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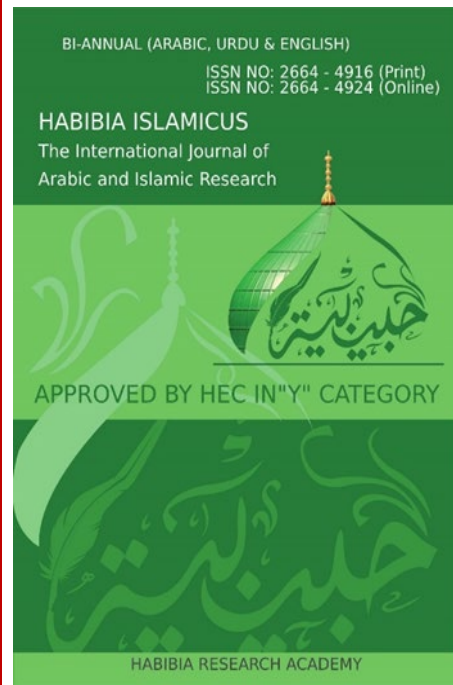
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TOPIC:

KASHMIR CONFLICT AND ROLE OF CHINA AN ANALYSIS

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KASHMIR CONFLICT AND ROLE OF CHINA AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT:

This research paper examines the attitude of People's Republic of China towards Kashmir conflict. Chinese leaders have been evolving their own strategy towards the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Chinese concentration was focused basically to oppose the United States and the United Kingdom in the United Nations. Even when the Soviet Union began to favour the Indian stand, China remained neutral. China cooperated with Pakistan in every field including the Kashmir issue but the United States, Soviet Union and the Western block opposed Chinese efforts in the United Nations. That's why China remained unsuccessful in resolving the Kashmir dispute.

KEYWORDS: Kashmir Dispute, China, Pakistan, India, United Nations, NATO, China's Kashmir policy.

PAKISTAN-CHINA RELATIONS

People's Republic of China and Pakistan have had cordial relations. This trend began soon after Pakistan recognized the government of the People's Republic of China in Peking as the legal Government of China. Although the two countries follow the different social and political systems, they have come together to support each other in times of crisis. The commonly felt threat from hegemonies' and expansionism of the two regional powers i.e. USSR and India promoted understanding between them. China-Pakistan relations developed in depth after the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962, when a number of agreements on the boundary, trade, air, services, radio-television etc. were signed, exchange of visits became frequent, and Peking extended economic and military assistance to Pakistan.

The Chinese people deeply sympathize with the just struggle of the Kashmiri people for their right of self-determination and support Pakistan's efforts for achieving freedom of Kashmir. It must be pointed that Indian Government will never gain any benefit from its chauvinist and expansionist policy towards its neighbours. China would like to advise the Indian Government to stop its domineering and arbitrary practice by bullying its neighbour by relying on imperialism and return to the path of settling the Kashmir issue in accordance with the Indian Pakistan agreement and the aspirations of the people of Kashmir.

"The Indian Government had always been perfidious on the Kashmir question. It once pleaded solemnly with Pakistan to grant the Kashmiri people the right of self-determination. But far from honoring its pledge, it had brazenly declared that Kashmir is an integral part of India and had subjected the Kashmiri people to brutal national oppression. People's Republic of China condemned the Indian brutalities in Indian occupied Kashmir and strongly supported the armed struggle of Kashmiri people. China also termed this armed resistance as just and realistic. Where there is oppression, there is bound to be revolt and the more violent the oppression, the bigger the revolt. The Indian government's predicament is entirely of its own, and it can blame no one but itself."¹

CHINA'S RECENT KASHMIR POLICY

Since November 2003, India and Pakistan have effectively maintained a cease-fire along the Line of Control separating their respectively controlled segments of Kashmir.

Meanwhile, New Delhi and Islamabad have renewed their efforts to arrive at long-term solutions to this intractable conflict that has dragged the two neighbours to war three times since the 1947 partition. Despite incessant, albeit much reduced violence and incidents, peace has so far prevailed. The latest thaw is manifested in summit meetings between the two countries' top leaders and regular official consultation, proposed and actual troop pullback, and agreement on missile launch notification. During his recent visit to the Siachen Glacier, where the Indian and Pakistani troops have stood eyeball-to-eyeball on the highest battleground in the world for over two decades, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called for "turning the glacier into a mountain of peace," which reportedly has received endorsement from the Indian military.²

Beijing has welcomed these positive developments, and considers "Indo-Pakistani rapprochement a major step toward regional peace and stability."³ Rarely stated though, are the implications of either the continued impasse or a possible resolution of the Kashmir for China's own security interests. How does China view the Kashmir conflict, and to what extent do its positions on the issue reflect broader Chinese foreign policy toward South Asia and its relationships with India and Pakistan respectively? This brief seeks to address these questions by examining the change and continuity of Beijing's policy toward the Kashmir dispute and explaining the underlying rationales behind it, with a focus on the more recent developments.

