

CHINA'S LOW KEY FOREIGN POLICY ON KASHMIR: FROM APATHY TO INDIFFERENCE

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BACKGROUND

The dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir has the unhappy distinction of being the longest-standing quarrel between any of the ex-colonial states and, indeed, one of the longer running quarrels between any two states. It has, of course, been the main dispute throughout between India and Pakistan and the biggest stumbling block in the improvement of relations between the two countries. It would perhaps, not to be an exaggeration to say that Indo-Pakistan relations in the past fifty-six years have been a hostage of the Kashmir dispute. Kashmir is central to India-Pakistan relations and the security paradox in South Asia. It has triggered two of the three wars between the two countries since they gained independence. The nuclearization of the region also nuclearised the Kashmir conflict, leading to internationalization of the dispute as a nuclear flashpoint¹. In view of the nuclear weapons capabilities of the two protagonists, it has also become one of the most dangerous disputes in the world. In particular, Pakistan has had made it the cardinal test and precondition for any meaningful improvement in bilateral relations and the establishment of a durable peace in the sub-continent. There have been endless tensions and wars between India and Pakistan on this issue which is no nearer a settlement today than it was fifty-six years ago².

The Kashmir dispute is neither a territorial conflict nor a question of unsettled frontiers between India and Pakistan. It is actually a matter of self-determination relating to the destiny of twelve million people of Kashmir³.

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The Kashmiris right of self-determination has been promised by India, Pakistan as well as the United Nations but today after the fifty-six years, it is yet to be fulfilled, regrettably,

However, none of these attempts, whether by the parties themselves or by the others bore even meager fruit. A unilaterally imposed solution might have solved the problem, but the wars that have been fought over Kashmir all ended in truces that solved nothing. Through the Cold War era, these regional realities became enmeshed in the triangular global confrontation among the U.S., the USSR, and China. This meant that Pakistan was able to find outside help from countries that had little interest in picking a quarrel with India, but wanted to ensure Pakistan's goodwill at the level of global competition and, to some extent, were pursuing broader world-order values.

It is undeniable that India had, at the outset of the dispute, promised to allow the Kashmiri people the choice to freely decide whether they wanted to join India or Pakistan. In particular, India had promised to abide by the UN resolutions to this effect. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had made repeated pledges to the world, and to Pakistan bilaterally, that India would allow the people of Kashmir to exercise their right of self-determination in an UN-supervised plebiscite. For instance, in a telegram to the Pakistani Prime Minister on 30 October 1947, Nehru had said: "Our assurance that we shall withdraw our troops from Kashmir as soon as peace and order are restored and leave the decision about the future of the State to the people of the state is not merely a pledge to your Government but also to the people of Kashmir and to the world"⁴. Similarly, the Indian representative, Gopalaswami Ayyenger told the UN Security Council on 14 January 1948:

The question of the future status of Kashmir vis-à-vis her neighbours and the world at large, and a further question, namely, whether she should withdraw from her accession to India, and either accede to Pakistan or remain independent, with a right to claim admission as a Member of the United Nations-all this we have recognized to be a matter for unfettered decision by the people of Kashmir, after normal life is restored to them⁵.

Nehru repeated similar pledges till the mid-1950s. Any impartial observer would have to say that India has, since then, reneged on these solemn commitments. Making short shrift of India's subsequent sophistry and quibbling justifying the volute face on its commitments, Krishna Menon, a close aide of Nehru, had frankly admitted in 1965 that political morality was pretty much a "text book approach" to public affairs' and that the real reason why India does not permit a plebiscite in Kashmir is that 'we would lose it'⁶

The international community has not accepted India self-serving argument that the people of Kashmir have, through the decisions of the popularly elected Kashmir Assembly, exercised their right of self-determination. Such local elections could not be a substitute for an UN-supervised plebiscite. This was so declared in specific terms by the UN Security Council⁷. Furthermore, these local elections were never held in a free atmosphere and, as testified by most foreign observers, they were blatantly rigged. The people of the Pakistan-controlled portion of Kashmir obviously did not participate in this election process or in the 'decision' of the Kashmir Assembly endorsing Kashmir's accession to India.

Even less valid is the Indian argument that the Indian Constitution has declared Kashmir to be an 'integral' part of India and that this is a settled matter. Such a unilateral declaration can have no legal validity or international acceptance. India argues that any discussion of Kashmir by another country is interference in India's internal affairs since Kashmir is an 'integral' part of India just like any other Indian state, like UP or Orissa. But the point is that there are no UN resolutions with respect to UP or Orissa, whereas there are number of such resolutions regarding Kashmir which the UN and other international bodies have expressly described as a 'disputed' territory.

To examine the Kashmir dispute, the existing position is that Pakistan has been insisting that this is the 'core' issue which must be resolved on the basis of the UN resolutions, passed between 1948 and 1957, asking for impartial plebiscite to determine whether the Kashmiri people wish to join India or Pakistan. India too regards Kashmir, as the main dispute with Pakistan, though its prescription for a solution is the opposite, that

Pakistan should accept Kashmir as an integral part of India. That is to say that Pakistan should accept *de jure* India's *de facto* control over the larger portion of Kashmir and also yield the Pakistan-controlled portion of Kashmir. The positions of the two sides have remained frozen for a long time. The new thinking would require some way to resolve or at least, to defuse the Kashmir dispute⁸.

The Great Powers, by pursuing policies which are designed to safe guard their own global interests; have made the solution of the Kashmir dispute more difficult. In the face of the rising power of China, Russia and the United States are co-operating with each other in maintaining the status quo in Asia⁹. They appear to be more interested in keeping the lid on trouble spots than in resolving disputes that foster and then erupt suddenly into war.

