



The Kashmir Issue between India and Pakistan: Political, Strategic, and Humanitarian Dimensions

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Abstract

The Kashmir dispute, which has been pitting India and Pakistan, has been one of the longest but most complex territorial disputes in the South Asian region. Kashmir has been pointed out as one of the basic pivots of enmity, which has resulted in several wars, as well as several cases of armed conflict, between the two nations since the partition of British India in 1947. The Kashmir dispute has evolved from being an interstate dispute to an identity in terms of leverage and human security, and has finally developed into an embodiment of a supportive conflict situation. The Kashmir dispute could persist as it does, thanks to resolute national discourses, as well as the power dynamics in the region, and the ineffectiveness of international efforts aimed at developing long-lasting solutions. Within the in-depth historical context of this research, this study shall explore several reasons behind the inefficacy of previous

efforts at developing solutions to the Kashmir dispute through the use of qualitative modes of analysis, which are reliant upon secondary research materials and informed by several strategic aspects such as aspects of military power dynamics, as well as hydrological aspects, as well as human aspects, which include the Kashmiri.

Keywords:

Kashmir dispute, India, Pakistan, South Asia, security, territorial disputes, humanitarian crisis

Introduction

The Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan is one of the oldest and most complex boundary issues in South Asia. The cause of this complicated relationship is the Muslim-majority state of Jammu & Kashmir, whose accession to India under pressure led to the first India-Pakistan war in 1947-48.¹ Over time, the Kashmir dispute has evolved from being solely a territorial conflict to include various other forms. The dispute has gradually expanded from a purely territorial issue to involve crises related to human rights and identity.

That the dispute in Kashmir has been ongoing is directly situated within competing assertions of national history and geo-strategy, and within the absence of appropriate international frameworks that guarantee the region will be at peace. Kashmir is an integral part of the sovereignty of India, and Pakistan considers Kashmir an integral part of its national strategy and

¹ Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, 1846–1990* (Hertingfordbury: Roxford Books, 1991), 113–120.

history. The significance of the land as an ingredient of strategy has been further multiplied owing to its location in the mountains and proximity to China, along with possession of nuclear capabilities that increase the stakes in the case of escalation.² But at the same time, the cost of this dispute in terms of humanity can never be measured in any respect, and the mere presence of the common man from this region is affected by a lack of mobility and curfews, violation of human rights, and the psychological effects of living in a constant state of this armed zone.

Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the issue of the Kashmir conflict from political, strategic, and humanitarian perspectives to analyze the extent to which the efforts that have been made toward resolving the conflict in the past have been blocked and the dimensions that can be explored in which a representative peace can be guaranteed. It has been identified that the dimensions of the issue of the Kashmir conflict from an international perspective must be inextricably linked with the acquisition of internationalized levels of human-related securities; accordingly, the objective of this research paper is to create an understanding of the history of one of the most profound conflict episodes in South Asia.

Literature Review

The Kashmir dispute is a phenomenon that encompasses various issues such as history, politics, strategic interests, humanitarian crises, and international politics, and this can be identified in various research works available on this crisis. In this regard, Bose and Ganguly demand the need to consider the history behind this crisis when they point to the fact that some historical legacies from the colonial era and, consequently, some

² Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 15–25.

arrangements with regard to princely states at the time of partition entrenched this crisis.³ To this point, while Bose damages his argument by referring to choices during the era of partition, Ganguly particularly identifies the domestic politics within states like India and Pakistan that have regularly prevented any diplomatic effort at resolution.⁴ Wirsing continued with this rationale when he identified that territorial and water resource interests, rooted in this history, played their part. Other, more contemporary questions refer to political stories that hold this crisis alive.⁵ Tahirkheli identifies that human security is squarely affected by government choices and other matters like curfews and disappearances.⁶ While other writers, like Shamim, Nasim, and Ali, hold that political choices cannot succeed in this crisis until international mediation is introduced.⁷

Geographical location, high altitude, and proximity to China make Kashmir of immense strategic significance. Militarization and nuclear policy of India and Pakistan make the threat of conflict even costlier. Water resources are also of significance in light of the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960. The treaty handed over water resources to the two nations. But the development of Indian dam projects at Kishanganga and Baglihar has started new tensions in this regard and has already brought advantage to Indians over this issue as well. But of late, new domains have occupied a

³ Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁴ Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁵ Robert L. Wirsing, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute: Unresolved Conflicts and Regional Security* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁶ Tahir Tahirkheli, *Human Security and Conflict in Kashmir* (Islamabad: Strategic Studies Institute, 2023).

