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Line of (No) Control: A Plausibility Probe into Rasler's De-escalation Model using the India-Pakistan Case

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I.   Introduction

At the core of the world's most pressing security challenges lie a multitude of protracted interstate rivalries and conflicts. The scholarship around the issue of protracted conflicts has been offering a plethora of fresh theoretical frameworks to view and understand some of the world's most intransigent and protracted interstate conflicts. While many authors have dealt with the origins of dyadic conflicts and why they persist, relatively less attention has been afforded to the conditions that allow for their termination. Amongst the limited literature that deals with the de-escalation of protracted conflicts, Karen Rasler's model stands out as an evolutionary framework. The framework has held substantial explanatory power in understanding how protracted dyadic conflicts de-escalate and the necessary conditions that have allowed for de-escalation to occur in the 10 most prominent cases of dyadic conflicts in the modern age[1].

However, it is evident that in many ways, the world has changed substantially in recent times and possibly, so has the fundamental nature of conflicts. Previously held assumptions about the conditions that allow for conflicts to persist may or may not hold true anymore. Consequently, assumptions about the conditions that allow for de-escalation also may or may not stand either. The question that must be asked then is, does the 20-year-old theory still hold relevance? Can a theory that has worked well in explaining conflicts of the past, be robust enough to stand up to the changing contextual situations of today? It is this question I am attempting to explore through this paper by way of a plausibility probe. In order to probe the theory in today's day and age, I use on of the most the pertinent cases of a protracted dyadic conflict post World War II – the case study of India and Pakistan.

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[1] Karen A. Rasler, William R. Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly, *How Rivalries End* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

No study of inter-state rivalry and protracted conflicts can overlook the India-Pakistan case. It is a conflict which directly affects nearly 1.6 billion people or 20% of the world's population, not to mention the larger strategic significance the region has in the world. Hence any broad theory on rivalry termination that is developed must consider its applicability in the India-Pakistan case. It is to be noted that Rasler et al. themselves have already tested the theory against the India-Pakistan case for the period 1947-2010.[2] Why then is it necessary to re-assess the case if it has already been attempted? The answer lies in the simple contention that the context under which India and Pakistan have historically operated in has changed.

The 2014 Indian Parliamentary elections would mark a important inflection point in the history of India and the Indian subcontinent. The election of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister would usher in more assertive, aggressive and erratic Indian behaviour in the region. This unpredictability in behaviour in foreign policy would especially be ostensible during and following the end of Modi's first term. This is the reason why I have selected this time period (2019-2022) as the basis of my analysis. Within Pakistan, during the same period - internal political instability and an impending economic crisis seem to be affecting the Pakistani establishment's behaviour towards India. Finally, a rising, more aggressive China and its clashes with India during the same time duration has become a major concern for India. The South Asian situation therefore, has changed – warranting a re-assessment through an established theoretical framework.

For this paper, I will first engage with the most prominent theory on de-escalation and other theories that have attempted to deal with the question of rivalry termination. I will attempt to identify gaps in this existing literature and elaborate how the Rasler theory fills in the gaps. Then I will enter into a discussion of the significance of the India-Pakistan case and

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[2] Karen A. Rasler, William R. Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly. ; *The results of the study are discussed in depth in the next section of the paper.*

what previous work on the topic has said. After establishing the details of Rasler's theoretical framework, I will establish a historical context to the case of India and Pakistan and attempt to lay a bridge between its history and the current scenario by exploring its changing contexts. I will then move into a discussion of the analysis and results which will use Rasler's theoretical framework to study 3 events in the recent history of India and Pakistan – (1). Pulwama/ Balakot crisis, (2). Abrogation of Article 370 and, (3). India's border clashes with China[3]. Finally, I will summarise my findings and present my theoretical contributions in the conclusion section.

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[3] I would like to thank Shreyas Shende for his academic contributions that allowed me to study these cases better.

II.   Literature Review

Existing scholarship approaches the question of de-escalation from a number of different positions. Consequently, there are many theories guide the study of de-escalation of protracted conflicts. In this literature review section, I am going to be engaging with the most prominent theory in rivalry termination – ripeness. Then, I will briefly mention what other theories - that have taken up the question of de-escalation of protracted conflicts - say and highlight the gap in the literature. Then I will move into a discussion of the significance of the India-Pakistan case while highlighting previous research.

Ripeness Theory

A theory which features prominently in the scholarship that engages in the issue of conflict de-escalation is that of ripeness[4]. Zartman introduced the theory in 1985, with further refinements being made in later works[5]. The theory of ripeness has subsequently been worked on, primarily by academics concerned with war termination. Hancock organizes the authors who have worked on the ripeness theory into 2 groups: the 'objective' group who focus on crises and stalemates and the subjective group that have focused on the perception that parties hold around negotiation (i.e.. if the time to negotiate is ripe or if negotiation can provide more benefit than fighting).[6] In this discussion, I will engage with the different conceptions of ripeness according to the conceptual categorizations that Hancock has introduced.

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[4] William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (Oxford University Press, 1985), //global.oup.com/ushe/product/ripe-for-resolution-9780195059311.

[5] I. William Zartman, "The Timing of Peace Initiatives: Hurting Stalemates and Ripe Moments 1," *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, October 18, 2007, https://doi.org/10.1080/14718800108405087.

[6] Landon E. Hancock, "To Act or Wait: A Two-Stage View of Ripeness," *International Studies Perspectives* 2, no. 2 (2001): 195–205.

There are 3 major proponents of ripeness, including the original author, Zartman. According to the original theory, the timing of the conflict resolution attempt has more value than the actual content of the proposals for a solution. Zartman states that the idea of ripeness is rooted in the adversaries' perception of a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS). In this situation, where both parties find themselves locked into a conflict where neither sees a possible victory, and the stalemate is painful to both of them, the adversaries seek a way out and conflict is terminated. The original theory proposed by Zartman was fairly limited in its scope and was subsequently expanded by characterizing the situations around catastrophe that incentivize parties to engage in negotiations so as to find a solution.

It is important to note that Zartman states that ripeness is a perceptual event that is necessary but not sufficient for the initiation of negotiations. It cannot be treated as self-fulfilling or self-implementing and requires the action of parties (or mediators) to be seized. A ripe moment can be seized if a valid spokesperson can create a perception for both parties that there is a way out from a deadlock in conflict[7]. Hancock states that Zartman's definition of ripeness assumes a sense of passivity where parties, including the third mediating party first must let violence and destruction continue until the situation is ripe for mediation. A failure to identify the right moment risks exacerbating the conflict through a ill-conceived intervention.

Haass, while believing that ripeness is essential to a successful negotiation, approaches ripeness in a slightly different way. He claims that ripeness is not a natural condition and introduces 4 prerequisites for ripeness[8]: (1) a shared desire to come to agreement, (2) the ability of leaders to come to an agreement and sell it to its constituents, (3) room enough in the negotiations so that parties can claim they protected their national

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[7] Daniel Druckman and Justin Green, "Playing Two Games: Internal Negotiations in the Philippines," in *Elusive Peace*, ed. I. William Zartman (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), 299–331.

[8] Richard N. Haass, *Conflicts Unending: The United States and Regional Disputes* (Yale University Press, 1990).

interests, and (4) a negotiation process that is acceptable to both parties.[9] He states that policymakers can only hope that conflict does not escalate in periods they identify as not being ripe. In this way, Haass differs from Zartman's definition as he considers ripeness as an perceptual issue which is concerned internal politics as opposed to Zartman who considers ripeness as being inter-party perceptional. By this definition, he brings into the concept of ripeness - an important property which is that each adversary party has within itself differing factions. In other words, he looks at ripeness as being concerned with intra-party perceptions.

Stephen John Stedman builds further on Zartman's theory and proposes that the definition of ripeness should be based around considering parties as a set of varied actors rather than singular entities[10]. This particular proposition of Stedman places his analysis between Haass' intra-party and Zartman's inter-party conceptualizations. He also further differs from Zartman from how he perceives the notion that actors need to believe that there is no scope for them to achieve their desired goals before they can identify a moment as being ripe. He believes that the perception of a mutually hurting stalemate is actors on either side must perceive the stalemate as mutually hurting but that in itself is not sufficient for ripeness. Like Haass, Stedman also focuses on the internal contributors of ripeness such as the role played by leadership in the conflict.

While ripeness acts as the theoretical foundation on which many subsequent theories of rivalry termination are built on, I argue that there are a few recognizable drawbacks with theory itself. The theory is posited as having predictive capability in very what are very complicated and uncertain circumstances. O'Kane's assessment of ripeness using the case of Northern Ireland points to a lack of evidence that decision makers – even by using Zartman's

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[9] Haass.

[10] Stephen John Stedman, *Peacemaking in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe, 1974-1980* (L. Rienner Publishers, 1991).

6 propositions – could accurately predict when conditions were ripe.[11] Lederach calls

ripeness a "rear view-mirror", pointing towards its usefulness as being more explanatory than

predictive.[12]

Another concern with ripeness is its over-emphasis on a single aspect of conflict

termination – the role of the third-party mediator. From Ganguly et al.'s study, it is clear that

in the case of India and Pakistan, the presence of a third-party mediator alone has not

contributed to de-escalation in the same way Zartman's theory would posit.[13] The singular

focus and emphasis on a single variable of rivalry termination is a theme which is witnessed

repeatedly in other theories as well.

Other theories

A few other scholars have taken up the subject of de-escalation or termination of

rivalry, highlighting different facets as drivers of de-escalation. Rock introduces a 3-step

model that begins with a catalyst such as a crisis which allows for a reexamination of

thinking to overcome policy inertia. In his model, when 3 sets of stimuli of motivation for

decision makers match with facilitating factors – peace between great powers becomes a

possibility.[14] For Armstrong, rivalry termination by way of negotiation becomes more likely

when adversaries are confronted with the threat of deteriorating strategic and diplomatic

conditions that brings about a rethink of their own strategies towards others.[15] Additionally,

Armstrong also considers the increased threat perception of an adversary, which was

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[11] Eamonn O'kane, "When Can Conflicts Be Resolved? A Critique of Ripeness," *Civil Wars* 8, no. 3–4 (September 1, 2006): 268–84, https://doi.org/10.1080/13698240601060710.

[12] Natalie Walter, "Summary of 'Building Peace,'" Text, Beyond Intractability, May 23, 2016, https://www.beyondintractability.org/bksum/building-lederach.

[13] Karen A. Rasler, William R. Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly, *How Rivalries End*.

[14] Stephen R. Rock, "Why Peace Breaks Out" University of North Carolina Press, accessed July 28, 2022, https://uncpress.org/book/9780807865866/why-peace-breaks-out/.

[15] Tony Armstrong, "Breaking the Ice," United States Institute of Peace, 1993, https://www.usip.org/publications/1993/07/breaking-ice.

previously perceived to be on the brink of collapse and not worth negotiating with as a facilitative factor.

