

***The Difficult Politics of Peace: Rivalry in Modern South Asia,* Christopher Clary, (Oxford University Press, 2022), 320**

India and Pakistan have been involved in a long-standing rivalry over the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) for seven decades. Since their independence in 1947, both states have fought three wars and border skirmishes frequently occur at the Line of Control (LOC), the line that divides the part of J&K each state controls. The unresolved issue of J&K has been a bone of contention between the two neighbors besides other issues like the Rann of Kutch, Siachein etc. In order to ensure control over these areas, both countries allocate a large portion of their budget on defence even while facing other economic challenges, the author argues.

The book under review is authored by Christopher Clary, an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University at Albany, State University of New York, and a Nonresident Fellow with the South Asia Program of the Stimson Center in Washington, DC. The book is divided into eight chapters and provides a chronology of major events and developments that mark the rivalry between the two neighboring states. Clary attempts to dissect the cycle of peace-building and war-making between the rival states by taking into account various developments such as; 1948 war, 1965 war, Tashkent Declaration 1966, 1971 war, Kargil conflict, the then-Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to Lahore in 1999, and Musharraf's four stage Kashmir plan etc.

The author with the help of his 'Leader Primacy Theory' elucidates how leaders control foreign policy of a state. Through this lens, he explains the fluctuations in Indo-Pakistan enduring rivalry. There were times when both states came close to peace and then reverted back to conflict. So what actually influences the decision making in both states? He assesses Indo-Pak rivalry through the prism of his own theory and also compared it with other theories of peace and conflict. According to the author, the onus is on degree of authority the leader holds within the government. Often leaders with fractured diplomacy fail to develop cordial relations with rival states. He concludes that rapprochement, and reversal to conflict involves the presence or absence of strategic incentives. But occasionally, such strategic incentives are rendered purposeless if peace is not in the interest of power centers/veto players of the state i.e. intelligence agencies, political

opponents and higher military officials. Often times, even if the leader of one state has the authority within the government, he/she is still unable to make peaceful relations with the rival state mainly because the leader of the rival state does not hold the same degree of authority. It therefore depends on the leaders of both states and not just one.

The book also sheds light on the circumstances under which rivalries are more peaceful and when they are more conflictual. The author explains why and when a state opts for peace-building and when it is prone to war-making. He asserts that such variations in the quantum of rivalry are a product of the political choices of policymakers. He analyzes Indo-Pak rivalry from a historical perspective with the help of some recently declassified documents, and interviews of the policymakers. He provides an explanation of the causes of peace and war between the two South Asian rivals that suggests that the domestic politics of the two are complex and sometimes dangerous. He asserts that not only rivalry impacts interstate relations but also the politics within the two rival states is transformed by the internal friction.

Clary examines the patterns in both states since 1947 until the present. He argues that the international strategic incentives are often pushed into background by the domestic politics of a state. He is of the view that Pakistan's civil-military relationship is complex and army as well as its intelligence agencies exert influence over the domestic politics, and also shape its foreign policy in a way that best serves their own interests. On the other hand, India has fractious coalition politics and leaders who attempt to initiate efforts for better relation with Pakistan are either pressurized or overthrown by the veto players within the government.

Overall, the book presents a detailed account of cycle of conflict and cooperation in Indo-Pak rivalry however; it only presents one side of the history i.e. Indian perspective. For instance, the author calls Pakistani army revisionist which is emboldened by its nuclear capability to engage in a high-stakes game of proxy violence against India. Such claims are unsubstantiated according to Pakistani authorities, and a narrative built by India. He does not mention RAW's role in fomenting militancy in Balochistan province of Pakistan, and its border areas with Afghanistan. There is substantial evidence available that shows that several organizations are operating as Indian proxies in these areas. The author

also does not discuss India's abrogation of articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution. He also does not take into account Indian airstrikes on Pakistani territory in 2019, and claim that it had carried out a surgical strike in 2016 while discussing Indian role in maintaining peace and stability between the two states.

In chapter six titled '*Dhaka, Simla and an Incomplete Peace*'; he claims that "There is considerable evidence available that the Pakistan military may have sought to ethnically cleanse the East-Pakistan of its Hindu population". 1971 war was fought vehemently by the Pakistani army to secure the Eastern part of its territory and not to commit Hindu ethnic cleansing. Sarmila Bose, after extensive research in her book "*Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War*" has established that the atrocities were carried out by both sides. Bengalis also actually killed many west Pakistanis, and Biharis who supported a united Pakistan.

While discussing about South Asian nuclearization in chapter seven, Clary writes that India's 1974 nuclear test was a peaceful one and despite India's avowed peaceful goals, Pakistan's nuclear weapons program accelerated in response. By the mid of 1980s, Pakistan had sufficient fissile material to make a nuclear bomb. India, being cognizant of Pakistan's nuclear weapons progress, reenergized its weapons work. It may also be interesting to note that technically there is no difference between a PNE and a weapon test but the author does not think so. The author also does not take into consideration proposals initiated by Pakistan to keep South Asia free of nuclear weapons. After the first Indian nuclear test, Pakistan made several proposals for keeping South Asia free of nuclear weapons and missiles. These proposals include simultaneous application of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards on all nuclear facilities and bilateral arrangement for their reciprocal inspections; simultaneous accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); regional CTBT; Zero Missile Regime in South Asia; and signing of a Non-Aggression Pact. However, none of these proposals met a positive response. In addition, Pakistan is not the first to introduce nuclear weapons in South Asia. It was forced to develop nuclear capability for self defence. After 1998 nuclear tests, Pakistan proposed a Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR) in South Asia. The SRR is premised on three intertwining and mutually reinforcing elements of conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraint, and conventional force

balance. If taken in earnest, this proposal could lay the foundation of enduring peace and stability in the South Asian region.

Generally, *The Difficult Politics of Peace* is a remarkable read. Clary justifies his argument based on his leader primacy theory and has given a new perspective on 'India-Pakistan unending rivalry' to the international relations scholars. Through his theory, he makes a reasonable point that both Indian and Pakistani leaders who had the motivation for peace and also had the authority did initiate peace-building process, with a long-term vision and not just as a temporary measure taken between wars and conflicts to normalize the situation. This book is an excellent account of the background of the rivalry between Pakistan and India and gives an understanding of the challenges that both states face in laying the foundation for lasting peace in the region.

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