

Kashmir in Indo-US Relations: Historical Context, Strategic Magnitudes, and Contemporary Challenges

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Abstract

Kashmir remains one of the most insistent challenges in Indo-US relations, evolving from a Cold War irritant to a complex diplomatic issue in the current strategic partnership. This paper examines the historical path of American policy toward the Kashmir dispute from 1947 to 2021, analysing how changing geopolitical contexts, strategic priorities, and bilateral dynamics have shaped US approaches to this combative issue. Through a sequential analysis of US presidential administrations, this paper establishes that while early American neutrality and Pakistan-centric policies created significant tensions with India, the post-Cold War era witnessed a gradual shift toward recognising Kashmir as a bilateral matter between India and Pakistan. The paper argues that despite this evolution, vital differences continue, mainly regarding human rights concerns and arbitration roles. The methodology uses historical analysis of diplomatic documents, policy statements, and bilateral agreements. Key findings show that Kashmir's role in Indo-US relations has transformed from a primary hindrance to a controllable challenge in the broader planned alliance, though current developments following the 2019 constitutional changes have reignited American Congressional concerns. The paper concludes that effective management of the Kashmir issue requires continued diplomatic engagement, respect for India's sovereignty, and focus on shared strategic interests while handling the genuine humanitarian concerns.

Keywords: Kashmir, Indo-US Relations, treaty of accession, geopolitics, plebiscite.

Introduction

Kashmir has emerged as one of the most enduring diplomatic challenges in Indo-American relations, reflecting fundamentally different perspectives on territorial sovereignty, conflict resolution, and regional stability. While India views Kashmir as an integral part of its territory based on legal accession, the United States has historically approached the dispute through the lens of regional stability and conflict prevention. There have been many conflicts fought between India and Pakistan over the territory of Kashmir, which has been a key flashpoint in the area. The dispute between India and Pakistan over the territory of Kashmir has included both nations. Historically, the United States has maintained a policy of neutrality, avoiding partisan positions, which means that it has avoided taking sides and instead concentrated on fostering peace and stability in the region. The subject of Kashmir has continued to provide substantial hurdles for relations between India and the United States, notwithstanding this fact. The United States of America has been more and more involved in the conflict, notably because of the strategic interests it holds in the region. In addition to being a significant hub for international trade and business, the region is home to a number of important military sites, one of which is the Srinagar airfield, which is operated by the Indian Air Force. Over the past several years, the situation in Kashmir has considerably deteriorated, and tensions between India and Pakistan have been increasing. There were extensive demonstrations and acts of violence in the region as a result of the decision made by the Indian government to withdraw Article 370 of its constitution, which had previously provided the state of Jammu and Kashmir a great deal of autonomy. Pakistan's claims over the region have been dealt a significant setback as a result of this decision, which has led to an escalation in tensions between the two nations. (Kronstadt, 2011)

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Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This paper employs historical analysis as its primary methodology, examining diplomatic documents, policy statements, congressional records, and bilateral agreements spanning seven decades of Indo-US relations. The research adopts a chronological approach, analysing how different US presidential administrations approached the Kashmir issue within evolving strategic contexts. The theoretical framework draws from realist international relations theory, which emphasises how states pursue national interests within anarchic international systems. This perspective helps explain why US policy toward Kashmir has shifted based on changing strategic priorities, alliance considerations, and regional power dynamics rather than consistent normative positions. Primary sources include official US State Department records, Congressional testimonies, presidential statements, and Indian parliamentary debates. Secondary sources encompass scholarly analyses, diplomatic memoirs, and policy research from established think tanks. The paper acknowledges limitations in accessing classified diplomatic correspondence and relies on publicly available materials and declassified documents.

Early Cold War Period (1947-1962)

The significance of Kashmir as a matter in the relationship between India and the United States cannot be emphasised. Because of its strategic position, abundant natural resources, and cultural value, the area is an essential component of the geopolitical activities that take place in the region. In addition, the war over Kashmir has had enormous repercussions for the peace of the area, since tensions between India and Pakistan have periodically escalated into armed engagements. In addition to the ramifications it has for the area, the Kashmir problem has also had important repercussions for the relationship between India and the United States. The United States of America has, throughout its history, maintained a robust connection with India, and it has provided major aid to India in the areas of both the military and the economy. The Kashmir dispute, on the other hand, has been a source of stress between India and the US, particularly during times of crisis in Kashmir.

