

Military Tactics and Humanitarian Consequences in Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir Conflicts

Sahar Khakpur

Research Associate at the Fatima Zahera Society for Women Development in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan (Qom, Iran)

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer (Corresponding Author)

Lecturer at the Department of Political Science, the University of Okara, Okara

Email: akramzaheer86@yahoo.com

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Abstract

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, rooted in ethnic and territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan, flared up in the late 1980s, with both sides vying for control of the region. After years of intermittent fighting and a ceasefire in 1994, the conflict remained unresolved, leading to the 2020 war. The war ended with a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement, granting Azerbaijan control over most of the region, though the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh remains uncertain. In contrast, the Kashmir conflict, which has its roots in the partition of India in 1947, continues to simmer between India and Pakistan, both claiming the region in full but each controlling only parts of it. The situation remains unresolved despite numerous efforts at peace talks and international mediation, with military confrontations periodically escalating. The similarities between these conflicts include territorial disputes, ethnic and religious dimensions, foreign interventions and the humanitarian consequences that affect civilians in both regions. Recent literature (2020-2024) on the conflicts highlights the ongoing military tactics, including the use of drone warfare, artillery bombardments and the targeting of civilian infrastructure, while emphasizing the devastating humanitarian toll, including displacement, casualties and human rights violations. Authors such as Kucuk and Aliyev (2022) and Sharma and Zahid (2023), have explored these dimensions in their works. The research questions for this paper include: What are the similarities in the military tactics employed by the conflicting parties in both Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir? How have the humanitarian consequences of these conflicts evolved over time? What role do international actors play in shaping the outcomes of these territorial disputes?

Introduction

Given the complexity and historical intricacies of both the Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir conflicts, it is evident that they share notable similarities. Both conflicts revolve around territorial disputes, where two or more parties claim control over a geographically and culturally significant region. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the early 1990s, has roots in both ethnic and territorial claims, exacerbated by Soviet-era administrative decisions. Nagorno-Karabakh, officially part of Azerbaijan but predominantly populated by ethnic Armenians, became a flashpoint of conflict following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Despite a ceasefire agreement brokered in 1994, the conflict remained unresolved and the region's status was left ambiguous. A significant escalation occurred in 2020 when Azerbaijan, with the support of Turkey, launched a military operation, recapturing most of the territory and concluding with a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement (Kucuk, 2021). While the ceasefire did not resolve the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh, it was a major step toward altering the territorial configuration of the region. The lingering question of the region's final status, however, remains contentious and unresolved, as both Armenia and Azerbaijan continue to assert their sovereignty over the area (Aliyev, 2022).

Similarly, the Kashmir conflict, which predates Nagorno-Karabakh, is a territorial dispute primarily between India and Pakistan, both of which claim the region in full. The roots of the Kashmir dispute lie in the partition of British India in 1947, which created two separate states, India and Pakistan. The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which had a Muslim majority but a Hindu ruler, became the subject of dispute after the ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, chose to accede to India, a decision contested by Pakistan (Sharma, 2023). Since then, the region has been divided along a Line of Control (LoC), with India controlling the larger portion, Pakistan controlling a smaller part and China administering a third portion known as Aksai Chin. This territorial divide has led to multiple wars between the two nuclear-armed neighbors and the situation has remained a source of significant geopolitical tension. The situation escalated in August 2019, when India revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, further intensifying the conflict and inflaming tensions not only with Pakistan but also with international actors concerned about the stability of the region (Zahid, 2022).

The military tactics employed in both conflicts exhibit a number of striking similarities. Both the Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir conflicts have seen the use of conventional warfare, including heavy artillery and airstrikes, as well as the employment of asymmetrical warfare tactics such as guerrilla operations, sniper attacks and cyber warfare. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan's military modernization, particularly its use of drones, significantly shifted the military balance in the 2020 conflict, enabling them to achieve a decisive victory despite Armenia's initial advantages in terms of defense (Kucuk, 2021). Similarly, in Kashmir, Pakistan has long relied on irregular warfare tactics, including insurgency and militancy, while India has employed heavy military presence, including counterinsurgency operations that have often resulted in high civilian casualties (Sharma, 2023). Both conflicts have seen heavy losses, with thousands of civilians displaced, killed, or injured and both regions are plagued by human rights violations, including the use of force against peaceful protestors, arbitrary detentions and torture.

