India-Pakistan Confrontation: What has Changed about Indian-Held Kashmir since 1947?

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Prologue

The ideological imprudence and political short-sightedness of Indian leadership has never allowed it to win the hearts and minds of Kashmiris. Treating the Kashmiris with an iron fist would never complement Indian grand strategy in the region and beyond. The human sufferings in Indian-held Kashmir (IHK) would also continue to jeopardize India's self-proclaimed world shining image. The Kashmir conflict has long begun to cease as a 'mere territorial dispute' between India and Pakistan given the strategic pattern of regional and international politics in the last few decades, large-scale western influence in the region, proxy wars, dynamics of alliances and coalitions within and beyond the region, and most importantly, the rise and spread of dissident elements in IHK with strong linkages elsewhere. Becoming well aware of these socio-political dynamics, New Delhi has lately realized the futility of any solution of Kashmir issue without taking into account the diverse political aspirations of Kashmiris living in the region. What is still missing in New Delhi's policy vision, however, is her stiffness over not allowing a trilateral dialogue to break the impasse of political negotiations and finding a win-win solution on all three fronts, i.e., India, Pakistan, and Kashmir. The nature of India-Pakistan peace parleys and the strategic issues involved in them often fail to complement whatever New Delhi and Kashmiri leadership arrives at and vice versa. The peace process on Kashmir is a broad subject to be dealt with in a single study. This paper, therefore, limits itself to socio-political and military dynamics

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through which IHK has been passing during the past six decades, making it vulnerable to communal wrangling just like the rest of India.

Introduction

It has been more than six decades that the Kashmir issue has kept the Indo-Pakistan hostility burning. In spite of respective Indian and Pakistani claims about Jammu and Kashmir as 'an integral part of Indian union' and 'unfinished business of 1947', the essence of dispute has changed a lot in recent decades. In the words of Teresita C. Schaffer, "The Kashmir problem began as a dispute over territory; what has made it toxic has been incompatible national identities."[1] The Indian drive to play against the wills of majority Kashmiris has put Indian nationalism into rivalry with Kashmiri nationalism. India and Pakistan have entered an arms race over Kashmir and are engaging in fruitless bilateral diplomacy both with and without international persuasion. On the other hand, the Kashmiri youth and politicians have long rejected the status quo over Kashmir; more so, as the world community has shifted its attention from the settlement of Kashmir dispute to a mere call for crisis-management. One of the most perceptible changes regarding IHK is recognition on the part of both India and the international community to view Kashmiris as important stakeholders in achieving a sustained resolution of the conflict. The Kashmiri youth has become tech-savvy enough to post online pictures and videos of Indian security forces' brutalities, besides engaging in online discussion forums to share their vision and ideas of peace, thus waging a social media war against the armed hands of Indian government.

The IHK has long been administered by India as a special territory under Article 370 of the Indian constitution. Amendments to this article have been central to a gradual integration of Kashmir with the rest of the country. Kashmiri diasporas around the world are expressing dissatisfaction with the Indian administration and pace of development in Kashmir, and want Kashmiris to run their own socio-economic and political affairs. Despite a lack of leadership among Kashmiri political groups, many from the academic and business circles are speaking up through modern modes of communication, involving social media sites, to show

their concerns and views about the conflict. Their views exhibit concern about Kashmir's under-development, showing local alienation from the Indian setup of centralized control of Kashmir affairs. The Kashmiri youth also want their voice being recognized as the most important in any dispute settlement process between India and Pakistan as well as through the international community.

This study seeks to analyze various changes that have altered the geo-political landscape of IHK on global radar. In doing so, the study is set to answer the following questions: What has changed in IHK geographically, militarily, and politically? What has been the Indian central government's policy vis-à-vis IHK since 1947? To what extent, local representatives have any say in the running of IHK? How strong is the communal divide or integration (if there is any) with respect to the demands of regional autonomy? Does the emergence of social media constitute an important change in reviving Kashmiri struggle at the international forums? What are the most pressing challenges for Kashmiris in the present day? Based on the preliminary assertion that regional and international geo-politics in the recent past have brought numerous changes in IHK, the study aims to highlight the need for a remodelling of Indian strategy about the issue itself.

Geopolitical divisions of IHK

The disputed area of Kashmir, located in the north-western region of Indo-Pak Subcontinent borders China and Afghanistan. The territory is divided into five regions. Two regions, administered by Pakistan, are commonly referred to as Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad (free) Jammu and Kashmir, while three are in the control of India, collectively incorporated by India into the state of Jammu & Kashmir, also known as IHK. A line of control marking the ceasefire line between the Pakistani and Indian administered parts, both on ground and map, actually divides the disputed territory to which both India and Pakistan lay their respective claims. The geographical divisions of Kashmir do not make it a mere territorial dispute between the two historically rival states but also involve political underpinnings, cultural reflections, and economic discrepancies within and outside these divisions. The IHK is itself divided into three regions which represent ethnic,

religious, economic, and political diversities intensified during the recent years.

According to the Indian government's 2011 census, the population of IHK is about 12.5 million (see Table 1).[2] The first important part of IHK is called the Vale or Valley of Kashmir with a population of more than 5 million.[3] The Valley has a predominant Muslim majority. Jammu is the second most-inhabited area, having a population of 4.4 million with a 60 per cent Hindu and 30 per cent Muslim population.[4] Muslims are a majority in three of Jammu's six districts. The mountainous Ladakh is the third region of IHK mainly inhabited by Muslims and Buddhists (see Table 2). Each of the communal group is about half in the district of Leh, but in Kargil district Muslims are in majority.[5] The Ladakh region also includes a large Shiite Muslim population showing religious diversity from Sunni majority in the Valley.

The IHK is divided not only geographically but also politically. Of these three IHK regions, supporters of the freedom movement are primarily based in the Valley of Kashmir opposing the rule and heavy control of New Delhi. This is the region that has suffered most because of armed clashes between Indian security forces and local Kashmiris. Jammu and Ladakh are on the side of the Indian government.

Table 1

Area and population of the three regions

Region	Area (Sq. Miles)	Population (2011 Census)
Kashmir Valley	8,639	5,350,811
Jammu Region	12,378	6,907,623
Ladakh Region	33,554	290,492
Total	**54,571**	**12,548,926**

Source: Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs.

Table 2

Religious Demography in J&K - Census 2011

DIVISION	POPULATION			
	Muslim	**Hindu**	**Sikh**	**Buddhist**
Kashmir	97.16%	1.84%	0.88%	0.11%
Jammu	30.69%	65.23%	3.57%	0.51%
Ladakh	47.40%	6.22%	-	45.87%
Jammu and Kashmir	**66.97%**	**29.63%**	**2.03%**	**1.36%**

Source: Election Commission of India, 2014

The Kashmiris themselves are not happy about these regional divisions. Dissatisfied with Indian acts of control, the population of IHK is politically divided into three groups—those who are on the side of Pakistan, political groups favouring centre's rule, and finally those who are struggling for independence.

