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**Shagun Sharma**  
PhD Doctoral Candidate in  
Chinese Studies, Centre for  
East Asian Studies, School of  
International Studies,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi, Delhi, India

## **Ethno religious separatism in Xinjiang and Kashmir: A comparative study of state response to separatist movement**

**Shagun Sharma**

### **Abstract**

The Research Paper closely studies Chinese and Indian government policies and practices in Xinjiang and Kashmir respectively. The most critical challenge to India and China's stability is the ethnic tension in Kashmir and Xinjiang. The issue has been intimately connected to Islamist insurgencies. From New Delhi and Beijing's perspective, the situation in Xinjiang and Kashmir presents it with a series of troublesome characteristics. First, the Uyghur and the Kashmiris are the dominant ethnic group in Xinjiang and Kashmir. Secondly, both the Kashmiris and the Uyghur are predominantly Muslims. The purpose of this study is to try and understand what the Chinese and Indian approach to managing their ethnic minorities is and what are the various ways and means they endorse in dealing with it. This study will prove helpful in determining the minority policy elsewhere where there are other sizable ethnic groups in minority. In the context of China's rising as a world power, it is important for India's overall strategy to see how China manages its restive Muslims, especially the Uyghurs. This understanding may help India to avoid the errors of interpretation in its minority policy strategies and put it in a better position. The Uyghur struggle contains many elements familiar to students of ethnic movements. Two key international forces bear directly on the nature of the Uyghur issue. The first is the growing global force of identity politics and movements for national autonomy among dissatisfied minorities. The second is the tendency of Islamist movements to play growing roles in the independence movements of Muslim minorities. These two forces influence much of the politics across the region.

**Keywords:** Uyghur, Xinjiang, Kashmir, Ethnic groups, separatism

### **Introduction**

It has often been said that the 21<sup>st</sup> century belongs to Asia, therefore, the rise of two Asian powers, China and India, are often on the radars. However, Both the powers have been closely dealing with various challenges and issues like ethnic conflicts and separatism. The most critical challenge to their stability is the ethnic tension and conflict in Xinjiang and Kashmir. The geopolitical position of Xinjiang and Kashmir make it quite crucial to their national interests. Both the regions are vital to India and China's territorial integrity and national security. Two key international forces bear directly on the nature of these conflicts. The first is the growing global force of identity politics and movements for national autonomy among dissatisfied minorities. The second is the tendency of Islamist movements to play growing roles in the independence movements of Muslim minorities. The purpose of this study is to try and understand what the Chinese and Indian approach to managing its ethnic and religious minorities is and what are the various ways and means they endorse in dealing with it. It can be analysed how Islamic minority conflict is interconnected with ethnic and religious issues. This case study will also prove helpful in determining the minority policy elsewhere where there are other sizable ethnic groups in minority. In the context of India and China's rise as a world power, it is important for Asia's overall strategy to see how China and India manages its restive Muslims, especially the Uyghurs and Kashmiris.

The key questions which I seek to respond is that what have been the state policies towards separatist movements in China & India, and how has Kashmir's and Xinjiang's geopolitical position contributed to the problem. Is Uyghur and Kashmiri consciousness based more on instrumental needs than on cultural and psychological, or vice versa and is the people's identity as Uyghur and Kashmiri stronger than their Islamic identity? I argue that the Chinese

**Correspondence**  
**Shagun Sharma**  
PhD Doctoral Candidate in  
Chinese Studies, Centre for  
East Asian Studies, School of  
International Studies,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi, Delhi, India

state policy towards its minorities is one of the dominant factors which has led to the formation and assertion of ethnic identity among the Uyghurs in Xinjiang and the larger sections of Kashmiris are more concerned about obtaining and practicing autonomy than achieving an independent state.

