

MP-IDSA

Issue Brief

India's Changed Approach to Kashmir Settlement

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S*ummary*

Recent positive steps in India-Pakistan relations have led to expectations of a resumption of the discussions that got stalled in 2007. A return to the framework that drove the back-channel negotiations does not, however, appear to be a tenable proposition any longer. The Manmohan-Musharraf initiative was disowned by the Pakistan Establishment after Musharraf's departure. Even if Pakistan were to be keen on reviving that formula, India is unlikely to favour it because of the Modi government's commitment to regain Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. While this change in Indian policy may lead to the placement of the Kashmir issue on the back burner in the short and medium terms, it is likely to aggravate conflict in the long term.

India and Pakistan have taken some preliminary steps towards the easing of tensions and resumption of dialogue during the last two months. In early February, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa called for a resolution of the Kashmir issue in "a dignified and peaceful manner as per the people's aspirations."¹ In response, the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs reiterated India's desire to have "normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence."² In late February, the Directors General of Military Operations of the two armies agreed to renew the ceasefire along the Line of Control.³ March 2021 saw Prime Minister Imran Khan and General Bajwa calling for peace and resumption of dialogue while emphasising the importance of India taking the first step and creating a conducive environment especially in Jammu and Kashmir.⁴

Analysts have, however, expressed scepticism about the prospect of meaningful dialogue. Some have emphasised irreconcilable contradictions such as India's concerns on cross-border terrorism and Pakistan's on Kashmir.⁵ Others have highlighted the tactical nature of these steps, driven by India's focus on the challenge along the China border and Pakistan's on the unfolding Afghan situation. At the same time, there is an expectation that, if the two countries were to take further steps towards a full-fledged dialogue, they should ideally pick up the threads left off in 2007.⁶

A return to the framework that drove the Manmohan Singh-Pervaiz Musharraf initiative does not, however, appear to be a tenable proposition any longer. Even if the Pakistan Establishment, which had disowned it after Musharraf's departure, were to be keen on reviving that framework, India no longer views that formula with favour. Whereas successive Indian governments since the late 1940s favoured and pursued a solution to the Kashmir issue along the existing territorial status quo, the Narendra Modi government has been consistently asserting India's sovereign claims over Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK).⁷

Highlighting this change in Indian policy is the purpose of this brief. After this Introduction, the first section summarises various efforts made since the late 1940s to forge a Kashmir settlement along the extant territorial status, albeit with minor adjustments. Section two highlights the Modi government's articulations and actions

¹ ["Bajwa offer on J-K issue: India, Pakistan should resolve it in 'dignified, peaceful manner',"](#) *The Tribune*, February 4, 2021.

² ["Transcript of Virtual Weekly Media Briefing by the Official Spokesperson](#) (February 04, 2021)," Ministry of External Affairs, February 5, 2021.

³ Press Information Bureau, ["Joint Statement,"](#) *Ministry of Defence*, February 25, 2021.

⁴ Press Trust of India, ["Peace with Pakistan Will Give India Direct Access to Central Asia: Pak PM Imran Khan,"](#) *NDTV*, March 18, 2021; ["Full Text of Gen Bajwa's speech at the Islamabad Security Dialogue,"](#) *The Dawn*, March 18, 2021.

⁵ C. Raja Mohan, ["Delhi has nothing to lose by exploring the seriousness of the Pak army chief,"](#) *The Indian Express*, March 2, 2021.

⁶ Khurshid Kasuri and Radha Kumar, ["Small steps to lasting Indo-Pak peace,"](#) *The Indian Express*, March 24, 2021.

⁷ PoJK is the new term being used by the Government of India since 2016. See, Vijaita Singh, ["In a first, PoK becomes PoJK in MHA document,"](#) *The Hindu*, March 25, 2016.

with respect to PoJK and locates them in the long-held positions of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), its predecessor, Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), and the parent body, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The Brief concludes that this change in policy is likely to endure and highlights what may ensue therefrom in the short and long terms.

Indian Advocacy of Territorial Status Quo

From 1948, India consistently proposed that the Kashmir issue be settled on the basis of the extant status quo, albeit with minor territorial adjustments to establish a rational border. Such a settlement has, however, been unacceptable to Pakistani leaders, who have repeatedly sought, both during negotiations as well as through war and support for insurgent and terrorist groups, to wrest some or all portions of Jammu and Kashmir from India.

