

## **Mediating Enduring Rivalry: Prospects For Indonesian Mediation Initiatives In The India-Pakistan Kashmir Dispute**

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### **Abstract**

*The enduring conflict over Kashmir between India and Pakistan remains unresolved despite several international mediation attempts. This study investigates these historical endeavors and evaluates Indonesia's prospective role as a mediator leveraging its neutral stance and long-standing connections with both parties. A comprehensive qualitative literature review revealed that preceding mediations primarily concentrated on territorial lines, allocation of resources, and ephemeral ceasefires that temporarily eased tensions but were inadequate in addressing the underlying ideological divergences and identity issues perpetuating distrust. While frameworks such as the Indus Waters Treaty, which tackle joint technical concerns, have yielded some success in fostering collaborative arrangements, imposed resolutions have often lacked credibility due to sovereignty concerns and national rhetoric. The research findings indicate that Indonesia is posited as a potential neutral facilitator, drawing from its diplomatic accord and cultural rapport with India and Pakistan. Its non-aligned disposition, coupled with a track record of brokering peace within its region, uniquely qualifies it to sensitize dialogues and engineer technical partnerships inspired by its own experiences with autonomy accords. Although challenging, strategically implemented Indonesian-led confidence-building initiatives could gradually nurture mutual trust and cooperation. For the transformation of the Kashmir dispute to be enduring, it is recommended that a comprehensive strategy be adopted, placing a premium on reconciliation, inclusive policymaking, and the primacy of human security. Crucially, any process must incorporate localized reconciliation dialogues and bottom-up mechanisms to ensure legitimacy and resolve deep-seated grievances.*

**Keywords:** *India-Pakistan, Kashmir, Mediation, Indonesia, Conflict Resolution*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The India-Pakistan conflict is an enduring and intricate dispute that has commanded significant scholarly and policy-related interest globally. A primary point of contention within this conflict is the status of the Kashmir region in the northwestern segment of the Himalayas, where sovereignty remains under dispute. This conflict has its roots in the 1947 partition of British India and is characterized by persistent rivalry, territorial discord, and security dilemmas (Wang, 2022). The entrenched nature of this dispute can be attributed to a myriad of factors, such as the disparity in power, intractable issues, and the entanglement of this rivalry within the broader geopolitical landscape (Paul, 2006). The implications of this conflict extend beyond the immediate region, with potential ramifications for both neighboring states and international stakeholders (Norkevičius, 2014; Wang, 2022). Furthermore, the strategic partnership between Pakistan and China has introduced an additional dimension to an already complex situation, prompting security apprehensions in India and necessitating the formulation of reciprocal tactics (Gul et al., 2021).

The region's strategic significance for both countries has further exacerbated the tension, leading to armed conflicts and territorial disputes (Malik, 2021; Harshe, 2005; Leake & Haines, 2017). The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 played a pivotal role in igniting the conflict, as the accession of Kashmir to India became a point of contention between the two nations (Razia, 2021; Ali, 2019). The Kashmir conflict is not only a territorial dispute between

India and Pakistan but also involves the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who seek self-determination and freedom (Bhat, 2019; Haq, 2019; Munawar, 2018). Pakistan supports the right of self-determination for Kashmiri citizens, while India denies them this right and accuses Pakistan of supporting militant activities in the region (Munawar, 2018).

The protracted bilateral conflict between India and Pakistan carries consequential international ramifications. To transcend such confrontations, the implementation of conflict resolution strategies is essential. Fisher et al. (2001) articulate conflict resolution as the endeavor to confront and mitigate the root causes of conflict, coupled with the aim of forging renewed relationships among the adversarial parties. One significant mode of conflict resolution is mediation, which involves the facilitation of negotiation through the participation of an unbiased third party (Rahmadi, 2010). Various entities, including the respective governments of India and Pakistan, other sovereign states, international organizations, and the United Nations (UN), have instigated peace initiatives and bilateral discussions with the intention of resolving their discord. These measures span a wide array of approaches, from advocating for referendums to the creation of agreements assumed to be mutually advantageous. Despite these endeavors, the recurrence of hostilities often necessitates the establishment of ceasefire protocols.

