**Forum:** GA4

**Issue:** Strategies to Mitigate Tension and Ensure Stability in Congested, Disaster-Prone Regions, with a Focus on Kashmir.

**Student Officer:** Larson Simbine

**Position:** Deputy Chair



**Introduction**

The world is home to a plethora of regions/areas battling destabilization, whether it be via factors like armed conflicts, droughts, natural disasters, etc. The Kashmir region is one that has been embroiled in a perpetual state of instability, as a subsequent result of all of these factors & more. Territorial disputes in the region have ensured that tensions have been at a constant high between neighbouring states in & around the Indian subcontinent, while also making it challenging to respond to crises like natural disasters, as the aforementioned states have still been jockeying for sovereignty.

Since 1947, the Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as well as the People’s Republic of China have been at odds with each other, with regards to which state has the right to governance over the Kashmir region. Such disputes have often turned bloody, with 3 wars as well as several armed skirmishes being linked to Kashmir since the middle of the 20th century. By analysing tensions in areas like Kashmir, the devastating effects of political instability all around the world are made ever clearer, with the outbreak of wars displacing families, leading to mass casualties, as well as leading to large refugee crises.

Additionally, the Kashmir region is one which is prone to natural disasters, with floods, earthquakes & landslides all taking place on a frequent basis. This prevalence in natural disasters therefore poses a greater risk to the already unstable region, leading to even more hardships on towards Kashmir’s residents.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Geopolitical tension**

A state in which different nations find themselves politically at odds, potentially straining diplomatic ties & the ability to cooperate.

**Sovereignty**

The authority/ability of a state to govern a particular area or region. This authority must generally be recognized by many, or a majority of UN Member States in order to hold any real sort of credibility.

**Peacebuilding**

Efforts made at transforming from a state of conflict/tension towards a state of peace; potentially leading to the establishment of diplomatic relations amongst other things.

**Humanitarian Assistance**

The usually global, consecrated effort to provide aid to people in need. These people are often the subject of violent conflicts or natural disasters.

**Disaster Risk Reduction**

Efforts or policies aimed at reducing the devastating effect which natural disasters pose to those vulnerable to them. These include disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, rehabilitation & recovery.

**Climate Change Adaptation**

These are means aimed at taking action to mitigate the risks & effects of climate change, which include changing weather patterns, rising sea levels, among other things.

**Infrastructure Resilience**

How well infrastructure e.g. buildings, roads can withstand external shocks which may lead to their damage.

**Environmental Management**

Measures taken to mitigate the detrimental effects things such as natural disasters, climate change, etc. can pose.

**Background Information**

**The Kashmir region:**

Located in the heart of south central Asia, Kashmir is a region rich in beautiful sights & fertile lands, with crops like saffron, apples, rice & other vegetables routinely being cultivated in the region. Areas like the Kashmir Valley are also surrounded by mountainous landscapes like the ones of the Himalayas, with lakes like the Dal lake and Nigeen lake further enhancing the area's beauty; with such places proving to appeal to tourists. These factors and more have assured that Kashmir would be a key economic interest, which any nation would be fortunate to bear claim to.

**Geopolitical Tension in the Kashmir region:**

The Kashmir region in south central Asia has been an area which has been hotly contested for, ever since the British left the region by handing India & Pakistan independence in 1947. This all came to a boiling point for the first time in October 1947, with the outbreak of the first Indo-Pakistani War, culminating in Pakistan controlling approximately 1/3rd of the Kashmir region, & India controlling the rest. The Sino-Indian War in 1962 also saw the People’s Republic of China enter the equation, having seized the easternmost part of the region from India; in a short yet bloody conflict. All of these factors & more, including the outbreak of two more wars between India & Pakistan, have seen relations strained between all three of these powers; with none of them willing to relinquish their claims to the region.