The three regions of IHK have been following a different approach towards centre's rule of the territory since the contested accession of Kashmir to India in 1947. The accession is a controversial affair because the ruler of Kashmir, a Hindu Maharaja, chose to accede to India disregarding the popular will of his majority Muslim populace. The events that followed later and involved a war between India and Pakistan in late 1947 gave the Indian government an excuse to use every means to tighten its control over the territory and people of Kashmir. The brutal state repression accompanied by instruments of constitutional integration of IHK by the Indian government has produced dissident elements within the territory over the years. The Kashmiri uprising of 1989-90 has a whole background of misrule, political manipulation, economic exploitation, and military high-handedness towards local activists often labelled as pro-Pakistani and militants revolting against the state. This uprising started from the Valley and spread to other parts of IHK. Over the course of time, ethno-geographical, religious, socio-economic, and political divisions have become a dominant feature in IHK though. The following section will look into details of each of these divisions.

Regionalism in IHK

Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh achieved administrative unity only during the British rule. Before that the three regions of IHK remained distinct in their identity and political governance.[6] Putting three divergent regions into one without regard for their religious and cultural differences pitted them against one another soon after the British withdrawal from India. Political differences between these regions also have a communal angle as the Valley is different from Jammu and Ladakh in terms of its demographic composition and allegiance towards Delhi government. There has also been a feeling of political neglect in Jammu and Ladakh because of resource allocation and administrative decisions for the region being taken in New Delhi. A perception of political and

electoral dominance of the Valley widely prevails amongst inhabitants of Jammu and Ladakh. Sensitivities also exist in Jammu about the Valley being a pivotal point of politics for New Delhi and, therefore, enjoying national and international policy attention. This regional disparity led to the beginning of agitation-based politics in Jammu as early as 1953. To address regional discontents, the Indian government appointed several commissions in the past, two of which were Sikri Commission and Gajendragadkar Commission, to make inquiries into regional imbalances which later proved true in economic and political fields.[7] Uniformity of politics and development in IHK, however, is neither the goal of successive IHK governments nor of New Delhi.

Regional political aspirations took a communal form when the two major political parties in IHK, National Conference and Congress, competed for votes in 1983 Assembly elections by campaigning for faith-based voting. The Congress succeeded in winning the support of Jammu Hindus by playing up their fears of domination by the Valley-centred politics of the region whereas the National Conference targeted Muslim dominated constituencies throughout IHK.[8] This trend of communal-based electoral politics in IHK continues to this date.

Sub-regional political divisions grew wide enough with the demand of Jammu and Ladakh for treating the whole region under exclusive jurisdiction of Indian constitution instead of granting it a special status under Article 370.[9] The Hindus of Jammu and Buddhists of Ladakh have long been supporting a complete integration of IHK in the Indian Union in contrast to the demand for greater autonomy by the Muslims of the Valley.[10] Demanding separation of Ladakh from the rest of IHK, Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) formed the People's Movement in 1989 for Union Territory status.[11] In other words, the demand called for representational allegiance to the centre and making Ladakh politically distinctive from Jammu and Valley. LBA also started demanding a trifurcation of IHK along communal lines:[12] Ladakh for Buddhists, Jammu for Hindus, and Valley for Muslims which was welcomed by both hardliner Hindu forces in India including Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS),[13] as well as the so-called liberal political parties like Congress.[14] The trifurcation demand is

still being repeated by these political groups in India occasionally as the lasting solution to Kashmir problem.

Sub-regional politics in Ladakh

Within Ladakh,[15] political differences are wide enough between its two districts—Leh and Kargil—largely due to a clash of identity crossing religious and regional lines. Co-inhabited by Buddhist and Islamic cultural spheres, the large number of Shiite Muslims in Kargil puts it apart from Leh which is a Buddhist dominant area. The two areas were made separate districts in 1979 by the then chief minister of the state Sheikh Abdullah[16] on administrative grounds, but the decision sounded more like a religious one and could be likened to the historical partition of Bengal into East and West Bengal by the British government in 1905. Following widespread Hindu agitation, the partition of Bengal was reversed by the British Viceroy Lord Hardinge in 1911. The division of Leh and Kargil is, however, still intact resulting in the politics of region, religion, and identity.

In fact, religious divisions in Ladakh became more prominent after new political developments in the region which were characterized by electoral politics and young Buddhists' demands of separate Union Territory status for Ladakh. Both in Leh and Kargil, relations between Muslims and Buddhists are in constant tension primarily due to the incidents of conversions on account of inter-religion marriages in the past. This is widely opposed now after becoming a major issue in 1989.[17] The demand for Union Territory status was heavily opposed by Muslim inhabitants of Ladakh region which resulted in communal riots in 1989 leading to a social boycott of Muslims from 1989 to 1992 by the LBA.[18] This four-year agitation-based politics led to the birth of another political organization, the Ladakh Union Territory Front (LUTF), with the merger of all Leh-based political parties into it.[19]

For centuries, Ladakh remained home to socio-cultural, religious, and commercial exchanges between its Muslim and Buddhist population. This communal harmony transformed into religious clashes between different political groups belonging not only to Buddhists but also to Shia and Sunni sects of Islam. Religious fundamentalists from Buddhist and Shia Muslim groups were reportedly engaged in violence to settle political scores.[20]

This inter-faith discord was principally exploited by LBA through highlighting Buddhist identity as distinct from Islam, and associating the former with the history and territory of Ladakh.[21] Thus the period of 1970s and 1980s witnessed growing fundamentalism within Buddhist community, calling for unity against non-Buddhists.[22] Recognizing the distinct geographical and religious identity of Buddhists, the government of India agreed to give Ladakh the status of Autonomous Council. The Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) was created Under the LAHDC Act of 1995 as a regional autonomous model. Using the same model, an Autonomous Hill Council was also established in the neighbouring Kargil District, known as Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Kargil or KAHDC.[23] The two Councils have long been engaged in the politics of religious fundamentalism and have used their respective religious identities to win alliances. During the *Panchayat* (local government) elections in 2011, faith-based campaigning particularly became the test case.[24]

This inter-religious political rivalry is especially dominant in Zanskar, a majority Buddhist town in the Muslim majority Kargil district of Ladakh. Since the start of 21st century, the two communities are engaged in bitter rivalry over the issue of conversions out of fear of losing their respective demographic majorities. National newspapers' comparative assessments of two census reports (2001 and 2011), suggesting an overall decline in Buddhist population in the district due to religious conversions, are only adding to the politically motivated communal divide in the region.[25]

Rise of militant/radical forces

Even if the Kashmiris conceded to Maharaja Hari Singh's hurried accession to India without any consideration for majority's will, it was the gradual suppression and feeling of alienation that made the inhabitants of IHK dead set against New Delhi's rule. Giving feedback after interviewing political and economic representatives from the Valley, the Kashmir Study Group report narrates, "These people who in the early years had not necessarily been happy with the Indian connection but had been content to live with it, had now become embittered antagonists of India."[26]

The story of the rise of militant elements in IHK begins with post-partition politics between Kashmiri leadership and Indian government. Reluctant to accept Pakistan's statehood and having suspicions on final accession of Kashmir to India, soon after partition India embarked upon a programme to win the support of Kashmiris. National Conference (NC), the biggest political party founded by Sheikh Abdullah in Kashmir during pre-partition years, also found patronage in Nehru's Congress to solidify the former's rule in IHK.[27] The NC and Congress leaders were able to conclude an agreement in 1949 which provided for an independent political status for Kashmir in the future Indian constitution. The first constitution of India in 1950 not only endorsed the 1949 Agreement by incorporating Article 370 to delineate relationship between central government and IHK, but also included IHK in Article 1 and Schedule 1 to validate the latter's accession to the Indian Union. Under Article 370, IHK was allowed to have its own constitution, flag, and political title. The Article restricted Indian government's powers vis-à-vis IHK to external affairs, defence, and communication only. In the years to come, Abdullah's absolute authority in governing IHK as different from the rest of India came under heavy criticism. Looking at the internal political history of IHK from 1950s to 1970s, one gets a sense that a battle of pursuing competing objectives soon drifted NC and central government apart.[28] Sheikh Abdullah was arrested in August 1953 in 'Kashmir Conspiracy Case'. This provided an opportunity to secessionist elements to come out in the open. The arrest of Sheikh Abdullah and a change in government[29] strengthened the belief that the central government was only interested in promoting its control in the territory at the cost of undermining the process of democracy.