### **Uyghur Ethnic Movements**

Since the 1990s, the issue of Uyghur separatism in Xinjiang has been recast. In recent years the Uyghurs, have rallied around a steadily solidifying ethno-political identity. Calls for greater autonomy have culminated in a number of violent clashes between Uyghur groups and Han Chinese authorities. The first major violent incident China faced is in Baren township of the north west of Kashgar in April 1990. For China this challenge to the state was a turning point in its policies not only towards the Uyghur but also to the entire Xinjiang region. Throughout the 1990s sporadic political violence occurred in Xinjiang. From the bus bombings in both Xinjiang and Beijing, to assassinations of Han Chinese officials, Uyghur resistance to Chinese rule had turned deadly. On July 5, 2009, the Uyghurs in Urumqi, who perceived the Shaoguan incident as an anti-Uyghur violent mobilization by the Han Chinese settlers, organized a peaceful street demonstration to voice their discontent and to demand a full government investigation. The reports suggest that the security forces used excessive force against Uyghur protesters. While other reports say the Uyghur demonstration in Urumqi erupted into violence when Uyghur grievances were given no hearing. These incidents point to Chinese regime policies to assimilate Uyghurs to the Han Chinese population by preventing them from practicing their religion and speaking their language as the source of dissatisfaction and turmoil in the region. What prompted the manifestation of ethno-political conflict in Xinjiang? A variety of factors exist within the Xinjiang today that create the motive within Uyghur society for people to engage in political violence to address their ethnic, economic, social, and political grievances. Beijing's economic policies have favoured the coastal regions and the Han nationality, contributing to relative economic deprivation for Uyghurs and other minorities. The national minorities in Xinjiang are over-represented at the bottom of the socio-professional scale and the Han are over-represented at the top. These factors have led to large-scale armed ethno-nationalist conflict. Moreover, external support from radical organizations promoting Islamic fundamentalism, provide the additional means for collective political violence as Muslims in Xinjiang have a long list of grievances with the government. The desire to establish a political and social order that would put Uyghur Muslims at the centre of the system is very strong. Since the 1950s, successive Chinese political leaderships systematically formulated policies and carefully implemented actions to socio-economically as well as politically de-empower the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Such policies and actions can be defined as Sinicization. The state policies to settle the Han Chinese in the Xinjiang region efficiently "increased" as a result of state-sponsored population transfers from other parts of China." A second massive Sinicization in the form of systematic colonization took place in the 1990s. The CCP offered an attractive economic incentive program called the "Big Development of the Northwest" to the poor Han Chinese and the Uyghurs were systematically denied

opportunities to be a part of the rising program. The state's policies aggravated the indigenous Uyghurs against the Han Chinese settlers. The language policy adopted since the 1950s by the Chinese CCP denied the basic rights for Uyghurs to continue their education in their own language. From Beijing's perspective, the situation of the Uyghur in Xinjiang presents it with a series of troublesome characteristics. First, the Uyghur are the dominant ethnic group in Xinjiang, comprising some 43 percent of the population. Secondly, the Uyghur are predominantly Muslims. Thirdly, a substantial number of Uyghur currently reside in the neighbouring Central Asian republics and they have a recent history of separation. These demographic, geographic and political factors have converged since the establishment of the People's Republic to make Xinjiang a particularly problematic issue for Beijing. Indeed, it has also been argued that the long-time central government policy of celebrating the ethnic identity of Uyghurs in an effort to appease them has had the corollary effect of revivifying Uyghur political consciousness. The rise of ethnic nationalism and even "terrorism" in Xinjiang has at its core an essential contestation of identities reflected in the state's discourse of development and security.

The essence of the "Xinjiang problem" is that its economic development has come to be seen by many active parts of the indigenous population as a zero-sum game, in which they are not only the losers but will, by losing, also forfeit their culture and homeland and even their very existence as a distinct people. Xinjiang Turks, as like minorities everywhere who fear "assimilation" into the culture of a larger ethnic group, deeply mistrust Chinese talk of a multi-ethnic society and fear their fate is to be absorbed into a specifically Han Chinese world. Hence, they see themselves as fighting to preserve their unique historical homeland, language, culture, and traditions from forces they believe would obliterate them.

