



Indo-Pak Policies Appraisal vis-à-vis contemporary Kashmir Conflict Dynamics

Syed Mushahid Hussain Naqvi

Email: mushahidnaqvi673@gmail.com

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Syed Mushahid Hussain Naqvi

Email: mushahidnaqvi673@gmail.com

Abstract

The Kashmir conflict remains a central issue in Indo-Pakistani relations, reflecting deep ideological divides and posing significant challenges to regional stability. This paper examines the contrasting policies of India and Pakistan regarding Kashmir, focusing on their implications for regional security and the rights of the Kashmiri population. India's 2019 revocation of Article 370 marked a shift toward territorial consolidation and demographic changes, accompanied by heavy security measures that have sparked domestic and international criticism. In contrast, Pakistan's strategy has centered on internationalizing the issue, emphasizing human rights violations and seeking global support. The paper explores the structural barriers to conflict resolution, such as mutual distrust and the marginalization of Kashmiri voices, and the role of external actors like China and the United States. It advocates for inclusive conflict resolution strategies, such as confidence-building measures, local stakeholder involvement, and strengthened governance, to

transform Kashmir from a source of conflict to a platform for regional cooperation and peace.

Keywords: *Kashmir conflict, Indo-Pakistani relations, Article 370, territorial dispute, regional stability, conflict resolution, South Asia.*

Introduction

In India and Pakistan, Kashmir represents more than just a contested territory; it has become a core part of both nations' identities. For Pakistan, the presence of a Muslim-majority region under Indian control challenges the ideological foundation of Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims. For India, retaining Kashmir is vital to affirming the secular, pluralistic identity of the Indian state. Both countries, however, have used Kashmir to deflect from domestic challenges, with Pakistan rallying support for the "Kashmiri cause" to consolidate political power and unify a fragmented populace, while India manipulates the conflict as an existential struggle against extremism and separatism.¹ In retrospect, The Kashmir issue is compounded by historical grievances, ethnic and religious tensions, and regional political dynamics. As Kashmir's dispute dates to the 1947 British departure, where inadequate partition mechanisms left princely states like Kashmir vulnerable to conflict.² The British failed

¹ "Kashmir Documents," *Pakistan Horizon* 43, no. 2 (1990): 105–59.

² Ghulam Nabi Fai, "Resolution of the Kashmir Dispute: A Way Forward," *Strategic Studies* 32/33 (2012): 1–14.

to provide clear guidelines, leaving Kashmir's Muslim-majority population under Hindu rule without a definitive path forward. For Pakistan, the presence of Kashmir under Indian rule has been a persistent reminder of unfulfilled promises to protect Muslim-majority regions from Hindu dominance. For India, Kashmir embodies its secular ideology, which is often challenged by separatist movements. In both countries, Kashmir plays a strategic role in uniting various constituencies.

Since its inception, the Kashmir conflict has been characterized by a combination of historical grievances, territorial disputes, and competing nationalistic narratives. The inadequacies of the partition process, particularly the ambiguous status of princely states like Jammu and Kashmir, set the stage for decades of conflict. Over time, the region has witnessed multiple wars, insurgencies, and cycles of violence, transforming it into a flashpoint with profound implications for South Asian stability.

Recent developments have further complicated the conflict's dynamics. In August 2019, India made a significant constitutional shift by revoking Article 370, which had granted Jammu and Kashmir a special autonomous status³. This move, framed as a step toward

³ Happymon Jacob, "Toward a Kashmir Endgame?: How India and Pakistan Could Negotiate a Lasting Solution" (US Institute of Peace, 2020), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25406>.

national integration and economic development, was accompanied by stringent security measures, a communications blackout, and demographic policy changes. These actions were met with criticism from international observers and resistance from the local population. Simultaneously, Pakistan intensified its diplomatic efforts to internationalize the issue, presenting India's actions as violations of international law and human rights. However, Pakistan's internal challenges and limited success in mobilizing global support have exposed the constraints of its approach.

Beyond India and Pakistan, the conflict has broader regional and global dimensions. The involvement of external powers, such as China, and the threat of escalation in a nuclearized South Asia amplify the stakes. Meanwhile, the voices and aspirations of the Kashmiri people remain largely marginalized, overshadowed by the competing agendas of the two states.

