

The Siachen Peace Park Proposal: Reconfiguring the Kashmir Conflict?

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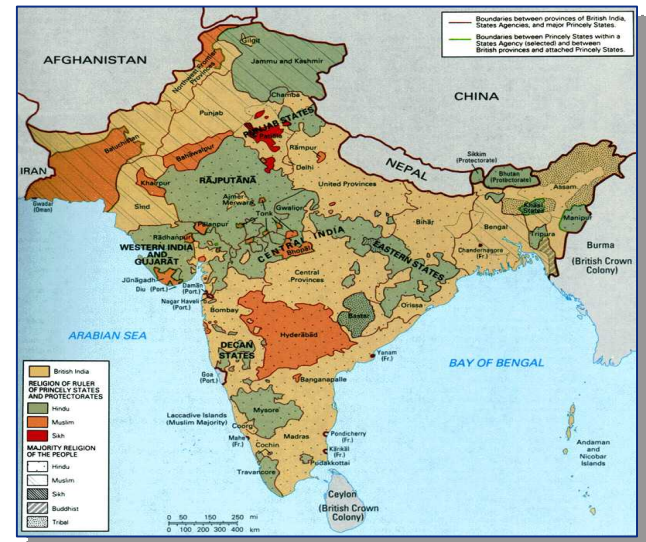


Outline

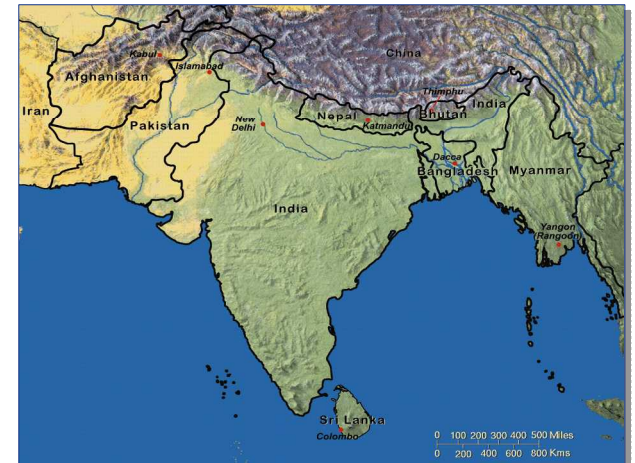
- **Context**
- **The Siachen Dispute**
- **The Peace Park and Science Center Concepts**

Background and History

- **British India divided in 1947**
 - Decision to divide into a predominantly Muslim state, Pakistan (East and West), and a predominantly Hindu state, India
 - Difficulty arose in how to deal with many of the princely states, especially Kashmir
- **Kashmir conflict led to war in 1948**
 - Pakistan sought control due to Moslem majority, while Hindu leader Maharaja Hari Singh sought defensive help from India and agreed to be part of India
 - India gained control of 2/3 of the territory
 - War ended and Kashmir was divided with a UN cease fire on Jan. 1, 1949 under terms of the Karachi agreement
 - Cease fire line slightly adjusted after 1965 and 1971 India/Pakistan wars