The factors that contribute to destabilizing relationships and lead to possible de-escalation is the primary focus of the Goertz and Diehl model. These include shifts in power distributions, leadership/regime changes, resource scarcities, major wars, and changes in territorial control and are all possible sources of shocks to a rivalry.[16] Bennett approaches the question of rivalry termination from a cost-benefit point of view.[17] For him, if increasing threats increase the potential costs and/or benefits, it encourages rivalry termination. Changes in leadership also effect change since he argues new leaders are less committed to a old strategies and can adopt de-escalatory measures. For Maoz and Mor, the perception of incompatible goals for rivals and the dissatisfaction that arises from it is at the centre of rivalries.[18] Rivalries in this case believe that something can be done to rectify incompatibility of goals. Therefore, when dissatisfaction ends either due to a change in perception or an acceptance that nothing can be done about the incompatible goals – rivalry terminates.

The India-Pakistan rivalry has existed due to the existence of intractable conflict issues such as disputed borders. In this scenario of underlying intractable conflict issues, Orme posits that negotiated settlements are dependent on a set of factors that can affect reduction in hostilities.[19] These are; (1). Change in the perception of conflict from being intractable to more tractable than previously thought. (2). Existence of new external threats or internal economic concerns that create a pessimistic outlook for leaders on their ability to

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[16] Paul F. Diehl and Gary Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry*, 2000, https://www.press.umich.edu/16689/war_and_peace_in_international_rivalry; Gary Goertz and Paul F. Diehl, "The Initiation and Termination of Enduring Rivalries: The Impact of Political Shocks," *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (1995): 30–52, https://doi.org/10.2307/2111756.

[17] D. Scott Bennett, "Measuring Rivalry Termination, 1816-1992," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 2 (1997): 227–54; D. Scott Bennett, "Integrating and Testing Models of Rivalry Duration," *American Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 4 (1998): 1200–1232, https://doi.org/10.2307/2991855.

[18] Zeev Maoz and Ben Mor, *Bound By Struggle: The Strategic Evolution of Enduring Rivalries*, 2002, https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.17039.

[19] John Orme, *The Paradox of Peace: Leaders, Decisions, and Conflict Resolution* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

compete with rival. (3). If there is a lack of a risk of domestic political change and if the decision maker retains the ability to persuade populations to accept foreign policy changes – the pessimism can overcome distrust of the opponent and result in a negotiated settlement. It is evident that a major underlying issue between India and Pakistan is the existence of unsettled borders. Owsiak and Rider posit that the issue of disputed borders is the primary driver behind rivalries.[20] Consequently, resolving border issues would lead to less conflict and terminate rivalries. Their work is however quite open ended as to explaining the mechanisms through which conflict termination may occur.

The dominance of the Pakistani Military establishment over the country is also one of the reasons that conflict with India persists, as Ganguly has argued.[21] Darnton also concurs with the idea that military can be a major obstacle to rivalry de-escalation if it has a vested interest in allowing the rivalry to persist.[22] According to him, two things are necessary to overcome the military's power; (1). If ending the rivalry means a loss of a mission – an alternative mission needs to be found, and (2). Major resource constraints are also needed to convince the dominant power that change in the status quo is unavoidable.[23]

The identifiable gap in the existing literature is that most literature highlights certain facets of what may lead to termination of rivalries or de-escalation. The foci of existing literature ranges from endogenous factors such as domestic conditions[24] to exogenous factors such as the role of third parties.[25] Previous research has indicated that it is hard to establish a

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[20] Andrew P. Owsiak and Toby J. Rider, "Clearing the Hurdle: Border Settlement and Rivalry Termination," *The Journal of Politics* 75, no. 3 (July 2013): 757–72, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381613000595.

[21] Karen A. Rasler, William R. Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly, *How Rivalries End*.

[22] Christopher Darnton, *Rivalry and Alliance Politics in Cold War Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), https://doi.org/10.1353/book.31451.

[23] William R. Thompson, Kentaro Sakuwa, and Prashant Hosur Suhas, *Analyzing Strategic Rivalries in World Politics*, 1st ed. (Springer International Publishing, 2021), https://www.springerprofessional.de/en/analyzing-strategic-rivalries-in-world-politics/19886664.

[24] Orme, *The Paradox of Peace*; Maoz and Mor, *Bound By Struggle*; D. Scott Bennett, "Integrating and Testing Models of Rivalry Duration"; Goertz and Diehl, "The Initiation and Termination of Enduring Rivalries."

[25] William Zartman, "Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond," in *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War* (National Academies Press, 2000), 225–50.

direct causal link between the termination of protracted conflicts and factors the existing literature has covered.[26] Moreover, existing theories while highlighting different facets, tend to overlap as well. Therefore it is evident that their lies synergies between the literature which can be homogenized to come up with a broader theory. This is where Rasler's theory of expectancy revision and de-escalation of protracted conflicts acts as a unifying theory that encompasses elements of a large number of other theories.[27] Thompson argues that Rasler's theory highlights a core set of processes that encompasses the mechanisms of a large number of other theories and hence is a flexible and comprehensive instrument for deciphering how rivalries end.[28]

With the applicability of Rasler's model in mind, I intend to use the case of India and Pakistan to test the plausibility of her theory. I will be expanding on what the theory entails exactly in a latter section and testing it against the selected case.

Significance of the India- Pakistan case

The case of India and Pakistan has been one of the most prominent examples of a protracted dyadic conflict since the end of World War II. Both countries have engaged in hostilities ever since their founding in 1947, institutionalising the conflict. India has long maintained a doctrine of strategic restraint[29] in its policy towards dealing with provocations from Pakistan. Successive governments employed this doctrine in trying to get concessions

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[26] Roy Licklider, "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945-1993," *The American Political Science Review* 89, no. 3 (1993): 681–90, https://doi.org/10.2307/2082982; Charles King, *Ending Civil Wars*, Adelphi Paper 308 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 199.

[27] Karen Rasler, "Shocks, Expectancy Revision, and the De-Escalation of Protracted Conflicts: The Israeli–Palestinian Case," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 6 (2000): 699–720.

[28] William R. Thompson, Kentaro Sakuwa, and Prashant Hosur Suhas, *Analyzing Strategic Rivalries in World Politics*.

[29] Sunil Dasgupta and Stephen P. Cohen, "Is India Ending Its Strategic Restraint Doctrine?," *The Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 163–77, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2011.562442.

out of the Pakistani establishment[30]. However, these steps towards normalization and reconciliation have often been derailed by sudden escalatory events[31]. India's constant claim of Pakistan's alleged involvement with insurgent and terrorist groups that operate against India[32] has further made any growth in cooperation very hard.

The case of India and Pakistan has been previously studied under the Rasler theoretical framework for the period 1947-2010[33]. Chapter 6 of the book "How Rivalries End" has been dedicated to analysing the Indo-Pak case and to that end, Rasler et al. divide the study into 4 phases: Phase I: 1947-1966, Phase II: 1967-1971, Phase III: 1972-1989, Phase IV: 1990-1998, and Phase V: 1998-2010. The study finds that several attempts at de-escalation have been made in the 63 year period of study. However, despite the occurrence of external shocks, third party pressures and the presence of policy entrepreneurs, there has only been 1 phase where the rivalry saw substantial de-escalation: within Phase III (1972-1979). Even within Phase III, the underlying sources for conflict remained unresolved. Intransigence and a lack of reciprocity from the adversary, the authors claim, finally brought this period of de-escalation to a close.[34] The authors state a few possible explanations as to why the conflict has failed to subside despite the prevalence of most of the variables in the Rasler model. These explanations are rooted in the complex historical dynamic between both countries which I will briefly discuss in this paper as well.

The first explanation they posit is the differences in regional agendas of both India and Pakistan. With Pakistan being a revisionist power and India largely being a status quo

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[30] S Y SURENDRA KUMAR, "THE NARENDRA MODI GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TOWARDS PAKISTAN: COOPERATIVE AND TOUGH BILATERAL DIPLOMACY," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 21, no. 4 (2017): 126–37.

[31] Agnieszka Kuszewska, "India-Pakistan Conflict Escalation and De-Escalation: The Dynamics of Contemporary Security Challenges," in *Polish Contributions to South Asian Studies* (Elipsa, n.d.), 94–109.

[32] Abhinav Pandya, "The Future of Indo-Pak Relations after the Pulwama Attack," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13, no. 2 (2019): 65–68.

[33] Karen A. Rasler, William R. Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly, *How Rivalries End*.

[34] Karen A. Rasler, William R. Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly.

power[35], the question of territorial compromise from either side on one of the underlying sources of discontent – the Kashmir issue, becomes virtually non-existent[36], largely due to the differing regional agendas. Secondly, the structure of the states, the authors claim allow the conflict to persist. The domestic features of the Pakistani state – mainly the overbearing role of the military in the Pakistani state, make any resolution exceedingly difficult. The authors claim that civilian governments have been unable to seek any rapprochement with India since they have existed at the sufferance of the military, which has different priorities.

The implications of this case on the theoretical framework is that in the case of India and Pakistan – in the period being studied – shocks do not seem to be critical to bringing rivalry de-escalation, unlike the Israeli-Syrian case. The authors seems to find no links between shocks and expectancy revision. The shocks seem to have been intensifying the rivalry instead. Third-party pressures and some acts of reciprocity while being present in the relationship, do not seem to be contributing substantially to de-escalation efforts. In the one phase that the authors have recognised as having noticeable de-escalation – the Pakistani military established was in a weak state as a result of the 1971 India-Pakistan war.

However, with a visible change in foreign policy, brought by a more assertive, aggressive and domestically (ideologically) motivated government in India[37] -combined with the threat of a two front war for India – seems to have brought about a significant shift in the behaviour of the Pakistani dispensation which is ostensible by various reconciliatory gestures[38] made towards India in the past few years. Therefore, the case of India and Pakistan is ripe to be re-assessed.

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[35] Sumit Ganguly, "Nuclear Stability in South Asia," *International Security* 33, no. 2 (2008): 45–70.
[36] Karen A. Rasler, William R. Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly, *How Rivalries End*.
[37] John Vater and Yogesh Joshi, "Narendra Modi and the Transformation of India's Pakistan Policy," *South Asia Scan*, no. 9 (2020).
[38] Chandrima Banerjee, "Why Is Pakistan so Keen to Reopen Trade with India Now," *The Times of India*, February 27, 2022, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/forgetting-kashmir-pakistan-wants-to-trade-with-india-heres-

The challenge here is the recency of the time period being studied. I argue that a substantial shift in the dynamics of the two countries has been brought about by shocks. I elaborate on the historical context that India and Pakistan have operated in, how the situation has changed and the current situation in later parts of this paper. The new dynamic hence established warrants new research since it potentially varies from the dynamics that have been studied previously. New research could potentially lead to results that differ from previous studies. But the issue that arises is that this change is fairly recent and much is yet to be seen on how the effects of this shift in dynamics play out. Therefore the primary goal of the paper would not be to formally test the Rasler model using the new India-Pakistan case but rather to conduct a plausibility probe of the model.

