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Research report

Forum: The United Nations Security Council

Issue: Preventing Escalation of the Current Conflict Between India and
Pakistan

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Introduction

India and Pakistan have long shared a tumultuous history of conflict, both politically and socially, stemming from a British colonial rule that unrighteously 'settled' itself into the region, leaving behind a trail of ruin after its overdue departure in 1947. The issue now spans over a period of over 75 years, making it one of the longest interstate disputes and further peaking international

interest and concerns due to both nations possessing significant nuclear arsenals.

At the centre of the conflict lies the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir, claimed wholly by both states. Tensions however, extend further than solely territorial disputes, with issues such as terrorism, national security and water resources also falling within the scope. While diplomatic efforts and ceasefires have not been in absence, they have been, so far, to no avail, with smaller individual incidents rapidly evolving into dire situations with military interference, often showcasing how explosive the conflict can be and the immense difficulty of maintaining long-term stability.

The recent escalation in 2025 is a prime example of the above, after 26 were killed in a terrorist attack in Indian-administered Kashmir, the strained ties between the nations deteriorated rapidly and led to each state taking official economic and diplomatic measures against the other. Days later India launched military strikes into Pakistan-administered Kashmir, subsequently followed by Pakistani strikes and starting what would become four days of hostility, ending with a ceasefire that, while desperately needed, in no way dealt with the complex and sensitive underlying issues.

Today - while tensions are not as high as they have been - cooperative diplomatic action to resolve, or at least de-escalate, this historic feud, is imperative.

Definitions of key terms

Jammu and Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir is a union territory administered by India. The region has been subject to a border dispute since the 1940s and is separated from Pakistan administered regions through the Line of Control.

The Partition of British India

The Partition of British India was the division of British India into two independent states; The Union of India and The Dominion of Pakistan.

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Line of Control

The Line of Control is the military control line between the Indian and Pakistani regions of the former princely states of Jammu and Kashmir.

Pahalgam Attack

The Pahalgam Attack was a 2025 terrorist attack targeted to Hindu tourists. In total 26 were killed by the three armed terrorists.

Islamism (Islamist)

Islamism is the political and ideological movement believing that Islam should influence the political system and that the aforementioned is superior to all other forms of governance.

Operation Sindoor

An Indian military campaign including military strikes in response to the Pahalgam attack

Indus Waters Treaty

The Indus Water Treaty is a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan regarding the use of water from the Indus River System.

Permanent Court of Arbitration

The Permanent Court of Arbitration is an intergovernmental organization providing a variety of dispute resolution services to the international community and established in 1899.

General overview

Historical Overview

The conflict between India and Pakistan owes its beginnings to the Partition of British India in 1947, when the two independent states were established. The future of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, then an independent princely state, however, remained contested. Following an armed raid into the region in October 1947, Maharaja Hari Singh acceded Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian government in return for military aid. This accession was, of course, heavily disputed by Pakistan and thus contributed directly to the First Indo-Pakistani War, establishing the territorial dispute that remains, to this day, an ongoing tension.

A United Nations-mediated ceasefire in 1949 fortunately brought an end to the initial hostilities, but did not produce a permanent agreement. Jammu and Kashmir consequently remained divided between both Indian and Pakistani administrations, while proposals to determine the state's final status were never implemented. Subsequent conflicts in 1965 and 1971, and the Kargil conflict in 1999, further fueled the rivalry between the two nations. In 1972, however, the Simla Agreement established a Line of Control and required India and Pakistan to resolve differences peacefully, although the fundamental dispute itself remained unresolved.

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In those and the following decades, the conflict snowballed into one regarding far more than pure territorial sovereignty. Matters such as water security, terrorism and instability took their place at the forefront of this debacle, even further expanding the already large extent of issues surrounding the region. What was a border dispute evolved into a conflict of global concern through unsuccessful deal upon unsuccessful deal and a multitude of violent exchanges.

Current Overview

The 2025 Pahalgam tourist attack was an immediate catalyst for one of the most serious escalations in years. Gunmen opened fire on civilians in Pahalgam, in the Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, killing 26. While The Resistance Front (TRF), an Islamist militant

organisation, claimed the attack, they retracted the claim blaming the statement on cyber intrusion. The TRF itself claims to be an indigenous Kashmiri resistance movement, yet is widely believed to be an offshoot of a Pakistani terrorist group (as designated by the US).

India attributed responsibility to Pakistani military groups and then argued that Pakistan bore responsibility for allowing such groups to operate within Pakistan-administered territory. All involvement was denied by Pakistan and a call was made for an independent investigation. Already fragile relationships were strained, if not shattered after India closed border crossings and suspended the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan taking similar measures.

