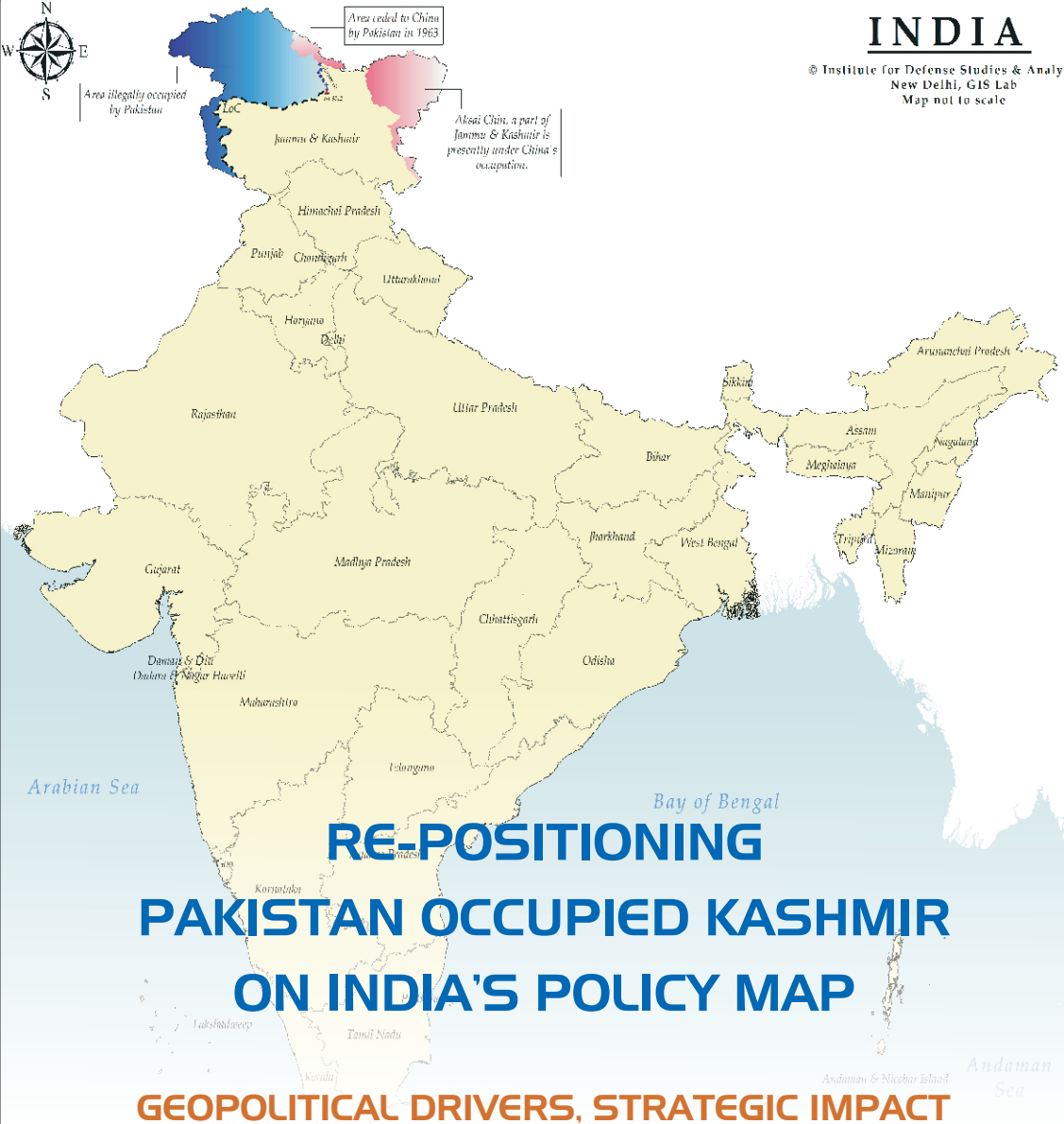




INDIA

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Map not to scale



RE-POSITIONING PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR ON INDIA'S POLICY MAP

GEOPOLITICAL DRIVERS, STRATEGIC IMPACT

Priyanka Singh

IDSA MONOGRAPH SERIES

No. 62 OCTOBER 2017

**RE-POSITIONING
PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR
ON INDIA'S POLICY MAP
GEOPOLITICAL DRIVERS, STRATEGIC IMPACT**

PRIYANKA SINGH



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES

रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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ISBN: 978-93-82169-78-9

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this Monograph are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute or the Government of India.

First Published: October 2017

Price: Rs.

Published by: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
No.1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram
Marg, Delhi Cantt., New Delhi - 110 010
Tel. (91-11) 2671-7983
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Layout &
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Printed at: M/S Ma

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The protracted issue of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is considered one of the most intractable challenges faced by independent India. The recent history of this erstwhile princely state has witnessed political upheavals, an unprecedented level of state sponsored terrorism, and constant manoeuvring about achieving the best form of governance for a state whose ruler signed the Instrument of Accession in favour of India. Under the Lapse of Paramountcy, the Instrument of Accession was a provision given by the outgoing British administration to bestow the princely states in British India a choice to remain independent, or join either of the emergent dominions—India or Pakistan.

Indian policy making has been adaptive and accommodative of global shifts in the past. From a purely idealistic stance, India's policy posturing today seems to be placed more on pragmatic footing, both at the global and domestic level. In this backdrop, this study proposes to analyse whether it is prudent in the emerging geopolitical scene for India to revisit and refine its position on Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). Presently, India has a clearly stated position on PoK which it claims is an integral part of India by virtue of the Instrument of Accession as well as the Parliamentary Resolution of 1994.

The survey of India Map shows PoK and parts of the erstwhile princely state of J&K which are presently under China's control (Aksai Chin and the Trans Karakoram Tract) as an integral part of India. In sync with the official position of India on PoK, the cartographic representation of these parts is a constant reminder of India's territorial claim on the whole of J&K.

THE PRINCELY STATE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR: FORMATION, FRAGMENTATION

The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir originated in the aftermath of the Anglo-Sikh War after the signing of the Treaty of Amritsar on 26 March 1846. The territory was sold out to Maharaja Gulab Singh, the Dogra Rajput ruler. According to the text of the Treaty of Amritsar, the “hilly or mountainous country with its dependencies situated eastward of the river Indus and westward of the river Ravee” was ceded to the Maharaja’s suzerainty.¹ Henceforth, the princely state consisted of disparate ethnicities, and a multi-regional multi-faith population under the rule of a Dogra Rajput dynasty. From 1846 till 1947, the princely state was ruled as a single administrative unit. In 1947, the princely state of Jammu of Kashmir comprised the sub units of Jammu and Kashmir which is presently controlled by India, the so called Azad Jammu and Kashmir, as well as Gilgit-Baltistan (previously referred to as Northern Areas by the government of Pakistan) including the Trans Karakoram Tract (Shaksgam Valley) ceded to China by Pakistan in 1963 as a result of the provisional Sino-Pak Border Agreement.

At the time of India’s Independence, the princely state was a single administrative unit under Maharaja Hari Singh, the scion of the Dogra dynasty. Since the Maharaja was undecided on a preferred course, he wished to sign a Standstill Agreement with both India and Pakistan. India refused to sign the agreement immediately, citing other major concerns and issues facing the country in the wake of Partition. However, Pakistan readily accepted the Standstill offer, and signed it. In separate telegrams that were sent to the leadership in both India and Pakistan, the draft of the agreement noted, amongst other things, that “Jammu and Kashmir Government would welcome Standstill Agreements with India (Pakistan) on all matters in which these exist at the present moment with the outgoing British India Government. It is suggested that existing arrangements should continue pending the settlement of details”.²

¹ Christopher Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir and Kashmiris*, Hurst UK, 2015, p. 72.

² Text of the Standstill Agreement with India and Pakistan, 12 August 1947, available at http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/6534/15/15_appendix.pdf, accessed 23 March 2015.

However, in a serious breach of the Standstill Agreement, Pakistan not only cut off essential supplies to the Jammu and Kashmir, but also hatched a conspiracy with tribal fighters to commit aggression on the territory belonging to the princely state under Maharaja in an attempt to acquire it by force.

In response to the Maharaja of Kashmir's appeal, the Indian government agreed to offer military assistance to avert the invasion, but on the condition that the Instrument of Accession be signed before such help could be extended. The government of India contended that without a legal sanction, they could not offer military assistance in the Maharaja's territory as it would amount to aggression in a neighbouring territory. Hence, the Instrument of Accession was signed in India's favour after due deliberations were held between the two sides. Post accession, India was successfully able to contain the Pakistan led aggression to a large extent. But, in course, Pakistan was able to seize a considerable chunk of territory in the eastern side of the princely state which is now referred to as the so called Azad Jammu and Kashmir by the government of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, another rebellion was underway in the Gilgit-Baltistan region, aided by British officers, who chose to continue serving the Pakistan army post-1947. The uncertainty regarding the future course of the then princely state of J&K fuelled apprehensions in a section of the local population who were in connivance with the Pakistan army, especially its British officers who seemed to have understood that the northern frontiers would best serve their strategic purpose if they were under Pakistani control. Gilgit-Baltistan region was commonly termed as the strategic northern frontiers facing Britain's arch imperial rival, Russia. Precisely for this strategic value, the region was under British lease since 1935, for a period of 60 years. The lease was terminated in view of British withdrawal, and hence, the control of the region was restored to the Maharaja of Kashmir.

Thus, for the time that the region was under the Maharaja of Kashmir, India had a very good window of opportunity to declare its local autonomy within the state of J&K. A pre-emptive measure such as this could have gone a long way in pacifying the brewing unrest amongst particular sections of the population, and averted the crisis which

eventually occurred. Unfortunately this did not happen in the frenzy of celebrations as the region had reverted to the Maharaja of Kashmir. On his visit to Srinagar in the beginning of August 1947, Mahatma Gandhi “saw the seeds of future trouble in an unqualified inclusion of Gilgit in Kashmir”.³ Mahatma Gandhi’s thinking predicted the impending trouble. The newly appointed Governor, Brigadier Ghansara Singh, the Maharaja’s representative, was captured by rebels who later declared the region’s accession to Pakistan by hoisting a Pakistani flag in Gilgit. Gilgit Agency had been on lease to the British for quite some time and, therefore, at that point an “unqualified inclusion” back into the princely state proved to be a miscalculation.⁴

PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR: INCEPTION, EVOLUTION

By late 1947, the erstwhile princely state of J&K was dissected from the northern and eastern sides, and is currently controlled by Pakistan. This includes a substantial chunk of the Gilgit Baltistan territory lying trans Karakoram—a tract of 5000 square miles being ceded to China in 1963 as a gesture to cement the then evolving Sino-Pakistan strategic alliance. Henceforth, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) refers to parts of the erstwhile princely state of J&K which have been under Pakistan’s control since 1947. It comprises the so-called ‘Azad’ Jammu and Kashmir (‘AJK’) and Gilgit Baltistan which, until 2009, was referred to as the Northern Areas by the government of Pakistan. India has a legal claim on these territories by virtue of the Instrument of Accession which was signed in India’s favour by the ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, on 26 October 1947.

FROM PERIPHERAL KASHMIR TO GEOPOLITICAL KASHMIR

The part of Kashmir under Pakistan’s control has been completely shrouded in the debate on Kashmir. This has been as a result of a deliberate strategy pursued by Pakistan to keep the areas blanketed

³ Sisir Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations*, Asia Publishing House, 1967, p.109.

⁴ Ibid.

from the domain of information and physical access. For a while after 1947, both parts—the so called AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan—remained politically conjoined. As soon as the Kashmir issue gained traction at the international level—more specifically, in the United Nations—the two regions were segregated by implementing the Karachi Agreement in 1949. Since then, the two units within PoK have been separate political entities.

There is no one term or legally accepted nomenclature for referring to these areas. The 'AJK' part is mostly referred to as 'Pakistan-controlled Kashmir', or the so called Azad Kashmir. The Gilgit-Baltistan region was, till recently, referred to by a geographical annotation—the Northern Areas. Apart from India's official claim which refers to both parts as PoK, there is largely no unanimity in the terminology or a single point of reference as far as both these regions are concerned. Since the region is considered inaccessible and has grossly escaped academic attention, it is also usually connoted as the "other Kashmir", or "the forgotten frontiers", stressing the utter lack of attention and study of these parts of the former princely state.⁵

The unequivocal significance of these parts in PoK has often been relegated to irrelevance in the solution of the Kashmir issue, giving an impression—at least in trans-national debates—that these areas do not count in the overarching Kashmir problem, and that their fate is broadly settled. Lost in terminology, both parts have been deprived a role or a say in any discussion dealing with the future settlement of the Kashmir issue.

The Strategic Component

Since both the so called AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan lie on the periphery of the erstwhile princely state, and touch the borders of important countries of the region, their strategic significance has been immense.

⁵ Navnita Chadha Behera, *Demystifying Kashmir*, New Delhi: Pearson-Longman, 2007, p. 170; Parvez Dewan, *The Other Kashmir: Almost Everything About-Aksai Chin, Baltistan, Gilgit, Hunza, Mirpur, Muzaffarabad*, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2011.

This strategic significance has, therefore, also been at the core of their fate and trajectory. It was predominantly geopolitical calculations that guided the British decision to keep the northern part under a strong tab during the pre-1947 period. This is why they decided to administer Gilgit on lease for a span of 60 years.

Sole Land Link between China and Pakistan

Gilgit-Baltistan forms the crucial link between Pakistan and its all-weather friend, the People's Republic of China. It is difficult to imagine how their bilateral ties would have flourished had the region, rightfully so, would have been under India's control. The territorial swap in which Pakistan ceded 5000 plus square miles of territory to China as part of a provisional border agreement with the latter was only the beginning of what has evolved and now being projected as the most defining partnership in the Asian context.⁶ The Sino-Pak territorial agreement served as a precursor to the subsequent building of the Karakoram Highway. In the present context, China is seeking to leverage this territorial link to fulfil its ambitious multi-pronged transnational connectivity project known as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Concurrently, the PoK region has received world attention even though in a limited way. In the aftermath of the massive earthquake in 2005, international non-governmental organizations and international agencies were given access to carry out relief work in the calamity ravaged area. For some, this was the unravelling of the little known domain of the Kashmir issue—that there existed a different, unknown, uncharted territory linked to the larger issue pertaining Kashmir and its people.

A lot of water has flown since these territories within PoK were separated from J&K after being invaded and acquired by deceit. India's political capital has been wholly invested and its diplomatic energies exhausted all these years in defending its position on the part of J&K which is under its own control. India's single agenda focus (though

⁶ For a succinct updated account of the Sino-Pakistan strategic relations, see: Andrew Small, *The China Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics*, Hurst, 2014.

largely unavoidable) has enforced a deep sense of detachment from the rest of J&K—that is, PoK.

It is in this backdrop that this monograph seeks to look at whether now is an opportune moment to comprehend the geopolitical environment anew, bring about policy alterations, and re-energize India's policy on Kashmir by making it more broad-based, comprehensive, and sound. In the light of significant geopolitical shifts witnessed in the region and beyond, India needs to enunciate its stand on PoK yet again—but this time in a better pronounced, profound, and consequential way.

Based on the hypothesis that, in a changing context, Indian policy on PoK needs appropriate modifications and become more responsive, this monograph is mainly divided into three parts:

PART I: ANALYSING INDIA'S APPROACH TOWARDS 'AJK' AND GILGIT-BALTISTAN

Part I prepares the background of the study by a critique of India's policy towards PoK in the past. The chapter titled, "India's Policy Stance on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir Since 1947: A Critique" briefly lays out historical information and analysis. The section outlines the critical premise of the study of India's policy approach towards PoK. It surveys India's stance on the territory lost from J&K during the critical months following Independence. This part also puts together how India's leadership was positioned on PoK, and whether or not there was consensus and clarity on objectives at the leadership level. This particular chapter also encapsulates PoK vis-à-vis several wars fought between India and Pakistan, and surveys respective losses and gains as well as the regain of territory during these wars.

PART II: WHY A RE-POSITIONING NOW?

Part II forms the crux of the study, by lining up the critical geopolitical drivers which make India's repositioning appear compelling and necessary. It consists of two chapters which explain the basis for the study, justify the timing of it, and emphasise the need for India to revisit its policy on PoK. Today, the geopolitical scene has altered significantly. The Cold War dynamics are no more the dominating force

in international relations. World politics is governed through multipolarity, and India is now party to important multilateral engagements. India's relations with the United States (US) have transcended to a new level of understanding. Concurrently, India's has unresolved issues with China; and then there are issues arising from the purported rivalry between the US and China.

Chinese presence in PoK is a warning bell and needs diligent attention by India. Otherwise, this could translate into serious strategic implications in the future. It is essential that this aspect of PoK figures unfailingly in the bilateral exchanges between India and China. Since the US too has been developing certain stakes in PoK lately, related issues can be discussed on a mutual basis between the US and India to see if this could be applied as strategic balancer against China and Pakistan.

Secondly, India has good relations with post-Soviet states such as Tajikistan situated on the border of PoK— straddling the Wakhan Corridor. The corridor connects PoK with Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and China. At a time when India has pledged long term non-military commitment towards Afghanistan, some reorientation in policy thinking may be worthwhile. Merely stating that PoK is an integral part of India may not suffice in the changed geopolitical atmospherics.

India's political stature has grown, and its economic clout is well acknowledged. It is in a better bargaining position today than ever before. With the improved security situation in J&K—which kept it occupied for more than two decades—India is well placed to be assertive on PoK. India's equations with Pakistan have deteriorated, especially post Mumbai's 26/11 attack. With a declining security situation in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, Pakistan is being cornered by the international community, including by its major ally, the US. The time is ripe for India to amend the predominant perception that Pakistan being the smaller state, has consistently been bogged down by India. Also, there is scope for India to blunt the edge of Pakistan's Kashmir propaganda. For instance, engaging the PoK diasporic movements could be a significant step in this direction.

In this section, the first chapter does a mapping of the role of key external players in the PoK region. It argues that, of late, there has been

considerable interest on the part some important countries (such as the US and China) to participate in developmental activities, including infrastructure building in PoK. Chinese activities in PoK, especially in Gilgit Baltistan, have been consistently reported and debated in the media and academic circles. Several factors/drivers have been attributed to Chinese interests in this key strategic region. Apart from the US and China, there is an emerging role of several other important countries in the PoK region, such as of France and Japan, who seem to be either involved in several development and infrastructural projects there or are exploring various options at hand. The evolving role of these countries (as well as several other countries) has been described and analysed to gauge whether there is a possibility of PoK becoming a hotspot for geopolitical manoeuvres.

The much coveted and hotly debated CPEC is going to be built through part of PoK—that is, Gilgit-Baltistan. Keeping in view the enormity of this connectivity project and the prospects it offers, a separate chapter is included in this part on this strategic corridor plan. The chapter deals extensively with CPEC and its impact on Gilgit-Baltistan, and forecasts the challenges it is likely to bear upon India's security interests.

PART III: IS A RE-POSITIONING POSSIBLE?

The concluding section emits the overall findings of the study. These are that repositioning in PoK is not only possible but also feasible and prudent in the current geopolitical context. The chapter offers suggestions on making India's approach towards PoK positive, and also on how India should go about making its PoK policy more adaptive. The study concludes on a note of optimism regarding the unfolding of geopolitical vistas which earlier were not in favour of India's interests. A tepid approach on PoK has cost India not only territorial loss but also in terms of political and diplomatic capital while defending its control on the rest of the state of J&K. The debate and negotiations dealing with the resolution of Kashmir have been unfairly focused on the part of J&K under India's control and bolstered Pakistan's audacity on claiming the territory that legitimately belongs to India.

Pakistan's consistent strategy has been to hard bargain in terms of a "LoC plus" settlement without accounting for substantial chunks of Indian territory that continues to be under its control (read PoK).⁷ The gradual re-posturing on PoK by India will effectively dissipate Pakistan's stratagem on Kashmir. Based on this contention, India needs to be more innovative in formulating policy measures- one that would commensurate with its re-posturing on PoK. This would be possible by undertaking a detailed analysis of the prevailing ground situation in these areas, and derive a detailed strategy to yet again pronounce its claim and official position on PoK. There are constituencies within India which have raised the issue of PoK at the national and international level. However, until these constituencies get some kind of policy cushioning, they are bound to lose relevance in due course. With a hope to revitalize India's approach on PoK, a set of concrete, doable and promising policy measures have been delineated towards the end of the study.

⁷ Sunil Khilnani, Rajiv Kumar, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Prakash Menon, Nandan Nilekani, Srinath Raghavan, Shyam Saran, and Siddharth Varadarajan, *Non Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century*, 29 February 2012, New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research, 2012, p. 19.

PART I

ANALYSING INDIA'S APPROACH TOWARDS 'AJK' AND GILGIT-BALTISTAN

Chapter II

INDIA'S POLICY STANCE ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR SINCE 1947: A CRITIQUE

“Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas—the Pakistani part of Kashmir—are conspicuously absent from the debates on Kashmir. These mountainous regions are enveloped in multiple and overwhelming silences—“intellectual silence” reflected in a striking absence of literature; the international community’s “silence” in selectively focussing its attention on the Kashmir Valley; the “silence” of the Pakistani polity which, in its yearning for Kashmir, has cared little about the region’s people; and the “silence” of India which seems to have completely turned its back on these areas since 1947–48”.