The spectrum of the India-Pakistan conflict transcends territorial and security disputes, extending into realms that encompass national identity, cultural narratives, and the perpetuation of ideologies in discourse (Ali, 2017; Nasr, 2005). Deep-seated national identities and historical narratives have exacerbated the resilience of this conflict, emphasizing its complex nature and the critical need for an all-encompassing understanding of its socio-political and cultural foundations (Nasr, 2005). Beyond territorial contentions, this conflict materializes across a variety of domains, including media propaganda, governmental transitions, economic considerations, and the intricate implications of nuclear diplomacy on geopolitical stances (Hussain, 2021; Khan et al., 2022). The nuclear aspect infuses the dispute with added complexity and exigency, amplifying the imperative for conflict resolution and arms control within the South Asian context (Hussain, 2021).

In this intricate diplomatic landscape, Indonesia emerges as a formidable intercessor in the persistent India-Pakistan conflict, underscored by its demonstrated prowess in resolving international disputes. Exhibiting a commendable history of mediation within Southeast Asia, through its engagement with the Cambodian conflict and the South China Sea disputes, Indonesia has made evident its dedication to the advancement of peace (Emmers, 2014). Furthermore, Indonesia has broadened its peacekeeping influence beyond its geographical confines, as evidenced by its role in nurturing peace discussions in Afghanistan. Through bilateral initiatives and collaboration among scholars, universities, and the community, Indonesia is fostering significant cooperation. For instance, the religious organization Nahdlatul Ulama, in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Intelligence Agency (BIN), endeavors to facilitate reconciliation between the Afghan government and the Taliban group. These efforts, which included meetings and dialogues among the groups in Jakarta in 2011, resulted in several shared agreements aimed at building peace (Malik, 2017).

Indonesia's commitment as a mediator in conflict resolution is also evident in the North Natuna Sea Conflict, through trust-building among ASEAN countries and China (Laksmi et al., 2022). Indonesia has the potential to act as a mediator in the Jammu-Kashmir conflict, not only considering Indonesia's experience as a mediator in several conflicts but also its cultural and historical ties with India and Pakistan (Gunawan, 2021). Moreover, Indonesia possesses economic leverage that could be a significant asset in its role as a mediator for both countries (Khairunnisa, 2021).

This paper endeavors to analyze the mediation patterns previously employed by the governments of India and Pakistan, as well as third-party states and international entities in the

India-Pakistan conflict. It will distil these experiences into lessons learned that may inform future mediation initiatives by Indonesia

## RESEARCH METHODS

To thoroughly investigate and grasp the complex dynamics of the the Kashmir conflict and the various peace initiatives undertaken by the UN, the governments of India and Pakistan, and third countries, this study will use a descriptive qualitative approach (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The author examines various academic literature such as scientific journals, books, and relevant online sources to analyze the mediation efforts that have been carried out in the India-Pakistan conflict regarding Kashmir. The core methodology of the literature review discussed here is the thematic analysis framework developed by Braun & Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a commonly employed qualitative approach for examining qualitative data. This method entails identifying patterns of significance within the data, defining themes, and generating a comprehensive report. Data and information were collected through a systematic review of relevant literature.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Geopolitics of Kashmir

On August 15th, 1947, as the British colonial era in the subcontinent ended, almost all princely states acceded to either Pakistan or India, with three major exceptions - Kashmir, Junagadh and Hyderabad (Raghavan, 2010). The Kashmir region holds vital strategic import in both geopolitical and natural resource terms, hence becoming contested between India and Pakistan. Territorial claims over Kashmir hold greater significance than mere cartographic ambitions. Geopolitically, Kashmir occupies a critical junction bridging Central and South Asia, bordering India, Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan (Irrum, 2023). It serves as a vital overland gateway linking South Asia to Central Asia and Europe, while also connecting Pakistan overland to its key ally China (Bokhari, 2020). Moreover, Kashmir plays a notable role in China's flagship Belt and Road Initiative, as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) traverses Pakistan-administered Kashmir regions, facilitating Chinese access to the Gwadar Port and Arabian Sea while bolstering connectivity and Pakistan's economic development (Malik, 2021).