**The effect of natural disasters to the Kashmir region:**

Kashmir has also proven to be a region prone to devastating natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, & those of the like. One of the more harrowing incidents of a natural disaster befalling this region came 20 years ago, when the 2005 Kashmir earthquake led to the deaths of over 85,000 people, with hundreds of thousands more being injured & millions being displaced. The presence of rivers such as the Jhelum River, which tends to overflow during the heavy rains of monsoon season, has also meant that floods have been a prevalent part of the region's history. In particular, the 2014 floods in Kashmir have been cited as some of the worst in recent memory, with the damage of infrastructure displacing hundreds of thousands from their homes. Factors like deforestation & climate change have only served to make this situation more dier, with human interference not only increasing the prevalence of these disasters, but their devastating effect too, as the roots of trees can no longer help to absorb some of that rain water.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

**India**

Controlling roughly 2/3rd’s of Kashmir, including areas like the Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh, India is a relevant stakeholder with regards to issues present in the region. The Republic of India’s involvement in the region stems back to 1947, whereupon the partition of India & Pakistan, the ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, seceded the territory to the Indian Government, in exchange for military protection against Pakistani backed tribal militias. Ever since this key event, India has resisted any attempts at Kashmir’s secession, claiming that the region is a vital part of India. Kashmir was integrated into the republic through Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, being allowed to have its own constitution, flag, as well as government; while the Republic of India maintained control over foreign affairs, defense, finance & communications.

**Pakistan**

Pakistan has laid claim to Kashmir since its own independence in 1947, arguing that the region should have been seceded to it, based on the fact that it had a Muslim majority population present; as per previous agreements made with India based on religious grounds. As such, Pakistan did not accept the Instrument of Accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh, which handed the region to the Republic of India. This all culminated in the First Indo Pakistani war, & the resulting ceasefire handed Pakistan control over approximately 1/3rd of the Kashmir region. To this day, Pakistan still maintains that Kashmir is a disputed territory, firmly believing that the Kashmiri people should have their own say as to who should control the region; having called for referendums in Kashmir.

**China**

China’s stance in Kashmir is rooted in control over the northeastern part of the region, namely the Aksai Chin area. It is important to note that China does not lay claim to the entirety of Kashmir, unlike India & Pakistan; rather just this area. This would be as Akshai Chin acts as an area of strategic importance; connecting Tibet with Xinjiang. China & India have been at odds with regards to this part of the region, resulting in the Sino Indian War in 1962, which saw China take control of this region & integrate it as a part of its own country. China has historically supported Pakistan’s stance on Kashmir, likely due to the fact that both nation’s interests align on the matter.

**UN Security Council**

The UN Security Council has long since been called upon in order to solve disputes in this region, being called to intervene on the outbreak of 3 separate conflicts between India & Pakistan, as well as coming up with resolutions in efforts to bring stability & peace to the region; by partitioning Kashmir.

**United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs**

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) has played a role in coordinating humanitarian assistance & relief in Kashmir, after the outbreak of natural disasters, namely including earthquakes, floods, etc.

**Timeline of Events**

| **Date** | **Description of Event** |
| --- | --- |
| 16th March 1846 | Treaty of Amritsar signed, bringing Kashmir under control of the British Raj |
| 14th August 1947 | British India Partitioned into India & Pakistan |
| 22nd October 1947 | Outbreak of the First Indo Pakistani War |
| 20th October 1962 | Outbreak of the Sino Indian War |
| 5th August 1965 | Outbreak of the Second Kashmir War |

**Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

* Security Council Resolution 215 calling upon India & Pakistan to schedule troop withdrawal, 11 May, 1965 **(S/RES/2015/1965)**
* Security Council Resolution 47 on the restoration of peace, order & the plebiscite in the State of Jammu & Kashmir, 21 April, 1948 **(S/RES/1947)**
* Security Council Resolution 209 on an immediate ceasefire between India & Pakistan, 4 April 1965 **(S/RES/209)**
* Security Council Resolution 38 requesting India & Pakistan to take measures to improve the situation in Kashmir, 17 January 1948 **(S/RES/38/1948)**
* Draft resolution on the situation of human rights in Jammu & Kashmir, 28 February 1994 **(E/CN.4/1994/L.40)**
* Resolution on the final disposition of the State of Jammu & Kashmir, 24 January 1957 **(S/3779)**
* Resolution concerning the India & Pakistan question adopted at meeting 470 of the Security Council, 14 March 1950 **(S/1469)**

**Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

**The Tashkent Agreement**

India & Pakistan came together to sign the Tashkent Agreement in 1966, shortly after the conclusion of the Second Kashmir War, the year prior. This was brokered by the neutral Soviet Union in an attempt to ensure peace regionally, & it mainly focused on normalizing relations between the two previously hostile nations. As a result of this, the question of Kashmir was left out for the most part, with efforts at reconciliation being the key focus of this convention.

