

## **The Difficult Politics of Peace: Rivalry in Modern South Asian**

Christopher Clary, ISBN: 978-0197638415: (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, 336 pages)

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"The Difficult Politics of Peace: Rivalry in Modern South Asia" by Christopher Clary is a nuanced and thought-provoking analysis of the complex dynamics of rivalry and conflict in South Asia. Clary introduces the "Leader Primacy Theory" - a fascinating explanation of how Indian and Pakistani leaders navigate their domestic political landscapes to pursue peace-building initiatives. By analysing the complex interplay between leadership decisions and political circumstances, Clary sheds light on the factors that shape the two nations' approaches to conflict resolution. The author contends that leaders who aspire to end interstate conflict and rivalry must initially solidify and consolidate their control over foreign policy. If the leaders don't have reasonable control over foreign policy, veto players and other external factors can stop them from making important decisions or coming up with peaceful solutions. These players may try to make things worse instead of better. This can make it harder for countries to get along and could lead to more conflict. The author argues that enduring rivalry between two states ultimately creates a trust deficit among its officials and the public at large.

Clary's book is organized chronologically and consists of eight chapters. In chapter one of the book, the author introduces his theoretical framework, which centres on leader primacy. He argues that rigid structures of foreign policy authority can impede progress toward peace and lead to a lack of trust between nations. The chapter outlines the cycle of peace-building and war-making and explains how effective leadership is essential to break the cycle and promote diplomatic solutions. The

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author also compares his leader primacy theory with other theoretical approaches to conflict resolution, highlighting its unique contributions to the field. Overall, this chapter sets the stage for the rest of the book by providing a comprehensive overview of the author's theoretical assumptions and key arguments.

Chapters 2 and 3 delve into the early stages of the Kashmir conflict, examining the root causes behind this enduring rivalry. The violence and turmoil of the partition and the inability to reach a consensus regarding the fate of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir engendered animosity between India and Pakistan from the outset. This hostility was further fuelled by subsequent events, including the 1948 war. In the post-war period, both states regarded each other as military adversaries, resulting in heightened tensions. The Regional Security Complex theory also provides insight into this traditional hostility, wherein two states are compelled to act according to their security concerns, primarily driven by their immediate surroundings. The author employs the Leader Primacy Theory to elucidate the shifting interstate behaviours of these antagonistic states. Furthermore, the author examines significant political events that transpired between 1948 and 1954, including the reconciliatory efforts led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan. While these negotiations succeeded in averting a further war during that time, they failed to bring a viable resolution to the Kashmir conflict, despite the involvement of the global community.

In chapter 4 of his book, '*Nehru Ayub and the Indus Water Treaty*,' Clary explores the significant political events between 1955 and 1960. During this period, President Ayub initiated peace talks with India to resolve complex issues between the two countries. This move by President Ayub raises an important question. If the Pakistani military was inherently committed to the conflict with India, General Ayub would not have engaged in peace initiatives to solve the intricate matters during that particular period. The efforts of Ayub and Nehru resulted in the historic Indus Water Treaty in 1960, which involved the World Bank. This

progress is particularly puzzling because it challenges the assumptions about the supposed genetic antagonism of the Pakistan army towards India and offers an alternative explanation for their behavior. Clary's analysis sheds light on the complex political dynamics that led to this historic treaty and encouraged a nuanced understanding of the region's history. In addition, he highlights the change in leadership style and its effects on the political landscape.

The 5th chapter of the book, '*The Rise of Bhutto, Sino-Indian Conflict, and the Second Kashmir War*', examines the ill-fated attempts at peace-building in South Asia during the 1960s. The author also delves into the ascension of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to power, his leadership style, and its impact on Pakistan's foreign and security policy. The author argues that Pakistan's efforts to gain control of Kashmir from India resulted in the 1965 war. Furthermore, the Sino-Indian conflict significantly impacted the regional security dynamics. The political events during the early and mid-1960s culminated in the incomplete peace agreement at Tashkent, which failed to achieve the desired results. The chapter provides valuable insights into South Asia's complex historical and political context during this period. It underscores the challenges and obstacles to achieving lasting peace in the region and the influential role of key figures such as Bhutto.

