

Peace in Kashmir: Myth and Reality

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Politicians spin realities to create myths about their people and their country in order to take them forward to a better life. This is called leadership and when done with compassion and wisdom peoples and nations can achieve great advances. But when such myths are spun out of self-interest then, tragically, the result can be misery and death. Kashmir, it would seem falls into this second category. The reality, according to the people of Kashmir, is that they want an end to the corruption that has blighted their society, they want to live in harmony with their fellow countrymen and women, they want a secular state without borders, they want their children from different communities and faiths to go to school together, they want an end to all forms of discrimination, they want an end to the abuse of human rights and killings, they want India and Pakistan to stop using them for their own selfish reasons, they want to be masters of their own destinies and to this end they want negotiations in good faith. These are the major findings of the most extensive poll ever done in J & K to find out what solutions the people vision as the way forward for Kashmir (see 'About this Poll') and it stands in sharp contrast to the myths spun by those political leaders who's rhetoric is born of the 'blame game'. Critically the questions for this 'peace poll' were written by the people of Kashmir through a programme of extensive interviews in Ladakh, Jammu Province and the Kashmir Valley and so it is their reality and perceptions of their 'problems' and 'solutions' that are tested here. We will start with the 'problems'.

The Problems

For all the people of J & K the top 5 problems out of a list of 37 (table 1) are 'Corrupt administration' 1st at 59% 'very significant' followed by 'High levels of unemployment' 2nd at 56% 'very significant' then 'India and Pakistan talking for 20 or 30 years with no result' at 54%; 'Pakistan and India are using the Kashmiri people for their own interests' at 45% and 'The vested interests of all the groups involved in keeping the conflict going' also at 45% 'very significant'. Violence and the 'blame game' do not come into this list until the 13th problem is reached at 40% 'very significant' for 'Violence instigated by Pakistan' followed by 'Violence instigated by domestic Mujahidin' 15th at 36%; then the Indian Army 26th at 31% and finally International Jihadists 36th at only 26% 'very significant'.

Table 1. The 'problems' faced by the people of J & K in order of significance

All - Jammu - Kashmir - Ladakh		Very Significant
1st	Corrupt administration	59%
2nd	High levels of unemployment	56%
3rd	India and Pakistan talking for 20 or 30 years with no result	54%
4th	Pakistan and India are using the Kashmiri people for their own interests	45%
5th	The vested interests of all the groups involved in keeping the conflict going	45%
6th	Poor quality of infrastructure and services	45%
7th	Non-cooperation and separation leads to the deepening of the conflict	44%
8th	Economic development has been politicised	44%
9th	The political leadership of Kashmir is divided	43%
10th	No consensus for a solution in India	42%
11th	Ineffective State Human Rights Commission	42%
12th	Violence instigated by Pakistan	40%
13th	The PM does not include people from both sides of Kashmir in the Round Table Talks	39%
14th	If Government do not take advantage of the current desire for peace then the opportunity for peace may be lost	37%
15th	Violence instigated by domestic Mujahidin	36%
16th	Failure to settle the Kashmir issue prevents large inward investment such as Hydro-electric	36%
17th	The <i>rebel fighters</i> who give up the armed struggle are harassed by the security forces	35%
18th	Denial of democratic rights	35%
19th	Poor quality of education	35%
20th	The PM's Round Table is compromised by previous commitments not being fulfilled	34%
21th	India is not showing any flexibility on demilitarization	34%
22nd	Pandit refugees unable to return home in fear of life, property and honour of women	34%
23rd	Kashmir politicians discriminate against Ladakh and Jammu	34%
24th	Our culture, language and religion is threatened by modern development	32%
25th	Independence will not bring safe borders with Kashmir's neighbours	32%
26th	Violence instigated by the Indian Army	31%
27th	The <i>rebel fighters</i> disregard for Human Rights	31%
28th	Kashmir Separatist leadership will not negotiate	29%
29th	The people of J and K are separated by language, religion, culture and geography	29%
30th	Politicians discriminate against minorities	29%
31st	Our children are confused by so much change coming from outside	29%
32nd	The Government's rejection of the United Jihad Council's offer for a ceasefire	28%
33rd	Religious identity politics in J and K will have a negative impact on the rest of India	28%
34th	The government claims to speak on behalf of the Pandits	27%
35th	20,000 applications pending for bus to Azad Kashmir	27%
36th	Violence instigated by international Jihadists	26%
37th	The problem is only in the Valley	25%

So corruption, maladministration and poor political leadership are the main problems faced by the people of J & K as a whole but does this analysis stand up to closer scrutiny when looked at from the different perspectives of the 3 provinces and 3 major religious groups in the state. The answer is, for the most part, 'yes' but there are some notable exceptions. Table 2 lists the top 5 problems by religion, region, and for Muslims in the different regions. 'Corrupt administration is 2nd or 3rd on nearly all these lists but 'India and Pakistan talking for 20 or 30 years with no result' is 1st for Muslims, the Kashmir Valley and Muslims living in the Kashmir Valley and Jammu Province while 'Violence instigated by Pakistan' is 1st for Hindus and Jammu Province. For Buddhists 'High levels of unemployment' comes first. This is also true for Ladakh and Muslims living in Ladakh.