The Plebiscite Front (PF) was founded in 1955 by the supporters of jailed Sheikh Abdullah and began demanding the right to self-determination for IHK. Describing the Indian Army as the army of occupation, the PF termed Kashmir's accession to India temporary.[30] Opposing the politics of NC, PF emerged as an active political party in the region with seeds of separatism and remained so until early 1970s when a political compromise was reached between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi leading to restoration of the former to his position in IHK.[31] It was during this

period of political confrontation between Indian government and IHK that militant groups rose up in protest for their rights. Hilal Bhatt, a Kashmiri writer, recalls how his peer group at school used to long for joining indigenous guerrilla organizations to fight Indian rule, and parents fearing their children to become militants began sending them to boarding schools outside the Valley.[32]

The PF was dissolved by Sheikh Abdullah in exchange for his reinstated status in the government. This dissolution, however, proved short-lived as the young secessionist elements of PF soon established another separatist group known as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Successive efforts of New Delhi to control IHK politics by installing hand-picked regimes, entering into alliances with NC, and planned rigging in State Assembly elections proved disastrous for Kashmiri youth. Opposing political settlement between NC and centre-led Congress, JKLF raised slogans for liberation of Kashmir. Massive street agitation of JKLF began in the wake of post-1987 election results. This engaged a large number of young Kashmiris enthusiastic for ending Indian control of IHK. Instead of addressing their grievances, the Indian government dealt high-handedly with secessionist elements by appointing tough administrators like Jagmohan Malhotra and supporting security forces against common citizens in IHK.

> Victoria Schofield points out:
> "The grievances amongst the Kashmiris, which had been allowed to fester, the steady erosion of the 'special status' promised to the state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947, the neglect of the people by their leaders, were clearly India's responsibility. Tavleen Singh believes that Kashmir would not have become an issue 'if the valley had not exploded on its own thanks to Delhi's misguided policies'. "[33]

The integrationist politics of Indian government through undemocratic and inhuman ways of control were always resisted by some sections in IHK. During 1987 and 1989, however, there were episodes of massive violence, shutdowns, and protests against Indian administration and policies in IHK. The following events particularly triggered the armed battle for self-determination in IHK:

1. Unconstitutional removal of elected governments, frequent change of chief ministers, and whittle down of Article 370

by the Indian government imbibed a feeling of betrayal and alienation amongst the Kashmiris from 1950s onwards. The Holy Relic Movement of 1963[34] gave a new angle to secessionist elements in the region. Headed by Mirwaiz Molvi Mohammad Farooq, the Holy Relic Committee was jointly formed by Muslim clerics and separatist parties for restoration of the Holy Relic. Becoming a 'coalition of opposition parties' in the Valley, the Holy Relic Committee was soon transformed into Action Committee[35] rallying common masses through religious sentiments around the right to self-determination.

2. The history of Assembly elections in IHK is linked with rigged and fraudulent electoral politics. The manipulation of electoral votes in 1987 elections, however, proved disastrous for Indian government. The results of the 1987 elections brought a massive change in youth politics of Kashmiri groups who raised anti-India slogans throughout the Valley. Navnita Chadha Behera has articulated the feelings of Kashmiri youth who used to say, "the bullets will deliver where the ballot had failed, slaves have no right to vote in the democratic set-up of India and we were left with no option but to pick up the guns."[36] The Indian government first responded by appointing hard-line rulers and later by introducing direct rule in IHK in January 1990, igniting a new wave of resistance in the region.
3. Although the *Jama'at-e-Islami* (JeI) in Kashmir had come into being in 1945, much before the partition, it only actively started participating in the politics of IHK during 1970s.[37] The JeI has long been projecting itself as the champion of Muslims in Kashmir which led many militant outfits of IHK freedom movement to get linked with it. These include *Hizbul Mujahideen, Hizbul Islami*, *Islami Jamiat-e-Talba*, *Al-Jehad*, etc. The JeI itself came into alliance with other pro-freedom Islamist organizations under the banner of Muslim United Front (MUF) in September 1986. Along with JeI, other fundamentalist parties grouped under MUF were the *Ummat-i-Islami* and *Anjuman-i-Itehed-ul-Muslimeen*. Other political units of MUF included Islamic Study Circle, Muslim Education

Trust, Muslim Welfare Society, *Islami Jamiat-i-Talba*, and *Idara-i-Tahqiqat*. The main objective of MUF was to protect the religious and political rights of Muslims in IHK by contesting polls in 1987. But electoral rigging and manipulation of ballot boxes resulted in massive victory of NC-Congress alliance. The MUF defeat in 1987 elections proved counterproductive for New Delhi, as the former received mass support in the following years. Street protests against electoral rigging resulted in imprisonment of large number of Kashmiri political leaders later to become heads and chiefs of various militant groups in IHK. Some of their names include Mohammad Yousuf Shah (Syed Salahuddin) heading Kashmir's largest surviving militant outfit *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen* (HM), and Mohammad Yasin Malik, Chief of JKLF. Both of them contested the 1987 elections from the platform of MUF.[38] To continue the freedom struggle by championing the cause of Islam, an 11-party alliance was formed in March 1990 with the name of *Tehrik-e-Hurriyat-e-Kashmir*. The alliance comprised of some old militant outfits in addition to new political leadership striving for the freedom of Islam. Some of the prominent member organizations of this alliance were JeI, Muslim Conference, People's League, *Mahaz-e-Azadi*, and Islamic Students League.[39] The religious cause, as propounded by these Islamist organizations in IHK, helped engage masses in freedom struggle on a large scale. Most of these religion-based political organizations resorted to armed struggle only after facing brutal treatment of their leaders by the Indian army and paramilitary troops in IHK.

