

[Editorial Notes] The forgotten fact of China-Occupied Kashmir

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Introduction:

- Following the **abrogation of Article 370** and reorganization of the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), a China-Pakistan tandem has emerged to internationalize the issue, including in the UN Security Council.
- While Pakistan continues to train and fund separatists and terrorists in Kashmir area, **China's support for Pakistan** is motivated by a desire **to perpetuate its own territorial grab** in the trans-Karakoram Shaksgam Tract of Kashmir.

China's view on Jammu and Kashmir issue:



- China treats the J&K issue as a **“bilateral dispute left”** that should be resolved by India and Pakistan themselves.
- Recently, Pakistan announced that it will make **Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) as the fifth province of Pakistan**.
- China did not oppose this move of Pakistan. However, China **questioned the establishment of the Union Territory of Ladakh** when India scraped Article 370. This shows that China’s inclined behavior towards Pakistan.

Parts of Indian Territory occupied by China and Pakistan:



- The **Shaksgam valley in the trans-Karakoram tract**, part of PoK, was **handed over by Pakistan to China** through an illegal border agreement on March 2, 1963. China transferred 750 sqm in Hunza to Pakistan.
- **India rejected the Agreement**, claiming the entire territory belonged to India. Also, the **continuing Chinese occupation** of Kashmir's territory **does not find adequate mention** in the contemporary discourse surrounding this issue.
- China occupies **5180 square kilometres in the Shaksgam Valley** in addition to approximately **38,000 square kilometres in Aksai Chin**.
- China and Pakistan brazenly promote the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** which runs through **parts of Indian territory** under their respective occupation.

Background

- China played an insidious role in changing the frontiers of Jammu and Kashmir through fictitious claims and unscrupulous alliances with local chieftains.
- China exploited the '**Great Game**' between **British India and Russia** in the late 19th century.
 - It pitched territorial claims far beyond the traditional frontiers of Xinjiang (a Chinese autonomous region).
 - It gradually crept into areas in the **Taghdumbash Pamirs and the Karakorams**, south of

its frontier along the **Kun Lun mountains**.

Sino-Pakistan agreement

- After the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, from 1953, Chinese troops actively started transgressing the frontier in **eastern Hunza**.
- In October 1959, they rustled some livestock from the area, with initially angry response, Pakistan spotted an opportunity in the rapidly deteriorating India-China ties in the late 1950s, and decided to pander to the Chinese.
- Pakistan deliberately chose to downgrade the historical claims of the Mir of Hunza and **eventually signed away the Shaksgam valley to China in 1963**.

The Pakistan connection:

- Under the Sino-Pakistan Agreement of 1963, Pakistan gave the administration of Kun Lun mountains border to china.
 - This enabled China to extrapolate a claim line eastwards along the Karakoram Range in Ladakh. In other words, China claim the whole of Aksai Chin in which it had no historical presence.

China: as party to the dispute

- The **provisional nature of the territorial settlement** between China and Pakistan is evident in **Article 6 of the 1963 agreement**.
 - The two Parties have agreed that **after the settlement of the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India**, the sovereign authority concerned will reopen negotiations with the China **to sign a formal Boundary Treaty** to replace the present agreement.
- In effect, this agreement has established China as a party to the dispute. It has a vested interest in legitimising its illegitimate gains in the trans-Karakoram tract.

Conclusion:

- The one option never tried before is **a peace initiative by China, India and Pakistan** to resolve their common border disputes through resolution of the Kashmir issue.
- India's significant current military deployment to counter Chinese mobilisation may yet help persuade China to step back, there is no escaping the longer-term trend.
- If India can't redress the growing military imbalance and as Pakistan becomes even more dependent on China, China will loom larger than ever on the entire Kashmir region.