

South Asia's Security Dilemma: How India and Pakistan Lost Policy Flexibility in the Kashmir Conflict

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ABSTRACT. The South Asian subcontinent has seen many conflicts and wars over Kashmir, and Kashmir is at the heart of the conflict between India and Pakistan. Historically, India has gained the upper hand in many conflicts. However, both sides remain in a "security dilemma." This security dilemma is not limited to the military, but is an all-encompassing "security dilemma." Currently, such as territorial conflicts, security challenges, energy shortages, resource scarcity, arms race, and geopolitical wrangling has led to India-Pakistan relations remaining rife with suspicion and mistrust. The most difficult issues can be resolved if the two countries review and revise their policies and postures and make progress in building bilateral trust. This paper will examine the impact of the Kashmir conflict on the security dilemma between India and Pakistan and will discuss how both sides have lost flexibility in the security dilemma, which, by default, demands further studies on the subject.

1 Introduction

Kashmir, as the core of the conflict and problem between India and Pakistan, has long curbed the relationship and development between the two countries. And security dilemma theory, as one of the most famous concepts in international relations literature [1], can provide a special perspective for analyzing the Kashmir issue. And it can provide some reference for the analysis of the conflict between India and Pakistan. This paper will use the security dilemma theory to analyze how both sides have lost policy flexibility in the Kashmir conflict. An exploration of the following questions is the main focus of this paper. Why use the security dilemma theory? What does the historical conflict between India and Pakistan bring to the dilemma? Why do these two countries still prefer military rivalry to political and economic cooperation? What can we learn from using the security dilemma theory to analyze the problems between these two countries?

To analyze each question, this paper is divided into three parts, the first part introduces the security dilemma theory, the second part presents the historical background of the conflict between India and Pakistan, and the third part will use the security dilemma theory to analyze why these two countries prefer military competition over political and economic cooperation between them.

2 The theory and source of the Security Dilemma

The term "security dilemma" was first introduced in the work of Professor John H. Herz of the City University of

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New York[2]. Since then, the term "security dilemma" has been widely used in the study of international relations [3]. When a state adopts some security strategies to ensure its security, the security of its neighbors is not guaranteed. To compensate for its compromised security, the neighboring state also decides to adopt some corresponding security strategies. These counter-strategies in turn undermine the original security strategy of the state, making its security insecure. Both sides then enter a "security dilemma". Until one side gains a significant security advantage (e.g., strategic nuclear weapons or a ballistic missile defense system that can guarantee its security). The country can escape the security dilemma. The infinite repetition of the game between the two sides after entering the security dilemma is similar to a prisoner's dilemma. The anarchy in which both sides find themselves without the intervention of a more powerful force prevents them from escaping the security dilemma. Precisely because of the mistrust between the two sides, it leads to the necessity of making the most malicious predictions about each other's intentions and actions, and the actions of both sides cause this insecurity to be amplified. In this cycle, the perception of insecurity stems from the gap between the two sides (e.g., in armaments or population), and this perception of insecurity allows the psychological impact to be amplified. Even if the gap between the two sides is the source of the security dilemma, the impact of this perception of insecurity is further amplified, which in turn determines whether the security dilemma will intensify or soothe. Such uncertain perceptions can make both sides in the dilemma believe that the other side will develop security at the expense of their security, thus making misunderstandings deepen[4]. According to Mearsheimer, the degree of fear between states determines the likelihood

of war and the intensity of security competition between them; the deeper the fear, the stronger the security competition, and the greater the likelihood of war. The logic is clear at a glance: the state that feels fear is particularly desperate to find a way to improve its security, and it tends to use dangerous policies to achieve that end." [1].

In short, the security dilemma depends on perceptions between the two sides and not objectively on the gap between them [5]. The extent of the security dilemma depends on how both sides perceive and act on it. When the interests of both sides conflict with each other, the uncertainty of the other side's intentions and actions makes it necessary for both sides to choose strategies that increase their security, and this choice inevitably leads to the outbreak of arms races, alliances, confrontations, and even conflicts [3].

3 The historical background of the India-Pakistan geopolitical conflict

In 1947, on the eve of the British colonialists' withdrawal from South Asia, they proposed the "Mountbatten Plan", a "partition and rule" for India and Pakistan, which was based on the principle of majority rule. According to the principle of majority decision, the Hindu-majority areas were to be given to India and the Muslim-majority areas were to be given to Pakistan. Each state could remain independent or join either India or Pakistan at its discretion according to the principle of the decision of the princely states [6]. The unique composition of Kashmir (the majority of the population of Kashmir is Muslim, but the rulers of the Turkish states are Hindus) has led to numerous armed conflicts and wars between India and Pakistan. Both sides consider Kashmir to be a core territorial area of great importance. For Pakistan, Kashmir is particularly critical, as it provides an effective tool for strengthening its identity and, if lost, its strategic integrity and geopolitical security are greatly constrained. On the issue of Kashmir, Pakistan has always shown an unyielding resolve [7].

By concentrating its forces and increasing the size of its deployment, India's military superiority in Kashmir eventually allowed the Indian government to take the initiative. The Pakistani government had to ask for help from Britain and the United States, requesting them to appeal to the UN to intervene and plan an unconditional ceasefire. On April 21, 1948, the UN adopted a resolution calling for a ceasefire and preparing for a referendum in Kashmir. The resolution also established the UN India-Pakistan Commission to undertake and supervise the Kashmir referendum [8]. The Karachi Agreement was signed after several rounds of negotiations. India controlled two-thirds of Kashmir and three-quarters of its population, while Pakistan controlled one-third of Kashmir and one-quarter of its population. This war showed that although the Pakistani side had a strong determination to gain Kashmir, the power gap forced it to maintain the status quo.

The conflict between the two sides intensified again in the mid-1950s and mid-1960s, and after the Sino-Indian

conflict in 1962, the Pakistani side believed that the Indian military no longer had the strength and confidence to protect Kashmir. A second war broke out on September 1, 1965, and as Pakistan's military capability was unable to meet its desired goals, the strategy again turned negative, culminating in the signing of the Tashkent Declaration after the UN intervened. It was agreed that the ceasefire line would be withdrawn and a peaceful settlement would be reached. The conflict further expanded after the two wars, and the intervention of external factors, represented by the UN, further complicated the problem.

The third Indo-Pakistani war broke out in 1971 when India sent troops to dismember East Pakistan and the two sides again clashed in Kashmir. India gained a significant advantage in the east in this war and declared a ceasefire on December 17. The Pakistani side accepted the truce and signed the Simla Agreement the following year, agreeing on a line of control between the two sides in Kashmir. No major war broke out between India and Pakistan after that, but skirmishes continued while both sides used nuclear weapons as one means of deterrence. To this day, both sides continue to deploy large numbers of troops and establish posts, bases, or camps near the ceasefire line in response to each other's military operations.

4 Analysis of the Kashmir Conflict to Explore the Security Dilemma between India and Pakistan

Kashmir is at the heart of the India-Pakistan conflict. Its demographic composition, religion, and language are intricate and complex. In terms of Kashmir's population composition, it is mainly composed of Muslims, who make up 78 percent of the population, Hindus and Sikhs, and Buddhists, who make up 20 percent. But even among the Muslims who dominate the population, there are huge differences in the economy, culture, and common language. "They are divided first of all by geography." Many Muslims in the Jammu region live in the mountains at an altitude of about 5,000 meters, often in isolation in the winter when the mountains are snowbound, while the Srinagar Valley is a different kind of nature. In general, Kashmir has developed a relatively unique culture over the centuries. The Jammu people speak Dogri, while the Srinagar people speak Kashmiri" [7]. The different languages and living habits complicate the already intense religious and geographical conflicts. Although the three Indo-Pak wars in Kashmir did not produce large-scale inter-religious retaliations (here, only local religious conflicts), the religious situation in Kashmir remains bleak. Especially after the spread of extremism and terrorism in the post-2000s, Kashmir has seen a large number of cross-border terrorist activities, which have caused a lot of problems for both India and Pakistan. These cross-border terrorist activities are essentially the result of out-of-control religious and ethnic sentiments. India and Pakistan have repeatedly tried to organize the spread of terrorist activities, but this uncontrolled emotion cannot be solved entirely by the government. On the other hand, India and Pakistan have condoned such uncontrolled emotions out

of national interest. This indulgence has led to the expansion and extremism of conflicts and contradictions. It makes the flexibility of both sides on the Kashmir issue gradually become less until they lose it completely[9].

With economic development, there have been attempts to resolve the Kashmir issue peacefully between India and Pakistan. But these actions have proved insufficient to change the current situation, such as Pakistan's counter-terrorism operations, which are perceived by the Indian side as "war to feed war," and the Uri incident, which proved that political trust between the two sides is extremely fragile and has led to speculation on the part of the other side, which leads to misunderstandings rather than understanding. These misunderstandings escalate the situation, thus laying the powder keg for a larger conflict to follow. Currently, such as territorial conflicts, security challenges, energy shortages and resource scarcity, arms race and geopolitical wrangling have led to India-Pakistan relations remaining rife with suspicion and mistrust[10].

Because of Kashmir, India and Pakistan are caught in a quandary from which they cannot extricate themselves. At times, the two sides have pursued peaceful solutions to security dilemmas and economic cooperation, while tension in Kashmir has pitted them against each other. The territorial claims of both sides over Kashmir are the central factor in the dilemma. Getting all of Kashmir has been a common quest of both sides for decades. As the upper basin of the Indus and its tributaries, India is bound to pursue Kashmir for securing water resources. And to secure the capital, Kashmir is a territory that Pakistan is unlikely to give up. The Kashmir dilemma is not just a territorial quest, but one of the cores of the geopolitical conflict between India and Pakistan. A long-standing lack of trust between India and Pakistan, with misunderstandings exacerbated by multiple military clashes and wars, has allowed the security dilemma to begin to take shape. As one side deploys troops near the ceasefire line, the other side will deploy more troops to secure itself. And this expansion of forces would stop as both sides reached the limits of their deployment[11]. At this point, the two sides will begin to compete in other areas, such as military equipment or military facilities. Neither side can alleviate the Kashmir security dilemma without the involvement of a more powerful force. This security dilemma is difficult to resolve or alleviate on its own when both sides define their security in terms of the disputed territory. The increased security dilemma is not only military in nature but also affects both sides politically and economically. For example, the irregular state of diplomatic relations and the lack of communication channels between the two sides make them more sensitive to each other's actions. This, in turn, exacerbates the state of the security dilemma[12].

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study of the India-Pakistan Kashmir issue shows that the security dilemma caused by the Kashmir issue is something India and Pakistan cannot alleviate or disengage from. The insecurity caused by the security dilemma makes both sides fear the threat of the

other side, thus enhancing their security to make the other side feel insecure. This situation requires the intervention of a strong external force to resolve the problems and conflicts between the two sides. Defusing the problem depends not only on the efforts of the Indian and Pakistani governments but also requires trade-offs between the two sides in terms of specific interests. The current freezing of relations between the two countries is a pattern of conflict, with both sides acting in a way that increases tensions in South Asia. In the long run, without intervention, India and Pakistan are bound to move toward conflict or war, and the accumulated grievances and disputes over the past eighty years cannot be remedied by dialogue or regional cooperation. Furthermore, Kashmir, as the core of the India-Pakistan conflict and one of the critical elements of the security dilemma, is likely to become the powder keg for a new round of war.

Furthermore, this situation does not depend only on the two sides; the involvement of external factors is equally important. However, the most important thing is for India and Pakistan to form a consensus to resolve Kashmir peacefully. The rivalry and conflict between the two sides stem more from visions that, in turn, contribute to the security dilemma that prevents the two sides from reaching a peaceful coexistence, which leaves them with a policy of limited cooperation or non-cooperation. How to break out of this "Thucydides trap" without the intervention of external forces is a direction that needs to be studied more in the future.

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