### **Understanding Xinjiang**

The ethnic minorities and Muslim majority in Xinjiang, which means the "New Territories" in Chinese, were largely conquered and integrated into the Chinese state in the 1750s. Xinjiang became a province in 1884. According to the noted historian Jonathan D. Spence, the Xinjiang region was not initially colonized or settled, but was maintained as a strategic frontier zone, with up to 20,000 Manchu and Chinese banner garrisons, at a huge annual cost. The largely Muslim inhabitants kept their own religious leaders, who were bound by salaries and titles to the Qing state. After the dissolution of the Qing Dynasty, the last Chinese dynasty, the Republic of China's Nationalists gradually saw the country fall into Japanese occupied territories and warlord fiefdoms, including Xinjiang, which was ruled by an autonomous military governor who nervously sought aid and sponsorship first from Soviet Russia and then from the Nationalists, before ultimately surrendering to the Communists in Xinjiang in September 1949. Although initially declaring the People's Republic of China as a multinational state in 1949, the Communist Party's Anti Rightist Policy of 1957 opposed "local nationalism" among ethnic minorities and clamped down on religions. A decade later, the harsh Cultural Revolution (1966-76) saw many even greater injustices against ethnic minorities. Religion was especially suppressed, but so was ethnic language, cultural cuisines and garb. The Uyghur in Xinjiang, like

other Muslim minorities throughout China, saw their religious texts and mosques destroyed, their religious leaders persecuted, and individual adherents punished. With the more open policies of the late 1970s through the early 1990s, restrictions on minorities and religions began to loosen. This opening resulted in more minorities speaking out against what were seen as discriminatory economic, religious, and political practices.

### State Response

The response from Beijing has been officially reasonable, but less so in practice. In September 1999, *National Minorities Policy and Its Practice in China* was released by the Office of the State Council. The policy outlines a fairly generous policy toward minorities. But it was far from practising. Open tolerance of minorities declined further in Xinjiang after September 11, 2001, when China felt it was now both internationally permissible to “crack down” on separatists in Xinjiang and nationally more urgent to protect its porous borders. Clearly the Chinese government has been cracking down on Uyghur militants. Western human rights groups are concerned about overall treatment of prisoners and the targeting of minorities, while the Chinese government is concerned that Islamic militant rhetoric and funding are finding their way into China. The issue then becomes whether China is victimizing the Uyghur minority, using terrorism and separatism as an excuse to violate their human rights, or whether China itself is a victim of separatism. The Chinese tend to refer to this concern by the three character slogan of separatism, extremism and terrorism, implying a distinct link between the three concepts. For instance, former Chinese President Hu Jintao said on June 17, 2004, that “We have to fight against the three evils of separatism, extremism and terrorism,” in a speech at a summit meeting of the six-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), adding that terrorism in all forms must be suppressed and double standards must be ruled out in fighting what is regarded as a grave threat to world peace and development. It is clear that the Chinese leadership fears that Xinjiang separatism has and will continue to gain support from transnational Muslim extremists.

The central government’s policies on separatists include the use of force, for example, in August 2001, the Chinese military undertook large-scale exercises in Xinjiang with an imposing parade of military hardware through the center of the city of Kashgar. The Xinjiang exercises, which were spread over almost a month, reportedly involved 50,000 troops, one of the largest ever staged by the Chinese in the region, featuring dozens of armored personnel vehicles, tanks, and camouflaged trucks filled with troops, capped off by a flyover of fighter jets. Armed police held a large-scale anti-terror exercise in Xinjiang on August 30, 2005. In the exercise, special police forces fought and subdued a group of “armed terrorists” who took over a company building and held some people as hostages following a failed attack at a prison.

Economic incentives, however, may well be the largest tool in the central government’s policies toward Xinjiang, especially the Western Development policies. The Western Development policies were first an economic development strategy to reduce poverty and then an urgent social necessity of Chinese leaders. The attempt to use economic tools to address ethnic separatism in Xinjiang reflects the

Chinese government’s long-standing belief that Uyghur primarily want a good economic life for themselves and their children. The current Chinese government is acutely aware of the challenges and dangers that lesser development in the western regions like Xinjiang means for not only China’s overall continued prosperity, but also for political stability, the possible enticements of Islamic extremism, and the calls for ethnic separatism. The underlying idea is that if the western regions, most notably Xinjiang, have sufficient development, then the minorities will prosper, be less restive, give less support for separatist activities, and be more integrated into the fortunes—both economic and political—of China. A complicating factor that has become manifest along with this economic development has been migration into the western regions, primarily of Han (or majority) Chinese. Not only is this making the western regions more ethnically Chinese, but also it is reinforcing the “minority” status of the Uyghurs, who watch the better paying jobs go to Han Chinese while the harder labor, poorer paying positions are given to Uyghurs.

