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India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir dispute: unpacking the dynamics of a South Asian frozen conflict

Sumit Ganguly[1] · Michal Smetana[2] ·
Sannia Abdullah[3] · Ales Karmazin[4]

Abstract The Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan remains at the core of one of the most intractable conflicts in modern history. This article provides a plausibility probe into the dynamics of this South Asian rivalry that is conceptually based on the dynamic understanding of "frozen conflicts" introduced in this special issue of *Asia Europe Journal*. We lay out the key features of the conflict vis-à-vis the redefined notion of frozen conflicts, situating the rivalry in the broader category of unresolved protracted conflicts with a looming threat of violence renewal. In turn, we examine the three transformational dynamics as they operate in this particular case: peaceful thawing, violent thawing, and conflict withering. We conclude that despite the ongoing developments within the conflict dynamics, the possibility of conflict transformation through any of the suggested pathways remains unlikely in the near future.

✉ Michal Smetana
michal.smetana@fsv.cuni.cz

Sumit Ganguly
sganguly@indiana.edu

Sannia Abdullah
sanniaabdullah@gmail.com

Ales Karmazin
ales.karmazin@mup.cz

1   Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA

2   Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

3   Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA

4   Department of Asian Studies, Metropolitan University Prague, Prague, Czech Republic

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Introduction

The Indo-Pakistani rivalry remains one of the most intractable conflicts of modern history. Since 1947, the two South Asian neighbors have fought four wars and gone through multiple crises and military standoffs. As of today, the peaceful resolution of the core dispute between India and Pakistan—the fate of the border state of Jammu and Kashmir—does not seem to be in sight.

This article aims to unpack the dynamics of the Indo-Pakistani rivalry analytically through the conceptual lenses of "frozen conflicts" introduced in this special issue of *Asia Europe Journal* (see Smetana and Ludvik, this issue). Despite the abundance of scholarship dealing with different aspects of this South Asian enmity, so far, there have been no explicit attempts to conceptualize the case as a frozen conflict. While this term has been mostly reserved for unresolved conflicts in the post-Soviet space, we argue that its conceptual features are also applicable to the present case.

As such, this article serves as a plausibility probe to test the applicability of this conceptual framework beyond the traditional Eastern-European regional focus. As outlined in the seminal essay by Eckstein (1975), plausibility probes are pragmatic tools for evaluating the usefulness of the proposed theories and concepts before they are rigorously tested within a more elaborated research design (see also Levy 2008; George and Bennett 2005, p. 75). To that end, we investigate and discuss the logic of the Indo-Pakistani conflict "frozenness," including the three proposed mechanisms of frozen-conflict dynamics: peaceful thawing, violent thawing, and conflict withering.

In the article, we proceed as follows. First, we provide a brief review of the academic literature that approaches the Indo-Pakistani rivalry as a specific instance of a more general international relations (IR) concept. Second, we discuss the match between the South Asian conflict and the definitional features of frozen conflicts introduced in this special issue. Third, we investigate the logic of peaceful thawing in the conflict and the repeated failures of diplomatic initiatives to achieve a stable peace between the two countries. Fourth, we unpack the logic of violent thawing and discuss the inability of either side to terminate the conflict through military victory. Fifth, we outline the possible avenues for conflict withering. We conclude by summarizing the findings and recommend directions for future research in this area.

Literature review

Although IR scholars have already approached the Indo-Pakistani rivalry from various theoretical and conceptual angles, they have mostly shied away from explicitly labelling it as a "frozen conflict." Nevertheless, popular accounts characterize the Kashmir conflict as frozen quite frequently (Dobhal 2017; DW 2016; Polgreen 2010), sometimes drawing an analogy between the quality of the conflict and the prevailing climatic conditions in the mountains in the disputed area (Bearak 1999; North 2014). It is not surprising that such accounts do not elaborate on the qualities of the conflict "frozenness" more closely and do not transform the notion into a well worked out analytical category. Policy papers, briefs, or expert analyses occasionally use the frozen conflict perspective as well (e.g., Ray 2012; Sridhar 2007) but their insights are usually

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constrained by their focus on the specific aspects or periods of the conflict without providing comprehensive and systematic insights into the overall conflict dynamics.

