The Ancient War

The civilians of Kashmir, trapped in the shatterbelt of the territorial dispute between India and Pakistan since 1947, have suffered within what is considered the world’s most militarized warzone as they watch their homeland destroyed through the two nations’ conflicts. A severe amount of miscommunication between the countries and their initial unwillingness to compromise have led to catastrophic consequences for both countries and their citizens. A lack of understanding between India and Pakistan may lead to further drastic actions and mistakes that may destabilize the current ceasefire in place and provoke further bloodshed.

Over the past years, tensions have risen to the point where both sides are expecting a confrontation at any moment.  The Human Rights Watch reported that “On May 11 and 13, 1998, India tested five nuclear devices, and three weeks later, Pakistan responded in kind”.  The nuclear device tests of India were perceived as an active threat and prompted Pakistan to respond out of fear that the Indian militia was going to launch a strike on Pakistan. Based off past conflicts, Pakistan assumed the worst and perceived India’s provoking actions as a signal towards nuclear war, feeding their animosity and wariness towards their neighboring country. The high level of tension that resulted between the countries ensured that future attempts of negotiations would remain difficult.

Although there have been many ceasefire opportunities throughout the long, gruesome war, these promised times of peace weren’t always kept.  *The New York Times* published in 2013 that “Pakistan reported 1,970 ceasefire violations while India reported 970,” and according to Professor Jacob, “India was “disproportionally” shelling across the border”.  Despite the multiple agreements made, both countries have made it clear that any past agreements have effectively become null. Neither country can trust the others’ word, especially regarding a ceasefire. Regarding the peace, many civilians “hope it will last”, yet have very little faith in the agreement surviving for an extended period of time. This is likely to be true if changes are not made immediately.

The war over Kashmir between India and Pakistan has been recorded as one of the longest lasting wars in history. To maintain the ceasefire put in place, both countries must make concessions as signs of investment in the newfound pace. Because of their past history, both sides have valid reasons to mistrust the other’s word, and must do more than simply “say” they will commit to the truce. Perhaps more transparency between the two governments would address any misconceptions that could lead to further conflict. It must also be recognized by both countries that if the war were to continue, the costs would outweigh the benefits. The loss of civilian and soldier lives along with the cost of maintaining a war over the course of seventy years and possibly more ultimately would begin to outweigh the end goal for the one who “wins” the fight. Despite beliefs that the two nations could never come to an agreement, a truce could potentially be a more successful solution than previously thought if such measures were taken. With these changes, the rival countries can finally work together as one despite their past differences to create a better place.