When Will Trump and Hillary Use the K-Word?

The crisis in Kashmir is starting to boil over — and the next U.S. president isn't going to be able to avoid intervening.

By **Sreeram Chaulia**

This year's grueling U.S. presidential campaign has had the occasion to discuss the Ku Klux Klan, Tim Kaine, and Don King, but not the K-word that every citizen of South Asia instantly knows by shorthand: Kashmir. In all likelihood, Americans will soon recognize this as a costly omission. Whoever wins the White House in November will likely be forced, early in his or her administration, to address a crisis that is quickly coming to a head — one involving jihadi terrorism, nuclear weapons, and military conflict, with the potential to unsettle American allies and interests across Asia.

Kashmir is the unresolved business of India's bloody partition in 1947, when the departing British colonialists carved out the new nation-state of Pakistan for the Muslims of the subcontinent. A large part of Muslim-majority Kashmir remained a part of India while Pakistan seized a smaller portion, leaving it as a major bone of contention and the site of multiple wars between the two countries. Seventy years have passed, but there is no end in sight to the India-Pakistan rivalry to reclaim the whole of the territory.

The root causes of the present crisis in Kashmir are political changes outside that restive region. Pakistan has always been a conventionally smaller power than India, but in recent years it has seen its neighbor's economic and diplomatic power grow rapidly, especially relative to its own stagnation. Pakistan has tried to stay relevant by using all means to up the ante against Indian control of Kashmir. In the past two months, there has been a sustained separatist upheaval in Indian-administered Kashmir, with street battles between alienated local Muslim youth who demand secession or integration with Pakistan and Indian security forces in riot-control gear. On Sept. 18, four heavily armed jihadi militants ambushed an Indian Army camp in the Kashmiri town of Uri, near the Line of Control separating the region between India and Pakistan, and killed 18 soldiers. It was the worst such cross-border incident in years.

Pakistan has tried to stay relevant by using all means to up the ante against Indian control of Kashmir.

An outraged Indian government rightly believes the civilian unrest and armed extremist attacks in Indian Kashmir are the handiwork of the Pakistani intelligence and military. Most of the world tends to agree. Islamabad's efforts to raise the "Kashmir problem" in international forums are mostly being met with shrugs and snubs. Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has appointed nearly two dozen emissaries to lobby world capitals to galvanize opposition to India's "occupation" of Kashmir and has also been ratcheting up mentions of the "K" word at the U.N. General Assembly — but to no avail. Most of the international community, barring some countries in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, is saying that if Kashmir matters at all, it is not as a freedom struggle but as a flash point for jihadis acting on Pakistan's behest.

But the U.S. presidential contenders seem not to be moved by the present crisis at all. India and Pakistan, governments and citizens alike, have been scrutinizing Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton and her Republican rival, Donald Trump, for signals of how they would fashion their South Asia policies. The Democratic Party's platform promises to maintain President Barack Obama's definite tilt toward India — "the world's largest democracy, a nation of great diversity, and an important Pacific power" — while continuing to apply pressure on Pakistan to "deny terrorists sanctuary" on its soil. The Republican Party's platform echoes similar sentiments to its counterpart by calling India a "geopolitical ally and a strategic trading partner" while wryly noting about Pakistan that a "working relationship is … necessary, though sometimes difficult." Republicans also call for "ridding the region of the Taliban and securing Pakistan's nuclear arsenal," highlighting American anxieties about Islamabad's status as a sponsor of jihadis and host to the world's fastest-growing nuclear weapons arsenal.

This is all part of a tendency by the U.S. government to view India and Pakistan primarily as potential partners that can serve American interests in Asia, with India considered the preferred alternative and Pakistan seen as a problem to be

managed. Washington favors abstracting from the Kashmir crisis in service of its own regional interests, rather than addressing it in specific terms. But to that extent, its approach to crisis diplomacy there has not kept pace with events. The United States still feigns a studied neutrality in Kashmir, when it should be actively intervening in a way to clear a path for its deepening alliance with India.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been leveraging the country's soft and hard power to isolate Pakistan on Kashmir. Yet, as the Uri attack demonstrated, marginalizing Pakistan on Kashmir is not enough to shut down Islamabad's jihadi proxies or mitigate civilian disenchantment in Indian-administered Kashmir. Moreover, Modi is sensitive enough to public opinion in India that he feels compelled to retaliate each time Pakistani-trained jihadis cross over the Line of Control and perpetrate brutal violence on Indian soldiers and civilians. Options including the "hot pursuit" of terrorists inside Pakistani territory and the assassinations of jihadi leaders are not off the table in New Delhi. All of which suggests the Kashmir crisis will get much hotter in the time ahead.

Already, the Indian prime minister has delivered a tit-for-tat blow to Islamabad by mounting a diplomatic and unmentioned covert action strategy to support anti-Pakistani separatists in the war-torn Pakistani province of Baluchistan. The Pakistani military establishment, for its part, has traumatic memories of the Indian military intervention that severed Pakistan in 1971 and birthed the new nation of Bangladesh. Modi's strategy of hitting Pakistan where it hurts, i.e., in regions where the state's control is shaky, is bound to have a reflex reaction in the form of intensified Pakistani-inspired protests and attacks in Indian Kashmir.

It would be an understatement that matters in Kashmir are coming to a head after a few years of quiet. A relatively weakened and cornered Pakistan, like North Korea, is also a more dangerous Pakistan. Something's going to give, and when it does, it won't just be Kashmir on the line. Another full-scale or quasi-war over Kashmir is sure to have spillover effects, as India and Pakistan are both nuclear-armed and share a tense international border, along which the populous provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Gujarat, and Rajasthan lie. Hopes of containing the Taliban in Afghanistan will be set back if Pakistan returns to total war with India, since Islamabad would view domination over Kabul via a resurgent Taliban as necessary for "strategic depth" with respect to India. Kashmir is a trigger for mayhem in South Asia.