Figure 1 depicts the geopolitical position of Kashmir amidst the dynamics involving India, Pakistan, and its neighboring countries. Due to significant and permanent changes in global politics, the Indo-Pacific region has become a focal point for major power struggles. The strengthening relationship between India and Indonesia, evident in their upgrade to a comprehensive strategic partnership, offers an opportunity for these nations to collaborate more closely and advance the Indo-Pacific agenda (Kaura, 2018). Since 2021, Indonesia and India have established three bilateral cooperation platforms focused on defense and security: the Biennial Meeting at the Minister of Defense level, the Indonesia-India Security Dialogue (IISD), and the Joint Defense Cooperation Committee (JDCC) at the Secretary-General level of the Ministry of Defense. Hence, there is potential to enhance defense cooperation at the operational level through the establishment of a Bilateral Defense Forum (Indonesia-India Bilateral Defense Forum). This forum would cover various areas of cooperation such as education, training, military research, operational counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response (Bandonio et al., 2021).



Figure 1. Map of Kashmir Region  
(Source: Natural Earth Data, 2023)

Regarding natural resources, Kashmir harbors abundant assets like hydropower, forestry, minerals, and freshwater, hence control over Kashmir holds economic importance for both India and Pakistan. The Indus River system, vitally important for Pakistani agriculture, originates from Kashmir, therefore loss of authority over Kashmir could jeopardize Pakistan's food security (Barret, 2020). Kashmir's hydroelectric and irrigation potential also strongly impacts Pakistan's economy, granting India influence over its neighbor via control of river flows. Rivalry over river resources has been a source of interstate tension and for almost sixty years the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) survived diplomatic tensions between India and Pakistan (Wirsing and Jaspardo, 2006).

The enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan owes partially to the interlocking sense of contested national identities, territorial disputes, and power struggles in the region (Kadir, 2019). Despite peace initiatives and ceasefires monitored by the UN, tensions have persisted, profoundly impacting bilateral relations and geopolitics. Escalatory cycles have been influenced by factors like military capability expansion, nuclear weaponization and alliance patterns (Bolognani, 2011). Moreover, mass media and cinematic propaganda has served to manufacture cross-border public sentiments (Liliweri, 2010). What follows is a timeline summary delineating major flare ups along the Kashmiri Line of Control:

<b>TIMELINE OF CONFLICT ON THE BORDER OF KASHMIR</b>			
<b>Time</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Cause</b>	<b>The Result</b>
27 October 1947– 5 January 1949	The First War of Kashmir	Revolt of Pashtun tribes against Hari Singh's Empire.	United Nations-initiated ceasefire The Northern Kashmir Territory and Azad Kashmir fell into the hands of Pakistan
5 August – 23 September 1965	The Second War of Kashmir	Gibraltar's operation was carried out by Pakistan, by infiltrating military forces into Jammu and Kashmir to create a rebellion against the Indian government	The two nations claim each other's victory. Ceasefire through UN Security Council Resolution 211 Return to status <i>quo ante bellum</i>
3 December – 16 December 1971	Indo-Pak War 1971 / Bangladesh War of Independence	Indian troops invading East Pakistan (Bangladesh) Pakistan opened the West Front by launching airstrikes on Indian air stations and launching offensive operations into India from Kashmir in the north to Rajasthan in the south.	India's victory Bangladesh's independence
13 April 1984 – 25 November 2003	Siachen's Conflict	India captured the Siachen glacier in operation Meghdoot	There was negotiation but resulted in the seizure of Siachen from Pakistan, who was later brought into the Ladakh territory
May – July 1999	War of Kargil	When the Pakistan's military infiltrated Indian territory, they responded with attacks by the Indian army and air force on the Kargil region	Military leaders meeting to negotiate the Kargil conflict. As a result, Pakistani prime minister Nawaz sharif has ordered the Pakistani militants and the military to retreat from Kargil