—Excerpted from Navnita Chadha Behera, *Demystifying Kashmir*, 2007, p. 170.

While India’s overall position on Jammu and Kashmir has followed a consistently emphatic pattern, its policy on Pakistan occupied Kashmir has been less pronounced—so much so that it is virtually non-existent for a large section of people even within the country. The fact is that an otherwise large section of a politically aware/vigilant populace within India is nevertheless rather grossly ignorant about PoK. Though several other factors could account for this knowledge gap, the scant acknowledgement accorded to PoK by successive political dispensations in India seems to be broadly responsible for the same.

India’s overall approach to PoK can be broadly divided into two phases: the pre- and post-Cold War eras, when security and geopolitical orientations concerning the world order underwent a kind of sea change. India’s position on PoK is mainly defined by the Instrument of Accession

signed in October 1947 and the Parliamentary Resolution of 1994. Following Independence, there were several crippling factors which not only made India's broader position on Kashmir weak, but also steered it away from the path of reclaiming PoK. With the passage of time, the salience of PoK in the Kashmir issue has diminished; and now, it appears a daunting challenge to reconfigure/rethink PoK, and appropriately situate it in the existing strategic discourse and in India's policy thinking/making process dealing with Kashmir.

In the years following Independence, India bravely pursued its stance on the Kashmir issue. As a part of this diplomatic mission, India did raise the issue of Pakistan illegally occupying territories which, by virtue of the Instrument of Accession, belong to India. India has, till date, neither acknowledged nor accepted the so called independent stature of the so called AJK, nor does it concede Gilgit-Baltistan as part of Pakistan. India's intent has been clear that even if the use of term *Azad Kashmir* is made, it is only for the sake of a point of reference to differentiate between the two parts of PoK or classify the two sides across the LoC. This clarity of purpose was forcefully expressed by former Defence Minister V. Krishna Menon in his marathon speech at the UN in January 1957. Menon noted:

“...my government uses the words ‘Azad Kashmir’ without accepting the connotation of the word ‘Azad’ means ‘free’, we do not accept the term as meaning free Kashmir forces. They are enslaved Kashmir forces or whatever they are. But we have to use the language as it is given, and it should be understood that we do not regard it in its literal sense”.¹

However, with the passage of time, the issue of Kashmir became intractable after the UN's repeated failure to work out an amenable

¹ E. S. Reddy & A. K. Damodaran, *Krishna Menon on Kashmir: Selected Speeches at the United Nations – II*, Sanchar Publishing House, New Delhi in association with Krishna Menon National Memorial Committee 1992, at http://www.geocities.ws/enugareddy/krishnamenon/Krishna_Menon_on_Kashmir_-_I_-_January_1957.pdf, accessed 17 January 2015.

solution or achieve some kind of breakthrough. After the promulgation of the interim constitution of the so called AJK in 1974 following the Simla Conference (discussed in detail in the latter half of the chapter), it is difficult to sift India's stance on developments across the PoK region. There is deficient material to suggest what exactly India's approach was, as not much is documented in the period following this time. This makes it difficult to comprehend India's policy calculations regarding PoK till a certain point. Changes came about only after the time when Pakistan aided and abetted insurgency hit the otherwise peaceful landscape in the state of J&K in India during the late 1980s.

THE PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION ON JAMMU AND KASHMIR, 1994

The outbreak of insurgency in J&K coincided with the fall of the Soviet led Communist bloc. The commencement of a unipolar world led by the US post 1991 disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the simultaneous end of Cold War ushered a new set of challenges for India on Kashmir. At this time, the international community seemed to be buying the false human rights violation propaganda unleashed by Pakistan against India. The then P.V. Narsimha Rao-led Congress government requested opposition leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to lead the delegation that was constituted to present India's defence on the Kashmir issue at the UN in Geneva.² Subsequently, a reiteration of India's tough position on Kashmir and a resurrection of its claim of PoK was expressed by unanimously passing a resolution in the Indian Parliament on 22 February 1994, emphasizing that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India, and that Pakistan must vacate parts of the State under its occupation. The text relevant to PoK in the resolution is as follows:

“This House notes with deep concern Pakistan's role in imparting training to the terrorists in camps located in Pakistan and Pakistan

² K.P. Nayar, “The good old days: Delegations from India and Pakistan, then and now”, *The Telegraph*, 26 August 2015, at https://www.telegraphindia.com/1150826/jsp/opinion/story_39065.jsp, accessed 10 January 2015.

Occupied Kashmir, the supply of weapons and funds, assistance in infiltration of trained militants, including foreign mercenaries into Jammu and Kashmir with the avowed purpose of creating disorder, disharmony and subversion”.³

On behalf of the People of India, Firmly declares that –

“(a) The State of Jammu & Kashmir has been, is and shall be an integral part of India and any attempts to separate it from the rest of the country will be resisted by all necessary means; (b) India has the will and capacity to firmly counter all designs against its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity; and demands that – (c) Pakistan must vacate the areas of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, which they have occupied through aggression; and resolves that -(d) all attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of India will be met resolutely”.⁴

The Parliamentary Resolution was passed in a context when insurgency in J&K was at its peak. India was yet again under the scanner, facing the danger of being isolated internationally at the behest of Pakistan. However, the Parliamentary Resolution served to remind everyone that India's stand on Kashmir remains unmoved, and its standing claim on parts of J&K under Pakistan's illegitimate control stands unrevoked. In a newly emergent international order in which several states were still trying to configure and reconfigure strategic alignments and political preferences, the particular resolution was and still is a milestone in terms of unequivocally stating India's position on PoK. Till date, the Parliamentary Resolution (in addition to the Instrument of Accession) serves as a benchmark on India's official position on PoK, and finds a mention in almost any draft document or policy statement made therein.

³ Parliament Resolution on Jammu and Kashmir, 1994, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/papers/parliament_resolution_on_Jammu_and_Kashmir.htm, accessed 2 March 2015.

⁴ Ibid.

FACTORS SHAPING INDIA'S STAND ON POK POST-1947

In the aftermath of World War II, the United Nations Organization (UNO) was founded on 24 October 1945. The UN was envisaged as an international multilateral forum to resolve conflict and ensure maintenance of peace and order in and amongst the member countries. Closely following on the heels of the formation of the UN, India became independent after nearly 200 years of British rule. The security matrix in the world was then dominated by the big powers, and this power equation was transcendent in the working of the UN. After Pakistan's continued aggression in J&K and incessant bloodshed which carried on for months, India decided to take its case to the UN Security Council. However, little did it realize the diplomatic tussle and power politics it would have to face while making an attempt to secure its rights on the entire state of J&K. This also marked the beginning of a phase where India had to take its fight on Kashmir on multiple fronts—the British, the US, and subsequently China. In the UN Security Council, all except the former Soviet Union, seemed to be offering outright support to the Pakistani position on Kashmir.

Selective Rendition of UNSC Resolutions

Once India had registered the case of Pakistani aggression in Jammu and Kashmir, the Security Council passed a resolution in April 1948. The UN Security Council resolutions suggested a stage-wise restoration of peace and order in the entire J&K belt. Preceding the issue of a plebiscite, the resolution clearly delineates directives for Pakistan, which reads:

“To secure the withdrawal from the State of Jammu and Kashmir of tribesmen and Pakistani nationals not normally resident therein who have entered the State for the purpose of fighting, and to prevent any intrusion into the state of such elements and any furnishing and of material aid to those fighting in the State”.⁵

⁵ Security Council resolution 47 (1948), 21 April 1948, p.4., at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/47 (1948), accessed 3 July 2015.

This is followed by separate paragraph of advice for India:

“When it is established to the satisfaction of the Commission set up in accordance with the Councils’ resolution 39(1948) that the tribesmen are withdrawing and the arrangement for the cessation of fighting have become effective, put into operation in consultation with the commission a plan for withdrawing their own forces from Jammu and Kashmir and reducing them progressively to the minimum strength required for the support of the civil power and the maintenance of law and order”.⁶

It is clear that Pakistan did not follow the UNSC resolutions directives of demilitarizing PoK and, hence, refused to fulfill the necessary precondition for holding of a referendum.

Demilitarization as a Pre-condition for Plebiscite

In sync with the UN resolutions, General Andrew McNaughton, the then Chairperson of the UNSC, called for withdrawal of Pakistani forces from the areas it had annexed by deceit. As per McNaughton’s report, “the administrative control over the Northern Areas of Kashmir should remain with the existing local authorities.”⁷ He further recommended:

“The withdrawal from the State of Jammu and Kashmir of the regular forces of Pakistan; and the withdrawal of the regular forces of India not required for purposes of security or for the maintenance of local law and order on the Indian side of the Cease-Fire Line; also the reduction, by disbanding and disarming, of local forces, including on the one side the Armed Forces and Militia of the State of Kashmir and on the other, the Azad Forces”.⁸

⁶ Ibid., p.5.

⁷ Proposal in respect of Jammu and Kashmir made by General A.G.L. McNaughton, President of the Security Council of the United Nations, pursuant to the decision of the Security Council taken at its 457th meeting, on 22 December 1949 available at <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/uncom3.htm> (Text of McNaughton’s report), accessed 3 July 2015.

⁸ Ibid.

In his report (1949), McNaughton categorically calls for disbanding of local militias in Jammu and Kashmir as well as the so called Azad forces. The Owen Dixon Plan (1950) suggested two alternative plans: a comprehensive plebiscite versus a partial plebiscite to ascertain the choice of people in indecisive areas within J&K such as the Kashmir Valley. The Frank Graham proposal (1951) suggested that, on the Pakistan occupied side, the Pakistani troops and Pakistani nationals should withdraw. On the Indian side, however, only the “bulk” of forces should retreat.⁹

Earlier, on the issue of the cease fire, Pakistan against inserted a caveat that it could take a call on declaring a cease fire only on its behalf, and not on behalf of the government of the so called Azad Kashmir. According to Pakistan, the government of the so called Azad Kashmir was the sole authority for taking such a decision, and it was responsible for controlling the territory seized from the erstwhile princely state of J&K.¹⁰

Pakistan propagandistic position on J&K hinges on the issue of a UN advised and administered plebiscite, completely ignoring the preconditions (regarding Pakistan’s withdrawal from the areas it deceitfully seized) attached to it. Lack of holistic understanding of the UNSC resolutions have, on one hand, developed a sense of complacency in Pakistan and, on the other, rendered serious misgivings in India. The preconditions attached to holding a plebiscite have been ignored while principles of self-determination, independence, etc. have been used as tools to coerce India not only by Pakistan but by the international community at large. A skewed approach towards the Kashmir issue slowly gained traction and immensely constrained India’s behaviour while defending its control on part of Jammu & Kashmir and its stated claim on PoK.

⁹ “UN’s Failure in Kashmir: A Factual Survey”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2 October 1965, at http://www.epw.in/system/files/pdf/1965_17/40/un_s_failure_in_kashmira_factual_survey.pdf, accessed 4 July 2015; Navnita Chadha Behera, *Demystifying Kashmir*, Pearson Longman, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 214-215.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Anglo-American Role and the Cold War Bloc Politics

The Kashmir issue as such incubated in an international environment heavily surcharged with Cold War politics, divisions, trends and inter-state alignments. In a world order broadly divided between the Soviet-led eastern and the US-led western bloc, India charted a non-aligned course. This was in stark contrast to the strategic choice adopted by Pakistan which was open to and more than willing to embrace the culture of power politics or bloc alignments.

India's pursuit of non-alignment and assertion of strategically autonomous course had few takers. In addition to the explicit role Britain played in commissioning a hasty accession of Gilgit-Baltistan to Pakistan including the key role some of the British officers played in it, the British receptivity towards Pakistan during and after the partition was fairly high. The overt support on Gilgit-Baltistan was critical in Pakistan making a substantial gain in J&K territorially. Later, when the matter of Pakistan's aggression was referred to the UN by India, a supportive stand taken up by the British helped Pakistan attain diplomatic edge. This was mainly due to the widespread propagation made from Pakistan that the British Governor General Lord Mountbatten "aided and abetted" Kashmir's accession to India.¹¹ Such allegations somewhat made the British politically conscious that their purported neutrality should not be perceived as anti-Muslim.¹²

The United States was initially reluctant to get mired in a dispute involving the Commonwealth states. Its hands were relatively full with engagement in Europe and it also felt the British, since they had ruled south Asia for a long period, had a better understanding of local politics and issues. However, later on, owing strategic compulsions and a formal military alliance with Pakistan, the US response on Kashmir was in

¹¹ H. V. Hodson, *Great Divide: Britain, India, Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, Hardcover, 1997, p.441.

¹² C. Dasgupta, *War and Diplomacy in Kashmir: 1947-48*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2002, pg. 17.

tandem with the British- one that seemed clearly inclined in favour of Pakistan.

Diplomatic Standoff on the Sino-Pak Border Agreement 1963

The 1962 war between India and China marked the advent of China in the Kashmir issue, hence complicating it further. China had overtaken control on Aksai Chin, part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Aksai Chin is a huge tract of territory of 14000 plus sq miles, a high altitude desert terrain, which is now a part of the Hotan Prefecture in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).¹³ India has a standing claim on Aksai Chin as part of the princely state of J&K. Additionally, China also controls the Trans Karakoram Tract which was ceded to it by Pakistan under a provisional border agreement between the two countries. Hence, India continued to further lose territory from the former princely state of J&K, more so due to a growing Sino-Pakistan alliance in the region. In a sharp reaction, India accused that Pakistan: "... merely for nuisance value and as an instrument to put pressure on us-has entered into negotiations and concluded agreement with the Central Government of People's Republic of China. That agreement is in total violation of any rights or authority Pakistan may possess, for it has no sovereignty over this state; it is not Pakistan's to trade away or negotiate about. It has been done on a basis which we cannot accept- our position in regard to China, which is not under discussion before the Security Council".¹⁴

India's protest note registered its objections to both the Chinese and Pakistan:

"In lodging an emphatic protest with the government of the People's Republic of China for this interference with the sovereignty of India over the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the

¹³ For a detailed analysis on the India-China bilateral standoff in the aftermath of 1962 war see: John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, Reprint edition (1 February 2002).

¹⁴ Sisir Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations*, p. 428.

government of India solemnly warns the Government of China that any change, provisional or otherwise, in the status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir brought about by third parties which seek to submit certain parts of Indian territory to foreign jurisdiction will not be binding on the Government of India and that the Government of India firmly repudiate any agreements, provisional or otherwise, regarding her own territories arrived at between third parties who have no legal or constitutional *locus standi* of any kind. It is clear that the Government of China are in this matter acting in furtherance of their aggressive designs and are seeking to exploit the troubled situation in Kashmir and India's differences with Pakistan for their advantage. The Government of India will hold Government of China responsible for the consequences of their action".¹⁵

While it is correct to say that the span of international attention was unfairly tilted and focussed on the Jammu and Kashmir under India, it is also a fact that India was overwhelmed while dealing with a biased international opinion on Kashmir. Therefore, India could not accord PoK the degree of significance which was merited in strategic and political terms.

INDIA AND PoK: STAID POLICY, LOST OPPORTUNITIES, UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Multiple factors have contributed to India's neglect of PoK as a policy domain as discussed above. There has been a serious lack of consistency in India asserting its claim on parts of J&K which have been in Pakistan's occupation including those that are presently with China. Disproportionate attention on J&K at the expense of PoK has been the biggest fallout of this policy inertia on India's part.

Nebulous Definition of PoK Within India

One of the major challenges before formulating a coherent sound policy on PoK are the lapses and non-uniformity in the common

¹⁵ Ibid.

understanding of what constitutes PoK. The most generic definition of PoK constricts it only to the thin strip of land which is what is referred to as the so called Azad Jammu and Kashmir. However, from India's standpoint, the term PoK stands for both the so called AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, though both were put under Pakistan's control through different means, at different points of time and under varying circumstances. Both entities within PoK currently under Pakistan's control were part of and were being administered by the former princely state, a large conglomerate of disparate distinct units.

Gross neglect on taking up the issue of PoK in Kashmir's context every time has undermined the territory's significance in political terms and strategic calculus. The prevalent attitude of neglect and ignorance towards PoK has almost pushed it down peoples' perception and memory. The overall awareness level on PoK, especially within India, is dismally low. The issue has existed quite low on India's strategic priorities until very recently. The subject of PoK is nearly absent in political discourse, be it in strategic planning or policy formulation exercises. The domain of scholarship on Kashmir is not inclusive and is rather skewed without much focus being trained on PoK.

PoK During India- Pakistan Wars

Indian conquest of Haji Pir: Since 1947, India and Pakistan have engaged in at least three full-fledged wars including limited scale wars on Kashmir. During India-Pakistan war of 1965, the Indian army captured Haji Pir Pass situated in Pir Panjal range in a chivalrous battle led by Major Ranjit Singh Dayal.¹⁶ Haji Pir Pass nestled between Jammu and Kashmir, the confluence of Poonch-Uri route, was key to access the so called 'AJK' in PoK. The captured pass was later returned to Pakistan as part of the Tashkent Agreement in 1966. Since then, there is much debate whether it was a strategic blunder to give it back to Pakistan, who used it even during that particular war to flush infiltrators

¹⁶ Col Bhaskar Sarkar, "Battle of Hajipir Pass 1965", *Indian Defence Review*, 15 May 2016, at <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/battle-of-hajipir-pass-1965/>, accessed 2 July 2016.

inside J&K.¹⁷ Post 1988, the Haji Pir route has continued to extensively serve Pakistan's proxy designs. The route has been used by Pakistan sponsored terrorists to infiltrate in the J&K region.

India's gains in the Ladakh sector: Subsequent to the 1965 war, India-Pakistan were locked in another armed conflict, this time due to a humanitarian crisis in what was then East Pakistan. India was forced to intervene due to a serious refugee situation arising as a result of influx of people from the then East Pakistan who were compelled to flee to escape Pakistan abetted military atrocities. It was during this conflict in 1971 that Indian forces led by Chewang Rinchen of the Ladakh Scouts seized control over four out of the fourteen villages in Baltistan.¹⁸ These villages were: Chalungka, Turtuk, Thyakshi and Thang with a total area of 804 sq kms. Turtuk is situated between Skardu and Leh. Turtuk village is the last outpost between India and Gilgit-Baltistan and until 2010, it remained inaccessible to tourists and other common people.¹⁹

The Siachen conflict: The India-Pak conflict over the Siachen Glacier stemmed from the undefined LoC after point NJ 9842. According to the ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan –the Karachi Agreement signed in July 1949, the ceasefire line was demarcated but further to the map coordinate point NJ9842, “thence North to the glaciers”, it was left un-demarcated keeping in view the desolate and

¹⁷ P.C. Katoch, “Battle of Haji Pir: The Army's Glory in 1965”, *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, July–September 2015, at http://www.idsa.in/system/files/jds/jds_9_3_2015_BattleofHajiPir_0.pdf, pp. 53–74, accessed 5 February 2016.

¹⁸ Aaquib Khan, “Turtuk, a Promised Land Between Two Hostile Neighbours”, *The Wire*, 15 April 2017, at <https://thewire.in/123835/turtuk-story-of-a-promise-land/>, accessed 17 April 2017.

¹⁹ Nandini Mehta, “Turtuk Diary”, *Outlook*, 8 August 2011, at <http://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/turtuk-diary/277826>, accessed 12 October 2012.

tough nature of the terrain.²⁰ Hence, NJ9842 had been the northernmost point of the then ceasefire line and now the Line of Control. The conflict over Siachen erupted when Pakistan started to send mountaineering expeditions by issuing tourist permits to foreigners. India was quick to note the breach of understanding as per the Karachi Agreement and after due deliberations, decided to retaliate in what is known as Operation Meghdoot.²¹ Since then, the Siachen Glacier has been controlled by the Indian army despite hostile climatic conditions.

India's Inability to Counter Pakistan's False Propaganda

One of the gross failures of the Indian policy over the years has been not to publicize existing political and social realities in PoK so as to tear into or blunt the broader dubious agenda of Pakistan on Kashmir. Notwithstanding the fact that developments in PoK have not filtered out freely and consistently into public domain or in the information space, even limited facts and figures available were enough to have been skilfully utilized to perforate Pakistan's false propaganda especially regarding the so called *Azadi* in parts of J&K under its control since 1947. There are ample contradictions inherent in Pakistan's approach towards PoK. What Pakistan has successfully done is to deftly conceal PoK from being subjected to critical scrutiny unlike J&K under India. Following are few cases in example which exhibit serious contraventions in Pakistan preaching and fallacious practices vis a vis Kashmir.

As discussed earlier, PoK constitutes the so called AJK and the Gilgit-Baltistan region that were administered as a single unit till 1949. Post 1949, the two parts were not only administratively dissected, but have also since then followed a different course of political trajectory. While the so called AJK has been provided cosmetic trappings of an independent nation, Gilgit-Baltistan has been subject to several

²⁰ B. G Verghese, *Siachen Follies: Defining Facts and Objectives*, CPR Occasional Paper Series No. 20, May 2012, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, at http://www.cprindia.org/sites/default/files/working_papers/Siachen_0.pdf, p.7, accessed 7 April 2016.