4. The impact of changing international climate on IHK was huge. Events like revolutionary movements of Hungary and Cuba and the success of Afghan *Mujahideen* against Soviet Union instigated the birth of groups like Al-Fatah and People's League in IHK who initiated guerrilla warfare against Indian tyranny and as an expression of disappointment with the political leadership of Kashmir. A number of militant outfits were established by political leaders as well as by other prominent Kashmiris at this time. By 1994, there were some 11 major militant

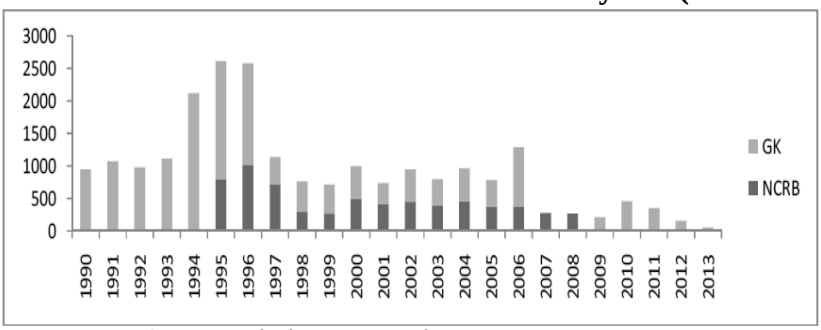
organizations operating in IHK besides dozens of smaller ones.[40] Many of them were banned by the Indian government, while many re-emerged with new alliances and different names. Researching into news archives of the 1990s, one gets the impression that the revolutionary ideas of freedom and concepts like nation-state were becoming more popular internationally during those times. The surge for freedom in IHK was partly created by the disintegration of USSR[41] and independence of many Central Asian states in the waning years of the Cold War.

5. Communal politics played its own role in strengthening separatist tendencies in IHK. The centuries old group identity of Kashmiris was divided into Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist aspirations for rights within the region. The Hindu nationalist parties including Praja Parishad, Jana Sangh, and the RSS—backed by Congress and other Hindus—launched agitation as early as 1952 against the autonomous status of IHK.[42] The communal agitation of Praja Parishad led Sheikh Abdullah to shift his idea from 'complete internal sovereignty of Kashmir' to an 'independent Kashmir'. Events like the Amarnath Land controversy of 2008 and beef-ban controversy of 2015 have also multiplied radical elements amongst the youth of Kashmir who view them as Hindu India's religious domination of Kashmir.[43]
6. The ruthless use of force by Indian Army and acts of torture against Kashmiri youth fuelled gross resentment and reinforced militant elements in IHK during the past decades. According to Human Rights Watch, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) provides safe exit to Indian Army from being trialled in extrajudicial killings in Kashmir.[44] The cycle of repression and abuse of human rights under the umbrella of AFSPA (1990) reinvigorated the growth of radical forces in Kashmir. The AFSPA gives extraordinary powers to Indian Army to counter militancy in IHK. These extraordinary powers also provide the army impunity in cases where innocent civilians including children are killed by 'mistake'.[45] The Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA) is another cruel law used by both

central and state governments to detain a person without trial for a period of two years. Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have declared the PSA as an unconstitutional law misused by the Indian authorities to hold anyone in custody without judicial enquiry.[46] The number of detainees held under the PSA has greatly reduced in recent years though (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Total number of detainees under Public Safety Act (1990-2013)



GK: It represents Greater Kashmir newspaper data
NCRB: It represents National Crime Records Bureau
Source: Kumar Mohd Haneef, *International Research Journal of Social Sciences,* July 2015.

There are three types of security forces positioned by the Indian government in Kashmir for several decades: Indian Army, the Border Security Force (BSF), and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The latter two forces directly operate under the Home Ministry unlike the Indian Army controlled by the Ministry of Defence. Of these three forces, BSF has particularly earned bad reputation for its brutal operations and extrajudicial killings of innocent Kashmiris.[47] There is a whole count of horror stories of individual tortures and inhuman treatment meted out by the Indian security forces to the Kashmiris at the infamous torture centre Papa-II.[48] The unchecked repression and despotism of Indian government in the name of security has only worsened the situation, giving rise to radicalism and extremism in the region. This point is well-endorsed by the Director of Global Operations at Amnesty International, "Till now, not a single member of the security forces deployed in the state has been tried for human

rights violations in a civilian court. This lack of accountability has in turn facilitated other serious abuses."[49]

There is a dearth of collated data on the number of killings, disappearances, rapes, tortures, and encounters of Kashmiris during the last 25 years. The only thing that one gets after doing extensive web research is reiteration of figures between 40,000 to 100,000 killings in IHK from official and unofficial sources. The IHK government places the total figure of killings in IHK at 43,460 from 1990-2011. This figure, includes 21,323 freedom fighters, 13,226 civilians killed by freedom fighters, 3,642 civilians killed by security forces, and 5,369 policemen killed by freedom fighters.[50] These figures, like other data available on media group sites and civil society associations, lack coherence in collation of the information on killings, suicides due to tortures and rapes, physical disabilities, internal displacements, reported and unreported disappearances, and unmarked graves in Valley and other regions. Further research is required to elucidate the criminality of the Indian security forces—by virtue of the authority vested in them through draconian laws in the name of security in IHK—but which has ruined the whole Kashmiri society making it only reactionary and venomous. Blaming the collective coercive arm of Indian government for the growth of militant elements in IHK, Behera writes in *Demystifying Kashmir*, "The central government appointed Governor Shri Jagmohan's policy pushed the populace to becoming anti-Indian and turned the most apolitical Kashmiris into active supporters of militancy."[51]

Showing concern for increasing radicalization of the Kashmiri youth, Waheed Parra, a youth leader from the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) argued, "Firstly, they [young Kashmiris] have a conflict with their identity. Secondly, they are anti-establishment. We are trying to figure out how to integrate them into the mainstream."[52] The ruling party should also recognize this boldly that every action has a reaction. Indian brutal suppression of freedom elements in IHK and redefining of Kashmir issue by linking it with terrorism and insurgency radicalized the Kashmiris' struggle for self-determination.

Indian diplomacy of control

In the past decade, the politics of violence has receded in IHK to a great extent but lack of political stability as well as new modes of protest and the freedom movement still pose multiple challenges to Indian rule in the region. India has been following a trifold policy in its international diplomacy on Kashmir issue. At international forums, India has long rejected external intervention in an attempt to maintain a policy of bilateralism in dispute settlement with Pakistan. In discussions with Pakistan, India upholds Kashmir as its integral part, conditioning the continuation of the peace process with the settlement of other prickly issues between the two countries. But internally India treats Kashmir as a colony, depriving its inhabitants of majoritarian pluralism and democratic rights. To strengthen the centre's control and weaken local administrative authority, the Indian government issued 28 constitutional orders and extended the application of some 262 Indian laws to IHK between 1954 and 1970s.[53] Almost 600,000 troops were deployed in the Valley to police a population of just 8 million. [54] During the past 68 years of military conflict, Indian diplomacy vis-à-vis Kashmir has changed from persuasive integration to coercive, and from electoral influence to aid and development diplomacy.