In chapter 6 of his book, '*Dhaka, Simla and an Incomplete Peace*,' Clary continues to shed light on changing the political dynamics and role of Bhutto in the East Pakistan crisis and the 1971 war. The author argues that Pakistan's will to protect its Eastern territory inevitably crumbled on the eve of 16th December 1971. As a result, India entered the crisis, leading to the Indo-Pakistan war. Furthermore, Clary disputes claims of Pakistan's Army's involvement in the ethnic cleansing of Hindus in East Pakistan, as there is no significant evidence of such allegations. The author's argument about the Pakistan Army's involvement in ethnic cleansing challenges conventional narratives and sheds new light on the conflict. After the secession of East Pakistan, leadership dynamics in

Pakistan underwent a significant change. The author uses his Leader Primacy Theory to evaluate civilian rule in Pakistan under Bhutto's leadership. Despite the 1971 trauma and the associated pitfalls, Bhutto made efforts to engage in peace with India. He collaborated with his Indian counterparts to take peace-building measures, which may have contributed to his downfall via a military coup and execution. This chapter's meticulous analysis and interpretation of events enable the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics that shaped the region during this period.

The 7th chapter of the book, '*Dictatorship, Democracy and the Bomb in South Asia*', delves into the bilateral relations between India and Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s. The author provides an analysis of the leadership and characteristics of Zia ul Haq and Indira Gandhi, evaluating their impacts on the enduring rivalry and nuclearization in the region. Despite various peace-building measures, the desired results were not achieved, primarily due to the lack of strategic incentives. The US' aid to Pakistan, owing to its support in Afghanistan, diminished the need for Pakistani strategic introspection. The events taking place in Afghanistan also impacted South Asia's regional security dynamics. After India's 1974 nuclear tests, the Kashmir issue became a flashpoint between the two major powers. Pakistan's aspirations to become a nuclear state were accelerated after India's tests in 1974. The subsequent governments of Pakistan and India failed to build trust and improve peace-building measures after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, resulting in a severe crisis in the 1990s and a limited war between the two nations in 1999. In 1998, Pakistan proposed a Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR) for tenacious peace in the region. Overall, the Kashmir conflict remained dominant in defining political discourses in South Asia during the 1980s and 1990s. Despite various efforts, the conflict persisted, and tensions between the two nations remained high.

In the final section of the book, the author offers an in-depth analysis of the peace-building efforts and significant political events that

occurred during the reign of military dictator Pervez Musharraf and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The author thoroughly examined the Indian BJP's role and the leadership of Manmohan Singh in implementing peace-building measures and their implications on the rivalry between India and Pakistan. Musharraf's loss of authority ended the decade without any significant peace initiatives. The author concludes the book with a nuanced discussion of his arguments untangling the implications of his theoretical approach to interstate rivalries. However, the author overlooks some critical events that have occurred, such as the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A in August 2019 by the BJP government, which had significant security and geo-strategic implications for South Asia and, in particular, Kashmir. The author also fails to mention the human dimension of the rivalry, which has a profound impact on the global community.

Overall, *"The Difficult Politics of Peace: Rivalry in Modern South Asia"* is a captivating and thought-provoking analysis that provides insights into the interstate rivalries in the region, particularly between India and Pakistan. Clary Christopher's use of the "Leader Primacy Theory" as a theoretical framework makes this book an academically enriching read and a valuable contribution towards understanding the Indo-Pakistani relationship and reconciliation measures under different governments. This book is a must-read for anyone who wants to gain a deeper understanding of the complicated political and security issues in South Asia, including policymakers, scholars, and anyone curious about the region. Its detailed and balanced approach to the complexities of the region's politics and security makes it an essential addition to any literature on South Asian politics.