This study critically appraises the policies pursued by India and Pakistan vis-à-vis the Kashmir conflict, exploring their historical context, strategic motivations, and impact on the region. It unfolds the structural and conceptual challenges that have perpetuated the impasse, while highlighting the implications for regional security and the global order. By examining historical legacies, nationalistic ambitions, and geopolitical complexities, this paper seeks to

contribute to a deeper understanding of the conflict and explore potential pathways for resolution.

India's policy on Kashmir:

India's policy on Kashmir, especially following the significant constitutional shift in August 2019, has been marked by a series of strategic moves intended to solidify the region's integration into the Indian union and manage security risks.

Constitutional Reorganization and Policy Objectives:

The Indian government's August 2019 decision to revoke Article 370, which had granted Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) a degree of autonomy since 1949, represented a pivotal shift in its policy. Article 370 allowed J&K its own constitution and autonomy over matters excluding defense, foreign affairs, finance, and communications. Its removal was justified by the government as necessary for ending separatism and integrating the region with the rest of India. In addition, the bifurcation of J&K into two union territories—Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh—signaled the central government's intent to exercise direct control over the region.

The revocation has political, economic, and social dimensions. Politically, the government argued that a unified legal and administrative framework would eliminate the sense of separateness

among Kashmiris and contribute to national unity. Economically, the government contended that full integration would facilitate investments and development, leading to job creation and infrastructure development. Socially, the move was framed as a step toward equality, granting the same rights and laws to the citizens of J&K as enjoyed by those in other states.

Administrative and Security Measures:

The reorganization into union territories placed the region under tighter federal control, specifically under the Home Ministry, signaling an unprecedented level of administrative oversight. This reorganization allowed the central government to enact laws previously out of reach due to J&K's autonomy. It facilitated the imposition of new residency laws, now allowing non-residents to settle, work, and own property in the region, a significant shift with potential demographic implications.

The government accompanied this transition with stringent security measures. In response to concerns about civil unrest and militancy, a large security deployment was established, with additional troops dispatched to maintain order. Key political figures were detained under the Public Safety Act (PSA), a preventive detention law, and the government enforced a communication blackout to control information flow and curb mobilization efforts against the

reorganization. These steps, while effective in short-term pacification, raised international concerns over human rights.

Communications Blackout and Control Over Information:

The communication restrictions, initially complete and only gradually lifted over subsequent months, were intended to prevent coordination among separatist groups and inhibit the spread of misinformation. The internet restrictions affected daily life, education, healthcare, and business, especially amid the pandemic when digital communication was essential. Although some services were restored, full internet access remained restricted well into 2021.⁴

The blackout also served as a form of information control, limiting both internal dissent and the visibility of the region's situation to the broader world. India defended these actions as essential to maintain order, though critics argued it contravened democratic norms of free speech and access to information. These measures have underscored the government's stance on prioritizing security over liberal democratic freedoms in managing Kashmir.

⁴ Radha Kumar, "Is Kashmir's Autonomy History?," *Social Scientist* 48, no. 7/8 (566-567) (2020): 29–40.

Rejection of International Mediation and Sovereignty Assertion:

A notable aspect of India's policy has been its firm stance on Kashmir as a domestic issue, rejecting any form of international mediation. This reflects a broader policy to assert sovereignty and deter external influence, particularly from Pakistan, which has continually advocated for international intervention. India's approach to de-internationalize the Kashmir issue became more pronounced as it reclassified parts of Pakistan-administered areas, such as Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad, within its own meteorological subdivisions, reinforcing its territorial claims.⁵

This positioning aligns with India's refusal to engage in dialogue on the status of Kashmir except to discuss Pakistan-administered Kashmir, thus signaling that any negotiations would be strictly limited in scope. India's position serves a dual purpose: affirming its territorial integrity and discouraging Pakistan's involvement, which has been framed as illegitimate interference in domestic matters.

Demographic and Cultural Integration:

One of the more controversial aspects of India's policy has been the introduction of new domicile laws. These laws allow individuals from

⁵ Bharat Bhushan, "Overhauling Kashmir Politics: Incubation of Artificial Political Processes Destined to Fail," *Social Scientist* 48, no. 7/8 (566-567) (2020): 49–58.

outside the region to claim residency in J&K if they meet specific criteria, such as working or studying there for a defined period. This policy has been viewed as a demographic strategy, with potential implications for the region's cultural and religious composition. Critics have argued that these changes could alter the Muslim-majority character of the Kashmir Valley, leading to tensions over identity and political representation.

