“An eye for an eye makes the whole world go blind.” –Mahatma Gandhi

Kashmir, an area northwest of India, has been a disputed region since the 1940s and continues to be a corollary of perpetual hostility. The primary cause of the partition between India and Pakistan is the religious convictions Muslims and Hindus adhere to. This blatant contrast between the beliefs of the two religions and a history of mutual distrust sparks continual animosity and hence, concerning the interpretation of each country’s actions, judgement is clouded. In 1947, religious sectarian violence ensued, and Muslims fled to Pakistan while Hindus were drawn in the opposite direction towards India, masses of people on both sides were killed in the process as atrocities were committed by both Muslims and Hindus. The strife between the divergent religions has induced a misperception that this past discord could advance in the same brutal manner as before.

Formerly, Pakistan and India was a unified colony of Great Britain. However, both countries’ desires to be separate autonomous regions due to religious differences plus the lack of a definite boundary after gaining independence came together to create a harsh and lasting dispute between the current sovereign states. Kashmir, the disputed territory, has a Pakistani-friendly Muslim majority. India, however, has formal claim to the territory since Kashmir was a state of India. Unable to come to a resolution, all parties involved are experiencing a cycle of aggression. From a cynical standpoint, each country will protect its own interests first, so an act of preparation to defend itself may be perceived as a threat to the other. Consequently, there is an onslaught of violence and miscalculations.

With the history of past violence that Pakistan has incited, India sees the actions of Pakistan and Kashmir as threats to India. Thus, India takes defensive measures to limit the people of Kashmir, such as setting curfews and spraying protesters with non-lethal pellet shotguns. On the other hand, the people of Pakistan and Kashmir see Kashmir as a rightfully-Pakistani Muslim state. Therefore, the people of Kashmir perform offensive operations against the Indian government, like protesting and harassing Indian military, because they see the Indian government as oppressing Kashmir’s right to be part of the country that it wants to be.

The conflict between India and Pakistan is deeply rooted in the mistrust formed from violence that has run from 1947 all the way up to the 21st century. In order to overcome the distrust and disdain that the two countries have for each other, both would have to be willing to put aside their religious differences and their violent pasts in order to reach agreements that satisfy both parties. The people of Kashmir have spoken: they want to be a part of Pakistan. As the governing body over Kashmir, India should take the opinions of Kashmir into account and give them what they want to achieve peace. Yet, Pakistan must also be willing to take Kashmir and not push for more. Both countries must act in accordance to the safety of not only their own people, but for the peace and wellbeing of others, in order to make sure the future isn’t an India and Pakistan partitioned.