**The Simla Agreement (1972)**

Shortly after Bangladesh had gained independence from Pakistan in 1971, India & Pakistan reopened discussions in an attempt to resolve the issue in Kashmir; with efforts being spearheaded by both powers. This attempt at resolving the Kashmir issue marked significant progress in the resolution of the territorial dispute, namely stating that both countries would resolve their differences bilaterally, with neither side altering the situation of Kashmir by themselves. Although this paved the way for future talks on the issue, India & Pakistan’s differences on the matter had meant that no real resolution on the matter had come to pass.

**The Lahore Declaration (1999)**

In 1999, Heads of India & Pakistan, Atal Bihari Vajypayee, as well as Pervez Musharraf respectively, convened in Lahore in efforts to discuss peace between the two regional powers. Subsequently, the Lahore Agreement reaffirmed both nations’ resolve with regards to solving tensions, with both seemingly keen on bringing the Kashmir issue to a close. However, the outbreak of the Kargil War later that year had not only served to strain relations between the two, but to also halt any chances at a lasting peace between them, or a resolution to territorial disputes in Kashmir.

**Administration of Aid After The 2005 Kashmir Earthquake**

As for the issue that is trying to mitigate the impact of natural disasters in the region, relief efforts have routinely been spearheaded in the wake of such devastating events. One of these instances came in 2005, when India launched Operation Sahayata in an effort to provide emergency relief, by distributing food, water & other medical supplies. It is worth noting that the Indian army was also deployed in order to search for potential survivors, amongst the rubble. While such efforts helped to minimize the catastrophic impact that the earthquake had on Kashmir initially, they ultimately fall short when it comes to bringing long term solutions to the issue.

**Disaster Management Policies & National Response**

Over the past few decades, India has developed numerous disaster management policies, with events like the 2001 Gujarat earthquake and 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami acting as catalysts to these changes. These policies saw bodies like the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) come into fruition, with such organisations looking to find ways to institutionalise disaster preparedness. The Jammu and Kashmir State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), which is more specific to the region, works in cohesion with the NDMA to improve early warning systems, disaster preparedness, as well as to train first responders when it comes to natural disasters occuring.

**Possible Solutions**

**The Formation of Trilateral Relations & Dialogue**

Quite simply put, any attempts to solve the Kashmir issue between the regional powers of India, Pakistan & China, must first require the full intent of the aforementioned nations to come to a resolution on this matter. Preferably, this would be through direct dialogue between India, Pakistan & China, with no involvement from outside parties, but as seen previously through acts like the Tashkent Agreement, such third parties may be pivotal in acting as a middle ground between the hostile nations. Dialogue may act as an opportunity for India, Pakistan & China to express their concerns, as well as their grievances; potentially bringing all three of them one step closer to reconciliation.

**UN Mandated Plebiscite or Resolution**

Another solution to the Kashmir issue would be to hold a referendum or vote, with regards to which nation the region should choose to align with; with Kashmiris being able to get a voice on the matter. This would not only give the people of Kashmir a voice on the matter, which they haven’t had any real say on, but it would also ensure that a fair & democratic solution to this matter is reached. However, conditions would first need to be agreed upon by India & Pakistan, which have been unable to come to any agreements on how a plebiscite would take place before.

**Creation of Autonomous Regions Within Kashmir**

This would see Jammu & Kashmir divided into numerous autonomous regions, with each said region being given its own regional governance over their own regional territory. Such regions may be allocated to dominant religious/ethnic groups in the region, such as Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs primarily; in order to ensure their rights are being protected. As a result of such policies, local autonomy & governance could be ensured in such a diverse region, while the needs of various communities in Kashmir would be met.

