

## Research Essay

The assignment my paper was written in response to was to find a real world situation explained by one of the theories from my political science class. This was not an easy task, but I did eventually pick a viable topic with a corresponding theory. I set to work on the arduous process and found that at the end of two months, I finally held in my hands a paper that I felt confident in. I felt the reason it had turned out so strong was in large part due to my extensive research and incorporation of a variety of sources. My sources gave the paper merit and substance. Ultimately I found that the true accomplishment of my political science paper was not in giving one more example to prove a well-accepted theory, but in honing my research and writing skills.

When thinking of potential cases, my mind immediately jumped to non-Western countries because many of the political theories we learned about were created mainly to explain empirical observations found among Western countries. I was interested in the countries that I felt had been neglected by political science because I wanted to see if the same theories could still explain their situations. India was of special interest to me because it is the only non-Western country with a democracy that has been widely acknowledged as being a success. I also wanted to find a puzzling situation that wasn't an obvious fit with one of the theories because I felt that if I could use the theory to explain an unexpected situation, it would make the theory look even stronger. The Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan fit both criteria. The topic was of significance because while some political scientists discussed the causes, none tried to fit it with a more general theory. By fitting a general theory to this specific situation, it also shed light on some of theory's flaws.

I fit the Indo-Pakistani Kashmir dispute to James D. Fearon's rationalist theory of why wars occur. The article in which he published the theory provided my argument for what caused and perpetuated the dispute. While this article remained central for the entirety of the writing process, the part of the article that provided my main argument changed halfway through. At the beginning I thought the issue indivisibility was the rationalist explanation of the Kashmir conflict. After further research, however, I realized it only seemed like issue indivisibility on surface level and it was actually commitment issues at the root of the problem. This completely changed the approach to the conflict that my paper took. I gathered and thoroughly read through several secondhand sources which were articles from political science journals for context. They also showed me the different arguments political scientists had used to explain the Kashmir conflict. They mainly suggested issue indivisibility. Other sources though, such as an article by Kydd and Walter and another by Fearon, helped me expand on and reaffirm commitment issues as the cause. The third group of sources I used gave details of Indo-Pakistani relations over Kashmir in 2002, a year which I used as a case study of the way commitment issues have historically influenced their relations.

I did not, however, simply choose the first helpful sources I ran across. In order to evaluate the accuracy of my first group of sources, the political science articles which provided background and case specific theories, I cross-referenced the events and accounts given in each. Within my paper, the historical accounts of an event often involve citations from multiple sources, but the information from each works together seamlessly. I also took the backgrounds of the authors into account so I knew what their bias was. For example, even though I did not mention it in the paper, I researched Nasreen Akhtar, author of "A Response to 'The Kashmir Conflict'" and found that she was a political science lecturer at the International Islamic

University in Islamabad, Pakistan. This explains why her account of the events shines a more negative light on India. Her article was written in response to the authors of another source I used, Ratham Indurthy and Muhammad Haque. Indurthy, in comparison, was born and educated in India through undergraduate schooling, so his perspective is more in favor of India. I even included some citations from his response to Akhtar's article in order to fully incorporate both perspectives. With my third group of sources, which were mainly periodical articles from the internet, I checked to make sure they were from well known and respected sources like the *New York Times* and *The Indian Express*. *Pakistan KaKhudaHafiz* is a leading Pakistani news source that I used so both the Indian and Pakistani press were represented. The other two sources were part of a book by Owen B. Jones, a journalist for BBC, that was published by the Yale Press and part of a lesson plan by Sumantra Bose, a professor at the London School of Economics. By researching each of my sources, I made sure they were credible and that I knew enough about them to use them wisely.

This term paper turned into an extensive and time-consuming research project through which I learned much. Often, I struggled with the feeling that I was over-researching. Ultimately, I realized I was just taking too many notes on unimportant information. I learned to always skim sources to determine their level of importance before reading them carefully and taking notes. The most important thing I learned was that primary sources and empirics provide evidence that really strengthen a paper, and I should use them as much as possible. I use to think journal articles were the only substantial sources. This paper took a lot of effort, but I feel that it was a worthwhile learning experience, and I'm proud of the finished product.