⁷ Shamim, Nasim, and Ali, *Political Mediation and Conflict Resolution in Kashmir* (Lahore: Vanguard Publishers, 2024).

central position, and that is Cyber and Info Wars in Kashmir. Studies carried out by Tyagi, and Paliwal have highlighted that social media polarization and Cyber Wars enhance an ambience of distrust and hence mark Kashmir as an increasingly prominent location of digital and territorial contention.⁸

The Kashmir issue has a high and well-documented human cost. Human Rights watch reports the violation of rights by the Indian forces and the militants alike, including cases of arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial executions.⁹ The studies by Haq and Shabbir demonstrate that the long-term insurgency and counterinsurgency have undermined the fundamentals of learning and development. This study needs to be supplemented by the construct of Human Security.¹⁰ The need for a people-oriented strategy has been highlighted by Tahirkheli as a result not just of psychosocial trauma and economic marginalization, but also the enduring effects of militarization.¹¹

International/multilateral perspectives of the Kashmir conflict are also important in terms of how the conflict has been dealt with. This has led to international intervention, including resolutions, peacekeeping efforts, and mediation by the United Nations itself. However, its intervention, though

⁸ Paliwal S., Mehra V., and Gupta N., *Information Warfare in Kashmir: Emerging Dimensions* (Asian Journal of Security Studies, 2025), 22–40, see also Tyagi A., Verma R., and Singh P., *Cyber Conflicts and Social Media Polarization in Kashmir* (Journal of Digital Security Studies, 2020), 88–105.

⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Pakistan: Kashmir's Human Rights Crisis* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999).

¹⁰ Haq M., *Education and Development Challenges in Kashmir* (Srinagar: Kashmir University Press, 2018), see more Shabbir K., Khan A., and Malik R., *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Kashmir: Social Impacts* (Islamabad: Peace Studies Center, 2022).

¹¹ Tahir Tahirkheli, *Human Security and Conflict in Kashmir* (Islamabad: Strategic Studies Institute, 2023).

significant, has been comparatively limited by its compulsions related to international realities.¹² Similarly, other international platforms such as SAARC and the OIC have found it necessary to act as facilitators.¹³ Again, such intervention has been comparatively limited by rivalry in international platforms. International realities, meanwhile, have led Butt to situate the Kashmir conflict in the international power dynamics of 2024.¹⁴ Despite an immense body of literature, there are various gaps in understanding. In general, either the strategic implications of the conflict, such as military presence in Kashmir or water resource management, have been studied in various studies in Kashmir. Humanitarian concerns in Kashmir have been considerably focused upon, leading to an incomplete understanding of the conflict in general. Second, state-level strategies in dealing with conflict-resolution measures have been state-level above the Kashmiris' possibilities.¹⁵ Therefore, at the current juncture, it becomes necessary to overcome such gaps within an integrated human security strategy professing the imperative of an inclusive people's strategy for conflict resolution in Kashmir.

Research Questions

1. What has sustained the historical and political processes of this conflict in Kashmir since 1947?

¹² United Nations Security Council, *Resolutions on the Kashmir Conflict*, UN Doc. S/RES/47, 1948.

¹³ OIC, *Reports on Kashmir Mediation Efforts, 2022*; SAARC, *Regional Cooperation on Conflict Mediation, 2023*.

¹⁴ Butt H., *Kashmir in International Power Dynamics* (Karachi: Global Affairs Press, 2024).

¹⁵ Rashida Abbas, Adeela Ahmed, and Muhammad Tabish. "Mediation in armed conflict: A case of Kashmir." *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 5, no. 2 (2022): 1-12.

2. How are strategic interests such as military, water, and geography shaping the behavior of both India and Pakistan in Kashmir?
3. What are the main humanitarian and human rights challenges posed by prolonged militarization to Kashmiris?
4. Why have previous efforts towards conflict resolution failed, and what are the feasible paths to a sustainable and inclusive peace?

Research Objectives:

1. Tracing the historical evolution of the Kashmir dispute and its institutionalization in the India–Pakistan relations.
2. The analysis of strategic dimensions of Kashmir, especially military and water-related issues.
3. To analyze the humanitarian implications of the conflict on the civilian population of Kashmir.
4. Propose a framework for conflict resolution through the integration of human security, regional diplomacy, and multilateral mechanisms.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative analytical methodology with secondary data to analyze the political, strategic, and humanitarian facets of issues in Kashmir. The content analysis is employed on government statements, agreements, United Nations resolutions, and human rights documents to detect critical patterns and themes. The triangulation of academic literature with government/public policy and human rights documents increases the validity of research; moreover, simultaneous coverage of strategic and human security sectors provides a clearer

perspective on the implications and solutions for both sectors impacted by this crisis.

Historical Evolution

The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which had a majority Muslim population but belonged to the Hindu rulers, became a hotbed of Indian-Pak strife during the 1947 partition of British India, which is where the Kashmir dispute began. The first Indo-Pak war broke out in 1947–1948 after the monarch, who had his sights set on independence, later joined the Indian side. The UN intervention culminated in the establishment of a cease-fire line, which later came to be known as the “Line of Control,” but this could not culminate in the final settlement and plebiscite within the region. The subsequent wars, such as Kashmir in 1965 and the Kargil War in 1999, as well as high altitude disparities such as the Conflict of the Siachen Glacier, could further engross this distrust and militarization process in this region.¹⁶ Some attempts at reaching various bi-lateral agreements, such as the Simla Agreement of 1972 and the Lahore Agreement of 1999, could try to embed the process of dialogue and ceasing of war, but the innate long-term rift in the objectives of the two nations, the militancy, and instabilities could prevent this particular conflict in this region from reaching any point towards the final settlement, thereby developing in this region into a highly complex one, which rests on territorial claims, strategic requirements, and finally, humanitarian crises.¹⁷

¹⁶ Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 67–110.