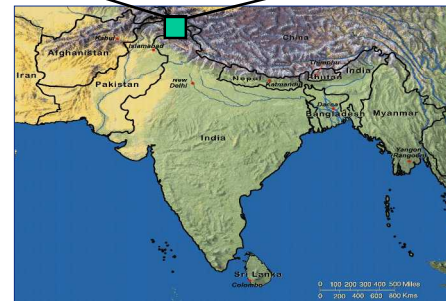
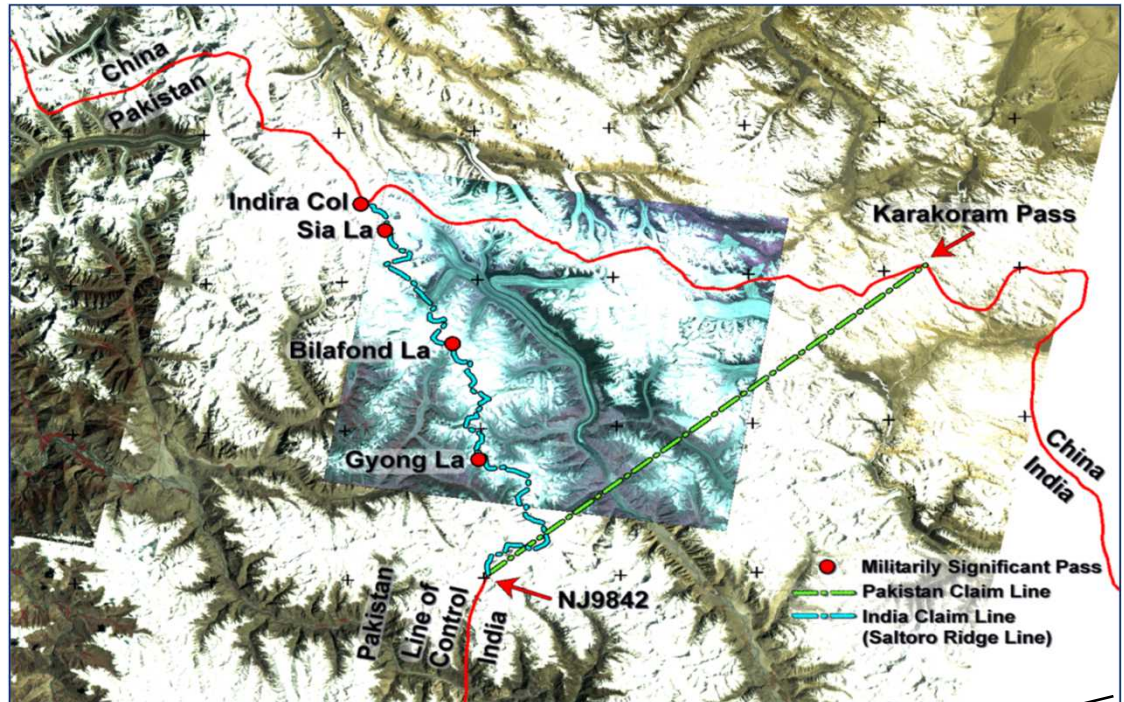
Map of British India



Map of Modern South Asia

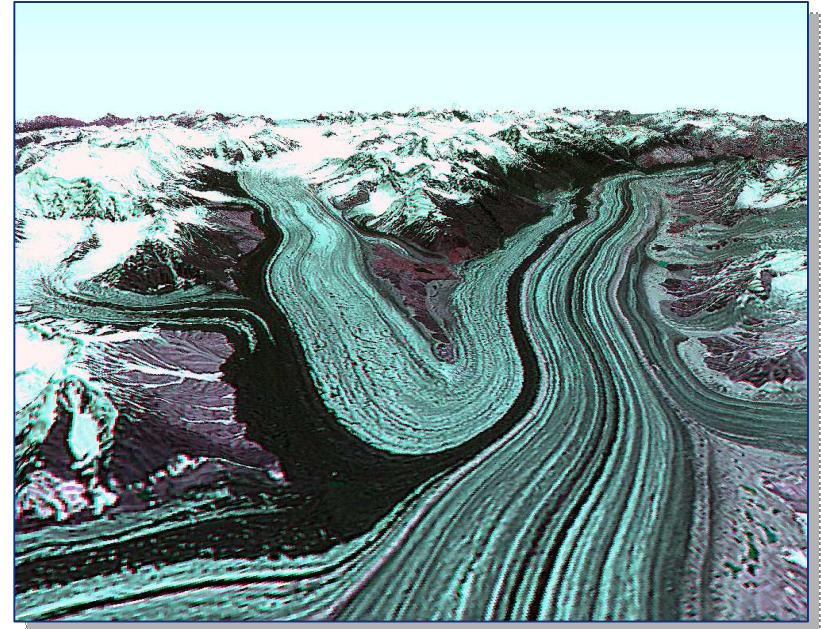
Origins of the Siachen Conflict

- Cease fire line dividing Kashmir ended at map coordinate NJ9842 at the foot of the Saltoro mountain range
- From there the agreement called for the line to go “thence north to the glaciers”
- This was interpreted by Pakistan to mean northeast to the Karakoram Pass on the Chinese border
- India interpreted it to go along the Saltoro range watershed line northwest to the Chinese border
- From 1949 until 1984 the area remained unoccupied
- In 1984 Indian troops occupied the passes along the Siachen glacier laying claim to about 1000 square miles of disputed territory