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why/articleshow/89803565.cms. and "Pakistan's New National Security Policy: Test Lies in Implementation," *The Express Tribune*, February 2022, https://tribune.com.pk/story/2345659/pakistans-new-national-security-policy-test-lies-in-implementation.

III. Theory

I. _Model & Theoretical framework_

The theoretical foundation of this paper is drawn from Karen A. Rasler's 'Shocks, Expectancy Revision, and the De-escalation of Protracted Conflicts'. The purpose of this paper is to assess the suitability and explanatory value by way of a plausibility probe of the Rasler framework to understand the recent de-escalation of conflict between India and Pakistan. Karen Rasler introduces an evolutionary framework based on the revision of expectations to study the de-escalation of protracted conflicts. Her theory rests on 4 fundamental pillars – shocks, policy entrepreneurs, third party pressure and reciprocity. This theory was further developed in a subsequent book "How Rivalries End"[39] which added the concept of reinforcement into the framework. Previous literatures on de-escalation of protracted conflicts approach the question of de-escalation from a variety of angles. However, Rasler et al. posit that there is limited evidence that has been generated by prior research which shows that is a significant simple direct relationship between any single factor that have been previously explored and the termination of protracted conflicts[40]. The theory thus generated therefore takes into consideration multiple variables to account for the lack of evidence of significance of each variable.

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[39] Karen A. Rasler, William R. Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly, _How Rivalries End._

[40] Rasler, "Shocks, Expectancy Revision, and the De-Escalation of Protracted Conflicts: The Israeli–Palestinian Case."
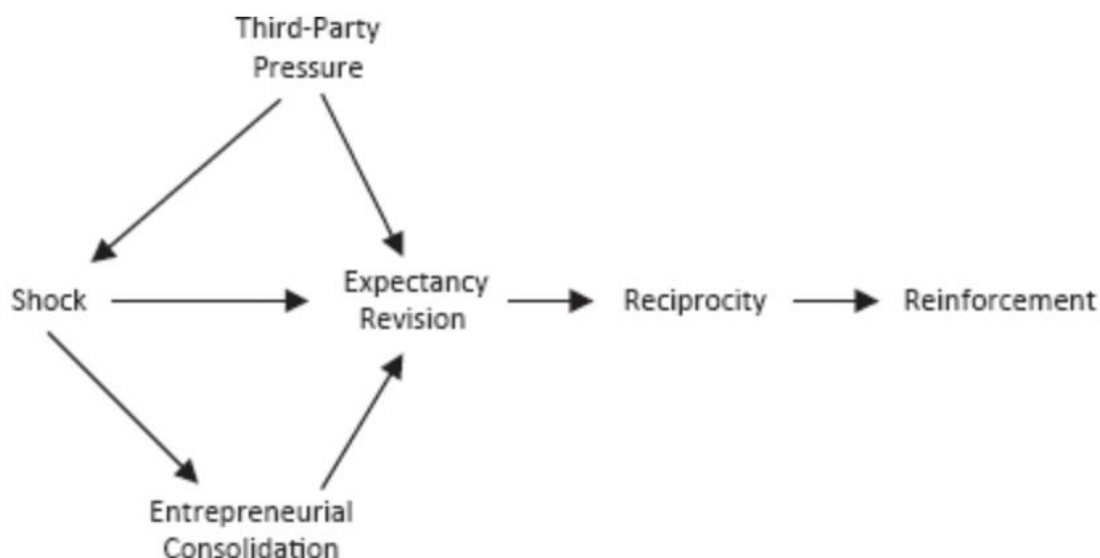
Figure 1. Expectancy model for rivalry de-escalation and termination.[41]

The basic model (Fig. 1) shows that a central causal mechanism of de-escalation is the presence of expectancy revision on the part of one or both adversaries[42]. The resistance to any resolution of the conflict stems from deeply entrenched expectations that each side has of the other. These expectations are based on strategies, tactics and past actions. The author argues that this intransigence is only weakened when a shock is introduced to the system. This shock could be exogenous or endogenous, and they allow for the transformation of protracted conflicts if they can encourage rivals to re-evaluate their existing policy positions against each other. However, shocks in themselves are not sufficient enough to bring de-escalation to a situation of protracted conflicts. Importantly, shocks could also act transitional situations which lead to further escalation. The impacts of the shocks, the author argues is "highly contingent on timing, context and changes in leader's expectations"[43]. Therefore, shocks themselves are not deterministic. De-escalation due to expectancy revision becomes more

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[41] Karen A. Rasler, William R. Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly, *How Rivalries End*.
[42] Rasler, "Shocks, Expectancy Revision, and the De-Escalation of Protracted Conflicts: The Israeli–Palestinian Case."
[43] Rasler.

likely when shocks converge with the other key variables; policy entrepreneurs, third party pressure and reciprocity & reinforcement.

Policy entrepreneurs are 'strategic pioneers' who are willing to take on established policy positions in an effort to overturn them. Existing policy positions are reinforced due to existing institutional structures within which are deep rooted supporting ideologies. According to the author, a policy entrepreneur must "first consolidate their political influence by effectively eliminating or removing their internal opposition and promoting the role of like-minded reformers."[44] This process of is affected by the occurrence of shocks as well. Critical events or shocks can allow policy entrepreneurs a window of opportunity to assert their political leadership by introducing innovative solutions to existing problems.

Third-party pressure on adversaries is also an important variable in this model of de-escalation. External mediation could perform as an important causal force in bringing about de-escalation. However, the author argues it is unlikely that mediation, in the absence of expectancy revision or actions of policy entrepreneurs, can bring about any de-escalation. Shocks play an important role in the efficacy of third party pressure too. External mediators know that shocks can induce transitional phases which are ripe for third-party mediation. Therefore, shocks can reintroduce third party attempts at mediation & negotiation towards peace.

Finally, reciprocity and reinforcement are crucial in bringing about de-escalation[45]. For effective de-escalation, appropriate concessions need to be made by both adversaries. Cooperation and concessions can contribute to altering and then reinforcing expectations

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[44] Rasler.

[45] Louis Kriesberg, *Constructive Conflicts: From Escalation to Resolution* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); Joshua S. Goldstein and John R. Freeman, *Three-Way Street: Strategic Reciprocity in World Politics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/T/bo3774476.html; Richard Ned Lebow, "The Search for Accomodation: Gorbachev in Comparative Perspective," in *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War*, ed. Thomas Risse-Kappen and Richard Ned Lebow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

which allow for a shift towards moderation. Reciprocity and reinforcement are crucial elements in the strengthening of the de-escalation process post the initial political breakthrough.

II.   *The Case of India and Pakistan*

Historical context to the case of India and Pakistan

This section of the theory aims to review the literature which establish the fundamental basis which has dictated the interactions between India and Pakistan. Further, it aims to establish aspects of the dynamic which have enabled the conflict to protract. It then introduces the current situation between the two countries which lays out the empirical puzzle.

The relationship between India and Pakistan was established in the backdrop of a war over the -then princely state of Jammu & Kashmir[46]. This territorial dispute has acted as a fulcrum for the repeated souring of relations between the 2 states over the past 75 years[47]. As John A. Vasquez notes, if the foundation of the rivalry is rooted in a territorial dispute, rival states stand a much higher chance of engaging in a war.[48] This indeed stands true for India and Pakistan, who in their first 60 years of existence, have been involved in 4 wars (1947-48, 1965, 1971, and 1999), three of which (1947-48, 1965 and 1999) have been fought over the Kashmir region[49]. This particular region is of such significance for both regions since it backs

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[46] Anand Mohan, "The Historical Roots of the Kashmir Conflict," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 15, no. 4 (1992): 283–308.

[47] Mohan.

[48] John A. Vasquez, "Distinguishing Rivals That Go to War from Those That Do Not: A Quantitative Comparative Case Study of the Two Paths to War," *International Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1996): 531–58. 1. Hereafter rivalry is defined as, "a relationship characterised by extreme competition and usually psychological hostility, in which the issue positions of contenders are governed primarily by their attitude toward each other rather than by the stakes at hand"

[49] T.V. Paul, ed., *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

the foundations of both countries.[50] India deems it necessary to hold onto this Muslim

majority region for it emphasizes its own identity as a secular state.[51] For Pakistan, which

was created as a homeland for Muslims in South Asia, its identity remains incomplete

without the absorption of Kashmir[52]. Vasquez argues that a persistent disagreement and the

use of negative acts build up a negative affect which result in 'the actor dimension' of rivalry,

which embeds the concept of cyclical conflict within the relationship[53]. This cyclical nature

of conflict can be visualized using Ramsbotham et al.'s conflict escalation and de-escalation

model which includes 9 stages: difference, contradiction, polarization, violence, war,

ceasefire, agreement, normalization, reconciliation.[54] Agnieszka Kuszweska asserts that India

and Pakistan's inherited, protracted conflict have witnessed all the above-mentioned phases

except normalization and reconciliation[55]. Efforts to de-escalate and normalize ties have

historically been derailed and rendered moot due to the cyclical nature of the conflict and the

resultant movement backwards, away from normalization and reconciliation.[56]

The most dramatic shift backward from a point approaching normalization was in

1999 during the Kargil war, in the backdrop of the nuclear tests that both countries carried

out a few years earlier. The Prime Minister of India, in a significant symbolic gesture,

reaffirmed India's commitment to Pakistan's territorial integrity while consequently choosing

to lower the state of alertness along the international border and the line of control.[57] This

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[50] Ganguly, "Nuclear Stability in South Asia."

[51] Ganguly. For the Indian position on Kashmir, see Sisir Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1966).

[52] For a discussion of the identity of Pakistan, see Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004). For the ideological claim of Pakistan to Kashmir see, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *The Myth of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[53] Vasquez, "Distinguishing Rivals That Go to War from Those That Do Not: A Quantitative Comparative Case Study of the Two Paths to War." 1. Actor Dimension here, is defined as a situation where contenders are more concerned with hurting or denying the competitor than with their own immediate value satisfaction.

[54] Oliver Ramsbotham, H. Miall, and T. Woodhouse, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

[55] Agnieszka Kuszweska, "India-Pakistan Conflict Escalation and De-Escalation: The Dynamics of Contemporary Security Challenges," in *Polish Contributions to South Asian Studies* (Elipsa, n.d.), 94–109.

[56] Kuszewska.