¹⁷ Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 45–120.

Post-2019 Realities: Status, Economy, Society, and Geopolitics of Kashmir

The political and administrative circumstances under J&K have undergone a radical transformation since the revocation of the provision of Article 370 on the 5th of August 2019, essentially translating into the division of J&K into two union territories.¹⁸ Its semi-autonomous status as a unique state under the Indian Constitution has been repealed, leading to a reduction in its autonomy by coming under the more dominant direct administration of the Indian federal system. This has brought a sea of change in the local mechanism of administration as the pre-existing state constitutional framework, laws, and rights have been repealed; much of the state legislations have been centralized; land laws have been amended to allow people from outside the Kashmir Valley to acquire domicile rights and own property.

This major recalibration had been reported by New Delhi in efforts to finally assimilate Kashmir into an integral union of India altogether. According to the government, this was meant to bring an end to “special status” and bring more advancement into the region itself. Critics argue against this, scrapping the autonomy was said to have adversely impacted Kashmiri politics itself, with an irrevocably diminished requirement for better representation.¹⁹

¹⁸ Government of India, *The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order*, 2019.

¹⁹ Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. *The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order*, 2019. New Delhi: Government of India, 2019.

Security, Recent Escalations, and Regional Tensions

There is no indication of political-military normalcy in the post-2019 era. The security events reported have been nearly entirely followed by the presence of the military, curfews, and other restrictions. Over 690 violent events have been reported to have occurred since 2019, which include militant attacks as well as forces involved in operations against the militants who have lost their lives. This indicates the threat of loss of life within the "new normal."²⁰

The dispute also persists on an international level and is fraught. The 2025 assault that resulted in tourist casualties in Indian-controlled Kashmir led to strong reaction mechanisms from New Delhi, such as the suspension of key water-sharing arrangements.²¹ India linked such circumstances to terrorism and held that Pakistan was implicitly involved in a series of recent escalation activities. Water security, a high-stakes strategic priority for years, flared up once again. The suspension of India's Indus Waters Treaty was a direct challenge to water rights in Pakistan.

In these scenarios, what adds complexity is now having China, as a neighboring power, casting a careful eye over what they do, while internal power competitions within South Asia make Kashmir not only a bilateral conflict, but now part of larger plays.

²⁰ Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), *Pakistan Security Report 2023* (Islamabad: PICSS, 2024).

²¹ South Asia Terrorism Portal, *Incidents in Jammu and Kashmir, 2019–2025*; Press Trust of India, *Kashmir Tourist Attack 2025: Casualties Reported*, The Hindu, 2025.

Securitization Theory and the Construction of Threat Narratives in the India-Pakistan Kashmir Conflict

Securitization Theory provides one of the most useful prisms through which to understand why India and Pakistan persist in viewing Kashmir not as a routine political issue but as an existential one related to national survival, regional stability, and identity.²² The theory argues that, through speech acts, political narratives, and extraordinary measures, states turn mundane political issues into urgent questions of security. Analyzed through this prism, the Kashmir conflict seems not just a territorial dispute but a long-term process whereby India and Pakistan consistently "securitize" Kashmir to justify exceptional measures that redefine political, military, and humanitarian realities. This viewpoint significantly improves the political, strategic, and humanitarian issues discussed in the article.

The way India has reaffirmed Kashmir as a crucial component of national sovereignty and territorial integrity reflects this. The majority of criticism, whether political, social, or even cultural, is frequently portrayed as a danger connected to terrorism or outside meddling.²³ The post-2019 events I examined for my piece, particularly the repeal of Article 370 and the transformation of Jammu & Kashmir into union territories, are blatant instances of securitizing actions.²⁴ Backed by official rhetoric on national integration, counterterrorism, and public order, such actions were thus rendered routine. Now, extraordinary measures-large-scale troop

²² Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 23–28.

²³ Adeela Ahmed, Arsim Tariq, and Rashida Abbas. "Demographic Changes in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) and the Future of UN Resolutions." *International Journal of Kashmir Studies* 3, no. 2 (2022).

²⁴ Sumantra Bose. *Kashmir at the Crossroads: Inside a 21st-Century Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

deployments, communications blackouts, curfews, and restriction of movement-were thereby rendered routine. In securitization terms, India managed to persuade its own domestic audience that such actions were imperative for the protection of the state and, therefore, placed Kashmir squarely within the domain of emergency politics rather than within normal democratic politics. Pakistan has also used securitization as a response to the Kashmir issue. Based on the literature review and strategic parts of my paper, Pakistan considers the Kashmir issue to be the “unfinished agenda of partition.” The Indian administrative and military measures are perceived not just as policy choices but as “existential threats to regional security and the political rights of the Kashmiris, particularly those who are Muslims.” Pakistan's securitization strategy justifies Pakistan's political activism within the United Nations, raising concerns regarding the human rights situation within Indian-controlled Kashmir, and maintaining a military presence along the Line of Control. Further, Pakistan's concern regarding water resources emanating from Kashmir, as identified within the strategic realms of my paper, further escalates Pakistan's perceptions regarding threats, particularly within the Indian dam constructions or suspensions of treaty obligations as challenges to the “existential security” of Pakistan regarding water resources.