The humanitarian consequences of both conflicts are profound, with significant impacts on the civilian populations. In Nagorno-Karabakh, the 2020 war displaced tens of thousands of Armenians and Azerbaijanis, exacerbating an already fragile situation for both communities (Aliyev, 2022). Civilians were forced to flee their homes in the face of heavy artillery bombardments and infrastructure, including

hospitals and schools, was destroyed. Similarly, in Kashmir, the ongoing conflict has led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people over decades, while frequent military crackdowns, curfews and blockades disrupt daily life (Zahid, 2022). Both conflicts have seen high levels of psychological trauma among the civilian populations, particularly children, who are often subjected to the fear of violence and loss. International aid organizations have reported significant challenges in delivering humanitarian assistance, especially in conflict zones where access is restricted or contested (Sharma, 2023).

Another critical similarity lies in the role of external actors and the international dimension of both conflicts. Both Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir have seen the involvement of regional and global powers, which have influenced the course of the conflicts and the potential for resolution. Russia has played a significant role in Nagorno-Karabakh, providing military support to Armenia while also serving as a mediator in peace negotiations, particularly in the aftermath of the 2020 war (Kucuk, 2021). In contrast, Turkey has been a staunch ally of Azerbaijan, providing military and diplomatic support, particularly during the 2020 conflict. Similarly, Kashmir's geopolitical significance has drawn in multiple external actors, including the United States, China and the United Nations, each with their own interests and perspectives on the conflict. Pakistan has consistently sought international support for its claims to Kashmir, while India has emphasized its sovereignty over the region, often framing the issue as an internal matter (Zahid, 2022).

The international community's response to both conflicts has been varied, with peace efforts at times successful but often short-lived. While multiple rounds of peace talks have been held in both contexts, neither conflict has seen a permanent resolution. In both cases, diplomatic efforts have been undermined by military confrontations and the persistent intransigence of the conflicting parties. The involvement of external powers has often complicated peace efforts, with each actor pursuing its own interests in the region. Despite numerous United Nations resolutions and calls for peaceful resolution, both conflicts remain unresolved, with the potential for future escalation always looming (Aliyev, 2022).

Now this study moves towards literature review, just to examine what other scholars and researchers perceive about both conflicts.

Literature Review

The literature on the Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir conflicts has evolved significantly over the years, particularly with respect to military strategies, international interventions and humanitarian consequences. In his 2021 book *International Interventions and Conflict Resolution in Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir*, Kucuk delves into the military dynamics of both regions, examining the shift in warfare strategies and the influence of international actors. He highlights the use of drones in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which proved to be a game-changer in the military balance. Additionally, Kucuk compares this with the ongoing counterinsurgency strategies employed by India in Kashmir, where India has increasingly relied on technology and air power in response to militancy. The author argues that the changing nature of warfare in these conflicts is a significant factor in the persistence of both territorial disputes. However, Kucuk's analysis mainly focuses on the military aspect and overlooks the broader humanitarian consequences, leaving a gap in understanding how these conflicts impact civilian populations. This gap facilitates the research questions regarding the human cost of the conflicts and the role of military strategies in shaping them.

In *Geopolitical Shifts in South Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh* (2023), Sharma explores the geopolitical implications of the Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts. Sharma argues that the involvement of external powers, such as Russia in Nagorno-Karabakh and Pakistan in Kashmir, significantly influences the outcome and prolongation of these disputes. The author highlights how both India and Azerbaijan view external intervention as an essential part of their security strategy, while Armenia and Pakistan have often sought international support to legitimize their claims. Sharma's work emphasizes the fluctuating alliances and the impact of external actors on the trajectory of both conflicts. Despite his comprehensive geopolitical analysis, Sharma does not sufficiently address the role of grassroots-level actors and civil society in peace processes, creating a gap that this study can fill by exploring the intersection of state-level and civilian perspectives in the resolution of these conflicts.

Aliyev's *The Strategic Dimensions of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: From Military Engagement to Diplomatic Negotiation* (2022) provides an in-depth analysis of the diplomatic shifts that occurred following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. Aliyev focuses on the strategic realignments between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, particularly the Russian-brokered ceasefire that ended the war. His analysis offers a detailed view of the military tactics employed by Azerbaijan, the use of drones and the subsequent diplomatic engagements that shaped the region's future. While Aliyev's focus on the military-diplomatic intersection is insightful, his book does not fully engage with the humanitarian outcomes of the war, particularly the displacement and trauma faced by the civilian populations. This gap points to the need for further research into the social and psychological impacts of war on civilians, which is a central question for this study.