The first Indian effort was made as early as October 1948. On the side-lines of the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference in London, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru proposed to his Pakistani counterpart Liaquat Ali Khan that the issue be settled by both countries accepting the territorial status quo. He added that such a settlement could also include "certain areas in western Poonch and the north-western part of the State [under Indian control] being allotted to Pakistan."⁸

Nehru's rationale for advocating such a settlement was as follows: India had referred the Jammu and Kashmir issue to the United Nations (UN) mainly to prevent the outbreak of "an all-out war" with Pakistan. But the experience at the UN compelled him to conclude that "nothing substantial could be expected" from the world body, especially given India's determination not to concede on "any basic point" as well as Pakistan's disinclination to "revert to the *status quo ante-war*".

Under these circumstances, India had two options. One was to continue what was likely to prove to be "a long drawn-out" war for regaining those territories of Jammu and Kashmir that were under the control of Pakistan and its irregular proxies. But such a step involved the risk of "an all-out war" with Pakistan as well as international intervention given that the UN Security Council remained seized of the issue. The second option was to reach a settlement with Pakistan "on the basis of the existing military situation."⁹ This line of thought led Nehru to propose, in his personal capacity, a settlement along the existing status quo, albeit with minor territorial

⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah, "Impracticability of an Independent Kashmir," *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru: Second Series* [hereafter SWJN-SS], Vol. 19 (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1996), p. 324.

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 323-24.

adjustments in favour of Pakistan. But Liaquat Ali Khan “refused to consider this matter on this basis”.¹⁰

Nehru offered a similar proposal in May 1955 during conversations in Delhi with the visiting Prime Minister and Interior Minister of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Bogra, and General Iskander Mirza, respectively. On this occasion as well, Nehru indicated his willingness “to consider the transfer of a certain part of the Poonch area” to Pakistan and pointed to the desirability of the Kishanganga river serving as “a suitable line” in the north.¹¹ During the course of this conversation, he also referred to the impracticality of the informal proposals that Pakistan’s then Governor General, Ghulam Mohammed, had conveyed through emissaries: India transferring to Pakistan “a large piece of territory in Jammu, north of Chenab” and “Kashmir proper” coming under “some kind of a joint control of a joint army”.¹²

Bogra and Mirza also expressed their inability to accept Nehru’s proposal of an agreement based largely on the status quo because of three related reasons: public opinion would oppose it, Pakistan would not get anything out of it, and India would be able to free itself from UN Security Council and other international “entanglements”. Instead, they advocated “major adjustments”, which involved India retaining only “some districts” around Jammu and the rest of the territory going to Pakistan.¹³

India restated a similar proposal for settling the Jammu and Kashmir issue along the extant status quo, albeit with minor territorial adjustments, during the Swaran Singh–Zulfiqar Bhutto talks. Six rounds of talks were held in 1962 and 1963 under American urging, pressure and a behind-the-scenes-role. The United States hoped, in the words of then Secretary of State Dean Rusk, to not only bring about a settlement of the Kashmir issue but also a reconciliation between India and Pakistan as well as induce India to join America in containing China.¹⁴

During the negotiations, the then Minister for Railways Sardar Swaran Singh proposed that, in addition to retaining all the territory it then controlled in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan would be allotted “small sections under Indian control to the west and north of the Valley, but nothing in the Valley itself.”¹⁵ According to D. K. Palit, the then Director of Military Operations and a member of the Indian negotiating team, Singh was even prepared to offer some portions of the Kashmir Valley. Indeed, Palit records that he was informed by the then Commonwealth Secretary Y. D.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 324. Also see, “Talks with Mohammad Ali and Iskander Mirza – I,” *SWJN—SS, Vol., 28* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 2001), p. 249.

¹¹ See the minutes of this conversation held on 15 May 1955, “Talks with Mohammad Ali and Iskander Mirza – II,” *SWJN—SS, Vol., 28* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 2001), p. 255.

¹² Ibid, p. 254.

¹³ “Talks with Mohammad Ali and Iskander Mirza – III,” *SWJN—SS, Vol., 28*, pp. 257-58; “Talks with Mohammad Ali and Iskander Mirza – IV,” *SWJN—SS, Vol., 28*, p. 260.

¹⁴ Cited in Timothy Crawford, “Kennedy and Kashmir 1962-63: The perils of pivotal peace-making in South Asia,” *India Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3, July 2002, pp. 7-8.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 13.