Table 2. The top 5 problems for Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and those living in the Kashmir Valley, Jammu Province and Ladakh

Muslim per cent	Very Significant	Hindu per cent	Very Significant	Buddhist per cent	Very Significant
1st India and Pakistan talking for 20 or 30 years with no result	64%	Violence instigated by Pakistan	58%	High levels of unemployment	71%
2nd Corrupt administration	62%	Kashmir politicians discriminate against Ladakh and Jammu	53%	Kashmir politicians discriminate against Ladakh and Jammu	66%
3rd High levels of unemployment	60%	Corrupt administration	52%	Corrupt administration	66%
4th Pakistan and India are using the Kashmiri people for their own interests	55%	High levels of unemployment	48%	The <i>rebel fighters</i> disregard for Human Rights	63%
5th No consensus for a solution in India	49%	Violence instigated by domestic Mujahidin	46%	Pandit refugees unable to return home in fear of life, property and honour of women	63%
37th The government claims to speak on behalf of the Pandits	22%	India is not showing any flexibility on demilitarization	13%	20,000 applications pending for bus to Azad Kashmir	5%

Kashmir Valley per cent	Very Significant	Jammu Province per cent	Very Significant	Ladakh per cent	Very Significant
1st India and Pakistan talking for 20 or 30 years with no result	65%	Violence instigated by Pakistan	56%	High levels of unemployment	66%
2nd Corrupt administration	62%	Corrupt administration	56%	Pandit refugees unable to return home in fear of life, property and honour of women	64%
3rd Pakistan and India are using the Kashmiri people for their own interests	61%	High levels of unemployment	52%	Corrupt administration	60%
4th High levels of unemployment	61%	Kashmir politicians discriminate against Ladakh and Jammu	49%	Violence instigated by domestic Mujahidin	56%
5th India is not showing any flexibility on demilitarization	55%	Violence instigated by domestic Mujahidin	48%	The political leadership of Kashmir is divided	56%
37th Kashmir politicians discriminate against Ladakh and Jammu	16%	India is not showing any flexibility on demilitarization	18%	Violence instigated by the Indian Army	8%

Kashmir Valley per cent Muslim	Very Significant	Jammu Province per cent Muslim	Very Significant	Ladakh per cent Muslim	Very Significant
1st India and Pakistan talking for 20 or 30 years with no result	66%	India and Pakistan talking for 20 or 30 years with no result	66%	Pandit refugees unable to return home in fear of life, property and honour of women	65%
2nd Corrupt administration	62%	Corrupt administration	60%	Violence instigated by Pakistan	63%
3rd High levels of unemployment	61%	High levels of unemployment	58%	High levels of unemployment	63%
4th Pakistan and India are using the Kashmiri people for their own interests	60%	The PM does not include people from both sides of Kashmir in the Round Table Talks	53%	Independence will not bring safe boarders with Kashmir's neighbours	62%
5th India is not showing any flexibility on demilitarization	55%	No consensus for a solution in India	52%	The political leadership of Kashmir is divided	58%
37th Kashmir politicians discriminate against Ladakh and Jammu	16%	Our culture, language and religion is threatened by modern development	22%	Violence instigated by the Indian Army	10%

So both the region a person comes from and their religion influence views of the conflict in J & K. Similarly Hindus from the Valley have a different perspective on these issues to Hindus in Jammu Province (table 3). For them the number one problem is not 'Violence instigated by Pakistan' but 'Failure to settle the Kashmir issue prevents large inward investment such as Hydro-electric' at a very high 82% 'very significant' followed by 'Economic development has been politicised' also at 82% and 'Non-cooperation and separation leads to the deepening of the conflict' at 73%.