Walter Lippmann, writing in 1960, observed: "Any real progress of peace must rest on the premise that there will be causes of disputes as long as we can foresee, that these disputes have to be decided and that a way of deciding them must be found which is not war"¹⁰. The Western mind-set for the Kashmir problem is that it is basically a Muslim cause and one more manifestation of Muslim 'military' desire. It, therefore, leaves the Western governments and the news media unmoved. This attitude works to India's advantage¹¹. The moral pressure of the world public opinion does not appear to be such that India would be compelled in the foreseeable future to change its stance on Kashmir. Further, it would be an over-simplification to conclude that this state of affairs has been due to the poor projection of the Kashmir cause and Pakistan's case as has become the standard lament in Pakistan in the news media and elsewhere¹².

China has maintained an over-all tilt towards Pakistan's standpoint on Kashmir. Rejecting New Delhi's claim that Kashmir is an integral part of India, China views Kashmir as a dispute between Pakistan and India. However, the details of China's Kashmir policy have varied over time. Its emphasis on various methods for resolving the dispute has also shifted from time to time, mainly because of the changes in its South Asian policy and interaction with the West¹³. (First 10 years apathy next 15 years active support next 13 years deadlock, now indifference).

FIRST PHASE

In the fifties, China avoided taking sides on the Kashmir dispute as the two contenders, (i.e. Pakistan and India) were Asian states and neighbours. The Chinese leaders maintained their neutrality even when Pakistan moved close to the West, followed by participation in the US sponsored alliance system. Though the Chinese had strong reservations about Pakistan's policy of alignment with the West, they showed a lot of restraint in their dealings with Pakistan. However, they cautioned Pakistan and India not to involve the West, and especially the UN, in the settlement of the Kashmir problem, but should evolve a solution through their own efforts. This approach could be traced back to 1953 when the Chinese leaders welcomed the decision of Prime Ministers Muhammad Ali Bogra and Pandit Nehru to hold talks on Kashmir. The People's Daily noted with satisfaction that such talks would exclude the UN which had during the preceding five years "aggravated the Kashmir dispute" and that the UN "was a mere instrumentality of the United States, who wanted to convert Kashmir into a colony and a military base". The People's Daily endorsed the right of the people of Kashmir to determine their future¹⁴. It needs to be noted that it was the time when India had not retracted its commitment to let the people of Kashmir exercise their right of self-determination. Pakistan was deeply impressed by the fact that China maintained a consistently neutral attitude on Kashmir, regarding it as a disputed territory.

Prime Minister Zhou Enlai maintained during his visit to Pakistan in December 1956 that, like other disputes among the Afro-Asian nations, Kashmir could also be settled amicably and that the "colonists" who had originally created this problem should be kept out of it.

In 1957, when the Chinese Prime Minister visited Ceylon, he and the Ceylonese Premier, in a joint statement, appealed to India and Pakistan to settle the Kashmir dispute peacefully through direct negotiations¹⁵. This was followed by the Chinese Prime Minister's statement that he was not in favour of sending UN troops to Kashmir. This remark irritated the Pakistani leaders because that was also India's position¹⁶.

Suhrawardy informed the Prime Ministers of China and Ceylon that Pakistan could not accept their suggestions for direct talks with India on Kashmir¹⁷. The Chinese Prime Minister further expressed that he did not favour taking this dispute to the U.N.¹⁸ Later, Mao Zedong declared that China would maintain a neutral position on Kashmir. Pakistan's Foreign Minister welcomed Mao's statement and hoped that the Soviet Union would also adopt a similar position¹⁹.

Pakistan took up the issue of demarcation of the northern frontiers with the Chinese government in October 1959. The Chinese had reservations about this offer because the relations between the two countries were at low ebb at that time. A group of Nationalist Chinese Muslim pilgrims on way to Saudi Arabia for Haj stopped over in Karachi and called on Pakistan's Foreign Minister. This meeting and their statements were well publicized in Pakistan, which evoked a strong Chinese protest. Pakistan's policy on China's representation in the UN was also inconsistent and in 1959 it had cast a negative vote on this question. On top of this came Ayub Khan's proposal for Indo-Pakistan collaboration for defending the subcontinent against external threats (i.e. menace from the North), which irritated China. The reply to the Pakistani note for talks on demarcation of northern frontiers was not received until January 1961. The negotiations moved at a very slow pace in the initial stages²⁰. It seemed that the Chinese did not want to alienate India at that stage by setting the border issue quickly because they viewed Kashmir as a disputed territory. This attitude changed when Pakistan explained them that it was asking for identification of the line of divide, and that the areas to the north of the demarcated line would be Chinese while the status of the area to the south of the line did not have to be determined. Further the defense of this area, Pakistan maintained, would be the responsibility of Pakistan. This explanation facilitated, the dialogue. Additional impetus came from the outbreak of hostilities on the Sino-Indian border in 1962²¹.

Chinese caution on Kashmir was evident from the text of the Pakistan Border Agreement (March 1963), which was signed as a provisional agreement. Article 6 provided that after the settlement of the Kashmir dispute, the agreement would be renegotiated/reconfirmed by China and the concerned sovereign authority. A cautious sympathy for Pakistan on

Kashmir was manifested in the joint communiqué issued after the signing of this border agreement as the Chinese government lauded Pakistan's efforts for seeking an amicable settlement of the Kashmir dispute. However, Zhou Enlai asserted an overall position of neutrality on Kashmir in an interview with the Associated Press of Pakistan later in the same month. He said:

“...Even when we were on friendly terms with India, we took an attitude of non-involvement in the Kashmir issue. We have always cherished the hope that India and Pakistan would settle the Kashmir issue and other issues between them in a friendly way. We hope to see an independent and strong Pakistan. We are now on friendly terms with Pakistan, but we have not given up our desires for friendship with India²². Earlier, in December 1962, China welcomed the decision of Pakistan and India to hold Foreign Minister-level talks on Kashmir²³.