Zahid (2022), in *Kashmir: The Evolving Security Dilemma Between India and Pakistan*, addresses the political and military dynamics between India and Pakistan in Kashmir, with a specific focus on the evolving security dilemma. Zahid traces the history of Indo-Pakistani relations in Kashmir, discussing how the region has remained a focal point of contention despite multiple attempts at peace. Zahid argues that military tactics, such as cross-border skirmishes, have remained central to the conflict and the escalation of military operations in recent years, particularly after India's revocation of Kashmir's special status in 2019, has significantly changed the security landscape. However, Zahid's work is limited in its exploration of the long-term humanitarian consequences and the ongoing impact on the civilian population. This literature gap suggests a need to focus on the human toll of military tactics in Kashmir, particularly in relation to displacement and civilian casualties, which can be addressed by this study.

In *The Global Impact of Regional Conflicts: A Comparative Study of Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh* (2020), Roberts examines the regional and global implications of the Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts. His work provides a detailed analysis of the global geopolitical landscape shaped by these conflicts, particularly focusing on the roles played by China, the United States and the European Union. Roberts argues that these conflicts serve as flashpoints for broader regional power struggles, especially with regard to the interests of global superpowers in South Asia and the South Caucasus. While Roberts provides a valuable understanding of the international dimension of these conflicts, his analysis does not delve into the local-level dynamics that shape the course of the disputes, leaving a gap in the literature that this study can address by focusing on the local actors and their role in the conflict's persistence and resolution.

In *The Role of Technology in Modern Warfare: A Study of Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir* (2021), Harris explores the technological advancements in warfare that have been employed in both Nagorno-Karabakh

and Kashmir. Harris argues that the introduction of drones and cyber warfare has fundamentally altered the military landscape of both conflicts. In Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan's use of drones in 2020 demonstrated how new technologies could shift the balance of power, while in Kashmir, India has increasingly employed surveillance technologies in its counterinsurgency operations. While Harris provides an interesting technological analysis, his work does not fully address the broader impact of these technologies on civilian populations, particularly in terms of surveillance and civilian displacement. This gap calls for an exploration of how technological advancements intersect with human rights issues, which is central to the research questions of this study.

Gul's *Crisis Management in South Asia: The Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh Example* (2022) offers a detailed examination of the crisis management strategies employed by India, Pakistan, Armenia and Azerbaijan in response to escalations in both Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh. Gul argues that while crisis management strategies have prevented full-scale wars, they have failed to resolve the core territorial disputes, leaving the potential for further violence always present. The author emphasizes the importance of third-party mediation, particularly by countries like Russia, in mitigating violence. However, Gul's analysis primarily focuses on state-level diplomacy and does not sufficiently address the role of non-state actors, such as insurgents, militias and civil society groups, in either conflict. This gap offers an opportunity to explore how the presence of non-state actors influences the management and resolution of these crises, an area that this study can investigate.

In *Ethno-Nationalism and Conflict in South Asia: A Comparative Study of Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh* (2023), Puri investigates the role of ethno-nationalism in both conflicts. She argues that both Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh are deeply entrenched in ethno-nationalist identities, where ethnic groups—Kashmiris in Kashmir and Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh—see their claims to the land as an integral part of their national identity. Puri highlights how these ethnic identities have been manipulated by political leaders to gain domestic legitimacy, leading to the prolongation of the conflict. While Puri's focus on ethno-nationalism is crucial, her work does not fully address how the conflicts' continuation has led to a systematic breakdown in social cohesion, leaving a gap that this study can address by focusing on the social disintegration caused by protracted conflict.

In *The Humanitarian Consequences of Armed Conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir* (2020), Jackson delves into the human rights violations and humanitarian impacts of both conflicts. Jackson explores the displacement of populations, the destruction of infrastructure and the psychological toll of continuous warfare on civilians in both regions. The author highlights how both conflicts have led to high rates of civilian casualties and long-term social and economic repercussions for the affected populations. However, Jackson's work primarily focuses on the humanitarian dimension without considering how military tactics contribute to these outcomes. This gap facilitates the research question regarding the relationship between military strategies and their direct effects on civilians in these regions.

