

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

By IASToppers' Editorial Team | 2020-11-06 00:00:00



#### Introduction:

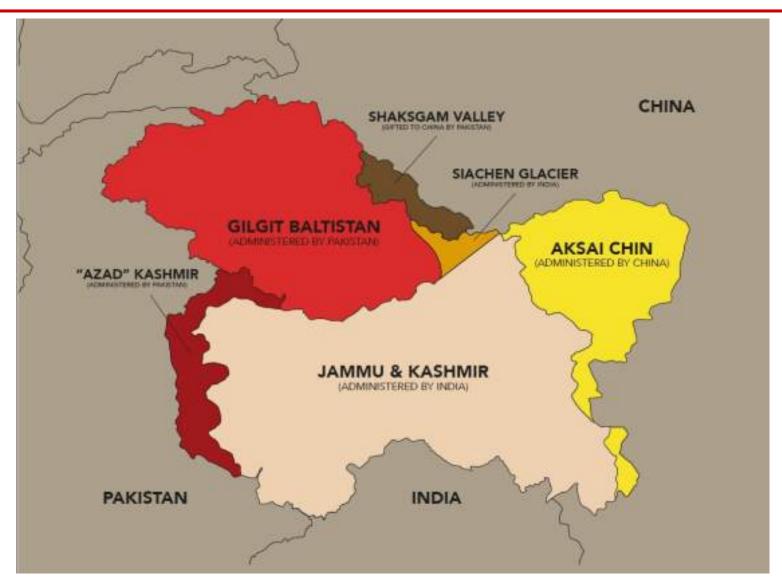
- Following the **abrogation of Article 370** and reorganization of the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), a China-Pakistan tandem has emerged to internationalize the issue, including in the UN Security Council.
- While Pakistan continues to train and fund separatists and terrorists in 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.