SECOND PHASE

A clear tilt towards Pakistan's position on Kashmir began to shape up in China's policy when its relations with India got bogged down in the aftermath of the boundary war and its relations with Pakistan improved in the backdrop of Pakistan's efforts to adopt an independent posture in world affairs. Pakistan's policy of maintaining a discrete distance from the West and expanding its relations with the states of Asia and Africa in the sixties, especially after the 1962 Sino-India war, facilitated the relationship with China. The highest levels of visits were exchanged during 1964-66, between the two countries. Pakistan launched a diplomatic campaign for the seating of China in the UN. To reciprocate Pakistan's gestures, China also changed its stance on the Kashmir issue.

When Zhou Enlai visited Pakistan in February 1964, China expressed support for the resolution of the Kashmir problem “in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir as pledged to them by India and Pakistan”²⁴.

Chinese Prime Minister, in his statement abandoned China's Hitherto Non-Committal Posture on Kashmir. He categorically supported the Kashmiri

people's right, to self-determination. China's new stand on Kashmir was greatly appreciated by Pakistan; because of those who advocate a plebiscite solution of the Taiwan issue could have cited it against China²⁵.

During his visit to China in March 1965, Ayub Khan was accorded an effusive welcome. Chairman Mao Tse-Tung (Zedong) expressed warm appreciation for Pakistan's support. The joint communiqué denounced the 'two Chinas' policy and reaffirmed that the Kashmir dispute 'should be resolved in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir as pledged to them by India and Pakistan'²⁶. China not only supported the right of self determination to the people of Kashmir but also demanded to solve the Kashmir dispute according to the U.N. Security Council resolution. So China showed her firmed stand on Kashmir.

China extended full support to Pakistan when the Indo-Pakistan war broke out in September 1965 and the Chinese media began to talk specifically about the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of Kashmir. China further declared on 12th September 1965 that its non involvement in the Kashmir dispute 'absolutely does not mean that China can approve of depriving the Kashmiri People of their right of self determination or that she can approve of Indian aggression against Pakistan'²⁷. It was a clear warning for India to solve the Kashmir dispute according to the wishes of the people of Kashmir as pledged to them by India and Pakistan. The Chinese sent a note to India, dated 16 September 1965, stated inter alias:

“---The Chinese government has consistently held that the Kashmir question should be settled on the basis of respect for the Kashmiri people's right of self-determination, as pledged to them by India and Pakistan. That is what is meant by China's non-involvement in the dispute between India and Pakistan. But non-involvement absolutely does not mean failure to distinguish between right and wrong; it absolutely does not mean that China can approve of depriving the Kashmiri people of their right of self-determination²⁸.

Similar support was expressed during Chinese president Liu Shao-Chi's official visit to Pakistan in March 1966. He declared:-

“---We have always held that the Kashmir dispute should be settled in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people. Any attempt to deprive the Kashmiri people of their right of self-determination or to bury the Kashmir question will neither be countenanced by the Kashmiri people nor by the Pakistani people..... The Chinese Government and people firmly support the righteous stand of the Pakistani government and the just struggle of the Kashmiri people for their right of self-determination²⁹. He reiterated that China would continue to support the just struggle of the people of Kashmir³⁰.”

China expressed support for the right of self-determination of the people of Kashmir in all high level exchanges with Pakistan in the late sixties. The Chinese became more vocal in their support in the early seventies and talked repeatedly of two matters in an inter-related manner: support for Pakistan's “national independence, state sovereignty and territorial integrity”, and peaceful settlement of the Kashmir problem through the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of Kashmir. The joint communiqués issued at the conclusion of Z.A. Bhutto's visits to China in 1972, 1974 and 1976 contained strong and specific references to these matters. The efforts for the realization of the right of self-determination were often described as “a just struggle”. The top Chinese political and military leaders who visited Pakistan during 1972-77 publicly endorsed Pakistan's position on Kashmir, including the right of self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. 1976-77 can be described as the high point of Chinese public endorsement of the right of self-determination in unequivocal terms. Subsequently, they began to separate the two issues: support for Pakistan's independence and territorial integrity, and a settlement of the Kashmir problem through the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of Kashmir.

THIRD PHASE

A subtle shift in China's Kashmir policy took place since the early eighties, when Chinese leaders avoided pointing references to the right of self-determination, and emphasized more on negotiated settlement between India and Pakistan on the basis of Simla Agreement and UN Resolutions. Pakistan had shown an understanding of China's silence over

the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir in view of China's effort to develop a functional interaction with India. They continued to express their support to Pakistan in unambiguous terms as was the case in the late sixties and early seventies, their position on Kashmir began to shift. The Chinese leaders stopped making pointed references to the right of self-determination or stayed quite on Kashmir. At times, they called for the settlement of the Kashmir problem in accordance with the Simla Agreement and the resolutions of the UN. Pakistan's official circles interpreted this as an indirect support to the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir problem through the exercise of the right of self-determination. Subsequently, they reverted to the position of neutrality, which characterized their policy on Kashmir prior to 1964 and began to call upon Pakistan and India to settle the Kashmir problem and other disputes through peaceful and direct negotiations.

Deng Xiaoping made the first public expression of the revised Chinese approach to the Kashmir problem in his interview to an Indian journal, *Vikrant*, in June 1980. He described Kashmir as a bilateral problem between Pakistan and India, which the two countries should settle amicably³². The Chinese have generally played up theme of reconciliation in South Asia. China's premier Zhao Ziyang avoided a pointed reference to Kashmir during his visit to Pakistan in June 1981, although Pakistani president General Zia-ul-Haq had raised the issue in his banquet speech. Zhao Ziyang emphasized the need for reconciliation of differences in South Asia "free outside interference and through consultations on an equal footing"³¹.