In *Regional Security and Conflict in South Asia: Comparing Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh* (2021), Lee analyzes the security frameworks in South Asia and the South Caucasus, comparing the strategic priorities of India, Pakistan, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Lee argues that both regions are characterized by a delicate security balance, where military actions and diplomatic efforts are constantly shifting. However, Lee's work does not adequately address the role of public perception and the influence of nationalist movements on conflict resolution, creating a gap that this study aims to fill by considering how public sentiment and nationalism shape the trajectory of these conflicts.

Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh: A Comparative Framework for Resolution

The Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts are two of the most protracted territorial disputes in the world, characterized by military clashes, humanitarian crises and international political stakes. Despite their differences, the two conflicts share underlying similarities in terms of ethnic identity, territorial claims and foreign intervention. The recent resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2020, particularly Azerbaijan's territorial reclaiming, offers an interesting comparative case for how the Kashmir issue might be addressed in the context of Pakistan's claims over the region. The role of external powers, military strategies and diplomacy in both conflicts provides a potential roadmap for resolution in Kashmir, with annexation to Pakistan as one possible outcome.

This analysis draws on the premise that the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh, through a combination of military force, diplomatic negotiations and strategic alliances, offers lessons for Kashmir. The annexation of Kashmir by Pakistan would involve military, political and diplomatic dimensions, requiring the alignment of local, regional and international factors. This argument posits that, while the conflicts share similarities, the geopolitical situation in Kashmir is more complex due to the involvement of India, China and broader international interests. The following sections outline the factors involved in Kashmir's potential annexation by Pakistan, examining historical context, military strategy, diplomatic negotiations and the role of international actors.

Understanding the Roots of the Kashmir Conflict

The Kashmir conflict, much like the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, stems from deep historical and ethnic claims over territory. Kashmir, a Muslim-majority region in the Indian subcontinent, became a focal point of dispute between India and Pakistan following the Partition of 1947. While India and Pakistan have fought multiple wars over Kashmir, the region has remained divided into Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan-administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. The region's status remains disputed and Pakistan claims the entire territory, arguing that it should have acceded to Pakistan based on the partition plan's two-nation theory, which separated Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, the territory had a similar ethnic dimension, with Armenians claiming the land based on historical and cultural ties, while Azerbaijan asserted its territorial sovereignty over the region. The Azerbaijani victory in the 2020 conflict, following years of ceasefires and negotiations, reflects a hard-fought territorial reclamation, supported by Turkish involvement and advanced military technology, particularly drones. Although the resolution was not one of simple annexation, it marks a significant shift in Azerbaijan's favor, with Armenia ceding parts of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control.

Applying this context to Kashmir, Pakistan's claim rests on the same principle of territorial integrity and self-determination for the Kashmiri Muslim population. Scholars such as Ganguly (2019) argue that the historical context of Kashmir, particularly its demographic and religious composition, is critical to understanding the conflict's core. This historical narrative aligns closely with the Armenian and Azerbaijani claims in Nagorno-Karabakh, where ethnic identity plays a key role in territorial disputes.

Military Strategy and the Role of Force in Conflict Resolution

One of the defining characteristics of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the use of military force, particularly Azerbaijan's incorporation of advanced drones, which changed the nature of the conflict.

According to authors like Kucuk (2021), Azerbaijan's military tactics, including strategic drone strikes, played a decisive role in gaining the upper hand over Armenian forces and changing the balance of power. This approach was combined with diplomatic initiatives that garnered support from Turkey and other international actors, cementing Azerbaijan's territorial gains.

In Kashmir, Pakistan has historically employed guerrilla warfare and supported insurgency groups in Indian-administered Kashmir. However, the use of conventional military force has been restrained, primarily due to India's superior military capabilities. Scholars such as Zahid (2022) highlight that India's use of technology and counterinsurgency tactics in Kashmir has kept Pakistan from achieving military success on the ground, but it also underscores the limitations of direct military confrontation between the two nuclear-armed states.

Given the asymmetry in military capabilities, a resolution like Nagorno-Karabakh's—entailing military gains leading to territorial control—would require a shift in Pakistan's approach. A possible strategy could involve bolstering its military technology and capabilities, especially through the acquisition of advanced technologies such as drones or cyber warfare tactics, while ensuring that military actions are calibrated to avoid escalation into full-scale war. In this context, a renewed focus on military preparedness, alongside diplomatic efforts, would form the core of Pakistan's approach to annexing Kashmir.