Tensions again rose and developed into confrontation with India launching Operation Sindoor on the 7th of May 2025, striking nine sites it identified to be militant organisation affiliates. Further attacks followed from either side after Pakistan condemned the first strikes as acts of aggression. Eventually a ceasefire was reached on the 10th of May and all military confrontation was immediately halted.

A key factor now, is thus the above mentioned Indus Waters Treaty, a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan regarding the use of water from the Indus River System. The Treaty states that India is to control the three “Eastern Rivers” and Pakistan the three “Western Rivers” with the “Eastern Rivers” accounting for roughly 20% of all carried water, and the “Western Rivers” 80%. The Treaty also states India’s right to use the “Western Rivers” for irrigation and non-consumptive uses such as power generation. It is regarded as one of the most successful water-sharing treaties in the world. Following the 2025 Pahalgam attack however, the Indian government suspended the treaty, saying it would continue to do so until Pakistan ended its alleged support for cross-border terrorism. The Government of Pakistan has openly rejected this position and maintains that the Treaty remains operational. On the 31st of August 2026, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague stated that India must uphold the treaty saying that: *“India must observe its obligations under the Treaty, including those relating to the design and operation of its hydro-electric projects on the Western Rivers.”* Following the statement the Indian Ministry of Foreign affairs subsequently rejected it, declaring that: *“Its pronouncements, now or in the future, will have no effect on India's actions in connection with the projects being undertaken by India.”*

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The current situation is volatile. Tensions run high due to terrorists plaguing the region, sanctions and, most importantly, the nuclear capabilities of both nations overshadowing the conflict at all times.

Major parties involved

India

India controls the largest portion of Jammu and Kashmir and views its accession to India legally valid and thus its sovereignty undisputable. Counter-terrorism and deterrence are emphasised as central elements of its policy on Kashmir and Pakistan.

Pakistan

Pakistan is the main opposer of India's position of the control of the Kashmir region and administers Azad Jammu, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltisan. Pakistan denies involvement in the Pahalgam attack but responded with military action after Operation Sindoor.

The People's Republic of China

The PRC borders both Pakistan and India, and itself controls territory in the broader Kashmir region. The PRC maintains close relations with Pakistan during its own significant border disputes with India, India-Pakistan conflicts thus almost directly affect the PRC.

The United States of America

The United States is not a party to the territorial dispute, however, the US does play a key role with its importance as a nation sustaining diplomatic relations with both Pakistan and India. US officials have pressed for deescalation and ceasefires in the past, including during the 2025 crisis.

The Resistance Front/ Lashkar-e-Taiba

The TRF, while it claims to be indigenously Kashmiri is believed to be an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani Islamist Jihadist military organisation, and is itself a prominent violent Islamist military group in Kashmir. The TRF is thought to be behind the Pahalgam attacks, although they deny these claims.

Timeline of Key Events

1947-1949- First Indo-Pakistani War over Kashmir; The Partition of British India leaves the status of Kashmir disputes. After its accession to India, fighting break out between India and Pakistan ending in a UN ceasefire

1965- Second Indo-Pakistani War; A second conflict breaks out surrounding Kashmir, ending without resolution, furthering the cycle.

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1972- The Simla Agreement; The Simla Agreement establishes the Line of Control

2025 - Pahalgam Attack and Operation Sindoor; Terrorist attacks on Hindu tourists lead to accusations and an Indian organized Operation Sindoor attacking buildings thought to be linked to Pakistani Islamist groups. Conflict ends with a ceasefire but no solution to the Kashmir dispute or the constant tensions.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The United Nations Security Council discussed the Kashmir dispute during the First Indo-Pakistani War and established a framework consisting of a ceasefire, demilitarisation and, most importantly, a plebiscite. The plebiscite was never held however, due to disagreements between India and Pakistan on its conditions.

The Simla agreement committed India and Pakistan to peaceful agreements and the establishment of the Line of Control. Although this successfully ended immediate military confrontation, the underlying issue of Kashmir itself was not resolved.

Major crises such as the Pahalgam attacks also demonstrated the usefulness of third-party diplomacy on helping halt hostilities; a ceasefire was again reached with the assistance of other nations. Again however, these ceasefires did not address the underlying issues.

Possible solutions

While many attempts to halt conflict have been successful, actual progress with regards to the resolving of all the central issues, tensions and territorial disputes is virtually nonexistent. The tensions remain high, violent (military) conflict keeps appearing, and water agreements stay unfulfilled. A real solution must address all of these aforementioned issues, through a certain co-operation between states. One must also consider the peoples of the Kashmir region; theological differences play a major role in terrorist activities and hate crime and thus the safety and wellbeing of the people. Therefore, a plebiscite such as the one formerly suggested by the UNSC in 1948-1949 is not illogical.

So consider a framework built on tolerance and co-operation that will truly hold the peace, with the best intentions in mind for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

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