India's leadership was deeply disappointed by the US administration's stance during the first Indo-Pakistani crisis over Kashmir in 1947, particularly American support for UN Security Council resolutions calling for a plebiscite in Indian-administered Kashmir. This early disagreement established a pattern of diplomatic tension that would persist for decades. The US wanted to keep alive the Kashmir issue between the two sibling countries

by challenging the validity of Kashmir's accession to India. (Kumar, 2021:13) Nehru's repeated promises in 1947-48 to determine Kashmir's accession through a plebiscite resonated with Western democratic values (Mansingh, 1976:165)

The United States of America had agreed to put Kashmir before the Security Council, and it had also continued to encourage plebiscites in the state, which Nehru found to be very frustrating. Immediately following the Soviet Union's veto of a resolution that called for the stationing of United Nations troops in Kashmir, the Security Council reached an agreement to dispatch its president, Gunnar Jarring of Sweden, to the subcontinent. Jarring stated that the conflict had reached a stalemate. Late in 1957, Pakistan once again brought the matter to the attention of the Security Council. With Frank Graham serving as the leader, the Council dispatched yet another expedition to South Asia, which, like the last one, was unsuccessful. The UN Security Council's resolution on January 17, 1948, established the framework for the organisation's future engagement in the Kashmir dispute. The resolution, which urged the governments of India and Pakistan to take prompt action in all of their jurisdictions, was influenced by the United States. India was furious with the Security Council for holding both nations equally accountable for the crisis and failing to denounce Pakistan as the aggressor; hence, the resolution was doomed to fail. The US's intention to include Pakistan as a key component of its Middle East policy is the root cause of the action (Palit, September 2001: 789-805). Pakistan violated the UN Commission's August 13, 1948, resolution by failing to withdraw its troops from occupied Kashmir territory as promised, and the American administration remained a silent spectator on Pakistan's attitude. (Nehru, 1961: 483)

India was earlier convinced to solve the problem with mutual understanding as Rasgotra wrote that "In 1954, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru again took a big risk by considering all the social, racial and religious aspects of Kashmir and had persuaded Pakistan Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Bogra during his 1953 state visit to India to hold a plebiscite in both parts of Kashmir, but Nehru wanted this to be done under the supervision of a small neutral state rather than the US. But despite the agreement of both sides, Pakistan backed out of the issue under pressure from Washington. So, the United States pretended to resolve the issue; rather, it wanted to continue to grind its axes in future strategies in the sub-continent. (Rasgotra, 2016: 8-89)

The foundation of US policy toward Kashmir was established during the early Cold War period, when American strategic priorities focused on containing Soviet influence in South Asia. This section examines how initial

US neutrality gradually evolved into a Pakistan-centric approach that significantly strained relations with India.

Strategic Complications and Alliance Dynamics (1954-1965)

The mid-1950s marked a critical phase when US strategic commitments to Pakistan began directly affecting Kashmir diplomacy. American military assistance to Pakistan and the formation of Cold War alliances created new complexities in managing the Kashmir dispute while maintaining relations with both South Asian nations. It was the United States' special favour to Pakistan that inspired it, through different channels, to put pressure on India on the Kashmir problem. India was a big recipient of foreign aid and loans through World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and due to nonpaying capacity, some of the officials such as Stephen J. Spingarn, suggested and opined that due to India's adverse loan payable situations it could be easily pressured to expedite the settlement of the Kashmir crisis. (Mudumbai, 1980: 94)

Nehru was so irritated with the US pressure on India to support the UNCIP resolution that he summoned American ambassador Henderson and told him that he was completely fed up with the United States' moral guidance, and he refused to budge on Kashmir. Despite the cost of the destruction of India, Kashmir, and the entire world, he would not back down. (Kux, 1992: 62)

The Kashmir issue has been an important factor in the mutual relations between India and the United States. There is no direct connection of the US with India on the Kashmir issue; rather, this issue was a political legacy of the Mountbatten Plan of independence under British rule. Nehru has cleared India's position on Kashmir, while addressing in Lok Sabha, that based on the Treaty of accession, Kashmir is an integral part of India and at appropriate time India would go to know the people's will through plebiscite, but keeping in view the invasion of Kashmir by tribesmen and to seek help request from Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah, India reacted against intruders and asked Pakistan to stop the entry of these raiders to establish peace and order and then India will go to know the people's opinion. (Nehru, 1961: 444) Pakistanis feel that they have been deprived of land and the people who are rightfully theirs in Kashmir. The majority of people in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir are Muslim, although the ruler was a Hindu maharaja, who initially desired independence for his kingdom but soon acquiesced to pressure from New Delhi to join India following an assault by Pakistani irregulars. Two-thirds of Kashmir were under Indian control after the ensuing conflict. (Mohite. 1987: 61)