As such, the systematic use of the frozen conflict concept for scrutinizing the rivalry between India and Pakistan has been rare. Rather than frozen, the Kashmir conflict is usually labeled and examined as an "enduring rivalry" (esp. Paul 2005), "protracted conflict" (e.g., Ganguly 2001; Brecher 2016; Khan 2002; Mahapatra 2016; Venugopal and Yasir 2017), or an "intractable conflict" (e.g., Coleman 2003; Crocker et al. 2005; Kriesberg 1993; Vallacher et al. 2011). If IR scholars ever apply the frozen conflict concept in the Indo-Pakistani case, it mainly serves to provide a general description of the conflict's character, rather than a central analytical category through which they would examine the conflict (Baghel and Nüsser 2015; Bose 1999; Jahn 2015, pp. 205–220; Stavrevska et al. 2016). Such usage is, to a large extent, merely intuitive.

There are very few cases when the character of the Kashmir conflict is discussed with at least some links to the conceptual foundations of frozen conflicts. Such a discussion, if present at all, usually does not go very far. For example, Baghel and Nüsser (2015) indicate their critical stance toward the use of the frozen conflict concept in the Indo-Pakistani case as there is "a temporal dynamism"—without developing this statement any further. However, as noted by Chavez Fregoso and Zivkovic (2012, p. 140), the adjective "frozen" does mean that the situation on the ground does not change over time, but merely that the conflict does not *transform*—to some extent, change is inherent in *all* frozen conflicts (cf. Smetana and Ludvík, this issue). As such, the academic exploration of the Indo-Pakistani conflict as a frozen one lacks the depth, systematic analysis, and discussion of how the Kashmir dispute relates to other frozen conflicts.

Conceptualizing frozen conflict

In the introductory article to this special issue, Smetana and Ludvik defined frozen conflict as a "protracted, post-war conflict process, characterized by the absence of stable peace between the opposing sides." Moreover, in frozen conflicts, "core issues between the opposing sides remain unresolved, the dispute is in the forefront of mutual relations, and there is a looming threat of violence renewal" (Smetana and Ludvík, this issue). In this section, we discuss the applicability of this conceptual focus of frozen conflicts on the empirical case of Indo-Pakistani rivalry.

The origins of the Indo-Pakistani rivalry can be traced back to the process of British colonial withdrawal from the subcontinent in 1947. The British chose to partition the subcontinent mostly along demographic lines; predominantly, Muslim areas of the British Indian Empire came to constitute Pakistan. In addition to those areas that had been formally under the aegis of the British Crown, there also remained some five hundred "princely states." Lord Mountbatten, the last representative of the Crown, decreed that these states would have to accede to India or Pakistan according to their geographic contiguity and demography (see Copland 1997). However, the disposition of Jammu and Kashmir posed a problem: it shared borders with both India and Pakistan, had a Muslim-majority population, and a Hindu monarch. The nationalist leaderships of both countries were keenly interested in integrating Kashmir into their respective states. Indian elites were keen on holding on to Kashmir to demonstrate that

a predominantly Muslim state could exist within a secular polity. Pakistani elites, on the other hand, wanted to acquire Kashmir on irredentist grounds.

One of the key characteristics that sets frozen conflicts apart from other types of protracted conflicts in international politics is the formative experience of initial war. This original violent episode started in October 1947 when Pakistan mounted a military operation to seize the state of Jammu and Kashmir by force (Sisson and Rose 1990; Dasgupta 2014). Indian forces managed to stop the advance of the Pakistan-supported raiders but not before they had successfully seized about one-third of the territory of the state. The United Nations Security Council imposed a cease-fire which came into effect on 1 January 1949. This first Indo-Pakistani military clash involved sustained combat, organized armed forces, and an estimated number of 1500 casualties on the Indian and 6000 on the Pakistani side, qualifying the violent episode as a war under the Correlates of War project definition (Singer and Small 1982, pp. 205–206).

In the more than 70 years since the First Kashmir War, the unresolved territorial status of Jammu and Kashmir has remained the core issue in the South Asian conflict. As such, together with the Israeli-Arab conflict, the Indo-Pakistani rivalry remains one of the longest protracted conflicts of our times. The absence of direct violence in certain periods (e.g., 1971–1989) can largely be attributed to Indian military preponderance rather than a temporary transformation of the adversarial relationship (Ganguly 2001)—with the employment of force always part of the cost-benefit calculations of both actors even in crises that did not turn violent. The Kashmir dispute has been permanently in the forefront of bilateral relations and has remained highly salient in the domestic politics of both countries. The complexity of the conflict has been further deepened through the involvement of Pakistan-backed terrorists in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir, repeatedly influencing the dynamics of the South Asian conflict by carrying out attacks against Indian military and civilian targets.