Gundevia that the cabinet had “unhesitatingly approved the Prime Minister’s proposal about a partition of Kashmir.”¹⁶ But Bhutto’s counter-proposal demanded that Pakistan be allotted almost the whole of Jammu and Kashmir – Kashmir Valley, Chenab Valley and Ladakh – with India retaining only “a small part of Jammu.”¹⁷ In the absence of a viable meeting point, these talks were eventually suspended.

It was only in the immediate aftermath of the 1971 War that a Pakistani leader was even willing, albeit tactically as it later proved, to consider a settlement along the territorial status quo. Convinced by P. N. Haksar’s argument about the possible adverse consequences of imposing a harsh peace on Pakistan, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi emphasised to President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto the merits of such a settlement and the transformation of the renamed Line of Control into a *de jure* border at the 1972 Simla Conference.¹⁸ Bhutto conceded that it was “the only feasible” solution but expressed his inability to formalise such an agreement at that juncture.¹⁹ Subsequent Pakistani leaders disowned Bhutto’s admission however, with one former official crowing that Bhutto “fooled” Gandhi at Simla.²⁰

The most recent effort, undertaken in the mid-2000s, to find a mutually acceptable solution on a ‘status quo plus’ basis did not also bear fruit, although the top leadership on both sides did make a sincere effort in subtly altering established national positions to bridge the gulf.²¹ In essence, what Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Pervaiz Musharraf sought was to make the Line of Control “irrelevant ... just lines on a map” so that people and goods could move freely between the two sides.²²

According to the Indian interlocutor in these talks, “the essential prerequisite” for achieving the goal was “an end to hostility, violence and terrorism.”²³ Only that would pave the way for establishing an open border especially between the Kashmir Valley and so-called ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’, considerably thinning down the number of troops deployed on both sides, and evolving a joint mechanism to “look into socio-economic issues like Tourism, Travel, Pilgrimages to Shrines, Trade, Health, Education, and Culture” so that “self-governance” could be ensured “for internal management in all areas on the same basis on both sides of the LoC”.²⁴

¹⁶ D. K. Palit, *War in High Himalaya: The Indian Army in Crisis, 1962* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1991), pp. 392-93.

¹⁷ Crawford, “Kennedy and Kashmir,” p. 14.

¹⁸ Gary J. Bass, “Bargaining Away Justice: India, Pakistan, and the International Politics of Impunity for the Bangladesh Genocide,” *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Fall 2016, pp. 164-66.

¹⁹ P. N. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, the ‘Emergency’, and Indian Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 192-93.

²⁰ Cited in *ibid*, p. 199.

²¹ For a crisp summary of the shifts in positions by both sides, see Ashley J. Tellis, [Are India-Pakistan Peace Talks Worth A Damn?](#) (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2017), pp. 58-59.

²² Manmohan Singh, [“PM's speech on launch of Amritsar-Nankana Sahib Bus Service.”](#) March 24, 2006. Musharraf too reportedly called for making the Line of Control “irrelevant”. See, Tellis, *Are India-Pakistan Peace Talks Worth A Damn?*, p. 57.

²³ Satinder Kumar Lambah, [“A Possible Outline of a Solution.”](#) *OutlookIndia*, May 14, 2014.

²⁴ *Ibid*.

That an agreement along these lines was largely worked out to mutual satisfaction was revealed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in May 2009 when he reportedly observed: “General Musharraf and I had nearly reached an agreement, a non-territorial solution to all problems, but then General Musharraf got into many difficulties with the Chief Justice and other forces and therefore the whole process came to a halt.”²⁵ According to Sanjaya Baru, a former Media Adviser to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh was keen on renewing the process with Musharraf’s successors – President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani – even in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008.²⁶

Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, who, as then Foreign Minister, was part of the small group that monitored and guided the progress of the back channel negotiations on the Pakistan side, has revealed that the group comprised of top military leaders and diplomats including the Vice Chief of Army Staff, Director General of the Inter-Services Intelligence, Corps Commanders, and the Foreign Secretary.²⁷ Yet, President Musharraf’s successors, both civilian and military, distanced themselves from the framework that had been evolved. Prime Minister Gilani dismissed the framework proposals as “half-baked things that didn’t have the mandate of Parliament.”²⁸ General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, who as Director General Inter-Services Intelligence was part of the core group that monitored the back channel negotiations, “distanced himself from the negotiations” after becoming Army Chief and even informed US officials that “Musharraf had operated independently, that he was unaware of the agreement’s details, and that it was, at any rate, untenable because it did not enjoy the support of the army’s corps commanders.”²⁹ Kayani’s term as Pakistan Army Chief coincided with the November 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai, which effectively put paid to any immediate prospects of the back channel process being revived. His successor, General Raheel Sharif, reverted to ‘Kashmir is the jugular vein’ rhetoric and to Pakistan’s long-held position of seeking a solution in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions.³⁰

Modi Government’s Position

Even as India sought to forge a settlement of the Kashmir issue along the territorial status quo, it did sporadically assert sovereign claims over PoJK during the 1990s and noughties. The most significant assertion in this regard was the resolution unanimously adopted by both Houses of Parliament in February 1994 demanding that Pakistan vacate the portions of Jammu and Kashmir territory which it has

²⁵ Cited in Tellis, *Are India-Pakistan Peace Talks Worth A Damn?*, p. 60.

²⁶ Sanjaya Baru, *The Accidental Prime Minister: The Making and Unmaking of Manmohan Singh* (Penguin Books, 2014), Kindle Locations 3283-3291.

²⁷ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, *Neither A Hawk Nor A Dove: An Insider’s Account of Pakistan’s Foreign Policy* (Penguin Books, Gurgaon), Kindle Locations 4563-4578.

²⁸ Tellis, *Are India-Pakistan Peace Talks Worth A Damn?*, p. 61.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Pranab Dhal Samanta, “[Line of no control.](#)” *India Today*, August 22, 2014.

“occupied through aggression”.³¹ Parliament, however, passed the resolution more as an expression of defiant determination in the wake of Pakistan’s diplomatic campaign and Kashmir consequently becoming a global talking point.

In his 1993 address to the United Nations General Assembly, US President Bill Clinton referred to the conflict in Kashmir as a serious global threat.³² A month later, Robin Raphel, Clinton’s Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, asserted that the United States does not recognise Maharaja Hari Singh’s signature on the instrument of accession “as meaning that Kashmir is forevermore an integral part of India.”³³ About this time, Pakistan’s diplomatic campaign was reaching a crescendo with the introduction of a resolution in the United Nations Human Rights Council condemning India for grave human rights violations, which, if adopted, had the potential to reopen the Kashmir file in the United Nations.³⁴

This backdrop explains why India ignored the issue of PoJK after it managed to weather the diplomatic storm over Kashmir. Moreover, once the back channel became active during the Vajpayee prime ministership, the issue of territory under Pakistan’s occupation was ignored. It was revisited only in the aftermath of the intense emotions generated by the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack. In 2009 and 2010, the Ministry of External Affairs asserted Indian sovereignty over PoJK on two occasions, first in the context of Pakistan holding elections in Gilgit-Baltistan, and the second in the wake of statements that the region has become Pakistan’s fifth province.³⁵

Since the coming to power of the Modi government in 2014, the tone of Indian assertions of sovereignty over PoJK has become sharper and their frequency has also increased. In June 2015, responding to media questions about the proposed elections in Gilgit-Baltistan, the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs not only asserted Indian sovereignty but also dismissed the elections as a camouflage for Pakistan’s “forcible and illegal occupation of the regions.”³⁶ A few months later, exercising its right of reply during the UN General Assembly debate, an Indian representative called out Pakistan as a foreign occupier of the territory of Jammu and Kashmir.³⁷

³¹ For a reproduction of the resolution, see [“Parliament Resolution on Jammu and Kashmir,”](#) South Asia Terrorism Portal.

³² [“Address by President Bill Clinton to the UN General Assembly,”](#) United States Department of State, September 27, 1993.

³³ Abhay Vaidya, [“The Robin Raphel saga: What happened in Washington that soured Indo-US ties.”](#) *FirstPost*, November 11, 2014.

³⁴ Shekhar Gupta, [“On a Short Fuse,”](#) *India Today*, March 15, 1994.

³⁵ [“GOI protests to Pakistan against the “Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order-2009.”](#) Ministry of External Affairs, September 11, 2009; [“Official Spokesperson on remarks by the so-called CM of Gilgit-Baltistan,”](#) Ministry of External Affairs, January 1, 2010.