[57] Ganguly, "Nuclear Stability in South Asia."

was followed by a major incursion by Pakistani forces into the Indian-administered region of Kargil, which Ganguly argues was perceived as a "profound betrayal"[58] by the Indian establishment. Countering the narrative of nuclear deterrence acting as stabilizing force in the region, Paul Kapur asserts that nuclear weapons have provided Pakistan (the revisionist power) a compelling incentive to provoke India (the status quo power), with the former secure in the knowledge that its possession of nuclear weapons will limit any retaliatory action[59]. Michael Krepon furthers this argument by focusing on the 'stability/instability paradox' wherein neither India and Pakistan have a clear appreciation of the other's intentions, thus each is prone to making serious misjudgements through a process of mutual misperception and therefore he fears the two states may become trapped in a spiral of misperception and stumble into full-scale war. [60]

With regards to Pakistan's alleged involvement with the Kashmir insurgency[61], Kapur states that while India has maintained restraint, its patience has been tried and that it has come close to expanding the scope of conflict. Repeated Pakistani provocation he argues "may fray India's restraint and prod its decision makers to take military action in attempt to put an end to these periodic attacks"[62]. Therefore, to sum up, the India-Pakistan relationship in the past couple of decades has been characterized by a revisionist power in Pakistan and a India with a 'strategic restraint' doctrine which has shaped interactions between the two neighbours.[63]

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[58] Ibid

[59] S. Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), http://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=10541.

[60] Michael Krepon, "The Stability/Instability Paradox, Misperception and Escalation-Control in South Asia," ed. Rafiq Dossani and Henry S. Rowen, *Prospects for Peace in South Asia*, Stanford University Press, 2005.

[61] For origins of insurgency, see Sumit Ganguly, "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 76–107. And Pakistan's alleged involvement, see Sumit Ganguly and Kanti Bajpai, "India and the Crisis in Kashmir," *Asian Survey* 34, no. 5 (1994): 401–16.

[62] Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia.*

[63] Dasgupta and Cohen, "Is India Ending Its Strategic Restraint Doctrine?"

Changing contextual situation

The geo-political realities of South Asia have changed quite drastically in the past decades. The dominant political ideology of India has transformed in the past decade with the rise of Narendra Modi led right-wing, Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. Under Modi, the Indian dispensation has adopted a different approach to interact with Pakistan[64]. Kumar describes it 'cooperative and tough bilateral diplomacy', wherein Modi has often surprised the policy circles with surprising gestures towards building cooperation as well as acted harshly and aggressively as well.[65] Happymon Jacob, mentions how Narendra Modi's overtures to his counterpart, Nawaz Sharif surprised policy analysts, especially with his surprise visit to Sharif on the latter's birthday.[66] On the other side of the spectrum, the Modi government has also engaged with Pakistan in a highly escalatory manner, seemingly breaking away from India's strategic restraint doctrine.[67] Escalatory moves according to Kumar and Jacob include, the Balakot airstrikes and Abrogation of article 370[68].

In his study of cycles of cooperation and defection between Pakistan and India, Kanti Bajpai notes that Modi's seeming vacillations in his dealings with Pakistan – characterised by peace overtures during the first half of his tenure and more hard-line assertion during his second – could partially be explained by his inability to get the terrorism-based concessions he wanted through bilateral meetings. He further claims that Modi's assertive bilateralism has translated into an insistence that anti-terrorism is the only subject of discussion and that the

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[64] KUMAR, "THE NARENDRA MODI GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TOWARDS PAKISTAN: COOPERATIVE AND TOUGH BILATERAL DIPLOMACY." And Happymon Jacob, Sumit Ganguly, and E Sridharan, *Line on Fire: Ceasefire Violations and India-Pakistan Escalation Dynamics* (Oxford University Press, 2019).
[65] KUMAR, "THE NARENDRA MODI GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TOWARDS PAKISTAN: COOPERATIVE AND TOUGH BILATERAL DIPLOMACY."
[66] Jacob, Ganguly, and Sridharan, *Line on Fire: Ceasefire Violations and India-Pakistan Escalation Dynamics*.
[67] Vater and Joshi, "Narendra Modi and the Transformation of India's Pakistan Policy." and Kuszewska, "India-Pakistan Conflict Escalation and De-Escalation: The Dynamics of Contemporary Security Challenges."
[68] Pradip R. Sagar, "Balakot Airstrike Marked Paradigm Shift in the Way India Responds to Terror Attacks," *The Week*, n.d., https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2022/02/26/balakot-airstrike-marked-parasign-shift-in-way-india-responds-to-terror-attacks.html.

Kashmir dispute with Pakistan is off the table. This tougher stance on Pakistan has also

seemed to reap electoral rewards for the Modi government, who made it a central point to

their 2019 election campaign[69], which further makes a more assertive foreign policy towards

Pakistan, favourable to the Modi regime.

Another school of thought, pegs India's change in foreign policy to the rise of a more

irridentist China[70]. Singh argues, that after the border clashes in Eastern Ladakh in the

summer of 2020[71], the threat of a two front challenge (simultaneous conflicts with China as

well as Pakistan) become tangibly real, a threat he believes a resource constrained,

overstretched and vulnerable India military will bogged down by. The need therefore, for an

alternative way to deal with Pakistan is evident. Given these recent changes in the geo-

political context of the India-Pakistan relationship, Bajpai concludes by noting that India's

foreign policy towards Pakistan has changed under the Modi government, a view which is

consistent among other scholars as well.[72]

Current situation (2019-2022)

Ever since the major escalations between India and Pakistan in 2019[73], there has been

a relative peace that has presided between both nations. In a rare and sudden move, in

February 2021, the Director Generals of Military Operations of both countries declared in a

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[69] Ronojoy Sen, "ISAS Brief No. 656 - The Changing Narrative of India's General Elections," *Institute of South Asian Studies*, April 30, 2019, https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/ uploads/2019/04/ISAS-Briefs-No.-656-The-Changing-Narrative-of-Indias-General-Election.pdf.

[70] Sushant Singh, "The Challenge of a Two-Front War" (Stimson Center, 2021), JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep30830.

[71] Ethirajan Anbarasan, "China-India Clashes: No Change a Year after Ladakh Stand-Off," *BBC*, June 1, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57234024.

[72] Kanti Bajpai, "Narendra Modi's Pakistan and China Policy: Assertive Bilateral Diplomacy, Active Coalition Diplomacy," *International Affairs* 93, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 69–91, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiw003. And Vater and Joshi, "Narendra Modi and the Transformation of India's Pakistan Policy."

[73] "Kashmir Attack: Tracing the Path That Led to Pulwama," *BBC*, May 1, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-47302467.

joint statement to stop cross-border firings, adhering to the Ceasefire Agreement of 2003[74].

Ever since the declaration, the number of cross-border ceasefire violations (CFVs) have

drastically fallen to record lows, with the Indian Army claiming zero violations[75]. Figure 1.

Visually represents the sheer drop in ceasefire violations between both nations from previous
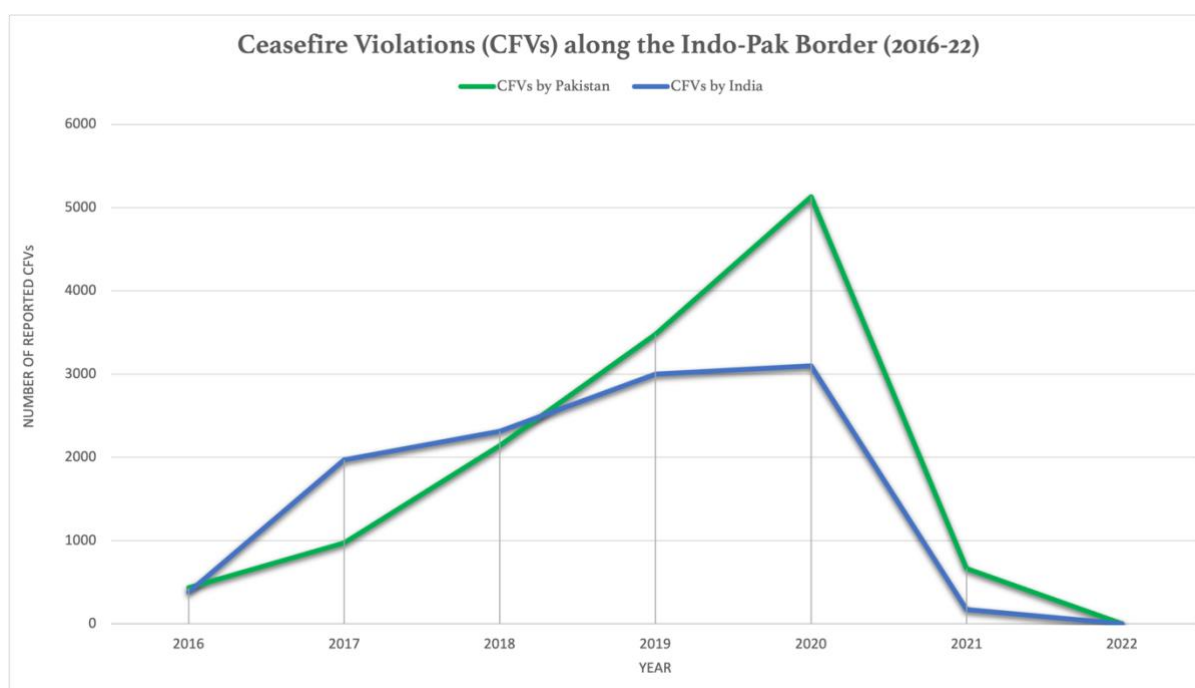
years.

Figure 2. Ceasefire violations along the Indo-Pak border[76].

The Pakistani Chief of Army Staff spoke of the need to "bury the past and move

forward" while referring to India-Pakistan ties, a view which was echoed by the Pakistani

Prime Minister[77]. Many such de-escalatory gestures and moves have been witnessed in the

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[74] Ghoshal, Devjyot. 2021. "India, Pakistan militaries agree to stop cross-border firing in rare joint statement." *Reuters*. February 25. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-pakistan/india-pakistan-militaries-agree-to-stop-cross-border-firing-in-rare-joint-statement-idUSKBN2AP0PG

[75] Naseer Ganai, "India-Pakistan LoC Truce: One Year On, Peace Prevails," *Outlook*, February 26, 2022, https://www.outlookindia.com/national/indo-pak-loc-truce-one-year-on-peace-prevails-news-184182. And "Lok Sabha Unstarred Question 2432" (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, August 3, 2021).

[76] "Ministry of Foreign Affairs – MOFA." Accessed June 27, 2022. https://mofa.gov.pk/. and "Lok Sabha Unstarred Question 2432." See appendix for data table.

[77] "Time to Bury the Past and Move Forward: COAS Bajwa on Indo-Pak Ties," *Dawn*, March 18, 2021, https://www.dawn.com/news/1613200#comments.

recent past which makes it evident that there has been a substantial shift in the dynamics between the 2 nuclear states despite their troubled history.