Peaceful thawing and the logic of conflict (non-)transformation

Peaceful thawing is the intra-conflict dynamics resulting from diplomatic negotiations between the belligerents. As discussed in Smetana and Ludvik (this issue), "in the case of frozen conflicts, these thawing dynamics usually stop short of conflict transformation. Instead, after reaching the peak of the thawing process, the conflict slips back to 'frozenness.'" In this section, we discuss the drivers of peaceful thawing in the history of the Indo-Pakistani conflict, with particular focus on factors rooted in domestic politics and idiosyncratic political personalities in the two countries, as well as pressure from third parties. Additionally, we seek to identify "what happens at the critical junction, when the thawing can potentially lead to conflict transformation but instead the process reaches its peak and the conflict re-freezes" (Smetana and Ludvik, this issue).

Examples of peaceful thawing driven by internal developments have been particularly prominent within the Indo-Pakistani conflict dynamics since the 1990s, especially in relation to the processes connected with the 1999 Lahore Summit, the 2001 Agra Summit, and the 2003–2009 Composite Dialogue. For example, in 1999, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee visited Pakistan to attend the Lahore Summit together with his Pakistani counterpart Sharif. Two major factors contributed to the Indian decision to

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pursue a possible rapprochement with Pakistan at the time. The first was the success of India's counterinsurgency strategy in Kashmir—having restored a degree of normalcy in the country, Vajpayee felt sufficiently confident on the domestic scene about pursuing a dialogue with its adversary. The second may have stemmed from a careful calculation to normalize India's "deviant image" in the wake of the Pokhran-II nuclear tests and to assuage the concerns of the global community (and particularly the USA) regarding strategic stability in the region (cf. Raja Mohan 2004; Ganguly and Wagner 2004; Kienzle 2014).

In Lahore, Vajpayee made a dramatic symbolic gesture. At the place where the resolution on the creation of the state of Pakistan was passed in 1940, he unequivocally committed India to the territorial integrity of Pakistan. In the aftermath of this visit, confident in the belief that a process of rapprochement with Pakistan was under way, Indian authorities chose to reduce their level of alertness along the Indo-Pakistani borders both in Kashmir and elsewhere. What Indian intelligence had failed to ascertain, however, was that the Pakistani military establishment was wholly opposed to the pursuit of a relaxation of tensions with India. It remains an intriguing counterfactual question about what may have transpired after Vajpayee's visit had he had a viable interlocutor in Pakistan.

The Lahore Declaration was arguably the most important bilateral agreement ever signed between the two countries. While the subsequent 1999 Kargil War had contributed to a profound sense of betrayal, Vajpayee eventually chose to invite General Pervez Musharraf to the city of Agra in July 2001 for a dialogue. This meeting, while initially promising, ended in an impasse. Two factors, it is widely believed, contributed to the deadlock. Some Indian interlocutors argue that Musharraf was overly keen on pushing for an agreement without suitable discussion of particular details (Chawla et al. 2001). This was unacceptable to key members of the Indian delegation at the talks. More to the point, Musharraf was unwilling to address any Indian concerns about Pakistan's involvement with terror (Sarma 2001). The second related reason was the unwillingness on the part of some key Indian officials to reach an accord with Musharraf unless he was willing to make suitable concessions on this critical matter (cf. Wheeler 2010; Baral 2002).

In 2005, Musharraf floated another proposal to resolve the Kashmir conflict by first demilitarizing the region and granting the territory independent status either under a UN mandate or Indo-Pakistani joint control. In addition, the following year, Musharraf proposed a "four-point agenda" for settling the Kashmir dispute: a gradual withdrawal of troops, self-governance, no changes to the region's borders, and a joint supervision mechanism (Hussain 2007). Whereas moderates in India called the proposal an "opportunity," hardliners saw it as "unacceptable." Eventually, yet another attempt to bring about a bilateral peaceful thawing of the conflict had failed.