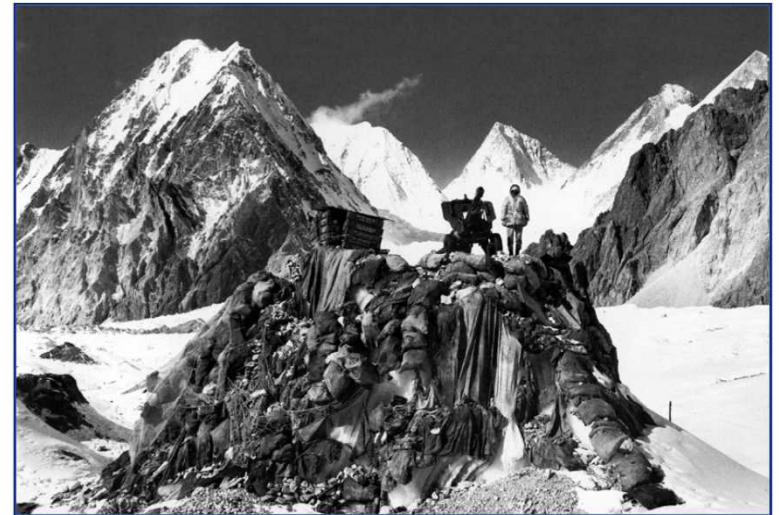
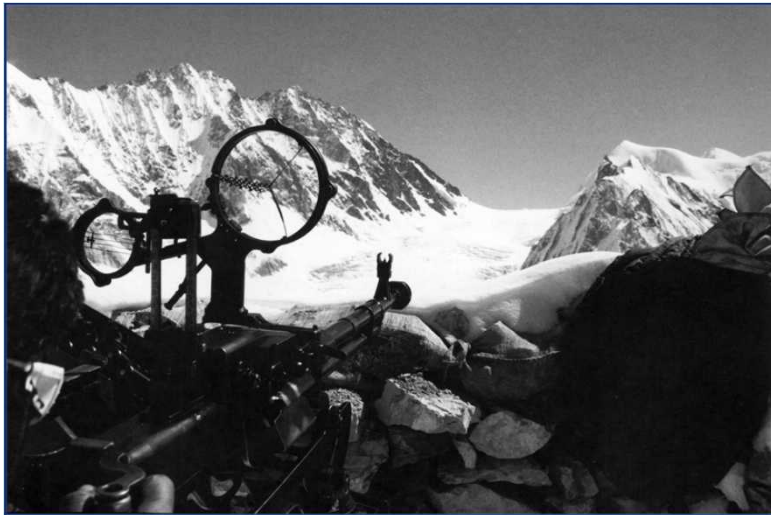
The Siachen Dispute

- Longest glacier in the Himalayan Mountains (over 70 km)
- Glacier areas occupied by troops since 1984
- Some troops are stationed at altitudes in excess of 6000 meters
- Most casualties due to the weather and altitude
- Hundreds die each year from altitude sickness and accidents
- Temperatures of minus 40-60 degrees C, blizzards lasting days at a time



Current Status

- Troops still deployed along Siachen and Saltoro Mountains
- Multiple attempts to resolve the conflict failed to be implemented
- Prime Minister and Foreign Minister level talks have suggested Siachen as candidate for resolution



Consequences of Conflict

- **Great human suffering and death**
 - Thousands of soldiers killed over the 23 year conflict
- **Significant financial costs to both India and Pakistan**
- **Tremendous environmental damage to this otherwise pristine environment**
 - Thousands of barrels equivalent of trash, waste and debris annually
- **Added tensions between India and Pakistan that further complicate resolution of broader security concerns in Kashmir**
- **Limited access for mountaineering, research and other civilian applications**
- **Other broader Himalayan issues not receiving adequate attention**
 - Degradation of the Himalayan ecosystem
 - Global warming impacts
 - Loss of biodiversity