In conjunction with the domicile laws, there have been initiatives to resettle the Kashmiri Pandits, a Hindu minority community that fled the valley in the 1990s due to insurgency. This policy, though framed as an attempt to restore cultural diversity, has raised concerns among Kashmiris about forced demographic shifts. By promoting resettlement and investment from non-Kashmiris, the Indian government aims to integrate Kashmir more closely with the national cultural fabric, yet this approach has exacerbated fears of eroding the region's unique.

Development Initiatives and Economic Policies:

India has also emphasized economic development as a cornerstone of its policy in Kashmir, claiming that improved infrastructure, job creation, and investment would reduce alienation and generate a more prosperous and peaceful environment. The government initiated various projects in sectors such as infrastructure, healthcare, and

education, attempting to present these as benefits of the new administrative arrangement. While these measures are intended to stimulate the economy, the underlying political tension and the heavy security presence have limited their effectiveness.

Furthermore, local businesses, particularly those reliant on tourism, have suffered due to the extended security and communication restrictions. Thus, while development policies were central to the government's narrative, the lack of consultation with local stakeholders and the parallel security policies have resulted in mixed outcomes, with economic gains yet to be widely felt among Kashmiris.

Political Reconfiguration and Local Governance:

A significant aspect of India's policy is reshaping the political landscape of Kashmir. With the abrogation of Article 370, traditional political alliances in the region faced challenges as mainstream politicians were initially detained, sidelined, or pressured to align with the central government's stance. The formation of new political alliances aligned with the central government's policies aimed to create a cooperative local governance structure, reducing reliance on separatist-leaning parties.

However, the political reconfiguration also faced resistance. Traditional political parties, including the National Conference and

the People's Democratic Party, have resisted these changes, viewing them as an attempt to dilute Kashmir's political voice. The central government's strategy, therefore, hinges on cultivating a new set of political stakeholders who would promote pro-India sentiments within the valley, albeit with limited success in generating genuine local support.

Revamped Media Policy:

In June 2020, the Government of India introduced a new media policy in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, granting the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) extensive powers over media operations. Under this policy, the DIPR is authorized to monitor media outlets and journalists for activities categorized as "misinformation, fake news, plagiarism, and anti-national activities." Additionally, the department holds the authority to determine media accreditation, often referred to as "empanelment," and to regulate the allocation of government advertising, a critical revenue stream for many local newspapers. Given the financial dependency of local newspapers on government advertising, this policy has sparked concerns about the potential suppression of press freedom, as media outlets may feel pressured to self-censor in order to maintain favorable relations with the authorities and secure essential funding. This development has intensified debates

surrounding media autonomy and freedom of expression in the region.

Pakistan's Policies on Kashmir

Pakistan's approach to Kashmir contrasts sharply with India's, centering on internationalizing the issue, drawing attention to human rights concerns, and garnering support from allied nations. Pakistan's policy framework comprises diplomatic initiatives and leveraging Islamic solidarity to press India on its Kashmir policies.

Disengagement of Bilateral Ties:

Following India's revocation of Article 370 in August 2019, which ended Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional status, Pakistan adopted a comprehensive policy of disengagement from India, marking a significant shift in bilateral relations. This policy involved downgrading diplomatic ties, including the expulsion of the Indian High Commissioner and the cessation of cross-border dialogues. Pakistan also suspended all bilateral trade, halted transport links such as the Samjhauta Express and bus services, and curtailed cultural exchanges, reflecting a broader strategy to isolate India diplomatically.

Internationalization and Diplomatic Campaigns:

In response to India's revocation of Article 370, Pakistan launched a diplomatic campaign to highlight what it considers India's violation of Kashmiri rights and international law. Pakistan's strategy, often termed "Kashmir-shaming," involves presenting India's actions as a unilateral move that disregards Kashmiris' aspirations and rights. This campaign aims to draw attention to alleged human rights abuses, particularly in forums like the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and bilateral meetings with allied countries. Prime Minister Imran Khan has been particularly vocal about Kashmir at the UN General Assembly, where he called for international intervention, portraying India's actions as oppressive and illegal. Pakistan also engaged China to support its stance at the UN Security Council, although it encountered limited success due to the opposition of other permanent members.

Advocacy for Human Rights and Mobilization of the Muslim World

Pakistan has emphasized human rights violations in Kashmir to gather support from the Muslim-majority nations, appealing to Islamic solidarity. Through the "Muslim 5 Summit," which included Malaysia, Iran, Qatar, and Turkey, Pakistan sought to mobilize a bloc sympathetic to the Kashmiri cause. While some countries expressed

support, traditional allies, especially from the Gulf region, maintained a neutral stance, reflecting the limited success of Pakistan's efforts to gain a broad coalition.