IV. Analysis and Results

I have elaborated on the empirical developments relating to the case of India and Pakistan. The next step from here is to analyze the explanatory value of Rasler's theoretical approach for this particular case. As previously mentioned, the case of India and Pakistan has been studied under the Rasler framework for the period 1947-2010, with the results pointing towards only one phase where significant de-escalation was witnessed, with no real link being witnessed between shocks and expectancy revision. This, despite the presence of policy entrepreneurs and third-party pressures. Given the unprecedented decrease in hostilities in the recent past[78], the case of India and Pakistan between the period 2019-2022 is ripe to be re-analyzed within the Rasler theoretical framework. For the purposes of this paper, I will examine the period 2019-22 (hereafter referred to as the current phase) through Rasler's expectancy revision theoretical approach and its key concepts; shocks, policy entrepreneurship, third party pressure, and reciprocity & reinforcement.

Identifying shocks

Rasler's framework introduces a few types of disruptive events that are likely to produce expectancy revision and eventual de-escalation[79]:

1. Emergence of external threats from new actors that reduce the significance of threats posed by existing adversaries.

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[78] See Fig 2. "Ceasefire violations along the Indo-Pakistan border"
[79] Rasler, "Shocks, Expectancy Revision, and the De-Escalation of Protracted Conflicts: The Israeli–Palestinian Case."

2. Changes in domestic political leadership that emphasize domestic problems at the expense of foreign policy considerations[80]

3. Significant decreases (current or impending) in the availability of economic resources.[81]

4. Catalytic event that makes adversaries re-evaluate their assumptions about their rivals or changes their ability to compete with them.[82]

Keeping this criterion in mind, I identify 3 shocks that feature prominently in the current phase I am studying:

1. Pulwama - Balakot Crisis (February 14, 2019 - March 1, 2019),

2. Abrogation of Article 370 by India (August 5, 2019), and

3. Border clashes between India and China (May 5, 2020).

The shocks are chronologically arranged and studied. These 3 shocks will be further be studied to ascertain the presence of variables (third party pressure, policy entrepreneurs, reciprocity and reinforcement) that make up Rasler's theoretical framework.

I. *Pulwama-Balakot Crisis (February 14, 2019 – March 1, 2019)*

The attack on a convoy carrying Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel by a vehicle borne suicide bomber in the Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir marked the beginning of a watershed moment in the geo-political realities of South Asia. The

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[80] Licklider, "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945-1993"; Valerie Bunce, *Do New Leaders Make a Difference?* (Princeton University Press, 1981), https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691642567/do-new-leaders-make-a-difference; Lebow, "The Search for Accomodation: Gorbachev in Comparative Perspective"; Matthew Evangelista, "Sources of Moderation in Soviet Security Policy," *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War* 2 (1991): 315–16.

[81] Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, "The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions," *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 3 (1997): 263–83, https://doi.org/10.2307/422121; Janice G. Stein, "The Political Economy of Security Agreements: The Linked Cost of Failure at Camp David," in *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics*, by Peter B. Evans, Harold K. Jacobson, and Robert David Putnam (University of California Press, 1993); Mattei Dogan and John Higley, "Elites, Crises, and Regimes in Comparative Analysis [1998]," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 37, no. 1 (139) (2012): 269–91.

[82] Rasler, "Shocks, Expectancy Revision, and the De-Escalation of Protracted Conflicts: The Israeli–Palestinian Case."

responsibility of the attack was claimed by a Pakistan-based Islamic militant group *Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)*.[83] The attack led to the death of 40 CRPF personnel in what many described as the worst attack in the region in over three decades[84]. The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, who was up for re-election in April, vowed that those behind the attack "would pay very a heavy price for their actions."[85] What followed was unprecedented in recent history between the 2 nations and a departure from established policy of strategic restraint that India had historically adhered to[86]. On February 26th, 12 Mirage 2000 jets of the Indian Airforce crossed the line of control (LoC) and claimed to have bombed "Jaish-e-Mohammed's biggest training camp" inside Balakot, Pakistan[87]. This was the first time after the Indo-Pak war of 1971, that Indian air force jets had crossed into Pakistani airspace for an offensive operation, conveying a clear departure from the dominant policy position of strategic restraint. The strikes were subsequently claimed to be "non-military" and "pre-emptive" in nature[88]. The following morning, Pakistani aircraft entered Indian airspace causing an aerial dogfight with Indian jets which resulted in the downing and capturing of an Indian pilot and an Indian claim of downing of a Pakistani F-16[89]. The crisis was the first of its kind, involving direct aerial combat since both countries became nuclear armed. The crisis

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[83] "Kashmir Attack: Tracing the Path That Led to Pulwama."

[84] Sameer Yasir and Maria Abi-Habib, "Kashmir Suffers From the Worst Attack There in 30 Years," *The New York Times*, February 14, 2019, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/world/asia/pulwama-attack-kashmir.html.

[85] "English Rendering of PM's Speech at the Flagging off Function of Vande Bharat Express," accessed July 8, 2022, https://pib.gov.in/pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1564704.

[86] Rakesh Sood, "Does Balakot Define a New Normal?," ORF, accessed July 7, 2022, https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/does-balakot-define-a-new-normal-49198/.

[87] "IAF Struck 'JeM's Biggest Training Camp' at Balakot, Says Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale on India's Operation in Pakistan-India News , Firstpost," Firstpost, February 26, 2019, https://www.firstpost.com/india/iaf-struck-jems-biggest-training-camp-at-balakot-says-foreign-secretary-vijay-gokhale-on-indias-operation-in-pakistan-6154411.html.

[88] "IAF Struck 'JeM's Biggest Training Camp' at Balakot, Says Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale on India's Operation in Pakistan-India News , Firstpost."

[89] Sameer Joshi, "How Pakistan Planned to Hit India Back for Balakot -- the Mission, the Fighters, the Tactics," *ThePrint* (blog), September 14, 2019, https://theprint.in/defence/how-pakistan-planned-to-hit-india-back-for-balakot-the-mission-the-fighters-the-tactics/291522/.

only subsided when Pakistan returned the captured Indian pilot after 58 hours in the custody of the Pakistani Army.[90]

Shock: The events of February 2019 feature as a prominent shock that fit within the definition that Rasler provides. As mentioned before, the Indian airstrikes marked the departure from the established policy position of strategic restraint by India. This sudden departure from its position introduces a sense of unpredictability in the bilateral relationship.[91] The unpredictability allows space for the re-evaluation of assumptions of the Pakistani dispensation vis-à-vis its conduct with India. This becomes evident in the Pakistani decision to release the captured Indian pilot – Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman within 58 hours of his capture. Historically, Pakistani military's conduct regarding captured Indian military personnel has been vastly different.[92] Nor did the Pakistani dispensation use Abhinandan as a bargaining chip, something that one could argue was witnessed in the case of captured ex-naval officer, Kulbhushan Jadhav.[93] The evidence therefore points towards the revision of some expectations in the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan.

Policy Entrepreneurs: Rasler defines a policy entrepreneur as principal decision makers, relatively new to office, who are unusually receptive to the idea of altering external relationships. The essence of the policy entrepreneur as per Rasler's study, one could argue is one who moves away from an established hardline posture to a more moderate co-operative

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[90] "IAF Pilot Abhinandan Varthaman Back Home after 58 Hours in Pakistan Army Custody," Hindustan Times, March 1, 2019, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/iaf-pilot-abhinandan-varthaman-back-home-after-58-hours-in-pakistan-army-custody/story-mfrnHO5s3oZhb6StncGC0J.html.

[91] Gautam Chikermane, "5 Ways India's Foreign Policy Has Changed Post-Balakot," ORF, accessed July 8, 2022, https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/5-ways-indias-foreign-policy-has-changed-post-balakot/.

[92] Nikhil Moorchung, "Indian Prisoners of War in Pakistan: Bring Back Our Soldiers," Deccan Herald, May 22, 2021, https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/main-article/indian-prisoners-of-war-in-pakistan-bring-back-our-soldiers-988608.html; and Soutik Biswas, "The Mystery of India's 'missing 54' Soldiers," *BBC News*, January 26, 2020, sec. India, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-51191199.

[93] Sushant Sareen, "The Kulbhushan Jadhav Judgement: Now What?," ORF, accessed July 8, 2022, https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-kulbhushan-jadhav-judgement-now-what-53138/.

posture. The same essence is visible in the Israel-Palestine case study where she identifies *Yasir Arafat* and *Yitzhak Rabin* as policy entrepreneurs.[94] However, in the case of India and Pakistan, my findings point towards a different type of policy entrepreneur that fits into the definition of who a policy entrepreneur is but goes against the essence of the policy entrepreneur.

The presiding prime minister of India, *Narendra Modi,* is the most prominent policy entrepreneur that is central to the Pulwama-Balakot shock. In response to the Pulwama attack, Modi departed from the dominant policy position of strategic restraint by ordering an unprecedented air strike into Pakistani territory[95]. This shift in policy position, driven by Modi points towards his willingness to adopt a more "muscular policy", establishing it as the "new normal".[96] Tellis refers to the move as representation of "an erosion of a major-psychological barrier – India's reluctance to frontally challenge Pakistan's nuclear coercion —and opens the door to future punitive actions that may be far more painful than those witnessed in this initial salvo."[97]

The policy entrepreneur on the Pakistani side is identified as *Imran Khan,* the presiding prime minister of Pakistan. The role of Imran Khan as a policy entrepreneur in the case of Pulwama/Balakot is not as prominent as that of Narendra Modi. However, by announcing the decision to return the captured Indian pilot, the Pulwama/Balakot shock allowed Imran Khan to "extend an olive branch"[98] to India, recognizing the need to avoid any further escalation with a more unpredictable Indian dispensation.

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[94] Rasler, "Shocks, Expectancy Revision, and the De-Escalation of Protracted Conflicts: The Israeli–Palestinian Case."

[95] Gautam Chikermane, "5 Ways India's Foreign Policy Has Changed Post-Balakot."

[96] Sood, "Does Balakot Define a New Normal?"

[97] Ashley J. Tellis, "A Smoldering Volcano: Pakistan and Terrorism after Balakot," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed July 8, 2022, https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/03/14/smoldering-volcano-pakistan-and-terrorism-after-balakot-pub-78593.

[98] "Narendra Modi v Imran Khan: Who Won the War of Perception?," *BBC News*, March 1, 2019, sec. India, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-47414490.