Several reasons explain the shift in China's Kashmir especially the absence of any reference to the right of self-determination as a method of solution. First, China's policy of improving relations with India led to toning down of its statements on Kashmir. Since the revival of diplomatic interaction between India and China in 1976, the latter worked towards improving its relations with India. China issued less strident statements on Kashmir after 1977-78. In 1981, the absence of overt expression of support to the right of self-determination during Zhao Ziyang's visit to Pakistan was due to the fact that China's Foreign Minister was to undertake a visit to India shortly after Zhao's trip to Pakistan. Therefore, it was not

considered advisable to issue a statement on Kashmir that would offend India. Second, China felt that if it wanted to defuse tension in the region, it should avoid involvement in any dispute. This tendency became strong as the process of normalization of relations between China and India gained some momentum in the eighties. The Chinese leaders avoided critical comments about the latter's policies towards other South Asian states, and they did not return to the idiom of the seventies on the Kashmir issue. They also urged the reduction of tension in South Asia and called upon the states of this region to improve their relations. They progressively adopted a non-partisan attitude towards inter-state disputes in South Asia³³.

Third, the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 overshadowed all other considerations in the eighties so far as the Chinese were concerned. They persistently demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops, supported the resistance cause in Afghanistan, and assured Pakistan of unwavering support to its independence and territorial integrity and its resolve to resist Soviet pressures. The Chinese began to be concerned about the developments in Afghanistan after the overthrow of Sardar Daoud in April 1978. The new Afghan government led by Noor Muhammad Taraki sought to strengthen its ties with the Soviet Union, culminating in the signing of a treaty of friendship and co-operation in December 1978. China was also concerned over Afghanistan's efforts to revive its irredentist claims on Pakistani territory. The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 convinced them that the Soviets wanted to absorb Afghanistan into their security system and that the Soviet-Afghan pressures on Pakistan were part of the Soviet strategy to expand its orbit of influence³⁴. Afghanistan figured prominently in Pak-China dialogues in the eighties and the two countries accelerated bilateral co-operation in all areas of mutual interest, although China retreated from its high profile support to Pakistan on Kashmir.

Many observers in Pakistan viewed this as a tactical change rather than a withdrawal of support. They argued that, as a matter of fact the reference to UN Security Council's resolutions point toward the Kashmiris rights of self-determination³⁵.

The high-level diplomatic exchanges between Pakistan and China in 1980-82 focused mainly on the Afghanistan issue. Important visits from China i.e. Foreign Minister Huang Hua (January 1980), Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang (May-June 1981), General Yang Dezhi, Chief of General Staff of the PLA (November 1981); Vice Pre-mier Ji Pengfi (March 1982). Important visits from Pakistan: President Zia-ul-haq (May 1980 and October 1982), Foreign Minister Agha Shahi (December 1990), Foreign Minister, Yaqub Ali Khan, (April 1982). They devoted their attention to finding ways and means for Soviet withdrawal and China extended co-operation for strengthening Pakistan's capability to withstand Soviet pressures. The Kashmir issue was pushed to the background. China's public statements either avoided reference to the Kashmir issue or talked about its peaceful resolution through bilateral efforts. Pakistan has shown an understanding of China's silence over the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir in view of the latter's effort to develop a functional interaction with India. This was a view as a tactical change. Replying to a question on Kashmir, Pakistan Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo remarked in 1985 that there should be no doubt about China's support to Pakistan on this issue³⁶.

Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng visited Pakistan in November 1989, and told his Pakistani friend that India is a great country in South Asia and has an important geographic location and the maintenance of good neighbourly relations between India and its neighbours is vital to this region. India on its part reciprocated Chinese gesture by treating the disturbances of 1987 in Tibet as an internal affair of China, whereas the Western countries criticized on the basis of violation of human rights. India also appreciated China's policy on practice not to back the secessionist and other political movements in India- a change from China's previous policy.

Since, 1988, after Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister's visit to China relations significantly improved Indo-Chinese. A just and honourable solution of the Kashmir problem is considered a matter of death or life in Pakistan. China again reassured Pakistan that closer ties with India would not beat the expense of long-standing relations with Islamabad.

FOURTH PHASE

Since the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Chinese have stressed the need for positive interaction and peaceful resolution of conflicts among nations. Their relations with India have shown an upward trend without having any adverse effects on their relations with Pakistan. They also urge India and Pakistan to settle their problems amicably.

This approach of amity shaped China's perspective on Kashmir in the post-cold War era. The Chinese leaders emphasized negotiated settlement of the Kashmir problem at the bilateral level. At times, they called for dealing with the Kashmir problem in accordance with the Simla Agreement and the relevant resolutions of the U.N. Wasim Sajjad, Chairman Senate, who led a Pakistani delegation to China in August 1991, said on his return that the Chinese leadership supported the efforts for peaceful settlement of the Kashmir problem³⁷. The leader of a Chinese Communist Party delegation on visit to India in September 1992 expressed the hope that the Kashmir problem would be resolved in "a just and reasonable" manner through negotiations between India and Pakistan³⁸. China's ambassador to Pakistan said that the Kashmir dispute was "an issue left behind by history". He hoped that it would be settled "peacefully and amicably through talks between Pakistan and India in accordance with some relevant resolutions on Kashmir issued by the United Nations and the Simla Agreement"³⁹.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif arrived in Beijing on 6th October 1992 on a five-days official visit in response to an invitation extended by the Chinese Prime Minister Li. Peng. During his negotiations and meeting with Chinese Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif thanked Chinese people and officials for reiterating support for the rights of self-determination of Kashmiri people as envisaged in the on-record and specific resolution of U.N. He also thanked the Chinese leadership for reiterating its support for Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir question and its early resolution through peaceful negotiations in accordance with the respective resolutions and the Simla Accord⁴⁰.

Li Ruihuan, Chairman, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said before leaving for a visit to Nepal, India and Pakistan in November 1993. We sincerely hope that Pakistan and India will remain calm and exercise restraint, and find a proper settlement of the Kashmir question through a dialogue, consultations and by peaceful means⁴¹. As a friend to Pakistan and friendly neighbour to India, China on its part is ready to do what it can in its own capacity for a peaceful settlement of this question. A peaceful settlement to the issue represented the common interests of the people in Kashmir, the peoples in India and Pakistan, and the people in China. This is the position of China as a friend of both India and Pakistan as it is a dispute between two friends of ours⁴². Though China adopts a more or less neutral position between Pakistan and India on Kashmir and advises the two states to avoid escalation of tension, it will not be favourably disposed towards a settlement of Kashmir that jeopardizes Pakistan's security interests in the region. Its continued unambiguous support to Pakistan's independence and territorial integrity will influence its views on the solution of the problem.