Mutual securitization creates a vicious cycle of perceived threats, in which the policies of one country serve to confirm the other's fears. This becomes clear in the aftermath of the 2019 escalations, such as water agreement disagreements, cross-border shootings, diplomatic crises, and outright military mobilizations.²⁵ As I showed in the section on “Challenges to Conflict Resolution,” narrative obstacles to reaching any

²⁵ International Crisis Group, *Raising the Stakes in Jammu and Kashmir*, (Brussels: ICG, 2020).

kind of agreement are created by such speeches aimed at securitization. India realizes the Pakistani diplomatic pressure and mentions of UN resolutions to legitimize their claims as attempts to preempt their centralization policies, buildups, and resource management, which in turn are unilateral policies by India leading to instability in the region, as perceived by Islamabad.

The Securitization Theory is also very helpful in explaining the harsh humanitarian implications that I have discussed in the “Humanitarian Dimensions” section of this article.²⁶ As soon as Kashmir is conceived on a security existentialist template, the normal requirements, demands, and hopes of the people remain secondary to this national survival cocoon. This is why curfews, monitoring, arrests, communication blackouts, and disruptions in health and educational services have been regularly implemented and suffered on such security grounds.²⁷ Moreover, the psychological trauma being confronted by Kashmiris, fear, apprehensions, alienation, and intergenerational trauma, also get objectively located in this securitized space where normal life is held to ransom by such exceptional measures.²⁸

Using the Securitization Theory, it is therefore important to address the reasons that have ensured that the conflict in Kashmir has not been ended despite the many bilateral and international initiatives that have been put in place. As long as the governments of India and Pakistan continue to securitize the conflict in the sense that they see the conflict in Kashmir as

²⁶ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, (CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

²⁷ Amnesty International, *India: Communications Blackout in Kashmir Violates Basic Rights*, 2019.

²⁸ Adeela Ahmed, Arsim Tariq, and Rashida Abbas. "Demographic Changes in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) and the Future of UN Resolutions."

an existential issue affecting the national identities and security of the said countries, then there is little room for political maneuvers and negotiations to bear fruit, or the grievances of the people of Kashmir to be addressed. Only when the conflict in the region is shifted from the realm of securitized politics to the realm of human security can peace be achieved.

The “New Normal” and the Socio-Political Compact

With these changes as the background, the supporters of the post-2019 deal claim that the current situation in Kashmir is “new normal.” They identify the enhanced infrastructure, the revival of tourism, new businesses, and integration into the national economy and institutional systems of the region's stabilization after several decades of conflict.

As a “peace dividend,” some analysts describe that it also includes not only development activities but also a supposed cutting back of funding and infiltration activities. Official reports state that better management of borders, suppression of non-state actors, and closures of financial channels have reduced militant network power.²⁹

However, this narrative is also open to critique. “Many people in Kashmir,” one scholar argues, “believe that there is a normalization of sorts that has been achieved,” with “restricted political dissent,” “restricted freedom of speech,” and “unequal distribution of benefits in the economic sphere.”³⁰ Others see the shift in demographics and legal statutes of domicile in terms of alienation rather than inclusivity and suspect the moral locus of identity, ownership, and rights.

²⁹ Joseph Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 8th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2020).

³⁰ Ayjaz Wani, *Perspectives on the ‘New Normal’ in Kashmir*, ORF Special Report No. 130 (Observer Research Foundation, 2021).

On the other hand, it also seems that the economic recovery is quite fragile. Whatever the tourism or infrastructural benefits may be, they can easily be wiped out by an incident related to security and/or new restrictions, as has been witnessed in the renewed violence/international pressure in this situation.

Strategic Dimensions

The unique topography, military importance, and resource potential of the Kashmir region make it strategically valuable. Kashmir is a crucial buffer state because it is located at the northernmost point of the Indian peninsula and shares borders with China and Pakistani-administered Kashmir. The geographic location provides important points for Kashmir's defense and monitoring, and control of important passes and glacial areas, such as the Siachen dispute, has further enhanced its military value. India and Pakistan-administered Kashmir regard Kashmir as their core, but this region is one of the places in which geostrategic rivalry prevails.³¹ The military presence in Kashmir, on either side of the Line of Control, in substantial territory controlled by India, and in the Pakistani-administered portions of Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, is extensive. The presence of nuclear weapons in the Kashmir region makes it even more volatile, as any conflict in Kashmir could easily develop into a wider crisis in this area.

Water resources further accentuate the strategic aspects, where the Indus Waters Treaty has allocated the six rivers of the Kashmir Valley to both India and Pakistan. The construction of dams and hydroelectric power

³¹ Syed Muhammad Saad Zaidi and Muhammad Taimur Fahad Khan, *Analyzing the Convuluted Kashmir Dispute: A Retrospective Analysis*, (*Journal of Regional Studies Review*, 2025) 498–502.

stations by India in the Kashmir Valley, such as in the Kishanganga and Baglihar projects, serves as leverage in the management of water resources in Pakistan, accentuating water insecurity in Pakistan during times of strategic tension. Recently, during instances of strategic tensions, the management of water resources, such as opening dam gates, has served as a military strategy by Pakistan. The ongoing dispute has also witnessed movements in cyberspace, where cyber operations, cyber media, and cyber misinformation spread perceptions in cyberspace.³² The role of cyberspace in information dissemination and in shaping public opinion has been portrayed in computational analyses.