²¹ For a detailed analysis of the Operation Meghdoot, see Nitin Gokhale, *Beyond NJ984: The Siachen Saga*, Bloomsbury India, New Delhi, 2014.

provisional political frameworks that have been enforced from time to time. On the contrary, in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India, democratic popular representation has been put in place for over decades now. The political processes in the J&K state are in sync with the broader democratic traditions exercised in India. India, therefore, had an opportunity to shape and strengthen its claim on the PoK region based on democratic dividends it offered to people on its side of J&K by consciously transmitting across the board how this stood in contrast to the perpetual state of statelessness in both parts of PoK.

a) Article 370 vs Article 257

Jammu and Kashmir has been an integral part of the Indian dominion since 1947 and is ruled under Article 370, a special provision outlined in the Constitution of India.²² PoK is not part of the Constitution of Pakistan. While the so called AJK has a separate interim constitutional arrangement since 1974, Gilgit Baltistan is still reeling under political ambiguity and experimenting with different provisional political systems. The only place where PoK finds a passive reference is in Article 257 of Pakistan's Constitution which states: "When the people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir decide to accede to Pakistan, the relationship between Pakistan and the State shall be determined in accordance with the wishes of the people of that State".²³

There is inherent contradiction in Pakistan's policy on PoK and what is essentially enshrined in Article 257. The proposition that the "people of the state decide to accede to Pakistan..." is presumptuous- based on an assumption that the entire Jammu and Kashmir will actually accede to Pakistan. Secondly, the fallacious paraphernalia of an independent state in at least the so called AJK

²² For details: refer to the Text of Indian Constitution available at https://india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf, pp. 243-244, accessed 25 May 2015.

²³ Refer Text of the Constitution of Pakistan available at <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part12.ch4.html>, accessed 17 June 2015.

stands dismissed if one were to take Pakistan presumptuous sense of belief that the people will eventually accede to Pakistan and not choose to either remain independent or fully unite with India.

The revocation of the State Subject Rule (implemented in the entire princely state of J&K in 1927) in Gilgit-Baltistan was an errant breach diluting the original character and identity of these areas. Withdrawal of the State Subject Rule has led to far reaching demographic transition in Gilgit-Baltistan, originally a Shia dominant region.

b) Bond of Allegiance

All political representatives and public officials are required to sign a Bond of Allegiance reaffirming PoK's accession to Pakistan. This is another set of glaring contradiction: While Pakistan has vociferously propagated self-determination for the people of Kashmir, in PoK-an integral part of J&K, it warrants political and public representatives to accept allegiance to the idea of Kashmir integrating with Pakistan. Therefore, what needs to be publicized more by India is the fact that Pakistan is selling the concept of independence by erecting a false statehood with the *Azad* nomenclature. The mandatory bond of loyalty stands in gross contradiction to the idea of self-determination as propagated by Pakistan's shrill rhetoric on Kashmir.

c) Human Rights Propaganda versus Political Disenfranchisement

The false human rights allegations levelled on India by Pakistan could have been neutralized to a large extent by disseminating the case of prolonged political disenfranchisement of these areas under PoK. Continued denial of political rights and absence of a legal constitutional framework in PoK is the worst form of human rights violation.

INDIA'S PREDISPOSITION FOR LOC AS THE PERMANENT BORDER

Though India lost a substantial chunk of the erstwhile princely state of J&K i.e. PoK in the months subsequent to Partition, it never really was

able to rake up the issue as forcefully at the international arena as was needed. Consistent lack of focus on the PoK region for one reason or the other led India to evolve a policy course that resonated more or less with a settlement somewhat around converting the Line of Control into a permanent border between India and Pakistan. It has been contended often that in the decades following the genesis of Kashmir problem, there was what some would comprehend as a tacit willingness in India's overall approach for permanently retaining the status quo. Even if there was some truth in this, it was tantamount to India giving up PoK even before staking a proper assertive claim on the territory and instead be content by settling for the LoC as a permanent division between the two countries. Contrary to this, Article 257 in Pakistan Constitution and the Bond of Allegiance are indicative of Pakistan not only intending to permanently possess PoK, but also aspiring to control the entire J&K that has been assigned to India's control by virtue of the Instrument of Accession.

Swaran Singh-Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Talks, 1961-1963: The talks between Swaran Singh and Pakistan's then foreign minister, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, was the first occasion when Kashmir was discussed bilaterally between India and Pakistan. The talks were spread over a period that straddled the aftermath of India's war with China in 1962. The backdrop and overall atmospherics were particularly downbeat due to adverses suffered by India in the war. Nonetheless, in that context, the talks were a bold initiative on India's part to go ahead and negotiate with an adversary on a controversial issue such as Kashmir. Pakistan's intent and position was bolstered by India's perceived low morale. In a series of talks that were held between 1961 to 1963, the Indian negotiators included Sardar Swaran Singh, Y. D. Gundevia amongst others, while Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was leading the Pakistan side.²⁴

Talks were held across cities in India and Pakistan including Karachi, Calcutta, Rawalpindi, etc. The understanding in India on the proposed "practical territorial adjustment" was reached according due sensitivity

²⁴ For detailed reference to the several rounds of talks see: Y D Gundevia, *Outside the Archives*, Sangam Books, Orient BlackSwan, Reprint 2008.

to the military, whom the establishment felt would not be easy to convince.²⁵ However, as the talks proceeded, Pakistan took a hard-line approach while claiming the Chenab watershed- it was not satisfied with just a part of the vale demanding that the entire Kashmir Valley be given to Pakistan. India undertook initiative in an attempt to resolve pending issues with Pakistan- one that could lead to an amicable closure on Kashmir. However, Indian efforts towards reconciliation fell flat yet again due to Pakistan's rigid obsession that centered around acquiring control over the whole of J&K state.

Simla Agreement 1972: In the course of India-Pakistan equations since 1947, perhaps it was in the aftermath of the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971 that India was placed in the strongest stead vis a vis Pakistan. This was in the backdrop of Pakistan's unconditional surrender, while its eastern wing broke away into a separate independent nation, Bangladesh. In the ensuing period, Pakistan was in a remarkably weak strategic position, politically fragile and morally shattered. A bilateral conference between India and Pakistan was convened in Simla in June-July 1972. Several outstanding issues including the release of the prisoners of war, etc. were on the agenda of the meeting. Kashmir was initially on the prime agenda and there was discussion leading to some points of concrete understanding on the issue. Following are the salient points of agreement between the two sides:

- Most significant agreement arrived at the meeting was regarding the conversion of the ceasefire line into a line of control. India's line of thinking was based on: "the transformation of the ceasefire line into line of control was the core of the Indian solution to the Kashmir problem. The *de facto* line of control was meant to be graduated to the level of a *de jure* border".²⁶ Aziz Khan, the chief negotiator from the Pakistan side, quite "vehemently" objected to the idea contending that the change in terminology would amount

²⁵ Ibid., p. 241.

²⁶ P.N. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, The 'Emergency' and Indian Democracy*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.192.

to change in status quo and this was not acceptable to him.²⁷ Despite Aziz Khan's reservations, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then representing Pakistan as a President, keenly insisted that a "line of peace" be established. This line of peace should gradually be made porous and, henceforth, the issue of Kashmir be resolved via peaceful means.

- India's leverages were prematurely diluted with a rather conciliatory approach when the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi exhibited her deference for the Pakistan side clearly refraining to be seen as "dictating terms to a defeated adversary".²⁸
- It is noted that the Indian side was successfully able to convince President Bhutto that that the ceasefire line be referred to as the line of control and not 'line of peace', as he suggested. Bhutto apparently also agreed to the proposition that the line of control could be "gradually endowed with the characteristics of an international border".²⁹

Some of the broad points of understanding believed to have emerged especially with regard to what is known as the so called 'AJK' were as following:

- Pakistan was to initiate a political process to incorporate 'AJK' by making constitutional and administrative changes in the region. It is believed that there was a tacit understanding that in response to Pakistan's act of amalgamating the territory within the so called AJK, India would make nominal "low key" protest.³⁰
- After resumption of traffic across the international border, the LoC would be open on select points to allow movement across, installing proper mechanisms and processes of immigration and customs there.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 193.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 195.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 196.

- It was believed that with the passage of time, and subsequently allowing movement across both sides would help sooth feelings of bitterness culminating in a passive understanding that the Line of Control is the *de facto* border.

Preparing well to battle domestic politics in his country, the then President Zulfikar Bhutto was conscious that he may have to face fierce criticism back home on the purported concessions he agreed to at the Simla Conference on Kashmir issue. This was mainly for having giving up his claim on the Jammu and Kashmir under India including the coveted 'Vale' of Kashmir.³¹ Bhutto knew the political costs involved and realised the fear of having to face a severe backlash in domestic constituencies, including the all-powerful Pakistan army.

At Simla meeting, however, this seemed to be the only workable solution in order to end the seemingly intractable Kashmir issue and push it forth towards a logical long lasting conclusion. The Simla Pact was a win-win for Pakistan since its 93,000 prisoners of war held by India during the 1971 conflict were released and, more importantly, the captured territories were returned. The specific understanding on the intent of both leaders to make the line of control as the permanent border was not articulated in the draft agreement and was primarily in the form of a tacit mutual understanding arrived at between the two leaders. This, however, had fatal consequences for India's strategic interests. President Bhutto went back on his commitment soon as he landed in Pakistan. Instead of taking a defensive position, Bhutto rather tried to shun his critics by noting that he had not compromised the Kashmir issue at all. According to Bhutto, he allowed Kashmir to be discussed during the Simla conference in order to negotiate concessions from India on the prisoners of war issue and restoration of the lost territories.³²

³¹ Ibid., p. 196.

³² Bhutto's speech post Simla Agreement available on Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Speaks on Shimla Pact-.flv, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Ev4nvMFtxs>, accessed 9 May 2015.

Neither side wanted to appear as if they had climbed down from their stated position on Kashmir and, therefore, majority of discussions were attributed to what was not on the paper but agreed otherwise between the two sides.

Musharraf's 4-point formula, 2006: Former Chief of Pakistan Army and later President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf during his heyday came up with a 4-point formula largely reflecting the spirit and letter of the Simla Pact. His 4-point remedy on Kashmir included: gradual demilitarization with phased withdrawal of troops; local self-governance; status quo in the Line of Control in Kashmir along with free movement of Kashmiris across the LoC; and a joint supervision mechanism in Jammu and Kashmir in which Kashmiris would be third party apart from India and Pakistan.³³ Pervez Musharraf must be credited for coming up with a bold workable solution on Kashmir knowing well the deep intermesh between politics and the Kashmir issue in Pakistan. His proposal was one which rested on maintaining territorial status quo and gradually demilitarizing the entire J&K region, which in a way underscored India's purported inclination towards pursuing status quo in the region.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Multiple factors have been ascribed in the preceding section that shaped India's approach to PoK over several decades. There have been unintended collateral consequences of India's policy stasis on PoK vis a vis Pakistan. The interregnum has created a rather conducive environment for Pakistan to vehemently continue with its irrational pursuits in order to establish its claim on J&K by solely focussing on the part of the state under India's control. India's inadvertent neglect and inadequate attention to the parts of erstwhile state under Pakistan's control has commissioned a huge strategic cost and diplomatic disadvantage. Anything perceived, therefore, in terms of the final resolution/settlement on the Kashmir issue envisages only the Indian

³³ A S Dulat, *Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years*, Harper Collins, New Delhi, 2015, p. 278.

J&K on the negotiating table and not PoK. A long held un-holistic perception has diminished India's claim on PoK. It has also instilled a sense of self-satisfaction within India that reflects a rather reconciliatory approach on PoK- appearing content with the LoC as the permanent border solution between India and Pakistan. In the long run, PoK now billed as a strategic miss, could eventually impinge India's interest by diminishing its bargaining power on Kashmir every time it is dealing with Pakistan.

PART II

WHY A RE-POSITIONING NOW?

Chapter III

GEOPOLITICAL DRIVERS AND STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has peaked in the past few decades and, in many ways, the world is gradually shrinking. In this process, the greater role—economic or otherwise—of external powers in a particular region or country is perceived as routine. However, the role of external actors in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) assumes a different meaning. PoK is part of the erstwhile princely state of J&K and, therefore, its possession by Pakistan is considered illegitimate based on the Instrument of Accession. PoK's political status is still disputed—it is controlled by Pakistan but claimed by India since 1947. In this context, the chapter seeks to collate and examine the role of other countries in PoK. The chapter is divided into 5 parts: the first part outlines several crucial drivers which encourage this kind of external involvement; part two briefly defines the contemporary nature and scope of this role; part III and IV form the crux of the chapter by surveying the role of some important countries in PoK. It also examines the possibility of whether the role/presence of these countries in this region will eventually make PoK a battleground for contesting geopolitical objectives and conflicting strategies in the future. Part V sets out to draw implications of this kind of an involvement for India's claim on PoK. Towards the end, the chapter suggests certain doable measures for India to consider and adopt in the emerging geopolitical context especially that lies close in the vicinity of PoK.

This chapter is premised on the fact that outside actors have begun to take an increasing interest in PoK of late. This is, in some ways, a significant breakaway from past. The early years after India's independence did witness the role of the international community in

the Kashmir problem. At this time, most of them—including the US either rallied behind Pakistan or equated India with Pakistan.¹ With a changing context and geopolitical priorities, there has been a perceptible shift in the pattern in which the international community is looking at PoK. Now, the role of the international community is more economically and strategically oriented from that of a purely political or diplomatic perspective. This chapter primarily deals with the more recent developments—the post 2005 earthquake period—but also alludes briefly to history as and when required.

CRITICAL DRIVERS CONDUCTING EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT IN PoK

Before surveying the role played by several important countries in PoK, it is prudent to look at some compelling factors which support this kind of external involvement there. These drivers are a complex combination of pertinent geopolitical compulsions, strategic preferences, economic prospects, and ecological calamities—reasons which seem to guide policy decisions overtime in these countries to venture into PoK. A couple of these drivers may give lead towards understanding as to why this kind of transition is occurring now, and why international attention is presently diverted towards PoK.

The Strategic Component in PoK

PoK is nestled between the Himalayas and the Karakoram Range, the Hindukush, and the Pamirs; it also shares borders with the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan, the rest of J&K, China's Xinjiang, Tajikistan, and Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. PoK is strategically unique and, until recently, considered largely inaccessible to outside world. Simultaneously, its geographical landlocked position makes it a gateway to important countries in the region. The connectivity quotient of PoK is slowly gaining prominence in regional strategic discourse. It is believed that some kind of a presence, economic or otherwise, in the region could be useful strategically.

¹ For a detailed Indian perspective on the role of the great powers during the initial phase of the Kashmir issue, see C. Dasgupta, *War and Diplomacy in Kashmir: 1947–48*, Sage, 2002.

Extensive Presence of China

China's growing stakes in PoK has captured increasing media attention. Continued and panoptic coverage on the emergent role of China in PoK has given it the much needed international visibility and attention. China's phenomenal growth as an economic giant, accompanied with political prowess, has shifted the centre of gravity towards it and, therefore, also to its activity in the neighbourhood, including in PoK. 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. Developing economic stakes is a probable step in that direction.

International Aid and Assistance in the Aftermath of 2005 Earthquake

A massive earthquake, measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale, hit PoK and adjoining areas on 8 October 2005 (the epicentre was Muzaffarabad in the so called Azad Jammu and Kashmir). This disaster could be termed watershed as far as studying the role of other countries in PoK is concerned. It was after the calamity that international aid and relief items started to pour into the region. This moment of crisis provided access to international aid agencies and non-governmental institutions in PoK. Before this, there was very limited access for the international community to PoK, the outsider's role being largely confined to Chinese activities there.

The flow of international agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in PoK post 2005 was a blessing in more than one way. Not only did this provided instant relief to the affected people in PoK, but stories on the developmental lag in PoK also started to filter out of the region. Until then, the discourse on Kashmir was confined to debating the false propaganda on J&K which was fed by Pakistan, and flared by the West.

Abundant Resources

As a region, PoK is largely pristine, and gifted with immense wealth of natural resources. The Indus and its tributaries which flow through the region render opportunities for large scale power generation projects and dams. In addition, Gilgit-Baltistan especially is blessed with large

reserves of mineral deposits.² This combination serves as a lucrative opening for countries like China. The Chinese have taken an active role in the mining sector of PoK possibly to fulfil their own domestic requirements.

Pakistan is currently facing an acute energy shortage. The abundant water resources available make PoK a suitable destination for Pakistan to construct huge dams which could alleviate its energy problem. Similarly, being the most populous country of the world and undergoing rapid industrialization, China is fast burning its own resources. Thus, it may not be entirely far-fetched to suggest that China thinks it would be useful to invest in mega hydro power projects near its periphery, in PoK, so that in times of need, essential resources could be sourced from close proximity.

Developmental Requirements in PoK

The PoK region is in dire need of infrastructure and sustainable development work. Therefore, there is a greater scope for the outsiders to invest in various sectors. Besides hydropower and infrastructure development, there is urgent need to strengthen social sectors such as health and education. Development in PoK has been deliberately neglected over the years due to its disputed status, and also because of Pakistan's deep obsession with the rest of J&K.

Role of the Diaspora

A large number of people from PoK have relocated to the West, with a significant number of them living in countries like the US, Canada, Belgium, and the UK. Apart from taking up businesses and professions, these people have been able to form organizations that could serve as a platform to project pertinent issues regarding PoK. They have successfully disseminated awareness about local politics and problems

² Report titled "Mineral Resources of Central Karakoram National Park & Suggested Safe Mining Techniques", (Gilgit: World Wide Fund for Nature Pakistan, 2008), at http://www.wfpak.org/gcic/pdf/Reports/2009/Geological%20Survey%20Report%20of%20CKNP%20by%20M%20Alam%20draft%20~3_%20140709.pdf, p. 7, accessed 14 June 2015.

in the region. In the process, the organizations and individuals have highlighted the economic requirements of an otherwise underdeveloped/developing region in their respective countries of stay.

Scope to Bargain

While the disputed nature of the territory makes it difficult to rally funders, it does at the same time leave room for investing parties to bargain during deals and agreements. Since PoK's current status is disputed (being claimed by India), many multilateral institutions (for instance the World Bank) have shown reluctance to invest in mega projects such as the Diamer Bhasha dam in Gilgit-Baltistan. Similar concerns have, in the past, deterred other institutions from investing in the area; indeed, they have occasionally even urged Pakistan to seek a No Objection Certificate from India.³ However, such preconditions have been put forth in a limited sense only by donors/investors who are sensitive towards the controversial status of PoK.

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF EXTERNAL ROLE IN PoK

Investment opportunities in PoK were thrown open by Pakistan a long time ago. However, the region was more or less in state of confinement, and perhaps only China, besides Pakistan, had some kind of access to it. Apart from the deliberate strategy of Pakistan to siphon it off from the broader discourse on Kashmir, the presence of militant training outfits all over PoK was a major deterrent in allowing access to countries, except China.

In PoK, the emerging role of other countries is mostly related to development and infrastructure building. The majority of the countries, including China and the US, are now involved in several hydropower projects being built in PoK. Important ongoing projects in PoK are the Diamer Bhasha dam in Gilgit-Baltistan, Bunji dam, Neelum Jhelum project, and the Mangla dam raising project in the so called AJK. The

³ Shahbaz Rana and Faizan Dawood, "Diamer Bhasha Dam: World Bank, not ADB, presses for seeking Indian NOC", *The Express Tribune*, 1 March 2013, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/514063/diamer-bhasha-dam-world-bank-not-adb-presses-for-seeking-indian-noc/>, accessed 19 June 2015.

external role in PoK 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. Others countries, like Russia and Japan, seem to have just started to develop some interest; rather, they are testing the waters. France has already taken a plunge, while the UK shares an old diasporic connection with PoK.

MAPPING THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL PLAYERS⁴ IN PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

External involvement in PoK over the last couple of years has more or less been identified with the role of China. However, as one studies other ongoing projects in detail and surveys news reports, it becomes clear that it is not only the Chinese who are present or engaged in PoK. A host of other countries are either involved, or are in the process of participating, in development and infrastructure activities in PoK. Even countries like Russia—which traditionally have not been close to Pakistan—are showing a good deal of interest in investing in PoK-based projects. In this backdrop, this ensuing section seeks to collate and analyse the role of these potential investor/participant countries, and see how things have gradually unfolded in PoK.

The P-5

It is interesting to note that all countries of the P-5 group presently have a link to PoK. Whether this outside interest is incumbent on each other or the resultant of one of them, or secondary, is still being debated, and is an evolving process. The section deals with China and the US in greater detail. Apart from their economic orientation, the involvement of these two has strong strategic underpinnings, and has reached a level when certain key points can be deduced from their presence in PoK.

⁴ External players in the study refer to nations, and not multilateral institutions such as the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank (ADB), etc.