Table 3. The top 5 problems for Hindus living in the Kashmir Valley and Jammu Province

	Kashmir Valley per cent Hindu	Very Significant	Jammu Province per cent Hindu	Very Significant
1st	Failure to settle the Kashmir issue prevents large inward investment such as Hydro-electric	82%	Violence instigated by Pakistan	59%
2nd	Economic development has been politicised	82%	Kashmir politicians discriminate against Ladakh and Jammu	53%
3rd	Non-cooperation and separation leads to the deepening of the conflict	73%	Corrupt administration	52%
4th	High levels of unemployment	73%	Violence instigated by domestic Mujahidin	47%
5th	India and Pakistan talking for 20 or 30 years with no result	64%	High levels of unemployment	47%
37th	The government claims to speak on behalf of the Pandits	9%	India is not showing any flexibility on demilitarization	13%

One more point worth making, because it has far reaching implications for finding a constitutional solution to the problem of Kashmir is the fact that 'Kashmir politicians discriminate against Ladakh and Jammu' is 2nd on both the Hindu and Buddhist lists at 53% and 66% 'very significant' respectively while it is at the very bottom of the list (37th) at only 16% 'very significant' for the people of the Kashmir Valley. This lack of understanding is clearly very serious. Fortunately however, when it comes to 'solutions' for peace building and peace making, the people of J & K speak again with one voice so that, with a minimum of good leadership, a very great deal could be achieved.

The Solutions

When the research for this poll was done, every time someone suggested a 'problem' they were invited to propose a 'solution', otherwise, it was suggested, there would be little value in including their 'problem' in the questionnaire. We got lots of 'solutions' and these were then tested across J & K by asking one simple question - 'With regards to the future peace and stability of Kashmir please indicate which of the following options you consider to be 'essential', 'desirable', 'acceptable', 'tolerable' or 'unacceptable'?' Table 4 lists the economic solutions in order of priority from 89% 'essential or desirable' for 'Effective independent Commission to deal with corruption' to 59% 'essential or desirable' for 'Joint strategies for economic development between the 2 Kashmirs'. What is then important to note is the extent to which any community in J & K oppose these policies as 'unacceptable'. There is strong support from everyone for economic 'solutions' to the problems of J & K that are 'home grown' however, where those 'solutions' involve cooperation with Pakistan then there is some resistance from Hindus and

Buddhists. For example 'Start trade across the LoC' is 'unacceptable' to 19% of Hindus and 32% of Buddhists while 'Joint strategies for economic development between the 2 Kashmirs is 'unacceptable' to 55% of Buddhists.

Table 4. Economic solutions

	All Essential or Desirable	All Un-acceptable	Muslim Un-acceptable	Hindu Un-acceptable	Buddhist Un-acceptable
Effective independent Commission to deal with corruption	89%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Build infrastructure and communications	84%	3%	3%	4%	5%
Develop hydro electric power to reduce dependency	83%	4%	5%	2%	
Develop herbal medicines, horticulture and forestry	76%	3%	4%	2%	
Safeguards against external economic invasion	68%	8%	7%	10%	
Open trade between India and Pakistan	66%	7%	5%	9%	21%
Telephone links between the 2 Kashmirs	63%	10%	9%	11%	39%
Restrict external investment in property to leases of no more than 99 years	62%	10%	12%	8%	11%
Open roads of ancient silk route between Leh, Tibet and Pakistan	62%	10%	6%	16%	13%
Start trade across the LoC	61%	11%	5%	19%	32%
Joint strategies for economic development between the 2 Kashmirs	59%	11%	7%	14%	55%

As with the economy anything that can be done to improve the quality of education in J & K is welcome with 'Improve the education for all disadvantaged people in J & K' at 83% 'essential or desirable'. However, the people of J & K also want 'Student exchange programmes between ethnic groups' at 79% and 'Education should be secular' at 81% 'essential or desirable'. There is no significant opposition to these policies from any group. Resistance only comes when education polices single out particular groups. For example 21% of Muslims and 20% of Hindus (perhaps for different reasons) find it 'unacceptable' that 'Madrasas should be licensed by government' and 32% of Muslims find it 'unacceptable' that 'Pandits should be given intellectual space in existing institutions of higher education'. There is no serious resistance to 'Preserve and teach the Bhoti (Ladakh) language...' but including the language in Schedule 8 of the Indian Constitution is met with 13% 'unacceptable' from Muslims perhaps because of its associated constitutional implications (table 5).

Table 5. Education solutions

	All Essential or Desirable	All Un-acceptable	Muslim Un-acceptable	Hindu Un-acceptable	Buddhist Un-acceptable
Improve the education for all disadvantaged people in J and K	83%	2%	2%	2%	
Education should be secular	81%	4%	5%	2%	3%
Student exchange programmes between ethnic groups	79%	2%	1%	3%	
New textbooks on good governance and human rights	79%	2%	2%	2%	
Inspectorate of schools to monitor standards	78%	3%	2%	6%	3%
All students in J and K should be educated together	68%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Madrasas should be licensed by Government	50%	20%	21%	20%	3%
Pandits should be given intellectual space in existing institutions of higher education	43%	25%	32%	14%	3%
Preserve and teach the Bhoti (Ladakh) language for both Shias and Budists	42%	7%	9%	5%	
The Bhoti (Ladakh) language should be included in Schedule 8 of the Indian Constitution	39%	11%	13%	7%	3%

