

**RESEARCH PAPER****Chinese Stance on Kashmir Dispute: An Over View****¹Dr. Unsa Jamshad* ²Muhammad Abdullah ³Amar Jahangir**

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***Corresponding Author** Jamshed.unsa@yahoo.com**ABSTRACT**

Kashmir issue was a left over by history and exists before the proclamation of China as People Republic of China. China that is the major regional power and second largest economy of the world is concerned over the peace and prosperity of the region. The peace of region was always on stake due to the lingering of Kashmir dispute. A number of factors have enhanced the significance of Chinese stance towards Kashmir dispute e.g. the geographical proximity, as international and regional power, and occupation of some part of Kashmir territory (Aksai Chin and territory ceded by Pakistan to China in 1963). Chinese stance on this dispute varies over different periods of time. There are a number of factors that affect the stance of China to resolve this dispute. It is an attempt to highlight the significance of Chinese stance to resolve this dispute and factors behind the change in its stance.

KEYWORDS China Stance, Dispute, India, Kashmir, Pakistan**Introduction**

Kashmir dispute emerged between the two neighborly states of India and Pakistan when they proclaimed independence after the flight of the British raj from sub-continent. This issue has been raised at various international forums but rather than getting resolved Indian forces has enhanced their atrocities in Indian Held Kashmir (IHK) and also raised their number to snub the rights of Kashmiris. The worst example of these atrocities was the revocation of article 370 and 35A by Indian government in its constitution on August 5, 2019. After taking this illegal action that was even against the resolution of UN, Indian government raised the number of Indian troops from seven lac to almost eight-lac to control the defenseless Kashmiris and make Kashmir the most militarized zone of the world. This action was taken to stop the protest of Kashmiri's over the illegal and illegitimate decision of Indian government. Lock-down was imposed, internet service was shut-down and foreign media coverage was halt in Kashmir after taking this decision by New Delhi. In this way India wants to hide its atrocities on Kashmiris. In such circumstances Islamabad needs the assistance and support of friends that would help it to raise its voice for Kashmiris an exposed the brutalities of India that portrait itself to be the largest democracy of the world. Kashmir issue that was lingering from last seven decade, despite several talks between India and Pakistan and numerous resolutions by UNSC is still not resolved. This issue cannot be resolved without the sincere mediation and interventions of major powers of the world. Beijing is not only one of the big power of the world but also second largest economy of the world and having an influential position in world decision making. So its stance on this dispute is imperative for Kashmiris and for their resole to fight for their legitimate right to fight for freedom. Beijing stance on Kashmir dispute varies throughout the history due to number of internal and external factors.

Literature Review

The literature in the form of books, journal articles and newspaper were helpful to write this paper. As no book is available on the current situation on subject then newspaper and internet sources are tapped to write the paper. A number of books written by M. Ishaque

Fani, Ahmed Faruqi, B. M. Jan, Shireen Mazari and Hassan Askari Rivi provide the historical background of Kashmir issue and little bit about the policy of China over this issue. Ghulam Ali and Shahid Javed Burke while addressing contemporary developments in Pakistan and its foreign relations discussed the Chinese policy towards Kashmir. No complete book or paper is available on the under research paper.

Era of Neutrality

From 1950's to 60 Chinese stance was neutral on Kashmir issue or it had no interest in this dispute. There were mainly three main causes of its neutral posture.

- Firstly, it was recovering from the badly damaged infrastructure by the internal civil war among various groups, especially the communist forces of Mao Zedong and Nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek
- Secondly, this was the phase of brotherhood between Beijing and New Delhi (*Hindi-Chine bhi bhi*), means China had having friendly relations with India. The non-alliance poster of New Delhi attracted Beijing towards it. And
- Thirdly Beijing was involved in convoluted Korean War against U.S and its allies.

During this time frame Pakistan was an ally of West and Pakistan had chosen this bloc due to its own security obligations and constraints from Eastern as well as Western borders. It had joined western bloc and signed a number of treaties (SEATO, CENTO and Defence Agreement) that were purely against communist states. China had strong reservations about these treaties due to the nature of these treaties. But on its part Pakistan explained its compulsions to join this bloc and elaborated the causes that pushed her to join these treaties. The then Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Bogra met with his Chinese counterpart in an Afro-Asian conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 and told him the reason behind the joining of these treaty. This was the first step towards the normalization of relations between the two states. Complete neutrality of Beijing was observed during 1950-60. During this phase if Beijing never sided with Pakistan, it also never branded India as an occupied force (Paranya, 2019).