³⁶ [“Official Spokesperson’s response to a media question on elections which are to be held in Gilgit-Baltistan on June 8, 2015.”](#) Ministry of External Affairs, June 2, 2015.

³⁷ [“Statement by India exercising India’s Right of Reply during the General Debate of 70th session of UN General Assembly \(September 30, 2015\).”](#) Ministry of External Affairs, October 1, 2015.

Further, after a gap of some ten years, the ministry appears to have renewed engagement with the diaspora from Gilgit-Baltistan and even explored the possibility of inviting them for the 2017 edition of the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*.³⁸ There is, however, no confirmation as to whether any member of the PoJK diaspora participated in that or subsequent editions of the *Divas*. When asked in the run-up to the 2017 event, the Secretary in charge of Overseas Indian Affairs provided the ambiguous answer that the event is open to all non-resident Indians and persons of Indian origin.³⁹ Nor is it clear whether there was any member of the PoJK diaspora among the 3121 delegates from 91 countries including four listed under 'Others' who participated in the 2019 edition of the *Divas*.⁴⁰

The change in India's approach to the issue of PoJK has evidently come at the express direction of the political leadership. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself has publicly referred to the region on at least three occasions. First, at the All-Party Meeting he convened in August 2016 to discuss the unrest in Kashmir following the killing of Burhan Wani, Modi not only emphasised the importance of winning the people's confidence while ensuring national security but also highlighted the fact that PoJK is a part of Jammu and Kashmir.⁴¹ Four days later, in his Independence Day address, he thanked the people of Gilgit and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) for honouring the Indian nation by honouring him and showing goodwill towards him.⁴² Subsequently, while speaking in the Lok Sabha in February 2018, Modi observed that "[h]ad Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel been the first Prime Minister, a part of Kashmir would not have been under control of Pakistan".⁴³

Senior cabinet ministers have followed Modi's lead. Following the abrogation of Article 370 and the establishment of the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, Home Minister Amit Shah averred in Parliament that all his references to the State of Jammu and Kashmir should be understood as including Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. More significantly, he added that PoJK is worthy of the ultimate sacrifice.⁴⁴ Here, it is also worth noting the informed speculation about Shah's criticism of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee for foreclosing the option of regaining

³⁸ Shubhajit Roy, "[Centre planning to call diaspora from Gilgit-Baltistan for Pravasi Divas 2017](#)," *The Indian Express*, August 27, 2016.

³⁹ "[Transcript of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2017: Curtain Raiser Briefing \(January 2, 2017\)](#)," Ministry of External Affairs, January 3, 2017.

⁴⁰ See answer provided in Lok Sabha by then Minister of State V. K. Singh in response to Unstarred Question No. 521, "[Pravasi Bharatiya Divas](#)," February 6, 2019.

⁴¹ "[PoK is part of Jammu & Kashmir, says PM Narendra Modi at all-party meeting](#)," *The Indian Express*, August 12, 2016.

⁴² "[PM's address to the Nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on 70th Independence Day](#)," PMIndia, August 15, 2016.

⁴³ Press Trust of India, "[Had Sardar Patel been first PM, entire Kashmir would have been ours: PM Modi in Lok Sabha](#)," *India Today*, February 7, 2018.

⁴⁴ Ananya Bhardwaj, "[Amit Shah tells Lok Sabha J&K also means PoK & Aksai Chin, ready to die for this](#)," *The Print*, August 6, 2019.

PoJK by precipitately conducting the 1998 nuclear tests and thus providing Pakistan an opportunity to demonstrate its own nuclear weapons capability.⁴⁵

Shah's statements in Parliament were followed up by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar. Speaking at an election rally in Haryana in August 2019, Singh stated that, if talks are held with Pakistan, India will not discuss any issue other than Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.⁴⁶ A few weeks later, addressing the press on the occasion of 100 days of the second Modi government, Jaishankar affirmed that PoJK is a part of India and expressed the hope that the country will someday obtain "physical jurisdiction" over the region.⁴⁷

These statements from members of the Modi government reflect the long-standing position advocated by the BJP, its predecessor BJS, and the parent body RSS that PoJK should be regained. While the BJP's election manifestos for the 2019 and 2014 elections did not refer to PoJK, the 2009 manifesto specified that the parliamentary resolution of 1994 "shall remain the cornerstone of future decisions and actions of our Government" when it came to "dealing with issues related to Jammu & Kashmir."⁴⁸