CHINA

As mentioned above, China's role in PoK in being keenly watched by rest of the world and, therefore, it has become one of the potential drivers for PoK to evolve as a strategic hotspot. Contrary to others, China has been engaging with several activities in PoK for a long time. In this regard, it is useful to track China's involvement in PoK during the history post 1947 in order to understand the current shape of Chinese agenda vis-à-vis the disputed region.

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-Baltistan as the only land link between the two countries is of foremost significance. Therefore, recent times have witnessed large scale announcements regarding various infrastructural and developmental projects in the region sponsored by China.⁵ Chinese forays in PoK, especially in Gilgit-Baltistan, need to be analysed in the light of the larger Sino-Pakistan ties which, over the years, have evolved into a strong strategic partnership. Both countries share mutual trust and commonalities of interests which have bound them together for decades. This bonhomie has been often reflected in the statements issued by both sides, either individually or bilaterally. The 'all-weather' ties between the two countries have instilled China with the confidence to go ahead with projects in a region whose political status is still contested. Also, Pakistan's rather open arm policy towards China has facilitated the latter's easy access for using the available resources in the PoK region.

The possible presence of PLA (People's Liberation Army) in PoK has been acknowledged by high officials of the Indian army, including the

⁵ Dinkar Gupta, "Joint Sino-Pak Game Plan for Northern Areas Underway", *The Diplomatist*, May 2012, at http://www.diplomatist.com/dipo5th2012/story_003.htm, accessed 23 September 2014.

former army chiefs, General Bikram Singh⁶ and his predecessor General V. K. Singh as well as by former Air Chief Marshall N.A.K. Brown.⁷ Interestingly, there was a flurry of reports emanating from the West which endorsed the possibility of a substantial presence of PLA in the Gilgit-Baltistan region.⁸

Salient Features of Chinese Propensity towards PoK

Harness benefits of a rich resource base: To keep up with a steep growth in requirement of resources over the years, China is looking at developing reserves in the vicinity. With abundant natural resources, Gilgit-Baltistan has quite a lot of such resources. With the River Indus and its tributaries, as well as several other rivers, the PoK region has vast hydro resources, most of which lie untapped. Initially, China did not show much interest in the mega US\$ 14 billion Diemer Bhasha dam project—though there were reports that it could provide partial funding to the tune of US\$ 4 billion. Another hydropower project located at Bunji was being built with Chinese assistance. The project was completed after a MoU to this effect was concluded between Pakistan's Ministry of Water and Power and the Three Gorges Project Corporation from China.⁹ Apart from this, the Pak-China Joint Energy Working Group held consultations in 2012 to jointly take up important hydropower projects in PoK—the Kohala Power Project (KHP)

⁶ Vinay Kumar, "Chinese providing security to PoK projects: Army Chief", *The Hindu*, 20 September 2012, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article3915660.ece>, accessed 28 April 2015.

⁷ "4,000 Chinese, including troops, in PoK: Army Chief", *The Indian Express*, 5 October 2011, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/4-000-chinese-including-troops-in-pokarmy-chief/856186/>, accessed 24 May 2015.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Chinese firm to build Bunji Dam", *The Nation*, 23 August 2009, at <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/politics/23-Aug-2009/Chinese-firm-to-build-Bunji-Dam>, accessed 22 February 2014.

located in Muzaffarabad in the so called AJK, and the 969 MW Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHP), also located in the so called AJK.¹⁰

Developing PoK as a gateway to the broader region: As noted, PoK is located in a key strategic location sharing borders with important countries and regions. This could be an important calculation in China's strategic agenda which seeks to cut its distance to the oil rich Persian Gulf by building a dense network of roads and railway through PoK and Pakistan. China has aggressively led and participated in infrastructural development throughout South Asia. However, Chinese flourishing interest in PoK has been very disconcerting for India as the region is claimed by it as part of J&K.¹¹

The Xinjiang/Uyghur factor: In July 2012, reports surfaced that China may set up a Consulate in Gilgit-Baltistan. This was soon linked to China's vexation on the growing tide of Uyghur movement in its western province of Xinjiang. For a long time, Xinjiang has been in the grip of a secessionist movement that turned violent owing to the demand for a separate homeland for Uyghurs. Over the years, the Uyghur movement is allegedly said to have developed links with groups such as the Al Qaeda as well as several other groups active inside Pakistan, such as the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Chinese insecurities on the Xinjiang problem have been reiterated time and again. There is widespread concern in China over the possibility that fundamentalist elements could seep into China via the PoK region, and further accentuate the rising unrest in Xinjiang and, possibly, also in the Tibet region.¹²

¹⁰ Khaleeq Kiani, "China group interested in AJK power projects", *Dawn*, 7 May 2012, at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/07/china-group-interested-in-ajk-power-projects/>, accessed 29 January 2015.

¹¹ "More than troops, Chinese projects in PoK worry India", *The Indian Express*, 5 September 2010, at <http://expressindia.indianexpress.com/latest-news/more-than-troops-chinese-projects-in-pok-worry-india/677450/>, accessed 5 December 2014.

¹² Zafar Iqbal, "China To Open Consulate In Pak-Controlled Gilgit-Baltistan For Strategic Grip", 4 July 2012, at <http://www.groundreport.com/World/China-To-Open-Consulate-In-Pak-Controlled-Gilgit-B/2946946>, accessed 19 March 2015.

It is to be noted that China has already taken a lead in undertaking various projects in PoK. Some of the important activities and projects for which agreements have been finalised between China and Pakistan are given below:

- An inter-governmental framework agreement signed in December 2011 within which the widening and realignment of the Karakoram Highway was to be conducted. China agreed to pitch in with the required heavy machinery such as long arm excavators and earth moving equipment.¹³
- The Karakoram Highway was upgraded to include a stretch of 17 kms to replace the portion that was damaged during the Attabad landslide in 2010. The China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), and the National Highway Authority of Pakistan signed a US\$ 275 million agreement to jointly conduct the up-gradation work.
- The China Gezhouba Group Corporation (CGGC) agreed to loan out 94 per cent of the cost of a proposed road link between Gilgit and Skardu.¹⁴ The project ran into controversy regarding non-transparency in the bidding process.¹⁵
- Other important projects in PoK with Chinese firms comprise: the Phandar project (US\$ 70 million); the Harpo hydropower project (US\$ 44.608 million); the Yulbu power project (US\$ 6

¹³ “Pak launches multi-million dollar projects in Gilgit-Baltistan, China to chip in with \$100 million”, *India Today*, 29 September 2012, at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/category/rest-of-the-world/1/184.html>, accessed 7 March 2015.

¹⁴ Ansar Abbasi, “Ministry asks NHA to scrap Rs 36 billion road contract”, *The News*, 5 October 2012, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-17936-Ministry-asks-NHA-to-scrap-Rs36-billion-road-contract>, accessed 11 March 2015.

¹⁵ Ibid.

billion);¹⁶ and the Mangla dam raising project in the so called AJK by the China International Water & Electric Corporation.¹⁷

- It was expected that China may invest in housing and communications sector in PoK to the tune of US\$ 300 million.¹⁸

THE UNITED STATES

One could easily relate the United States to the broader issue of Kashmir until recently. With broadening ties between India and the US, overtures on the Kashmir issue have somewhat toned down. In a changing context, however, the US is believed to be taking an increasing interest in the affairs of PoK. The evolving interest could be attributed to certain developments which have taken place inside PoK and elsewhere.

Visible signs of the US's evolving interest in PoK started to appear more clearly during May-June 2012 when a three member delegation of the US Embassy in Islamabad paid a five day long visit to Gilgit-Baltistan. The delegation from the Embassy comprised Lisa Buezonos (Political/Economic officer), Kimberley Phelan (Political Officer) and Khalid Javed (Security Advisor).¹⁹ The composition of the delegation reflected the multifaceted approach with which the US seems to be approaching the region which, until recently, was more of an uncharted territory for them. This was followed by the visit of the US Ambassador Cameron Munter to Pakistan to 'AJK' on 13 June 2012. During his visit, Ambassador Munter met Chaudhury Abdul

¹⁶ Mangla Dam Raising Project, Pakistan, website of the China International Water and Electric Corp., at <http://english.cwe.cn/show.aspx?id=150&cid=15>, accessed 15 December 2014.

¹⁷ Malik M Ashraf, "Chinese Mega Projects in Pakistan", *Pakistan Observer*, 16 July 2011, at <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=103439>, accessed 21 March 2014.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Shabbir Mir, "US team approaches G-B police chief for security cover", *The Express Tribune*, 29 May 2012, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/385482/us-team-approaches-g-b-police-chief-for-security-cover/>, accessed 11 July 2015.

Majeed, the then Prime Minister of the so called AJK.²⁰ He also interacted with the representatives of non governmental organisations who had received aid from the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) in the past. The press release of the US Embassy described the visit as an effort to show support for strengthening the education sector and also offer assistance in local development activities.²¹

Utilization of Development Dollars: The US approach to PoK also needs to be looked at within the larger debate of the inefficiency and underutilization of US developmental funds which were purely humanitarian and non-military. USAID Country Director Jock Conly noted: “Diامر Bhasha Dam needs massive financing and we can extend partial assistance for the project.”²² The US at some point announced it would give US\$ 3.5 billion to the controversial Diامر Bhasha dam.²³ This amount was sanctioned from the Kerry-Lugar-Berman package; the funds from this package were until then not being disbursed in totality, and remained unabsorbed. The Diامر Bhasha project is controversial owing to its location in a disputed region, share of royalty between Khyber Paktunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, and most significantly the ecological impact it would create on the fragile ecosystems of PoK. The US took a long time to consider providing a part of funding which had escalated, and stood at US\$ 14 billion. Pakistan was persuading the US for this for over two years after the World Bank said no to participating in the funding. The World Bank has serious reservations regarding the site of the dam project which is

²⁰ “Ambassador Munter Reaffirms U.S. Commitment to AJK in Trip to Region,” 13 June 2012, at http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/pr_061312.html, accessed 23 February 2013.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Zafar Bhutta, “US, Japan pledge assistance for Diامر Bhasha Dam”, *The Express Tribune*, 13 September 2012, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/435653/diامر-bhasha-dam/>, accessed 10 January 2013.

²³ Khaleeq Kiani, “US\$3.5 bn expected from US for Diامر-Bhasha dam”, *Dawn*, 3 January 2013, at <http://dawn.com/2013/01/03/3-5bn-expected-from-us-for-diامر-bhasha-dam/>, accessed 9 February 2013.

located in the disputed area of PoK. While the World Bank and the ADB (Asian Development Bank) have denied funds to Pakistan, the US acquiescing to give funds came across as strange and unwarranted. In the past, the US has funded the Satpara dam near Skardu which has a capacity of 17.7 MW, and is a comparatively smaller hydropower project in PoK. The US Congress allocated an amount of US\$ 19,000,000 for the project.²⁴

On 9 July 2012, a USAID delegation paid a visit to a municipal library in Gilgit-Baltistan and offered a sum of US\$ 30,000 from the Ambassadors' Fund Programme for its updation/modernization.²⁵ Besides, USAID is currently involved in a training programme of school teachers within AJK under the US\$ 75 billion USAID Teacher Education Project.²⁶ The USAID mission director, John Conly, was in Muzaffarabad in February 2013 to award scholarships to 150 students from the 'AJK' University. Prime Minister 'AJK' Chaudhury Majeed was present on the occasion and, in his remarks, Conly reiterated the US's resolve to "supporting Pakistan in its efforts to improve the quality of basic education"; he termed the scholarships to be "yet another expression of the US government's long term commitment to help build a stronger, more prosperous Pakistan".²⁷ Notably, at least 100 students from the so called 'AJK' have already benefitted from similar US sponsored scholarships.

²⁴ Satpara Multipurpose Dam Project, January 2011–April 2013, at http://transition.usaid.gov/pk/db/sectors/energy/project_11.html, accessed 11 February 2013.

²⁵ "G-B tour: USAID team visits library, irrigation project", *The Express Tribune*, 10 July 2012, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/406005/g-b-tour-usaid-team-visits-library-irrigation-project/>, accessed 10 December 2012.

²⁶ "The United States Trains 150 Teachers in Azad Jammu & Kashmir", 19 February 2013, at http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/pr_021913.html, accessed 27 February 2013.

²⁷ "USAID training 150 AJK teachers", *Pakistan Today*, 19 February 2013, at <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/02/19/news/national/usaid-training-150-ajk-teachers/>, accessed 27 February 2013.

There were few unconventional but mixed features on the agenda of the Embassy delegation which need to be accounted for while drawing inferences regarding the US interests in PoK. During the visit to the region, the delegations held meetings with a woman legislator to know about the role and extent of women participation in governance. Secondly, they visited a local police station to see how it functions and, last but not least, they met with important nationalist leaders like Manzoor Parwana, leader of the Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement (GBUM), to get a sense of the state of politics in the region.

Gauging Chinese Ingress in PoK: The US geopolitical motives in PoK, especially in Gilgit-Baltistan, seem to be guided majorly by the Chinese factor. It has been widely acknowledged in the media as well as by credible analysts like Selig Harrison, amongst others, that Chinese presence in the PoK region is growing at an alarming rate. The US's long association with Pakistan and a comprehensive assistance programme makes it convenient for it to penetrate inside PoK, and probably keep a tab on Chinese moves.

UNITED KINGDOM

United Kingdom (UK) shares perhaps the oldest ties with what is today referred to as PoK. The Gilgit-Baltistan region was leased out to the British by the Maharaja of Kashmir in 1935. Pending the withdrawal of British rule from India, the lease agreement was revoked and the territory was handed over back to the ruler of Kashmir. The British had gauged the strategic worth of the region long ago, and referred to it as the Northern frontiers. It is believed that it was due to these strategic implications that members of the British army—under the leadership of Major Brown—facilitated Gilgit-Baltistan's accession to Pakistan.²⁸ Notably, a large number of British officers opted to join the army of Pakistan then.

²⁸ For a detailed account of Major William Brown's role in the Gilgit rebellion, see: Brown, William A, *Gilgit Rebellion: The Major Who Mutinied Over Partition of India*, Pen and Sword, 2014.

In the present context, the British affinity to PoK lies in presence of diaspora mainly from the so called AJK in Britain. They fled to Britain after being displaced by the building of the Mangla dam in Mirpur district. These people form a significant section of the PoK diaspora in Britain (who live mostly in Bradford and Birmingham), and contribute a substantial chunk of remittances to the Pakistan economy. The British people of Pakistani origin have invested millions of pounds in Mirpur—so much so that the city is sometimes referred to as Little England.²⁹ Expatriates from Mirpur constitute a huge section of the diaspora in Great Britain.³⁰

To facilitate travel between the so called AJK and UK, it was reported in September 2012 that a bus service should run between Mirpur and Birmingham. The distance between the two is nearly 65,000 miles across continents, and many have deemed it to be the longest route to be catered by a bus service. The fare will be notably cheaper than air fare; but the journey will, naturally take a longer time—around 12 days. As reports suggests, there have been instances of people travelling by road from UK to the so called AJK in the past. Since the route will have to cut through the volatile Afghanistan-Pakistan region, people have expressed relevant concerns on the viability of the proposal.³¹ Overall, the idea is more or less in a preliminary stage, and it remains to be seen whether the concept actually gets traction, once the two sides get down to finalising the logistical and the security side of it.

²⁹ “How Azad Kashmir city of Mirpur became Little England”, *BBC News*, 29 January 2013, at <http://wiki-uk.com/blog/how-azad-kashmir-city-of-mirpur-became-little-england-bbc-news/>, accessed 26 February 2013.

³⁰ For a detailed analysis of Mirpuri immigrants in Britain see: Michael Lothers & Laura Lothers, “Mirpuri immigrants in England: A sociolinguistic survey”, SIL International, 2012, at <http://www.portmir.org.uk/assets/pdfs/mirpuri-immigrants-in-england-a-sociolinguistic-survey.pdf>, accessed 14 November 2014.

³¹ Hasan Suroor, “From Birmingham to ‘Little Birmingham’, by bus”, *The Hindu*, 25 September 2012, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/from-birmingham-to-little-birmingham-by-bus/article3936061.ece?css=print>, accessed 18 January 2013.

FRANCE

France's participation in PoK is relatively new, and it is currently engaged in Rs. 9 billion (68 million Euros as soft loan) extension project of an existing dam in the so called AJK. The credit facility agreement was signed between the two sides on 6 July 2012. The Additional Secretary of the Economic Affairs Division, Iftikhar Ahmed Rao, the French Ambassador to Pakistan, Philippe Thiebaud, and Nicolas Fornage, country director of the French Development Agency, were present during the process which took place in Islamabad.³²

The duration of the project is four and a half years—between January 2012 and June 2016. This project aims at building a new 48 MW run-of-the-river hydropower project in the Jaggran Valley in the so called AJK. The site is located about 90 km northeast of Muzaffarabad city, and would be located downstream of the Jaggran I project (30. 4 MW) which was completed in the year 2000 with French assistance. Upon completion, the project promises to alleviate the acute energy problems in the adjoining area, and promises to benefit approximately 21.2 million people with uninterrupted power supply as well as enhance sources of renewable energy.³³

In addition to this, the French agency is also involved in a two-year capacity building program of government agencies in the so called AJK, such as the Hydro Electric Board, which is responsible for implementing the Jaggran II project. The capacity building program slated to cost 0.37 million Euros was to be sanctioned as a grant.³⁴ The

³² “Soft loan: France pledges Rs9 billion for hydropower project”, *The Express Tribune*, 7 July 2012, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/404762/soft-loan-france-pledges-rs9-billion-for-hydropower-project/>, accessed 12 February 2013.

³³ “Construction of a 48 MW Hydropower Project in Jaggran”, at <http://www.afd.fr/lang/en/home/pays/asie/geo-asie/agence-pakistan/projets-pakistan/mandat-energie/centrale-jaggran>, accessed 15 February 2013.

³⁴ “Capacity-Building of Hydro Electric Board (HEB), Azad-Jammu & Kashmir”, at <http://www.afd.fr/lang/en/home/pays/asie/geo-asie/agence-pakistan/projets-pakistan/mandat-energie/assistance-technique-heb>, accessed 15 February 2013.

training programme would focus mainly in helping the implementing agency to be sensitive to environmental concerns, and follow required standards in building power projects in an ecologically fragile region. Since the amount was promised in April 2012 and the agreement could be finalised only in July 2012, there was great deal of apprehension within Pakistan whether they would be able to clinch the French loan which was offered to them at a very low interest rate of 1.73 percent.³⁵

Like several other western countries, France also participated substantially in the post 2005 earthquake reconstruction work in the so called AJK. The AFD offered 40 million Euros as “very soft loan” in April 2006, the total amount being disbursed by March 2008 via the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA). The amount was used for co-financing (with the World Bank and other donors) housing projects in the rural areas, and claims to have benefitted 110,000 people with 18, 500 houses.³⁶ In June 2007, the then French Ambassador to Pakistan, Rgis de Belenet, inaugurated a reconstructed school in the Buttman village of the ‘AJK’ which was undertaken by a French NGO, Premie`re Urgence (PU) with financial assistance from the French government. The French NGO contributed in building 61 schools across 40 isolated villages of the Union Councils of Machiara, Serli Sacha, and Heer Kotli in the ‘AJK’.³⁷ Under different programmes, the NGO was beneficial for around a total of 35,000 people in ‘AJK’.³⁸

³⁵ Tariq Naqash, “AJK hydropower project hits snags”, *Dawn*, 13 April 2012, at <http://dawn.com/2012/04/13/ajk-hydropower-project-hits-snags/>, accessed 11 November 2012.

³⁶ “Post-earthquake Intervention: AFD contributes to reconstruction”, <http://www.afd.fr/lang/en/home/pays/asia/geo-asie/agence-pakistan/projets-pakistan/mandat-post-crise/intervention-post-seisme>, accessed 30 November 2012.

³⁷ “French ambassador visits school constructed by NGO in AJK”, *Associated Press of Pakistan*, 1 July 2007, at http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=11920, accessed 20 October 2012.

³⁸ “French Ambassador attends the opening ceremony of a school reconstruction project by French NGO Premiere Urgence in AJK”, 28 June 2007, at http://www.ambafrance-pk.org/spip.php?page=mobile_art&art=1172, accessed 23 October 2012.

The French Ambassador also paid a courtesy visit to the then Prime Minister and later on President of 'AJK', Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan.

RUSSIA

In the interregnum, when Pakistan was struggling to raise funds for the ambitious Diamer Bhasha dam project, and the US was yet to agree to fund it, Russia emerged on the scene by offering to take on the contract at the government-to-government level without undergoing a bidding process.³⁹ This was just before President Vladimir Putin's much hyped planned visit to Pakistan in October 2012. On 11 September 2012, Pakistan's Inter Governmental Commission (IGC) in Islamabad briefed the Russian officials on several energy projects being planned, especially the Diamer Bhasha dam project which the Pakistani side, reportedly, pointed out was a huge 4,500 MW project, with a capacity to cater to the agriculture and electricity needs of 8.5 million acre-feet (Maf).⁴⁰

A Pak-Russian Inter Ministerial Commission planned to meet before Russian President's proposed visit in order to discuss the mechanism of cooperation between the two sides on mega projects, such as the Diamer Bhasha dam.⁴¹ Subsequently, however, the visit of the Russian President—which was first of any Russian head of state to Pakistan in so many years—was deferred amidst controversy. The erstwhile USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) shared borders with the Gilgit-Baltistan region of PoK, and it was due to the purported rivalry and conflicting interests between the British and the Russians, that British favoured Gilgit-Baltistan's union with Pakistan at the time they were leaving the subcontinent (post USSR's disintegration, the new state of Tajikistan borders Gilgit-Baltistan).