Humanitarian Dimensions

Alongside the strategic aspects, the humanitarian situation in Kashmir remains grave. Continual militarization, curfews, and operations by the security agencies also resulted in the creation of a dismal situation regarding the impact on the civilian population. Instances of violation of human rights include arbitrary arrests, torture, and enforced disappearance on all fronts. Militant activities also impinge upon the civil population negatively. The conflict, therefore, has resulted in creating psychosomatic trauma that leads to fear, alienation, and stress transmission from generation to generation, eating into the fabric of society.

Moreover, the absence of effective political expression has caused the voice of the people of Kashmir to be rendered insignificant in negotiations that bear a direct impact on their future, adding to the otherwise ingrained perceptions of injustice. The lack of adequate infrastructure exacerbates

³² Tyagi A., Verma R., and Singh P., *Cyber Conflicts and Social Media Polarization in Kashmir*, (Journal of Digital Security Studies, 2020), 88–105, see more Paliwal S., Mehra V., and Gupta N., *Information Warfare in Kashmir: Emerging Dimensions*, (Asian Journal of Security Studies, 2025), 22–40.

the effects of the humanitarian crisis in the region, as well as the underdevelopment of the healthcare and educational sectors, and the unavailability of basic services to the population. On a larger scale, the human aspect of the security of the province of Kashmir stresses the reality that the strategic and militarized approaches to the conflict cannot be effective in developing a peaceful future and that the inherent day-to-day vulnerabilities and aspirations of the people of the province must be considered in the strategies of stability.

International and Multilateral Role

In the Kashmir Dispute, there clearly exists the factor of the international/multilateral aspect, wherein global and regional actors become involved in the management/resolution of the dispute. The role of the United Nations would remain insignificant from the point of view of historical resolutions, peacekeeping roles, and mediations.³³ Though the United Nations chose a plebiscite on the matter and involved the role of commissions concerning the supervision of ceasefires,³⁴ the role would remain patchy and extremely politicized due to the concerns of major member nations.³⁵ Henceforth, the role of the United Nations would remain predominantly reactive and less proactive in the matter of safeguarding human rights and ensuring the implementation of an agreement.

³³ Saman Mehmood Sultan and Sawera Mohsin, *Role of United Nations in Kashmir Conflict: An Exploratory Study*, (Annals of Human and Social Sciences, 2024) 675–85.

³⁴ Adeela Ahmed, Arsim Tariq, and Rashida Abbas. "Demographic Changes in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) and the Future of UN Resolutions."

³⁵ Syed Akmal Hussain Shah and Aamir Amin Bhat, *UN Resolutions and Pak-India Agreements on Issue of Jammu and Kashmir: A Comparative Study from Kashmiris' Perspective*, (Asian Journal of Academic Research, 2024).

In addition to the role of the United Nations, regional and international powers exercise their influence over the conflict as per their plans and priorities. The Chinese interests in the region of Aksai Chin and their good relations with Pakistan offer a background to Beijing's role, while the US, European nations, and international powers sometimes use their role through diplomatic and economic interventions, sometimes giving less importance to humanitarian issues in favor of regional stability and economic trade objectives. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are two examples of regional and international organizations that have tried to create space through cooperation and dialogue, but have fallen short due to intraregional politics among their members and the absence of a trustworthy mechanism to enforce their resolutions.³⁶ Multilateralism has been proposed by think tanks and non-governmental organizations as a means of achieving peace through human security, confidence-building, and mediation. A long-term peace settlement is still hampered by the absence of a third-party mechanism.

From 2019: Abrogation of Article 370, Demographic Implications, and International Responses

The strike down of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, is one of the most pivotal changes in the history of the Kashmir conflict that has dramatically changed the constitutional and geographical character of Kashmir.³⁷ Before the strike down in 2019, Jammu & Kashmir enjoyed a special semi-autonomous position as a constituent part of the Indian Constitution

³⁶ Muhammad Shamshad and Farooq Arshad, *Failure of Organization of Islamic Cooperation: A Case of Dismal State of Human Rights in Kashmir and Palestine*, (Margalla Papers, 2021) 47–60.

³⁷ Mohd Amin Mir, *The Kashmir Dilemma and the Repeal of Article 370: A Comparative Analysis*, (Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 2024) 173–85.

with its own laws and a special constitutional status and safeguards against any influx of outsiders and settlement in the state. The action taken by the Indian state to strike down the special constitutional status and to effectively carve out Jammu & Kashmir and the newly formed Ladakh state as two union states has not only meant a changeover to a different administrative structure but also a radical change in the political character and autonomy of Kashmir itself. The action was framed as a necessary measure by New Delhi to better integrate Kashmir into the Indian state with a view to decreasing any feelings of Jammu & Kashmir being separate or distinct as a state and to speed up growth and accelerated economic progress in the state.