But India wants to acquire the entire Kashmir, which portion is under the control of Pakistan because Pakistan got into the Kashmir illegally, through an act of aggression, and neither was invited by the ruler nor the ruled in the region, while India came to Kashmir through a legal process. (Chatursherni, 1980: 142)

American military assistance to Pakistan significantly complicated Indo-US relations during the early 1960s, as India viewed such support as indirectly strengthening Pakistan's position in the Kashmir dispute while undermining India's legitimate security concerns. Pakistan's strategic dissatisfaction with India's pledge to refrain from declaring war on the Kashmir dispute. Under such dire circumstances, the United States' actions constituted a questionable element in the relationship between the two countries. (Rajan., 1958: 263)

Conceptual Foundations and Legal Debates (1947-1960)

This period established the fundamental legal and conceptual frameworks that would shape decades of international discourse on Kashmir. The debates over plebiscites, accession validity, and sovereignty principles during this era created lasting positions that continue to influence contemporary discussions. On the contrary, Pakistan demands a plebiscite in the entire Kashmir as promised by Nehru. India's intention of internationalising the Kashmir problem and presenting it to the United Nations is rooted in the basic principles of India's foreign policy, and to reveal Pakistan's conspiracy behind the invasion. The United States also supported the U.N. intervention in the plebiscite to avoid any coercion and intimidation. (Sultan, 1980: 86)

The plebiscite question assumes critical importance when examining its origins: whether this proposal emerged from the Maharaja's conditions, Nehru's political commitments, or Pakistan's diplomatic strategy, each source carrying different implications for the dispute's resolution. As Yuri Nasenko has mentioned in her book that Plebiscite was neither first demanded by either side between Pakistan and India but it was the reply of lord Mountbatten in writing to the letter communicated by the Maharaja in which Mountbatten stated that as quoted by Nasenko, 'Government had decided to accept the accession of Kashmir state to the dominion of India, further "as soon as law and order have been restored, the question of the state's accession should be settled by a 'reference' to the people", so it was Lord Mountbatten who could be responsible to alive for decades the simple situation into a complicated one by suggesting ensuring the people's consent in the matter. (Nasenko, 1977: 41)

In Asia continue to interference purpose further both the friend states U.K. and United States delegations

evolved new theory regarding Kashmir that it is no man's land and where sovereignty is yet to be undetermined was taken seriously and Nehru strongly rejected such a vague notion stating, "Kashmir has at no time been recognized as a sovereign state under international law it has always been considered an integral part of India and further he said in Indian Parliament," the accession of Kashmir to India is entirely in conformity with the Indian independence Act and the negotiations that preceded it, it is also fully in accord with all that has happened in case of the other princely states which acceded to India."

Nehru, in his style, clearly admitted in the Parliament that Kashmir is an integral part of India, it is fully legally acceptable as per international law and is following the law of independence; no state should have any doubt or question about it. (Nehru, 1961: 466-467).

American policymakers initially misunderstood the nature of Indian secularism, incorrectly applying the two-nation theory to suggest that Pakistan's Muslim identity gave it greater claim to Kashmir's Muslim-majority population. This perspective overlooked India's constitutional secularism and the legal basis of Kashmir's accession. The US couldn't find the fact that India and the Indian leadership were forced to accept the partition of India based on religion. Although the United States itself is a plural society that became biased on the Kashmir issue and ignored India's secular pluralism, Americans were very reluctant to consider the legal aspects of the problem and supported the unlawful presence of Pakistan in Kashmir. (Mansingh, 1976: 165)

Cold War Alignment and Strategic Calculations (1960-1979)

The escalation of Cold War tensions and the formation of formal alliance structures fundamentally altered the strategic context surrounding Kashmir. Pakistan's integration into American alliance systems created new diplomatic constraints on US policy toward the dispute. Pakistan's alignment with the American bloc during the Cold War, combined with US security commitments under various military treaties, provided Pakistan with diplomatic leverage to maintain international attention on the Kashmir dispute despite India's legal claims based on the Instrument of Accession. This strategic relationship enabled Pakistan to maintain international attention on the dispute despite India's legal claims based on the Instrument of Accession. Pakistan geographical location and US policy to containment of communism also the cause of reliability in mutual bilateral relationship between Pakistan and United States and India's tendency of independent role which eloquent unbiased opinions on different crisis and US policy of forging worldwide

cooperation and alliances and tendencies towards the policy of Nonalignment were sufficient to discontentment of United States. (Kumar, 2021: 9).