³⁹ "Zafar Bhutta, Diamer Bhasha Dam: Russia wants to take up project without bidding", *The Express Tribune*, 12 September 2012, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/435035/diamer-bhasha-dam-russia-wants-to-take-up-project-without-bidding/>, accessed 30 October 2012.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ "Russia to help build Diamer-Bhasha Dam", *Pakistan Observer*, 12 September 2012, at <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=173441>, accessed 11 December 2012.

Amidst an emerging debate on the possibility of a Russia-Pakistan-China axis, the sale of Su-35 Flanker E fighter aircraft to Pakistan by Russia has re-energised the Russia-Pakistan ties.⁴² Such developments, amongst other things, could also renew Russia's interest in PoK in due course, and we may witness substantial investment from Russia towards development activities in the region.

JAPAN

Japan has an elaborate programme in PoK under the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Programme post 2005. It offered immediate assistance by dispatching relief teams, sending reinforcements and supplies to the affected areas in PoK. Japan conducted a rehabilitation and reconstruction study to formulate an urgent and effective plan, and carried out the reconstruction of schools, bridges in the Muzaffarabad-Chakoti area, and participated with other countries in capacity building programmes to offer technical assistance in building seismic resistant and barrier free health care facilities.

During the down phase in September 2012, when Pakistan was frantically looking for funds to support the Diamer Bhasha dam project, there were reports which suggested that Japan in principle had agreed to fund the power houses for the dam. According to an official in Pakistan, if the proposal materialized, it would "create a win-win situation for both parties: it [would] provide much-needed funding for the project and an opportunity to JICA to sell its equipment".⁴³ In a series of conflicting reports, it was noted that an EAD official acknowledged before the Senate Committee that the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) would provide US\$ 4 billion for the

⁴² "Analysts Sceptical over Pakistan-Russia Su-35 Negotiations", *Defence News*, 12 September 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/09/11/analysts-skeptical-over-pakistan-russia-su-35-negotiations/72080268/>, accessed 27 December 2015.

⁴³ Shahbaz Rana, "Diamer Bhasha dam: Japanese aid keeps plans afloat", *The Express Tribune*, 31 August 2012, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/428687/diamer-bhasha-dam-japanese-aid-keeps-plans-afloat/?print=true>, accessed 21 December 2012.

equipment and machinery, including 12 turbines with a capacity of 375 MW.⁴⁴

However, a fortnight later, the JICA spokesperson clarified that neither such an undertaking was given nor any commitment was made, citing that the cost of the Diamer Bhasha project was such that Japan would not be in a position to offer any assistance. In the same statement, the JICA representative acknowledged that Japan had extended Pakistan a loan worth US\$ 200–250 million to carry out the replacement work of 4 hydro generation units at the Mangla Dam in Mirpur in the so called AJK.⁴⁵

Of late, Japan has shown keen interest in the horticulture sector in Gilgit-Baltistan. The Project for the Promotion of Value Added Fruit is being undertaken by JICA, and the slated time period is between May 2012 and November 2015.⁴⁶ Japan is expected to provide Rs. 437 million of the total cost of Rs 465.966 million as aid to support value addition on apricots and apples, and provide assistance in technical improvement.⁴⁷ The Japanese role was confirmed by a senior official of Pakistan's Planning Commission. He noted: "The main strength of the economy of Gilgit-Baltistan is fruits and horticulture, and Japan International Cooperation Agency has extended the firm commitment to fund value addition of apples and apricots".⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Khalid Mustafa, "Japan denies it made \$4 bn offer for Bhasha dam", *The News*, 16 September 2012, at [http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-132228-Japan-denies-it-made-\\$4-bn-offer-for-Bhasha-dam](http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-132228-Japan-denies-it-made-$4-bn-offer-for-Bhasha-dam), accessed 1 February 2013.

⁴⁶ Maps of JICA Major Projects-Pakistan, 1 October 2012, at <https://libportal.jica.go.jp/fmi/xsl/library/Data/PlanInOperation-e/EastSouthAsia/Pakistan-e.pdf>, accessed 11 February 2013.

⁴⁷ Khalid Mustafa, "Japan may aid Gilgit-Baltistan horticulture", *The News*, 20 April 2012, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-103902-Japan>, accessed 14 January 2013.

⁴⁸ "Pakistan: Japan investing in Gilgit-Baltistan", 21 April 2012, at <http://www.defence.pk/forums/economy-development/174544-pakistan-japan-investing-gilgit-baltistan.html#ixzz2MHmvxCiB>, accessed 14 January 2013.

With over 300 types and tastes, Gilgit-Baltistan is home to the largest variety of apricots, and this is a major source of income for local agriculturalists. They have started to catch the attention of tourists especially visitors from Japan.⁴⁹

OTHER NATIONS INVOLVED

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Public Assistance for the Pakistan Earthquake Victims (SPAPEV), a Saudi Arabia based relief organization, played a key role in channelizing aid and assistance—comprising donations from the Saudi people on the call of Saudi Government—in the aftermath of 2005 earthquake.⁵⁰ The organisation based in Riyadh has, over the years, played an extensive role in reconstruction and rehabilitation projects in PoK. In January 2015, Saudi Arabia decided to give a loan of Riyal 206 million for the Chehlla Bandi Road in Muzaffarabad in the so called AJK. The announcement was made after Jassim M Al-Khaldi, Charge d'affaires, Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Islamabad, handed over a letter to Pakistan's Finance Minister, Ishaq Dar, from the Saudi Finance Minister. According to a statement issued by Pakistan's Finance Ministry, the loan amount is to be repaid over a period of 20 years.⁵¹

Kuwait

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) expressed its keenness to participate in the building of the Diامر Bhasha dam during President Zardari's visit to Kuwait in May 2011.⁵²

⁴⁹ "Charm of apricot blossom in Gilgit-Baltistan", *Dawn*, 19 April 2012, at <http://dawn.com/2011/04/19/charm-of-apricot-blossom-in-gilgit-baltistan/>, accessed 5 January 2013.

⁵⁰ For a detailed description see: Saudi Public Assistance for Pakistan Earthquake Victims (SPAPEV), at <http://www.spapev.org/>, accessed 5 January 2013.

⁵¹ "Saudi Arabia providing Riyal 206mln for Muzaffarabad road project", *Daily Times*, 7 January 2015, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/business/07-Jan-2015/saudi-arabi-providing-riyal-206mln-for-muzaffarabad-road-project>, accessed 6 February 2013.

⁵² "Kuwait will provide fund for Basha Dam construction in Pakistan", *Pakwatan*, 10 May 2011, at http://www.pakwatan.com/latest_news1.php?id=1864, accessed 14 February 2013.

Iran

In January 2012, the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed Mehndi Shah, held a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, Alireza Haghghian, to apprise him of the investment potential in the PoK region, and at the same time to emphasize how the government of Iran could extend cooperation in sectors such as tourism, energy and, most importantly, encouraging cultural exchanges with Gilgit-Baltistan. The press note on the website of the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad described that the meeting: “laid stress on the expansion of ties between Iran and Pakistan, and the utilization of the potential of the Gilgit-Baltistan Region for further development of relations.”⁵³

Considering that even after the demographic tampering Gilgit-Baltistan has a substantial Shia population, it would be quite interesting to see how things unfold if Iran begins taking an economic, and possibly strategic, interest in PoK.

South Korea, Turkey, Indonesia

Making a significant move in September 2015, the government of Pakistan outsourced a major expansion plan for Muzaffarabad to five important countries, including South Korea and Turkey. According to the government of so called Azad Kashmir, the five countries—which include China, South Korea, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait—will help building hydropower projects, mosques, and infrastructure for education purposes.⁵⁴ Reports suggest that there could be 3000 Chinese workers and around 300 Korean workers in Muzaffarabad to carry out various projects. Saudi Arabia is involved in building a university

⁵³ “Meeting of the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Region with the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran”, 25 January 2012, at <http://www.iranembassy.pk/en/meetings/716-meeting-of-the-chief-minister-of-gilgit-baltistan-region-with-the-ambassador-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html>, accessed 19 January 2013.

⁵⁴ “Pakistan outsources Muzaffarabad reconstruction work to five countries”, *The Express Tribune*, 4 September 2015, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/950534/pakistan-outsources-muzaffarabad-reconstruction-work-to-five-countries/>, accessed 7 September 2015.

campus. Turkey is involved in building government buildings, the secretariat, and residential complexes.⁵⁵ Previously, in 2006, a Turkish NGO, KISME YOK Mu (Solidarity and Aid Institution) was extensively involved in rebuilding several projects in the earthquake affected areas of the so called AJK. Together with Pak Turk International CAG Educational Foundation, the organization spent some US\$ 12 million on developing education and health facilities in the ‘AJK’ region and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁵⁶

In the past, Indonesia expressed its willingness to offer expertise and extend “maximum co-operation” in the horticulture sector in Gilgit-Baltistan.⁵⁷

POK: A GEOPOLITICAL AXIS IN THE MAKING?

Having analysed the changing trends wherein we can see an increasing interest from a number of countries to invest in several projects in PoK, one can conclude that there is a definite shift in how various countries are looking at the region in terms of economic engagement. If the present trends continue, there is every likelihood that a politically restive region bestowed with abundant natural resources could quickly turn into a geopolitical hotbed in which major powers become rivals of each other in order to further their geopolitical objectives. There are a few possible scenarios emerging from a reading of this emerging context. One is whether the role of other countries could help bring about the much needed development in the PoK region. It is possible that competing strategic interests may result in tangible benefits for the people and the region. Second, and a grim possibility is that genuine

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Government of Pakistan Report, “Pakistan: Turkish NGO spends \$ 12 million on various projects in quake-hit areas”, 7 May 2006, at <http://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-turkish-ngo-spends-12-million-various-projects-quake-hit-areas>, accessed 10 August 2015.

⁵⁷ Iqbal Mirza, “Gilgit-Baltistan: fruits, horticulture exports could fetch billions”, *Business Recorder*, 26 April 2012, at <http://www.brecorder.com/component/news/single/1182473/>, accessed 11 August 2015.

concerns of the people regarding political and economic deficit get overshadowed by the growing geopolitical rivalry.

It is far-fetched to think mega projects will have a direct impact on the lives of local people in PoK. Most of the hydropower projects are intended to meet the energy requirements in Pakistan, and not so much of PoK per se.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

The role of external players in PoK has mixed implications for India. For its standing claim on PoK, this kind of intervention does not augur well. India's relations with most of the countries, whose role has been delineated in this chapter, are normal and friendly. So, it is intriguing to see that while India has raised occasional and, in most cases, standard objections publically with China, it has chosen to remain silent on others.

While India is against the internationalization of Kashmir issue, some kind of international scrutiny on PoK in the wake of 2005 earthquake and subsequent reports from Emma Nicholson⁵⁸, International Crisis Group⁵⁹ and the Human Rights Watch⁶⁰ were welcome signs from India's point of view. This kind of attention was a ripe and opportune moment to make India's case on Kashmir strong and balanced. However, looking at the present situation—especially in the light of developments discussed herein, it seems that the opportunity is fast

⁵⁸ Baroness Emma Nicholson of Winterbourne, "Report on Kashmir: present situation and future prospects", 25 April 2007, at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2007-0158+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>, accessed 29 May 2015.

⁵⁹ "Discord in the Northern Areas", International Crisis Group (ICG) Asia, Report no. 131, 2 April 2007, at http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/131_discord_in_pakistan_s_northern_areas.pdf, accessed 11 May 2015.

⁶⁰ "With Friends Like These...' Human Rights Violations in Azad Kashmir", *Human Rights Watch*, September 2006, Volume 18, no. 12 (C), at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/pakistan0906/pakistan0906webwcover.pdf>, accessed 19 May 2015.

slipping out of India's hand even before it could use it. The scope for diplomatic manoeuvring in order to change prevalent perceptions on Kashmir, born out of such revealing international reports on PoK, seems to have dissipated.

In March 2013, news reports in Pakistan suggested that India's Ministry of External Affairs has, through a "verbal demarche", sought from the Pakistan's High Commissioner in New Delhi details regarding ongoing projects as well as donor countries and other agencies in PoK.⁶¹ The information was based on a letter written by the Director General South Asia in Pakistan's foreign ministry (dated 28 November 2013) to the Secretary of Water and Power in Islamabad. Prior to this, Pakistan's High Commissioner in New Delhi had conveyed the message (via a telegram on 23 November 2013). According to reports, the communication suggested that India was asking Pakistan to seek NOC for any projects that are being built in PoK. This development is yet to be confirmed by the authorities in India. But, if it has happened, it is a welcome and positive move. India needs to act in sync with its official position on PoK. It cannot be indifferent to developments across LoC, if it claims the region as its integral part according to the Instrument of Accession and the Parliamentary Resolution of 1994.⁶² At a point when PoK is witnessing this kind of a surge, such reactions from India are natural and bound to happen.

The moot problem that remains is that the role of external powers in PoK is likely to dilute India's claim on PoK. The foray of important external players is bound to provide tacit recognition to Pakistan's illegal hold over the territory. Pakistan has been sticking to its maximalist

⁶¹ Khalid Mustafa, "India asks Pakistan to seek NoCs for projects in GB, AJK", *The News*, 3 March 2013, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-21335-India-asks-Pakistan-to-seek-NoCs-for-projects-in-GB-AJK>, accessed 18 May 2015.

⁶² The full text of the Parliamentary Resolution unanimously adopted by both houses of Parliament, dated 22 February 1994, is available at <http://www.kashmir-information.com/LegalDocs/ParliamentRes.html>, accessed 20 February 2015.

irrational approach, expecting concessions from India on Kashmir. Therefore, it becomes quintessential for India to tackle the situation with a proactive approach, and adopt a stimulating and sound policy on PoK. Since these countries sign the agreements/contracts/bonds with Pakistan (who is in illegal occupation of PoK), all such arrangements stand null and void. Unlike most countries, multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the ADB have shown considerable sensitivity in seeking a No Objection Certificate from India for certain projects in PoK, such as the Diamer Bhasha dam project.⁶³

⁶³ Shahbaz Rana, "Diamer Bhasha Dam: World Bank, not ADB, presses for seeking Indian NOC", *The Express Tribune*, 1 March 2013, at <https://tribune.com.pk/story/514063/diamer-bhasha-dam-world-bank-not-adb-presses-for-seeking-indian-noc/>, accessed 1 March 2013.

Chapter IV

THE CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC): IMPENDING CHALLENGES

“... it is not (only) the internationally contested status of the Northern Areas¹, whether they are part of Kashmir or not, and the unsolved conflict in general that explains the situation today but (also) an internally Pakistani perspective that views the Northern Areas in relation to “down-country”: as a source of power and water and as a strategic area controlling connections to China. Here, a province controlled by a non-Sunni majority seems to be a risk to main political forces in Pakistan...”.

—Excerpt from
Georg Stöber, “Religious Identities Provoked: The Gilgit
‘Textbook Controversy’ and its Conflictual Context”.²

INTRODUCTION

While defining economic corridor development in the context of integrating Asia’s sub regions, a 2013 report published by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) observed:

“Economic corridors connect economic agents along a defined geography. They provide connection between economic nodes

¹ Till 2009, Gilgit-Baltistan was referred to as the Northern Areas by the Government of Pakistan.

² Georg Stöber, “Religious Identities Provoked: The Gilgit ‘Textbook Controversy’ and its Conflictual Context”, *Internationale Schulbuchforschung*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2007, pp. 389–411, at http://www.gei.de/fileadmin/gei.de/pdf/abteilungen/schulbuch_und_gesellschaft/Suedasien/ISF/29_4Stoeber.pdf, p. 407, accessed 19 December 2014.

or hubs, usually centred on urban landscapes, in which large amount of economic resources and actors are concentrated. They link the supply and demand sides of markets”.³

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to be built via Gilgit-Baltistan is one such ambitious multipronged multibillion project. Upon completion, the 2700 kilometres plus highway corridor will give China direct unfettered access to Pakistan's strategic Gwadar Port situated on the Arabian Sea. The project is designed to build road network/highways, railway infrastructure, and undertake several energy development projects. The concept has evolved at stages during reciprocal bilateral visits between Pakistan and China over the last few years. A final stamp of approval was provided in November 2014 when the Chinese government, in association with major Chinese banks, committed a massive sum of US\$ 45.6 billion towards the project.⁴ Reports suggest that, of the total amount, the majority sum of US\$ 33.8 billion would be channelled into energy projects (to alleviate Pakistan's power crisis), and the balance towards infrastructure development.⁵ A part of this plan is already underway: the Hazara Motorway that will connect outer Islamabad with China via Karakoram Highway, and the fiber optic cable running from the Chinese periphery to Rawalpindi.

Gilgit-Baltistan, a part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), links China with Pakistan and, hence, forms the bedrock of Pakistan-China strategic liaison. Earlier, the Trans Karakoram Tract (part of Gilgit-Baltistan) was ceded to China as a

³ Hans-Peter Brunner, “What is Economic Corridor Development and What Can It Achieve in Asia's Sub regions?” ADB Working Paper Series on Regional Economic Integration, No. 117, August 2013, at <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/100110/reiwp-117-economic-corridor-development.pdf>, accessed 15 November 2014.

⁴ Mehreen Zahra-Malik, “China commits \$ 45.6 billion for economic corridor with Pakistan”, *Reuters*, 21 November 2014 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/21/pakistan-china-idUSL3N0TB44K20141121>, accessed 21 December 2014.

⁵ Ibid.

result of the provisional Sino-Pak Border Agreement 1963. Similarly, the Karakoram Highway built across Gilgit-Baltistan has had a major role in cementing the Pakistan-China ties—economically, strategically and politically. Notwithstanding the vistas the highway has thrown open, the region per se has remained largely under developed. The CPEC will pass through village Khyber (Hunza), Attabad, Jaglot, Gilgit, Pari, Gor, Chilas in Gilgit-Baltistan before entering Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan.⁶ The corridor will bring up special economic zones (SEZs) which will include setting up industries along the Karakoram Highway with the help of investment from several Chinese companies. A rail network connecting Kashgar to Gwadar is also planned through the Karakoram route.⁷

In this backdrop, this chapter primarily attempts to understand the impact of CPEC on Gilgit-Baltistan. While doing so, the chapter will describe the project design, the stated positions of Pakistan, China, and India, and allude to local perceptions in Gilgit-Baltistan regarding the upcoming economic corridor. While examining the overall strategic impact of CPEC at the local and regional level, the chapter seeks to address some of these questions: what are the prospects for Gilgit-Baltistan region to be integrated with the project? Would it harness the proceeds from the corridor and is it politically enabled to do so? And, if that be, to what extent? Will economics transform the politics of the region? Or will Gilgit-Baltistan continue to remain a resource backyard, limited to offering vital hydro potential and mineral reserves to feed into the project? Will the aggressive Chinese agenda concerning Gilgit-Baltistan undermine basic questions regarding its political status and rights?

The chapter attempts to analyse CPEC through the prism of Gilgit-Baltistan, thereby emphasizing the region's salience in the project. It is

⁶ Aasim Siddiqui, "Understanding Economic Benefits of Trade-Corridor Between Gwadar-Kashgar", INTERMODAL Network, at http://www.intermodal-asia.com/files/aasim_siddiqui__apsa.pdf, accessed 2 January 2015.

⁷ "China tables railway project linking to Pakistan", *Dawn*, 30 June 2014, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1116104>, accessed 4 June 2015.

divided mainly into 5 parts: (a) introduction; (b) how CPEC was conceived, project details therein, objectives behind it, route options, and the sources of funding; (c) the CPEC vis-à-vis Gilgit-Baltistan through the spectrum of politics, economic development, social indicators, security, and the imminent ecological concerns the project could cause in due course; (d) a brief overall assessment charting out the obstacles and limitations the project may encounter; (e) relevance to India in view of its stated position on PoK.

CPEC: INCEPTION, OBJECTIVES, LAYOUT, ROUTING, FUNDS

Inception

Even as CPEC as an idea has existed for some time and, in Pakistan, it has somewhat bi-partisan political support, it was formally launched during President Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan in April 2015.⁸ Several MoUs were concluded between the two countries around this time. Former Presidents Pervez Musharraf and Asif Ali Zardari, during their respective stints, engaged with it at the conceptual stage, both emphasizing the bright prospects the project had to offer. In November 2014, the project received traction during the meeting between Chinese Prime Minister, Le Keqiang and Pakistan Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, where the former referred to both countries as being "iron friends".⁹ During the meeting, the broad outline of the project was agreed upon by both sides, and several documents on economy, technology, energy, finance, industrial parks, and information and communication were signed by the two sides. Previously, in February 2014, Pakistan President Mamnoon Hussain visited China and at the end of his visit a joint statement titled, "Deepening China-Pakistan Strategic and Economic Cooperation" was mutually agreed upon: "the Economic Corridor,

⁸ "China's Xi Jinping agrees \$46bn superhighway to Pakistan", *BBC*, 20 April 2015, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32377088>, accessed 2 July 2015.

