The Limits of Influence: America's Role in Kashmir, Howard B. Schaffer, Brookings Institution Press, 2009, 0815703708, 9780815703709, 272 pages. This is the first systematic history of U.S. efforts to help forge a settlement between India and Pakistan on the "Kashmir question." Former ambassador Howard B. Schaffer draws on interviews with senior American officials, historical research, and his decades of experience in South Asia to explain and evaluate three generations of U.S. activities and policies toward the volatile region. "The Limits of Influence" chronicles America's views on --and involvement in --the long-standing struggle waged between India and Pakistan over Kashmir since their independence in 1947. He brings the discussion up to the current day, concluding with recommendations on the role Washington might usefully play in resolving the long-simmering dispute, thus reducing the dangerous tensions between two nuclear-armed archrivals in a region of great importance. His book is a fascinating piece of diplomatic history as well as an instructive look at the present and future of the Kashmir dilemma and its impact on vital U.S. concerns."Indian and Pakistani positions on the terms of a settlement have grown closer over the past few years. A quiet shove by Washington may be more likely than before to help push the two governments over the elusive finish line they have never been able to cross on their own. And the critical part Pakistan plays in the war on terrorism has added to the importance of a Kashmir settlement to major American interests in South Asia and beyond...." --From the Introduction.

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Engaging India Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb, Strobe Talbott, 2006, Business & Economics, 270 pages. Rich with human detail and penetrating analysis, this insider account chronicles the remarkable negotiations between the United States and India after three nuclear devices.

Foreign Relations of the United States, United States. Dept. of State, 1866, Political Science.

The Eagle and the Peacock U.S. Foreign Policy Toward India Since Independence, M. Srinivas Chary, 1995, History, 194 pages. A diplomatic history of American foreign policy toward India since 1947 that analyzes the forces of the Cold War in setting policy both between and within the two nations.

This is the first systematic history of U.S. efforts to help forge a settlement between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir question. Former ambassador Howard B. Schaffer draws on interviews with senior American officials, historical research, and his decades of experience in South Asia to explain and evaluate three generations of U.S. activities and policies toward the volatile region. "The Limits of Influence" chronicles America's views on-and involvement in-the long-standing struggle waged between India and Pakistan over Kashmir since their independence in 1947. He brings the discussion up to the current day, concluding with recommendations on the role Washington might usefully play in resolving the long-simmering dispute, thus reducing the dangerous tensions between two nuclear-armed archrivals in a region of great importance. His book is a fascinating piece of diplomatic history as well as an instructive look at the present and future of the Kashmir dilemma and its impact on vital U.S. concerns.

Schaffer seems to sincerely believe that United States can fashion its policies based on its interests; but other countries should fashion theirs based on principles! Unfortunately interest driven policy often produces tactical wins and strategic losses. Schaffer is quiet about acknowledging the strategic failure of US policy toward Pakistan; and the threat this has created for US and South Asia. Partition did not create a separate nation for all muslims! After partition, India continued to remain home to a large population of Muslims spread throughout India.

Pakistan is going back in time with Military dictators usurping power from weak civilian governments; feudal lords dominating economic assets; fundamentalists hijacking a peaceful religion to deny equality to women; education to young and membership in the Ulema to minority sects amongst Muslims. India, on the other hand, has a stable and institutionalized democracy; civil liberties; rule of law; modern education; and religious tolerance.

In lives lost, wars spawned, and reputations ruined, the territorial dispute over Kashmir surely ranks near the top of all the world's intractable conflicts. Schaffer, a retired U.S. ambassador with decades of experience in South Asia, has written an exemplary account of the United States' efforts over 60 years to settle, or at least manage, this problem. From 1948 to 1989, U.S. diplomacy fluctuated between engagement and quiescence. But in 1989, the outbreak of a serious insurgency in the Kashmir Valley—which has drawn or nearly drawn the nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan into open conflict on several occasions-made further U.S. disengagement untenable. Beginning with the presidency of George H. W. Bush, crisis management, rather than conflict resolution, became the chief challenge for U.S. diplomacy. As the title of this book suggests, however, even high-level U.S. engagement has brought only modest results. Nonetheless, Schaffer argues that the time is right for a fresh U.S. initiative to help resolve the Kashmir dispute, especially since the views of India and Pakistan on the terms of a potential settlement have grown closer. U.S. President Barack Obama probably believes he already has a full plate of foreign policy problems. But were he to succeed where 11 predecessors have failed, his Nobel Peace Prize would surely take on added luster.
Howard Schaffer's outstanding book is must reading not only for those interested in the long-standing dispute between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir region, but also for anyone interested in understanding the current conflicts in Central Asia. Although the book concentrates on the roles played by the United States over decades in seeking a solution for Kashmir, at the same time it provides a detailed outline of that conflict from its genesis to its current impact on geopolitics in Asia. With extensive experience as a Foreign Service officer in South Asia, culminating in his tour as ambassador to Bangladesh in the 1980s, Schaffer is among the few who have both the on-the-ground experience and broader Washington perspective to cover this topic thoroughly.

The Kashmir problem began with the 1947 partition of British India into the independent states of India and Pakistan, a process that cost perhaps a million lives and dislocated millions more. The Hindu maharaja of largely-Muslim Kashmir dithered when faced with the decision of which country to join, and within months an uprising by Kashmiri Muslim veterans of the old British Indian army was underway, soon joined by tribal fighters from Pakistan. India responded to the maharaja's appeal for help by insisting it would come to his aid only if Kashmir were part of India. As conflict continued, both sides called upon the infant United Nations to resolved the dispute, beginning the long, sad tale of foreign involvement. By 1949 Kashmir was in essence divided, the western and northern part occupied by Pakistan, the rest under Indian control.

During the Cold War years, Kashmir became one more venue for great power competition. The U.S. enlisted Pakistan's participation in the ring of alliances designed to contain the Soviet Union. The latter, of course, then provided India with military assistance and tried with limited success to bring it within the Soviet orbit. But when Pakistan called on its alliance partners for support on Kashmir, U.S. equivocation became the first of a series of what Pakistanis took to be its abandonment by an ally. That experience, repeated over the ensuing decades, is an important element in Pakistan's reluctance to fully commit to the current U.S. effort to bring stability to Afghanistan.

Now in its sixth decade, the Kashmir conflict has once again emerged as a significant, albeit little noticed in public discussion, obstacle to achieving regional stability. In the final chapters of The Limits of Influence Schaffer underscores this point with a detailed description of the Bush administration's frustrations in balancing its relationships with India and Pakistan as it launched the effort to expel the Taliban regime from Kabul in 2001. For it to support that effort Pakistan insisted on distinguishing the "War on Terror," aimed at the Taliban and al Qaeda, from what it considers to be the freedom fighters seeking autonomy for Kashmir. India, on the other hand, insisted on including what it considers terrorist actions on its territory in that "war."

Schaffer's detailed account of events is buttressed by extensive footnotes, drawing heavily on the record of official documents for the early decades of the dispute, and relying on interviews with current and former officials for more recent periods for which the official record has yet to be released.

The Limits of Influence paints a vivid picture of the difficulty even the most powerful country has in controlling events in other countries whose essential national interests are at stake. There is unlikely to be a better textbook example of such a situation than that offered to readers by Howard Schaffer.

Michael W. Cotter is Publisher of American Diplomacy. He served as U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan, 1995-98. A career Foreign Service Officer, he had prior assignments to Chile, Zaire, Turkey, Ecuador, Bolivia, and South Vietnam in a career spanning more than 30 years. He currently lives near Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where he lectures and writes on international issues.

"Indian and Pakistani positions on the terms of a settlement have grown closer over the past few years. A quiet shove by Washington may be more likely than before to help push the two governments over the elusive finish line they have never been able to cross on their own. And the
Howard B. Schaffer served in the U.S. Foreign Service for thirty-six years, culminating with a term as ambassador to Bangladesh. He currently teaches at Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service, where he is director of studies at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy. He is the author of Chester Bowles: New Dealer in the Cold War (Harvard, 1993) and Ellsworth Bunker: Global Troubleshooter, Vietnam Hawk (University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Before the 1947 partition of India, few Americans knew or cared about the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Tucked away in the high western Himalayas, Kashmir, as it was commonly called, was an amalgam of territories widely varied in language, culture, religion, ethnicity, and economic development. Its disparate regions had been cobbled together by the dynastic ambitions of the state's rulers abetted by British imperial design. In the first half of the nineteenth century, these maharajas, Hindus of the Dogra ethnic group based in the Jammu area of the state, had with British backing created one of the largest states in Britain's Indian empire. Situated along India's border with China, touching Afghanistan, and close to the Central Asian regions of Czarist Russia and, later, the Soviet Union, it was also one of the most strategically placed.

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Since gaining independence in 1947 India and Pakistan have clashed repeatedly over Kashmir, raising fears within the international community of a larger war, perhaps even a nuclear flashpoint. In The Limits of Influence veteran U.S. diplomat Howard B. Schaffer illuminates the U.S. view of the conflict and gives an insider's account of Washington's efforts over the last thirty years to forge a settlement.

Drawing on interviews with senior American officials, archival research, and decades of personal experience in South Asia, Schaffer examines three generations of U.S. policy, beginning from 1948 when fighting erupted in Kashmir. He traces Washington's interventions between 1948 and 1963 to resolve the dispute; efforts which culminated in a major initiative to promote negotiations between India and Pakistan in the wake of the Sino-Indian war of 1962. The negotiations failed, generating much ill-will in the region. For the next fifteen years U.S. policymakers took a hands-off approach, but since 1989 when the conflict in the Valley entered a new and violent phase, Washington renewed its efforts to help defuse the crisis.

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