A very interesting twist in US policy towards both states in South Asia was noticed during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. The United States had withdrawn all the financial assistance to both India and Pakistan, treated both even handed and imposed a complete embargo on both states, ignoring the effect of who had initiated the conflict. Pakistan tilted towards the People's Republic of China for military assistance. (Nayar, 1976: 81-88)

Nuclear Dimensions and Crisis Management (1971-1999)

The introduction of nuclear capabilities into South Asian strategic calculations fundamentally transformed the Kashmir dispute from a regional territorial conflict into a potential trigger for nuclear confrontation, compelling new forms of American diplomatic engagement. Kashmir is the sole issue in three major wars that have been directly fought to date between India and Pakistan, and Pakistan-sponsored indirect infiltration continued in the region to defame and instable India. It was worth mentioning that US was going to involve directly in 1971 Indo-Pak war and President Nixon administration's attempt to use the nuclear-powered Enterprise as a part of gun boat diplomacy to threat or pressure India side, (might be that was a question of Pakistan national integrity and United States zeal to protect its old ally Pakistan) (Brands, 1973: 371-384). Dilip Mohite (1987) wrote that President Nixon administration attitude on India in 1971 war with Pakistan and treaty with USSR has approved the statement of John Foster Dillas, "that those who are not with us are against us", so Indo-US relations touched the lowest ebb which was rectified by US Navy's nuclear-powered Enterprise ordered to move Bay of Bengal against India (Mohite, 1987: 62-63). Geopolitics is dynamic, and the state actors perform their role accordingly. During the Cold War US attitude towards India regarding Kashmir was negative in certain administrations. This period created structural constraints for India, and the United States kept a distance most of the time, but the end of the Cold War was the driver of new perceptions, and countries responded to changes and continued by adapting their new foreign policy orientations.

America sees Kashmir as a factor in fulfilling strategic objectives in Asia, especially South Asia, rather than an international issue. Initially, due to the cold war situation and expansion of communism United States was afraid that the Kashmir issue might lead either of the disputants into the arms of the communists. (Sultan, 1980, p 85) America has been supporting Pakistan on the Kashmir

issue, and it was with the US support that Pakistan could reach the Kashmir issue in the Security Council in 1957, 1962 & 1964, and the United States not only alone but through international organisations as well, also proved to be biased towards Pakistan regarding the issue of Kashmir. In the matter of Kashmir US has not played any significant role in the UN Security Council; rather, swaying to the rhythm of Pakistan's words was a factor of tension between Indo-US relations. (Gupta, 2009: 23)

During the Kargil war, new dimensions were highlighted in the mutual relations between India and the United States. Pakistan felt that America, the only superpower in the world, was its traditional friend and would initiate help for Pakistan during this war, but the United States not only accused Pakistan of threatening world peace but also forced Pakistan to solve the mutual issue through talks at the table. Although Bill Clinton's views on Kashmir did not match with India's views, and considered the opinion of the people of Kashmir important for solving the problem. The Kargil war issue worked as an immediate burning factor after the nuclear test. US annoyance also brought them close to clearing the mist of uncertainties between the two. (Menon, 2018: 130-131) But India's timely twenty years treaty of friendship with Russia saved India from the devastation beyond expectations. But this act of the United States' direct involvement in a bilateral war was the biggest blow to the world's vast liberal democratic systems, proving that the national interests of a country are the blind drivers of foreign policy, where all signals of ideological compatibility remain silent and invisible.

India-US ties were heavily reliant on Pakistan and its rhetoric about Kashmir until the late 1990s and the fall of the Soviet Union. From Rajiv Gandhi's tenure as prime minister in mid 90s, when he put aside the tense previous ties and collaborated with the US in the fields of technology and the military, there has been a shift in the US perspective on India. The US position as a powerhouse in the unipolar system was undeniable following the fall of the Soviet Union, and the country had to develop new norms of conduct in the international system to meet its new obligations. Economic liberalisation was enhanced, and the non-aligned movement was questioned, and the US's dominating role in international organisations resulted in a change in policy towards India. Indo-US relations after 1991 were concentrated on economic reforms. India focused on the trade and investment relationships with United States although the momentum was not commendable and that all due to the bureaucratic hurdles and basic structural problems in India but on the other fields such as security, defense and military relations warmed up during Narsimha Rao period but on Kashmir the status quo like situation

remained as such. The 1998 nuclear tests by both India and Pakistan fundamentally altered the strategic calculus of US policy toward South Asia. The prospect of nuclear conflict over Kashmir elevated American concerns about crisis stability and reinforced the imperative for diplomatic rather than military solutions to the dispute. The prospect of nuclear conflict over Kashmir elevated American concerns about crisis stability and reinforced the imperative for diplomatic rather than military solutions to the dispute. The 1999 Kargil conflict between two nuclear-armed nations demonstrated the dangerous escalatory potential of Kashmir-related crises, prompting decisive US diplomatic intervention that successfully pressured Pakistan to withdraw its forces and de-escalate the confrontation. (Desai, 2006: 163)