Demographic change is also one of the most immediate concerns that have arisen following the revocation of Article 370. Factors such as the disregard for the constitutional safeguards earlier placed on the ownership of land and domicile rights in the region have made the region vulnerable to influxes from other regions in India. You discussed how new domicile laws give persons outside Kashmir the right to domicile themselves and own property there, and how this has created an altogether new dynamic related to the political economy of Kashmir. Such policies are seen to diminish Kashmir's majority Muslim character, influence their political representation, and modify voting demographics in favor of the ruling party's national vision on the one hand, and on the other, all this takes place in the securitized environment that your study has captured—that is, military domination, communication restrictions, and a lack of political representation that has heightened feelings of alienation among Kashmiris.

There has also been a significant shift in governance since 2019. The centralization of political power with the abolition of the state assembly,

the onset of the direct rule system imposed from New Delhi, as well as changes in the administrative apparatus, have thus reshaped the dynamic between the residents of Kashmir and the state. Although the government in New Delhi cited infrastructure development, development projects, and the growth of the tourism industry as proof of progress under the "new normal" in Kashmir, the locals believe that these initiatives were implemented without their proper involvement or consultation.³⁸ Due to communication lockdowns, curfews, and other security-imposed limitations that impede socializing, business, and education, economic development is still precarious.

Global attention was drawn to the removal of Article 370 and the security measures that followed. Several countries in North America, Europe, the Gulf, and South Asia responded cautiously or with varying degrees of anxiety.³⁹ Pakistan was averse to it and called it an international infringement of UN resolutions and international norms, and has since made strenuous efforts through diplomatic pathways to internationalize the Kashmir problem. China stated a territorial vision that included competition with India in response to India's restructuring of Ladakh.⁴⁰ Following communication outages and restrictions on civil freedoms, Western governments and administrations, including those of the United States and the European Union, voiced some concerns about human rights circumstances. Human rights groups and various international media and civil societies also highlighted the humanitarian and political implications of this new development. However, as your paper suggests, no

³⁸ Ayjaz Wani, *Perspectives on the 'New Normal' in Kashmir*, ORF Special Report No. 130 (Observer Research Foundation, 2021).

³⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Pakistan), *Pakistan's Response to Abrogation of Article 370*, 2019; Xinhua News Agency, *China Urges Peace in Kashmir*, 2019.

⁴⁰ Saheb Singh Chadha, *Negotiating the India-China Standoff: 2020–2024* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2024),

international great power took concrete steps during widespread international attention and effectively bore witness to the ineffectiveness of international mechanisms in dealing with developments that various states classify as domestic and state matters of international sovereignty.

The post-2019 scenario is a phenomenal occurrence in the sense that it signifies not merely a constitutional turn but also a point of drastic change that has brought about transformations in the domains of governance, demography, national security, and international perspectives about Kashmir.⁴¹ The revocation of Article 370 escalated tensions in the global/geopolitical domain, pointed out comprehensive democratic concerns, and drew worldwide attention, although at the same time emphasizing the imperfections of external interference.⁴² The importance of 2019 onward lies in emphasizing the verification of your research hypothesis, which states that in the absence of polity-wide democratic political discourse, the recognition of Kashmir's agency, as well as a convergence of national/constitutional demands of security coupled with human rights, exclusive policy choices would continue to fuel, rather than answer, the discontent of Kashmir's grievances.

Challenges to Conflict Resolution

A major complicating factor in the Kashmir conflict is its complexity with regard to the political, strategic, and social elements at play. Indeed, it is primarily a major challenge presented by the trust deficit existing between India and Pakistan. India's assertion of territorial integrity is at odds with

⁴¹ Adeela Ahmed, "The New Emerging Technology Cyber Capabilities: Prospective Hazards on Deterrence Stability between India and Pakistan." *International Journal of Kashmir Studies*, 7, no. 1 (2025).

⁴² Saroj Kumar Aryal and Sania Muneer, *Geopolitics, Conflict and Narratives: An Assessment of Kashmir Conflict after the Abrogation of Article 370*, (Journal of Political Science, 2023)

Pakistan's perception that Kashmir is an unresolved national question, thereby resulting in a zero-sum game scenario wherein giving and taking are very costly politically.

Asymmetrical power dynamics also make this dispute even more complex. Here, India has a structural edge based on its stronger military might and economics, but Pakistan's backing of militant proxies has increased Indian security concerns, which in turn deepens this particular security dilemma with the worst possible outcomes expected by both sides.⁴³ The role of water increases the complexity of this dispute further, as it gives Indians the upper hand in Pakistan, and this has increased the intensity of dispute-level tensions, along with the possibility of an escalated conflict.

The issues of human rights and lack of political inclusiveness continue to hamper the process for the restoration of peace in the region. Except for a few resolutions by the United Nations and other constructs, very few have taken into consideration the wishes and views of the Kashmiris in this matter. In the absence of any real possibility for the meaningful inclusion of the locals, any agreement reached could potentially be viewed as being forced upon them, and therefore, unjust or unconstitutional. Moreover, the lack of proper enforcement by these international organizations continues to create a veneer that these interventions lack real power to enforce compliance because UN resolutions lack the wherewithal to be able to do so effectively and physically, when push comes to shove.