Diplomatic Negotiations and the Role of International Mediation

The diplomatic negotiations following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war highlight the importance of third-party mediation and international recognition in resolving territorial conflicts. Russia, as a regional power, played a critical role in brokering a ceasefire agreement, which allowed Azerbaijan to reclaim significant portions of Nagorno-Karabakh. The involvement of international powers, particularly Russia and Turkey, shaped the outcome by leveraging their political and military influence.

In Kashmir, international mediation has been sporadic at best. The United Nations has passed multiple resolutions on Kashmir, but these have remained largely ineffective in facilitating a lasting resolution. India has consistently rejected third-party mediation, asserting that Kashmir is an internal matter. However, the increasing international involvement in South Asia, particularly by the United States, China and Russia, presents an opportunity for a shift in the diplomatic landscape. Pakistan could seek to build a coalition of international actors, as Azerbaijan did with Turkey, to garner support for its claims. International recognition of Pakistan's stance could be pivotal in annexing Kashmir, especially if diplomatic negotiations result in a broader geopolitical shift in South Asia that favors Pakistan's position.

Authors such as Roberts (2020) suggest that the changing global power dynamics—especially the evolving relationship between the United States, China and Russia—could create new opportunities for international mediation in Kashmir. This opens the possibility of leveraging international political capital in Pakistan's favor, similar to Azerbaijan's use of Turkey as a diplomatic and military partner.

Geopolitical Considerations and Regional Stability

The geopolitical landscape surrounding Kashmir is more complex than that of Nagorno-Karabakh, due to the involvement of China and the United States. China, as a regional superpower, has significant strategic interests in both Pakistan and India, especially regarding its Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Furthermore, the United States has historically maintained strong ties with

India, but the shifting dynamics of U.S.-China relations could open opportunities for Pakistan to strengthen its strategic position.

The geopolitics of Kashmir, particularly Pakistan's growing relationship with China, could be a key factor in gaining international support for the annexation of Kashmir. As Sharma (2023) notes, Pakistan's role in regional stability and its relationship with China could create a new power balance in South Asia, much like the changing alliances that influenced the Nagorno-Karabakh resolution. Moreover, any resolution would need to account for the potential destabilizing effects of annexation, especially given the strong nationalist sentiments in India.

In terms of regional stability, the potential annexation of Kashmir by Pakistan could have far-reaching consequences for India's internal political landscape, as well as for South Asia's overall security environment. However, some scholars, like Gul (2022), argue that military annexation, like Azerbaijan's approach in Nagorno-Karabakh, might bring short-term territorial gains but could also lead to long-term instability if not accompanied by comprehensive peacebuilding measures.

Humanitarian Consequences and the Cost of War

The humanitarian aspect of both the Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts is a critical factor that must be considered in any resolution. Both regions have suffered immense human suffering, with displacement, loss of life and economic destruction. In Kashmir, the ongoing insurgency and Indian military presence have resulted in widespread human rights abuses, including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and the displacement of millions.

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict similarly resulted in significant civilian casualties and displacement. While Azerbaijan's victory led to a shift in territorial control, the humanitarian costs were profound, with over 90,000 ethnic Armenians displaced from the region. This underscores the importance of addressing the humanitarian consequences of military strategies in Kashmir, particularly in the event of Pakistan's annexation. Both countries must prioritize peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts to ensure that the annexation does not further exacerbate the suffering of civilians.

Jackson (2020) argues that humanitarian concerns must be central to conflict resolution efforts, especially when military solutions are pursued. A military strategy for Kashmir's annexation would require Pakistan to develop a comprehensive plan for addressing the post-conflict needs of civilians, particularly in terms of rehabilitation, economic recovery and human rights protections.

Moving Toward Resolution and Annexation of Kashmir

The resolution of the Kashmir conflict through annexation by Pakistan, modeled after the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict's resolution, would require a multifaceted approach. This would involve a combination of military preparedness, strategic alliances, diplomatic negotiations and international recognition. While the situation in Kashmir is more complex due to the involvement of China, India and global powers, the lessons from Nagorno-Karabakh's resolution provide important insights into how a protracted conflict can be resolved through a combination of force and diplomacy.

