

Shoaib Laghari

Pol S 203

Paper 1

Tensions over Kashmir

What better way to introduce your first political paper in college than a cheesy, but true, proverb: each time history repeats itself, the price goes up. We see this truth come to an unfortunate fruition in many parts of the world today, but one of the most pressing is the issue over Jammu and Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Jammu and Kashmir, often referred to as Kashmir (abbreviated J&K), is a disputed territory that lies in the northern corner between India and Pakistan.¹ As soon as India and Pakistan had gained independence from the British in 1947, the issue of Kashmir was created due to the lack of mutually understood international borders.² Since then, India and Pakistan have fought multiple wars over the territory, and still quarrel at the UN-mandated Line of Control to this day.³ To the people of Kashmir, this has meant thousands of lives lost, many of whom were citizens, with more than 50,000 war widows, 100,000 orphans, and millions of internally displaced refugees resulting from the conflict.⁴ This paper argues that although India and Pakistan have gone to war on numerous occasions in the past, changing interests, interactions, and institutions will prevent them from fighting another large-scale war in the 21st century. To do this, I briefly summarize why failed crisis bargaining concluded to war in 1947, 1965, and 1999, then I explain concurrently why the issues causing these conflicts do not assume that another large-scale war must occur to resolve this dispute.

¹ Bose, "Kashmir: Roots of Conflict," 2.

² Ibid.

³ Harshe, "Peace Through Development Cooperation," 1.

⁴ Harshe, "Peace Through Development Cooperation," 10.

First, I must admit, this paper will be a dreadful read for the structural realist. Realism, as given by Thucydides, means that “the strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must.” In other words, structural realists summarize international relations as an effect of relational powers, where states are the primary actors and seek security, and those with greater military power will reap the benefits of others’ downfall.⁵ Those who adhere to these beliefs find no value in the study and analysis of changing interests, interactions, and institutions (which, unfortunately, my paper is based on). That is because, as realism goes, the only interest to take into account is security, the only interactions are those of coercion, and the only institutions that exist are the ones that don’t matter. Now, I will say, this is a viable school of thought—it stands to explain many historical and current events. In fact, the 1947 Indo-Pakistani War can be explained quite well by realism and war for security purposes. However, as both India and Pakistan have progressed through the 20th century, more factors have come into play and shown significant effects on their international relations than just security. If realism were the case, we would see a great conflict every time the LOC is crossed by one of the nations, yet this doesn’t happen, as this paper will discuss. Moreover, international institutions have shown to reduce the tensions between India and Pakistan, by mandating a ceasefire, encouraging talks of peaceful negotiation, and so on. While realism has its place in IR study, the issue of Kashmir and its complexities are overlooked from a realist perspective, which is why my thesis rejects the foundation of structural realism and places great significance on changing interests, interactions, and institutions.

To begin, a critical catalyst of the 1947 Indo-Pakistani War, sometimes known as the First Kashmir War, was the importance of territory and the belief that Kashmir was indivisible.

⁵ Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, “World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions,” xxxii.

At the time, India and Pakistan had just gained independence, and two months later they had committed to a year-long war over Kashmir. The reason why is because territory was so valuable at the time—it offered wealth, military advantage, and cultural unity.⁶ Because it was the source of the Indus river's water system, which connected the five major rivers of Punjab, both states saw great agricultural value in gaining control of Kashmir.⁷ Additionally, Kashmir lies at the intersection of India, Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, and Russia, giving it great strategic value.⁸ However, India and Pakistan refused to share its resources. Instead, both states chose to make possession over the entire state of Kashmir the cornerstone of their state identities.⁹ India believed that their identity as an inclusive, secular state depended on Kashmir being a part of its people, while Pakistan felt it was only fair for the Muslim-majority people of Kashmir to belong to the Muslim-majority state of Pakistan.¹⁰ Here, crisis bargaining inevitably led to war because no negotiation could offer a viable solution to accommodate both countries. For these reasons, the First Kashmir war was fought between India and Pakistan.

However, since 1945, empirical studies of world politics have shown the declining role of territory in causing interstate conflicts.¹¹ Whereas control of territory used to be valuable for agricultural purposes and creation of wealth, technological advances have weakened this link.¹² In 1947, both India and Pakistan were newborn states. Today, globalization and international trade have propelled their economies to multi-trillion-dollar values. Even trade between India and Pakistan increased steadily throughout the 20th century, providing greater incentive for both

⁶ Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, "World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions," 94.

⁷ Harshe, "Peace Through Development Cooperation," 6.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bose, "Kashmir: Roots of Conflict," 8.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, "World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions," 131.

¹² Ibid.

states to avoid war.¹³ Even when the two don't trade directly with each other, both are involved in international trade links between mutual partners, such as the US, Dubai, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and more.¹⁴ War would disrupt this trading efficiency, and neither states are willing to give that up, especially for the relatively lower agricultural value of Kashmir. At this point, the development agendas of India and Pakistan no longer prioritize winning over Kashmir, but reducing illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, among other social issues.¹⁵ Their main interests have now shifted away from territory, towards state development through international trade, and thus the actions taken on behalf of their interests will be to avoid war, not provoke it. These new interests have also led the way to answering the issue of indivisibility in Kashmir, which in fact may not be so indivisible after all. Although neither state is willing to let the other have the complete territory, negotiations for peaceful solutions have taken place since 2004 to consider possible solutions.¹⁶ These may even conclude in Kashmiri self-determination, based on appreciating democratic rights and institutions to the people of J&K.¹⁷

With the First Kashmir War ending in 1949, India and Pakistan sustained 16 years of peace (at least non-direct state conflict) until the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. This conflict started after Pakistan's Operation Gibraltar infiltrated J&k in an attempt to prepare an insurgency against Indian rule, in which India retaliated with a full-scale military attack.¹⁸ Lasting only 17 days, war occurred because of incomplete information in regards to the actors relative military strength (capabilities) and will to act (resolve).¹⁹ Incomplete information was a prevalent issue between India and Pakistan because the two actors remained ambiguous concerning each other's

¹³ Harshe, "Peace Through Development Cooperation," 11.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Harshe, "Peace Through Development Cooperation," 12.

¹⁶ Harshe, "Peace Through Development Cooperation," 13.

¹⁷ Bose, "Kashmir: Roots of Conflict," 7.

¹⁸ Ganguly, "Conflict Unending," 7.

¹⁹ Ibid.

military capability and power.²⁰ In other words, they couldn't tell one another what they were capable of, since that information could have been valuable to the other side in initiating attacks either now or later. Pakistan, in this case, had been falsely optimistic on India's unwillingness to take direct military action in response to their infiltration, nor were they expecting the thousands of hostilities on both sides which occurred from the conflict.²¹ Here, failed crisis bargaining led to war because of Pakistan's miscalculations in their risk return tradeoff, thinking they could carry out Operation Gibraltar without severe consequences.

However, the costs of conflict between India and Pakistan are much higher today than they were in 1965, entirely changing the nature of their interactions. This is because since 1998, Pakistan and India have become the first nuclear powers to engage in direct conflict.²² Nuclear capabilities are one of the most effective deterrents due to their huge disincentive cost for engaging in conflict.²³ As a reminder, only two nuclear bombs have ever been used in history, on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for a death count of over 120,000, resulting in the total destruction of each city alongside environmental degradation. It is understood by both India and Pakistan tensions over Kashmir cannot lead to full-scale war, because each has sufficient information about the other's capabilities to avoid entertaining the idea of conflict. Any attempts at triggering warfare would result in mutually assured destruction, that is, if one side starts losing, they will use their nuclear powers on the other and will find in retaliation a nuclear attack from the opponent.²⁴ That is why events such as firing exchanged at the Line of Control and Pakistani

²⁰ Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, "World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions," 107.

²¹ Ganguly, "Conflict Unending," 7.

²² Herrera, "Could Conflict Lead to Nuclear War?"

²³ Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, "World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions," 132.

²⁴ Ibid.

missiles shooting down Indian helicopters will not lead to full-scale war.²⁵ The costs of war due to nuclear capabilities have made entering war and prevailing worthless between the two.

Yet, just after nuclear capabilities had been revealed, India and Pakistan had gone to war once more in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1999. This conflict, also known as the Kargil War, happened after Pakistani soldiers crossed the LOC into Indian territory disguised as Kashmiri militants.²⁶ Unlike the last infiltration in 1965, one reason why Pakistan might have re-attempted this insurgency-causing infiltration is because of the unbalanced economic growth that had occurred between these two states, favoring India.²⁷ In this situation, Pakistan faced commitment problems, namely, uncertainty if India would uphold its recent pacificism once it had outpaced Pakistan's military standards.²⁸ Additionally, if this power led to the Indian acquisition of Kashmir, the wealth and military advantage for India would have meant that direct war with Pakistan was statistically preferable.²⁹ Pakistan, submerged in these feared, launched this preventive war, the Kargil War, because if conflict was to escalate, they had a better chance of victory now than later.

So, why didn't this conflict lead to nuclear war, mutually assured destruction, and the like? Almost immediately, Pakistan faced international diplomatic opposition for their actions, forcing Pakistani forces to withdraw from war in just 2 months.³⁰ International opposition signaled to Pakistan that conflict with India was far too dangerous for both states and their involved partners. Since 1945, these international actors (such as the United Nations) had grown

²⁵ Tribune, "Pakistan Shoots down Indian Drone"

²⁶ Harshe, "Peace Through Development Cooperation," 12.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, "World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions," 118.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Harshe, "Peace Through Development Cooperation," 12.

in emergence and assertiveness, proving valuable in promoting interstate peace and security.³¹ Since states cannot solve commitment problems on their own, third party intermediaries have helped resolve these disputes by setting rules and monitoring agreements, ensuring compliance from both parties.³² To deal with the commitment problems of Pakistan, international norm-setting against nuclear weapons encouraged India to develop their own “No First Use” doctrine in 1999, meaning India would only utilize their nuclear capabilities in response to a nuclear attack.³³ This relieved Pakistan from the threat of a future nuclear first-strike advantage posed by India, allowing the two states to enter a general state of peace that has held to this day.

As I reflect on this “general state of peace,” I find it necessary to clarify that this by no means implies that the conflict over Kashmir has been resolved. Border skirmishes occur to this day, unconstitutional laws are passed by both nations, and Kashmir is being only further damaged and oppressed, as seen recently by the lifting of India’s constitutional provision under Article 370. Instead, this paper should serve as an explanation for why failed crisis bargaining has historically led to war between India and Pakistan, while further analyzing the changing interests, interactions, and institutions of the modern world to explain that these two states will not enter another large-scale war. Unfortunately, we can no longer afford for history to repeat itself, and hopefully both India and Pakistan have well realized that. From here, resolving this conflict is in the hands of Indian and Pakistani policy makers. Understanding war is no longer an option for resolution, both states must find that only cooperation and diplomacy will resolve these tensions, otherwise only more Kashmiri lives will be lost.

³¹ Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, “World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions,” 134.

³² Ibid.

³³ Herrera, “Could Conflict Lead to Nuclear War?”

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