Third Party Mediation/ Pressure: Calls for de-escalation of hostilities followed immediately after hostilities first broke out during the Balakot by countries around the world. However, given the history and geo-political importance of the Indo-Pak conflict, only 2 countries have had any considerable stake as third-party mediators. These are the *United States* and *China*. During the Balakot crisis, the United States departed from its traditional position of neutrality by terming the Indian airstrikes as a "counter terrorism action".[99] The US was largely acquiescent to India's actions and did not try and mediate the conflict until the capture of the Indian pilot by Pakistan and retaliatory missile threats were made by India.[100] Therefore the role of any third-party mediation by the United States was limited in the Pulwama/Balakot crisis. China also seemed to have played a limited role in third party mediation during the crisis. In the wake of the aerial combat, on February 27, 2019, China dispatched its vice foreign minister - Kong Xuanyou to Islamabad to "discuss Indo-Pak tensions"[101]. But given China's strategic closeness to Pakistan,[102] it could not act as a neutral mediator in the conflict thus having a limited role in third part mediation. The findings therefore suggest that the overall role of third-party mediators in the Pulwama/Balakot crisis was limited.

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[99] U. S. Mission Pakistan, "Statement by Secretary Pompeo: Concern Regarding India-Pakistan Tensions," U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Pakistan, February 27, 2019, https://pk.usembassy.gov/statement-by-secretary-pompeo-concern-regarding-india-pakistan-tensions/.

[100] "Pulwama/Balakot and The Evolving Role of Third Parties in India-Pakistan Crises • Stimson Center," *Stimson Center* (blog), March 25, 2020, https://www.stimson.org/2020/pulwama-balakot-and-the-evolving-role-of-third-parties-in-india-pakistan-crises/.

[101] "China Sends Vice Foreign Minister to Pak to Discuss Indo-Pak Tensions," The Week, accessed July 8, 2022, https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2019/03/06/china-sens-vice-foreign-minister-to-pak-to-discuss-indo-pak-tensions.html.

[102] Zhang Li, "The Balakot Crisis Revisited: A Chinese Perspective," *Stimson Center* (blog), February 28, 2022, https://www.stimson.org/2022/the-balakot-crisis-revisited-a-chinese-perspective/.

Reciprocity & Reinforcement: By returning the captured Indian pilot, Imran Khan started the process of diffusion of tensions between the countries which eventually led to the de-escalation of the crisis. Pakistan's foreign minister expressed his interest in engaging with India over the dossier on JeM that the Indian government had sent over a day after the aerial combat and downing of an Indian jet.[103] It is unclear how their Indian counterparts responded to the overtures of peace made by Pakistan, since there was no official comment made from the Indian government. However, since hostilities were scaled back as a result of the return of the pilot, the Indian dispensation showed limited reciprocation to diffuse the crisis. The underlying issues however remained unresolved. Diplomatic relations remained largely strained in the aftermath of the crisis. However, it is to be noted that the high commissioners were reinstated to their posts on March 9th 2019, in part to facilitate the discussion of the modalities of Kartarpur Sahib Corridor Project.[104] Reinforcement was nonexistent since soon after the diffusion of hostilities, India abrogated Article 370 of the Indian constitution, a law which conferred a "special status" to the state of Jammu and Kashmir – causing a diplomatic crisis between the two countries.

II.   *Abrogation of Article 370 (August 5, 2019)*

On the 5th of August of 2019, the Indian government, in an attempt to clamp down and terminate a 3-decade long insurgency, brought about a drastic change to India's constitution. The Narendra Modi led government revoked the autonomy provisions for the state of Jammu and Kashmir, splitting the state into 2 regions – Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, and taking

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[103] "Pakistan Releasing Abhinandan for Peace but Imran Khan Isn't Optimistic about Modi," *ThePrint* (blog), March 1, 2019, https://theprint.in/opinion/pakistan-releasing-abhinandan-for-peace-but-imran-khan-isnt-optimistic-about-modi/199704/.

[104] Vinay Kaura, "India's Pakistan Policy: From 2016 'Surgical Strike' to 2019 Balakot 'Airstrike,'" *The Round Table* 109, no. 3 (May 3, 2020): 277–87, https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2020.1760499.

away statehood from both[105]. The change of status of the region has been referred to as one of the most consequential developments in the region since the insurgency first broke out in 1989. India's unilateral decision on the status of the region drew a substantial amount of criticism from Pakistan.[106] Pakistan downgraded its diplomatic relations with India and expelled the Indian High Commissioner, while recalling its own envoy from India[107]. Prime Minister Imran Khan spoke of the possibility of a potential nuclear war while reacting to the decision.[108] Relations remained soured in the aftermath of the revocation and no public engagements between both countries were witnessed in the time period. The first meeting since the hostilities only occurred when both countries met on the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor Project (KSP).[109] On November 9th, 2019, despite the diplomatic down-gradation following the abrogation of article 370, the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor Project was inaugurated separately by both countries with Prime Minister Imran Khan inaugurating the Pakistani side of the corridor. Khan called the opening of the corridor a "testimony to Pakistan's commitment to regional peace"[110]. While maintaining his position on Kashmir during the inauguration, he said that he hoped that the opening of the corridor marks the beginning of ties turning a corner between India and Pakistan.

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[105] Sameer P. Lalwani and Gillian Gayner, "India's Kashmir Conundrum: Before and After the Abrogation of Article 370" (US Institute of Peace, 2020), https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25405.

[106] Majid Alam, "Pakistan's Kashmir Policy Post-Article 370," The Diplomat, July 9, 2020, https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/pakistans-kashmir-policy-post-article-370/.

[107] "Pakistan Expels Indian High Commissioner, Recalls Its Envoy as Hostilities Rise After Kashmir Move," News18, August 7, 2019, https://www.news18.com/news/india/pakistan-expels-indian-high-commissioner-recalls-its-envoy-as-hostilities-rise-after-kashmir-move-2262117.html.

[108] "Imran Khan on Possibility of Nuclear War with India: 'If Pakistan Is Losing…,'" *The Indian Express* (blog), September 15, 2019, https://indianexpress.com/article/pakistan/india-pak-at-risk-of-nuclear-war-imran-khan-5996972/.

[109] "In First Meeting After Revocation of Article 370, India and Pakistan Meet on Kartarpur Corridor," News18, August 30, 2019, https://www.news18.com/news/india/in-first-meeting-after-article-370-revocation-india-and-pakistan-meet-over-kartarpur-corridor-2290303.html.

[110] Harpreet Bajwa, "Pakistan PM Imran Khan Raises Kashmir Issue on Opening of Kartarpur Corridor," *The New Indian Express*, accessed July 16, 2022, https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2019/nov/09/pakistan-pm-imran-khan-raises-kashmir-issue-on-opening-of-kartarpur-corridor-2059526.html.

Shock: Article 370 had existed within the constitution of India since the instrument of accession was signed by the erstwhile ruler of Kashmir in October 1947. The Narendra Modi led government of India revoked the "special status" of Jammu & Kashmir which had defined the dominant policy position of India on Kashmir. The decision was perceived as a major escalation by India and drew strong criticism from Pakistan. Beyond the dyadic scope of the issue, the move also provoked an intense international response, largely due to India's imposing of a communications blockade on the Kashmir region.[111] With the revocation, India further reinforced its new perceived image of being unpredictable, following on from the unpredictability of India's actions in the Pulwama/Balakot crisis, further providing room for expectancy revision for the Pakistani dispensation. In the backdrop of this crisis, and despite internal pressures on Imran Khan from Islamist parties[112], the decision to continue with the opening of the KSP was surprising with several doubts having been cast over the continuation of the project.[113] Pakistan's decision to continue with the continuation of the KSP, despite major escalation and shock from India could possibly be indicative of some expectancy revision that may have occurred within the strategic establishment of Pakistan. However, there is little evidence to establish a causal link between the India's decision to abrogate article 370 and Pakistan's decision to continue with the KSP. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain for certain if the shock of abrogation of article 370 lead to any expectancy revision.

Policy Entrepreneurs: The most prominent policy entrepreneur featured in this event is Narendra Modi. Article 370, despite many revisions, have guided India's policy in Kashmir

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[111] Khalid Shah and Kriti M. Shah, "Kashmir After Article 370: India's Diplomatic Challenge," ORF, accessed July 16, 2022, https://www.orfonline.org/research/kashmir-after-article-370/.

[112] "Why Kartarpur Corridor Is Unlikely to Defuse India-Pakistan Tensions | Asia | An in-Depth Look at News from across the Continent | DW | 08.11.2019," accessed July 14, 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/why-kartarpur-corridor-is-unlikely-to-defuse-india-pakistan-tensions/a-51166467.

[113] Shantanu Nandan Sharma, "Can Kartarpur Corridor Link India, Pakistan Even after Abrogation of Article 370?" *The Economic Times*, August 17, 2019, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/can-kartarpur-corridor-link-india-pakistan-even-after-abrogation-of-article-370/articleshow/70716914.cms?from=mdr.

and have arguably shaped India's dialogue with Pakistan over the region for decades. The revocation of article 370 had been a part of BJP's election manifestos since 1984, yet no subsequent BJP-led government had been able to execute the agenda.[114] In the days leading up to August 5th, the Narendra Modi led government undertook several steps to eliminate or reduce the impact of internal opposition including placing former Chief Ministers Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah under house arrest.[115] The Central Government also imposed a communications blockade on the state in an attempt to manage internal resistance from within the populace. By undertaking these drastic measures, Narendra Modi positioned his government to be able to carry out a drastic policy measure such as the abrogation of Article 370. The Narendra Modi led government, following on from the Pulwama/Balakot Crisis, continued to display unpredictability in behavior and a willingness to deviate from inertial policy positions.

Since it is difficult to establish a direct causal relationship between the opening of the KSP and the Abrogation of Article 370, it is therefore difficult to identify a clear policy entrepreneur on the Pakistani side. However, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's decision to continue the opening of the KSP and his subsequent comments at the inauguration lend him some credence to be classified as a possible policy entrepreneur. However, with limited evidence that points to a causal link between the abrogation of article 370 and the opening of KSP, and the exact role of Imran Khan, it is difficult to classify his role as a policy entrepreneur in this case.

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[114] Nikhil Rampal, "Article 370: Revisiting Election Manifestos, BJP's Push and Congress's Silence," *India Today*, accessed July 17, 2022, https://www.indiatoday.in/diu/story/jammu-and-kashmir-article-370-revisiting-election-manifestos-bjp-push-and-congress-silence-1577579-2019-08-05.
[115] Nikhil Rampal.

Third Party Mediation/ Pressure: The Abrogation of Article 370 was a solely unilateral decision taken by the Modi government and there seems to be no evidence to suggest that the Modi government took any foreign power in consultation. Some media reports suggested that India had taken the US into consultation, but the reports were denied by the United States as being false.[116] While responding to international concerns over the scrapping of article 370, India repeatedly reiterated its stance of treating Kashmir as a bilateral matter between the two countries with "no role or scope for third party mediation".[117] Pakistan's attempt to internationalize the issue of Kashmir was met with a muted response – barring the Chinese response.[118] However, with China being a partial party to the Kashmir issue, it could not act as a neutral third-party mediator. At the request of China, the UNSC conducted a closed-door meeting to discuss the issue for the first time in more than 50 years. India claims that the result of the meeting seemed to have reinforced of India's claim of keeping Kashmir a bilateral matter.[119] The opening of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor also seemed to have been a solely bilateral achievement with no outside mediators having been involved. Therefore, in the entire case abrogation of article 370 and KSP, there seems to have been minimal to no third-party pressure and mediation.

