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Potential Nuclear Conflict: In My Homeland?

On September 14, 1989, Tika Lal Taploo, a lawyer, became the first of many victims of the Kashmir conflict and insurgency. Separatist militant groups swarmed through his home city of Srinagar, choking neighborhoods with threats and xenophobic propaganda.

My parents' family also lived in Srinagar during that time. When living conditions became precarious, they fled, leaving their books, photo albums, and familial records behind. A year later they found out that their home had been burnt to the ground, and with it, any physical remnants of their presence in their homeland.

Among the many changes in India's Kashmir region, one constant remains: violence. India and Pakistan, the two nations embroiled in the conflict, have entered an arms race as tensions rise once again. Today, over 30 years since the insurgency, scientists are labeling the region as a potential site for nuclear conflict. Even more troubling is the fact that Pakistan has adopted a first use policy; in other words, if unable to counter an invasion from India, it will use its nuclear weapons. Pakistan is not alone in its non-commitment to a no first use policy, however. India has acquiesced that in the case of chemical or biological attack, it too will use its own arsenal of nuclear weapons. In fact, China is the only nation with nuclear weapons that has formally adopted a no-first use policy.

It pains me that greed over Kashmir has caused so much tension, to the point where mutual nuclear armament is the main suppressor of war. If a nuclear war occurs in Kashmir, or anywhere else in the world, global infrastructure would be brought to its knees, not to mention the countless lives lost.

Clearly, something must be done to peacefully end the era of nuclear weapons. Nuclear de-proliferation is the clearest answer, but is also an endlessly complex issue fraught with ethical controversy. If nuclear weapons leave the hands of governments like India's and Pakistan's, what stops third-party aggressors from beginning their own nuclear programs? It appears that there is a very fragile power balance that nuclear de-proliferation would certainly disrupt. Finding the conclusion to the age of nuclear weapons will be a difficult journey, but for now, we must advocate for peace and attempt to resolve conflict wherever it resides.

Perhaps it is human nature to constantly search for the most effective way to cause harm and destruction. Yet, compassion, sympathy, and a deep-rooted desire for harmony has led to the survival of humankind today. Throughout history, during decade-long wars, multiple international conflicts, and prolonged periods of struggle, it is a mutual longing for peace that has allowed us to persevere. In the modern day, this means voting for leaders that promote nonviolence and becoming educated about the communities that have been devastated by war. In the end, we must make an effort to ensure that governments worldwide commit to eliminating nuclear arsenals. Only then may we hope to reach the ending of this 75-year long story of nuclear weapons.

References

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