At the very top of the list of 24 policies for dealing with the security situation in J & K comes 'The violence should stop from all sides' at 87% 'essential or desirable' and at the very bottom of the same list comes 'Resolve the conflict through armed struggle' at only 18% 'essential or desirable'. 70% of Muslims consider this option to be 'unacceptable' (table 6). 'Serious abuses of Human Rights by the security services should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law' is 2nd on the list with 'Investigate all killings of who killed whom' both at 82% 'essential or desirable' followed by 'Pakistan and India should work together for a ceasefire' at 79%. There are no significant dissenting voices to the call for peace and justice. Only 6% of Muslims consider it 'unacceptable' that 'Pakistan should stop supporting rebel fighters in Jammu and Kashmir and close all training camps'. Similarly only 7% of Hindus oppose the idea that the 'Government should open up channels of communication with rebel fighters to establish a ceasefire'. Serious points of resistance are met however for Hindus with the suggestion that 'The Indian forces should completely withdraw from J & K' at 51% 'unacceptable' and 'All Detainees should be released' at 50% 'unacceptable'. But given an extended period of peace the long-term prospects are good. Only 13% of Hindus consider it 'unacceptable' that 'Those who give up the gun should be allowed to pursue a free life without harassment from the security services'.

Table 6. Security solutions

	All Essential or Desirable	All Un-acceptable	Muslim Un-acceptable	Hindu Un-acceptable	Buddhist Un-acceptable
The violence should stop from all sides	87%	3%	2%	7%	
Serious abuses of Human Rights by the security services should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law	82%	2%	1%	4%	
Investigate all killings of who killed whom	82%	3%	2%	6%	
Pakistan and India should work together for a ceasefire	79%	2%	2%	2%	5%
All reports concerning missing persons should be made public within 30 days	79%	4%	3%	7%	3%
All cases of murder, loot and rape should be prosecuted	79%	5%	4%	7%	8%
Pakistan should stop supporting <i>rebel fighters</i> in Jammu and Kashmir and close all training camps	78%	5%	6%	4%	
Peace Building and Human Rights training for all security services working in civil areas	75%	5%	6%	3%	5%
<i>Rebel fighters</i> and the Indian Army should cease all hostilities	74%	5%	3%	9%	
Demilitarise places of higher education	73%	4%	2%	6%	29%
Government should open up channels of communication with <i>rebel fighters</i> to establish a ceasefire	72%	5%	3%	7%	
Pressure from the International Community to get camps closed	71%	6%	8%	3%	3%
Those who give up the gun should be allowed to pursue a free life without harassment from the security services	70%	8%	4%	13%	18%
Army should provide a peace building service as they have in Tangdhar	69%	6%	9%	3%	
Demilitarise civilian areas	68%	7%	5%	10%	16%
Detainees should be kept in jails where their families can visit them	67%	8%	6%	9%	26%
Discussions of security at the central, state, regional and sub-regional levels	65%	4%	3%	5%	
Reduce the Indian Army presence in J and K	56%	21%	7%	43%	29%
Pandits need their own homeland for security	56%	13%	15%	9%	53%
Forces of both India and Pakistan should withdraw from both sides of Kashmir	51%	18%	11%	29%	21%
The Indian forces should completely withdraw from J and K	45%	30%	16%	51%	39%
All Detainees should be released	44%	29%	16%	50%	47%
Negotiate and agree all aspects of Indian Army activity in J and K	35%	30%	39%	15%	11%
Resolve the conflict through armed struggle	18%	59%	70%	42%	47%

Everyone in J & K seems to understand how important it is, now and in the future, to protect the rights of minorities. The top 3 items in the Human Rights and the law section of the poll are 'Majorities and minorities should be treated the same' at 85% 'essential or desirable' then 'Effective laws to protect all minorities in J & K' at 80% followed by 'More powers for the State Human Rights Commission' at 78% 'essential or desirable' (table 7). There is no significant dissent on these points. However when it comes to the suggestion that 'Minority rights in an independent Kashmir will be guaranteed by Islamic law' then 42% of Hindus and 79% of Buddhists find this proposal 'unacceptable'. International Human Rights law and domestic law based on those standards are clearly the preferred options.