Post-Cold War Transition and Strategic Partnership (1991-2001)

The end of the Cold War eliminated the primary strategic rationale for America's Pakistan-centric approach, creating space for more balanced engagement with India. However, the Kashmir dispute continued to complicate this transition, particularly as nuclear weapons entered the South Asian strategic equation. Vajpayee's Lahore visit was appreciated by Bill Clinton during his official visit to India soon after the Kargil Conflict, and he stated in the joint session of the Indian parliament that the resolution of the Kashmir issue is bilaterally possible and the United States has no intention to interfere in the matter. Gupta quoted an interview of Bill Clinton on March 21, 2000 that Kashmir dispute is bilateral and both the stand should respect the line of control and resume the dialogue and he also accepted that some elements in the Pakistan government provoking the violence in Kashmir and he strongly rejected the idea of any militarily solution of Kashmir. (Gupta, 2009: 28-34)

The Clinton administration's approach to Kashmir reflected broader policy tensions between strategic engagement with India and traditional concerns about human rights and regional stability. Officials like Robin Raphel frequently raised human rights issues in Kashmir, creating diplomatic friction even as broader bilateral relations improved. All of this, however, was caused by India's unwillingness to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its ongoing missile defence development. Narasimha Rao's government's economic policy reforms had less than anticipated outcomes, and the US granted China the designation of Most Favoured Nation for trade in 1996. However, several favourable developments in the US and Indian administrations later blended well to provide observable advances in the two nations' relationship during the short tenure

of Deve Gowda, I K Gujral, and Bill Clinton's second term. India's perspective that Pakistan was the primary supporter of cross-border terrorism in India, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, was gradually accepted by the US as a result of the bilateral agreement between the two countries. (Mukhopadhyay, 2024: 188-189)

War on Terror and Strategic Convergence (2001-2016)

The September 11, 2001, attacks fundamentally transformed US policy toward South Asia, emphasizing counter-terrorism cooperation over traditional alliance structures. This shift created opportunities for deeper Indo-US engagement while simultaneously complicating America's relationship with Pakistan over Kashmir-related terrorism. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks marked a paradigmatic shift in US foreign policy, fundamentally altering American perspectives on terrorism, regional security, and alliance priorities. This transformation had profound implications for US policy toward the Kashmir dispute, particularly given the documented links between Pakistan-based terrorist groups and activities in Kashmir. The major disagreements over Kashmir and how to handle Pakistan have also significantly decreased, and the United States has moved past the hyphenated relationship it once pursued with India and Pakistan. (Chadda, 2008: 49) But the incident of 2001 has brought about a sea change in the US administration's approach towards Asia and especially towards Muslim states in the wake of international terrorism. The administration of George W. Bush faced the biggest setback of a terrorist attack and a lesson that terrorist has no country boundaries. The United States' stance on India and Pakistan underwent a significant shift following the terrorist attack of 2001. Because on October 1, 2001, a terrorist attack occurred in Kashmir immediately after the 9/11 terrorist assault in America. Since both incidents had some connection to Pakistan, this terrorist incident demonstrates the United States' favourable view of India, as evidenced by the new anti-terrorism measures implemented during Vajpayee's visit and the country's satisfaction with the two nations' combined anti-terrorism campaign. The Joint Cyber-Terrorism Initiative was announced, and the US and Indian governments took further steps to cooperate in the defence sector through military discussions. George W. Bush expressed satisfaction with the expanding strategic partnership during his visit to India.

During his election campaign, Obama suggested greater US involvement in Kashmir conflict resolution, arguing that resolving India-Pakistan tensions would enable Pakistan to focus on combating militants rather than confronting India. This approach reflected the

administration's Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak) strategic framework (Tiwari, 2009: 51) So, Obama was not only bothered about Kashmir but also the growing militancy on Pakistani soil, as Pakistan claimed that it only supports the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination. At the same time, during an official visit to India, Barack Obama expressed worries about the security of minorities in a created communal atmosphere in India, suspecting their belongingness. (Wani, Jan 28, 2020).

