

AGENDA

**Conflict in Kashmir and crisis in South Asia
(A Framework for future research on Kashmir)**

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Discussion Brief

1. A great deal of literature has appeared on Kashmir during the last twelve years in India as well as in Pakistan. The foreign scholars too have contributed their scholarship to the studies on Kashmir. These studies have been carried out from varied perspectives and are not necessarily devoid of specific projections including distortions and biases. The bulk of the contribution has come from journalists and part time analysts. However, it needs to be recognised that some journalistic studies are valuable enough and do provide reference material for further researches and analyses on the subject.
2. The studies and analysis on Kashmir have, by and large, avoided the contemporary history of the state in its relationship with the union of India. The discussions and analyses on this aspect of the subject are sketchy and very often the entire discourse veers round certain specific developments and the oft-repeated cliches. This is not to suggest that these developments were not significant enough and that they did not leave grave political and sociological impact on the society and polity of Kashmir. However, these developments cannot be seen in isolation and are to be related to other political developments in the entire country. The analysis on the developments in Kashmir in the post-Independent India within the South Asian framework would further enrich the studies on Kashmir.
3. The conflict in Kashmir has to be located within the perennial initiatives of assertion between the two identities, ethno-cultural on the one hand and the religious identity on the other. The utopia of redrawing the boundaries and reliving an Islamic Caliphate of medieval times particularly in South and Central Asia is crucial aspect of the crisis in Kashmir. In a way this perception sustains the other utopia—setting up a *Hindu rashtra* in the country. There are two specific dimensions of the interface and assertion of identities in relation to conflict in Kashmir. One pertains to the impediments in nation-building efforts in the newly independent South Asian states. The second and most crucial one is building a civil, secular and a democratic society negotiating multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-regional differentiations in South Asian societies.
4. The assertion of Kashmir Identity, no doubt with all its secular manifestations, has prodded other linguistic and cultural identities to assert and seek accommodation of their urges and aspirations. Therefore, the issue of competing identities of J&K state which represents the sub-continental linguistic, cultural and religious diversity, provides another interesting area of research on Kashmir. It hardly needs to be mentioned that reconciliation of these diversities and pluralities form, by and large, the core of may a tension in South Asia.
5. The demand for the restoration of autonomy and relating this demand to the national concerns of integrity and security is yet another vital area of research on Kashmir. In the changing political situation this demand is being made by other states of the country although in different forms. It was reflected first in the Sarkaria Commission report and most vociferously voiced in

a recently held Chief Ministers conference of the country. This demand is equally at the root of internal conflict in Pakistan (Sindh) and Sri Lanka (LTTE).

In conclusion, the framework of studies on Kashmir has to be broadened. The analysis has to be creative. The historical material which forms the basis of the bulk of studies on Kashmir has to incorporate a sharp sociological perspective.

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