

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Conflict Over Kashmir

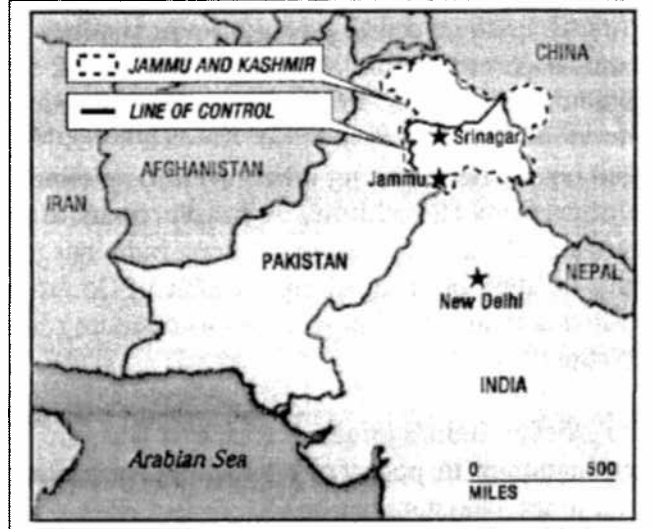
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/kashmir/front.html>

Part 1: What is Kashmir?

Kashmir is a legendarily beautiful mountainous region of some 7 million people that is located where the borders of India, Pakistan and China meet.

In 1947 the colonial-era rulers of Kashmir decided to join newly-independent India. Neighboring Pakistan thought the mostly Muslim region should be incorporated into Pakistan which also gained independence at that time. The two countries went to war over the issue in 1947-49 and again in 1965. In those conflicts Pakistan and China gained control of territory claimed by India, although India held on to the most populated areas.

Kashmir is dominated by the Himalayan Mountains which rise to 28,000 feet. From May to October, the city of Srinagar serves as the capital. From November to April, the capital moves to the city of Jammu. Jammu is also the name of the surrounding region.



Part 2: Who Is Involved?

India and Pakistan have a long-standing dispute over the state of Jammu and Kashmir, commonly known as Kashmir. The predominantly Muslim population is governed by the secular government of India. The armed forces of India and Pakistan maintain a frequently violated truce along what is known as the "Line of Control" dividing the region.

Since 1989, militant Islamic forces, including elements of al Qaeda and the Taliban, have used terrorism in an effort to drive India out of the region and establish Islamic rule. Pakistan says that India has perpetrated widespread human rights abuses to maintain its control. Since Sept. 11, India has said that it will go to war unless the cross-border attacks end.

1. Identify where Kashmir is.
2. What religion do the people of Kashmir practice?
3. What government controls the people of Kashmir today?
4. Explain what the "Line of Control" is.

5. Describe why groups such as the Taliban and al Qaeda want control over Kashmir. (What would they like to see happen in Kashmir?)

Part 3: Will there be war?

War is a real possibility.

For India, three terrorist attacks in the last nine months (the early 2000s), allegedly perpetrated by Pakistani-based militants, justify a military response. In October 2001, Islamic separatists killed 40 people in an attack on the legislature in Srinagar. In December, five Islamic gunmen entered the Indian parliament in New Delhi and killed seven people before being killed. In May, gunmen attacked an Indian army camp killing 30 people, many of them wives and children of Indian soldiers. India has responded with a military build-up along the Line of Control and has threatened to attack Islamic militants operating from Pakistan.

For Pakistan, India's threats are seen as an aggressive continuation of its policy of controlling Kashmir and also a threat to the Pakistani nation.

7. Explain the difference between what both India and Pakistan want relating to the Kashmir region.

Part 5: Who has nuclear weapons?

Both Pakistan and India are nuclear powers.

India tested three types of nuclear bombs in May 1998. As of the end of 1995, India had a total inventory of 315 to 345 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium, according to one study, enough for 20 to 60 weapons. Pakistan also detonated nuclear weapons in May 1998 and is reported to have up to 10 nuclear weapons.

Both countries have fighter jets and ballistic missiles that could be armed with nuclear warheads.

Part 6: What Does India Want?

India regards Kashmir as an integral part of the Indian nation. It describes the Pakistani occupation of portions of the region as illegal. It wants Pakistan to cease support for cross-border terrorism launched by groups that want to unite Kashmir with Pakistan.

What does Pakistan want?

Pakistan favors a plebiscite, as called for in a 1949 U.N. resolution, in which the residents of Jammu and Kashmir would vote on which country they want to join. India refuses to consider a plebiscite.

6. Explain the United States' position in the Kashmir conflict.

Part 4: What is the U.S. position?

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/29/AR2009122902930.html>

The Obama administration is supporting the Indian government's talks, or what it calls "quiet diplomacy," with Kashmiri separatists groups to discuss options such as greater autonomy and demilitarization of the region. The talks are seen in India's capital and in Kashmir as a key development, with dialogue about the future of the region continuing even though attacks in Mumbai last year have derailed talks between India and Pakistan.

"Washington fears that any overt American interference in Kashmir could backfire and set back warming relations between India and the U.S.," said Howard B. Schaffer, a retired Foreign Service official who is an expert on South Asia and author of "The Limits of Influence: America's Role in Kashmir." Any mention of appointing a special envoy for Kashmir, he said, is "viewed as toxic waste in India."

The Obama administration's apparent low-key approach to Kashmir belies the region's importance to the U.S. campaign against terrorism. The population here -- 10 million, as of the 2001 census -- is predominantly Muslim, and Islamist militants have tried to recruit followers in the region. But in recent years, most Kashmiris have said they just want a return to peace.

Even more important for U.S. interests, though, is calming the ongoing tension between India and Pakistan over the region so that the Pakistani military can turn more of its attention to helping root out al-Qaeda members and other militants who have used isolated regions of Pakistan as a base for operations against U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan.