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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-57470

Title: The Postcolonial Faultlines of a Composite State: History, Identity, and the Politics of Fragmentation of Kashmir,

Recommendation:
Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓,		
Techn. Quality		✓,		
Clarity	✓,			
Significance	✓,			

Reviewer Name: Abdul Haseeb Mir

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The manuscript titled "**The Postcolonial Faultlines of a Composite State: History, Identity, and the Politics of Fragmentation of Kashmir**" offers a sophisticated and historically grounded critique of the political architecture of Jammu and Kashmir. The paper's primary academic merit lies in its conceptualization of the "composite state" not as a stable administrative unit, but as a precarious assembly of divergent regional memories and uneven legitimacies forged in the crucible of the 1947 transition. By moving beyond the conventional state-centric or binary (India vs. Pakistan) narratives, the author successfully highlights the internal fractures—the "faultlines"—that have historically dictated the region's susceptibility to fragmentation.

The study's theoretical strength is its use of an interpretive approach to trace how the simultaneity of invasion, mass violence, and hurried accession produced a political entity marked by "postcolonial anxiety." The author expertly deconstructs the interplay between external geopolitical pressures and internal regional identities (Kashmir Valley, Jammu, and Ladakh), arguing persuasively that the state's internal dynamics are as critical to the "Kashmir question" as the transnational dispute. The engagement with the concept of "uneven legitimacy" provides a vital lens through which to understand the varied responses of different sub-regions to central authority and external influences.

However, while the paper is intellectually rigorous, it would benefit from a deeper engagement with modern political geography and the "spatiality of conflict." While the historical genealogy is excellent, the paper occasionally remains abstract. Strengthening the analysis of specific institutional

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mechanisms—such as the evolution of Article 370 or the impact of the 2019 Reorganisation Act—within the context of these "faultlines" would ground the theoretical claims in contemporary political reality. Additionally, the role of Pakistan is mentioned as an external influence, but the "triangular" relationship between regional aspirants, the central state, and the external neighbor could be more explicitly theorized using models of **"Ethnic Outbidding"** or **"Transborder Identity Politics."** Overall, the manuscript is a significant contribution to South Asian studies, offering a nuanced perspective on the complexity of composite states.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Deepen the theoretical framework by integrating **Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities"** or **Partha Chatterjee's "The Nation and its Fragments"** to explain why a "composite" identity failed to consolidate into a singular national or sub-national sentiment.
- Strengthen the discussion on the "Politics of Fragmentation" by providing a more granular analysis of the **Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh triad**; specifically, discuss how the specific socio-political aspirations of Ladakh (seeking UT status) or Jammu (demanding regional parity) served as early indicators of the eventual structural fragmentation.
- Incorporate a more critical analysis of the **1947 "Hurried Accession"** (line 11); discuss the specific "Instrument of Accession" as a legal-political document that institutionalized the "composite" nature while simultaneously leaving the "faultlines" unresolved.
- Expand the section on **"Pakistan's Role"** (line 15); move beyond the narrative of "invasion" to analyze how the ideological project of Pakistan (Two-Nation Theory) specifically targeted and aggravated the internal religious and regional faultlines of the composite state.
- Address the **"Spatiality of Conflict"**; analyze how the physical geography and the Line of Control (LoC) transformed these historical faultlines into "frozen" political identities that limit the possibility of a "composite" future.
- In the Introduction (lines 20-25), provide a clearer definition of the **"Composite State" framework**; distinguish it from "Federalism" or "Confederation" to clarify the unique structural vulnerability the author is investigating.
- Critically examine the **"2019 Reorganisation Act"** (or similar contemporary shifts) within the historical trajectory; discuss whether these recent developments represent a "resolution" or an "exacerbation" of the historical faultlines described in the text.

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- Strengthen the **Literature Review** (lines 318-328) by engaging with contemporary scholars of "Critical Border Studies" or "Conflict Geography" to provide a more diverse academic context for the Kashmir dispute.
- Clarify the "**Historically Grounded Interpretive Approach**" (line 12); explicitly state what archival sources, memoirs, or official documents were prioritized to build the "historical memory" narrative.
- Improve the transition between the "Violent Transition of 1947" and the "Contemporary Fragmentation" sections; explain the "critical junctures" (e.g., 1953, 1987) that allowed latent faultlines to erupt into active political crises.
- Discuss the role of "**Regional Memories**" (line 14) with more empirical depth; for example, contrast the "memory of the 1947 tribal invasion" in the Valley versus its perception in the Poonch/Mirpur regions to illustrate the "divergence" mentioned.
- Ensure that the **Conclusion** (line 315) offers a more prescriptive scholarly outlook; based on the analysis of these faultlines, what are the specific "layered histories" that must be addressed to construct a "political order that accommodates diversity"?
- Verify the consistency of the **Bibliography**; ensure that all foundational authors cited in the text (e.g., Zutshi, Snedden) are formatted uniformly according to the journal's required style (APA, Harvard, or Chicago).
- Incorporate a section on "**Methodological Reflexivity**," acknowledging the challenges of writing about regional "memories" and "legitimacies" in a highly polarized and securitized information environment.

Recommendation

Recommendation: Recommended for publication with minor revision.

The article "The Postcolonial Faultlines of a Composite State" is an exceptionally well-crafted piece of historical and political analysis. It successfully shifts the analytical focus from external territoriality to internal structural legitimacy, providing a much-needed depth to the study of Jammu and Kashmir. By addressing the minor suggestions regarding the deepening of regional case studies and the integration of contemporary political shifts, the author will provide a seminal text that challenges simplified narratives of the region and offers a robust framework for understanding the complexities of postcolonial state formation.