It is clear nonetheless that both the central government and the provincial authorities broadly fall on the side of avoiding becoming a victim of terrorist or separatist activities when it comes to the question of whether China is victimizing the Uyghur minority or whether China itself is a victim of Uyghur militants. For instance, following the mass protests and violent riots of April 1990 in Baren township, there were further Uyghur demonstrations and disturbances in various cities including Yining, Khotan and Aksu in the mid-1990s. This was followed by the Chinese government response: the initiation of a “strike hard” campaign against crime throughout China in 1996 which made Uyghurs and separatists in Xinjiang a key target. After the forceful suppression of a demonstration by Uyghurs in the city of Yining in February 1997, several days of serious unrest reigned in the city. A renewed national “strike hard” campaign against crime was initiated in April 2001 and has never formally been brought to a close.

Michael Clarke argues that Beijing’s handling of the Xinjiang and Uyghur issues at the domestic, regional and international levels is characterised by a number of contradictions. Domestically, the unrest suggests that China’s longstanding approach to Xinjiang is at risk of failure due to the contradictions inherent in the logic that underpins Beijing’s strategy. From Beijing’s perspective, control of Xinjiang since the early 1990s has been built upon accelerating economic growth and development in order to placate the region’s non-Han ethnic groups. Yet this has only been able to occur, in the authorities’ view, so long as security and control has been resolutely maintained.

Regionally, the Xinjiang and Uyghur issues have throughout the last two decades been of increasing salience in China’s diplomacy in Central Asia. In particular, they were important drivers of China’s efforts in establishing the ‘Shanghai Five’ grouping of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 1996 and the evolution of this grouping into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2001. China has used its growing strategic and economic weight in Central Asia to persuade the governments of the Central Asian states, both bilaterally and multilaterally through the SCO, to support its position on Xinjiang and the Uyghur issue. However, the growth of Chinese power and influence in Central Asia has also been coupled with an increasingly ambivalent and even negative perception of

China amongst the public of the various Central Asian states and this has been reinforced by the recent unrest in Xinjiang. Thus, Beijing faces a contradiction between its growing influence with the governments of Central Asia and the simultaneous tarnishing of its image in the wider population of the region.

While a number of geopolitical changes in the international system over the past three decades have contributed to internationalisation of the Uyghur issue, it has arguably been Beijing's own approach to Xinjiang domestically, and its handling of the Uyghur issue in its diplomacy, that have contributed to the internationalisation of the issue. In particular, China's portrayal of Uyghurs as 'terrorists' since the attacks of 9/11 and the demonising of Rebiya Kadeer in more recent times have resulted in the generation of a much higher international profile for the Uyghur and Xinjiang issues.

### **The Kashmir Conflict**

Insurgency, as it manifested in 1989, was not an isolated political phenomenon but was very much located in the historical context of the conflict situation in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the roots of which can be traced to the partition of the Indian subcontinent. The state has been the hub of clash among India, Pakistan, and Kashmiris themselves since 1947. The core of the argument is the question of dominion and the possibility of self fortitude by Kashmiris of whether to remain in India, join Pakistan, or form an independent state. The conflict thus represents the confluence of religious chauvinism, secular nationalism, and ethnic nationalism, personified in *Kashmiriyat*. For India, Kashmir is sign of secular nationalism. For Pakistan, Kashmir represents the breakdown of secular nationalism and the imperative of a Muslim homeland in the subcontinent, as well as the "incompleteness" of Pakistan. The dispute arose when the British announced in early 1947 that they would depart on 15th August 1947, and be succeeded by the two successor states of India and Pakistan. The Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh did not accede to either of the two successor states at the date of partition. He hoped to create an independent kingdom. But soon after, Pakistan attacked Kashmir claiming its rights over the state. The infiltrators penetrated the valley. Pakistani troops disguised as local tribesmen attacked the western reaches of his state. Hari Singh appealed to New Delhi for military assistance. Prime Minister Nehru agreed to provide assistance only after two conditions were met: the maharaja had to sign the Instrument of Accession and join India, and Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, the leader of the largest and most popular organization within the state, had to give his imprimatur to the accession. By Sept. 1947 the Maharaja had realised the impracticability of an independent Kashmir, and decided to offer accession to India.

