**Pakistan: Getting priorities straight**

[**Najm us Saqib**](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/najm-us-saqib)

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Take any argument. See it from any technical, historical, legal, moral, or political angle and you would appreciate Pakistan’s principled stand on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute. From the Partition Plan to the relevant UN Security Council resolutions to staying resolute on the status of AJ&K, Pakistan’s case on Kashmir was fought for decades by astute politicians and brilliant diplomats. Somehow, Islamabad was successful in keeping the issue alive against all odds. Any politician worth his salt would affectionately and faithfully plead the Kashmir case. Pakistan’s constitution speaks of Kashmir in Article 257. It is perhaps the only subject on which an absolute unanimity prevails in Parliament. The South Asian region became ‘volatile’ even ‘nuclear’ and has seen wars ostensibly on the pretext of Kashmir. Pakistan was dismembered in 1971 presumably due to Kashmir.

In fact, to many experts, all military build-ups, stand-offs, and tensions in the region originate and end in Kashmir. The military budgets of both countries are anchored in the Kashmir dispute. The Foreign Office would hold every expert on Kashmir in great reverence. Professionally sound diplomats would be posted in New York to plead the case on Kashmir. Similarly, the best of the best such as Ambassador Riaz Khokhar would be posted to New Delhi to hold the fort on Kashmir. Projection of grave human rights violations in the Valley, favourable reports issued by Amnesty International and Asia Watch along with translations in numerous languages of relevant material on Kashmir, particularly in the wake of an ‘indigenous movement’ in the Indian held Kashmir in 1989, would be the order of the day. Alistair Lamb would be the most sought-after author as and when it was important to bringing out the genesis of the dispute.

[Imran will be voted into power, says Rashid](https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2023/imran-will-be-voted-into-power-says-rashid)

Islamabad’s unwavering ‘political, moral and diplomatic’ support for the ‘valiant’ people of Jammu & Kashmir and their ‘just’ struggle of independence and their ‘inalienable right to self-determination’ would find prominent place in speeches of successive leaders of Pakistan. Depending on the kind of leadership in Islamabad at a given time, the content on Kashmir in the speeches to be delivered every September at the UN General Assembly would be carefully selected. From two-pages to just one paragraph, Kashmir would be mentioned as the paramount interest of Pakistan’s foreign policy.

From bilateral trade to the working of SAARC to peaceful coexistence as traditional rival neighbours to cricket, all matters hinge on Kashmir. So much so that Pakistan’s principled stand on Palestine also draws parallel with its standpoint on the final disposition of the Kashmir dispute.

On the other hand, the people of Pakistan hold Kashmir dear to their hearts and still believe their Quaid who termed it as Pakistan’s jugular vein. With the slogan ‘Kashmir baney ga Pakistan’ reverberating in mind, one was forced to believe in the fairy tales of realpolitik. Befitting functions would be held at home and abroad to commemorate Kashmir Solidarity Day in February and Kashmir Black Day in October. Every Think Tank in Pakistan has voluminous compilations on Kashmir containing solid arguments in favour of its annexation with Pakistan. The subject finds prominence in almost every debate in schools, colleges, and universities. Old diplomatic hands in both countries boast about their contributions in Track-II parleys on Kashmir.

[Punjab Assembly elections won't be conducted on May 14, tells Sanaullah](https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2023/punjab-assembly-elections-won-t-be-conducted-on-may-14-tells-sanaullah)

Lopsided development mainly due to heavy defence expenditure and perpetual animosity must be factored in when it comes to ascertaining the side effects of the Kashmir dispute. The T-word keeps hovering over the regional landscape primarily due to the trust deficit between the two nuclear States …. again, in the backdrop of Kashmir and its peripheries. The World sees Pakistan and India as perennial enemies terminally delved in permanent animosity … again, due to the Kashmir dispute. Little do the leaderships of both countries realize as to how much diplomatic weightage they lose and how much unnecessary embarrassment they invite by dwelling on their respective stands on Kashmir. Any diplomatic encounter at any multilateral forum and the world would know beforehand what India or Pakistan would state, making both the countries extremely predictable. Even the most harmless platforms like the UNEP at times become hostage to Pak-India rivalry.

Political and diplomatic pundits have initiated several policy papers offering several possible solutions to the Kashmir dispute. Substantive debates have been conducted over the years to conclude whether a political or military solution would suit the region. From autonomy to joint governance to formal partition of Kashmir to independence…. all possible solutions have met the same fate. Nothing. Both countries remain locked in perpetual struggle of controlling the disputed territory.

[PTI Sindh opposes alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami at local level](https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2023/pti-sindh-opposes-alliance-with-jamaat-e-islami-at-local-level)

Nothing changed…!!! Then came August 2019 and India abrogated Article 370, practically annexing an internationally accepted disputed territory and changing all previously known realities about the Kashmir dispute. Pakistan had forewarned the world of this totally illegal action through a PR issued by its Foreign Office a few months earlier. To say that the dispute is still on the agenda of the UN Security Council is true. However, this argument has hardly any practical value.

Far from the madding crowd, Pakistan is still struggling to come up with a correspondingly appropriate reaction or policy standpoint on Kashmir. Another irony? The Kashmir experts are still moving in circles while trying to disregard the presence of another cat in the room. By the looks of it, before India pounces on the status of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, certain appropriate changes in the Indus Waters Treaty seem to be the immediate objective. Let us review the Treaty to make it amenable to New Delhi’s plans. Remember, India is going to the polls next year? A question: Just like it changed the status of Jammu & Kashmir through a decision taken internally, what if India revokes the ever-important Indus Waters Treaty unilaterally particularly if Pakistan refused to blink? Would the World Bank listen to the involved ‘technicalities’ put forward by Pakistan? Imagine the scenario….!!

[Fawad calls for a commission to investigate Maulana Fazlur Rehman's revelations](https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2023/fawad-calls-for-a-commission-to-investigate-maulana-fazlur-rehman-s-revelations)

Never mind the ground realities of its ‘vital interests’, Pakistan is busy in deciding the dates of the next general elections.