UNDERSTANDING CHINA'S POLICY

China's declared positions on the Kashmir issue have evolved through four distinct phases. In the 1950s, Beijing upheld a more or less neutral position on the Kashmir issue. The 1960s and 1970s saw China shift its position toward public support of Pakistan's views on the issue as Sino-Indian relations deteriorated. Since the early 1980s, however, with China and India moving toward normalization of bilateral relations, Beijing returned to a position of neutrality even as it sought to balance between the need to satisfy Pakistan's demands for support and the growing interest in developing a better relationship with India. By the early 1990s, China's position became unequivocal that the "Kashmir issue is a bilateral matter to be solved by India and Pakistan through peaceful means."⁴

China's Kashmir policy must be understood within the broader contexts of its South Asia policy in general and where this policy fits in Beijing's global strategies, and its bilateral relationships with India and Pakistan in particular.⁵

While in the past, Beijing supported Islamabad's positions on the Kashmir issue to demonstrate solidarity with an "all weather" ally during periods of Sino-Indian estrangement and hostility, normalization with New Delhi has necessitated the adoption of a policy of neutrality to avoid unnecessarily alienating India and running the risk of entrapment. Indeed, as both India and Pakistan have acquired nuclear weapons capabilities, China has become extremely worried that any escalation of conflicts over Kashmir could precipitate a nuclear exchange, with horrifying consequences.⁶

Beijing is very interested in the reduction of tension over Kashmir and therefore is particularly encouraged by recent developments, such as the cease-fire along the line of control, the defense secretary meeting on the Siachen Glacier demilitarization, the resumption of civilian flight and the opening of the bus service through Kashmir, discussion on reducing military presence along the line of control, and military confidence building measures including the agreement on missile launch notification. A recent article in People's Daily on August 11 describes the ongoing Indo-Pakistani talks as "warm and constructive" and noted that New Delhi and Islamabad are beginning to tackle issues of substance, including measures to reduce tension and avoid military conflicts in areas along the line of control.

Chinese analysts suggest that both India and Pakistan have a lot to gain from the current rapprochement. Prolonged tension and fighting over Kashmir has exacted severe tolls in human and material terms for both countries. For instance, maintaining supplies to the Indian troops stationed on the Siachen Glacier costs New Delhi \$1 million a day. "Since fighting began in 1984, some 2,500 Indian and 1,300 Pakistani troops have died over the years, not so much in direct combat but as a result of the treacherous weather and terrain conditions."⁷ Managing the Kashmir issue has become a critical consideration in New Delhi's efforts to realize its great power potentials by channeling more resources to economic development. "For Pakistan, the conflict consumes even more resources. The post-September 11 regional security environment and the U.S.-led global war on terrorism also exert external pressure for Pakistan to deal with cross-border terrorist activities."⁸

Beijing is also interested in the evolving negotiations over Kashmir due to its own entanglement, which is largely a result of the October 1963 Sino-Pakistani Border Agreement. India claims the Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin of approximately 35,000 square kilometers as part of the territory in Ladaakh, Kashmir. While a remote possibility, "a resolution of the Kashmir dispute between New Delhi and Islamabad could re-open the sovereignty issue left over in the 1963 Sino-Pakistani border agreement."⁹

LOOKING AHEAD

Yet due to the intractable nature of the Kashmir conflict and the still widely divergent positions held by the two sides, any imminent resolution remains elusive. "Indeed, resolving the Kashmir dispute may be a most challenging diplomatic undertaking since the original conflict has evolved over the years from a purely India-Pakistan contention for jurisdiction to one that increasingly involves an independent movement within Kashmir, interwoven ethnic and religious strife and conflicts, and an increasingly fertile ground for cross-border terrorist activities."¹⁰

Nonetheless, Beijing hopes that the current thaw between New Delhi and Islamabad will continue. Peace and stability on the sub-continent would advance Chinese interests of further improving relations with India. Indeed, over the last few years, the bilateral relationship has registered significant progress, with regular high-level visits, booming

trade, continuing border negotiation, joint military exercises, and closer cooperation on intelligence sharing to fight terrorism.

Beijing has also sought to nudge Islamabad toward seeking a peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue. "China, however, continues to value its traditional ties with Pakistan, which is seen less as a counter to India and rather more as an important factor in Beijing's fight against ethnic separatist movements in its northwestern territories."¹¹

CONCLUSION

People's Republic of China condemned the Indian brutalities in Indian occupied Kashmir and strongly supported the armed struggle of Kashmiri people. China also termed this armed resistance as just and realistic.

In August 1965 armed struggle was on its peak and intense fighting was going on in Indian occupied Kashmir. China stated that this rebellion was natural that Kashmiri's no longer tolerate the brutal rule and communal prosecution of the Indian authorities. The Indian government had sent in large number of military troops, paramilitary forces and police to carry out sanguinary suppression but the local people had put up a firm resistance.

In order to cover up their wanton slaughter of the Kashmiri people and to divert the people's attention at home and mislead public opinion abroad, the Indian authorities have been trying to shift the responsibility for their crimes on to Pakistan. They charged that "Pakistan had attacked Kashmir." They had also made vile slanders against China repeatedly, with a view to creating a false impression that China was involved in the incident which was engineered themselves. On August 15, Indian Prime Minister Shastri alleged that the attack on Kashmir "is guided and controlled by Chinese officers." The next day Indian Defence Minister Chavan came out with an assertion about the "training of guerrilla warriors in Pakistani Azad Kashmir by Chinese instructors." Had those fantastic tales saved the Indian rulers? Certainly not, because they could not stand examination.

Beijing has growing interests in seeing a stable South Asia and is seeking a better relationship with India. That explains Beijing's more unequivocal position on the Kashmir issue, which in turn is firmly grounded in the belief that the only realistic way to resolve the Kashmir conflict is through peaceful negotiation between India and Pakistan. As Islamabad's trusted friend, Beijing could and should use its influence to convince Pakistan that it is also in her own interest to resolve the issue peacefully.

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