Table 7. Human Rights solutions and the law

	All Essential or Desirable	All Un-acceptable	Muslim Un-acceptable	Hindu Un-acceptable	Buddhist Un-acceptable
Majorities and minorities should be treated the same	85%	4%	3%	7%	8%
Effective laws to protect all minorities in J and K	80%	3%	4%	3%	
More powers for the State Human Rights Commission	78%	3%	3%	2%	3%
The Human Rights Commission should teach people their rights	75%	4%	3%	6%	3%
The RTI (Right to Information Act) for J and K should be more effective	73%	4%	3%	5%	5%
International Human Rights organisations should be allowed to operate in J and K	65%	6%	5%	6%	26%
The Special Powers, Disturbed Areas and Public Safety Acts should be repealed	64%	8%	6%	9%	37%
Pass a law requiring everyone to vote	53%	17%	23%	7%	5%
Minority rights in an independent Kashmir will be guaranteed by Islamic law	47%	23%	11%	42%	79%

Although 68% of the people of J & K consider it 'essential or desirable' that 'The Central Government should work with Pandits to develop a policy for return' with only 4% of Muslims, 2% of Hindus and no Buddhists opposed to this policy as 'unacceptable' 19% of Hindus and 24% of Buddhists are opposed to the idea that 'Refugees in Azad Kashmir should be allowed to return home just like Pandit refugees'. Is this a double standard or are Hindus and Buddhists simply not sure about the real status of those returning from Pakistan? Like so many issues raised in this poll some results invite more questions rather than providing clear answers. But everyone seems to want the Pandits back. That much is clear (table 8).

Table 8. Refugee solutions

	All Essential or Desirable	All Un-acceptable	Muslim Un-acceptable	Hindu Un-acceptable	Buddhist Un-acceptable
All Kashmiries should be allowed to live together again as they did in the past	83%	3%	1%	5%	24%
All funds and jobs should be distributed fairly according to the ration cards	70%	9%	10%	7%	37%
The Central Government should work with Pandits to develop a policy for return	68%	3%	4%	2%	
Establish a Commission to settle refugee Pandits property matters	68%	5%	4%	7%	
Establish a Parliamentary Commission of enquiry into the mass exodus of Pandits	66%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Government should resettle existing Pandit refugees in the Valley so that others will follow from outside the Valley	64%	6%	5%	7%	3%
1947 PaK refugees should have the right to vote, hold property and government jobs	63%	10%	11%	9%	11%
Facilitate the return of youths who have crossed the LoC	62%	15%	9%	25%	24%
Refugees in Azad Kashmir should be allowed to return home just like Pandit refugees	61%	11%	5%	19%	24%
Freeze the 1989 electoral list	49%	11%	13%	8%	3%

With regards to other more general peace building solutions or what are sometimes called Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) again there is much agreement (table 9). For example 75% of the people of J & K consider it 'essential or desirable' to 'Restore, protect and open all Temples and Shrines' with virtually no opposition to such a policy (Muslim 3%, Hindu 6%, Buddhist 0% 'unacceptable'). People want an independent media, for NGOs to bring people together and to build a secular pluralist society. But most of all, at 84% 'essential or desirable' the people of J & K believe that 'We must learn from the past'. These idealistic sentiments are welcome and are the stuff that real peace is made of. But this picture is not quite perfect - there are also some fears and concerns. Buddhists fear closer ties with Pakistan, 37% of them find it 'unacceptable' to 'Make travel across the LoC easier'. And perhaps for different reasons 21% of Muslims, 19% of Hindus and 50% of Buddhists consider it 'unacceptable' that 'Separatists should participate in elections'. Picking the right CBMs to move a peace process forward needs to be done with some care but when coupled with a range of the most appropriate economic, educational, security and human rights policies suggested here there is plenty of scope for action. So we now know what 'problems' have to be addressed and we also know what can reasonably be done to resolve them. The next question is how and who will decide?

Table 9. General peace building solutions

	All Essential or Desirable	All Un-acceptable	Muslim Un-acceptable	Hindu Un-acceptable	Buddhist Un-acceptable
We must learn from the past	84%	2%	2%	2%	
Give Kashmir real hope that a solution is coming	82%	3%	4%	3%	
Politics in Kashmir should focus on education and development	78%	4%	4%	4%	
All NGOs and Civil Society should co-operate to bring the common people together	77%	4%	2%	6%	3%
The media should be objective and not take sides in the conflict	77%	4%	4%	5%	
Live by culture, language and history in addition to religion	76%	4%	4%	3%	
Restore, protect and open all Temples and Shrines	75%	4%	3%	6%	
Cooperation and friendship leads to conflict resolution	75%	3%	3%	4%	3%
Build a secular pluralist society	73%	4%	5%	4%	
Delhi should work constructively with the J and K government without manipulating their affairs	70%	6%	7%	4%	
Pakistan should be our friend but not our master	70%	5%	5%	5%	3%
Take Kashmir ethnic politics out of election campaigns	66%	7%	5%	8%	29%
Everyone who wants to cross the LoC for religious festivals should be allowed to do so	66%	6%	4%	8%	
Open borders for social, cultural and economic exchange	62%	5%	4%	8%	5%
Make the bus service across the LoC available to the whole of the population on both sides	62%	7%	3%	13%	21%
Women from all regions of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-administered Kashmir should be included in all aspects of the peace process	62%	9%	11%	5%	5%
Make travel across the LoC easier	57%	9%	5%	14%	37%
Build identity based on common Kashmir symbols such as Nund Rishi and Lal Ded	55%	7%	4%	14%	3%
Separatists should participate in elections	45%	21%	21%	19%	50%