The Obama administration had some hesitations with India in certain issues like India's role in Afghanistan, the Kashmir issue and non-proliferation issues, but with a positive attitude US brought the relationship to a comfortable point with faith and further strengthened the ties. The US administration spoke of the Kashmir issue, but in a soft tone because of its changed outlook towards India. (Tourangbam, November 2012: 94)

But after winning the election, Barack Obama administration clarified its stance on Kashmir, saying that its bilateral matter between India and Pakistan and in this context, the US will continue to follow the policy of former President Bush administration and also expressed the resolution of the Kashmir issue is essential for creating peace and security in Asia. Further said that he appointed Hillary Clinton as his Secretary of State, who has had good relations with India in the past. Obama displayed a very positive attitude in this context and expressed hope that the talks between Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon would be fruitful. During the talks, issues like Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Pakistan and the terrorist attack on Mumbai were discussed, and the commitment to end terrorism through cooperation was reiterated. Gupta, 2009: 46-48)

The Obama administration often seems to be in a dilemma regarding Kashmir, although after 2010, the Obama administration abandoned the idea of mediating on Kashmir because of the differences between India and Pakistan and accepted Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's invitation to visit India. President Obama was more inclined towards Pakistan, but as America wanted to establish its influence in Asia, it could not ignore India from its strategic vision and the United States and India becoming mutually protective towards each other could not achieve their strategic objectives in Asia, so the behavior of both should be clear towards each other and mainly the change in the attitude of the Obama administration towards Kashmir was inevitable. (Anderson, 2010:13-34)

Contemporary Challenges and Constitutional Changes (2017-2021)

The revocation of Article 370 in August 2019 represented

a watershed moment that tested the maturity of Indo-US relations, particularly given America's historical sensitivity to the Kashmir issue. This section examines how the Trump and Biden administrations navigated between strategic partnership imperatives and domestic political pressures regarding human rights concerns. Obama's perspective regarding Kashmir was Af-Pak centred, and during his election campaign, he expressed serious concerns about the Kashmir issue and wanted to resolve the same to make Pakistan capable of focusing on militants on its restive North-West borders (Tiwari, 2009: 55-57). Richard Holbrooke was named the Af-Pak Special Representative by President Barack Obama said that India was initially intended to be included, but the country did not take well to being included in the same group as Pakistan and Afghanistan. The US learned from this that India preferred to be viewed as an ally rather than as a "client state," as Pakistan is. India thereafter became more involved in Afghanistan. India was the US's chosen nation, and they were getting along much better with the Afghans; therefore, US contacts with Pakistan started to become unnecessary at this point. Hamid Karzai, the President of Afghanistan, even admired India. India supplied weaponry and trained Afghan commanders and soldiers.

India's August 2019 decision to revoke Articles 370 and 35A, while reorganizing Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories, represented the most significant constitutional change in the region since 1947. This action, which India characterized as internal administrative reform, generated considerable international attention and tested the evolution of US policy toward Kashmir-related developments. This action, which India characterised as internal administrative reform, generated considerable international attention and tested the evolution of US policy toward Kashmir-related developments. Few questioned what the state's unique identity was in the first place, despite the Articles of the Constitution being ostensibly added to preserve it. With its many different ethnic groups and religious communities, Jammu & Kashmir has been a microcosm of India's pluralism. In Kashmir, the syncretic culture and identity that Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus had developed over hundreds of years together is what we frequently refer to as "Kashmiriyat." To put it another way, our forebears fostered the notion of India, and India is the idea of Kashmir. (Economic Times, Singh, 2019)

Trump fighting radical Islamic terrorism as a key common interest of the two countries received a standing ovation from the audience during a grand rally addressed by both leaders in Houston. The rally was India's strategic architecture to convey the indirect message to the militants in the Kashmir valley sponsored by Pakistan.

Trump's entry ban on Muslims from six countries, ban on the use of electronic gadgets from eight countries, predominantly Muslim population in planes. The Trump Islamophobic attitude (Hazarika, 2017, p33,) and closeness to India's fight against terrorism could work as a positive sign about the Kashmir matter. But besides declaring China as strategic competitor and welcomed emergence of India as the leading global power and a stronger strategic and defense partner of the United States in the National Security Strategy released by the Trump administration in December 2017 (Sikri 2024: 219) but the issue Kashmir for mediation also raised now and then by United States.