Pakistan has also used international media to bring attention to issues such as the communication blackout, arbitrary detentions, and restrictions on civil liberties in Kashmir. These efforts aim to build international pressure on India and push for a mediated solution, despite India's firm stance against external involvement.

Revisionist Policy and Questioning of the Simla Agreement

Pakistan's strategy also involves revisiting the Simla Agreement of 1972⁶, which forms the basis for bilateral management of the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir. The agreement stipulated that both countries would resolve their differences through peaceful means and prevent unilateral changes to the status quo. However, some retired Pakistani officials have argued that India's revocation of Article 370 nullifies the spirit of the agreement, providing Pakistan with grounds to reject it and seek new terms of engagement.

Although the Pakistani government has not formally repudiated the Simla Agreement, this revisionist rhetoric signals a willingness to

⁶ Sameer P. Lalwani and Gillian Gayner, "India's Kashmir Conundrum: Before and After the Abrogation of Article 370" (US Institute of Peace, 2020), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25405>.

question established frameworks and potentially redefine Pakistan's stance on Kashmir.

Leveraging China as a Strategic Ally

Pakistan's growing alignment with China has strengthened its position against India's Kashmir policy. China, which also has territorial disputes with India, particularly in the Ladakh region, has supported Pakistan's stance in international forums. This alliance has created a new dimension in the Kashmir dispute, complicating the possibility of bilateral resolution between India and Pakistan.

In 2020, when India and China experienced a standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Pakistan reportedly perceived this as a strategic opportunity to escalate its pressure on India regarding Kashmir. China's support has emboldened Pakistan to oppose India's unilateral moves, adding a layer of complexity to the regional security dynamic and heightening tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors.⁷

Policies Appraisal

The Kashmir conflict remains one of the most enduring and contentious issues between India and Pakistan, rooted in the flawed

⁷ US Institute of Peace, "China-India Relations," China's Influence on Conflict Dynamics in South Asia (US Institute of Peace, 2020), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27534.8>.

partition of British India in 1947. Both nations have adopted policies that reflect their ideological convictions, strategic priorities, and domestic compulsions. However, these policies have also perpetuated cycles of alienation, violence, and diplomatic stalemates, with the Kashmiri people caught in the crossfire. A critical evaluation of these policies highlights their contradictions, limitations, and implications for peace in South Asia.

India's Policies in Kashmir: Integration or Coercion?

India's policy on Kashmir underwent a dramatic shift in August 2019, when the government revoked Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which granted Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) special autonomy. This decision, accompanied by the bifurcation of the state into two Union Territories—Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh—was justified by the Indian government as a necessary measure to integrate the region with the rest of India, curb separatism, and promote economic development. Proponents of this policy argue that the removal of special status eliminates barriers to investment, improves governance, and fosters equality by applying uniform laws across the country.

However, the manner in which this policy was implemented has drawn significant criticism. The use of a communication blackout, mass detentions of political leaders, and an overwhelming military presence underscored the coercive nature of the government's

approach. While these measures temporarily suppressed large-scale protests, they also deepened alienation among the local population, particularly the youth, who view the abrogation as an assault on their identity and autonomy.

Moreover, the introduction of domicile laws, allowing non-residents to settle in J&K, has fueled fears of demographic engineering among the Muslim-majority population of the Kashmir Valley. Critics argue that these laws, coupled with efforts to resettle displaced Kashmiri Pandits, signal an attempt to alter the region's demographic and cultural composition, exacerbating tensions and undermining trust. Although India portrays these measures as steps toward national unity, the lack of meaningful engagement with local stakeholders suggests a disregard for the aspirations and grievances of Kashmiris.

India's policies have also been marked by a rejection of international mediation and a firm assertion of sovereignty. By framing Kashmir as an internal issue, India has sought to de-internationalize the conflict and deter external involvement, particularly from Pakistan. While this approach aligns with India's broader emphasis on territorial integrity, it also limits opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation. Furthermore, India's emphasis on security and counterterrorism, while addressing legitimate concerns, risks overshadowing the need for political solutions and trust-building measures.