⁹ "Le Keqiang: Building the China Pakistan Economic Corridor Flagship Project", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China, 8 November 2014, at http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/yjthzzdrsclrdzshyjxghd/t1209089.shtml, accessed 10 January 2015.

by combining China and Pakistan's respective development strategy, would be conducive to their goals of developing the economy and improving people's livelihood as well as bring benefits to regional common development and prosperity".¹⁰ In this meeting, the leaders of China and Pakistan also agreed to establish necessary technical support offices to expedite the economic corridor projects. The two countries pledged to realise the project at the earliest possible, and jointly harvest the benefits incurred.¹¹ CPEC's master plan "identifying "hidden dangers", bottlenecks and risks" was revealed in May 2017 via media. The CPEC blueprint delineated major sectors and areas that would be covered through several projects listed therein.¹²

The corridor was formally inaugurated with the establishment of a secretariat at Islamabad, and the ground breaking of the Hazara Motorway in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The highway (estimated US\$ 297 million) is a 60 km 4-lane road, to be readied in the next two years. Inaugurating the highway, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced the plan to construct a rail link between Karachi and Quetta, and another one between Hazara and Muzaffarabad. Speaking further, Sharif noted that the motorway would change the fate of the people of Hazara Division, and bring prosperity to the area.¹³

¹⁰ Joint Statement by the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on "Deepening China-Pakistan Strategic and Economic Cooperation", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China, 19 February 2014, at http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1130297.shtml, accessed 13 February 2015.

¹¹ "Early Finalization of Projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor", Ministry of Planning, Development & Reforms, at <http://www.pc.gov.pk/?p=3665>; see also, "China Pakistan to accelerate 'economic corridor' construction", *Xinhua*, 21 February 2015, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-02/21/c_133131361.htm, both accessed 24 January 2016.

¹² "Exclusive: CPEC master plan revealed", *Dawn*, Originally published on 15 May 2017 (The report was later updated on 12 June 2017), at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1333101>, accessed 17 May 2017.

¹³ "Foundation stone of China Pakistan Economic Corridor's Motorway Laid", *Xinhua*, 29 November 2014, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/30/c_133822684.htm, accessed 1 March 2015.

Objectives

While the Chinese have justified CPEC as a means of greater regional integration and connectivity, Pakistan has spun its primary objectives on the corridor around meeting the huge energy crisis the country has witnessed lately. Overall, both countries have highlighted the developmental aspects the corridor augurs, and have projected it to be serving the larger well-being in future.

However, the unstated intentions behind CPEC are still a subject of debate. Access to the port at Gwadar situated in Balochistan appears to be the prime driver behind CPEC.¹⁴ Gwadar Port in the south-west part of Pakistan has been built with Chinese assistance beginning 2001. Proximity to the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf makes Gwadar a key area to attain strategic depth in a major oil transporting route. In February 2013, the management of the port was handed over to the China Overseas Ports Holding.¹⁵ Since then, the Chinese are involved in a comprehensive expansion plan under which the strategic port is being developed as a deep water commercial port. An international airport at Gwadar is also in the offing.

Layout

The project has been conceived as multidimensional, to be completed over a period of time. Some of the projects within have been earmarked as early harvest projects which are due to be completed by 2017.¹⁶ Amidst wide ranging allegations of lack of transparency,¹⁷ Prime

¹⁴ Syed Fazl-e-Haider, "A strategic Seaport: Is Pakistan Key to China's Energy Supremacy", *Foreign Affairs*, 5 March 2015, at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/143227/syed-fazl-e-haider/a-strategic-seaport>, accessed 5 April 2015.

¹⁵ Anita Joshua, "China takes control of Gwadar Port", *The Hindu*, 18 February 2013, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/china-takes-control-of-gwadar-port/article4428759.ece>, accessed 12 March 2015.

¹⁶ Li Shen, "Power projects prioritized in China Pakistan Economic Corridor", *China Daily*, 9 July 2014, at http://www.china.org.cn/business/2014-07/09/content_32901466.htm, accessed 31 January 2015.

¹⁷ Khurram Husain, "Analysis: China-Pakistan corridor or labyrinth?" *Dawn*, 18 February 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1164337>, accessed 11 March 2015.

Minister Nawaz Sharif unveiled (July 2014) a list of 37 projects worth US\$ 39.6 billion, to be funded by China, before the Standing Committee of National Assembly on Planning and Development. According to the details, out of the 37 projects, 22 would be power projects with an estimated cost of US\$ 27.3 billion. These power projects are slated to receive funding from China—as commercial projects being undertaken by the private sector.

The following are the tentative projects currently listed to be undertaken under CPEC:^{18,19}

- 6 coal power projects (US\$ 5.94 billion), additional 2 coal based power projects at Port Mir Qasim, with a capacity of 660 MW (US\$ 2 billion). Similarly, another set of 3 power plants (330 MW each) at Thar Power Coal Plant (US\$ 1 billion).
- 2 Power Plants to be built by China Power International, each with a capacity of 1200 MW.
- A coal mining project (US\$ 860 million) at Thar Block-II, and another at Thar Block-I (US\$ 1.3 billion).
- Kohala power project (US\$ 2.4 billion), Karot hydropower project (US\$ 1.42 billion), and the 873 MW Suki Kanari hydropower project (US\$ 1.8 billion).
- 3 wind power projects of 250 MW (US\$ 375million).
- Extension of the Karakoram Highway Ranikot to Islamabad (estimated US\$ 3.5 billion), and the rehabilitation and upgrade of Karachi-Lahore-Peshawar railway track (US\$ 3.7 billion).

¹⁸ Mehtab Haider, “Government tables list of 37 mega projects of \$ 40 bn given to China”, *The News*, 22 July 2014, at [http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-263159-Govt-tables-list-of-37-mega-projects-of-\\$40-bn-given-to-China/](http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-263159-Govt-tables-list-of-37-mega-projects-of-$40-bn-given-to-China/), accessed 31 July 2014.

¹⁹ Ahmad Ahmadani, “China Pakistan Economic Corridor: PM approves over US\$ 38 bn projects”, *Daily Times*, 9 May 2014, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/09-May-2014/china-pakistan-economic-corridor-pm-approves-over-38bn-projects>, accessed 23 July 2014.

- 9 projects in Punjab 6110 MW (US\$ 6.2 billion); Orange Line metro train (US\$ 1.6 billion).
- 387 km of Multan Sukkur section of Karachi Lahore Motorway (US\$ 2.6 billion).
- Mirpur-Muzaffarabad Expressway.
- Railway line between Kashgar to Gwadar via Gilgit (feasibility study commissioned by China underway).²⁰
- Gas pipeline along the Karakoram Highway.²¹

Funding

In November 2014, the Chinese government announced its commitment worth US\$ 45.6 billion to finance CPEC over the next 6 years. Companies based in China will operate the projects as “profit making entities”.²² The China Development Bank, and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China will tender loans to these companies who will, in turn, channel funds towards several projects under CPEC. Energy projects within CPEC will be steered by the Three Gorges Corp and the China Power International Development. The China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is also noted to participate in the funding process.²³ Meanwhile, the government of Pakistan has approved Rs. 409 million for building the CPEC secretariat. Located in Islamabad, the Secretariat will implement and manage the corridor.

²⁰ Cui Jia, “China studying new Silk Road rail link to Pakistan”, *China Daily*, 28 June 2014, at http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2014-06/28/content_17621848.htm, accessed 30 July 2014.

²¹ Cheng-shin Ouyang, “The Sino-Pak Trade and Energy Corridor-An Assessment”, Paper presented at 8th Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Institute of International Relations, Warsaw Economic University, Poland, 18–21 September 2013, at http://www.eis-net.org/be-bruga/eisa/files/events/warsaw2013/Ouyang_Sino%20Pak%20Trade%20and%20Energy%20Corridor,%20An%20Assessment.pdf, accessed 7 October 2014.

²² See No. 4.

²³ Ibid.

Secondly, a steering committee, headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, shall monitor the progress of the project.²⁴ As of December 2014, bids on the project have been invited primarily from Chinese construction companies, though it claims to be open also to national and international agencies.²⁵

Routing

Initially, there have been three alternative routes proposed for the corridor which would form a link starting at Kashgar in China, and ending on Gwadar in Pakistan. The originally tabled western route runs through the following: Awaran, Ratodero, Naseerabad, Dera Bugti, DG Khan, DI Khan, Swat, and then links with the Karakoram Highway at Gilgit; the second option (eastern route) goes through Gadani, Khudzar, Ratodero, Sukkur, Multan, Lahore, Islamabad, and Havelain before joining the Karakoram Highway; and the a third alternative route: Turbat, Panjgur, Kalat, Quetta, Zhob, DI Khan, Swatand, and Gilgit.²⁶ Gilgit remains the common denominator in all the available options. Notably, within Pakistan, there has been great deal of internal discord and political jostling between the provinces and their representatives regarding the prospective route of CPEC.²⁷

IMPACT ON GILGIT-BALTISTAN: THE VIRTUAL PIVOT

In the emerging discourse on CPEC, while much has been touted about the ‘all-weather friendship’ between China and Pakistan, and the strategic significance of access to Gwadar, there is hardly any mention of the crucial areas of Gilgit-Baltistan in the project design. It is a hard

²⁴ See No. 19.

²⁵ Syed Irfan Raza, “Bids invited for Pak-China Economic Corridor Project”, *Dawn*, 24 December 2014, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1152875>, accessed 31 December 2014.

²⁶ Adnan Aamir, “Pak China Economic Corridor”, *Pakistan Today*, 7 February 2015, at <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/02/07/comment/pak-china-economic-corridor/>, accessed 4 March 2015.

²⁷ “Senators oppose change in China economic corridor plan”, *Dawn*, 12 June 2014, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1112173>, accessed 7 July 2015.

fact that the Sino-Pak alliance is contingent on the Gilgit-Baltistan region. The region forms the critical overland link between the two countries; indeed, it gives China access not only to parts of Pakistan but also to countries beyond. In this regard, it is almost impossible to envisage CPEC without Gilgit-Baltistan—a key geographical location, with a critical land mass, rich hydro resources, mineral wealth, and forest reserves. Gilgit-Baltistan offers vast hydro potential in the form of glaciers as well as the River Indus and its tributaries. In Gilgit-Baltistan, the Indus has the potential to generate 40,000 MW of electricity, while its main tributaries and sub tributaries could render up to 1200 MW of power generation.²⁸ Besides, Gilgit-Baltistan possesses large reserves of mineral resources—base metals and precious gemstones, metallic, non-metallic, energy minerals, rocks, and minerals for industrial use, placer deposits for the recovery of gold and other precious and non-precious metals obtained from the alluvial deposits, including ruby, topaz, fluorite, quartz, tourmaline, epidote, manganite, calcite, aquamarine, etc.²⁹

Geographically, the Gilgit-Baltistan region forms a strategic conflux, situated in the heart of Asia. The region's periphery is lined by the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan, the rest of J&K, China's Xinjiang, Tajikistan, and Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. From the perspective of an economic corridor and regional integration, Gilgit-Baltistan's connectivity potential adds great value to the CPEC project. However, there are growing concerns locally whether the region would be able to reap the benefits of the economic corridor. The Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly unanimously passed a resolution (August 2015) urging the government of Pakistan that since the corridor crosses the region, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan should be included in the decision making

²⁸ “Hydro Power Potential and Investment Prospects in Gilgit-Baltistan”, at http://www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk/images/stories/bus-pot_pdf/Hydro%20Energy.pdf, accessed 11 July 2013.

²⁹ Report titled, “Mineral Resources of Central Karakoram National Park & Suggested Safe Mining Techniques”, July 2009, at http://www.wwfpak.org/gcic/pdf/Reports/2009/Geological%20Survey%20Report%20of%20CKNP%20by%20M%20Alam%20_draft%20~3_%20140709.pdf, p. 7, accessed 10 May 2014.

consultative committee. The consultative committee does not include representatives from the region; and this has added a great deal to the angst amongst the local people. In its resolution, the Assembly also demanded that, parallel to CPEC, economic zones should be created in the region so that the benefit of a mega project such as CPEC percolates down to the local population.³⁰

With CPEC on one side, and a region like Gilgit-Baltistan (with long pending development requirements) on the other, one would portend a win-win situation for the region. However, Gilgit-Baltistan is still staggering under a provisional political framework since 1947. The prolonged phase of uncertainty has induced multiple complexities at the social level, and continues to inhibit the economic domain. It is useful to juxtapose economic prospects the corridor promises against grounds realities in Gilgit-Baltistan. This would help understanding whether the new project could act as a harbinger of local development and prosperity as well as address the region's political angst in future.

Political Ambivalence

The ambiguity in Gilgit-Baltistan's political system is the most perceptible reason why the region has been lagging behind for several decades, and remains devoid of tangible economic development. The constraints posed by an unfledged political scene is not only a disabling guarantee of political rights with respect to the local people, but also has far reaching ramifications on socio-political issues, including the ownership of resources. Though the 2009 empowerment order did give Gilgit-Baltistan a superficial political makeover, the region still reels under uncertainty regarding political status, lacking a truly representative political force. People do not possess the right of resource extraction nor do they get a fair share of the proceeds from the projects undertaken on their territory. Though the 2009 order created a province like structure

³⁰ Shabbir Mir, "New resolutions: G-B Assembly demands setting up of economic zones", *The Express Tribune*, 13 August 2015, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/936982/new-resolutions-g-b-assembly-demands-setting-up-of-economic-zones/>, accessed 14 August 2015.

in Gilgit-Baltistan, it fell short of conferring the region with conventional powers enjoyed by other provinces of Pakistan.³¹ The reign of authority as well as discretion regarding pertinent issues have been entrusted with the Gilgit-Baltistan Council, headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The ambiguity stems from Pakistan's dichotomous policy towards the region—invoking its link to the Kashmir issue to suit its purpose as and when required, while delinking it from Kashmir on other occasions—be it demographic tampering, revoking the state-subject rule, etc. The dualistic approach and transitory political structures have deprived the locals of a bargaining chip vis-à-vis resource revenues. Few forces exist to counter issues of political discrimination. In view of the close watch Islamabad keeps on the people and the political groups, political mobilization is non-existent. As far as the mainstream political parties—which have been in power in both parts of PoK—are concerned, the local leadership is seasoned to act as agents of the federal government rather than voice genuine concerns of the people they represent.

The relationship between the Gilgit-Baltistan region and Pakistan is not well-defined, and this dilutes the rights of the people to negotiate with Islamabad on issues of pertinence. Gilgit-Baltistan is not represented in the National Assembly of Pakistan. Therefore, the people's demands or claims do not have any legal binding while dealing with the government. This puts the region in a weak position while negotiating with Pakistan over the rights to manage their resources or customize development activities in order to meet specific local needs.

³¹ Caylee Hong, "Liminality and Resistance in Gilgit-Baltistan", Legal Working Paper Series on Legal Empowerment for Sustainable Development, Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL), June 2012, at http://www.cisd.org/public/docs/Hong_Liminality_and_Resistance_in_Gilgit-Baltistan.pdf, p.9, accessed 22 July 2015.

The following cases indicate the complexities of ownership and rights over resources in Gilgit-Baltistan:

In 2011, there was much controversy regarding a Hong Kong based mining company which set up its industry in Gilgit-Baltistan under the name Mohsin Industry. The firm was licensed by the government of Gilgit-Baltistan. Soon it hired local youth, promising them good returns and a steady source of income.³² Subsequently, upon realizing that it was a foreign firm, people began agitating, and sharp criticism from the media forced the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly to pass a resolution opposing the decision to license a foreign firm for mining. Eventually, the mining industry was forced to shut down operation. This was a significant case of irregularity sacrificing the interest of the local people.³³

Similarly, in Chipursan valley bordering the strategic Wakhan Corridor, local efforts to develop the coal industry did not fructify. In order to utilize the available resources, residents of the valley tried setting up a company by collecting local households to initiate and steer mining activity.³⁴ The idea behind the project was to develop the available resources and, thus, cater to development locally. Despite receiving a license, the company could never take off and initiate operations. The government of Pakistan declared the valley as a restricted area, and travelling there would require a no objection certificate (NoC) from Pakistan's Interior Ministry. Security restrictions stunted the prospects of investment in the area—investors were deterred and experts could not be roped in due to lack of funds.³⁵

³² “Mission Accomplished”, *Weekly Baang e Sabar* (Editorial), 26 December 2011 at <http://www.bangesahar.com/bang/Editorial.html>, accessed 3 June 2015.

³³ Shabbir Mir, “Mining licence controversy: G-B Council steps in against permit to Mohsin Industries”, *The Express Tribune*, 1 July 2011, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/200173/mining-licence-controversy-g-b-council-steps-in-against-permit-to-mohsinindustries/>, accessed 6 June 2015.

³⁴ See No. 31.

³⁵ Ibid.

In 2013, the Gilgit-Baltistan legislative assembly withdrew a controversial logging policy under mounting pressure from locals and environmentalists. According to the policy notified by the Gilgit-Baltistan Council and approved by the then Prime Minister, Raja Pervez Ashraf (interestingly on his last day in office), 4 million cubic feet of timber was allowed to be taken from the Diamer district to parts of Pakistan.³⁶ There was considerable resentment on the issue. Environmentalists argued that this would not only lead to deforestation of Diamer but would also encourage illegal felling.³⁷ Incidentally, there are no mechanisms in place to regulate timber felling in Gilgit-Baltistan, either to manage timber transportation fairly, avoid smuggling or to deal with cases of illegal felling.

Economic Realities

Though CPEC will cut across the Gilgit-Baltistan region, prospects for economic progress do not appear quite optimistic. First and foremost, there is the Chinese model of investment: for most overseas project they undertake, the Chinese hire their own workers, engineers, and companies to execute infrastructural and development projects. This model is not peculiar to Gilgit-Baltistan but deals with the wider Chinese model of investment. Hence, Chinese-undertaken projects are not known to spur local employment opportunities. Past indicators show that Chinese forays have cost the small scale industries in the region dearly as the local markets are full of cheap Chinese goods.³⁸ Hence, there is not much scope for locally manufactured goods which could

³⁶ Waqas Naeem, "Timber movement: Illegal transportation from G-B continues unabated", *The Express Tribune*, 15 July 2013, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/577016/timber-movement-illegal-transportation-from-g-b-continues-unabated/>, accessed 11 June 2014.

³⁷ "Deforestation, Timber Mafia and Corruption in Diamer", *Pamir Times*, 10 September 2014, at <http://pamirtimes.net/2014/09/10/deforestation-timber-mafia-corruption-diamer/>, accessed 3 November 2014.

³⁸ Senge H. Sering, "Expansion of the Karakoram Corridor: Implications and Prospects", Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, IDSA Occasional paper series, Issue 27, Lancers Books, 2012, p. 21, accessed 15 February 2015.

encourage small scale enterprises and provide employment to a section of the locals. Secondly, there is little possibility that contracts under the CPEC project will be awarded to local firms. As has been the case in past, lucrative projects (especially where China is involved) in the region have been given to people from Pakistan, and not Gilgit-Baltistan.³⁹

Economic indicators do not show much change in the region since the operationalization of the Karakoram Highway (late 1970s) either. Within the Gilgit-Baltistan circle, CPEC is an expansion of the Karakoram Highway. The highway is a metalled road connecting Kashgar to Gilgit-Baltistan through the Khunjerab Pass. Ever since the highway has begun operating, not much trade has been done through this route.⁴⁰ Instead, the highway has allegedly been used for clandestine activities: ferrying nuclear material from China to Pakistan, and beyond. In the last several decades, the Karakoram Highway has failed to generate any prospect for growth in the Gilgit-Baltistan region; nor has it added to its economic profile as such.

The Chinese are already involved in multiple projects in the region. But this does not seem to translate in elevating either the growth rate of the local economy or providing any source of employment. The growth rate has remained stagnant. The last census held in 1998 showed growth rate at 2.56 per cent.⁴¹ Latest projections on the growth rate in Gilgit-Baltistan still demonstrate 2.56 per cent during 2008 through 2013.⁴²

In the absence of a definitive political status, revenue sharing is another challenge for Gilgit-Baltistan. Already a political battle is ensuing on the controversial and delayed Diamer Bhasha dam project on the division of royalties between Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The site of the dam is located in the Diamer district of Gilgit-Baltistan

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 19–20.

⁴¹ Saad S. Khan, “Gilgit-Baltistan at a Glance 2013”, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan, at www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk/DownloadFiles/GBFInancilCurve.pdf, accessed 15 September 2014.