Table 1. India-Pakistan Conflict Timetable at The Border of Kashmir  
 (Source: modified by author)

## **International Mediation**

The quest to resolve the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan remains an enduring challenge within the realm of international relations. The Centre for Preventive Action (2023) has documented at least five instances of ceasefires overseen by the UN, namely the Karachi Agreement in 1949, the Tashkent Agreement in 1966, a ceasefire in 2003 following the Kargil War of 1999, the post-surgical strike ceasefire in 2018, and the cessation of hostilities subsequent to significant assaults on the Line of Control (LoC) in 2021. In the wake of the first ceasefire in 1947, the UN had proposed a referendum for the region, but the implementation of such a legally non-binding recommendation has proven difficult due to the conflict's sensitive nature.

Efforts to build confidence have been explored as potential avenues to ameliorate relations between the two nations. Yet, dialogues and preceding attempts have culminated only in what has been characterized as a "Cold Peace," which underscores the complexities entailed in securing substantive results from such initiatives (Haider & Azad, 2021). Consequently, tactical steps, including agreements on strategic resource aspects in Kashmir, have emerged as settlements that offer mutually beneficial solutions. A prime example is the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) of 1960, which amicably apportioned water usage between India and Pakistan, with the World Bank moderating the agreement to address hydrological technicalities and water distribution.

The IWT facilitated the return of both parties to the negotiation table after several prior rounds of bilateral discussions had failed, signifying a de-escalation of tension over vital water resources—one of the sticking points between the two nations (Clemens, 2005). This treaty is viewed as a foundational consensus, delivering mutual water access benefits, and signaling a milestone in averting a broader conflict, while also promoting adherence to the treaty amidst elevated political tensions. The treaty's limitations have been further underscored by the failure to address technical gaps and climate change vulnerability, necessitating a policy perspective to revisit its provisions.

Nevertheless, the IWT's role in achieving a lasting resolution has been impeded by several factors, including India's push for treaty amendments. Proposed infrastructural changes, such as dam constructions, are seen as a trigger for exacerbating existing tensions with Pakistan, potentially escalating to diplomatic rifts or military confrontations (Haines, 2013). Additionally, India must grapple with its internal infrastructure inadequacies, which could lead to inadvertent consequences like flooding in Kashmir. This, in turn, might provoke extremist factions, thereby compounding security concerns (Zawahri, 2009). Complications further arise due to ambiguities within the treaty's textual provisions related to tributary control, breeding persistent discord. Pakistan contends that India's actions in constructing water infrastructure within the permissive confines of the IWT's language undercut its water security, thereby bringing into question the treaty's efficacy and fairness (Pappas, 2011). Such disputes articulate the inherent challenge of abiding by a treaty that, while groundbreaking at its inception, continues to grapple with the complexities of inter-state hydraulic politics. This deeply entrenched mistrust infiltrates public perception, where it is often employed as a powerful catalyst for anti-Indian sentiment within Pakistan.

Following the establishment of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), tensions remained high in the Jammu and Kashmir region, signaling a need for additional peacemaking efforts. The Tashkent Declaration emerged as a response, crafted to bring about an end to the hostilities that flared during the 1965 India-Pakistan War. This agreement, signed on January 10, 1966, by Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and Pakistani President Mohammad Ayub Khan, achieved an immediate cessation of military actions. Stipulations of the Tashkent Declaration included the retraction of armed forces to their pre-conflict positions, a mutual exchange of prisoners of war, and steps toward restoring diplomatic relations. The declaration was underpinned by a joint

commitment to renounce aggression and pursue the peaceful resolution of disputes, fostering expectations for a subsequent period of peaceful coexistence in the region.