Reciprocity and Reinforcement: Even before the abrogation of article 370, the KSP project had been positioned as a symbol of peace and de-escalation by the Pakistani

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[116] "India Did Not Consult or Inform the US on Article 370: US," India Today, August 7, 2019, https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-did-not-consult-or-inform-the-us-on-article-370-us-1578383-2019-08-07.

[117] Ayaz Gul, "UN Chief Hails New Pakistan-India Crossing as 'Corridor of Hope,'" VOA, accessed July 28, 2022, https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-asia_un-chief-hails-new-pakistan-india-crossing-corridor-hope/6184445.html.

[118] John Cherian, "International Reaction to Abrogation of Article 370: Muted Response," September 13, 2019, https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/article29382230.ece.

[119] Scroll Staff, "J&K: UN Security Council Asked India, Pakistan to Solve Kashmir Dispute Bilaterally, Says Envoy," Text, Scroll.in (https://scroll.in), accessed July 28, 2022, https://scroll.in/latest/969562/j-k-un-security-council-asked-india-pakistan-to-solve-kashmir-dispute-bilaterally-says-envoy.

establishment. Pakistan's foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi in March of 2019 said that the consultations between India and Pakistan over KSP would improve relations between the two and bring about de-escalation – which is something that the Pakistani administration desires.[120] In the same month, both countries had also sent their high commissioners back after having expelled them earlier, displaying a level of reciprocity.[121] However, without a conclusive causal link having been established between the abrogation of article 370 and the KSP, and with diplomatic ties continuing to remain strained even in the aftermath of the opening of the KSP[122], any conclusion of reciprocity is speculative at best. Without any noticeable reciprocity, the question of reinforcement becomes non-existent.

III. *Border Clashes between India and China (5 May 2020 onwards)*

On the 5th of May 2020, Indian troops clashed with Chinese troops near the high-altitude Pangong Tso lake, along the Line of Actual control – the de facto border between the two nations[123]. The clash of 5th May would mark the beginning of a series of subsequent clashes which would increase in intensity and lead up to unprecedented violence in the recent history of both nations.

While the purpose of this paper is not to engage with the intricacies of the India-China historical relationship, it is important to first briefly understand and establish the dynamics between the countries. Almost immediately after India's independence from Britain, tensions between China and India arose due to unresolved border disputes originating in India's

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[120] Press Trust of India, "Scheduled Visit by Indo-Pak Delegations Will Help in de-Escalating Tensions: Qureshi," *Business Standard India*, March 7, 2019, https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/scheduled-visit-by-indo-pak-delegations-will-help-in-de-escalating-tensions-qureshi-119030700763_1.html.

[121] Kamran Yousaf, "Return of Envoys Signals Thaw in Ties with India," The Express Tribune, March 8, 2019, http://tribune.com.pk/story/1925752/pakistan-india-envoys-resume-duty-clear-sign-thaw.

[122] Manoj Gupta, "Pak's U-Turn: Qamar Zaman to Be Appointed as Trade Minister to Restore Ties with India, Sources Tell News18," News18, May 11, 2022, https://www.news18.com/news/world/shehbaz-govts-u-turn-pak-to-appoint-qamar-zaman-kaira-as-trade-minister-to-restore-ties-with-india-sources-tell-news18-5149501.html.

[123] Dinakar Peri, "Indian, Chinese Troops Face off in Eastern Ladakh, Sikkim," *The Hindu*, May 10, 2020, sec. National, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indian-chinese-troops-face-off-in-eastern-ladakh-sikkim/article31548893.ece.

colonial history. By 1962, war had broken out with Chinese troops crossing the McMahon line[124] and taking up positions deep in what India considered its territory. After reaching its claimed line, on November 19 1962, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai declared a ceasefire, redrawing the map and giving rise to the creating of the Line of Actual Control. Tensions had again peaked in 1967 when clashes broke out in the Nathu La and Cho La sector of Sikkim – then a protectorate of India. Only in 1988, with the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China did the relationship between India and China enter a new phase of cooperation.[125] 3 major policy shifts were witnessed as a result of the meeting; First both countries agreed to normalise the relationship without being predicated or dependent on the settlement of the unresolved boundary issues. Secondly, both countries agreed to maintaining peace along the LAC pending a final resolution which was deemed to be fair to both countries. And finally, both acknowledged the legitimate contributions of the other in maintenance of global peace.[126] Despite the presence of unresolved disputes, these 3 policy shifts largely guided the dyadic relationship between India and China with favourable outcomes for India such as the Chinese recognition of Sikkim as a part of India in 2003. Tensions rose again in 2013 and 2017 as Indian and Chinese troops faced off at Daulat Beg Oldie and the Doklam Plateau.

On the 15th of June 2020, the forces of both countries faced off along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), resulting in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and an undisclosed number of Chinese soldiers. The incident marked an inflection point in the history of the relationship between both countries, a view that is widely accepted by scholars on either side of the

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[124] The McMahon line is a 550-mile frontier that extends through the Himalayas which was drawn up as a result of a treaty between Tibet and British India. It is recognised as the official international border by India.
[125] Vijay Gokhale, "The Road from Galwan: The Future of India China Relationship" (Carnegie India, March 1, 2021).
[126] "Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi Visited China," accessed July 26, 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/200011/t20001117_697833.html.

border.[127] The clash did not involve the exchange of any gunfire – instead soldiers engaged in hand-to-hand combat while utilizing fence posts and sticks wrapped with barbed wires.[128] Reportedly, the troops continued to clash for around 6 hours. It was the first time since 1975 that any loss of life had been reported as a result of skirmishes along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The Indian government claimed China had "unilaterally tried to change the status quo".

Despite high level calls between the foreign ministers of both countries, further troop mobilisation continued. India also withdrew its restrictions on firearms along the LAC. While some disengagement did occur along the Galwan valley, patrolling point 15 and Gogra regions on the 25th of July 2020, it did not stem the larger pattern of tit-for-tat escalatory measures. On September 9th 2020, bullets were fired along the LAC for the first time in 45 years.[129] As of March 2022, 15 rounds of disengagement talks had taken place yet there seemed to have been no real breakthrough in the 2 years following the clashes at Galwan.

Shock: While standoffs in the few years preceding the Galwan Valley clash were not uncommon, there seemed to be something different about the incidents in question. More specifically, unlike past incidents which appeared to be one-off, uncoordinated standoffs, the current events occurred at multiple points along the LAC. Scholars have suggested that this could arguably suggest a deliberate and strategic Chinese effort, requiring approval from the very top.[130] In the same time period, China also enacted a new security law in Hong Kong

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[127] Brahma Chellaney, "For India, a Tipping Point with China | Opinion," Hindustan Times, June 10, 2020, https://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/for-india-a-tipping-point-with-china/story-6hwPN84esqFFpWPssRn3yM.html; Hu Shisheng and Wang Jue, "The Behavioral Logic behind India's Tough Foreign Policy towards China," *China International Relations* 30, no. 5 (September 2020): 37–65.

[128] Russell Goldman, "India-China Border Dispute: A Conflict Explained," *The New York Times*, June 17, 2020, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/world/asia/india-china-border-clashes.html.

[129] Rahul Singh, "Shots Fired at LAC after 45 Years," Hindustan Times, September 9, 2020, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/shots-fired-at-lac-after-45-years/story-o2GjyJqk9qXvLamP55BbwN.html.

[130] Ashley J Tellis, "Hustling in the Himalayas: The Sino-Indian Border Confrontation," n.d., 6.

and raised the issue of the reunification of Taiwan at National People's conference in May 2020.[131] These incidents also occurred in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, where the international community continued to raise questions about the origins and the spread of the virus, pointing to an investigation in China. There seems to be no question that China has in recent years adopted a more assertive and aggressive foreign policy, and some scholars seem to believe that the Modi government's new "assertive" and "aggressive" foreign policy has not helped in placating the situation.

The death of Indian soldiers as a result of the clashes with China acted as a major shock to the Indian political and military establishment, prompting a series of actions from India. Almost immediately after the clashes, India joined "The Quad" initiative – a group consisting of India, United States, Australia and Japan. All 4 countries of the Quad at the time of its creation had at least some points of contention with China. Officially, the purpose of the formation of the group is to secure strategic sea-routes in the Indo-pacific of any political or military influence but it is widely assumed that the quad is set up to control China's regional domination.[132] India's Malabar exercises, a trilateral naval exercise between India-US-Japan was expanded to include Australia as well, signalling increased military cooperation in the Indian ocean.

It is clear that India's perception and expectations with regards to China changed in the aftermath of the clashes, as is evident in the examples above. The threatening idea of a "two-front war" suddenly became a reality to the Indian establishment. Indian military officials believe that for India, a conflict involving both China and Pakistan would arguably open a half front in Kashmir, compounding India's security concerns.[133] In this situation, managing

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[131] "An Assessment of China's 13th National People's Congress – May 2020'," June 20, 2020, https://www.vifindia.org/article/2020/june/20/an-assessment-of-china-s-13-national-people-s-congress-may-2020.
[132] "WHAT IS QUAD?," *Business Standard India*, accessed July 26, 2022, https://www.business-standard.com/about/what-is-quad#collapse.
[133] "Can India Transcend Its Two-Front Challenge?," War on the Rocks, September 14, 2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/can-india-transcend-its-two-front-challenge/.

the threat of a two front war seems to have become a top priority for New Delhi. The way out of this conundrum for India is to ensure that one of the two fronts ceases to be a front. As of March 2022, even after 15 rounds of negotiations with China, the situation along the LAC still stands unresolved. Given Pakistan's weakened economic state and its de-escalatory overtures made to India over recent years, the situation was perhaps ripe for India to engage with Pakistan than to engage with a much stronger and assertive China. Therefore it can be argued that the current adherence to the ceasefire agreement with Pakistan is due to the recognition of the increasing possibility of a two-front war and the need for India to manage it.

Policy Entrepreneurs: The Policy entrepreneurs recognised here are the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi and the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan, General Qamar Javed Bajwa.