China's Vice Premier and Foreign Minister, Qian Qiochen, who visited Pakistan in February 1994, expressed concern at the violation of human rights in Kashmir by the Indian authorities. He rightly pointed out that tension would escalate in the region if Kashmir problem was not settled peacefully⁴³. Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen stressed the need for bilateral solution of the Kashmir issue through friendly and peaceful negotiations in the spirit of the Simla Agreement and UN resolutions. At a crowded Press Conference in Dhaka, the Chinese Foreign Minister, responding to a question on China's Kashmir Policy perceptions seemingly changed, said, "we hope both India and Pakistan would continue talks" he said Kashmir was a left-over issue of history that should be solved in a friendly and peaceful manner. He said, "We are satisfied with our relations with India. Our improved relations with India will not affect China's relations with other countries of this region"⁴⁴.

On Kashmir issue, the Chinese Foreign Minister said that the Beijing's Policy on Kashmir was unchanged. He observed that the Kashmir issue was a hang over of history and it remained unsolved due to non-implementation of the UN resolutions and Simla Agreement. He said that

India and Pakistan should resolve the issue through peaceful bilateral negotiations in the “light of the spirit of UN resolutions and relevant agreements”⁴⁵.

In late 1990’s, China encouraged a policy of restraint on the part of India and Pakistan and supported a dialogue between them for evolving a mutually acceptable solution of the Kashmir problem. China’s ambassador to India said in Calcutta in April 1994 that Pakistan and India should settle the Kashmir dispute through direct talks and they should avoid international mediation on this matter⁴⁶.

It was very disappointing for a majority of Pakistanis, when President Jiang Zemin, while addressing Pakistan Senate in December 1996, made no reference to the Kashmir issue in his 45 minutes speech and advised Pakistan to put the thorny issues aside and develop cooperative relations with India in less contentious sectors like trade and economic co-operation.

However, China was not in favour of international bodies, especially those perceived by China as being dominated by the West, passing judgments on human rights and related affairs in different countries, including Kashmir. That was the main reason that China was not in favour of the Pakistani resolution in the UN Commission on Human Rights. Moreover, China’s own the West often subjected track record on human rights and civil liberties to criticism. It did not want to encourage this trend by voting in favour of the Pakistani resolution on violations of human rights in Kashmir. A vote in favour of the Pakistani resolution would have alienated India, which was seen by China as a potential ally in its effort to resist American pressures on human rights. This is quite reassuring for India because China is not expected to extend any diplomatic support to Pakistan’s demand for the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir. However, China equally avoids taking sides on India’s charge of Pakistani intervention as the main cause of the insurgency in Kashmir.

It was understandable for Pakistan that, Beijing’s efforts to improve ties with India were part of its regional policy to build better relations with all its neighbours, but showing in difference on the Kashmir issue was hurting

for the Pakistanis⁴⁷. From China's standpoint, a war between India and Pakistan on Kashmir is a dangerous development. This will not only adversely affect China's efforts to normalize its relations with India but will also threaten peace and stability in the region. The Chinese leaders therefore repeatedly call upon the leaders of the two countries to find an amicable solution of the Kashmir problem.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that Chinese have over the years refrained from focusing on "denial of self-determination" as the cruse of the Kashmir question, and have instead been urging India and Pakistan to resolve all outstanding disputes, including Kashmir, through negotiations.

NPC Standing Committees Chairman Li Peng was all praise for the Lahore declaration when he visited Pakistan in April 1999, welcoming what he called "new trends in the region of settling mutual issues through dialogue and negotiations"⁴⁸. Needless to say, the Chinese were not amused when Kargil conflict broke out in May 1999, though, unlike the Americans, they did not censure Pakistan for violating the 'sanctity of the line of control'. Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz made a brief trip to Beijing before he went to New Delhi for the abortive talks on defusing tension along the LOC, while Information Minister Mushahid Hussain denied that Islamabad was playing the so-called China card to put pressure on India. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif followed suit a couple of week later though his visit to China was cut short, and a Karachi daily wrote "it is perhaps not surprising that Prime Minister found little to comfort him"⁴⁹.

Regardless of how and why Kargil incident happened, the Chinese have made it known that they do not favour confrontation between India and Pakistan. It was therefore just in tune with their general policy that they did not take sides during the Kargil war⁵⁰. That the Chinese advice was not headed apparently caused no ripples in Sino-Pakistan ties, but the fact remains that Islamabad and Beijing are no longer on the same wavelength on the question of how to go about seeking normalization of relations between India and Pakistan. To put the Kashmir issue on the back burner and negotiate a working relationship with India is something hard to digest for any government in Islamabad. Some Pakistanis observe that maintenance of the statuesque on Kashmir is too high a price for Pakistan

to pay in return for normalization of ties with India. The core issue of discord between Pakistan and India bears no resemblance to the Sino-Indian border dispute which the Chinese can afford to defer without any prejudice to their official stance. As a matter of fact the Indians allege that it suits the Chinese to let the question remain unsettled as they are in possession of Indian Territory and have no intention of vacating it⁵¹.

They were particularly disturbed by reports that some religious parties in Pakistan also had a nexus with Islamic 'Militants from Xinjiang'. The evil was nipped in the bud as Islamabad reassured the Chinese that no religious outfit from Pakistan would be allowed meddle in Xinjiang. An eminent Islamist politician, Jamaat-e-Islami Chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad, who was invited to visit China in June 2000, was reported to have told the Chinese that all religious parties in Pakistan were committed to friendship with China⁵². China and Pakistan have had divergent views on NATO's intervention in Kosovo, as unlike the Pakistanis who identified themselves with the cause of Kosova Muslims, the Chinese saw it as a dangerous precedent for foreign intervention. Similarly, the Chinese were apprehensive that pursuit of 'self-determination', top priority for, Pakistan to promote Kashmir issue, would encourage the forces of 'national splitism' and 'ethnic separatism' in their country⁵³.