Repression and violence

The politics of confrontation and cooperation between central government and Sheikh Abdullah sowed seeds of discontent and radicalism in IHK, challenging Indian control of the state. The inception of militancy in 1989-1990 was faced off by successive Indian governments with an iron hand. Broad literature is available within and outside the region depicting in detail the horror stories of Indian atrocities, mass murders, rapes, tortures, disappearances, and civilian sufferings. Since 1989, an estimated 70,000 people have been killed and around 8,000 have disappeared.[55] There are a number of voices from inside IHK narrating their childhood memories of human rights violations by the Indian security forces. In his personal memoir, Basharat Peer, a Kashmiri journalist, tells how the crackdowns and systematic torture by Indian security forces "changed Kashmir forever with militant groups sprung up in every village."[56] India responded to

this militancy by passing various notorious acts such as AFSPA and by setting up of two medieval torture chambers, Papa I and Papa II, into which large numbers of local people, as well as the occasional captured foreign jihadi, would 'disappear'.[57]

For the inhabitants of IHK, their territory is occupied by a 'foreign army'.[58] Search operations, curfews, irregular bans on internet, interrogations, and massive killings of local people by the Indian army and security forces in the name of maintaining security have long become a norm in IHK.
According to the Amnesty International 1992 report:

> "Widespread human rights violations in the state since January 1990 have been attributed to the Indian army, and the paramilitary Border Security Force (BSF) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)…. Cordon-and-search operations are frequently conducted in areas of armed opposition activity…Torture is reported to be routinely used during these combing operations as well as in army camps, interrogation centers, police stations and prisons. Indiscriminate beatings are common and rape in particular appears to be routine…In Jammu and Kashmir, rape is practiced as part of a systematic attempt to humiliate and intimidate the local population during counter-insurgency operations."[59]

Installing the Delhi-controlled governments in IHK has long helped Indian state apparatus to maintain a tight grip over the region. For example, the government of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad—installed in 1953 upon the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah—adopted a policy of coercive suppression of all military and political voices of resistance. Similarly the appointment of Jagmohan Malhotra as governor in 1990 began a new era of "state repression marked by routine beatings, intimidation, verbal abuse and humiliation, widespread torture, rape, arbitrary detention of scores of youth suspected of being militants, and shootings by the security forces at public processions and in crowded market areas."[60] The iron hand of respective Indian governments has case-hardened dissension and violence in IHK.

Erosion of autonomy

Article 370 of the Indian constitution has been at the core of historical and contemporary changes in IHK. In spite of acceding to the Indian Union in 1947, the so-called state of Jammu

and Kashmir (IHK) maintained its autonomy by signing the Instrument of Accession that limited central government's role to external affairs, defence, and communication. Article 370 of the Indian constitution recognized the distinctiveness of IHK by stipulating in clause D that no such order which related to the matters specified in the Instrument of Accession will be issued except in consultation with the IHK government. The article also acknowledges the supremacy of the Constituent Assembly of the state in recommending any changes to the said article by any presidential notification.[61] In simple words, Article 370 excludes the region from many general laws of the Indian constitution as applied in other states of India. For instance, the article prohibits Indian citizens from other states to purchase land or property in IHK. Similarly, as per the provisions of the article, the central government cannot enforce financial emergency in IHK under Article 360 of the Indian constitution without the concurrence of the IHK government. Many international agreements concluded by the Indian government do not automatically extend to the IHK, so on and so forth. The Article in its original standing calls for maximum autonomy of IHK and provides ample scope for self-rule within the Indian federation as envisioned by its chief drafter Sheikh Abdullah.

Ever since the incorporation of Article 370 into the Indian constitution, the subject of autonomy and self-rule in IHK has been widely opposed in India. Successive New Delhi-based governments have passed various amendments and constitutional orders with the help of installed governments in IHK to evade Kashmir's autonomy clause from the Indian constitution in an attempt to integrate the region with the Indian Union. The process started with the Constitutional (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order 1954, issued by the president of India, extending the centre's jurisdiction to all subjects under the Union List and the residuary powers. In 1958, through a constitutional amendment, IHK was brought under the purview of central administrative agencies. In November 1964, Article 356 (imposition of President's Rule) was applied despite provision in the state's constitution for governor's rule. Through the 1965 presidential order and 6th Amendment, the head of state (Sadr-i-Riyasat) elected by the state legislature was replaced by a governor

nominated by the centre and prime minister by chief minister.[62] In 1986, insertion of Article 249 into the Indian constitution empowered the parliament to enact legislation on any state subject with a two-thirds majority of Rajya Sabha (upper house of Indian parliament).[63] In the words of Ashutosh Kumar, "42 Constitution Orders issued over the last five decades have resulted in substantially curtailing the powers of the State Legislature whereas the powers of the Parliament have been extended. Out of 395 Articles of the Indian Constitution, 260 laws have been made applicable."[64] Such orders and amendments passed by the centre amount to a deliberate erosion of autonomy of IHK in an attempt to integrate the region with Indian Union irrespective of the will of majority of Kashmiris. Further, the history of rigged electoral politics in IHK exposes undemocratic intentions of India in beheading political consciousness and civil liberties of Kashmiris.

Loss of international interest

The United States and other western countries accept that Kashmir is a dispute but consider this long drawn out conflict as a typical case of contested border between India and Pakistan rather than an international issue involving severe human rights violations on which UN has passed many resolutions. The matter is still being considered 'a bilateral conflict' by the outside world with a slight change of view on the dispute to be settled in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiris.

The very first internationalization of the Kashmir dispute could be traced back to the UN intervention to impose a ceasefire to end the first war between India and Pakistan in January 1949. To monitor the ceasefire line between the two countries, the UN Military Observer Groups in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) were deployed in Kashmir. These groups continued the monitoring exercises until the outbreak of second war between India and Pakistan in 1965. The 1965 Indo-Pakistan war engaged outside world[65] to play a role in crisis management in South Asia. The 1971 war between India and Pakistan that led to the dismemberment of Pakistan through Indian covert military assistance witnessed an ever-increasing superpower engagement—Soviet Union, the United States, and China—all focusing on crisis diffusion over Kashmir with their larger global and regional

interests. This period was followed by a reduced international diplomacy in Kashmir conflict. Instead, the post-1971 bilateral diplomacy of India and Pakistan leading to Simla Agreement in 1972 itself led to an identification of a new 'ceasefire line' as the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir. It was the popular uprising of Kashmiris in 1989 that evoked international interest in the conflict again but from a new angle. This time, international human rights groups stood up to criticize violations of human rights in IHK by the Indian security forces. The armed resistance of Kashmiris in 1990s coincided with nuclearization of India and Pakistan in 1998 which reinvigorated international involvement in South Asia out of fear for militarization of Indo-Pak conflicts.[66] The rejection of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and nuclearization of the conflict alerted the US towards pressurizing the two countries to begin a series of talks to settle the root causes of conflicts between them.[67] This resulted in a high-level summit between India and Pakistan in February 1999 which was concluded with a bilateral agreement—the Lahore Declaration—to resolve all differences amicably. The Kashmir issue got huge international media attention due to the Lahore Declaration which reaffirmed India and Pakistan's commitment to find a peaceful resolution to it. International pressure for dispute settlement that was built up after the 1998 nuclearization of India and Pakistan reached new heights with the outbreak of a 'limited war' between the two countries in Kargil district of Kashmir in May 1999. Although the crisis came to an end with the intervention of United States in July 1999, international pressure[68] continued to mount on both the countries to enter into dialogue and negotiations. India also showed interest in accepting the US technology and intelligence to monitor the LoC which later allowed international diplomats to visit IHK during September and October 2002 elections.[69] International crisis management diplomacy was again set in motion in December 2001 when, in the wake of terrorist attacks on Indian parliament and Indian allegations on Pakistan for supporting cross-border terrorism, the two countries deployed armed forces along the LoC as well as at the international border. Stern warnings were issued from the high offices in the US to avert a nuclear war in South Asia.