Likewise, the party's manifestos issued in 1991, 1996 and 1998 referred to territory under Pakistan's occupation and affirmed Indian sovereignty over the whole of Jammu and Kashmir including PoJK. Given that the 1999 manifesto was issued in the name of the National Democratic Alliance, there was understandably no reference to PoJK. It is not clear why the party did not refer to Indian claims to the region in the manifestos issued for the 1984 and 1989 elections.⁴⁹

Notwithstanding these and the more recent lapses in 2014 and 2019, the fact remains that the BJP's predecessor – Bharatiya Jana Sangh – had, since its inception in 1951, highlighted Pakistan's occupation of Jammu and Kashmir territory and advocated efforts to regain it. At its very first annual conclave in December 1952, the Jana Sangh critiqued the Nehru government for pursuing policies that have resulted in Pakistan's continued occupation of one-third of the territory of Jammu and Kashmir. At subsequent conclaves, the party called upon the government to undertake efforts to regain that territory. The party also promised in its election manifestos that, if elected, it would make the necessary effort to regain PoJK. The Jana Sangh also criticised the Indira Gandhi government for concluding the Simla

⁴⁵ ["Did Amit Shah write a protest note to PM Vajpayee on nuclear tests in 1998?,"](#) *National Herald*, December 14, 2020.

⁴⁶ ["Any talks with Pak now will only be on PoK: Rajnath Singh,"](#) *The Times of India*, August 19, 2019.

⁴⁷ ["Transcript of Press Conference by External Affairs Minister on 100 days of Government \(September 17, 2019\)."](#) Ministry of External Affairs, September 18, 2019.

⁴⁸ Bharatiya Janata Party, ["Good Governance Development Security: Manifesto Lok Sabha Election 2009,"](#) p. 44.

⁴⁹ These manifestos are available on the Central Library page of the BJP's website at <http://library.bjp.org/jspui/handle/123456789/260>

Agreement of 1972 as well as for not liberating “the areas of Kashmir occupied by Pakistan since 1947” during the course of the 1971 War.⁵⁰

Over the decades, the RSS has also repeatedly flagged the issue of vacating Pakistan’s occupation of Jammu and Kashmir territory. As far back as 1963, the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha of the RSS asserted that the main issue in India-Pakistan talks should be vacating Pakistan’s aggression from the portion of Jammu and Kashmir it has been occupying. After Parliament passed the 1994 resolution, the Sabha expressed hope that the Rao government would abandon its ambivalent attitude on the Kashmir issue. Eleven years later, another RSS body, the Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal, reminded the Manmohan Singh government of the 1994 parliamentary resolution and called upon it to “stand firmly against any international pressure” to compromise on the issue.⁵¹

Conclusion

India’s position on the contours of a settlement of the Kashmir issue has changed during the course of the last few years. Driven by the long-held convictions of the BJP, the change appears set to endure for two reasons. The first is the pole position in the Indian political firmament that the BJP appears set to enjoy for some years to come. Second, future governments are likely to find it difficult to overturn a policy on national territory that is laden with emotional and sacral overtones.

This change in Indian policy on a Kashmir settlement may not have adverse consequences in the next few years because of India and Pakistan’s need to concentrate upon other compulsions, both internal and external. These include managing the adverse economic impact of the COVID pandemic, India’s need to prevent the precipitate emergence of a two-front threat, and Pakistan’s imperatives relating to the management of the Afghan transition and gaining relief from the strictures imposed by the Financial Action Task Force.

These circumstances may prove propitious for placing the complicated issue of Kashmir on the back burner and foster bilateral cooperation in order to better concentrate on meeting the above challenges. According to an informed Indian commentator, placing the issue on the back burner was also Modi’s own preferred approach when he first assumed the prime ministership.⁵²

In the long run, however, if both India and Pakistan were to competitively seek to alter the territorial status quo, the result would be a further aggravation of conflict.

⁵⁰ For a snapshot of the various statements issued on PoK by the Jana Sangh and RSS over the decades, see Shyamlal Yadav, [“Explained: How PoK has featured in RSS, Jana Sangh discourse for nearly 7 decades.”](#) *The Indian Express*, August 12, 2019.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ashok Malik, [“Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh: Exploring A New Paradigm.”](#) *ORF Special Report No. 94*, August 2019.

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