



Review Article

A Comparative Study of Pakistan Occupied Jammu-Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14577648>

Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p>Pakistan divided the areas of Erstwhile POJK into two parts in 1970. One part was called Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) while the second part was called Gilgit-Baltistan (Northern Areas). It is necessary to note here that only Pakistan claims it as AJK however, there is no freedom in POJK, not even according to the international laws. On the other hand, Gilgit-Baltistan was an integral part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir but Pakistan attempts to show it as a separate territory. These two areas are created only to misguide the international community and divert attention from the illegality of the occupation by Pakistan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ISSN No: 2583-7397 ▪ Received: 12-09-2024 ▪ Accepted: 19-10-2024 ▪ Published: 26-12-2024 ▪ IJCRM:3(6); 2024: 175-177 ▪ ©2024, All Rights Reserved ▪ Plagiarism Checked: Yes ▪ Peer Review Process: Yes <p>How to Cite this Manuscript</p> <p>Amit Tripathi. A Comparative Study of Pakistan Occupied Jammu-Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. International Journal of Contemporary Research in Multidisciplinary.2024; 3(6): 175-177.</p>

KEYWORDS: GB, LoC, POTL, POJK, AJK

INTRODUCTION

Maharaja Hari Singh ruled the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir until October 1947. At the time, it was spread over a geographical area of around 2,22,236 sq. km. On October 26, 1947, Maharaja Hari Singh merged the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir with India. Pakistan forcibly occupied some areas during its invasion of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947, 1965, and subsequently 1971. Pakistan divided the areas of Erstwhile POJK into two parts in 1970.^[1] One part was called Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) while the second part was called Gilgit-Baltistan (Northern Areas). It is necessary to note here that only Pakistan claims it as AJK however, there is no freedom in POJK, not even according to the international laws. On the other hand, Gilgit-Baltistan was an integral part of the

erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir but Pakistan attempts to show it as a separate territory. These two areas are created only to misguide the international community and divert attention from the illegality of the occupation by Pakistan. The areas under Pakistani occupation are termed now as Pakistan Occupied Jammu Kashmir (POJK) and Pakistan Occupied Territories of Ladakh (POTL).^[2] The areas of Gilgit, Baltistan, Skardu, Hunza Valley, and parts of Nagar Valley fall under POTL. The areas of Mirpur, Muzaffarabad, and Rawalakot constitute POJK. Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) which is a part of POTL, and POJK, are distinct regions, each with unique characteristics. In this research paper, a comparative study has been conducted to understand the basic differences and overall current political situation of these Indian

territories illegally controlled by Pakistan. Some key differences are mentioned below:

1. Geographical Location

Gilgit-Baltistan is located to the north of POJK. It includes areas like Gilgit, Baltistan, Skardu, and Hunza Valley. In terms of geographical area, Gilgit-Baltistan is six times bigger than Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Its current area is 72,971 sq. km.^[3] Its capital is Gilgit. Gilgit-Baltistan borders Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the west, Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor in the north, China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in the northeast, the Indian part of the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in the southeast and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir in the south. GB's borders also touch Tibet. It is characterized by its mountainous terrain, home to several of the world's highest peaks including K2.

POJK is Located to the south of Gilgit-Baltistan & geographically covers a total area of 13,297 sq. km.^[4] It includes areas like Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, and Rawalakot. Muzaffarabad is the largest city and the capital of Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. POJK constitutes the western portion of the larger Jammu and Kashmir region. It shares borders with the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the south and west. On its eastern side, POJK is separated from the Indian Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir by the Line of Control (LoC).