Pakistan's former Foreign Minister Agha Shahi, who led a delegation to China in June 2000, took great pains to explain to the Chinese think tanks the difference between a case of 'national self-determination' and a case of 'implementing specific international agreement negotiated between India and Pakistan under then edition of the UN Security Council', in order to underscore that the Kashmir question had no implications of secession or separation for other states⁵⁴. In a comprehensive review of Sino-Pakistan relations in July 2000, veteran diplomat, Agha Shahi reaffirmed the belief that no matter, what changes took place in the world, Pak-China relations would be maintained. There have of late been some irritants in these relations, in particular the questions of religious extremism in Pakistan, Agha Shahi acknowledged, but the Chinese, he said, valued their longstanding friendship with Pakistan. Agha Shahi listed several factors which he said were the cementing force in Pak-China ties, but according to him it was above all convergence of interests that had sustained an

atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding between the two countries. Agha Shahi had earlier made an elaborate presentation in the two round table discussions held in Beijing and Shanghai which could aptly be called a dialogue between two think-tanks, since the Chinese had summoned some of their leading experts on US, Russia and India to participate in the meeting. Agha Shahi told the Chinese that Pakistan-China friendship had assumed great salience in view of the "global and regional disequilibrium" and the "paradigm shift" in American approach towards South Asia. A senior Chinese analyst talking about the evolving Sino-Indian relations held the view that China had two options: either to have confrontation with India, or to seek to evolve its relations with India on the basis of the Five Principle of peace coexistence. A confrontationist attitude, he said, would only "push India towards the US". For whatever reason he seemed to believe that China could pull back the Indians from going all the way to join the American Camp.

In April 2002, Senior Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, Yang WenCheng expressed that China is fully supporting Pakistan's stand to resolve the Kashmir issue through peaceful means. He was talking to newsmen in Beijing at reception arranged by Pakistan Ambassador Riaz Khokhar at a local hotel. Mr. Yan WenCheng said that China considers Kashmir a major dispute between India and Pakistan, which he said needs to be resolved to ensure peace and stability in South Asia and both India and Pakistan should take necessary steps to reduce the tension⁵⁵. Although China's Foreign Office spokesman claimed that China is supporting the Kashmir dispute and Pakistan's stand to resolve the Kashmir issue but she always demanded and insisted both the countries to resolve it through bilateral means. It is varying China's Kashmir policy over time. Chinese Foreign Minister Jan Tiexuan arrived in Islamabad on 14th May 2002 on a two-day visit and held talks with Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar. Two sides agreed to work closely in a number of issues. He also met with President Musharraf and lauded China's contribution to the economic development of Pakistan⁵⁶.

During his stay in Islamabad, he did not give any reference to Kashmir. Although the Chinese foreign office spokes man earlier one month has

expressed that Kashmir issue is a source of tension in the region and urged both the countries to resolve it through peacefully.

On 23rd May 2002, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokes man in Beijing again expressed a great concern over the mounting tension between India and Pakistan. He urged the two nations to hold talks to resolve their outstanding dispute⁵⁷. He further said that resolution of Kashmir dispute is imperative to ensure peace in the region. When asked to comment on the threats of war against Pakistan by the Indian Prime Minister, the spokesman said that his country hoped that the two sides would exercise restraint and take steps for a peaceful solution of their outstanding disputes. The spokesman strongly condemned the killing of a prominent Kashmiri leader Abdul Ghani Lone describing it as an act of terrorism⁵⁸. China considers that Kashmir is a bone of contention between Pakistan and India and a great cause of tension and instability in the region. She always urges both countries to solve it emphasized on various methods for resolving it.

On 3rd June 2002, Chinese President Jiang Zemin urged Pakistan and India to show restraint and hold talks to ease tension. He was talking to the newsmen in Beijing⁵⁹. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan also expressed in Beijing the same day that China sincerely hopes the two countries will show utmost restraint and resolve their disputes through negotiation and dialogue in a bid to maintain peace and stability in South Asia. Chinese President and Foreign Office spokesman did not mention the right of self-determination to Kashmir's people. They only urge both countries to solve their disputes through negotiations⁶⁰. This shows the changing attitude of China towards Kashmir.

The Chinese Foreign Office spokesman Liu Jianchao on 5th June 2002 told the newsmen that China supports third party mediation for resolving Indo-Pak bilateral disputes including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that China appreciates and welcomes the offer of mediation made by the Russian President Vladimir Putin. He added that China would continue its efforts of mediating between India and Pakistan to settle their disputes through peaceful means. The spokesman hoped that the Russian President

would play a positive and constructive role for bringing to an end the on-going hostility between the two countries⁶¹.

Although China was in favour to solve the Kashmir dispute but she always urged both countries to solve it through bilateral talks, when Russia played a role of mediator between Pakistan and India in 1966 in Tashkand agreement, China although did not criticized it publicly but she showed her displeasure. It was the first time, she openly supported third-party mediation. The reason was that China and Russia were maintaining their good relations and the meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), was to be scheduled the next month at Saint Peters Burg in Russia. China did not want to create tension with Russia.

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Kuong Qihuan called on India and Pakistan on 8th June 2002 at Saint Peters Burg in Russia to settle their conflict over Kashmir through direct talks and dialogue between India and Pakistan. He was talking to press conference on the occasion of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) at Saint Petersburg. He said that tension between India and Pakistan has reached a very high point and this is very dangerous for South Asia. While Beijing is a traditional ally of Islamabad, China and Pakistan have friendly relations, and China and India have friendly relations too. China has always called on these two countries to exert restraint and solve their conflict through peaceful means⁶².