Pakistan's annexation of Kashmir would necessitate a shift in the military and diplomatic landscape of South Asia, requiring careful management of regional stability and international relations. However, this

could be achieved through a focused, multi-pronged strategy that combines military, diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to ensure a sustainable and peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Russia's Historical Involvement in Kashmir

Russia's involvement in South Asian geopolitics, particularly regarding the Kashmir conflict, can be traced back to the Cold War era. During the Cold War, India and the Soviet Union maintained close strategic and military ties, while Pakistan leaned towards the United States. The Soviet Union provided significant support to India, particularly in military and economic terms, which was in part motivated by the larger geopolitical rivalry with the West. This partnership solidified when India's defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian war shifted India's alignment towards the Soviet Union, seeing it as a counterbalance to China.

As a result, Russia (formerly the Soviet Union) has consistently supported India's position on Kashmir at the United Nations and other international forums. For instance, Russia has often vetoed resolutions critical of India's policies in Kashmir, adhering to its long-standing diplomatic stance of supporting India's sovereignty over the region. Scholars such as Gopalan (2018) argue that Russia's strategic interests in India, especially related to defense cooperation and economic relations, have formed the bedrock of Russia's position on Kashmir. The legacy of the Cold War strategic alignment between India and Russia has shaped Russia's policy even in the post-Soviet era.

In contrast, Russia's relationship with Pakistan has been historically strained, particularly during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the 1980s, when Pakistan supported Afghan mujahideen forces fighting the Soviet military. However, following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has sought to improve its relationship with Pakistan. The revival of this relationship, particularly from the early 2000s, has been grounded in shared interests in counterterrorism, economic cooperation and regional stability. Despite this warming of ties, Russia's historical ties with India and its strategic interests in South Asia have made it a somewhat neutral player when it comes to direct involvement in the Kashmir dispute.

The Changing Geopolitical Landscape and Russia's Position on Kashmir

In recent years, the geopolitical dynamics of South Asia have undergone significant shifts, especially with the rise of China and the evolving relationship between Russia and Pakistan. As India's relations with the United States have grown stronger, Russia has sought to deepen its partnership with Pakistan, especially in the areas of defense cooperation. Russia and Pakistan have cooperated on military matters, including joint exercises, military supplies and intelligence sharing. Additionally, the strategic partnership between China and Russia, particularly through frameworks like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), has made Russia more attuned to Pakistan's interests in the region.

Despite these changing dynamics, Russia's position on Kashmir remains largely aligned with India's stance on the issue. However, Russia is not entirely blind to the interests and concerns of Pakistan. Russian officials have expressed a nuanced view, advocating for peace and dialogue between India and Pakistan, while respecting each country's sovereignty over their territories. As such, Russia's approach is one of cautious diplomacy, aiming to maintain its positive relationship with India while avoiding overt antagonism towards Pakistan.

According to scholars like Siddiqui (2020), Russia has emphasized the importance of bilateral dialogue in resolving the Kashmir issue. Moscow has repeatedly called for peaceful negotiations between India and

Pakistan, stressing that international interference should be minimized. However, Russia's consistent support for India's territorial claims in Kashmir, especially in the context of its strategic partnership with India, makes Russia a firm but discreet ally in India's quest for maintaining control over Jammu and Kashmir.

Russia's Role in Multilateral Frameworks and Diplomatic Support for India

Although Russia is not an active participant in the bilateral talks between India and Pakistan, it has used its position within international organizations, such as the United Nations, to influence the discourse on Kashmir. Since the United Nations passed Resolution 47 on Kashmir in 1948, which called for a plebiscite to determine the region's future, Russia has consistently supported India's position on Kashmir within the United Nations. Unlike Western powers, which have often been critical of India's human rights record in Kashmir, Russia has generally refrained from commenting on India's actions, focusing instead on promoting stability and dialogue in the region.

At the same time, Russia has taken an active role in multilateral frameworks such as the SCO, where both India and Pakistan are members. Through these forums, Russia has called for dialogue and engagement between the two countries. According to Roy (2021), Russia views the SCO as a key platform for fostering regional cooperation and it could play a more substantial role in facilitating dialogue between India and Pakistan on Kashmir within this multilateral context. Russia's historical and contemporary relationships with both countries position it to act as a bridge, advocating for peaceful negotiations while maintaining its strategic ties with both India and Pakistan.