Musharraf's push to resolve the Kashmir dispute nevertheless demonstrates that there are drivers to peaceful thawing that go beyond the domestic politics in the two countries—specifically, that there is an indirect role of third parties, in this case, the USA. In a BBC interview, Musharraf himself mentioned the pressure from US President George W. Bush to settle the Kashmir issue (BBC 2006). Nevertheless, third-party pressure to find a peaceful resolution has been a part of the conflict since its very beginning. Already, the 1948–1949 war resulted in several United Nations resolutions that aimed to address the very core of the conflict (see UNSC 1951).

After the 1972 Simla Agreement, in which both countries agreed to settle their pending disputes bilaterally (Ministry of External Affairs of India 1972), the international community stopped paying attention to the conflict until the very end of the 1980s when an insurgency erupted in Indian-controlled Kashmir. Since then, it is primarily the USA that has exerted pressure on the two countries to initiate and sustain diplomatic dialogue (e.g., in the 1999 Kargil War, when Bill Clinton persuaded Nawaz Sharif to withdraw Pakistani military forces from Kargil). At the same time, India and Pakistan have often exerted indirect coercive pressure on each other through the USA as a powerful, potential intermediary (Bratton 2010).

Nevertheless, while Pakistan is generally more open to an internationalization of the conflict and continues to beat the same drum of seeking a solution to the Kashmir dispute through a plebiscite in accordance with UNSC resolutions, India's stance on a resolution remains focused on a bilateral solution. For example, the spokesperson of India's Ministry of External Affairs recently mentioned that "we are ready to talk Kashmir with Pakistan, but no third-party mediation" (Al Jazeera 2017). As such, the third-party intervention is a non-starter for India, while it also gives New Delhi greater discretion to leave the conflict pending.

Moreover, there are four major "spoilers" that prevent the Indo-Pakistani frozen conflict from transformation through peaceful thawing: (1) actions of local violent non-state actors that thrive on the "frozen conflict economy," (2) public attitudes in India that oppose a conciliatory approach to the Kashmir issue, (3) distrust between the political and military leaderships in Pakistan, and (4) the changing character of the indigenous Kashmir uprising.

First, terrorist attacks against Indian targets are frequently a driver of violence escalation in the frozen conflict and a spoiler of any ongoing diplomatic initiatives heading toward stable peace. For example, the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament following the Agra summit culminated in a military standoff and ruined any attempts for further dialogue; "the peace process was the first casualty and all links, including transport and diplomatic, with Pakistan were snapped" (Misra 2007, p. 509). In 2008, terrorist attacks in Bombay contributed to the failure of the Composite Dialogue. Similarly, in 2015, Indian Prime Minister Modi chose to make a brief stopover in Pakistan on his way back from a state visit to Afghanistan. This abrupt decision to meet with his Pakistani counterpart on the latter's birthday was seen as an attempt to break the logjam in the relationship (Barry and Masood 2015). However, barely a week after this visit, a Pakistan-based terrorist group attacked a major Indian air force base in Pathankot in the border state of Punjab (Najar 2016). The attack convinced many in India's decision-making circles that Sharif, though the legally elected prime minister, was either unwilling or unable to rein in terrorist forces operating from Pakistan's soil.

Second, the sense of Kashmir's exceptionalism, or perhaps more precisely, exceptional importance, has deeply penetrated public sentiments in India, as well as Indian popular culture. Civil society and politicians frequently repeat the argument that the pressure of public opinion compels India's leadership to take a coercive stance toward Pakistan. This conversely means that political leaders are rarely interested in bringing the Kashmir issue to the table. Weak political will speaks to the half-hearted attempts that fail to shift gears from peace thawing to conflict transformation. For instance, after the 2008 terrorist attacks, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in New Delhi tried to revive the composite dialogue. However, domestic public opinion placed

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significant constraints on the government from sustaining the dialogue with Pakistan. While it made some efforts in particular forums, these proved to be of little avail. Worse still, one of these overtures, made during a Non-Aligned summit meeting at Sharm-el-Sheikh in Egypt, generated considerable political opposition as critics argued that the government had made unilateral concessions to Pakistan (Bhushan 2009). During the remainder of the UPA government, little else of any consequence transpired despite some desultory attempts at negotiation.

Third, Pakistan's political leadership faces the entrenched hostility of its military establishment, which does not trust the politicians to settle the Kashmir issue through dialogue. Since its foundation, Pakistan has experienced several military coups—in 1958, 1969, 1977, and again in 1999. Since the 1977 coup of General Zia-ul-Haq, the Pakistani military has relied on Islamic groups to pursue its military objectives against India. Despite the processes of democratization after 1988, the importance of Islamist groups continued to rise alongside other tensions between the civil and military leaderships. The resulting civil-military distrust and strong bureaucratic inertia of the Pakistani establishment impede any efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute, as repeatedly demonstrated throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

Finally, since 2008, the character of the indigenous Kashmir uprising has been changing from a nationalist freedom movement to an Islamist movement. Pakistan's covert support to the Kashmiri has arguably altered the character of the conflict, with the local rhetoric newly eclipsed by the jihad narrative. As such, "Kashmiri nationalism is once again back in vogue, […] the Islamist discourse is no longer looked upon as an alien imposition from 'outside' but is gradually becoming a 'home-grown' phenomenon, marginalizing the much older ethos of 'Kashmiriyat'" (Behera 2016, p. 46). These developments also result in a closer connection between indigenous actors with transnational Islamist groups, further complicating the aforementioned involvement of violent non-state actors in the overall conflict dynamics. The resistance in Kashmir stimulates further violence, which negatively impacts the general prospect of successfully transforming the frozen conflict through peaceful thawing.

Violent thawing and the logic of conflict (non-)transformation

Violent thawing stands for the (re-)escalation of violence between the opposing sides in frozen conflicts. One of the key characteristics of frozen conflicts is that these violent episodes may alter the status quo but do not lead to conflict transformation through a decisive military victory by either side. Whereas the Indo-Pakistani conflict periodically escalates, the violence is unlikely to reach the stage of full conflict transformation and the conflict always returns to its original "frozenness," eroding the fabric for immediate opportunity to weave in peaceful settlement.

The nuclear revolution in South Asia after 1998 is an example of an endogenous factor that minimized a major conventional war scenario. While nuclear weapons in South Asia function as a "great stabilizer" on the level of all-out war, they simultaneously allow for instability at the lower levels of violence. This logic is recognized as the stability-instability paradox (Ganguly 1995; Kapur 2005; Mistry 2009; Ganguly and Hagerty 2012). The miscalculation of signals represents a real-time challenge for decision-makers in South Asia during individual instances of violent thawing of a

conflict with a history of broken peace accords and no channel of communications open to verify (dis-)trust. The processes of violent thawing in the South Asian context thus represent a mix of limited offensives, insecurities, miscalculations of intentions by leaders, and preventive attempts to alter the status quo between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

In regard to the 1999 Kargil War, some scholars have argued that nuclear weapons may have encouraged the Pakistani military leadership of General Pervez Musharraf to embark upon this venture. They contend that Pakistani decision-makers had concluded that India would be loath to respond with much vigor for fear of nuclear escalation (Ganguly and Kapur 2010). While this remained a predominant factor for assessing the limitations of the Indian response, other significant factors also contributed to Pakistan's decision to launch the operation in Kargil.

First and foremost, a Kargil-type operation was planned much earlier and was shelved for not being approved by the competent authorities of the time (Kargil Review Committee 2000). Second, the outbreak of violence is closely related to the very success of the Indian counterinsurgency strategy. Pakistan's military leadership concluded that India had successfully managed to restore a modicum of order in its part of the disputed state. Consequently, external attention to the insurgency was waning. A renewed conflict between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the 1998 nuclear tests would refocus external attention on the dispute. Third, Pakistan thought to bring India to the table and seek a resolution of the Kashmir situation from a position of equality as it was now too a nuclear power. Fourth, Pakistan wanted to get even with India over the loss of the Siachen Glacier in 1984. Fifth, according to internal Indian discourse, Kargil was also a result of an Indian intelligence failure with respect to Pakistan (Kargil Review Committee 2000).

However, the role of nuclear weapons in Kargil prevented escalation from India. Unlike in 1965, when India quickly resorted to horizontal escalation in the Punjab to relieve pressure on Kashmir, on this occasion, Indian forces carefully limited their actions to the Kargil sector. By early July, Indian forces had successfully routed all the Pakistani intruders.

After Kargil, violent non-state actors became a leading source of violent thawing in the successive crises. The 2001–2002 military standoff between India and Pakistan "put into motion the largest military mobilisation since World War II," with "[o]ver 500,000 Indian troops […] mobilised in the first stage of deployment" (Gupta 2016). As noted above, the crisis resulted from a terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament by elements of two Pakistan-based terrorist organizations, the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Lashkar-e-Taiba. All the attackers were killed in a gun battle that ensued between them and the Indian security forces. In the wake of this attack, the Indian government squarely placed the blame on Pakistan and made a series of demands on the country. India was unable to respond promptly to this terrorist attack as it had failed to develop any viable military options that it could promptly set in motion. Consequently, it had to gradually embark on a massive mobilization of its armed forces to implement a strategy of coercive diplomacy designed to induce Pakistan to end its support for terror (cf. Ganguly and Kraig 2005; Raghavan 2009). The Indian mobilization led to a counter-mobilization of Pakistani forces. This standoff continued until the fall of 2002 when India chose to demobilize its forces. To a considerable degree, the Indian political

leadership may have been inhibited from authorizing a full-scale war because of the dangers of potential escalation.

In the wake of the crisis, Indian policymakers concluded that they needed a new set of policy options to deal with a future Pakistan-sponsored terrorist attack. To that end, they tasked the armed forces with fashioning a military doctrine that would enable the country to swiftly respond to another, dramatic terrorist attack. This doctrine came to be known as "Cold Start" and called for the pre-positioning of weapons and equipment along strategic salients along the borders, plans for rapid mobilization, and close coordination amongst the armed forces (Ladwig 2008).

Another dimension of violent thawing is explained by the parochial interests of organizations and the role of domestic politics. For instance, the Pakistani military's incentive to freeze its stronger adversary over the Kashmir conflict is a cost-effective strategy. For years, Pakistani actions have tied down thousands of Indian soldiers in the counterinsurgency campaign, exacting economic costs on India (Tellis et al. 2001, p. 65).

On an earlier occasion, Pakistan, under the martial law rule of General Ayub Khan, conceived the 1965 military operation on the basis of the modernization plans of the Indian military in the aftermath of the 1962 Sino-Indian War. Pakistan military's muscle was in relatively good shape after entering into a military alliance with the USA in 1954, and it encouraged the military to execute Operation Gibraltar in 1965 before Indian military hardware could further improve. Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, prodded Ayub Khan to provoke a conflict with India in order to seize Kashmir. Anti-Indian domestic disturbances within Indian-controlled Kashmir led Ayub Khan and his associates to assume that there might be widespread support for a Pakistan-supported invasion of the region. Though the Pakistani military had entertained high hopes of a swift military victory, the conflict ended mostly in a stalemate. Furthermore, the Indian military as well as the political leadership of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri demonstrated much more resolve than the Pakistani leadership had expected. Therefore, the 1965 war and internal violent insurgency ended with territorial status quo in Kashmir and froze the bilateral rivalry into a stalemate.

The 1971 war, that led to the break-up of Pakistan and the creation of the new state of Bangladesh, once again demonstrated the role of domestic politics, this time emerging from internal forces in East Pakistan. The origins of the crisis can be traced from the electoral results of Pakistan's first free and fair election held in 1970. A regional party in East Pakistan, the Awami League (AL), swept the polls. Given the demographic composition of Pakistan, this meant that it would command a majority in parliament. The results were unacceptable to the Pakistan Army and to the dominant party in West Pakistan, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Discussions about power sharing arrangements ensued but quickly reached a deadlock. Meanwhile, the AL's stance became increasingly intransigent with growing calls for enhanced regional autonomy (Jackson 1975; Sisson and Rose 1990). During this time, the insurgency in East Pakistan had already reached its peak. To contain the internal disturbances, the army launched a campaign of widespread repression in East Pakistan culminating in the deaths of several hundred thousand civilians (Bass 2014). Confronted with this crack-down, some ten million refugees sought shelter in India. The Indian leadership under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi quickly concluded that it could ill afford to absorb them into its already turgid population. Accordingly, they devised a politico-military strategy

to break up Pakistan and help create a new state. The adoption of this strategy culminated in a war with Pakistan in December 1971. Pakistani forces faced defeat. A post-war settlement was reached at the old British colonial summer capital of Simla in 1972. Under the terms of this accord, both sides reiterated their commitment to abjure from the use of force to settle the Kashmir dispute. The Cease-Fire Line (CFL) was also converted into the Line of Control (LoC) reflecting the disposition of the troops at the time of the termination of the conflict (Ganguly 2001).

The exogenous dimension of violent thawing also frequently involves third-party intervention. The USA has been playing a crucial role in the brokering process in crises under the shadow of nuclear escalation. In the 1999 Kargil War, the conflict re-froze with the help of the USA: as the Pakistani forces were reeling from the Indian counter-offensive, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sought US intercession in the conflict. Unlike in the past, when the USA had adopted an equivocal stance during Indo-Pakistani conflicts, on this occasion, President Clinton forthrightly condemned Pakistan's role in precipitating the war. Facing a military defeat on the ground and confronting a diplomatic impasse, Pakistan was forced to accept a cease-fire without any Indian concessions. The war ended without any change in the territorial status quo. However, it may have convinced the Pakistani military establishment that resorting to conventional war would not enable it to further its goal of seizing Kashmir. To that end, it may have concluded that other strategies might prove necessary in order to enable Pakistan to further its goal of undermining India's control over a significant portion of the disputed state (cf. Tellis et al. 2001; Kapur 2003).

The latest developments in the conflict dynamics saw terrorists associated with Jaish-e-Mohammed in September 2016 attacking an Indian Army base in Uri in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (Rashid and Singh 2016). Previous Indian governments had mostly chosen not to retaliate in the wake of these provocations. However, Prime Minister Modi chose to launch an unprecedented retaliatory attack. Consequently, India conducted surgical strikes against terrorist hideouts across Pakistan's LOC in Kashmir. This was the first time an Indian government publicly acknowledged and, indeed, heralded such operations (Bengali 2016). Modi's decisions to call off ongoing talks and then militarily retaliate against Pakistan marked a significant departure from the practices of previous governments. These actions demonstrate a new resolve in dealing with Pakistan's periodic depredations and it appears reasonable to surmise that the present government is unlikely to return to earlier policies.

Potential for conflict withering

Another type of dynamic that can eventually contribute to conflict transformation is conflict withering. As noted in Smetana and Ludvik (this issue), conflict withering is "an external dynamic that nevertheless changes the importance of the issues at stake. In contrast to both types of thawing, withering lacks the original intention to transform the conflict; instead, withering is an unintentional by-product of some other development." In the case of the South Asian frozen conflict, this external development would have to make the core issue between India and Pakistan—the territorial dispute over Jammu and Kashmir—no longer central to the mutual relationship. This can come as a result of an (external) shock or a more gradual development that would decrease the salience of

the Kashmir dispute in the relations between the two countries. In this section, we firstly outline possible pathways for conflict withering but then argue why it is unlikely to see the conflict wither in the near future.

At least two pathways hypothetically leading to conflict withering can be sketched out. The first might involve a shock that changes the expectations of the decision-making elite within Pakistan or India and thereby leads them to re-calculate their strategy toward the other state. Such a shock is exogenous because it does not unfold from the very core of the conflict, but it may exhibit some endogenous characteristics, too, evolving from the regional and domestic politics of the two countries. To illustrate how this might look, it is useful to realize that such a shock with conflict transformation potential occurred—if not on any other occasion—in the aftermath of the 1971 war, which significantly influenced the political situation in Pakistan. The Pakistan Army, for all practical purposes, was discredited because of its ignominious role in the East Pakistan crisis (Ganguly 2001). Bhutto, as the new president of the country, could have seized the moment to consolidate democracy in the country. This could have contributed to shrinking the profile of the military within the Pakistani polity, to the reduction of Pakistan's hostility toward India, and to the moderation of mutual hostilities. This, however, did not materialize.

The other and more likely road that might eventually end the rivalry may be the increasingly divergent trajectories of the two countries. Pakistan's economic growth simply cannot keep pace with that of India and Pakistan may continue to have problems with sustaining its domestic governing capacities and keeping the state functional (cf. Paul 2014). Nor, for that matter, despite its reliance on China, can it sustain military expenditures that would enable it to take on its more capable neighbor in another conventional conflict. It can, of course, continue with its asymmetric war strategy. However, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which even such asymmetric capacities would be decreasing (in relative or absolute terms). As a result, the costs that Pakistan would impose on India would mostly be in the form of an irritant rather than amounting to a compelling external security threat. The two parties may not reconcile, but the rivalry, for all practical purposes, will simply cease to be manifested.