At the end of the SCO meeting, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan urged Pakistan and India to resolve their disputes peacefully. The Russian President Putin joined his Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin and four other central Asian leaders, he blamed and demanded Pakistan to put an end to terrorism in Kashmir. He said, "If we consider the roots of terrorism, we should ask Pakistan to put an end to terrorist activities coming from its territory and directed at India and Kahsmir"⁶³.

Chinese President did not show any reaction at the remark of Russian President. This shows the clear change in Chinese's stand over Kashmir. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jian Chao told reporters at a weekly briefing in Beijing on 11th June 2002 that China hopes India and

Pakistan will soon resume talks to settle their bilateral disputes, including the issue of Kashmir, through peaceful means. The spokes man said the peaceful co-existence is in the interest of the two countries and also in keeping with the wishes of international community⁶⁴.

On 16th October 2002, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokes woman Zhang Qiyue, urged India and Pakistan to resume dialogue at the earliest for resolution of their disputes, including the Kashmir issue for lasting peace in the region⁶⁵. She was talking to the news men at weekly briefly. Zhang Qiyue said China, being a neighbour and friend of India and Pakistan, hoped that they would realize the need of settling their differences through peaceful means.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mr. Liu Jianchao said in Beijing on 8th April, 2003 that China has envisioned the possibility of working in concert with India in the specific context of the present global complexities. He said the two countries “should further their coordination and cooperation to contribute to regional and world peace and stability”⁶⁶.

Responding to a question at a regular press conference, Mr. Liu said China and its “important neighbouring nation” of India should coordinate their efforts for peace and stability in their compatible capacities as the world’s two largest developing countries.

On the current surge in India –Pakistan tensions, he underlined that the two important countries in South Asia bear great responsibility to maintain regional peace and stability and should resolve Kashmir issue through peaceful channels and through dialogue.

Chinese Prime Minister Mr. Wen Jiabao expressed that the Kashmir question is a legacy from the past between India and Pakistan and it involves conflicting territorial claims, religion, ethnicity and other complex factors⁶⁷. He was answering the question of PTI correspondents. He said that more than 50 years of India –Pakistan conflict has shown that use of force can get them no where. As a neighbour and friend to both India and Pakistan, China has always urged the two countries to seek an effective solution to the Kashmir problem through peaceful dialogue.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the apparent end of communist expansionism, Islamic 'fundamentalism' has emerged as the main bugbear not only for the Western World but also for some of Pakistan's traditional friends, including China and some Muslim Central Asian countries. The Chinese government too is facing an insurgency in the Western province of Sinkiang, bordering Kashmir, from the local population who are ethnic Turkish Muslims⁶⁸.

Despite the cordiality and closeness in relations, there exist some irritants that require attention of the policy makers. Broadly speaking these issues are as follows⁶⁹:

- a) The support of Pakistani religious political parties to the separatists Muslim groups in Xinjiang.
- b) Diminishing Chinese support on Kashmir issue

China, in the post-cold war period does not have external security threats; the only threat it perceives is from within. In the recent past, a number of violent incidents have been reported from the Xinjiang province. Since early 90s, the emergence of five independent Central Asian States and Afghan Mujahideen's success to throw the Soviets out of Afghanistan had a profound effect on the Muslims of Xinjiang. There is a generally accepted perception in China that the neighbouring countries bordering Xinjiang are either involved or are being used for creating instability in that predominantly Muslim Province. In Pakistan the perception is that a well thought out attempt is being made to malign Pakistan for its alleged involvement in supporting what Chinese call "separatists and religious fundamentalists"⁷⁰. Unfortunately, very little attention has been paid to dispel such allegations, which are detrimental to Pak-China relations. This issue has started appearing in the local press demanding from the government to pay due attention to the issue and allay Chinese apprehensions. A Pakistan scholar Prof. Khalid Mahmud who visited China writes about his discourse with the Chinese officials:

"Though it was put across in a low-key friendly complaint, some eminent opinion leaders in Beijing did not hesitate to register their displeasure over

what they saw as export of Islamic fundamentalism to the Muslim majority Chinese province of Xinjiang. The upshot of their contention was that “separatists elements” in Xinjiang had linkages with Pakistani fundamentalist religious groups who were training and arming them for subversive activities. Some militants trained in Pakistan, they said, have been caught, and the Chinese authorities have enough evidence of their connection with Pakistan. Their real cause of concern however, was that the government of Pakistan had done nothing to stop it..... Nevertheless, we were wondering how Pakistan could hope to promote friendship with China, and expect the friend-in-need to stand by Pakistan in adversity, when its government was unmindful of the urgent need to act decisively against the misguided fanatics out to subvert the all-weather relationship”⁷¹.

Yet in another article, Saeed Hasan writes while touching upon the same subject. “Of late, China is perturbed by the activities of some militant Islamic groups based in Pakistan who were reportedly trying to penetrate the troubled Xinjiang region that is the reason that it had decided to strengthen security measures on the border with Pakistan. The government of Pakistan has assured the Chinese of discouraging such trans-border movements”⁷². It will be incorrect to assume that government of Pakistan is not taking appropriate actions to connect the situation. There are of course certain limitations to its actions⁷³. Pakistan is a Muslim and democratic country and by no means can curtail the activities of any religious political group, which is in line with the religious duties as Muslims. According to some sources, the government has at a number of occasions conveyed to the suspected groups, stern verbal warnings, threatening to take action against them for their alleged activities detrimental to Pak-China relations. Conflict in Afghanistan is almost two decades old. During the conflict, Islamic Ideology had been used to defeat the ‘non-believers or their agents’ by Afghan Mujahideen. This process introduced a new phenomenon of militant Islam, which energized the existing religious groups in the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan. It also has created a serious problem of sectarian violence for Pakistan. These politico-religious groups have established region-wise connections with similar organizations and are capable of carrying out trans-national operation on their own. Pakistan in May 1997 arrested and handed over to

the Chinese authorities, twelve Chinese students studying in the religious schools in Northern Areas. Their names were given by the Chinese authorities and were reportedly involved in the February 1997 uprising in Xinjiang. Later, they were reportedly executed after a short trial by the authorities as per law of the land⁷⁴.