Twenty options for negotiations were tested against public opinion (table 10). Critically the top priority here was 'Resolve the conflict through negotiation' at 81% 'essential or desirable' followed by, for example, the 'Kashmir people must be part of any talks and settlement of the Kashmir issue' at 76% 'essential or desirable'; 'Pakistan and India should talk directly to each other' 69%; 'Negotiation of the peace process must include all 5 regions...' 68% and 'Don't stop talking because of political radical groups' also at 68% 'essential or desirable'. Similarly 26% of Muslims, 11% of Hindus and 13% of Buddhists also found it 'unacceptable' that 'Religious extremists should not be allowed to negotiate the future of J & K'.

Table 10. Negotiation solutions

	All Essential or Desirable	All Un-acceptable	Muslim Un-acceptable	Hindu Un-acceptable	Buddhist Un-acceptable
Resolve the conflict through negotiation	81%	4%	2%	9%	3%
Kashmiri people must be part of any talks and settlement of the Kashmir issue	76%	3%	3%	4%	8%
All parties should enter into discussions without delay and express their true opinion	72%	6%	6%	5%	
India should have a debate on solution	70%	7%	4%	11%	13%
Pakistan and India should talk directly to each other	69%	9%	13%	4%	
Negotiation of the peace process must include all 5 regions of Kashmir: Northern Areas, Azad Kasmir, Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh	68%	5%	5%	5%	
Don't stop talking because of political radical groups	68%	7%	6%	9%	
Establish an independent commission and forum for peace and reconciliation in Kashmir	68%	5%	5%	6%	3%
India and Pakistan should facilitate intra Kashmir dialogue	67%	4%	4%	4%	
India, Pakistan, Shrinagar and Muzzafarabad must all be part of any solution of the Kashmir issue	61%	6%	5%	7%	3%
Establish inclusive working groups to undertake the groundwork and set the agenda for India, Pakistan and leaders of Kashmir	60%	6%	6%	6%	29%
Give refugees representation in negotiations	57%	10%	13%	6%	3%
Take Kashmir issue out of daily politics and hand it to an all party committee	56%	10%	12%	7%	
Religious extremists should not be allowed to negotiate the future of J and K	53%	20%	26%	11%	13%
Under the authority of a joint Indian and Pakistan commission monitored by SARC hold elections to negotiations for the final settlement of J and K	53%	12%	9%	15%	50%
Institutionalise the Kashmir Round Table with a permanent secretariat	50%	12%	9%	18%	
America or Europe should be an honest broker between India and Pakistan to settle the Kashmir dispute	45%	24%	26%	23%	29%
India and Pakistan should reach a compromise without input from Kashmir	36%	38%	47%	23%	18%
Involve all minorities in writing the Constitution for a Ladakh Union Territory	34%	27%	31%	23%	3%
Ladakh should start talks with the Government for a Union Territory	32%	27%	31%	22%	

The message is clear. The people of J & K want inclusive talks and they want all the relevant parties to the conflict involved - particularly themselves. The suggestion that 'India and Pakistan should reach a compromise without input from Kashmir was 'unacceptable' to 47% of Muslims, 23% of Hindus and 18% of Buddhists. Getting America and Europe involved as an 'honest broker' was not particularly popular either (only 45% 'essential or desirable' and 24% 'unacceptable'). The people of J & K want their own solution to the problem of Kashmir and they clearly should be given every opportunity to find one. The results of this poll suggest that getting agreement to a 'shopping list' of CBMs and other measures required to ensure good governance may not be particularly difficult but finding a solution to the more fundamental question of the constitution may be quite another matter. What can be agreed and how difficult is that task?