The international community was not initially willing to see Kashmir conflict in the light of self-determination. For many years, fighting in Kashmir remained a conflict only between India and Pakistan. It was in the post-1990 period of armed struggle in IHK that the voices of the Kashmiri freedom fighters captured the attention of human rights bodies internationally. These were the years when any peace process or idea of back channel diplomacy began to focus on Kashmiris as the 'third party' to the conflict.

Besides the United Nations, the issue has been raised on a number of international platforms including Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) without any significant outcome for its resolution. There have been moments when international community got involved in the conflict (1947, 1965, 1971, and Kargil) but their interventions primarily remained limited to diffusing the conflict especially after the nuclearization of both India and Pakistan. During all episodes of violent clashes along the LoC, the United States and many other European countries pushed Pakistan to stop supporting Kashmiris' movement for freedom instead of pressurizing India to accommodate the grievances of Kashmiris. For instance, Victoria Schofield writes about the Kargil War, "the Pakistani government called on the international community to assist in a resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Unconvinced by Pakistan's denials of involvement, the western response was far more supportive of India's demands for a withdrawal than Pakistan's requests for discussions to solve the core issue of Kashmir."[70]

The US and international involvement in Kashmir conflict has witnessed renewed engagement only during escalated conflict situations. Thus international interest in Kashmir could only be categorized as mere crisis-management. Analyzing the Kashmir policy of the Obama administration, former US foreign service officer Howard Schaffer writes, "Should another serious Kashmir related India-Pakistan crisis develop, Obama will no doubt resume the crisis-management efforts which have been so central to America's role in Kashmir in the quarter-century dating back to the George H.W. Bush administration."[71] The recent concern of the US and the world community with terrorist networks has facilitated a renewed interest in South Asia but with a different

strategy: pathologically focusing on Afghanistan while dealing with Pakistan and India as de-hyphenated[72] on Kashmir and other bilateral issues.

Party politics: lack of leadership in Kashmir

The three regions of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh have long been maintaining politics of regionalism where leadership is divided along ethno-religious and regional identities. The Valley-centred politics of regional leadership has generated intra-regional struggle for political influence dominated by external affiliations. During the post-1950s period, a number of political parties sprang up in Jammu and Ladakh regions in response to the control exercised by the Valley-based National Conference over economy and politics of IHK. The failure of Sheikh Abdullah's National Conference (NC) to integrate the divergent political aspirations across the three regions of IHK soon resulted in regional frustrations and dissenting political groups throughout the region. From 1967 to 1990, a number of outfits emerged in Jammu region. These included Panthers Party, Jammu Mahasabha, Jammu People Front, and Jammu Mukti Morcha. Organizations like Jammu Mukti Morcha protesting against the permanent dominance of the Valley-based leaders were created with the objective of forming a separate Jammu state.[73]

The politics of ruling parties in IHK from 1947 to-date is a history of alliances and coalitions with central government in New Delhi. This tradition of coalitions began when NC—established as early as 1932 in Kashmir—merged with the Congress and became the Jammu and Kashmir branch of the latter in 1965. The NC was reconstituted by Sheikh Abdullah in 1975 and won two immediate State Assembly elections with a majority in 1977 and 1983. The death of Sheikh Abdullah and decline of popular support in 1987 elections forced JNKC to seek power in IHK with the support of a coalition government of the Congress Party. This warranted a never-ending control of the centre on IHK governments in the years to come. Like NC, the second most important political party in IHK, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), also followed the practice of cobbling alliances and coalitions together with the central ruling political parties including Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).[74] Although the politics of coalitions with the

central government secured the regimes of NC and PDP in IHK, it resulted in a heavy cost in terms of trust loss by state subjects. Over the years, the declining economy, skimpy public infrastructure, and high rate of unemployment have fuelled the discontent of Kashmiri masses with their political leadership. The inconclusive elections of December 2014 with no party securing majority seats resulted in a new political bargain when the PDP entered into an alliance with BJP to form a coalition government in IHK.

It is for the first time in Indian history that a Hindu nationalist party is sharing power in the only Muslim majority region of the country. The road to this alliance seems to be quite turbulent as witnessed by a developing communal crisis in the past few months which has put IHK into prolonged unrest just like the rest of India where religious symbols have taken precedence over real governance, and regional practices are challenged by outworn ancient laws. The September 2015 ruling of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court (J&K HC) to ban the sale of beef in the region reiterated the 150-year-old Ranbir Penal Code enacted by the Dogra Maharaja of Kashmir in 1862 under which intentionally killing or slaughtering a cow was a non-bailable crime.[75] The J&K HC's ruling generated a vociferous debate besides demonstrations by sword-bearing Hindu radicals in Jammu and stories of violent attacks on Muslims. Only a month after the beef ban was imposed, violence broke out in the Valley followed by the death of a Kashmiri trucker allegedly involved in beef smuggling.[76]

Over the years, the Kashmir conflict has witnessed the emergence and decline of over 50 rebel groups[77] often competing or cooperating with each other to prove themselves as representatives of people living in IHK. In the last few years, representative leadership in Kashmir has been reduced to divided political factions. The attempts of successive Indian governments to influence ideology and political leanings in Kashmir have resulted in infinite divisions between and within regional leaderships of parties like the NC. Another major reason for party fissures has been ideological disagreements over the resolution of Kashmir dispute. One such example is JKLF—a militant-turned-political organization—which by the mid-1990s was split into two ideological groups: one supporting Kashmir's accession to

Pakistan and the other advocating for an independent and united Kashmir through peaceful means.[78] During 1980s, the JKLF remained a strong platform for masses in Kashmir to voice their support for independence. Backed by huge public support, the JKLF was able to organize mass processions, rallies, and protest marches including armed attacks against the Indian government.[79] By 1990s, the pro-independence and secular nationalist ideology of JKLF was heavily countered by newly formed radical groups in the Valley such as Hizbul Mujahideen (HM). Backed by Jamaat-e-Islami and seeking the support of Muslim majority of the Valley, the HM gave a call for jihad against the Indian government and stood for accession to Pakistan. The decade of 1990s witnessed huge armed clashes between HM and JKLF opposing each other's goals vis-à-vis Kashmir conflict. News reports confirm that it was HM which targeted the JKLF and killed hundreds of its cadres. It also leaked information about JKLF hideouts to the Indian forces.[80] The HM was initially able to receive some popular support which soon faded out due to its excessive Islamic orientation and internal feuds. The fractionalization of Kashmiri leadership into multiple armed and contrasting ideological groups dealt a severe blow to the Kashmir cause. In 1993, the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) emerged as an amalgamation of 26 religious, political, and social groups with an aim to combine disparate ideologies for a shared desire about the final resolution of Kashmir issue.[81] Despite functioning as a cooperative alliance for over 20 years, popular support for the leadership of APHC has reduced over the years due to internal rifts between pro-independence and pro-accession groups. Disagreements also crawled up in 2003 over the role of militancy and dialogue in the movement[82] resulting in its split into APHC (Mirwaiz group), Tehreek-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir (Geelani group), and Yasin Malik following his own course for independence. The APHC suffered a further split in 2014 when four constituent parties of Mirwaiz group left it.[83] The APHC's persistent stance on not taking part in State Assembly elections as a denunciation of Indian rule in the region has also left the organization without any popular political mandate. The self-representative character of APHC has failed to take into consideration the aspirations of the people in Kashmir. Then, there is Peoples Democratic Party, the current ruling political party in