## **Research Project:**

### **Examining Fearon's Commitment Problems as a Rationalist Explanation of War through the Study of Indo-Pakistani Relations: Why Has the Kashmir Dispute Continued for so Long?**

Since 1947 when India gained independence from Britain and Pakistan was formed, India and Pakistan have fought over the state of Jammu and Kashmir, a fight which has escalated to armed conflict several times. It is surprising that this dispute has lasted for over sixty years because while the territory displays no obvious strategic advantages, each country has invested a huge amount of their own resources into the conflict with little return. As James D. Fearon would note, the wars have been *ex post* inefficient. So why have multiple wars occurred and why has no intermediate bargain ever been reached? A review of the existing literature reveals that many political scientists, though they do not state it explicitly, seem to support Fearon's theory of issue indivisibility as the explanation of this dispute. Yet although the issue may look indivisible on surface level, when examined deeper the Indo-Pakistani conflict over Jammu and Kashmir is actually a nearly perfect example to support Fearon's explanation of how commitment problems can prevent bargains from being struck, leading to war. I will argue that this is the accurate explanation. While Fearon's theory fails to address all aspects of this specific dispute, it generally fits well with its historical patterns.

To contextualize my argument, this paper will first give a brief summary of the history of the conflict to show why the situation is puzzling. Next it will analyze James Fearon's rationalist explanation of issue indivisibility as causing war in order to provide background for the review of literature written about the causes of the Kashmir conflict. The paper will then summarize this

literature and discuss the different arguments, point out the flaws of the issue indivisibility explanations, and relate the arguments to Fearon's explanations. This will be followed by an empirically supported explanation of why commitment issues are responsible for the long duration of the dispute. Finally it will address the weaknesses of the commitment issues theory by looking at other arguments that explain some developments which commitment issues do not and by suggesting ways in which the theory could be improved.

In order for Fearon's argument of commitment issues to make sense, a brief history of the conflict and why it is puzzling must first be recounted. To clarify, I will refer to Kashmir's ongoing historical situation as an ongoing "conflict" or "dispute" to distinguish it from the military wars that did erupt periodically. The conflict grew out of post-colonial Pakistani independence. Unlike almost all other states that had composed colonial India, the state of Kashmir and Jammu (hereafter referred to as Kashmir) did not accede to either country. Both Pakistan and India, however, still wanted Kashmir as their territory. Pakistan's role in the beginning of the dispute was encouraging and supporting Muslim insurgents in Kashmir who were pushing for accession to Pakistan. Responding to a request for help from the Kashmiri Maharaja, India's first move was to send troops into Kashmir to combat the Muslim insurgents in exchange for Kashmir's accession to India with the Instrument of Accession. India won this war.

After the first war, the situation became very confusing and has remained so ever since. Pakistan, India, Kashmir, and the UN have bickered over whether the Instrument of Accession should be considered legitimate or not because it was signed by an unpopular leader who was soon after overthrown (Akhtar 46). At the beginning of the conflict and after the first war, both India and Pakistan reneged on deals setting up a relationship of mistrust. I will elaborate on these deals later in the paper. This mistrust was intensified by the periodic wars which occurred. Wars

broke out in 1963 because India began trying to incorporate Kashmir into its country (Sumit, Blank, and DeVotta 3), in 1965 due to Pakistani provocation, and in 1971 when India was drawn into the Pakistani civil war through Kashmir's involvement (Indurthy and Haque 11-12). Another war started in 1987 over the corrupt elections in Kashmir that caused protesting and allowed Pakistan to take advantage of the situation and send insurgents in again like it had during the very first war (Sumit, Blank, and DeVotta 4). The last war broke out in 1999. Going behind the Prime Minister's back, General Pervez Musharraf ordered Mujahedeen fighters ("holy warriors") into the Kargil region of Kashmir. While he lost the war, Musharraf still became the new Pakistani leader after executing a coup (Indurthy and Haque 13). His leadership marked an era of alternating between encouraging and condemning terrorist attacks on India and Kashmir. The UN eventually tired of the conflict, and dispute over Kashmir became the status quo.

The history of the Kashmir dispute has been complicated by its length and by the many actors involved. It is difficult to uncover why exactly this conflict has been perpetuated. James D. Fearon's 1995 article "Rationalist Explanations for War" sheds light on the reason though. Fearon made the observation that war almost always incurs high costs and neither side can be sure of the outcome. Therefore it is *ex post* inefficient, and this provides motivation for rational states to find an intermediate bargain that is a sufficient compromise on both ends (Fearon, "Rationalist" 380). In reality, however, this often doesn't happen. His explanations for this disparity were that war can be caused by issue indivisibility, commitment problems, or incentives to misrepresent private information (380-381).