India firmly rejected any US mediation in its bilateral issues with Pakistan. When US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley suggested the Trump administration might play a role in de-escalating tensions, India swiftly responded by reaffirming its long-standing position. Tourangbam, 2017: 28) This stance was consistent across diplomatic channels, with experts like former diplomats Meera Shankar and G Parthasarathy emphasizing that India does not welcome third-party intervention in the India-Pakistan issues. "The United States will try and find its place" in attempts to de-escalate Indo-Pak tensions and not wait till "something happens," Haley, a prominent Indian-American member of the Trump administration, stated in New York, suggesting that President Donald Trump may be involved in such endeavors. The US indication was about the Kashmir problem, but India strongly opposed any third-party mediation in bilateral issues with its neighbouring countries. (PTI Indian Express, April 4, 2017) Articles 370 and 35A, which granted Jammu & Kashmir unique status and the power to enforce its constitution, were abolished by India in August of last year. About half of mobile phone users and most internet services in the densely populated Kashmir Valley are still prohibited as of early January 2020, five months after the formal start of the crackdown in Jammu and Kashmir. Furthermore, hundreds of Kashmiris, including well-known political personalities, are still detained. In Jammu and Kashmir, about 5,100 persons were placed in "preventive custody" between August 4 and December 3. Out of them, 609 were still under "preventive detention," including 218 people who were allegedly "stone-pelters" who attacked police officers during protests in the streets. (The Hindu, January 5, 2020)

The current limitations are justified by New Delhi as being required in a security climate that is rife with danger. According to Alice Wells, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, who is the lead U.S. diplomat for the region, "There are terrorist groups who operate in Kashmir and who try to take advantage of political and social disaffection."

This statement was made in October. The broad threat has long been recognized by the U.S. administration. The Indian Home Ministry informed Parliament early in December that there had been 17% fewer incidents of "terrorist violence" in Jammu and Kashmir in the 115 days following August 5 than there had been in the 115 days before that date, from 106 to 88. In contrast, Wells said before a House hearing in October 2019 that "I believe that the arrest of four top Lashkar-e-Taiba/Jamaat-ud-dawah leaders has resulted in a decrease in infiltrations across the Line of Control." (PTI Washington, October 14 2019).

The Kashmir Valley is now experiencing a "punishing blockade," according to a report published by the New York Times in September. The article also mentioned that there have been intermittent protests that have broken out, and that scores of protestors have suffered significant injuries as a result of shotgun pellets and tear gas canisters. As a result, Kashmiris are "feeling unsettled, demoralised, and furious." (New York Times, September 30 2019) On the Kashmir issue, a bipartisan group of four senators from the US has recorded their concerns through a written request to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo regarding the life-threatening situation in Kashmir after the amendment in Article 370 by the government of India. They all have registered their worries over the human rights problems in Kashmir valley and about the public supplies and services (education, health and communication) and security issues within the region (Anadolu, February 13, 2020, para 25)

On November 1, residents of the state that was once part of Jammu and Kashmir were given the option to live in the Union Territory of Ladakh without a Legislature or the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory (UT), which will have the power to elect its own legislature. (India code 2019) The lieutenant governors of each new union territory are the main executives of the regions, and they report directly to the Home Ministry of India. The Indian Penal Code is one of the more than one hundred federal laws that are now relevant to Jammu and Kashmir. Additionally, more than one hundred and fifty laws that were enacted by the previous state assembly are being abolished, including long-standing bans on leasing property to nonresidents. (BBC 6 August 2019)

According to the United States Administration, India's decision to remove Article 370, which granted Kashmir special status, was an "internal matter" and the area needed peace. Pakistan's diplomatic attempts to draw attention to the events in India have been thwarted by this. The US worries about only the unlawful detentions in the state and urges respect for individual rights. Morgan Ortagus, a spokesman for the US State Department,

referred to recent developments as "strictly internal matters" and asked India to "respect individual rights". (BusinessToday.in, Updated Aug 08, 2019)

On the partial amendments in Article 370 of Indian Constitution, the comfortable reactions were recorded from the countries. The international community still views the conflict in Kashmir as a bilateral one that should be resolved by discussion between the two nations. President Donald Trump has so far catered to India's interests, despite once again offering to resolve the "explosive" Kashmir issue if both nations wanted him to. Before his travel to the G7 summit, which began in France on August 24, Trump reiterated his willingness to mediate in Kashmir. For him, the area is a "very complicated place" where Hindus and Muslims do not "get along so great." But later, Trump acknowledged that Kashmir is a bilateral problem following a conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the G7 summit. Modi promised him that the situation in Kashmir "is under control," he told the journalists. Modi emphasized that the problem is bilateral and could be settled via dialogue. The US State Department urged the Indian government to restore normalcy to the Kashmir Valley as quickly as possible. (Cherian, Sep 13, 2019).