2. Political Status

Politically, Pakistan admits that POJK and GB, both are disputed territories. Even today, the so-called "Azad Kashmir" or Gilgit-Baltistan are not included in Pakistan's constitution as separate provinces.^[5] Though POJK, in comparison to GB, has a more defined political structure under the guise of being an autonomous region. POJK operates under its own Interim Constitution of 1974, which provides a framework for self-governance. The region is administered by Pakistan but maintains its own legislative and executive functions

The political situation in POJK is complex and often tense. POJK is nominally a self-governing state. It has its own Constitution, elected President, Prime minister, Legislative Assembly, High court, and Official flag.^[6] Pakistan has exercised control over the state without incorporating it into Pakistan. The so-called "Azad Kashmir" is under the tight control of Islamabad. Not only it is dominated by Pakistan's ruling parties but also it is controlled by the Pakistani military bureaucratic setup. Hence, little autonomy rests with local leaders and elites. This has triggered resentment among the masses in POJK.

GB does not have a constitution and is governed by the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009, which provides a framework for its administration. GB has limited autonomy and is directly controlled by the federal government of Pakistan. It lacks the same level of self-governance as POJK. Like POJK, Gilgit-Baltistan has also not been formally included in Pakistan nor do the people of this region have any role in the constitutional affairs of Pakistan. The

people of this region have been living in a constitutional vacuum for more than 70 years. They have also not been given the mandatory constitutional status for a local assembly by Pakistan. In this context, the announcement made by the Government of Pakistan on August 29, 2009, is important. On this date, the "Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009" was announced. Officially published on 9 September 2009, the order introduced the following system of governance for Gilgit-Baltistan:^[7]

- a. A Gilgit-Baltistan Council;
- b. A Legislative Assembly
- c. The government, consisting of the Chief Minister (elected by the Legislative Assembly from among its members by a majority) and ministers
- d. A Governor, is appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Thus, the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order granted it a 'semi-provincial status'. POJK has a comparatively higher degree of autonomy compared to GB, which has more direct control from the federal government. These differences highlight the distinct political statuses of POJK and GB within Pakistan's political framework.

3. Administrative Divisions

POJK is administratively divided into three divisions – Mirpur, Muzaffarabad and Poonch. Again, these three divisions are divided into ten districts – Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Kotli, Bhimber, Poonch, Bagh, Hattian Bala, Sudhanoti, Neelum Valley, and Haveli.

Gilgit-Baltistan is divided into three divisions from administrative point of view namely Baltistan, Gilgit and Diamer. Out of these, Baltistan Division consists of five districts, Gilgit Division consists of five districts and Diamer Division consists of four districts. Thus, GB is divided into a total of fourteen districts. These fourteen districts are – Ghanche, Shigar, Kharmang, Skardu, Roundu, Gilgit, Ghizer, Hunza, Nagar, Gupis-Yasin, Diamer, Astor, Darel, Tangir.^[8]

4. Religious and Demographic Differences

The population of both Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan is almost entirely Muslim majority. However, POJK is predominantly Sunni Muslim, with a significant Shia Muslim minority as well. The people of this region culturally differ from the Kashmiris living in the Kashmir Valley and are closer to the culture of Jammu. Mirpur, Kotli, and Bhimber are all old towns of the Jammu region.

On the other hand, Gilgit Baltistan region is the only Shia-plurality area in an otherwise Sunni-dominant Pakistan.^[9] The population of Gilgit-Baltistan consists of many diverse linguistic, ethnic, and religious sects, due in part to the many isolated valleys separated by some of the world's highest mountains. The ethnic groups include Shins, Yashkuns, Kashmiris, Kashgaris, Pamiris, Pathans, and Kohistanis.

CONCLUSION

The above-mentioned comparison shows though POJK and GB both territories are integral part of Jammu & Kashmir, now illegally occupied by Pakistan, there are many dissimilarities between the two. By excluding Gilgit-Baltistan from the occupied areas, Pakistan has unsuccessfully tried to legitimize its illegal occupation of this area. While the Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir region is culturally, linguistically, and geographically closer to the rest of Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan is quite different in many aspects.

The most important thing is that since 1947, this entire area has been occupied by Pakistan but even today the rulers here have not had the political courage to declare these two areas as their provinces under the Pakistani constitution. Therefore, the discontent of the people of these two areas, deprived of development and struggling for basic fundamental rights, is increasing day by day.

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