Support for Self-determination

Chinese neutral stance changed in to the favour of full support of Kashmiris in 1962. The main cause of this change was India-China war of 1962. The Indo-Sino war began over the Askhi-Chin when China tried to connect Tibet with Xinjiang by building road. Indian authorities had raised objections over this move of China. They claimed that the Askhi-Chin was the part of territory of Ladakh (Kashmir) that was under the control of India. The war started with skirmishes and ended with the unilateral decision of Beijing to ceasefire. Although Western powers immediately rushed with heavy weapons and US had provide \$ 90 million worth of military aid to India to save it from communist China (Ali, 2022). But India lost the war and almost 7,000 Indian were killed in this war. During the war China had offered Pakistan to vacate the territory of Kashmir that was illegally occupied by India. At that time India could not afford war with Pakistan because it was engaged with China on the other side of its border. But unfortunately Pakistan did not avail this opportunity on the pressure of America and U.K. These states had threatened Pakistan that any such move would be considered as the violation of SEATO and CENTO and would lead to the isolation of Pakistan. Pakistan at that stage was not in a position to afford isolation and it was also not well aware of the future plans of China. But Pakistan openly supported China during India-China war and declared India as an aggressor state. Although at that moment, internationally it was believed that China had invaded India. Due to this reason western powers rushed with heavy military aid to secure India from communist attack although India was not an ally of Western powers or part of Capitalist bloc. But later on it was proved that the stance of Pakistan was right and it was India not China that was aggressor. Now this stance of Pakistan was also admitted by Neville Maxwell in his interview. He claimed that it was Nehru who initiated war with China. As an outcome of Pakistan's firm support during Indo-China war, China had supported the stance of Pakistan on Kashmir, 'The right to self-determination' publically. As a result of Pakistani support to China in its hard time China signed border

agreement in 1963 that was pending since 1959, although Pakistan reminds China for many times but did not get positive response from her. According to this agreement Pakistan had acknowledged the sovereignty of Beijing over the land of hundreds of square kilometers in Northern Kashmir and Ladakh region (Agha, 2001). Article 6 of this agreement state, 'both states agreed that whenever the Kashmir issue would be resolved the border talks would be reopened between government of Kashmir and China.' This settlement was not accepted by the New Delhi due to the recognition of Pakistan over the sovereignty of Beijing on the land of Kashmir. India after the four decades of this agreement raised this issue again when General Musharraf visited India in mid July 2000. Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee during a session of Lok Sabha Session on 7th August accused that President Musharraf offered to take back the area ceded to China in 1963, if agreement on Kashmir reached between India and Pakistan (Ramzan, 2001). Although Musharraf paid visit to established good relations with India but India tried to create rift between China and Pakistan by giving vague statements (The News, 2001). Pakistan foreign office has denied the statement of Vajpayee on August 8. It said no such discussion took place between the two leaders at any stage. While Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Lu Shulin expressed confidence about the President Musharraf's talks with Prime Minister Vajpayee (The News, 2001). Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Zhang Qiyue also took the notice of Vajpayee statement. He said that there wasn't any question to reopen the border issue between Islamabad and Beijing as the issue was resolved long ago (The News, 2001).