Two closed-door meetings of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have been held in the past five months to discuss the situation in Kashmir. Kashmir is discussed by the UN Security Council, and China calls on India and Pakistan to reduce tensions. Reuters, August 16, 2020. The US Congress has denounced New Delhi's action in two House resolutions on Kashmir. House Resolution No. 745, which was filed by Indian-American Representative Pramila Jayapal in the House of Representatives last year, has 36 co-sponsors, including two Republicans and 34 Democrats. In Kashmir, human rights are being violated: US Congresswoman Debbie Dingell (The Economic Times, January 14, 2020) India has consistently rejected US President Donald Trump's offers to arbitrate between Pakistan and India. Although Donald Trump has Indian support after proposing to resolve the Kashmir border problem, he subtly urged Modi to act.

The UNSC and the US in particular have put more emphasis on the situation in Kashmir, which has compelled New Delhi to send MPs and diplomats from other countries on "fact-finding" excursions to the Kashmir Valley. First, the administration brought a group of European Union parliamentarians to the Valley in October 2019. (WANI, Jan 28, 2020) During his presidential campaign, Biden's positions on Kashmir reflected concerns about human rights and minority treatment, suggesting a more interventionist approach than his predecessor while stopping short of advocating

independence for the region. To negotiate a peace deal, Biden will probably want to take advantage of the 2021 ceasefire and mediate. (Nicolson, 6-16-2022: 20)

Both the competitors for the President Election, Biden and Kamala Harris, had a poor perception towards India regarding its position on Kashmir, especially after revoking the special status of Kashmir. During Biden's presidential campaign Kashmir issue also remained an issue to influence a specific religion-based community. In "Joe Biden's Agenda for Muslim Americans was very protective, and his campaign combined what is occurring in Kashmir with a list of crimes committed against the Muslim population worldwide. Even India came under fire for the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens, which are very sensitive to India's internal security issues (Kapur, October 16, 2020). Anik Joshi, in his article, observed that Kamala Harris, during the election campaign, also criticised India's stand on Kashmir and the situation prevailing due to the eradication of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir recently and held India responsible for the human rights violations in the region. (Joshi, September 2020)

Conclusion

This historical analysis of Kashmir in Indo-US relations reveals a complex evolution from Cold War irritant to contemporary diplomatic challenge. The evidence demonstrates that while fundamental disagreements persist regarding approaches to the Kashmir dispute, the issue has become increasingly manageable within the broader framework of the strategic partnership between India and the United States. Several key findings emerge from this chronological examination. First, US policy toward Kashmir has consistently reflected broader strategic priorities rather than consistent normative positions on territorial disputes. During the Cold War, American support for Pakistani positions reflected alliance considerations and Soviet containment strategies. The post-Cold War period witnessed gradual recognition of the limitations of external mediation, culminating in the acceptance of Kashmir as fundamentally a bilateral matter between India and Pakistan. Second, the nuclear dimension has fundamentally altered the stakes involved in the Kashmir dispute. The 1998 tests elevated American concerns about crisis stability while reinforcing the imperative for diplomatic solutions. Subsequent crisis management during Kargil (1999) and post-Balakot (2019) demonstrated both the risks of nuclear competition and the possibilities for diplomatic intervention. Third, the war on terror created new convergences between Indian and American perspectives on Kashmir-related terrorism, even as disagreements persisted about broader

approaches to the dispute. Recognition of Pakistan's role in supporting cross-border terrorism gradually aligned US and Indian threat assessments, though differences remained about policy responses. The 2019 revocation of Article 370 represents a test case for the maturity of Indo-US relations. While generating Congressional concerns about human rights and regional stability, the constitutional changes did not fundamentally disrupt the strategic partnership, suggesting that Kashmir's capacity to derail broader bilateral relations has diminished significantly since the Cold War era.

Looking forward, several implications emerge for the management of Kashmir in Indo-US relations. The United States appears likely to maintain its position that Kashmir is a bilateral matter while expressing concerns about human rights and regional stability. India's challenge lies in balancing domestic political imperatives with international diplomatic sensitivities. Success in managing this issue will depend on sustained dialogue, respect for sovereignty, and focus on shared strategic interests, including counter-terrorism, regional stability, and great power competition with China. This paper contributes to understanding how territorial disputes can evolve within broader bilateral relationships, demonstrating that persistent disagreements need not prevent a strategic partnership if properly managed through diplomatic channels and mutual respect for core interests. Future research might examine the role of track-two diplomacy, economic interdependence, and multilateral frameworks in managing similar territorial disputes within strategic partnerships.

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