The constitutional question was approached in two ways. Firstly all the major elements of constitutional reform were tested in a list of 29 options (table 11) and then again as a series of 7 'packages' (table 12). There were significant levels of resistance from the different communities to nearly all of these proposals. The top priorities however were 'J & K should be a secular state' 1st at 68% 'essential or desirable' followed by 'The people of J & K should exercise their rights to a plebiscite in accordance with UN resolutions' at 60% rising to 73% for Muslims. It is their number one priority followed by 'Kashmir should be an independent country' at 65% 'essential or desirable'. For both Hindus and Buddhists, however, the top priority is that 'Kashmir should stay with India' at 74% and 100% 'essential or desirable' respectively. The second priority for Hindus is a secular state at 75% 'essential or desirable' and for Buddhists it is 'Ladakh should keep control of its land and culture' at 92%. How can these different priorities be reconciled? What compromise offers the best hope of success at the negotiating table? A process of elimination will help us here starting with the least preferred option.

No one wants to 'Join Pakistan' (table 13). Even 71% of Muslims consider this option 'unacceptable' (69% in the Kashmir Valley). They could have chosen 'tolerable' but they didn't. Although Hindus and Buddhists want to 'Join India' 49% of Muslims (63% in the Kashmir Valley) do not so this option does not seem to work either. But the UN resolutions for a plebiscite are limited to these two options – India or Pakistan. Clearly the Muslims of J & K do not understand this issue or have been misled. What they want is 'Full Independence' and that is not presently on offer. But suppose it were. What would happen then? For 58% of Hindus and 74% of Buddhists this option is 'unacceptable' (50% for Jammu Province and 62% for Ladakh). A plebiscite, even if Pakistan, India and the UN agreed to it, would leave Kashmir divided and no one wants that. 'Disintegration', at 49% 'unacceptable' is the least popular option after 'Join Pakistan'. This leaves 'Regional integration and devolution' which is 'unacceptable' to 55% of Buddhists; 'No change' which is 'unacceptable' to 47% of Muslims (58% in the Kashmir Valley) and 'Autonomy' which is 'unacceptable' to 61% of Buddhists. But this option 'Full implementation of Article 370 and return to the status existing in J and K before 1953 with a Parliament and Prime Minister leaving only defence, foreign policy and communications to India' is by far the 'lesser of all the evils' at only 23% 'unacceptable' over all. Providing the Buddhists can be persuaded that their minority rights and culture can be protected in an

autonomous state then this option just might work and perhaps this can be done by leaving the responsibility for the rights of minorities with India and by implementing far reaching devolution to all levels of government. Coupled with all the other measures for reform dealt with in this poll peace just might be possible at the negotiating table.

But we have forgotten one thing, the other half of Kashmir. On this final point everyone interviewed was asked 'Do you want all the questions in this poll to be asked in Pakistan-administered Kashmir?' and the result was 74% 'Yes' ranging from a high of 85% for Muslims in Ladakh to a low of 64% for Hindus in the Kashmir Valley (table 14). Providing the governments of India and Pakistan can now act in good faith and help the people of Kashmir find peace the people just might succeed where successive governments have failed.

About this Poll

The research for this poll was carried out by the staff of the Cvoter Foundation in Delhi and Dr. Colin Irwin from the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool in collaboration with 'THE WEEK'. The Questions were collected during a month of interviews undertaken by the research team in Ladakh, Jammu (including Kashmiri Pandit camps) and the Kashmir Valley. The Survey work was completed between March and May 2008 and included a random sample of two thousand people from all parts of Jammu and Kashmir with additional booster samples for the Buddhist, Sikh, Gujjar and other minorities. The full results are available at <http://www.peacepolls.org>.

Table 11. Constitutional solutions

	All Essential or Desirable	All Un-acceptable	Muslim Un-acceptable	Hindu Un-acceptable	Buddhist Un-acceptable
J and K should be a secular state	68%	8%	11%	4%	26%
The people of J and K should exercise their rights to a plebiscite in accordance with UN resolutions	60%	13%	9%	18%	66%
Consultation between all Districts	59%	10%	11%	10%	
Union of South Asian Countries to cooperate on economic and terrorism issues	56%	8%	9%	7%	66%
No political borders in Kashmir	50%	19%	14%	27%	37%
Kashmir should be an independent country	48%	29%	15%	51%	58%
Full implementation of Article 370 with Kashmir administered as it was before 1953	48%	19%	15%	24%	34%
Kashmir should be with India	46%	31%	47%	6%	
Each region should have autonomy within the larger unity of the J and K State	44%	23%	26%	19%	
Ladakh should remain with India	44%	28%	41%	7%	
Ladakh should keep control of its land and culture	44%	20%	21%	18%	5%
Decentralise to all levels of government down to the village	42%	16%	20%	11%	8%
Create 6 Regional Councils in Kashmir: Lai, Kargil, the Valley, Doda, Poonch and Jammu	40%	19%	22%	14%	32%
All the Districts of J and K should be allowed to decide their own future	37%	37%	34%	44%	5%
Create a Greater Kashmir including the Valley, Doda, Poonch, Rajauri and Kargil	36%	26%	21%	35%	58%
Share power (CM, Deputy etc) between Budisit and Shias in Ladakh	34%	22%	27%	17%	3%
Present status should continue	32%	39%	54%	13%	8%
Defence and Foreign policy should stay with India and everything else should stay with J and K	32%	30%	37%	16%	50%
Create a Greater Ladakh including Lah, Kargil, Northern Areas and Aksai Chin	32%	24%	26%	19%	53%
Call the Occupied Territories Eastern and Western Kashmir	32%	24%	25%	20%	47%
Make LoC the permanent boundary	31%	35%	37%	33%	16%
Make Line of Control irrelevant	31%	37%	31%	47%	34%
Establish Union Territory of Ladakh	30%	29%	35%	20%	5%
Direct Rule from Delhi in J and K	28%	40%	54%	18%	18%
Decentralise to 3 regions and Kashmir and Northern Territories in Pakistan	28%	31%	30%	31%	63%
Make 3 separate states under India – Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh	26%	46%	53%	34%	18%
Establish a Union Territory of Panun Kashmir based on Indian Constitution	24%	42%	50%	30%	37%
Joint management by Pakistan and India	24%	50%	49%	51%	58%
Kashmir should be with Pakistan	14%	64%	62%	66%	90%