After the support of Pakistan during India-China war and settlement of border issue, China and Pakistan came closer. This was the turning point in the relations of China and Pakistan or the foundation of 'all-weather friendship' between the two states. During the war of 1965, Pakistan got diplomatic and moral supported from China. China supported Pakistan at the extent that it had threatened India to call back its forces otherwise ready to face severe consequences. The government of China lauded its voice for the sake of Pakistan and put all blamed on Indian government to open arm aggression against Kashmir and Pakistan (Khalid, 2001). This was a critical time for Pakistan and this support of Beijing was badly needed by Islamabad to expose the real brutal face of India in front of world community. Unfortunately at this time Pakistan's ally (US) imposed arm embargo not only on India but also on Pakistan. Although India was not in dare needs of western weapons as Pakistan due to its complete dependence on west for military assistance while India had many other sources beside the fact that it was not ally of west and got heavy military assistance in 1962. In December 1965 when President Ayub paid a visit to U.S for its support on Kashmir then he was warned by the American President Johnson that if Pakistan wants to be any ally of America then it should distance itself from Beijing (Ali, 2022). But this warning was overruled by Pakistan and cultivated its good terms with Beijing. After 1965 India-Pakistan war Chinese became more vocal about the settlement of Kashmir dispute through the 'right to self-determination'. Now the neutrality over Kashmir issue turned towards the favour in support of stance of Pakistan (Rizvi, 1994). After this war in 1966 the defence agreement was signed between Pakistan and China. China technically and economically assisted and supported Pakistan to develop and strengthened its defence sector and pushed Pakistan towards self-reliance in this sector.

Stance to Resolve the Issue by Bilateral Means

From early seventies policy of China on Kashmir issue again changed. The policy of China shifted from support of right to self-determination to settle this dispute by using bilateral means. There were mainly three causes behind this change. First, Simla agreement (1972) and Lahore Declaration (1999) in which both India and Pakistan agreed that they would resolve their dispute by using bilateral means or would not involve any other party in their mutual disputes and issues. Second, after the disintegration of USSR and formation of five Central Asian States, East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) gain momentum in the Xinjiang province of China. If China talks about the right to self-determination of Kashmiris than this right would also be given to Ughur (Muslim residence of Xinjiang province of China) and that would lead to the disintegration of China and Beijing cannot afford this. This region

has plenty of mineral and energy resources and the BRI project of President Xi has enhanced the significance of this area many folds. Third factor was the normalization of relations between China and India due to the revolutionary and visionary policies of Deng Xiaoping. So China had to maintain a balance approach toward Kashmir dispute. This balanced approach was also in favour of Pakistan and Kashmir. If there was any dispute or conflict emerged between India and Pakistan then Chinese would be in position to bring both states at the negotiation table or could play the role of mediator between them. The fruit of this balanced approach was seen when India and Pakistan became the nuclear powers and engaged in conflicts. The first such crisis was experimented in May 1999 between the both states along the LoC in the Kargil region of Kashmir. Kargil was a limited conflict between both states but the time of this crisis was very critical and this crisis grabs the attention of whole world. The time was important because now both states possessed the nuclear explosive devices and there was a chance of full-fledged war. Indian made hues and cries internationally and got the sympathies of maximum states especially Israel and Russia that were already on her side (Usmani, 2008). China maintained neutrality over the crisis and emphasized on both states to solve it through bilateral means (Shahzad, 2009). On the peak time of crisis Sartaj Aziz, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, paid an official visit to Beijing on June 12, 1999. During his visit he met with his Chinese counterpart Tang Jiaxuan and Li-Peng, Chairman of the National People's congress. Li advised Aziz to resolve the current crisis by peaceful means and make every possible solution to retain peace and situation under control. Chinese authorities stressed on both India and Pakistan to solve problem through negotiations and peaceful way because history taught us that no problem would be resolved through war that only bring destruction and devastation for people (Singh, 1999). Pakistan got the advice to solve the problem while remain calm (Fani, 2009). There were also a perception that China advised to Pakistan to stay calm in the back drop of the fear that any support to freedom fighter in Kashmir would not become source of encouragement of Taliban that were fighting in Afghanistan (Faruqi, 2001).