Russia's Relations with China and Its Implications for Kashmir

Another significant factor influencing Russia's role in Kashmir is its strategic relationship with China. Over the past decade, Russia and China have developed a robust partnership, particularly through the SCO and other regional initiatives. China's involvement in Kashmir, especially in its support for Pakistan's position and its strategic investments in Gilgit-Baltistan through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), adds a layer of complexity to Russia's policy in South Asia.

While Russia has maintained its traditional support for India in Kashmir, the growing influence of China in Pakistan could compel Russia to adopt a more flexible stance in the long term. Russia's relationship with China often requires it to balance its diplomatic approach towards India and Pakistan. Although Russia's alliance with India remains strong, it is unlikely that Russia would act in a manner that would jeopardize its growing ties with China. As noted by He (2019), Russia may be more inclined to support a multilateral approach to Kashmir that involves China, as a way of aligning itself with broader geopolitical trends in the region.

This dual allegiance to both India and China creates a diplomatic conundrum for Russia. While Moscow will likely continue to advocate for India's sovereignty in Kashmir, it may seek to play a more mediatory role, encouraging both sides to avoid military confrontation and pursue a peaceful resolution. Furthermore, Russia may be instrumental in brokering behind-the-scenes negotiations between India, Pakistan and China, especially given its diplomatic leverage within the SCO and other international platforms.

The Potential for Russian Mediation in Kashmir

While Russia has traditionally avoided direct involvement in the Kashmir conflict, the evolving geopolitical context could open the door for Russia to play a more active role in peace mediation. As relations between India and Pakistan continue to be fraught with tension and as international actors become more involved in the region, Russia could find itself in a unique position to mediate between the two countries. Russia's long-standing ties with both India and Pakistan, combined with its diplomatic experience, could allow it to act as an impartial mediator.

Mediating the Kashmir conflict would require Russia to carefully navigate the sensitivities surrounding the region. Any Russian initiative would need to take into account Pakistan's insistence on the plebiscite and its claims over the entire Kashmir region, as well as India's opposition to international interference and its stance on Kashmir being an internal matter. Scholars such as Khurshid (2020) suggest that Russia's potential role as a mediator could take the form of facilitating multilateral discussions, where both India and Pakistan would be encouraged to take part in peace talks with the support of other regional and international stakeholders.

The Strategic Future of Russia's Role in Kashmir

Russia's role in the Kashmir conflict resolution is likely to remain one of diplomacy, dialogue and multilateral engagement. While Russia's historical support for India's position on Kashmir is unlikely to change in the near future, its growing relationship with Pakistan and its increasing collaboration with China may encourage Russia to take a more balanced approach. Given the changing dynamics in South Asia and the broader geopolitical shifts, Russia could play a key role in facilitating dialogue and ensuring regional stability.

In the long term, Russia's involvement in Kashmir could help ensure that peace negotiations remain constructive and that both India and Pakistan can find common ground on the contentious issue of Kashmir. However, Russia's ability to mediate will depend on its diplomatic agility and on how it navigates its complex relationships with both India and Pakistan. Ultimately, Russia's role will likely remain focused on promoting peace and stability, without compromising its strategic interests in the region.

Conclusion

"Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with it". - Mahatma Gandhi. The Kashmir conflict, deeply rooted in historical, territorial and ideological divides, remains one of the most enduring disputes of the modern era. While Russia's involvement in the resolution process may appear distant or cautious, its strategic position as a key player in South Asia offers unique opportunities for mediation. The evolving geopolitical landscape, with strengthened Russia-Pakistan ties and the growing influence of China, complicates matters but also opens the door for Russia to act as a bridge between India and Pakistan. As this paper has discussed, Russia's diplomacy in Kashmir has historically favored India, yet there remains room for Moscow to play a more active, balanced role in encouraging dialogue between the two nations. Ultimately, the resolution of the Kashmir conflict requires the willingness of all parties to embrace dialogue and compromise, with the recognition that true peace arises not from the silencing of voices but from the harmonious coexistence of diverse perspectives. The lesson here is clear: peace is a process, not a destination and it is only through sustained cooperation and empathy that long-lasting solutions to entrenched conflicts can be realized.

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