Pakistan's policy on Kashmir revolves around its ideological commitment to the region as the "jugular vein" of the country and the cornerstone of its two-nation theory. Since 1947, Pakistan has consistently advocated for Kashmir's self-determination, citing United Nations resolutions that call for a plebiscite to determine the region's status. In response to India's abrogation of Article 370, Pakistan adopted a policy of diplomatic disengagement, downgrading ties with India, suspending trade, and halting cross-border exchanges. These measures were intended to isolate India internationally and signal Pakistan's strong opposition to the constitutional changes.

Pakistan also intensified its diplomatic campaigns, portraying India's actions as violations of international law and human rights. At forums like the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Pakistan has sought to draw attention to alleged abuses in Kashmir, including mass detentions, restrictions on civil liberties, and the use of excessive force by Indian security forces. These efforts aim to rally global support for the Kashmiri cause and pressure India into reversing its policies.

However, the effectiveness of Pakistan's internationalization strategy has been limited. While some countries have expressed concern over human rights violations, major powers, including the United States and European Union, have largely refrained from intervening, treating Kashmir as a bilateral issue. Furthermore, Pakistan's reliance

on Islamic solidarity has faced challenges, as Gulf nations—traditionally considered allies—have prioritized their economic and strategic ties with India over ideological alignment with Pakistan. This diplomatic isolation underscores the diminishing impact of Pakistan’s rhetoric, which often prioritizes symbolism over practical solutions.

A Shared Failure: The Marginalization of Kashmiri Voices

Despite their divergent approaches, India and Pakistan share a common failure: the marginalization of the Kashmiri people in the discourse and decision-making processes surrounding the conflict. Both nations have instrumentalized Kashmir to serve their domestic and strategic agendas, often at the expense of addressing the aspirations and grievances of the region’s population. In India, the government’s emphasis on development and integration has been undermined by its authoritarian methods and lack of consultation with Kashmiri stakeholders. The sidelining of local political leaders, coupled with the absence of meaningful dialogue, has reinforced the perception that New Delhi views Kashmir primarily through a security lens. While economic initiatives, such as infrastructure projects and investment incentives, are central to India’s narrative, their impact has been limited by the ongoing unrest and mistrust in the region.

Similarly, Pakistan's advocacy for Kashmiri self-determination has been compromised by its failure to address governance issues in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Allegations of political manipulation, economic neglect, and suppression of dissent in the region weaken Islamabad's moral authority to champion Kashmiri rights. Moreover, Pakistan's focus on international advocacy and symbolic gestures often overlooks the practical needs and aspirations of the Kashmiri population, reducing the conflict to a tool for ideological and strategic gain.

A significant conceptual challenge lies in the zero-sum mindset that dominates Indian and Pakistani policymaking. Both nations believe that time is on their side, which prevents meaningful engagement or compromise. India's approach, particularly after the revocation of Article 370 in 2019, focuses on integrating Jammu and Kashmir through administrative and demographic changes. The government justifies these measures as necessary for national unity and development, envisioning that integration over time will lead to normalization. Conversely, Pakistan relies on sustained agitation, both diplomatically and through proxy militancy, to weaken India's position and maintain international attention on Kashmir. This zero-sum thinking leads to short-term policy maneuvers rather than genuine conflict resolution. Breaking this impasse requires both nations to adopt a longer-term, cooperative perspective, recognizing the shared benefits of peace.

Distrust and misinformation further complicate resolution efforts. Decades of mutual suspicion, fueled by political rhetoric and intelligence-driven narratives, have created an environment where even confidence-building measures (CBMs) are viewed with skepticism. Allegations of cross-border militancy, misinformation campaigns, and interference in domestic affairs dominate the discourse. This cycle of distrust undermines dialogue and prevents meaningful progress. Building transparency and establishing verification mechanisms for CBMs, such as troop reductions or trade facilitation, are essential to fostering trust.

Institutional weaknesses in both India and Pakistan also impede progress. India's governance in Jammu and Kashmir has often relied on heavy-handed security measures and a top-down approach, marginalizing local voices and deepening alienation. Policies such as prolonged communication blackouts, mass detentions, and restrictions on political activity have fueled resentment among Kashmiris, particularly in the Muslim-majority Valley. While India emphasizes development and integration, the absence of meaningful engagement with local stakeholders undermines these efforts. On the other hand, Pakistan faces governance challenges in its administered territories, such as Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Allegations of political manipulation and economic neglect weaken Pakistan's moral authority to champion the Kashmiri cause.

Strengthening governance structures on both sides is critical to addressing local grievances and fostering trust.