The involvement of various other issues, actors, and dynamics can influence the potential for conflict withering. Now, the conflict is not only centered around the originally crucial issue of the territorial control of Jammu and Kashmir as a symbol of Pakistan's and India's state-making projects, but it maintains a complex character. The original core of the conflict has gotten enmeshed with local politics and demands, Islamic radicalism, developmental issues as well as with new connections to great power rivalry (Schild 2015). Especially since the late 1980s, demands by local ethnic and religious groups have significantly contributed to the conflict's dynamics (Anant 2009). The original Indo-Pakistani conflict focused *on* Jammu and Kashmir has very much changed into a conflict in which various local or transnational actors are involved. Moreover, links to great power politics have not disappeared. We can illustrate this by the recent tension between India, China, and Pakistan caused by the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a project closely tied to China's grand strategic One Belt One Road Initiative. The initiative involves Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and is seen as a political and security issue by India's foreign policy makers (cf. Singh 2015).

It is possible to argue that the original motivations of both Pakistan and India connected with Kashmir as a symbol of their state-making projects weakened over time, but it did not cause the conflict to wither. The break-up of Pakistan in 1971 demonstrated that religion alone could not be the basis of nation-building in South Asia. Even as it undermined Pakistan's irredentist claim to Kashmir, it did not give up its claims due to reasons of domestic politics (Ganguly 2001). About a decade later, India's normative claims to Kashmir also declined as secularism increasingly came under attack within the Indian political context (Ganguly 2001). However, it was later in the same decade of the 1980s that local Kashmiri actors started to affect the conflict with their autonomist (and even secessionist) agenda.

Hence, while some of the aspects of the conflict may start to wither or diminish at a certain point, there seem to be many others that will continue to propel the conflict's dynamics and will likely reintroduce the previously withering aspects in one way or another later on. Due to this multifaceted and entangled character, the conflict is difficult to resolve. Or, in other words, the frozen and long-lasting nature of the conflict has contributed to making it more complicated and less likely to wither.

Conclusion

While Kashmir continues to bleed, it has locked India and Pakistan into a prolonged conflict comprised of cease-fires, peaceful negotiations, violent uprisings, and crises with a nuclear dimension. In this article, we provided a short case study in order to probe the plausibility of the "frozen conflict" concept on the empirical case of Indo-Pakistani rivalry. There are indeed some unique features of this particular case in comparison with other cases examined in this special issue of *Asia Europe Journal*; perhaps most prominently, the existence of two nuclear-armed rivals. However, as we demonstrated in this article, the South Asian conflict does correspond to the definition of frozen conflicts introduced in Smetana and Ludvik (this issue), including the protracted nature of the conflict, the experience of an initial war, the absence of stable peace, an unresolved core issue that remains in the forefront of mutual relations, the salience of the conflict in domestic discourses, and the looming threat of violence renewal.

In the article, we also used the dynamic conceptualization of frozen conflicts to examine the conflict dynamics in this Indo-Pakistani case. We identified two main drivers of "peaceful thawing" dynamics: domestic politics in the two countries and external pressure from third parties. Moreover, we argued that there are four major "spoilers" that prevent the Indo-Pakistani frozen conflict from transformation through peaceful thawing: actions of local violent non-state actors that thrive on the "frozen conflict economy," public attitudes in India that oppose a conciliatory approach to the Kashmir issue, distrust between the political and military leaderships in Pakistan, and the changing character of the indigenous Kashmir uprising. In addition, we focused on two main drivers that account for the periodic episodes of "violent thawing" of the conflict: the actions of violent non-state actors and the parochial interests and initiatives of domestic actors. We also discussed the logic of stability-instability paradox, which functions as a "great stabilizer" on the level of all-out war, yet simultaneously allows repeated escalations at the lower levels of violence. Finally, we outlined prospective

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pathways for conflict withering, with respect to the possibility of an external shock that would alter the expectations of domestic decision-makers and the increasingly asymmetric trajectories and capabilities of the two countries. We conclude that despite the ongoing, dynamic developments on the ground, the possibility of conflict transformation through any of the suggested pathways—peaceful thawing, violent thawing, and withering—remains unlikely in the near future.

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