



IPS INSIGHTS

Perspectives On the Issues Shaping Policy

Pakistan: The sole barrier between India's de facto military control over Kashmir to de jure

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Background:

On July 26, 2026, Indian Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh stated that any future discussions with Pakistan will focus exclusively on Pakistan-administered Kashmir, ruling out prospects of any general bilateral dialogue. He further lamented that the “success of Operation Sindoor is proof that India possesses the capability to respond to Pakistan’s every misadventure with a severity far beyond its imagination.”²

The reality, however, differs by manifolds. The crests and troughs are part of any freedom moment; however, one factor is common in every resistance struggle that parity between the aggressor and aggressed is never possible. The aggressed needs to be resilient because aggressor power’s potential is her lone constituency to survive upon. Same is the situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir, in which the Indian control over the disputed territory relies solely on the armed forces ecosystem.

Despite this, the resolve of Kashmiris, coupled with the solid support of Pakistan, refused to yield Kashmir cause at any cost whatsoever. Instead, their efforts have

resulted in breakthroughs at several occasions. For instance, in 2000s, PM Manmohan Singh invited the **APHC** and called the *Sky is the limit in terms of what can be done to resolve Kashmir*.³ Similarly, in January 2004, AB Vajpaie also invited the **APHC** and insisted on the *Insaniyat, Jamhuriyat and Kashmiriyat*⁴

However, the key misfortune was events of 9/11, which proved as a fraught development for Kashmir though Pakistan was ally of US. The September 2001 attacks fundamentally altered the entire global discourse on resistance movements. In the case of Kashmir, the struggle of right to self-determination increasingly diluted under the global “**war on terror**” narrative. This shift became a major stumbling block for the Kashmir cause, and **India effectively leveraged the post-9/11 environment to portray Kashmir’s indigenous resistance as terrorism**. This shifted the Indian position on Kashmir to security concerns, resulting in New Delhi’s weaponization of terrorism discourses in its favor.

Analysis

However, the regional and global context is now evolving:

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² Saurabh Trivedi, “Talks with Pakistan will only be on PoK, says Rajnath Singh,” The Hindu, July 26, 2026, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/rajnath-singh-in-dras-kargil-vijay-diwis-india-operation-sindoor-pakistan/article71268738.ece>

³ “Naseem Zahra, “What will it take to resolve Kashmir,” Arab News, June 4, 2005, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/267992>

⁴ Desk News, “Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s ‘Insaniyat, Jamhuriyat, Kashmiriyat’ is the foundation for peace in Kashmir,” First Post, August 16, 2018, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/atal-bihari-vajpayees-insaniyat-jamhuriyat-kashmiriyat-is-the-foundation-for-peace-in-kashmir-4976011.html>

1. Pakistan's Counterterrorism Posture

Pakistan's more serious and sustained handling of militancy, particularly in relation to Afghanistan, has gradually reshaped its international image from a security liability to a stabilizing actor.

2. Military and Strategic Credibility (2025)

Pakistan demonstrated that strategic competence and operational quality can offset numerical disadvantages, effectively managing tensions with India despite asymmetry. This reinforced the idea that capability—not just size—defines power.

3. Diplomatic Balancing and Global Role (2026)

Pakistan has shown increasing diplomatic maturity by maintaining a balanced approach between major global powers. This positioning has allowed it to project itself as a responsible regional actor and a potential contributor to global peace.

India capitalized on the post-9/11 environment – even when Pakistan was a frontline ally of the United States – the strategic landscape is no longer the same. Today, Pakistan's improved geopolitical standing, counterterrorism credentials, and diplomatic balancing provide a renewed opportunity as the terrorism mantra by India has been diluted.

The key argument, however, needs to remain grounded that geopolitical leverage alone will not automatically translate into gains

on Kashmir. Geopolitical gains have created space but that space must be used through coherent diplomacy, credible narratives, and sustained international engagement with perfect data-backed argument. This means that the “Pakistan factor” is vital – now and always in IloJK – because Pakistan is the only actor that resists the transition of de facto control of India into de Jure. Pakistan has two years limited window to push the Kashmir issue – in light of Trump's remaining time in office. The interest is only permanent feature not the tactical advantage based on the particular event. The quantum of give and take between Indian and Pakistan relations will decide the relationship.

Conclusion

Kashmiris living under India's de facto control are governed largely through a persistent threat-perception framework maintained by the Indian state. However, Pakistan's support as a legal actor in the dispute remains a key stumbling block preventing the de facto control by Indian Forces into de jure acceptance. The unilateral actions of 5th August 2019 demonstrated that any status arrangement, without a genuine balancing mechanism by Pakistan, remains vulnerable to abrupt alteration. The opportunity emerging in 2026 and 2027 must therefore be strategically utilized to address the fundamental cause of the dispute – Kashmir itself. This limited but favorable strategic window should be fully capitalized upon, as it represents a critical moment for meaningful progress for Kashmir.