Helicopter Rescue



Retreat of the Gangotri Glacier

Strategies for Peace

- **Potential Outcomes**
 - De-escalation
 - Disarmament
 - Demilitarization
- **Outcomes dependent on a sustainable peace process**
- **Sufficient political will is required to achieve peace**
- **Should that be achieved many avenues for building confidence can be envisioned**
 - Treaties and agreements
 - Monitoring systems
 - Inspections
 - Cooperative projects



Troops on Patrol
(photo by Harish Kapadia)



*Prime Ministers Shaukat Aziz
and Manmohan Singh*

The Siachen Peace Park Concept

- **First proposed in early 1990's**
- **Motivated largely from the mountaineering community**
 - **Individuals such as Aamir Ali and Harish Kapadia were key in promoting the concept**
- **Growing interest in both official and unofficial channels for this concept**
- **Seeks to:**
 - **Build on experience and success with other regional peace and transboundary parks**
 - **Ensure a durable peace in Siachen area**
 - **Create zones of disengagement**
 - **Permit troop withdrawal with honor and dignity**
 - **Prevent further degradation of Himalayan ecosystem**

The Siachen Science Center Concept

- **Replace military troops in the disputed area with scientists**
 - Idea developed in 1998 paper at Sandia National Laboratories in the US
- **Features:**
 - Maintains human presence
 - Bilateral effort
 - Unique additions to scientific knowledge
 - ◆ High altitude
 - ◆ Severe climate
 - ◆ Remote area
 - Potential for international funding and activity
 - Reduce suffering
 - Reduce defense expenditures
- **Draw upon other historical precedents**
 - Antarctic treaty
- **One example of such an effort is the International Karakoram Science Project**
 - Multinational, interdisciplinary effort by Indian, Pakistani, and American scientists to carry forward best possible research options

Unique Environment for Scientific Cooperation

- **Basic sciences**

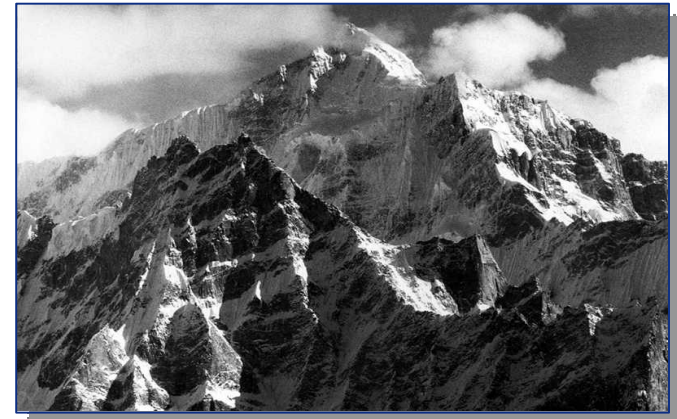
- Geology, glaciology, atmospheric science, astronomy, biology, botany, hydrology, ecology, environmental science

- **Human responses**

- Physiology, psychology

- **Engineering**

- Structures, logistics, communications, remote monitoring experiments



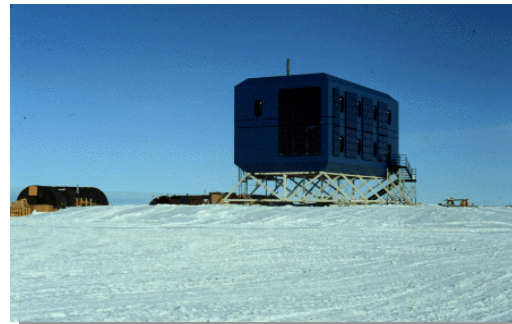
Geology



Glaciology



Field experiments



Severe climate shelters

Possible Next Steps

- **Joint declaration by both governments stressing commitment to the concept of a Peace Park or Science Center**
- **Joint body to delineate boundaries and plan phased troop withdrawal**
- **Joint planning team to work with NGO's on the concept and implementation**
- **Memorandum for cooperative management of the Park or Science Center**
- **International treaty formalizing establishment of such a Park or Science Center**

Summary

- **Siachen conflict is in need of resolution**
 - **Human and financial costs**
 - **Regional conflict/tension: India, Pakistan, China**
 - **Environmental concerns**
- **Political will is growing to address the issues**
- **Innovative solutions are needed to address concerns**
 - **Demilitarization**
 - **Verification**
 - **Peace Park and Science Center concepts**