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### Kashmir conflict: Historical and religious issues.

The current conflict that is taking place between India and Pakistan is not something new; actually it's been there since the British left these countries in 1947. The main issue is the dispute of a territory which is located in the border of these countries, which is Kashmir. The territory belongs to India, but the Pakistanis have been arguing this territory belongs to them, even before Independence of these two countries was achieved, because most of the population in this area is Muslim and the way in which this territory was granted to India was undemocratic. In this case it is necessary to provide an historical background in order to fully understand this conflict, also to mention which are the parts involved, consider the protagonist opinions and offer an outsider point of view.

While India was struggling to achieve its independence in 1947, the world's attention was focused on a devastated Europe by WWII and the emergence of the two super powers of the second half of XX century, USA and URSS. Once independence from the British Empire was achieved, the new countries in the Indian subcontinent began a dispute for the territories located in their north border, the Kashmir region. This territory was granted to India due to its location and the Pakistani disgust wouldn't wait: they began to claim this portion of land, arguing the will of the population was to be part of the Pakistani State, due it is religious majority. Since India wouldn't accept that this territory be granted, revolts started and the fighting began. Muslims revolutionaries were pushing the local government to accept the integration to Pakistan, but this didn't happen because the Indian army replied to the revolutionaries. It is at this point when the recently created United Nations (UN) had one of their first assignments, ordering a cease of fire and creating a line of control, which is a line in which no armed force can cross.

After this period of tension between India and Pakistan, two emerging nations, the situation remained in-control for a considerable time, until “Pakistan made plans for “Operation Gibraltar” to recover Kashmir...it first sent Pakistani guerrillas into the Valley in August 1965 hoping that the Kashmiri Muslims would rise in rebellion against India.” (Indurthy) This rebellion was quite similar to the one held previously on 1947, and the outcome was not different, the Indian forces held against the Pakistani rebellion, and with the contribution of the UN, USA and URSS, a cease-fire was decreed establishing a pseudo-peace, and it's called pseudo peace because there were no clear solution for this dispute.

One of the peculiarities that caught the world's attention was the moment of an imminent nuclear war, imminent because these two countries developed a program to enrich uranium and achieved the capacity to create nuclear weapons. At this point of history, the Kashmir conflict was compared with the cold war due to constant fear of a nuclear attack, and the consequences could have been catastrophic for the world. In the end the nuclear conflict was avoided, but still no viable solution has been offered.

Moving ahead in time, after 1990, one of the main factors in the Kashmir conflict has been the constant action of separatists and terrorists groups in the region. One of the most controversial issues that put in danger the peace between India and Pakistan, was the kidnaping of a tourist airplane that departed from India to Pakistan. Terrorists were asking for the liberation of Pakistanis prisoners in India. The Indian government refused to accept and the terrorists killed a man who was in his honeymoon and threatened to keep going on until the prisoners were released. The Indian government had no other choice but to release them. The Indian government cancelled all relations with Pakistan, including commerce and tourism, Pakistani consul in Kashmir was deported and India was preparing a new military incursion into Pakistan. After a brief moment of tension, Pakistan was sanctioned by the UN and diplomatic relations were reestablished.

Considering the events these countries had been through it is difficult to establish who is right and who is wrong. First is the perspective from India and the following quote is one of the main arguments they use in this dispute: “... the territory has been an integral part of the Indian Union since the maharaja of Kashmir signed an instrument of accession

and joined India in 1947.” (Kapur) In addition to this argument, India claims that Hindus living in the area are peaceful and have no trouble with the Muslims, and also it will be harmful for them, in matters of religion, if their lands become part of a Muslim State. It is also important to mention the constant suspicion that the Pakistani government is financially supporting separatist groups in the Kashmir region, also providing military preparation and intelligence.

But on the other hand there is the Pakistani side, they claim Kashmir was given without consulting the habitants and it was an imposition from the Indian State. Also they deny any possible relation with the terrorist groups that are looking forward to split Kashmir in a violent way. The following the following statement was made by the Pakistani government in 2002 “...Islamabad would not permit ‘any territory under Pakistan’s control to be used to support terrorism in any manner.’” (Roy-Chaudhur) They deny any possible entailment with these terrorist groups.

Since then tension has been growing, India keeps claiming the cooperation between Pakistani government and terrorist groups, but yet it hasn’t been proved in the eyes of international organizations, and no further sanctions have been imposed on Pakistan.

Religious perspectives of the two major groups in the Kashmir region are one important factor, for there are Hinduism and Islam. These religions offer different perspectives in the religious life and their relation with the government, and it would be almost impossible for Hindu people in Kashmir to live in a Muslim State, and forcing an exodus of these Hindus is outrageous. In the meanwhile the Muslims living in Kashmir struggle every day to live in a place prepared for Hindu lifestyle and religious practices it is this point when it is difficult to determine which religion has a better argument to claim the land in which these two large groups of people live.

The solutions that have been offered include: creating an independent State of Kashmir, finally grant the Pakistani government this territory, divide the land in half and give each country an equal piece, but none of this is viable solution, and for the meanwhile there are no imminent solution for this territorial dispute.

As a conclusion, the Kashmir conflict is a matter that has been an issue for India and Pakistan since their independence from the British Empire in 1947 and in 65 years no viable solutions have come. Many battles have been fought to gain control of this territory but thanks to certain international organizations they have come to a quick end without becoming major issues for third parties. By being a land in the border of two countries with completely different religious views, it has been an issue for the habitants to find a proper balance among both perspectives.

## Works Cited

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