Pakistan in May 2002, again handed over a key leader of Chinese Muslim separatists, Ismail Kadir who fought alongside the Taliban. Pakistan authorities detained Ismail Kadir, who Beijing says helped spearhead a separatist Uighur movement in the northwestern region of Xinjiang, as he attended a secret meeting in Kashmir⁷⁵.

China has blamed Uighur separatists for more than 200 violent incidents between 1990 and 2001 in Xinjiang and says Osama bin Laden provided financial and material aid to them. Xinjiang's communist party Secretary Mr. Wang Lequan said of more than 1,000 Chinese Muslim Uighurs who had fought alongside the Taliban, 300 were captured while in Afghanistan citing intelligence sources. He blamed that the rest were still in Pakistan or just over the border in Afghanistan⁷⁶.

This information provoked the religious political parties here, and severe criticism was leveled against the government. Given the criticality of China to Pakistan, the later needs to ensure that no one is allowed to undermine the Pak-China special relationship. "This alliance has many external forces attempting to weaken it"⁷⁷. The developments in Kashmir in the future can have implications for the adjacent areas like Buddhist Tibet and mainly Muslim Xinjiang. That is why China is wary of the idea of an independent and sovereign Kashmir. Additionally, China is perturbed by the specter of Islamic militant and fundamentalist groups using the Kashmir area as a launching pad for activities in the adjacent Chinese province of Xinjiang⁷⁸.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, China has maintained an over-all tilt towards Pakistan's stand point on Kashmir. China has rejected Indians claim that Kashmir is an integral part of India just like any other Indian Province, like UP or Orissa.

but also in Xinjiang province. Secondly, renewed nuclear transfers to Islamabad would force Delhi to respond by operationalising own minimum deterrent, which in turn would have security implications for Beijing. A dangerous as well as ruinously expensive nuclear arms race between Delhi and Beijing would suit the interests neither. Thirdly Islamabad, with its support to the Taliban, has actually brought US forces on to China's door step in Pakistan, Afghanistan and some Central Asian States.

Beijing now looking for multipolar arrangements in the international affairs, and thinks that the cooperation with Delhi would enhance these prospects and the new technocratic team that has taken over the Chinese leadership feels that there is considerable room for expansion of Sino-Indian trade, currently at \$3 billion. The striking progress made in the bilateral trade between China and India developed their relations and the trade has become a most dynamic area in Indian-China relations. China has entered the WTO, where affluent Northern countries take up much of the bargaining space, but transitional economies like India and China share similar interests. There is considerable scope for overlap and coordination of bargaining position.

The new generation of Chinese leadership has declared that China will persist in the policy of being friendly and good partner with neighbours and that China would like to deal with surrounding countries on the basis of equality, live side by side with them in peace and harmony, and join hands with them through thick and thin to achieve common progress. China will enhance high-level visits and political dialogues with its neighbours for better understanding and a regional political environment characterized by harmony, trust and coordination. We will strive to foster a new security concept which features mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation in the region. We will adhere to the principle of resolving differences, disputes and conflicts through dialogue, and work with other countries to achieve a regional security environment of peace, stability and harmony. We will endeavour to intensify economic cooperation with regional countries, promote various regional and sub-regional cooperation mechanisms, and foster regional economic environment that features mutual benefit of reciprocity.

But China considers that there are no UN resolutions with respect to UP or Orissa, whereas there are number of such resolutions regarding Kashmir which the UN and other international bodies have expressly described as a 'disputed territory. China has a clear view that Kashmir is a dispute between Pakistan and India. Its emphasis on various methods for resolving the dispute has only shifted from time to time, mainly because of the changes in its South Asian Policy and Interaction with the West. In the fifties, China adopted a neutral policy and avoided to take sides on the Kashmir dispute. China maintained her policy that both Pakistan and India should evolve a solution through their own efforts and they should not involve the West, and especially the UN for the settlement of Kashmir problem. Pakistan was deeply impressed by the fact that China maintained a consistently neutral attitude on Kashmir, regarding it as a disputed territory.

During the sixties, after the 1962 Sino –India War, China expressed firm support for the resolution of Kashmiri problem in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir as pledge to them by India and Pakistan and categorically supported the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination and it was China's new stand over Kashmir dispute. In early 1980's, the Chinese avoided pointing references to the right of self-determination and emphasized more on negotiated settlement between India and Pakistan on the basis of Simla agreement and UN resolutions. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, the Chinese stressed the need for positive interaction and peaceful resolution of conflict among the nations and Chinese leaders emphasized negotiated settlement of the problem at the bilateral level.

In late 1990's, China encouraged a policy of restraint on the part of India and Pakistan and supported dialogue between them for evolving a mutually acceptable solution of the Kashmir problem.

After 11th September events, the world scenario had totally changed and Beijing sees itself as a strategic player with a global role and the leadership of China thinks how Beijing's interests are actually being hurt in many ways by its "all weather ally" and Pakistan is failing to control its Islamic fundamentalist militant which could have its fallout not just in Kashmir

The Chinese have been insisting that they have no problems in their relations with Pakistan. Nothing will be allowed to impair the friendly ties between the two countries. It is the kind of reassurance they have often given.

China cannot be indifferent to the present and future developments in Kashmir. What happens if there were implications for China's internal security and peace and stability in the region? It also involves the security interests of its traditional ally, Pakistan. However, China is not in favour of a military solution of the Kashmir problem. It encourages a policy of restraint on the part of India and Pakistan and supports a dialogue between them for evolving a mutually acceptable solution of the Kashmir problem.

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