⁴² Ibid.

whereas the power houses are located at village Bhasha of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As per a provision in the Constitution of Pakistan, the royalty goes to the province where the power houses are located.⁴³ Gilgit-Baltistan is insisting on a fair share in royalty on the pretext that the Constitution of Pakistan does not apply to the region. Similar problems have been reported from the dry Sost Port jointly administered by the Sino-Trans Chinese Company and the Sost Dry Port Trust.⁴⁴

Security Repercussions

The flow of investment towards CPEC would lead to rising stakes for China and Pakistan in the region. In that case, an extensive Chinese security presence in Gilgit-Baltistan could become inevitable. In the past, the Chinese have stationed troops in Gilgit-Baltistan, and defended their presence on the grounds of security needed for their workers and engineers involved in several projects. The Chinese response was elicited after a flurry of reports surfaced in the aftermath of the 2009 *New York Times* article written by Selig Harrison.⁴⁵ Subsequently, the presence of the PLA (People's Liberation Army) soldiers was reiterated by high officials of the Indian Army.⁴⁶ Considering the enormity and extent of CPEC, it remains to be seen how voluminous and intense

⁴³ Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Article 161(2), at <http://www.mofa.gov.pk/Publications/constitution.pdf>, accessed 12 September 2014.

⁴⁴ Senge Sering, "China at a Crossroads in Gilgit-Baltistan", 25 September 2014, at <http://www.sharnoffsglobalviews.com/china-crossroads-baltistan-391/>; See also, Shabbir Mir, "Bad for business: In Pakistan's last border town before China, a schism deepens over a slap", *The Express Tribune*, 13 July 2014, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/734783/bad-for-business-in-pakistans-last-border-town-before-china-a-schism-deepens-over-a-slap/>, both accessed 2 January 2015.

⁴⁵ Selig S. Harrison, "China's Discreet Hold on Pakistan's Northern Borderlands", *The New York Times*, 26 August 2010, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/27/opinion/27ihtedharrison.html>, accessed 5 January 2015.

⁴⁶ "4,000 Chinese, including troops, in PoK: Army chief", *The Indian Express*, 5 October 2011, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/4-000-chinese-including-troops-in-pokarmy-chief/856186/>, accessed 5 January 2015.

the presence of Chinese soldiers will be in the region while the project is underway.

Gilgit-Baltistan witnessed a severe Taliban onslaught in June 2013, when a group of 9 mountaineers were killed near the base camp of Nanga Parbat. Amongst those killed were Chinese nationals. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) later took responsibility for the attack.⁴⁷ There have been recurring militant attacks in the region and, therefore, it is always a possibility that once the projects along the Karakoram Highway are raised, the threat from the Taliban and other militant groups targeting Chinese workers or their assets, escalates. The Karakoram Highway has witnessed several incidents of bloodshed in the recent past. There have been at least two major sectarian incidents during 2012–2013 when Shias travelling to Gilgit-Baltistan from Pakistan were attacked on the highway. They were identified as belonging to a particular sect, and later killed in cold blood.⁴⁸

The security situation in Gilgit-Baltistan is grim. As part of certain knee jerk measures, a unit of force was deployed as a means to cut the target killings occurring on the highway.⁴⁹ Similarly, a 50 member force to guard mountaineering expeditions was recently deployed as a measure to revive the dwindling state of tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan which took a severe hit after the June 2013 attack at the base camp near Nanga Parbat.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ “Nanga Parbat attack: Taliban say new faction killed climbers”, *BBC*, 24 June 2013, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-23027031>, accessed 25 June 2013.

⁴⁸ “Kohistan sectarian attack: 18 shot dead after being pulled out of for buses”, *The News*, 29 February 2012, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-12812-Kohistan-sectarianattack-18-shot-dead-after-being-pulled-out-of-four-buses>, accessed 7 March 2015.

⁴⁹ “Highway security: Karakoram Security Force to become part of regular police”, *The Express Tribune*, 22 March 2013, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/524468/highway-security-karakoram-security-force-to-become-part-of-regular-police/>, accessed 4 March 2015.

⁵⁰ “G-B police to train high-altitude force to protect mountain climbers”, *The Express Tribune*, 23 February 2015, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/842871/g-b-police-to-train-high-altitude-force-to-protect-mountain-climbers/>, accessed 4 March 2015.

For such reasons, the security concerns regarding CPEC have been flagged by the Chinese at the highest level during various phases of bilateral negotiations and exchanges between the two sides. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has acknowledged the Chinese concerns regarding safety, and assured full proof security to Chinese workers and assets.⁵¹ Hence, there are parallel prospects that, in order to oblige the Chinese, Pakistan could flood the region with its own security agencies and apparatus which will turn Gilgit-Baltistan (already under considerable influence of the military and the ISI) into a garrison.

Social Impact and Ecological Concerns

Gilgit-Baltistan has undergone a demographic transition during the past decades. Partially, this is the result of a deliberate design of the government of Pakistan to tamper with the demographic profile of a region which is essentially Shia-dominated. There is a possibility that the social profile of the region will undergo further change when people from other parts of Pakistan move into the region hoping to gain economically from CPEC. Notably, it is alleged that businesses dealing with Chinese goods in Gilgit-Baltistan is dominated by Pakistanis instead of locals.⁵²

While much has been spoken about the strategic and regional implications of the corridor, ecological concerns remain under-debated and unheeded. Gilgit-Baltistan lies in a high seismic zone: at least 90 per cent of the region comprises rugged mountainous terrain, with high vulnerability to earthquakes, glacial outbursts, floods, landslides, etc.⁵³ The region has been badly hit by a series of colossal calamities in

⁵¹ “Sharif inaugurates China Pakistan economic corridor project”, *The Hindu*, 1 December 2014, at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-international/sharif-inaugurates-chinapakistan-economic-corridor-project/article6649863.ece>, accessed 4 December 2014.

⁵² See No. 36.

⁵³ “Gilgit-Baltistan: Disaster Management Authority, Establishment Functions and Challenges”, at www.icimod.org/resource/13725, accessed 21 January 2015.

past: a severe drought (1999–2001); an earthquake (2005); the Attabad landslide (2010); the Gyari Avalanche incident (2012); and more recently, floods (2010 and 2014). The Attabad landslide led to the formation of an artificial lake that submerged an entire village and a section of the Karakoram Highway (still under repair). Besides, there are frequent tremors reported from the region.

The Chinese development projects have allegedly been negligent on ecological issues. The Three Gorges Corp, which has been commissioned to undertake some hydropower projects under CPEC, is noted to have overlooked serious ecological implications while building the ambitious dam project in China.⁵⁴ Building a metalled road and a rail network in the Gilgit-Baltistan region will be daunting in view of the tough terrain. More significantly, it could unleash grave ecological risks for the region in future.

CPEC: A DE FACTO LEASE OF GILGIT-BALTISTAN?

In 2012, there were widespread conjectures about whether Pakistan is willing to lease out Gilgit-Baltistan to China; this was followed by reports suggesting a Chinese consulate could be established there.⁵⁵ A report published in an Urdu daily, *Rozanama Bang-e-Sabar*, indicated Pakistan's intention to lease out the region to China for a period of 50 years.⁵⁶ The reports were rejected by both Pakistan and China, which

⁵⁴ “Environmental Security Concerns and the Three Gorges Reservoir Basin in China”, Issue Brief, Foundation for Environmental Security and Sustainability, January 2010, at http://www.fess-global.org/Publications/issuebriefs/ES_Three_Gorges_Reservoir_Basin_in_China.pdf, accessed 23 January 2015.

⁵⁵ Zafar Iqbal, “China to Open Consulate In Pak-Controlled Gilgit-Baltistan for Strategic Grip”, 7 April 2012, at <http://groundreport.com/china-to-open-consulate-in-pak-controlled-gilgit-baltistan-for-strategic-grip/>, accessed 31 July 2014.

⁵⁶ “Report Examines Chinese Mining Companies’ Inroads into Pakistan-Controlled Mineral-Rich Gilgit-Baltistan Region, and Protests by Locals”, 6 July 2011, Special Dispatch No. 3970, at <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/5433.htm>, accessed 31 July 2014.

also denied there was any plan to set up a consulate in Gilgit-Baltistan. Incidentally, this was around the same time that both countries concluded a US\$1.58 billion currency swap deal and other multi-million dollar agreements to upgrade the Karakoram Highway under an intergovernmental framework agreement.⁵⁷

Looking at the growing centrality of CPEC in the context of larger Sino-Pak strategic and economic ties, the possibility of leasing out Gilgit-Baltistan to China by Pakistan cannot be completely ruled out. Since China has committed a whopping sum towards the project, it is likely the Chinese would prefer controlling a key area which forms the confluence between the Chinese and Pakistani leg of CPEC. An equally high possibility is that China would closely monitor the upcoming corridor, due to both strategic and economic reasons. As part of monitoring, there is also likelihood that the Chinese may establish a mission in Gilgit-Baltistan in view of the region's criticality to the project especially while several key projects are built along the Karakoram Highway.

ASSESSMENT

Surveying the existing political, economic, social, and ecological contours concerning Gilgit-Baltistan, the prospects that the region will tangibly gain from CPEC is somewhat bleak. Unless some drastic transformation takes place politically, or otherwise, at the ground level, the chances of Gilgit-Baltistan benefiting from CPEC look hazy. Till then, the region could just be a curious onlooker contemplating on the extent and scope of China's growing role in the region at the behest of Pakistan. The deepening Sino-Pak nexus is likely to compound uncertainties regarding the political fate and economic growth of Gilgit-Baltistan. In the existing circumstances, people of Gilgit-Baltistan are not the actual stakeholders in CPEC projects. Therefore, as CPEC

⁵⁷ Rezaul H Laskar, "Pak, China ink currency swap, Karakoram highway deals", *The Indian Express*, 25 December 2011, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/pak-china-ink-currency-swap-karakoram-highway-deals/891781/>, accessed 1 March 2015.

proceeds, there is the probability of a fresh phase of political churning where nationalist groups would become vocal and more active, advocating political rights and economic guarantees for the locals.

Extrapolations regarding CPEC, or what drives China towards Pakistan, have been there. Is it the threat perception coming from India? Is it the classic balance of power strategy vis-à-vis India? Is it the secessionist challenge in Xinjiang? Or is it a comprehensive strategy to attain energy security.⁵⁸ The Chinese perspective on CPEC is also summed up as: “integrate Pakistan into the Chinese economy by outsourcing low-tech, labour-absorbing, resource-intensive industrial production to Islamabad, which will transform Pakistan into a giant factory floor for China”.⁵⁹

Simultaneously, there is growing perception that the corridor is a culmination of Chinese forays into Gilgit-Baltistan. Chinese strategic interests in the region have developed in phases: first, by identifying interests; second, by building/forging stakes; and finally, by consolidating the stakes. While overtaking the Trans Karakoram Tract and the building of the Karakoram Highway were part of the initial phases, CPEC marks the beginning of the third, and probably final, phase. It appears that CPEC is part of the sequential unfolding of Chinese long term strategy towards the region and beyond. This is considered crucial in meeting its three fold challenge: curbing internal disharmony in Xinjiang (dissuade dissent by development); reiterating regional prowess; and hedge India by lining up its periphery. Issuing a note on the closure of the Khunjerab Pass (which connects China to Gilgit-Baltistan), the Chinese state-run *Xinhua* noted (December 2014) that “the pass is a strategic point on the Karakoram Highway, which links China’s Xinjiang

⁵⁸ Michael Beckley, “China and Pakistan: Fair-Weather Friends”, *Yale Journal of International Affairs*, March 2012, at <http://yalejournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Article-Michael-Beckley.pdf>, p. 19, accessed 29 January 2015.

⁵⁹ Tarique Niazi, “Gwadar: China’s naval outpost on the Indian Ocean”, *China Brief*, Volume 5, Issue 4, 14 February 2005, at http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=3718#.VQwSiNKUew4, accessed 17 February 2015.

with Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan".⁶⁰ The statement calling Gilgit-Baltistan a part of Pakistan, invoked a short-lived stir in Indian media, weighing whether the Chinese remark was made deliberately.⁶¹

Meanwhile, realizing CPEC as planned is likely to be a tight rope walk for both China and Pakistan. The corridor will face its own set of challenges: it will cross through the conflict prone zones of Xinjiang, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Balochistan. Thus, the security orientation will remain a prime concern for CPEC. Secondly, since most of the funds for CPEC will arrive from China's end, there is bound to be a persistent element of uncertainty in view of the fact that the Chinese do not release funds easily. Their development plans are always guided by risk-averse investment behaviour.⁶² Lately, there have been some concerns expressed regarding this issue, at least within Pakistan.

Another significant dimension to bear in mind is the domestic political situation in Pakistan. Already there is uproar over the routing of CPEC, especially regarding diversions which seem to favour Punjab at the cost of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.⁶³ Mega projects in Pakistan have been the subject of intense inter-provincial discord. The shelved Kalabagh dam project and the in-crisis Diamer Bhasha dam are glaring examples of a raging inter-provincial rivalry over resource

⁶⁰ "Khunjerab Pass closes for winter season", *Xinhua*, 2 December 2014, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-12/02/c_133828478.htm, accessed 3 February 2015.

⁶¹ "Waving the red rag at India: China describes disputed PoK region as Pakistan", *Firstpost*, 4 December 2014, at <http://www.firstpost.com/world/waving-the-red-rag-at-india-china-describes-disputed-pok-region-as-pakistan-1833635.html>, accessed 10 February 2015.

⁶² For details, see, "Chia-Hsin Cheng, Are the Chinese Really More Risk Averse? A Cross-Cultural Comparison of the Risk-Return Relationship", at <http://www.jgbm.org/page/4%20Chia-Hsin%20Cheng.pdf>, accessed 10 February 2015.

⁶³ "Sherpao opposes change in Pak-China Economic Corridor route", *Dawn*, 15 December 2014, at http://www.china.org.cn/business/2014-07/09/content_32901466.htm, accessed 11 January 2015.

ownership in Pakistan. Pakistan's interest in CPEC is rooted in its desire for economic growth and for gaining a strategic edge. It is hopeful the "credit positive" project will act as the panacea to the dire financial and energy situation.⁶⁴ However, to fulfil such ambitious goals, Pakistan first needs to arbitrate and bring about balance and stability in domestic politics.

RELEVANCE TO INDIA

CPEC augurs strategic implications for the adjoining regions, especially India which claims Gilgit-Baltistan as part of J&K. India has opposed the project in principle. Replying to a specific query in the Parliament in December 2014, the Minister for External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj, noted the following:

“Government has seen reports with regard to China and Pakistan being involved in infrastructure building activities in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), including construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Government has conveyed its concerns to China about their activities in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, and asked them to cease such activities”.⁶⁵

Standard as the Indian objections to Chinese activities in PoK have been, the Chinese reacted on a similar line of argument—that the Kashmir problem remains a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan. Concurrently, there have been reports that suggest China has offered that India participate in its Silk route projects (China has linked CPEC

⁶⁴ “Moody’s treating commitment to CPEC a credit positive, reflective of economic significance of the project: Finance Minister”, Ministry of Finance, Govt. of Pakistan, 3 March 2015, at http://www.finance.gov.pk/press_releases.html, accessed 4 March 2015.

⁶⁵ Lok Sabha starred question no. 260, answered on 10.12.2014, at <http://www.mea.gov.in/lok-sabha.htm?dtl/24458/QNO260PROJECTS+OF+CHINA+AND+PAKISTAN+IN+NEIGHBOURING+COUNTRIES>, accessed 26 February 2015.

with the Silk Route projects).⁶⁶ In the given context, there are two options for India: the possibility to either participate in it, or obstruct the economic corridor?

Participating in the project will further dilute India's claim on the Gilgit-Baltistan region as part of J&K. Besides, entering into such an agreement with Pakistan on the projects within CPEC, either in Gilgit-Baltistan or beyond, will give tacit approval to Pakistan's control on the region. It will also undermine India's stand against increasing Chinese influence in the PoK region on the pretext of infrastructure and developmental activities. Notwithstanding the prospects of greater connectivity and linking with the wider region, India cannot think in terms of getting involved in the project due to its territorial position as well as manifold political consequences. Regarding its stated reservations on CPEC being built through PoK, India could think of articulating its opposition to the project in a pronounced and consistent manner. Since CPEC in many ways marks the culmination of the Chinese role in the region, post which the stakes are likely to intensify, India needs to think in terms of the long term repercussions of China's proximity to India's periphery, not only on the LAC (Line of Actual Control) but also on the LoC (Line of Control).

Both China and Pakistan have been signalling that India could participate in the project, provided it is willing to do so. Such signalling has, however, been un-emphatic. China and Pakistan have probably devised this particular strategy to tide over the controversies on CPEC being built through a disputed region which is claimed by India. It is well understood that India cannot be a part of CPEC, as it would amount to climbing down from its official position, and give tacit approval to

⁶⁶ "China wants India to play key role in 'Silk Road' plan", *The Hindu*, 10 August 2014, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/china-wants-india-to-play-key-role-in-silk-road-plan/article6301227.ece>. Also see: John C. K. Daly, "India Unsettled by Proposed China-Pakistan Economic Corridor through Kashmir", *The James Town Foundation, China Brief*, volume: 14, Issue 5, 6 March 2014, at http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42052&no_cache=1#.VLzIXNKUew4, both accessed 19 February 2015.

the Sino-Pak nexus in Gilgit-Baltistan. Indeed, much of the control of this region has already been ceded to China over the years—initially by handing over the Trans Karakoram Tract in 1963, building the Karakoram Highway, and more recently, undertaking several hydropower and infrastructure projects.

At the same time, India needs to consider that, in case CPEC does bring tangible economic development across the LoC (somewhat contrary to what this chapter argues), its challenges within J&K are likely to intensify. Thus, India needs to brace up to meet the challenges of bringing steady economic progress and growth in the state of J&K.

PART III

IS A RE-POSITIONING POSSIBLE?

Chapter V

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT AND THE WAY AHEAD

The two-nation theory propounded by the founders of Pakistan ended in an excruciating partition of India. However, the exposition of a separate nation for the Muslims did not hold much water as far as the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir is concerned. Jammu and Kashmir was indeed a disparate region, constituted of varying ethnicities and cultures that lived together for more than 100 years. As Professor Navnita Chaddha Behera notes: “The political construct of a Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir state pitted against a majoritarian Hindu rule—or of an Islamic bond cementing the relationship between the Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas with Pakistan—is, at best misleading”.¹ Therefore, Pakistan as such does have any *locus standi* on either Kashmir or on PoK, which it controls by virtue of acts of sheer aggression and deceit.

India’s self-imposed moratorium on proactively articulating its extant claim on PoK was withdrawn with panache when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day speech, remarked on how the people of PoK and Balochistan expressed gratitude towards him. Prime Minister Modi noted: “In the last few days, the way the people of Balochistan, Gilgit, from Pakistan occupied Kashmir have thanked me, it is the honour of 1.25 billion people of India. I thank those people from Balochistan, Gilgit and Pakistan occupied Kashmir”.² The

¹ Navnita Chadha Behera, *Demystifying Kashmir*, New Delhi: Pearson-Longman, 2007, pp. 1–2.

² “Highlights of Modi’s Independence Day speech”, *The Hindu*, 15 August 2016, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Highlights-of-Modis-Independence-Day-speech/article14571315.ece>, accessed 19 August 2016.

Prime Minister Modi's reference to PoK stirred popular opinion, which was till then resigned to sheer complacency, catalysed by the preceding Indian government's sustained neglect of the issue. While addressing a gathering of the Border Security Force (BSF) in May 2015, India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval noted the following:

“We have to plan and prepare for the future. We have got seven countries with which we share our border. We have six with which we directly share a contiguous border. But we also have a 106-km-long non-contiguous border with Afghanistan that we need to factor in. With all these seven countries, we have very special and peculiar relationships and peculiar problems”.³

The non-contiguous border herein referred to Gilgit-Baltistan's periphery that touches the Wakhan Corridor located at the strategically key confluence of China, Tajikistan and Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Doval's words, coming from the new political dispensation in New Delhi, were a significant case of re-posturing, as also providing the much needed traction to India's official stated claim on PoK.

After the general elections, the new dispensation led by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) took over office in New Delhi in May 2014. In early June 2014, there was widespread news that the nomenclature of PoK would be expanded to becoming “Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir” (PoJK) to include parts of Jammu under Pakistan's control.⁴ In March 2016, in a first, the Annual Report of the Ministry of Home Affairs 2015–2016 officially used the term PoJK while reflecting figures of the Cross LoC Trade between the two sides. The report notes: “Till 2015 December, 45,486 trucks have crossed over to PoJK and 28,891 trucks have crossed over to India's side through these two

³ Deepthiman Tiwary, “Need to factor in our 106km border with Afghanistan: NSA”, *Times of India*, 23 May 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Need-to-factor-in-our-106km-border-with-Afghanistan-NSA/articleshow/47391553.cms>, accessed 24 June 2015.

⁴ “Centre May Rename POK as Pak-Occupied Jammu & Kashmir: Sources”, *NDTV*, 6 June 2014, at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/centre-may-rename-pok-as-pak-occupied-jammu-kashmir-sources-575688>, accessed 8 June 2014.

routes”—that is, the Uri-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalakot routes. The report further notes that, “Security clearance has been accorded for the visits of trade delegations from J&K to PoJK”.⁵ In the wake of change of guard at the centre, there were certain conjectures that the new government may train the spotlight on a pertinent issue -PoK, that has remained unaddressed for a long period of time.