Inclusive Dialogue

⁴³ Muhammad Sadiq and Iftikhar Ali, *Non-State Actors, Sub-Conventional Warfare, and India-Pakistan Nuclear Crisis Stability/Instability*, (Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2024) 325–37.

Thus, true inclusion of Kashmiri voices at all stages of the peace process would be necessary for a long-term resolution to the conflict.⁴⁴ The conversation would have to go beyond the two-party system between India and Pakistan and involve the political leaders and people of the Kashmir area directly. Their views, their needs, and their hopes would therefore need to influence the negotiations with a view toward their acceptance of the solution reached. International intervention would thus be helpful here; a third-party mediator like the United Nations or a group of non-aligned countries could help as a monitor for this process.

Confidence-Building Measures

That a confidence-building measure is the need of the hour to eliminate suspicion and generate a climate helpful to a sustainable peace agreement cannot be undermined.⁴⁵ Unintended conflicts can be averted by regular communication across the LoC, a proper mechanism for verification, and military de-escalation at the LoC. An important sector, which could generate conflicts over a most mundane matter, is water sharing.⁴⁶ This faith-generated conflict could be eliminated by agreeing to a furtherance of the Indus Water Treaty and formulation of a joint committee involving the Kashmiris for water regulation. People-to-people exchanges in areas like culture, education, and economic engagement can help de-personify ‘the

⁴⁴ Mian Rifat Ullah Khan and Faiza Bashir, *Conflict Resolution: Revisiting the Unresolved Kashmir Dispute, The Dialogue*, (2025), 51–70.

⁴⁵ Muhammad W. Haider and Tahir M. Azad, *The Role of Confidence-Building Measures in the Evolution of Relations Between Pakistan and India*, (World Affairs, 2021), 294–317.

⁴⁶ Adeela Ahmed, “A Framework for Strategic Stability and Risk Mitigation in the Governance of Military AI in South Asia,” paper presented at the Global Conference on AI, Security and Ethics, *United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)*, Geneva, April 2025, https://unidir.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/AISE-2025-poster-presentations_compressed.pdf

other side.’ Such actions may appear iterative, but remain a precursor for a political solution.

Human Security Agenda

The human security element stresses the need to secure the welfare, rights, and dignity of Kashmiris as a core component for conflict resolution. The establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and investigating human rights abuses via independent commissions drawing upon both UN support and civil society can promote accountability and lessen grudges felt among Kashmiris.⁴⁷ Socio-economic development projects such as investment within the sectors of education, healthcare, and infrastructure could help to remedy the chronic neglect experienced by Kashmiris, while psychosocial services may help to reduce the psychological tolls associated with being subject to militarization and curfews for extended durations. In this way, human security can be viewed as a strategy supporting resilience beyond humanitarian needs.

Multilateral and Legal Frameworks

There is a need for enhanced multilateral engagement and legal assurances so as to make agreements more credible and guaranteed. The United Nations can be strengthened through a special envoy with a specific mandate related to facilitating human rights protection, political dialogues, and conflict monitoring. The region can benefit from a regional platform, such as SAARC or a South Asian body tailored for this purpose, which would establish a framework for cooperation related to water,

⁴⁷ Sehar Iqbal, *Through Their Eyes: Women and Human Security in Kashmir*, (Journal of Human Security, 2021), 45–63.

development, and security.⁴⁸ On the other hand, international legal instruments related to human rights law or treaties could act as a guarantee for the implementation of peace agreements.

Technology and Information Diplomacy

With the rising trends in the current conflict environment, there has been an emphasis on the cyber/information aspects of these issues. Creating communication hotlines and cyber diplomacy networks could avoid escalation due to misinformation and cyberattacks. Social media peace-building projects, such as promoting pro-peace speeches and depolarization on social media, could help avoid hostility and create empathy between rival communities.⁴⁹ Computer-based software could pinpoint ways to “amplify hope speeches and other narratives that support productive talk.” Technology would then become not only the means to manage this crisis but also the site of reconciliation.

Discussion

The dispute over Kashmir embodies what has become a long-standing and complex crisis that transcends a mere dispute over territory. Instead, from disputed decisions over partition, “the conflict has cumulatively evolved over the years through identity politics and geostrategic rivalries with humanitarian costs into a long-standing multidimensional crisis.” In fact, attempts at resolution “haven’t worked yet” – not because there aren’t willing mediators or a mutual need for a resolution, but because of three interconnected reasons among Indian and Pakistani leaders’ negotiation

⁴⁸ Sarwat Rauf, *Prospects of International and Regional Organizations in the Solution of Kashmir Issue*, (Journal of Political Studies, 2026).

