

Project Kashmiri-Diaspora, Transnational Politics and the Kashmir Dispute

Title:

Kashmiri-Diaspora, Transnational Politics and the Kashmir Dispute

Duration:

2006 – 2009

Host institution:

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Abstract:

This research studies the development and the political mobilisation of the Kashmiri diaspora in Britain with a focus on transnational politics in the context of the Kashmir dispute. Since the mid 20th century, Kashmiris from the Mirpur region have migrated to and settled in Britain. As a consequence of Pakistan's postcolonial control over the area of Mirpur, which since 1947 is part of Azad Kashmir, these people have been mostly identified as "Pakistanis" in Britain. Yet since the mid-1950s small networks of actors have committed themselves politically as Kashmiris, attempting to mobilize a Kashmiri community in a transnational framework. One important issue in this regard was in the 1950s and 1960s opposition against the construction of the Mangla Dam which submerged large tracts of Mirpur under water, as is today protest against the ongoing extension of the dam. Coeval with the uprising in Indian administered Kashmir, a perceived discrimination within the British multiculturalist system has meanwhile sparked a "Kashmiri national identity campaign" which demands the recognition of Kashmiris as Kashmiris – that is, not as Pakistanis – in Britain.

British Kashmiris protest against the extension of the Mangla Dam, Birmingham, September 2006

The research studies how a Kashmiri diaspora is constituted through discourses and practices of identity, community and memory in the intersecting contexts of British and transnational politics. It examines how various actors (individuals and organizations) attempt to



mobilize people for the construction of diaspora, how they try to transform this diaspora into a collective actor in the Kashmir dispute and what strategies of politics are employed both nationally and transnationally.

Fieldwork in Britain (especially in Bradford and Birmingham) is supplemented by research in Kashmir and Pakistan.

Keywords:

Kashmiris, Azad Kashmir, Britain, diaspora, transnational politics