The diversity of stakeholders further complicates the conflict. Beyond India and Pakistan, the Kashmiri population has varied and often conflicting aspirations. The Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley predominantly seeks autonomy or independence, while Hindu-majority Jammu and Buddhist-majority Ladakh have distinct preferences. These internal divisions are frequently overlooked in bilateral negotiations, reducing the prospects of crafting a resolution that reflects the region's diversity. External powers also play a role in shaping the conflict. The United States has historically viewed Kashmir as a nuclear flashpoint, promoting CBMs to prevent escalation. China's involvement, through its territorial disputes with India and strategic alliance with Pakistan, adds another layer of complexity. Managing these competing interests requires an inclusive approach that prioritizes Kashmiri voices while balancing regional and global considerations.

A fundamental conceptual challenge lies in the lack of consensus on what constitutes a "solution" to the Kashmir conflict. Pakistan advocates for a plebiscite under United Nations resolutions, allowing Kashmiris to decide between India and Pakistan. India, however, rejects this approach, viewing it as outdated and impractical given the demographic and political changes since 1947. Instead, India

emphasizes full integration and sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir. Meanwhile, the aspirations of the Kashmiri people range from demands for greater autonomy within India to calls for complete independence. Reconciling these divergent goals requires a pragmatic approach, focusing on incremental progress rather than an all-encompassing settlement.

Addressing these structural and conceptual challenges demands innovative strategies. Confidence-building measures, such as easing trade restrictions, fostering cross-border cultural exchanges, and reducing military deployments along the Line of Control, can help de-escalate tensions and build trust. Involving Kashmiri voices in the dialogue process is essential to ensure that any resolution reflects their aspirations. A parallel processing approach, addressing local grievances, bilateral disputes, and international concerns simultaneously, could create a comprehensive framework for resolution. Strengthening governance in Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-administered territories would also enhance the credibility of both nations in addressing the conflict.

External facilitation, while sensitive, can play a constructive role in fostering dialogue. Neutral actors, such as the United Nations or third-party mediators, can help bridge gaps and ensure transparency in implementing CBMs. However, external involvement must respect the sovereignty of both nations and prioritize local needs. Ultimately,

the success of any resolution effort hinges on India and Pakistan's willingness to move beyond entrenched narratives and adopt a cooperative approach.

Conclusion:

The Kashmir conflict remains one of the most intricate and enduring challenges in South Asia, shaped by historical grievances, ideological differences, and regional power dynamics. Both India and Pakistan have pursued policies that reflect their strategic priorities and national identities, yet these approaches have often entrenched the conflict rather than addressing its root causes. The structural and conceptual challenges of the Kashmir conflict highlight the deep-seated barriers to resolution. From its multi-layered nature to zero-sum thinking, distrust, and conflicting stakeholder interests, these challenges underscore the complexity of the issue.

India's focus on integration through administrative and demographic changes has sought to assert sovereignty but has also alienated local populations by sidelining their political aspirations. Meanwhile, Pakistan's strategy of internationalizing the issue and supporting separatist movements has garnered limited success, as global allies increasingly prioritize pragmatic relations with India. Both nations have failed to adequately address the diverse aspirations of the

Kashmiri people, whose voices remain central to any meaningful resolution.

Despite these challenges, opportunities for peace and cooperation exist. Confidence-building measures, such as trade facilitation, cultural exchanges, and military de-escalation, can lay the groundwork for trust. Strengthening governance structures in both India-administered Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-administered territories can address local grievances and enhance the credibility of both nations. Additionally, involving Kashmiri stakeholders in the dialogue process ensures that their aspirations are reflected in any proposed solutions.

Moving beyond zero-sum mindsets and entrenched narratives is essential for both India and Pakistan. A parallel processing approach that simultaneously tackles local grievances, bilateral disputes, and broader regional dynamics offers a pragmatic path forward. External facilitation, while sensitive, can provide neutral oversight and support in implementing confidence-building measures, provided it respects the sovereignty of both nations.

Ultimately, the resolution of the Kashmir conflict is not just about territorial or ideological claims; it is about fostering peace and stability for the millions of people of Jammu and Kashmir and the broader South Asian region. By prioritizing dialogue, inclusivity, and

incremental progress, India and Pakistan can transform Kashmir from a symbol of conflict into a bridge for regional cooperation. The road to peace may be arduous, but its reward stability, prosperity, and lasting harmony—are worth the effort for both nations and the global community.