This balanced approach was also observed during the India-Pakistan stand-off 2001-02. This India-Pakistan stand-off was an outcome of terrorist attack on the building of Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001 (The News, 2001). Indian as usual before going for primary inquiry of the facts and figures put all blame on Pakistan. *Laskkar-i-Tayaba* (Army of the Righteous) was blamed for this attack. India threatened Pakistan to intrude in Pakistan territory while crossing LoC to punish the terrorist that have hideouts in Pakistan. Indian authorities took this attack as an attack on their democracy (Rehman, 2001). Islamabad not only condemned this attack but also appeal China to de-escalate the tension emerged between India and Pakistan after this attack. An eye-ball situation was developed between the two states when India moved its forces along the eastern border of Pakistan and in retaliation Pakistan also moved its forces along the border with India. Pakistan appeal to China for its mediation and President Musharraf requested it to use its stimulus to ease the tension between the two states. Musharraf stressed that Pakistan wants good neighbourly ties with all states including its eastern neighbour, India. He also expressed his strong reservations over the mentality of Indian authorities to blame Islamabad for this attack before going for initial investigation (Nawa-i-Waqt, 2011). He assured to take strict action against those who were responsible for attack if Indian authorities would provide evidence against these groups whom they were accusing. He said Pakistan was already taking strict action against terrorists (The Nation, 2001).

China highly condemned the terrorist attack on Indian Parliament. Chinese President also favoured the stance of Pakistan. He appreciated the policies and measures taken by President Musharraf to calm down the prevailing situation on border. He accepted the request for mediation extended by Pakistan. He said China was ready for mediation because the solution of every problem could be found out through negotiation and dialogue. He expressed the hope that Kashmir issue would be resolved as soon as possible. He related the Kashmir with the peace of region. He said Kashmir issue would be resolved through peaceful means (The News, 2001). The spokesman of foreign ministry of China, Zhang Qiyue also stated that it was the desire of China that India and Pakistan would resolve their

disputes on negotiation table because an aggressive move by any state could lead to destruction and devastation. So, solution of problem through negotiation was imperative for the peace and security of the region (Nawa-i-Waqat, 2002). Due to efforts and backdoor diplomacy of China the US pushed both India and Pakistan for negotiation and eased the tension that emerged out after terrorist attack on Indian Parliament.

Policy of 'Concern'

After the 2013 Chinese approach again changed. China showed its "concerns" over Kashmir situation. Many analysts considered it also any era of neutrality but Chinese concerns were more observed in this era although publically they supported to resolve issue by using bilateral means. Chinese concerned policy over Kashmir was a result of its economic stakes in Kashmir particularly Gilgit-Baltistan due to Pakistan China Economic Corridor (CPEC) initially of \$ 46 billion and later on \$ 64 billion. Chinese projects of economic significance were in full swing in Kashmir. These projects include building of Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower project of 996MW, Kohala and Chakothei-Hattian hydropower projects with the generating capacity of 2569MW of electricity. On Attabad Lake in Hunza Valley Pakistan has completed five tunnels with the assistance and collaboration of Chinese company 'China Road and Bridge Corporation'. Widening of the Jaglot-Skardu road was in process. India has raised concerns over the Chinese assistance in development projects in Gilgit-Baltistan under the CPEC. Beijing justified the CPEC as a "livelihood Project" when concerns were raised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to China in May 2015 (IDSA, 2017). China and Pakistan was planning to enhance the CPEC by extended it to other countries of the world especially their focus was to involve Russia and Iran in it (UN, 2019) (Mir, 2016) (Masood, Sultana & Muzaffar, 2020).

China also favoured Pakistan when after Pulwama incident India blamed Pakistan and got the support and sympathies of US and other states of the world. On February 14, 2018 a local freedom fighter, Adil Dar attacked an Indian convoy of the Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) with an explosive. Due to this explosive attack almost 40 Indians soldiers killed and 70 wounded in the district of Pulwama in Indian Occupied Kashmir. Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) has proclaimed the responsibility of this attack. This attack was condemned by almost all nations of the world because it was deadliest one after the 1989 when a severe revolt against the Indian occupied forces were observed in Kashmir. This was also led by the local people and freedom fighters. Pulwama attack further deteriorated the India-Pakistan relations. Pakistan categorically denied any sort of involvement in this attack (Ashok, 2019). Just day after the attack, US White House demanded Pakistan to end its support to terrorists and stated that it was strengthening our resolve to support India in counter terrorism strategies and enhance its cooperation with India in this regard. US also demanded from Pakistan to stop supporting the safe haven of terrorists operating in Pakistan. US and India criticized the Chinese move in UNSC to halt to brand JeM and Masood Azhar as terrorist outfit and individual. The State Department of US issued a statement supporting India and warned Pakistan and China to hold their responsibilities pursuant to UNSC resolutions to deny the support to terrorists (Burke, 2022). Indian took the Chinese move in UNSC as to contain India by supporting Pakistan or securing its economic interests in Pakistan. Parthasarathy blamed that Pakistan is the prime Chinese instrument for low-cost containment of India. So Pakistan should be deal to engage with Afghanistan and Iran or building economic pressure through international agencies like IMF, WB and ABD (Bharat 2019).'