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Clinton and Trump cannot ignore this tinderbox. The winner of their contest will have to find a way to tamp down the terrorism emanating from Pakistan that has made Kashmir a simmering hotbed. But assuaging the interrelated fears and concerns of both Pakistan and India will require sustained American strategy — not the diplomatic clichés devoid of substance that have long marked Washington's policy prescriptions.

What's clear is that Pakistan would like formal U.S. mediation on the territorial dispute in Kashmir, which is precisely what India will not countenance. Creative diplomats, however, can create confidence-building measures to help break that impasse. If a President Clinton or Trump uses civilian and military aid as a lever to pressure Pakistan to have its jihadi allies in Kashmir cease their attacks, Modi can then be persuaded to ease the massive Indian military presence that antagonizes civilians in Kashmir and can encourage more democratic administration in the restive region.

By pressing Pakistan to abandon its proxy war in Kashmir and reduce its hostility toward India, Obama's successor can meet America's bigger need for a strong Indian strategic partner that can counterbalance China in Asia. But that will first require that he or she diagnoses early on the true roots of the current Kashmir crisis and realizes that it is building up to explode.

Sreeram Chaulia is a professor and dean at the Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, in Sonipat, India. His most recent book, *Trumped: Emerging Powers in a Post-American World*, was published in 2019. He tweets on global economic and political developments at: @sreeramchaulia.

TAGS: INDIA, PAKISTAN, UNITED STATES

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("_load") } c[j] = function () { function m() { m.id = e; return c[j].apply(m, arguments) } var b, e = ++k; b = this && this != i ? this.i
|| 0 : 0; (a.s = a.s || []).push([e, b, arguments]); m.then = function (b, c, h) { var d = a.fh[e] = a.fh[e] || [], j = a.eh[e] = a.eh[e] || [], f =

a.ph[e] = a.ph[e] || []; b && d.push(b); c && j.push(c); h && f.push(h); return m }; return m }; var a = c[j]._ = {}; a.fh = {}; a.eh = {}; a.ph = {}; a.l = d ? d.replace(/^\/\//, (g == "https:" ? g : "http:") + "//") : d; a.p = { 0: +new Date }; a.P = function (b) { a.p[b] = new Date - a.p[0] }; a.w && b(); i.addEventListener ? i.addEventListener(l, b, !1) : i.attachEvent("on" + l, b); var q = function () { function b() { return ["<head></head><", c, ' onload="var d=', n, ";d.getElementsByTagName('head')[0].", d, "(d.", g, "('script')).", i, "=''", a.l, "'\"></", c, ">"].join("") } var c = "body", e = h[c]; if (!e) return setTimeout(q, 100); a.P(1); var d = "appendChild", g = "createElement", i = "src", k = h[g]("div"), l = k[d](h[g]("div")), f = h[g]("iframe"), n = "document", p; k.style.display = "none"; e.insertBefore(k, e.firstChild).id = o + "-" + j; f.frameBorder = "0"; f.id = o + "-frame-" + j; /MSIE[ ]+6/.test(navigator.userAgent) && (f[i] = "javascript:false"); f.allowTransparency = "true"; l[d](f); try { f.contentWindow[n].open() } catch (s) { a.domain = h.domain, p = "javascript:var d=" + n + ".open();d.domain='" + h.domain + "';", f[i] = p + "void(0);" } try { var r = f.contentWindow[n]; r.write(b()); r.close() } catch (t) { f[i] = p + 'd.write("' + b().replace(/"/g, String.fromCharCode(92) + '"') + '");d.close();' } a.P(2) }; a.l && q() })() }(); c[b].lv = "1"; return c[b] } var o = "lightboxjs", k = window[o] = g(o); k.require = g; k.modules = c }({}); /*]]>*/
window.lightboxlib = lightboxjs.require("lightboxlib", "//www.lightboxcdn.com/vendor/044b8435-d6a0-427d-af56-eec8f6ae795a/lightbox.js?mb=" + (new Date().getTime()));
mendeleyWebImporter = { downloadPdfs(e,t) { return this._call('downloadPdfs', [e,t]); }, open() { return this._call('open', []); }, setLoginToken(e) { return this._call('setLoginToken', [e]); }, _call(methodName, methodArgs) { const id = Math.random(); window.postMessage({ id, token: '0.6135109758440409', methodName, methodArgs }, 'https://foreignpolicy.com'); return new Promise(resolve => { const listener = window.addEventListener('message', event => { const data = event.data; if (typeof data !== 'object' || !('result' in data) || data.id !== id) return; window.removeEventListener('message', listener); resolve(data.result); }); }
} };

var _sf_async_config=_sf_async_config||
{};_sf_async_config.uid=62828;_sf_async_config.domain="foreignpolicy.com";_sf_async_config.useCanonical=!0;_sf_async_config.authors=google_tag_manager["GTM-KVBCHJC"].macro(28);_sf_async_config.authors=google_tag_manager["GTM-KVBCHJC"].macro(29);_cbq=window._cbq=window._cbq||[];_cbq.push(["_acct",google_tag_manager["GTM-KVBCHJC"].macro(30)]); (function(){var a=document.createElement("script");a.setAttribute("language","javascript");a.setAttribute("type","text/javascript");a.setAttr
();