Three distinct developments during 1989–90 marked the beginning of the present phase of conflict. First, there was the armed militancy that had started making its impact through selective targeting of security forces, government officials, political activists belonging to mainstream political parties, and others perceived as sympathetic to the Indian state. Second, there was popular upsurge reflected through massive demonstrations on the streets of the valley resounding with slogans of azadi (freedom). Third, there was a collapse of the political order. With people openly defying the state, it was difficult for the government to

enforce its writ. More scholarly explanations have sought to locate the origins of the insurgency in the clash of competing nationalist visions, rampant electoral malfeasances, the rise of a frustrated middle class, or the breakdown of a composite Kashmiri cultural identity. It can also be argued that the Kashmiri insurgency arose out of a process of political mobilization that was unified with steady institutional decay. The political mobilization of Kashmiris started later than in the rest of the Indian state, but it accelerated dramatically after the 1970s. Institutional decay in Kashmir began as early as the 1950s, much earlier than in the rest of India. These two trends intersected as a new generation of Kashmiris emerged on the political scene. Significant political changes within India at large and within Kashmir itself transformed the politically passive Kashmiris into a highly mobilized population. Kashmiris, denied their voting rights in deeply flawed elections as they witnessed the increasingly free exercise of franchise in other parts of India. Awareness of this division grew with the spread of education and mass media in Kashmir and contributed to a growing sense of anger against the Indian state. According to Sumit Ganguly, the mobilization in Kashmir took place along ethno-religious lines. Four factors are significant. First, the state is divided into districts that also produce a religious division. Srinagar and the surrounding Valley of Kashmir are predominantly Muslim. The districts of Leh and Kargil, have predominantly Buddhist and Muslim populations, respectively. Jammu is predominantly Hindu. Second, the geographic isolation of the Valley separated Kashmiri Islam from the larger currents of Muslim politics in India. Indian Muslims rarely made common cause with fellow Muslims in the Valley, and the Muslims of the Valley never developed extensive ties with Muslim communities in the rest of India. Third, when secular politics fails to give an outflow for the expression of discontent, political mobilization tends to follow ethno-religious lines. A fourth and final factor that was responsible for the ethno-religious direction of the movement was Pakistan, sensing an opportunity to weaken India's hold on Kashmir, funded, trained, and organized the loose, unstructured movement into a coherent, organized enterprise directed toward challenging the writ of the Indian state in Kashmir. A number of more specific explanations for the crisis offer partial explanations for the origins of the crisis. For example, Ashutosh Varshney has traced the origins of the crisis to the clash of three competing visions of nationalism: Kashmiri, secular, and Islamic. Prem Shankar Jha, has argued that the revolt in Kashmir can be traced to middle-class frustrations. He contends that employment opportunities have not kept pace with the growth of an educated middle class in Kashmir. Consequently, the rebellion represents the expression of collective and growing frustration with the lack of economic opportunity. This conflict has acquired complexity not only due to the competitive claims of India and Pakistan, on the one hand, and those of the Kashmiris, on the other, but also due to the interlinking of its external and internal dimensions. While the external dimensions are defined by the continued hostility between India and Pakistan over the question of Kashmir and its internationalization, the internal dimensions are defined by the state of alienation of the Kashmiris vis-a-vis the Indian state.

The Indian state's response to the insurgency has been changing according to the shift in the nature of insurgency.

The first problem that the Indian state faced was to restore its authority and to have some semblance of political order. Only as the authority of the state was asserted, the state started looking for the ways and means to build peace in a more sustained manner. The approach to peace building that evolved over the period included three elements. First, even while the militaristic response was considered indispensable, it was recognized that the long-term approach had to be political. Second, it was also recognized that the problem had a complex character of intertwining external and internal dimensions. Hence, the need to address both the dimensions was recognized. Third, it was also acknowledged that long-term peace could not come about till the confidence of people in the state had been restored.