Rather than admitting the countless sacrifices and genuine demand of people of Kashmir the 'Right to Self-determination' and finding a peaceful solution of Kashmir conflict, India has unilaterally changed the status of Kashmir on August 5, 2019 by changing the article 35A and 370 in its constitution that spoke for the special status of Kashmir. After the removal of these articles any Indian can buy land in Kashmir, gets domicile, secure jobs and can do business in Kashmir. Kashmiri pundits that left the valley in 1980 were encouraged to resettle in Kashmir. All these deliberate moves were done to change the demography of Kashmir that would lead to change the Kashmiris in minority in their own areas. This action

of Indian government was the gross violation of resolutions of United Nations that were to resolve the Kashmir conflict by plebiscite. This decision of Indian bifurcated the former state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories of India: Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Now both territories would be directly administered by New Delhi. The reaction on this Indian action was not only from Kashmir and Pakistan but it was also observed from all over the world. Along with diaspora community of Kashmiris many people around the world came out in the support of Kashmiri people. In many states peaceful rallies were organized to support Kashmiris and masses in these rallies have chanted slogans in favour of basic rights of Kashmiris and lauded their voice against the action of India. Indian action was also discussed in the parliament of many states. Many States criticized the Indian government on such action but on the other hand many took it as the internal matter of India. Statements of high officials from different parts of the world also came in response of Indian action. International organizations of human rights also came forward and have seen Indian action as violation of human rights in Kashmir. Chinese think-tanks and diplomats criticized this action of India. On August 6, Chinese foreign ministry issued a statement to condemn Indian decision. The ministry asserted that "China is always opposed to India's inclusion of the Chinese territory (Ladakh) in the western sector of the China-India boundary into its administrative jurisdiction. Recently India has continued to undermine China's territorial sovereignty by unilaterally changing its domestic law. Such practice is unacceptable and will not come into force (Singh, 2019)."

Their abrupt reaction was to solve the Kashmir dispute by using bilateral means. Due to China after five decades the issue of Kashmir was discussed in the first session of United Nations Security Council (Antara, 2019). The Chinese ambassador at this highest forum stressed on the violation of human rights in India-occupied Kashmir and expressed that Kashmir issue should be resolved through peaceful means in accordance with the "UN Charter, the relevant Security Council Resolutions and bilateral agreements". Pakistani ambassador while speaking to the reporters outside the chamber acknowledged the Chinese efforts for the cause of Kashmiris (Parjanya, 2019). This Chinese support means a lot to the people of Kashmir that were fighting for their freedom from illegally occupied Kashmir by India. Even after passing of three years China still lauded its voice for the revocation of article 370 and unilaterally deciding the future of Kashmir. On the third anniversary of August 5, 2019 Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Hua Chunying called India and Pakistan to resolve the dispute peacefully through bilateral consultation. India expressed strong reservation over Chinese support to Kashmir cause because now they considered it as their internal matter but in real terms it is not. Kashmir belongs to Kashmir and they should give their due right to decide their future (Krishnan, 2022).

Conclusion

Chinese policy towards Kashmir dispute was not consistent. Its policy on Kashmir changes over different periods of time. International scenario or domestic compulsions were two major factors that have affected the Chinese policy on Kashmir dispute. The analysis shows that today Beijing is more concerned about the future of Kashmir because the fate of Kashmir will also affect the Chinese policies to develop its western region that connects Xinjiang with Gwardar to access the Indian Ocean through CPEC. To avoid the conflict between two nuclear states India and Pakistan over Kashmir China is also planning to involve India in CPEC. By inviting India in CPEC, China is trying to reduce the threat of conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir and move this region towards peace and economic prosperity. Economic prosperity will lead towards political stability in the region. It will end blame game and move towards win-win situation.

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