IHK, advocating self-rule. For many Kashmiris, the crisis of leadership in IHK is becoming the main stumbling block in the resolution of Kashmir issue.[84]

The current leadership in IHK is fractionalized and lacks vision to guide the dissenting sections of youth who are not only fed up with militancy but are also baffled about their future in the disputed state. The Kashmir Study Group (KSG), after surveying different civil society groups in IHK, reported in 1997 that although the top leadership of political parties in IHK was enthusiastic to run government, people seriously doubted their ability to do so. The KSG interviewees simply dubbed the leadership of APHC as 'confused' who not only failed to attract non-Muslim subjects of the state but also remained unable to devise a political consensus within the organization since its formation.[85] As the saying goes, united we stand, divided we fall. In recent decades, the dearth of unity amongst Kashmiris rendered the Kashmir cause leaderless. The Kashmiri leadership was never able to recognize the individual aspirations of different communities living in IHK. They failed to interpret the meaning of self-determination for each group of people divided along regional lines in Jammu, Ladakh, and Valley.[86] While self-determination means freedom for Muslim majority in the Valley, it represents integration within Indian Union for Hindus and Buddhists in Jammu and Ladakh. Even within Muslim majority populace of the Valley, a strong disagreement exists between pro-Pakistan and pro-independence groups over the concept of self-determination.

Vibrant youth and media in Kashmir

Traumatized by incessant warfare, high unemployment, political alienation, and social insecurities, the youth in IHK is hanging on to information technologies to show the inhuman face of India to the larger world. Media and web-based discussion groups often initiated by Kashmiris living in UK and elsewhere are providing alternate spaces to youth in Kashmir for catharsis. But this new battle is also counterattacked by the Indian government with frequent bans on text messages[87] as well as cyber surveillance. Kashmiri diasporas are everywhere in the world now. Those who have fled Indian atrocities in the Valley are now well-established, many of them exerting political influence in the US and British

parliaments. Many migrants from the Mirpur district (in Azad Kashmir) belong to prominent British-Pakistani community in London. They are quite active in using social networking sites to raise awareness among the international community about civic and political rights of people living in IHK. Many from this diaspora have established online NGOs to promote Kashmir cause and freedom mission.

The use of social media as an alternate means of protest has also become popular amongst separatist groups whose sole reliance on strike calls and protest calendars was gradually rejected by the local people questioning the efficacy of shutting down the daily businesses. The Hurriyat leaders are themselves using Facebook and Twitter accounts to bridge the gap between people and leadership.[88]

Termed as 'cyber intifada', the passionate youth of Kashmir are using their cell phone cameras to wage an alternate form of war against Indian atrocities. It has now become a battle of bullet versus stone and photo. In the words of Peter Goodspeed, "the youths record and photograph the clashes, posting images of the dead, sobbing mothers and funerals on Facebook and other websites….An uprising generated by Internet social sites is an angry amorphous force with no defined leadership."[89] Many Kashmiris now prefer street and online remonstrations over armed struggle. Those preferring e-protests are children of the conflict,[90] born during or after the rebellion movement, who have witnessed their families suffer from street violence in the sixty years of conflict. Street protests are now promoted and scheduled through Facebook and Twitter pages. The 'million march' was organized on 7 November 2015 to counter Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally in Srinagar through social networking groups. Over 120 such pages were identified by the cyber cell of Jammu and Kashmir Police Force in an attempt to block most of them.[91] Facebook and Twitter based chat groups revolve around anti-India discussions and often involve pro-freedom chants and slogans.

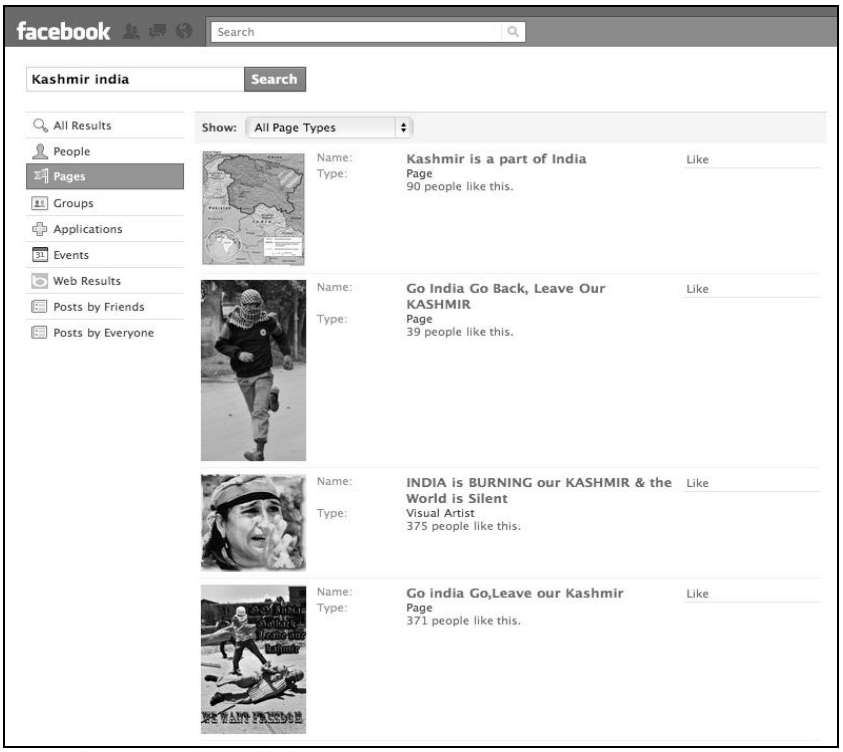
Many of the multimedia messages on YouTube and Facebook reporting innocent killings by the Indian Security Forces in Kashmir receive viral response (see Figure 2) and often end up in street rallies and mass protests. This has led the Indian government to enforce cyber surveillance and making arrests of

many Kashmiris with charges of terrorism and hate speech. Scrapped only nine months ago in March 2015 by the Indian Supreme Court, Section 66(A) that "prohibited the sending of information of a 'grossly offensive' or 'menacing' nature through computers and communication devices," [92] was utterly misused by the IHK police force since its enforcement in 2008. The police lodged several cases against politicians, journalists, students, and others in Kashmir for spreading rumours and sharing information that could 'create disturbances and destroy peace in Kashmir'. At least 16 people were booked in 2012 for their alleged role in organizing protests on social networking websites.[93] For security reasons, many from the youth have long been using fake names and anonymous accounts to post pro-freedom messages.

Technology has opened up Kashmir both physically and intellectually. Advances in road and transportation infrastructure have made inroads into distant parts of IHK as far and high as the Siachen Glacier. It was the availability of modern mountaineering technology and skills that allowed India to expand ground-centred Kashmir war to the heights of more than 15,000 feet, converting the desolate terrain of Siachen into a new battlefield.[94] The emergence of social media and web technology is the most significant change that has given long subjugated people in IHK independent and diverse channels of opening up to the outside world about their sufferings and loss of faith in the Indian society in spite of several restrictions on freedom of speech.