Contemporarily, 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 the China Pakistan Economic Corridor 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.

As far as stating objections to externally-aided projects in PoK is concerned, India has been doing that at various levels. For instance, India expressed serious reservations on building the ecologically unfeasible Diemer Bhasha dam project, yet again in Gilgit-Baltistan. The Diemer Bhasha dam is a huge roller-compacted concrete hydropower project being built in Gilgit-Baltistan, bordering the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Through official channels, India had objected to the dam being built in a disputed region. The fact that the proposed dam has been mired in huge controversies, including its ecological impact on a seismically fragile region; the dispute between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan over the share of royalty; and a lingering border dispute between the two, has deterred international financial institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to commit finances for the project. On the refusal of World Bank, there were reports that by exercising diplomatic persuasion, India was successful in convincing the international body about not putting finances in the project. Subsequently, in its statement, the World Bank clearly referred to its inability to fund a project that

⁵ Annual Report of the Ministry of Home Affairs 2015-2016, at [http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/AR_\(E\)_1516.pdf](http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/AR_(E)_1516.pdf), p.10, accessed 20 March 2017.

was being built in a disputed region between India and Pakistan. Notably, the bank cited India's reservations on the project before asking Pakistan to furnish a No Objection Certificate from India.

More recently, the Ministry of External Affairs also expressed objections to the elections in Gilgit-Baltistan held on 8 June 2015. MEA spokesperson, Vikas Swarup noted: "India's position is well known. The entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, which includes the regions of Gilgit and Baltistan, is an integral part of India".⁶ He further noted:

"We are concerned at the continued efforts by Pakistan to deny the people of the region their political rights, and the efforts being made to absorb these territories. The fact that a federal minister of Pakistan is also the 'Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan' speaks for itself".⁷

Gilgit-Baltistan has been subjected to political exclusion ever since it has been controlled by Pakistan. To tide over rising political unrest, the then Pakistan Peoples Party led government in Pakistan introduced a provisional political arrangement in August 2009 which was essentially to give the people of Gilgit-Baltistan a sense of political identity. The Empowerment and Self-rule Order 2009 was designed to assuage growing concerns amongst local people that they were deprived of political rights, and had no voice of representation in the federal set up in Pakistan. The order fell short of meeting the political aspirations of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Even the Human Right Commission of Pakistan called the order a cosmetic exercise—a "mere eyewash" which was more of a temporary measure to curb local unrest.⁸ Previously

⁶ Manoj Joshi, "Why India Insists on Keeping Gilgit Baltistan Firmly in the Kashmir Equation", *The Wire*, 2 June 2015, at <http://thewire.in/2015/06/02/why-india-is-bringing-gilgit-baltistan-back-into-the-kashmir-equation-3018/>, accessed 22 July 2015.

⁷ Elizabeth Roche, "India rejects Pakistan's plans of election in Gilgit-Baltistan region", *Livemint*, 2 June 2015, at <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/PATNAPMIRUSle830u2IzzM/India-rejects-Pakistans-plans-of-election-in-disputed-Kashm.html>, accessed 23 July 2015.

⁸ Gilgit-Baltistan Elections 2009, Report of HRCP Observers Mission, January 2010.

also, in a strongly worded statement, India objected to the Empowerment and Self-Rule political package challenging Pakistan's *locus standi* on introducing changes in a contested region.

India needs to consistently rake up the issue of PoK—especially to blunt Pakistan's larger propaganda on Kashmir. Some kind of a persistent political haggling by issuing regular statements and policy reiteration on PoK would be useful in this regard. Reiteration of the fact that India has not yet dispensed its claim on PoK would pave way for enhancing India's negotiating capability when the larger issue of Kashmir comes up for discussion and final resolution. A pro-active stance on PoK would certainly balance out Pakistan false rhetoric on Kashmir. Combined with regular policy pronouncements on PoK, this would revive the issue and acquaint a lot many more people about the salience of PoK in India's security interests.

India must pin PoK on the bilateral agenda with Pakistan and China in an effective manner.⁹ Since the two countries have decades-old nexus on the Kashmir issue which is presently manifested in the form of a string of infrastructure-hydropower projects through the PoK region, it is quintessential for India not to miss any opportunity to raise the issue of PoK with China and Pakistan- bilaterally or trilaterally, whichever way is appropriate. In the wake of the multi-billion CPEC hemming in India's northern periphery, it is incumbent that India actively takes up its standing claim on PoK forthrightly so as to convey its concerns on the corridor in an effective manner. Pronouncing its future stance on CPEC on the plank of its territorial claim on PoK will render India's overall position the much needed rigour and strength.

- India must undertake a calibrated strategy to raise domestic public awareness on PoK. As indicated in a Home Ministry-aided study, the awareness level on PoK amongst people in J&K is dismally

⁹ Priyanka Singh, "Inserting PoK into the Kashmir Conundrum", IDSA Strategic Comment, 3 May 2016, at http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/inserting-pok-into-kashmir-conundrum_psingh_030516, accessed 22 October 2016.

low.¹⁰ This calls for a concerted effort to disseminate agglomerations of information concerning PoK's history, political issues and challenges, the problem of disenfranchisement of the people, and the state-perpetrated demographic transition in these areas, etc.

- There is greater need than ever before to retrieve the subject of PoK from the backburner and bring it head on during strategic discussions and policy formulations. It is imperative that the issue of PoK figures in bilateral dealings with states with whom India has better ties, especially those who have either already invested in, or are planning to invest in developmental or infrastructure projects in PoK.
- India cannot shy away from reasserting its claim on PoK. In spite of not being in possession of a legal endorsement, Pakistan has been consistently focussing on J&K and staking a claim on the whole territory. The Instrument of Accession, signed in India's favour by the Maharaja of Kashmir in October 1947, is the most authentic and significant legal backing, based on which India must leverage its claim not only on J&K but also PoK.
- Over several decades, the Kashmir issue has been used as an instrument to bog down India in the international arena. India has been internationally isolated on several occasions due to the false propaganda unleashed by Pakistan against it. In connivance with China and certain countries in the West, Pakistan's relentless agenda and unfounded claim on Kashmir has been pursued over decades, causing recurrent chagrin for India. Had India also staked its claim on PoK in a forceful and consistent way, it could have gone a long way in neutralizing Pakistan's surreptitious designs and intentions.
- Reiterating its claim on PoK may confer India options towards dealing with the growing China-Pakistan nexus—a constant

¹⁰ "Perception Survey of Media Impact on Kashmiri Youth", Main Report, Institute for Research on India and International Studies (IRIIS), pdf, p. 52, accessed 23 October 2016.

nuisance for India spanning over decades since Independence. The China-Pakistan relationship hinges on commonalities shared by the two vis a vis an adversarial relationship with India. Buttressing its PoK policy by a legal claim on the territory gives India a potential option that could be exercised to counteract the burgeoning relationship between China and Pakistan. This is so especially as China's official position on Kashmir considers PoK as a disputed territory awaiting permanent settlement, which it concedes can be resolved only via bilateral means between India and Pakistan.

Lately, there is perceptible change in the general tenor of India's foreign policy especially vis a vis calibrated efforts towards making gripping policy pronouncements. In the context of the overall approach to foreign policy and as an issue of immediate strategic relevance, it is hoped that PoK refigures on the agenda of the Government of India—this time forcefully and meaningfully. The present dispensation in New Delhi has taken certain concrete steps which indicate a possible desire to shed past policy inertia on PoK. In order to ensure a more robust approach on PoK, some long and medium term measures need to fructify before one can conclusively gauge whether a fundamental shift in India's approach on PoK is underway. Nonetheless, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proclamation from the ramparts of the Red Fort is a positive beginning. While carefully evaluating the geopolitical environment, especially China's intent and forays into PoK, it is high time India draws a roadmap regarding how to secure India's territorial and strategic interests vis a vis China and Pakistan's persisting collusion on Kashmir.

ANNEXURE

PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR: A ROADMAP*

Ever since the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir State signed the Instrument of Accession, India's position on J&K, and on PoK in particular, has remained largely unaltered. The Indian position on PoK has been articulated intermittently, but in a rather mild way. India's claims on PoK have not been as strident as it ought to have been. True, the Parliamentary Resolution of 1994 was an emphatic re-statement of India's position on PoK, urging Pakistan to vacate areas under its illegal control. But such assertions have not been backed by astute and assertive repositioning at the diplomatic and policy-making levels, leading to the general impression that India is resigned to the idea of losing the territory to Pakistan and settling for the Line of Control as the border.

Re-calibrating the Indian approach towards PoK will require shedding policy hesitation on PoK, minimizing contradictions and addressing gaps in policy pronouncements. This may require an overhaul involving a multi-stage strategy to shift the discourse on PoK from the cartographic domain to the policy domain. To begin with, the following measures could be considered for implementation in the domestic, external and ancillary levels.

DOMESTIC LEVEL

A purposeful strategy on PoK will require a certain basic course correction — one that situates the region in the popular imagination in India and bridges the knowledge gap in the country about a region which legally belongs to it. In the absence of a concerted course correction, no breakthrough on formulating an ambitious and focussed

* Excerpted from the IDSA Policy Brief titled, “Beyond Cartographic Assertion: A Roadmap on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir” by the author published on 1 August 2016 available at http://idsa.in/policybrief/beyond-cartographic-assertion-pakistan-occupied-kashmir_psingh_290716.

strategy on PoK will be possible. The primary goal here should be to alter domestic perceptions and political complacency on PoK.

A white paper on PoK: In a vibrant democracy like India, where minute issues are open to intense debate and public scrutiny, the twin issues of J&K and territorial integrity enjoy multi-partisan support across the entire political spectrum. The Government of India needs to capitalise on this consensus by bringing out a white paper that delineates India's position on PoK in the light of developments that have occurred in the last few decades or more. It has been nearly 22 years since the Parliamentary Resolution of 1994 was passed and there has been no detailed point of reference to ascertain India's official claim on the PoK region since then. Meanwhile, statements from the concerned ministries in the government or default allusions to PoK have been rather sketchy, tepid, and at best, reactive. To enhance the vigour and substance of its claim, India needs to cogently argue out its position on PoK by putting out a comprehensive official document/proclamation in the form of a white paper that is mindful of contemporary challenges and geopolitical fundamentals.

Constitutional measures: Part VI Section 48 of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir carries a provision of 24 seats in the state's legislative assembly for representatives from PoK. This section notes that such seats shall lay vacant "until the area of the State under the occupation of Pakistan ceases to be so occupied and the people residing in that area elect their representatives."¹ While no concrete effort could be made to fill these seats in the assembly, provisions to constitutionally supplement a similar quota of representation in the Union Parliament have not been accorded much significance. In December 2014, a private bill to this effect was rejected by the Parliamentary Committee.² Before this, in October 2013, the government spurned media reports conjecturing a serious rethink on allocating seats for PoK in the Lok

1. "The Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir", at http://jklegislativeassembly.nic.in/Costitution_of_J&K.pdf, pp. 16-17.

2. Raghvendra Rao, "House panel bars BJP MP's Bill to create Lok Sabha seats in PoK", *The Indian Express*, 10 December 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/house-panel-bars-bjp-mps-bill-to-create-lok-sabha-seats-in-pok/>.

Sabha.³ It may be worthwhile to re-consider this option for effective policy posturing. Besides, an amendment to this effect would also address the element of incongruence between the constitution of J&K state and the constitution of India.

Deft dispersal and administration of information: The government needs to disseminate information regarding PoK through the right channels. Compared to the level of public awareness in Pakistan on Kashmir, that of PoK within India is dismally low. Comprehensive information on the political status of PoK should be infused in the popular discourse in the Kashmir Valley as well. As acknowledged in a Home Ministry-aided study conducted in 2010, Kashmiri youth appear largely unaware of the politics and nature of governance in PoK.⁴ Systematic efforts to curb misperceptions regarding the notion of azadi on the other side, especially in the so-called AJK, would be much useful. Similarly, it is vital to initiate steps that could factually highlight Gilgit Baltistan's sustained political exclusion by Pakistan. Concerted attempts should be made to fill the existing vacuum concerning PoK's political ground realities. It is also intriguing that people in India know relatively more about the excesses committed by Pakistani forces in Balochistan than what Islamabad is actually doing in PoK. India's inert policy behaviour is partially responsible for creating a situation where PoK invokes an uncertain ambiguous reaction amongst people at large despite the fact that they grow up used to the perpetual illustration of this region in the official map of India. Moreover, there is a large section of Indians that believes that India has virtually lost its claims on PoK. Besides, confusion still prevails on the geographical expanse of PoK. Several writings within India have more often than not referred to the so-called 'AJK' and PoK interchangeably, thus keeping Gilgit Baltistan away from the purview of India's claim. Apart from maps, it

3. "Home ministry denies plan to create Lok Sabha seats for PoK", *Live Mint*, 15 October 2013, at <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/VRqDJOmQWQ3yWywIJoQJCM/Home-ministry-denies-plan-to-create-Lok-Sabha-seats-for-PoK.html>.

4. Perception Survey of Media Impact on Kashmiri Youth, Main Report, Institute for Research on India and International Studies (IRIIS), pdf, p. 52.

is vital to undertake necessary measures to curtail the misrepresentation of facts related to PoK in the domestic public discourse.

Media feeds: Indian media's coverage of PoK has been rather scant, and lacks depth and understanding. Sporadic coverage of PoK in the Indian media — both electronic and print, as well as English language and vernacular — is reflective of the scale of importance that has been accorded to the region in the public discourse. The media tends to focus on issues that stir public sentiments. Unfortunately, because of decades of neglect and disinterestedness, PoK has lost its appeal as an Indian territory illegally occupied by Pakistan—a historical wrong that could not be set aright by the United Nations because the issue got enmeshed in Cold War politics. In an interesting departure from the past, in September-October 2015, a number of private news channels in India broadcast footage of gross human rights violations in PoK showing Pakistan's highhandedness against those challenging its authority and control in these areas. Ensuing discussions were, however, rather poor and ill-researched. Media coverage on PoK has a tendency to quickly dissipate as they fail to generate the necessary traction in India. Apart from Asian News International (ANI), which regularly features short videos on PoK, especially Gilgit Baltistan, PoK remains one of those domains that has been grossly neglected by the Indian media. It is distressing to note the stark contrast between the Pakistani media's obsession with Kashmir and the near complete apathy of the Indian media with respect to developments in PoK. It is hard to recall the last time a full-fledged op-ed focussing on PoK was published in any of the mainstream national dailies.

Along with promoting comprehensive coverage in state-owned broadcasting channels, developments and issues related to PoK need to figure frequently in the media especially on the prime time slot of private news channels. Augmenting references to PoK in official statements and focussed discussions on the issues concerning the region will incentivise media coverage, providing the much-needed stimulus for enhanced popular awareness regarding PoK.

THE EXTERNAL TIER

Pakistan's reaction to the recent spate of violence over the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani on July 8 has been along

expected lines. The statement from Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the observation of a Black Day and a joint session of Parliament were all aimed at indicting the government of India for committing gross atrocities in J&K. There were instant rebuttals from India, urging Pakistan to set its own house in order with stray allusions to violations taking place in PoK and Balochistan. In such circumstances, it is important that India innovates and shifts the policy gear from being merely reactive to being decisively proactive. It is of no avail if statements on PoK are invariably issued in a reactive mode, more so to balance out Pakistan's rhetoric. Pakistan is quick to capitalise on crisis situations in the Kashmir Valley and does not fail to seize the opportunity, in clear contrast to the indifference displayed on the Indian side which is reminded of PoK only upon some provocation from the other side. India needs to replace this approach with a more consistent, pre-emptive one so as to outmanoeuvre Pakistan's relentless rhetoric-driven agenda on Kashmir.

At a certain level, India's geopolitical challenges vis-a-vis PoK involves China as well. While China may aver its neutrality on the Kashmir issue, it will continue to be a factor for India to reckon with. China is in possession of 2000 square miles of J&K territory in the Shaksgam Valley and has played a pivotal role in consolidating Pakistan's hold over Gilgit-Baltistan. The Karakoram Highway was built through the disputed territory, despite India's protests. China has unfailingly reminded India of the disputed status of Jammu & Kashmir by denying visas to Indian military officials deployed in that state and it has now officially registered its concern on the recent incidents. China's statement noted that it was "concerned about the casualties in the clash, and hope that relevant incident will be handled properly. The Kashmir issue is left over from history. China holds a consistent stance and hopes relevant parties will address the issue peacefully through dialogue."⁵ Alongside facts regarding China developing extensive stakes across PoK (including the massive China Pakistan Economic Corridor), the aforementioned

5. "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang's Remarks", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, People's Republic of China, 18 July 2016, at http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1382407.shtml.

official statement signals a perceptible change in China's position. So far, it had avoided reacting to India's actions to counter Pakistan-backed subversion in the state. The China-Pakistan axis working together on the Kashmir issue has to be deftly handled.

Bilateral assertion with Pakistan and China: For the reasons mentioned above, India needs to place PoK on the bilateral agenda with both Pakistan and China. While Pakistan is in illegitimate control of PoK, China's unhindered involvement in the region despite India's protests is a constant source of strategic concern. India needs to highlight how terrorist sanctuaries have proliferated in the entire PoK. Collective inputs from the intelligence agencies could be used to prepare a dossier on the militant training camps in PoK and disseminate them through relevant platforms, apart from handing it over bilaterally to Pakistan, the United States, China and other key countries at the most appropriate occasion.

Hedge against Pakistan: The simmering political unrest in PoK has been understated and much less reported. For several years, a phenomenal growth in the number of nationalist or advocacy groups in the PoK region (especially in Gilgit Baltistan and also in the so-called AJK) has been witnessed. India needs to explore options to constructively engage with such political groups in PoK. Inputs from such groups would enable India to develop a better understanding of issues and concerns of the people and the land in this region.

India also needs to chart out a well-thought-out policy framework designed to diminish the malicious propaganda and subversive activities unleashed by Pakistan. While India has ably handled Pakistan's propaganda at the UN, it may be useful to consider citing PoK in rejoinders and pre-emptive remarks as well. So far, Pakistan has selectively quoted from the UNSC resolutions to corner India on the question of Kashmir. Pakistan's stratagem could be deflated to a great extent by invoking the 'demilitarization clause' from the same UNSC resolutions, which required Pakistan to withdraw its forces completely from what is now being referred to as PoK.

Additional routes on the Line of Control: In addition to the existing routes, India needs to consciously insist on opening up more points across the LoC for movement of people and goods, especially the

Kargil- Skardu route. The proposed route has been on the anvil for long and involves the sentiments of people on both sides in the Ladakh-Gilgit Baltistan sector. With an initiative such as this, India is likely to generate goodwill on the other side of the LoC and in the process also bring forth Pakistan's hesitations on such measures that seek to facilitate communication among the people on both sides of the LoC.

ANCILLARY MEASURES

In a democracy, the onus of changing the policy discourse lies as much on the people and institutions as on the government and media. Therefore, apart from engaging and harnessing the existing expertise and scholarship on various government policies, think tanks, educational institutions and the civil society at large need to think in terms of putting in place a robust discourse on J&K (including PoK) through some of the following initiatives:

Academic deliberations: In the wake of the ongoing turmoil in J&K, there emerged a critique regarding the stark gap in the holding of quality discussions on issues concerning J&K. Correspondingly, there is an utter lack of interest in developments in PoK— the election in the so-called AJK, for example, went literally unnoticed. Interestingly, the 'AJK' electorate voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Nawaz Sharif led PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz), which was at the receiving end of criticism for its openness to the idea of reconciliation with India. Regular discussions identifying the nuances in the local politics of 'AJK' and Gilgit-Baltistan in academic research institutions could be a good beginning. Similarly, proceedings from conferences and seminars on PoK could be effectively channelled into informing/educating policy circles. Open public discussions are quintessential for advancing the scale of domain awareness on PoK. It has to be borne in mind that optimal benefits from such discussions can be reaped only by engaging people from PoK. Nationalist constituencies in PoK need to be provided an appropriate forum for venting their views, thereby exposing Pakistan's highhanded approach towards the region. While it may be difficult to process the visit of residents of PoK to India for conferences, hosting people from the PoK diaspora based in Europe and the United States for the purpose offers an easier option.

Ideas exchange and research collaboration: Over the past few years, several PoK-centric think tanks have sprung up in the United States and Canada. Encouraging constructive engagement between PoK driven think-tanks, academics and communities with those in India will lead to cross-fertilization of ideas and forge partnership on significant issues of mutual interest. Institutions in India can also think in terms of incentivising young people from PoK (diaspora included) through educational and skill building exercises.

Respective of an extant territorial claim, Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) comprising the so-called 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan, has consistently remained quite low in the list of India's strategic priorities. Part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, PoK has for decades neither received adequate attention in terms of the region's stakes in the broader Kashmir issue nor has it figured prominently in India's policy pronouncements. Against this backdrop, the monograph urges a policy re-positioning by aggregating key geopolitical parameters concerning PoK which potentially impinge on India's vital territorial and security interests. That emerging geopolitical pressures exerted by the massive China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) must be factored in while determining the course of India's policy formulation on PoK, is the core thrust of the study.

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