⁴⁹ Andreas Hirblinger, *When the Digits Don’t Add Up: Research Strategies for Post-Digital Peacebuilding*, (Journal of Peacebuilding & Development, 2023).

strategy and policy actions toward a resolution of the conflict over the contested territory of Kashmir:

First of all, state-based negotiations set up a dynamic of India and Pakistan being “much more in a top-down form of diplomacy” rather than giving a voice or a seat at the table to the citizens of Kashmir themselves, thereby not only ending up as non-credible or non-verified agreements or decisions because of a lack of representation from their side but further hardening “Kashmiris' distrust toward Islamabad and New Delhi.”⁵⁰

Secondly, plans and decisions being imposed and agreed upon “strategic imperatives like security hegemony or control over natural resources like water or geographic advantage” as compared to “human security” may or may not suit all involved nations or countries, thereby “resolving the conflict remains precarious should the demands and claims of people living in Kashmir continue not being appropriately addressed.”⁵¹ Thirdly, the fact that there isn't much “global enforcement or multilateral enforcement” being facilitated or carried out through UN decisions or plans, leaves agreements or decisions non-credible or non-enforceable because of the lack of political

Such factors and challenges are poignantly exemplified in the scenario in Kashmir since 2019 through the nullification of Article 370 and reformation of Jammu and Kashmir into two separate union territories, thus securing and administratively controlling in a more centralized manner at the cost of self-governed politics in Kashmir. The Indian

⁵⁰ Mohd Amin Mir, and Ubaid Sidique. "The Back to Village Program: an experimentation in state-citizen engagement in Jammu and Kashmir." *Development in Practice* (2026): 1-7.

⁵¹ Saroj Kumar Aryal, and Sania Muneer. "Geopolitics, conflict and narratives: An assessment of Kashmir conflict after the Abrogation of Article 370." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 60, no. 2 (2025): 1310-1324.

government welcomes and applauds economic progress, new physical infrastructures, and restored flows of tourists. But this process has been accompanied by communication lockdowns, and even curfews and limitations on political expressions.⁵² The recovery in the economic structure is a mixed bag, with growth in tourism and infrastructural investments in some sectors, but a major downturn in actual means of livelihood and handicraft and cottage industries. Such incidents underscore the conflict between developmental efforts in a state and human security in a province and clearly underscore that peace and security can neither be induced nor guaranteed through administrative control.⁵³

On account of these factors, it is clear that the conflict is anything but intractable. What is required is an approach that is people-focused, inclusive, development-oriented, supportive of human rights, and facilitates CBMs, which will help to create a platform for sustainable peace. Strategic elements, whether military or water resources, need not become the source of constantly recurring conflict but may become areas where neutral management can help to facilitate structured cooperation on these issues, too. Moreover, what is important is the 'cyber' aspect, where, with the help of these methods, disinformation challenges could be met, polarization would decrease, and international empathy would be increased.⁵⁴ Assuming that this approach addresses both strategic dimensions as well as the human dimensions of the conflict

⁵² Shabana Naeem, and Shabnam Kausar. "Kashmir Issue During Musharraf Era: A Diplomatic Shift Towards Peace." *Social Science Review Archives* 3, no. 2 (2025): 383-394.

⁵³ Rifaqat Ali. "Kashmir Conflict, Prospects for Qatar to Mediate." Master's thesis, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (Qatar), 2025.

⁵⁴ Waseem Raja, Talha Latief Tantray, and Neeta Rani. "Radicalisation in Jammu and Kashmir: a theoretical and empirical appraisal of internal and external dynamics." *The Round Table* 115, no. 1 (2026): 82-96.

simultaneously, it would help, inch by inch, to build trust, lower tensions, and enable a propitious environment conducive to lasting stability.⁵⁵ Of course, the tipping point would lie in equitably balancing the interests with the sense of dignity, voice, and agency, realizing, ultimately, the welfare of Kashmiris becomes central to any lasting solution. It articulates with an explanatory background of lessons drawn in the last few years, the ‘Socio-Economic disruption, impact of centralization, the strength of local society, the crucial significance of an ‘inclusive’ strategy, highlighting both structural and human dimensions, becomes paramount.

Conclusion

India and Pakistan’s involvement in the Kashmir conflict for over 70 years has encompassed numerous historical claims, geopolitical rivals, and human rights concerns, instead of one issue about territorial rights. Issues such as Kashmir conflict not being solely about territorial rights but also about state riot driven policies versus the reality that Kashmiris live with, their rights, identity, and human rights concerns, indicate that the conflict is not adequately addressed due to the weaknesses associated with state-centric diplomacy that disregards human security needs for military and strategic gain with the absence of an appropriately effective global enforcement mechanism on the newly emerging developments such as the repeal of Article 370 and administrative centralization.

A completely new and human security-oriented approach needs to be adopted for the resolution of this issue. Yet despite such enormous obstacles as disparities of power and a lack of trust, this conflict is not an

⁵⁵ Tasleem Malik, Maira Safdar, and Fiazullah Jan. "Beyond occupation: memory, displacement, and the logic of settler control in Kashmir." *GeoJournal* 91, no. 1 (2026): 9.

insoluble one. The way to a sustainable and equitable peaceful outcome lies in having a multi-point solution which includes diplomacy, the protection of human rights, regional teamwork, and development aid. In South Asia, to alleviate suffering with a view to restoring the dignity of the Kashmiri people in a manner in which they can meaningfully participate, the challenge should aim at a solution that alleviates the suffering of the Kashmiri people.