Figure 2

E-battle for Kashmir



Source: Open Democracy, 2010.

Emergence of Kashmiris as a third party at conflict stage

The initial parties to talk on Kashmir dispute were India, Pakistan, and the United Nations. After the Indian insistence and outright rejection of third-party involvement in the resolution of dispute, the peace process vis-à-vis IHK was conducted on a bilateral basis. The Nehru-Liaquat Pact, the Tashkent Pact, the Swaran Singh-Bhutto talks, the Simla Accord of 1972, the Lahore Declaration of 1999, the Agra Summit in 2001, cricket diplomacy, and several rounds of composite dialogue process between India and Pakistan during the last 68 years are all examples of bilateral diplomacy to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

Several confidence building measures (CBMs) were also launched to institutionalize the peace process on Kashmir, such as the beginning of the fortnightly Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service

in April 2005 which became bi-weekly in August 2008. Another Poonch-Rawalakot bus service was started in June 2006 with increased opportunities for trade and travel across the Line of Control (LoC). The bus service helped in reuniting over 16,000 Kashmiris divided by the LoC. And trade of commodities between IHK and Azad Kashmir boosted goodwill and interaction between the populace on the two sides, besides engaging former militants in trading opportunities.[95] The cross-LoC trade, travel, and sporadic interactions between the Kashmiri leadership has marked a new beginning for a symbolic focus of India and Pakistan on Kashmiri people as the most important stakeholder in the conflict.[96] Many of these were the initiatives launched by the Vajpayee government in power from 1998 to 2004. The Track II diplomacy of Vajpayee government with Pakistan also brought in focus the initiation of dialogue policy with Kashmiri separatists.

In May 2000, the government of India made a public declaration to have dialogue with APHC. Similarly, it was in August 2000 that India began peace talks with Hizbul Mujahideen after the Srinagar-based pro-Pakistan group declared a unilateral ceasefire in July 2000 for three months in IHK.[97] It was again in October 2003 that India offered to enter into dialogue with separatist leaders after the offer of talks was rejected by militant groups and hard-line separatists. Moderate separatist leaders like Abdul Ghani Bhat accepted the talk offer recognizing that "talking is better than acrimony."[98] From 2004 to 2007, a section of Kashmir's separatist leadership was engaged by New Delhi and Islamabad on a regular basis. Several Kashmiri leaders met former Indian prime ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh. Some of them also travelled to Pakistan and met with the then president Pervez Musharraf. Pro-India Kashmiri leaders including present Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Peoples Democratic Party leader Mehbooba Mufti also met Musharraf. Likewise, former prime minister of AJK Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan went to New Delhi to attend a conference where he met Manmohan Singh in April 2007.[99] The failure of Indian government and Kashmiri leadership to sustain the political dialogue can mainly be attributed to the hard-line approach of New Delhi and disunity within the Kashmiri separatist groups.

Under growing international pressure regarding human rights violations in IHK and mounting militancy, Indian diplomacy has gradually turned to a two-pronged strategy: one continuing with a coercive hand, and the other promoting political dialogue in Kashmir. Going back in the past, the central government's efforts to initiate dialogue with the Kashmiri leadership[100] have remained a zero-sum game for reasons cited above. Following are some of these failed attempts:[101]

1. The BJP government's appointment of former Union Minister KC Pant as its interlocutor for peace talks with Kashmiris in April 2001 was met with failure after Hurriyat refused to talk without the involvement of Pakistan in negotiations, a demand stringently opposed by India.
2. In 2002, the so called Kashmir Committee was formed but failed to conclude an agreement with the Hurriyat.
3. In 2003, the BJP government appointed two interlocutors successively to engage in dialogue with separatist leadership in IHK. The talks failed due to the absence of a roadmap for talks and inability of the Indian government to offer any concessions to the separatists.
4. The two roundtables organized in February and May 2006 failed to achieve a consensual settlement due to the boycott of many separatist leaders, who called for the inclusion of Pakistan in the broader peace process.
5. In an effort to explore the contours of a political solution in IHK, the Indian government appointed a three-member team of interlocutors for Kashmir in October 2010. In the words of former Indian home minister P. Chidambaram the objective of this team was to "begin a process of sustained uninterrupted dialogue with all sections of people of Jammu and Kashmir, especially with youths and students and all shades of political opinion." This time, the process seemed to work differently[102] as the interlocutors were supposed to reflect the varied

opinions of different interest groups within their report encompassing socio-economic needs and political viewpoints across wide-ranging communal divisions and dissent elements in IHK.

Thus over the years, the Indian government and politicians have been able to recognize Kashmiris as imperative enough stakeholders to achieve the stability of society. The practice of entering into dialogue with the people of IHK has, however, been limited to expanding the electoral process in the region. Therefore, the process of dialogue between central government and Kashmiris failed to consult differing political and militant groups in IHK and narrowly relied on political negotiations with some of the divided separatist factions to achieve desired electoral clout. This has marginalized the peace process and intra-Kashmir dialogue. The inclusion of Kashmiris from all sections and communities in the dialogue process is central to a final and sustained resolution of the conflict because of the different regional and political narratives ranging from Azadi and autonomy to integration with India or Pakistan. The participation of the people of Kashmir is also critical for the success of the India-Pakistan dialogue on Kashmir. They are direct stakeholders and their involvement would help both in evolving and implementing a solution acceptable to all the three parties to the dispute—India, Pakistan, and the people of Kashmir. Kashmiris have been very supportive of the Composite Dialogue and the Kashmir-specific CBMs but have been demanding their inclusion in the process to make them trilateral rather than bilateral.[103] The international community has also increasingly recognized the importance of engaging Kashmiris as one of the primary stakeholders in the peace process.

Conclusion

The IHK has undergone massive structural changes in the past six decades. Originally aiming to achieve self-governing powers with a strong sense of Kashmiri nationalism, the early political leadership of IHK resisted every effort of the centre to integrate the ethnically diverse region in the federal structure of India. The overplay of politics of integration by New Delhi, ranging from rigged elections in IHK to a gradual attrition of autonomy clause in the constitution, transformed indigenous

political leadership into armed opponents. To make matters worse, militant struggle of Kashmiri youth was dealt with an iron fist by successive Indian governments which resulted in gross human rights violations and internationalization of the issue. The successive Indian governments' insensitivity to Kashmiri aspirations and regional grievances intensified struggling elements both within and outside IHK. The Kashmiri diasporas around the world have long started using modern media technologies to promote the cause of Kashmiris' self-determination. Many within IHK have become increasingly involved with social media to wage a cyber-war against Indian atrocities in the region. The Indian drive to make IHK 'an integral part of the Indian Union' has strengthened Kashmiri nationalism on the one hand, and disturbed the communal harmony in the ethnically diverse region on the other. The most important perceptible change in IHK is not only the emergence of Kashmiris as primary stakeholders in the dispute but the recognition of both Indian and international populace to engage Kashmiris in the peace process in order to achieve a sustainable resolution of the issue. Any win-win situation in the dialogue process, however, faces a number of important challenges ranging from weak and divided political leadership in IHK and stringent Indian stand on holding bilateral instead of trilateral negotiations to an inadequate international pressure.

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