Table 12. A constitutional package for Kashmir

All - Jammu – Kashmir - Ladakh	Essential	Desirable	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
1. Join Pakistan - All of J and K should become a part of Pakistan like any other Pakistan Province	8%	4%	5%	8%	74%
2. Full Independence – All 5 Districts should join to become the independent state of Kashmir with responsibility for both their domestic and foreign policy and protecting their borders with Pakistan, India and China	33%	12%	12%	10%	32%
3. Disintegration – Each of the 5 Districts should be allowed to choose their own future with Pakistan or India	12%	11%	14%	13%	49%
4. Regional integration and devolution – Pakistan and Indian Kashmir should function like a Co-Federation with an open boarder and decentralisation/local control in all Regions, Districts and Blocks	14%	15%	19%	17%	32%
5. No change – The status quo should stay the same with present Central, State and Regional arrangements for governance	22%	16%	15%	11%	34%
6. Autonomy – Full implementation of Article 370 and return to the status existing in J and K before 1953 with a Parliament and Prime Minister leaving only defence, foreign policy and communications to India	21%	22%	18%	14%	23%
7. Join India – All of J and K should become a part of India like any other Indian State	33%	13%	10%	9%	34%

Table 13. A constitutional package for Kashmir

Per cent 'Unacceptable'	A L L	M U S L I M	H I N D U	B U D D H I S T	V A L L E Y	M U S L I M	H I N D U	J A M M U	M U S L I M	H I N D U	L A D A K H	M U S L I M	B U D D H I S T
1. Join Pakistan - All of J and K should become a part of Pakistan like any other Pakistan Province	74	71	78	84	69	69	64	77	73	79	87	88	84
2. Full Independence – All 5 Districts should join to become the independent state of Kashmir with responsibility for both their domestic and foreign policy and protecting their borders with Pakistan, India and China	32	16	58	74	7	7	0	50	31	59	62	55	74
3. Disintegration – Each of the 5 Districts should be allowed to choose their own future with Pakistan or India	49	49	50	63	53	53	27	47	40	50	48	38	63
4. Regional integration and devolution – Pakistan and Indian Kashmir should function like a Co-Federation with an open boarder and decentralisation/local control in all Regions, Districts and Blocks	32	27	40	55	22	22	36	39	35	40	49	45	55
5. No change – The status quo should stay the same with present Central, State and Regional arrangements for governance	34	47	12	3	58	58	73	17	30	11	3	3	3
6. Autonomy – Full implementation of Article 370 and return to the status existing in J and K before 1953 with a Parliament and Prime Minister leaving only defence, foreign policy and communications to India	23	27	15	61	34	34	27	14	13	15	33	15	61
7. Join India – All of J and K should become a part of India like any other Indian State	34	49	10	13	63	63	46	13	20	10	13	13	13

Table 14. Do you want all the questions in this poll to be asked in Pakistan-administered Kashmir?

	Yes	No
All - Jammu - Kashmir - Ladakh	74%	13%
All - Muslim	77%	12%
All - Hindu	69%	15%
All - Budhist	74%	24%
Kashmir Valley	76%	9%
Kashmir Valley - Muslim	77%	9%
Kashmir Valley - Hindu	64%	27%
Jammu Province	71%	16%
Jammu - Muslim	73%	19%
Jammu - Hindu	70%	15%
Ladakh	81%	15%
Ladakh - Muslim	85%	10%
Ladakh - Buddhist	74%	24%