The Narendra Modi government operates under the 'Hindutva' ideology. One of the guiding tenants of the ideology is the enmity with Pakistan. It has been an electorally beneficial political strategy for Modi to have the conflict persist and to invoke Pakistan as an adversary. For Modi, a reversal on his established Pakistan policy would go against his party's ideological foundations and his own political motivations. Yet in this situation, in March 2022 during his first visit to Jammu after the abrogation of article 370, Modi refrained from engaging in the usual diatribe that BJP leaders engage in when referring to Pakistan.[134] This is in sharp contrast to Modi's speeches that have dealt with Jammu and Kashmir post his re-election in 2019. The agreement to adhere to the Ceasefire Agreement, combined with the reduction of hostile references to Pakistan in the same time point towards a strategy of de-escalating tensions by the Modi government. This shift has arguably been brought about

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[134] IANS, "Is PM Modi's Silence in Jammu on Pak and Terror a Sign of New Beginning?," *Business Standard India*, April 26, 2022, https://www.business-standard.com/article/politics/is-pm-modi-s-silence-in-jammu-on-pak-and-terror-a-sign-of-new-beginning-122042600515_1.html.

following the risk of a two front war with China. While the Modi government has not completely "reversed" its Pakistan policy, as that could be electorally disastrous, there is an arguable change in its rhetoric against Pakistan. Thus by going against his electorally beneficial strategy on Pakistan and engaging in de-escalatory behaviour to manage the risk of a two front war, Modi features as a policy entrepreneur in this case.

The policy entrepreneur recognised on the Pakistani side is Gen. Q.J. Bajwa. It is a well-established fact that Pakistan's army exercises a tremendous control over Pakistan's economic, social and political decisions.[135] Decisions of the army are taken almost completely independently of the civilian government's input or consent. Therefore the power to control the Pakistani military's engagement with India at the highest level rests with the Chief of Army Staff, Gen. Bajwa. On the 25th of February 2021, in a joint statement, the Pakistani and Indian militaries agreed to adhere to the terms of the Ceasefire agreement of 2003. It is widely believed by analysts that this agreement comes as a result of months of back channel negotiations between the two countries requiring a concerted effort from the highest levels.[136] Immediately after the declaration, Gen. Bajwa while addressing a session of the first Islamabad Security Dialogue (ISD) called for India and Pakistan to "bury the past and move forward"[137]. His speech was significant for 2 reasons. First, he committed to non-interference in the internal affairs of their neighbourhood countries. Second, his reference to the issue of Kashmir did not include the established policy position of Pakistan which calls on India to restore article 370 and prepare for self-determination as per the UNSC resolutions. Instead he said India needs to create a "conducive environment in Kashmir" for

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[135] Stephen P. Cohen, "Pakistan: Army, Society, and Security," *Asian Affairs* 10, no. 2 (1983): 1–26; Mansoor Akber Kundi, "Militarism in Politics: A Case Study of Pakistan," *Pakistan Horizon* 56, no. 1 (2003): 19–34.

[136] Shekhar Gupta, "Why Distrust-but-Verify Is a Prudent Response to Pakistan Gen Bajwa's Call to Bury the Past," *ThePrint* (blog), March 20, 2021, https://theprint.in/national-interest/why-distrust-but-verify-is-a-prudent-response-to-pakistan-gen-bajwas-call-to-bury-the-past/625108/.

[137] "Time to Bury the Past and Move Forward: COAS Bajwa on Indo-Pak Ties."

the resolution of the dispute.[138] The ceasefire agreement has held since his speech in 2021 and a similar call for dialogue, peace and diplomacy was made by Bajwa at the 2nd ISD in April 2022.[139] He further called for "geoeconomics" to replace geopolitics to ensure peace and stability in the subcontinent.[140] Thus the evidence suggests that there is a slow but noticeable shift in the policy position of the Pakistani military vis-à-vis its relation with India being driven by a policy entrepreneur - Gen. Bajwa.

Third Party Pressure/ Mediation: Since the surprise announcement of the agreement of the ceasefire along the LoC in February 2021, speculations were rampant about a mediating third-party. The security advisor to PM Imran Khan had said that this achievement was due to behind-the-scenes contact. Reports suggested that it was not the usual mediating powers such as the United States but instead the *United Arab Emirates* which facilitated the process.[141] In April 2021, UAE's envoy to the US, Ambassador Yousef Al Otaiba confirmed that it was indeed UAE mediating between India and Pakistan.[142] The UAE under prince Mohammed bin Zayed, has in recent years tried to cast itself as an important regional player, while simultaneously exercising influence outside the gulf.[143] Both Pakistan and India share strong ties with the UAE. Both countries provide a majority of the migrant workers that UAE requires, which also act as an importance source of remittances for both. Pakistan has shared

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[138] "Time to Bury the Past and Move Forward: COAS Bajwa on Indo-Pak Ties."

[139] "Pakistan Army Chief Gen. Qamar Bajwa Calls for Talks with India," *The Hindu*, April 2, 2022, sec. International, https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/pakistan-army-chief-gen-qamar-bajwa-calls-for-talks-with-india/article65284297.ece.

[140] "PMs Modi and Sharif Signal Possibility of a Thaw between India, Pakistan. There Is Room for Cautious Optimism," *The Indian Express* (blog), April 18, 2022, https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/small-steps-7873706/.

[141] Sushant Singh, "To Get to the Negotiating Table, India and Pakistan Had Help," *Foreign Policy* (blog), accessed July 27, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/04/india-pakistan-cease-fire-negotiations-peace/.

[142] Reuters, "UAE Is Mediating between India and Pakistan, Says Senior Diplomat," DAWN.COM, April 15, 2021, https://www.dawn.com/news/1618374.

[143] Kabir Taneja, "What the UAE Hopes to Achieve in between India and Pakistan," ORF, accessed July 27, 2022, https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/what-the-uae-hopes-to-achieve-in-between-india-and-pakistan/.

a historically strong security and political tie with UAE while in recent years, India's relationship with the UAE has thrived.[144] For UAE, its own interests are tied with a peaceful India and Pakistan.[145] Therefore the most prominent third party mediator recognised here is the UAE.

Reciprocity and Reinforcement: Out of the three events being studied in this paper, the only case where conclusive reciprocity is witnessed is in the events around the ceasefire agreement. The fact that guns have remained almost completely silent since the agreement was announced is conclusive evidence of reciprocity by both countries towards the goal of de-escalation. It is difficult to ascertain which country initiated talks first for the agreement to be signed. But the growing challenge of a two front war for India, and Pakistan's worsening economic conditions combined with uncertain neighbours[146] have made it an existential imperative for both countries to come to the negotiating table. For India, accepting foreign mediation relating to the Kashmir issue is a sharp departure from its established policy of keeping the Kashmir issue strictly bilateral. For Pakistan, the change in the rhetoric and tone of its top military official with regards to Kashmir and the repeated references of normalising relations, including trade, with India signals an intention of the Pakistani establishment to move forward with India. It is early to comment on if this pattern of reciprocity and improving relations will be reinforced, but it is nevertheless a sign of some cooperation between the two states.

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[144] Singh, "To Get to the Negotiating Table, India and Pakistan Had Help."
[145] Taneja, "What the UAE Hopes to Achieve in between India and Pakistan."
[146] Gupta, "Why Distrust-but-Verify Is a Prudent Response to Pakistan Gen Bajwa's Call to Bury the Past."

V. Conclusion

Utilizing Rasler's de-escalation model, it has been identified that the historically strained relationship between India and Pakistan seems to be standing at an important junction. It is clear that after an incredibly strenuous 2019 and 2020, both countries have moved towards de-escalation of hostilities. De-escalation here is identified as an overall decrease in hostilities in discourse as well as military activities. My study suggests that by both measures, India and Pakistan seemed to have diffused tensions from their peak in 2019. The sudden and rare adherence to the ceasefire agreement of 2003, which was a result of back-channel negotiations, facilitated by a third party signaled the willingness of both nations to de-escalate. The fact that the ceasefire has held (as of June 2022) since its announcement is further reinforcement of the same idea. Using Rasler's De-escalation Model, the findings of my study suggests that there are 3 primary reasons that have allowed the relationship to arrive at this junction: 1. The dumping of the doctrine of strategic restraint by a policy-entrepreneurial Narendra Modi. 2. The willingness of the Pakistani establishment, especially the Army, to de-escalate tensions with India under internal economic pressures and the threat of a more unpredictable India, and 3. The threat of a two-front war for India with an increasingly assertive China.

As a plausibility probe into the Rasler model using the case study of India and Pakistan, my paper suggests that the model plausibly holds explanatory value in explaining de-escalation of protracted conflicts. Although the time period of this study is fairly short and very recent, it is proving to be an important junction in the history of the India-Pakistan relationship. All 3 shocks being studied – Pulwama/Balakot, Abrogation of Article 370 and Border clashes with China- exhibit the presence and influence of the key variables of the Rasler model. The endogenous shocks of Pulwama/ Balakot and Abrogation of article 370

have been brought about by a policy-entrepreneurial Narendra Modi who seems to have dumped the established policy position and introduced space for revision of expectancy for Pakistan. Some sort of expectancy revision seems to have happened within Pakistan, which has been facing its own internal economic and political shocks. This expectancy revision has possibly been witnessed in the decision to return the captured Indian pilot and open up the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor and the Pakistan Army Chief's calls for peace and trade with India. Finally, the exogenous shock of the border clashes with China and the ballooning threat of a two-front war for India, seem to have allowed to revise expectations and engage with Pakistan to manage their two-front challenge. While historically, the role of third-party mediation seems to have been limited due to India's reluctance of accepting such mediation, there is evidence to suggest that mediation has been played a role in allowing for the ceasefire adherence. The presence and importance of Rasler's variables are therefore noticeable. However, despite the presence of all the functional variables of the model and their influence in the de-escalation process, my findings suggest certain deviations from the original model.

The most important finding pertains to the role of the policy entrepreneur in the model. Rasler's model defines a policy entrepreneur as a strategic pioneer that can overturn dominant policy positions in favor of new alternatives to old problems. In her framework, a policy entrepreneur adopts an approach of moderation by convincing constituents that previous hardline policies have yielded no results. This seemingly stands true for the Israel & Palestine case that she has studied. However, my findings challenge Rasler's definition of the role of the policy entrepreneur and the mechanism through which the policy entrepreneur brings de-escalation. In my case study of India and Pakistan, the most prominent policy entrepreneur that I have identified is Narendra Modi. Modi has consolidated his power and influence and moved away from India's dominant policy position of strategic restraint with Pakistan. Modi has also been able to reverse a decades long policy position by abrogating

Article 370. Yet, despite the erratic and escalatory behavior by Modi and India, de-escalation of tensions has occurred. A paradoxical probability hence occurs; de-escalation could potentially be brought about actions of sudden escalation by policy entrepreneurs. This is diametrically opposed to the role of the policy entrepreneur that Rasler has posited. This paper therefore suggests that there is scope for a rethink of the role of the policy entrepreneur and the causal mechanisms through which the actions of the policy entrepreneur affect the overall process of de-escalation.

To conclude, this paper makes 2 academic contributions to the existing scholarship. First, it establishes the existence of a changed context in the relationship between India and Pakistan by theoretically assessing how these changes have occurred. Second, it lends partial plausibility to the Rasler theory and suggests pathways for further research to improve the explanatory power of the theory,

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