The government strategy appeared to be three-pronged: to apply substantial military pressure on the insurgents, to sow discord in their ranks with offers of negotiation, and to revive the political process in the state. The major approach was to give the security forces absolute authority in their counterinsurgency operations, therefore, a number of laws had to be extended to J&K. The local Public Safety Act (1978), which had the provision of keeping people in detention without charge and up to one year in cases of threat to public order and two years in cases of threat to security of the state, was amended in 1990 and made more stringent. Subsequently, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (1990) and the Disturbed Area Act (1997) were introduced, which gave sweeping powers to the army officials and immunity from prosecution for "anything done or purported to be done in the exercise of the powers conferred by this Act." Other than these, there were a number of additional laws that were invoked by the authorities over the course of the insurgency. Apart from the security forces, the intelligence service was also involved. This one-track militaristic approach, while helping to bring down the level and intensity of militant violence and restore order, became counterproductive and intensified separatist sentiments and further alienating the masses. The massive use of force impacted not only militant operations, but also the lives of ordinary people. Apart from the day-to-day harassment faced by people during the crackdowns and house-to-house and body searches at any public place, there were frequent cases of arbitrary arrests and torture in custody and disappearances. There were also a large number of killings of civilians caught in the crossfire, in extrajudicial custody and during protest demonstrations. Indiscriminate firing on people participating in protests in particular generated significant public anger and legitimized the armed militancy in the eyes of common Kashmiris.

Restoring the political character of local administration and governance was an important step forward in the process of tackling the insurgency. With the political government in place, attempts were also made to provide economic incentives to Kashmiris. From the very beginning, the conflict had resulted in constricting economic development of the state, making it dependent on subsidies and loans from the Centre. With only marginal industrial development, the employment situation, especially for the educated youth, was dismal. Soon after the formation of the government, the NC promised government jobs and, in 1997–98, a package of 26,000 jobs was announced.

While making an assessment of the state's response, it can be stated that there was a need to shift the strategy from militaristic to political. On the positive side, having tackled

militancy to the extent of bringing it to a manageable level, the state could now divert its energies to tackling the popular alienation. After having substituted administrative governance with a political one, fresh attempts were made to bring a shift in the popular response. A major shift in India's approach to tackling the insurgency in Kashmir took place in 2003 when Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee initiated the Comprehensive Peace Process. He addressed the internal context of discontent and alienation of Kashmiris and formally recognized the complexity underlying the Kashmir problem. However in the last few years, Kashmir has acquired a post-militancy character, defined more by popular protests than by armed militancy. The politics of resistance has continued to manifest through mass protests. These mass protests have returned as the major tools for the expression of discontent in Kashmir. The frequency and intensity of the politics of protest increased as the internal and external peace processes slowed down and subsequently stalled.

In the final outcome, New Delhi's response to the insurgency has moved from a heavy handed approach devoid of non-violent means to an active search for dialogue and broader peaceful interventions. As the situation has moved from stable peace prior to the troubles of the 1980s to war and back towards crisis and unstable peace along the conflict curve, an increasing emphasis on peace building approaches aimed at bringing about sustainable peace and harmony have been on display. Maturing from a purely militaristic approach, it has come to acquire more nuanced militaristic-cum-political aspects. It has also evolved from a simplistic assessment of the problem in Kashmir as a proxy war waged by Pakistan to a more complex understanding of its internal and external dimensions. Yet, the state's approach never truly became 'politics-led.' And thus, resentment lingers and manifests itself periodically in the form of mass protests. It has kept sustained peace an elusive goal.