Despite the aspirational tenets of the Tashkent Declaration, enduring peace remained elusive, impeded by a multitude of factors. On the domestic fronts, public and governmental opinions diverged sharply, particularly in Pakistan, where belief in imminent victory over India had been pervasive during the conflict. Additionally, the declaration drew scrutiny in India for its lack of a formal no-war agreement, an element deemed crucial for long-term peace assurances. Compounding these concerns was the absence of any clause within the declaration that addressed Pakistan's involvement in supporting insurgent activities in Kashmir, an omission which left a critical component of regional stability unaddressed.

Strategically and diplomatically, the outcome of the conflict was viewed, especially within Pakistani circles, as a failure, given that their military advances into Kashmir had precipitated the war without yielding the intended result. Subsequently, even with the Tashkent Declaration in place, ministerial-level dialogues were plagued by unyielding differences over the Kashmir issue, rendering the talks ineffective. Such divergent positions underscored the complexities inherent in reconciling the two nations' stances on the deeply contentious issue of Kashmir.

In matters of territorial governance, the Karachi Agreement of 1949 and the Shimla Agreement of 1972 delineated the ceasefire boundary and the division of Kashmiri territory between India and Pakistan along the LoC, mitigating the potential for conflict escalation in the Jammu and Kashmir area (Majid et al., 2016). The Karachi Agreement of 1949 and the subsequent Shimla Agreement of 1972, while effecting a de facto territorial partition between India and Pakistan through demarcation lines, did not result in a holistic resolution of the conflicts. Unilaterally imposed territorial demarcations struggle to endure when the foundational issues of identity and politics continue to go unaddressed. Despite being perceived as progressive steps toward diminishing Indo-Pakistani frictions, the reality remains that tensions between the two nations are ongoing.

Continuing the search for peaceful resolutions, India and Pakistan signed the Lahore Declaration on February 21, 1999, with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at the helm. The declaration was aimed at the reduction of risks associated with accidental or unauthorized deployment of nuclear arms, the prevention of conflict—non-conventional and conventional—and the reinforcement of efforts to reach a pacific settlement over the Jammu and Kashmir issue (Shaheen, 2021). Both sides committed to undertake immediate and concrete steps toward reducing nuclear risks and intended to engage in dialogue concerning military doctrines, aiming to identify and implement confidence-building measures in both the nuclear and conventional military realms. The Lahore Declaration, despite its significant role in fostering an atmosphere of mutual trust between India and Pakistan<sup>1</sup>, was unable to ensure the longevity of improving relations due to the subsequent incursion by Pakistani forces into Kargil. This infiltration eventuated in the Kargil Conflict of 1999, marking a severe relapse in bilateral relations, and impeding the progress that had been achieved (Impiani, 2019).

After Lahore Declaration, a High-Level Conference (HLC) was instituted in Agra during the Agra Summit on July 15-16, 2001, under the facilitation of the World Bank, with the aim of charting a course for India and Pakistan to navigate their disputes. Despite concerted efforts to reconcile the Kashmir issue, the bilateral negotiations did not culminate in significant accords. India's stance was perceived as unbending, as it declined to concede to Pakistan's Kashmir-related propositions, maintaining its sovereignty claim over the entire Jammu and Kashmir region. Meanwhile, Pakistan's aspirations to gain recognition were unsuccessful, leading the discussions to terminate without fruitful outcomes (Schaffer and Mehta, 2001). At the meeting, both leaders, India's Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf, engaged to forge understanding

on perennial issues, including Kashmir's status and counter-terrorism measures. Though various propositions were put forth by both countries, including considerations for marked nuclear disarmament, the talks fell short of consensus, and the peacemaking endeavor ultimately did not yield resolution (Javaid and Ejaz, 2017). The following tabular summary illustrates the assortment of mediation efforts engaged by both India and Pakistan, alongside interventions by the UN, in the context of the Kashmir conflict:

Table 2. The Efforts for The Resolution of The India-Pakistan Conflict

No	Parties	Year	The Forms of Conflict Resolution.	Results
1	UN (Security Council)	1947	Referendum Options	As a result, the first ceasefire was implemented, but until 2023, the referendum for Kashmir has not been conducted.
2	The mediation was initiated by the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the Governor-General of Pakistan, Ghulam Muhammad.	1949	Karachi Agreement	This agreement divides the Kashmir region into two parts, with the demarcation line serving as the basis for both countries to claim the territories they control. However, the agreement did not result in a satisfactory resolution and instead escalated tensions between India and Pakistan in the later years.
3	The Tashkent Declaration was signed on January 10, 1966, by the Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and the President of Pakistan, Mohammad Ayyub Khan.	1966	Tashkent Declaration	This declaration marked the conclusion of the Second Kashmir War, which took place from August 1965 to September 1965. The declaration included an agreement for the exchange of prisoners of war, involving the release and repatriation of prisoners to their respective countries.
4	Moderated by World Bank.	1960	Indus Water Treaty (IWT)	The goal of this treaty was to regulate the use of water from the Indus River and several of its tributaries that traverse the territories of India and Pakistan. The agreement establishes a mechanism for fair and sustainable water allocation between the two countries, even though their relations were tense at that time, especially after the wars in 1947 and 1965.

5	Initiated by the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, and the President of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.	1972	Shimla Agreement	The Shimla Agreement concluded the India-Pakistan War in 1971. The agreement resulted in the independence of Bangladesh, which was formerly East Pakistan. Additionally, the agreement included provisions for the release of prisoners of war, withdrawal of forces, and the establishment of a control line known as the Line of Control (LoC) in the Kashmir region.
6	Initiated by India and Pakistan	1999	Lahore Declaration	It reaffirms the commitment of both countries to the vision of peace, stability, and mutual progress, as well as their full commitment to the Shimla Agreement and the UN Charter. It emphasizes nuclear disarmament and universal non-proliferation. However, the agreement faltered when the Kargil War broke out in May 1999, revealing the infiltration of Pakistani forces into the Indian-controlled territory of Kashmir."
7	A high-level meeting between the leaders of India and Pakistan. India was represented by Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, while Pakistan was directly represented by President Pervez Musharraf.	2001	Agra Summit	Several agreements were nearly reached regarding trade, prevention of nuclear war, and counterterrorism. However, the meeting failed to achieve concrete agreements due to differences in views on the future of Kashmir.

(Source: modified by author)

### Lesson Learned and Indonesia`s Portfolio in International Mediation

The absence of strong verification mechanisms has been a major shortcoming in previous accords between India and Pakistan. Agreements like the Lahore Declaration lacked monitoring systems to ensure neither side violates treaty clauses unilaterally. This enabled Pakistan's infiltration in Kargil despite the declaration's confidence-building steps. Robust verification procedures through impartial third parties are vital to guarantee compliance and build trust in the long-term. Additionally, past treaties failed to comprehensively account for technical complexities that may arise. The Indus Waters Treaty's ambiguities regarding tributary control opened the door for differing interpretations and disputes over hydroengineering projects. To

avoid this, water-sharing and other technical agreements must incorporate dynamic climate factors and delineate precise parameters through supplemental expert committees.

The narrow focus on resource allocation or territorial division in isolation could not resolve the Kashmir conflict's deep-rooted political and identity dimensions. Without reconciling their fundamental differences over Kashmir's governance and future, tactical agreements have proven ineffective. Holistic solutions that address political aspirations, human security, governance structures, identity rights, and historical injustices are imperative. Moreover, imposed territorial partitions along the LOC neglected participatory processes to ensure local legitimacy and disregarded long-term reconciliation. Sustainable peace requires centering historical truths, shared visions for the future, pluralistic identities, and participatory policymaking. In essence, existing gaps showcase that tactical, reactive solutions have fallen short. Instead, holistic frameworks factoring technical adaptabilities, participatory processes, reconciliation, and human security are vital to transform the deep-rooted India-Pakistan conflict.