**Improved Disaster Preparedness & Early Warning Systems**

The effect of natural disasters on the region have clearly played a huge role in the instability, as well as chaos, present in the region of Kashmir. As such, measures like improved disaster preparedness & early warning systems can help to keep future damage minimal, in order to ensure future natural disasters aren’t as destructive as the ones of old (2005 Kashmir earthquake, 2014 Kashmir floods). Flood forecast systems can be installed for areas like the Jhelum River, which are routinely prone to flooding, as this could act as a first step in safely evacuating locals. Early earthquake warning systems & landslide/avalanche monitoring could help minimize any future damage posed by natural disasters, with such efforts being able to alert people of an earthquake moments before, as well as warn communities about any real time risks of a potential avalanche, respectively.

**Strengthening Infrastructure and Building Resilient Communities**

The strengthening of infrastructure would be pivotal in mitigating the effects of natural disasters like earthquakes, as well as any damages from war, should they happen to break out. The construction of earthquake resilient buildings, that can withstand seismic shocks, should be prioritized, as it could make sure any future earthquakes aren’t as detrimental as the ones of old, such as the 2005 Kashmir Earthquake. Roads & transportation that can withstand landslides must also be constructed, as such events take place relatively frequently in the Kashmir region.

**Guiding Questions**

1. How is your delegation affected by this?
2. What has your delegation previously done in order to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, at home & abroad?
3. What could your delegation do to help the people of Kashmir, during the outbreak of natural disasters?
4. Does your delegation have a stance on the geopolitical issues that surround Kashmir?
5. Which alternative solutions could be brought forward to resolve the Kashmir Conflict?
6. How can Trilateral relations be established between India, Pakistan & China?
7. Does your own delegation suffer from the effects of natural disasters?
8. What can be done to ensure any future attempts at solving the Kashmir issue prove to be effective?
9. How can the Kashmir issue be resolved, while still benefiting each stakeholder?
10. How can things like natural disaster detection systems be enforced?

**Bibliography**

* Isaac, J. (2008). *The Vale of Kashmir*. W. W. Norton & Company.
* Owen, L. A., Kamp, U., Khattak, G. A., Harp, E. L., Keefer, D. K., & Bauer, M. A. (2007). Landslides triggered by the 8 October 2005 Kashmir earthquake. *Geomorphology*, *94*(1–2), 1–9.
* Schofield, V. (2003). Kashmir in conflict: India, Pakistan and the unending war. *Choice Reviews Online*, *40*(11), 40–6689.
* Avouac, J., Ayoub, F., Leprince, S., Konca, O., & Helmberger, D. V. (2006). The 2005, Mw 7.6 Kashmir earthquake: Sub-pixel correlation of ASTER images and seismic waveforms analysis. *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*, *249*(3–4), 514–528.
* Pye, L. W., & Bose, S. (2003). Kashmir: Roots of conflict, paths to peace. *Foreign Affairs*, *82*(6), 172.
* Schiffman, C., Bali, B. S., Szeliga, W., & Bilham, R. (2013). Seismic slip deficit in the Kashmir Himalaya from GPS observations. *Geophysical Research Letters*, *40*(21), 5642–5645.
* Alam, A., Bhat, M. S., & Maheen, M. (2019). Using Landsat satellite data for assessing the land use and land cover change in Kashmir valley. *GeoJournal*, *85*(6), 1529–1543.

**Appendix or Appendices**

1. <https://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/pkoth/kashmir.shtml> (Peacekeeping Operations & Historical Resolutions).

*This website is useful as it is the official UN page, providing an overview of the Kashmir Conflict in its entirety.*

1. [*https://www.thekashmirmonitor.net*](https://www.thekashmirmonitor.net)(News on Kashmir).

*This website is useful as it is a portal covering political, social & cultural issues in Kashmir.*

1. <https://www.cfr.org/asia/kashmir> (Council on Foreign Relations).

*This website is useful as it provides detailed reports & articles on the Kashmir Conflict.*

1. <http://www.kashmirtimes.com> (Regional News Publication).

*This website is useful as it focuses on news regarding Jammu & Kashmir.*