### **Linkages?**

The Xinjiang and Kashmir conflicts have long been treated as separate and incommensurate struggles. While they are certainly not equivalent in many important respects, there are also convergences between them. Thus, while the core issues, the parties to and the histories of the conflict, and the character of the military engagements differ between Xinjiang and Kashmir, they also have similarities in terms of the ethnicized aspects of the conflict, state naturalization of territory based national identities, and state established structures for autonomy in both regions. The Uighurs and the Kashmiris face similar domestic, political, economic and social challenges. They are good cases to compare for a number of reasons. Both the Uighurs and Kashmiris are minority groups in their respective countries. Both groups are culturally autonomous and benefit from some form of political autonomy (although more symbolic in the case of Xinjiang). Comparing Kashmir and Xinjiang, involves a politicized approach to the state in its singular and plural forms, including complicating biographies of the state and of the historiographies of the region. Thus, due to historical and political reasons, both groups are politically significant and strategically crucial for the study.

Both China and India have had to deal with regionalist and secessionist movements that have challenged the authority of the state. Both movements have also been internally

divided and characterized by groups in favour of secessionism as opposed to nationalist ones in favour of a better representation within the existing polity. In both cases, there has been significant influence of international factors, though much greater in Kashmir. Primarily there are three types of international factors – big power support, external cultural ties, and diaspora community activism which have provided opportunities and resources to make the political activism sustainable. The militaristic approach of both the countries to tackle the problems is more or less the same with China exercising more rigid and strict power control than India.

The state minority policies are strikingly different in Kashmir and Xinjiang. China's tolerance for Uyghur political dissent is very low whereas the Indian democracy has given quite an ample space for political dissents and public protests. In the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, there has been no restriction on religion. Kashmiris enjoy their right to practice their religion, which is Islam, and there is visibly no restriction on religious activities or assembly. In contrast to this, the Chinese government exercises strict control of Islam in Xinjiang. Islam, due to its resurging popularity among the Uyghurs after the Cultural Revolution, deeply worries the CCP because it fears that Islam could become a rallying point for the Uyghurs in political mobilizations. As a result, the Chinese government cracks down on "illegal religious activities" by "defrocking suspect clerics, breaking up unauthorized scripture schools (madrasa), and halting the construction of mosques." The government also strictly controls clerics' activities, and only those "judged patriotic and politically sound could continue to serve". The government specifically targets two groups: CCP party members and students, two groups that are officially banned from attending religious activities. This is not the case with India. The Right to religious freedom has been granted to all the Indian citizens.

China's developmental strategy toward Xinjiang has been accompanied by waves of migration by Han Chinese to Xinjiang. In 1953, Han Chinese were only about 6% of Xinjiang's total population, but by 2000 the percentage of Han Chinese had jumped to 40%. In the meantime, the Uyghur population dwindled from 75% in 1953 to 45% in 2000. Today, Han Chinese are concentrated in urban areas and the northern part of Xinjiang, while the Uyghurs are mostly concentrated in the southern and rural areas. In the capital city of Urumqi for example, 73% of residents are now Han Chinese. The Uyghur have so far been reduced to absolute minorities in the northern part of Xinjiang. Only in southern cities like Kashgar and Khotan do they still constitute an overwhelming majority. Due to the Special autonomous status of Kashmir, a non resident of the state of Jammu and Kashmir cannot buy property or settle in the respective state. So in contrast to the Chinese case, there has been no migration of non Kashmiris into the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In fact, the indigenous minority i.e. Kashmiri pundits (Kashmiri Hindus) were driven away from the valley in 1989 by the militants.

As citizens of differently organized states and subject to dissimilar conflicts, what methods and types of conflict resolution can be possible for both the states? Both of these conflicts have been framed and defined by the two core states involved- India and China- and thus the approach should be the merger of political scholarship on conflict and sovereignty. There are three primary arguments. First, both

the Kashmir and Xinjiang conflicts have been subject to the changing tides of international politics- be it be the decolonization in the late 1940s or the war on terror in 2000s and as a result, the interests of the people of these regions have been disenfranchised vis-à-vis the respective power and clout of India and China. Second, the internal and international aspects of the Kashmir and Xinjiang conflicts must be analyzed and addressed not in isolated terms, but in critical dialogue with shifts in the global order of things. Third, the people of Kashmir and Xinjiang must be recognized as key parties to the peaceful settlement of these conflicts, such that their rights are not trumped by the claims of state sovereignty. Therefore, it can be concluded that increased autonomy is the most realistic goal for Kashmir and Xinjiang.

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