The nexus between Indonesia and Pakistan extends beyond formal diplomatic interaction, flourishing into a profound emotional connection rooted in Islam, shared by the majority of their respective populations. According to the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre (RISSC), Indonesia and Pakistan are distinguished by having the largest Muslim populations in the world, with 86.7% and 96.5% respectively (Annur, 2023). Bonded by shared Islamic cultural norms and values, these nations have forged solid ties of friendship and unity. Their mutual engagement in platforms like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has further bolstered their alliance and collaborative efforts on a global level. The psychocultural ties between Indonesia and Pakistan—encompassing the psychological and cultural dimensions—enrich their interactions, elevating the relationship beyond the realm of traditional diplomatic exchanges.

Concurrent with its connection to Pakistan, Indonesia also has deep historical ties with India that date back to royal times and extend through Indonesia's own struggle for independence. In the 20th century, India was a key supporter of Indonesia's quest for sovereignty against Dutch colonial rule. Soekarno, the chief architect of Indonesia's independence, saw in India a comrade whose commitment to the values of independence and justice was unwavering. Following its independence in 1945, Indonesia forged strong diplomatic bonds with India, which have flourished in various sectors such as trade, education, and culture, further cementing their time-honored connection (Ilham, 2021).

In the dimensions of regional collaboration, India maintains a role as a pivotal trading partner to Indonesia. It is Indonesia's fourth largest export market and the twenty-first largest source of foreign investments. The ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) lays the groundwork for fostering robust trade relations between these nations (Antara News, 2023). On an economic note, as the leading global producer of Crude Palm Oil (CPO), Indonesia has a significant relationship with India, the largest CPO importer, thereby indirectly influencing India's domestic economy and food security framework (Kusnandar, 2023). This interplay not only reflects shared historical and cultural associations but also a web of economic interdependencies, providing Indonesia with a strategic opening to facilitate peace-building endeavors between India and Pakistan. The following entities have previously made offers to mediate the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan:

Table 3. Mediation Initiative for the Kashmir offered by Some Countries

No	Country	Mediation Initiative
1	China	China once offered itself as a mediator in the India-Pakistan conflict regarding Kashmir. However, India declined the offer due to concerns about China's track record of frequent conflicts with neighboring countries such as India, the Philippines, Japan, and Vietnam. Additionally, the fact that Sri Lanka lost the Hambantota Port due to debt entanglements with China further diminishes India's perceived benefits from engaging in negotiations involving China (Venkataraman, 2018).
2	Russia	In his address, Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared that Russia is consistently prepared to act as a mediator in the negotiation process for the resolution of the India-Pakistan conflict. While this intention was well-received by the Pakistani government, it was rebuffed by the Indian government, which perceives the India-Pakistan conflict as a bilateral issue that does not necessitate the involvement of a third party. Instead, India extended an offer for collaboration with Russia in the field of military technology (The Moscow Times, 2019).
3	United States of America	In his speech, President Donald Trump had offered the United States as a mediator in the India - Pakistan Conflict, "We are talking about Kashmir and the relation to what is going on with Pakistan and India, and if we can help, we certainly will be helping. We have been watching that and following it very, very closely." However, India did not give a positive response to the offer, through an interview with Al Jazeera media, Former Indian Foreign Secretary Lalit Mansingh stated, "The Government of India has repeatedly in the past clarified that it has a bilateral agreement with Pakistan and if there are any issues, they will be resolved bilaterally." (Hashim, 2020)
4	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia through its Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud stated that Saudi Arabia could help defuse the Pakistan - India Conflict if given the opportunity. Although having good diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, both India and Pakistan were unwilling to accept Saudi Arabia's offer without clear reasons (Anadolu Ajansi, 2021).

(Source: modified by author)

Previous attempts at third-party mediation between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir dispute have largely proven unsuccessful, despite efforts from nations such as China, Russia, the United States, and Saudi Arabia (refer to Table 3). India has consistently asserted that Kashmir is a bilateral matter between itself and Pakistan and has exhibited apprehension towards external intervention. India's hesitance to internationalize the conflict, its concerns regarding the impartiality of mediators, and the potential repercussions for its territorial sovereignty are probable underlying factors. Consequently, any mediation endeavors must be meticulously designed to sidestep the provocation of public sentiment on issues of sovereignty and national identity, which are highly contentious in the subcontinent.

In proposing to act as a mediator, Indonesia must navigate cautiously, bearing in mind the media dynamics and public opinion within both India and Pakistan to circumvent adverse

reactions. Previous mediation attempts have likely suffered from perceptions of political motivation. As a nation with amicable relations with both India and Pakistan, Indonesia might be able to launch new peace initiatives that stand a better chance of being well-received. Considering India's extensive exposure to media narratives regarding the Jammu and Kashmir conflict, any gesture construed as endorsing the region's independence could provoke backlash, as detailed by Kumari and Kohli (2017). Retrospectively, the Indian government's drive to shape a homogenized public opinion has been evident for decades, ranging from the portrayal of Pakistan as a terrorist haven in cinema to nationalist rhetoric in mainstream media and orchestrated social media campaigns (Bajwa et al., 2018). Therefore, India's reception of any third-party mediation, including offers from Indonesia, remains tepid.

Historically, the Indian state has invested heavily in strategies to foster a collective national consciousness and rigid perceptions of Pakistan among its citizens. Such a deep-seated ideological framework makes the prospect of external mediation particularly sensitive. Despite Indonesia's substantial diplomatic credibility, initiatives that might be construed as endorsing Pakistani territorial assertions or broader bilateral conflicts risk triggering Indian nationalist sentiments. Consequently, achieving meaningful resolution of the conflict requires an appreciation of these social and political intricacies and the profound underpinnings of tension in the subcontinent. Indonesia holds considerable promise as an impartial intermediary; nonetheless, achieving successful mediation will necessitate refined diplomatic skills to carefully handle issues pertaining to secession and national identity.

## CONCLUSION

The India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir remains an enduring rivalry rooted in contested histories, identities, and territorial claims. Despite numerous attempts at mediation by various parties, a comprehensive resolution has proven elusive thus far. Previous mediation efforts focused narrowly on ceasefires, resource allocation, and territorial division have not reconciled the fundamental differences in national perspectives that perpetuate mistrust and tensions. However, important lessons can be extracted - namely, the value of initially emphasizing mutually beneficial technical cooperation to reduce acute tensions, as exemplified by the Indus Waters Treaty. Furthermore, past interventions led by external third parties have often been difficult for India and Pakistan to accept, given the predominance of bilateral conceptualizations within South Asia. Looking ahead, Indonesia is uniquely positioned to play a mediating role, leveraging its social capital and influence within both countries. Potential avenues include facilitating dialogue on technical partnerships and exploring specialized administrative autonomy models informed by Indonesia's own experiences. While a challenging task, Indonesia retains credibility to make substantive contributions towards transforming the complex Kashmir conflict. Ultimately, sustainable progress necessitates a long-term approach focused on reconciliation, participatory policymaking, and human security. But incremental steps mediated sensitively by Indonesia offer promise for building trust and cooperation between India and Pakistan.

The protracted India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir remains an enduring predicament profoundly impacting regional affairs. Despite numerous mediation attempts, peace has proven elusive as differences in perspectives and identities perpetuate bilateral tensions. Valuable insights can nonetheless be gleaned from past experiences. Technical cooperation and mutually beneficial accords have greater potential to reduce tensions, while externally imposed settlements struggle for local legitimacy. As a state with credibility in both India and Pakistan, Indonesia is uniquely positioned to mediate sensitively, leveraging its social capital. Avenues

such as facilitating dialogue on technical partnerships and exploring specialized autonomy models informed by Indonesia's experiences may offer promise. While substantive conflict transformation requires a long-term focus on reconciliation and human security, incremental steps mediated prudently by Indonesia could instill cooperation and trust between India and Pakistan.

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