Although commitment problems will be discussed later in the paper, the literature I have reviewed relates most directly to the cause of issue indivisibility, so I will give a brief explanation of it here. Issue indivisibility is the idea that the nature of some issues is such that no

compromise can be reached. In these instances, there are fewer possible solutions and none of them fall within the zone of agreement for compromise that is preferable to war (Fearon, “Rationalist” 382). If this was the explanation for the continuation of the Kashmir conflict, one would not expect to find any indications of willingness to compromise.

A review of the literature on the topic of the Kashmir dispute shows that many of the political scientists who have studied this matter suggest that the cause of its continuation has been issue indivisibility. After all, the long history and apparent resolve of each side suggests that no compromise can be reached. This lack of a “bargaining range” is the defining characteristic of an indivisible issue (Fearon, “Rationalist” 382). As Sumit Ganguly, Jonah Blank, and Neil DeVotta assert, despite their repeated defeat, Pakistan has maintained its level of commitment to Kashmir (4). Rathnam Indurthy and Muhammad Haque recount many solutions to the problem which have been repeatedly suggested, but claim that none of these solutions are practical because Pakistan, India, and Kashmir do not seem to have an overlapping bargain range. It would be unlikely to get all three of the parties to agree on any of the solutions (Indurthy and Haque 38-39). Manav Kumar also warns that until India is willing to make concessions, no progress will be made and the region will remain in a state of political turmoil (39). As Robert G. Wirsing says, both sides now recognize that keeping the conflict alive is disadvantageous. He says that the status quo is India having control over all of Kashmir, but this status quo is impractical (235).

Some of the literature I reviewed cites religious ideology as one reason why the dispute over Kashmir is an indivisible issue. At the time the conflict started, Kashmir was 78% Muslim. Akhtar said that because Pakistan is viewed as the designated homeland of South Asian Muslims by most Muslims, officials and the public have felt that they can lay claim to the predominantly

Muslim Kashmir (45). Ganguly, Blank, and DeVotta stated the same logic. They also asserted that India, on the other hand, has wanted to keep Kashmir in spite of this as proof of how truly secular India is (Ganguly, Blank, and Devotta 1). Indurthy also cited religion as a reason of issue indivisibility, but suggested that India does have a religious interest in Kashmir because it is the home of historic Hindu temples and caves (57). Kumar's explanation stemmed more from a cultural attachment than a religious one. He said Kashmir has now been a part of India for so long that the public views it as indispensable (37). Another reason Wirsing gives for issue indivisibility is that Kashmir is strategically important because the one controlling it has increased control over the Indus river system (231).

While these authors have alluded to Fearon's issue indivisibility as the explanation of continual conflict in their articles, commitment problems are a much better fit. As Fearon said, issue indivisibility is actually the least likely to explain any war in reality because issues are so multilayered that at least one solution, if not many, should realistically exist ("Rationalist" 382). It is more of a theoretical model because it is not usually the nature of the issue itself that actually prevents a bargain from being reached, but some other mechanism (390). Commitment problems are usually that other mechanism. They occur when one side has reasons to mistrust the other side to keep their end of the bargain. This mistrust occurs because at least one party has an incentive to renege on the deal (381). Due to anarchy and lack of a way to enforce bargain terms, states aren't given a reason to trust that they won't be taken advantage of (401). It is a Prisoner's Dilemma scenario in which both sides have an incentive to defect because they risk losing a lot if they do not. In this type of dilemma, a tit-for-tat strategy will not work because losing once may result in elimination (402). He says these situations often appear to be subject to issue

indivisibility because a solution cannot be reached even though practical ones may be proposed (408).

Fearon named three empirical expressions of commitment problems leading to war in his article. The first was the occurrence of a preemptive war because one side has a better chance of winning if it attacks first (Fearon, "Rationalist" 402). Second are preventative wars where a declining state attacks another state because it will otherwise have to accept the conditions imposed on it if that state grows more powerful (406). The third expression is with disputes over territory. In this case, if acquisition of the territory would give one state important bargaining leverage over the other in the future, the state may prefer to go to war rather than compromise and divide the land. It may suffer the costs of war, but it views the potential to gain all of the territory and the power that comes with it as more important. This empirical expression of commitment issues may look especially like issue indivisibility, but it's not (408).

His description of two states facing commitment problems is strikingly similar to those of India and Pakistan. To start with, the initiation of the conflict was a preventative war. Even though the war was not a direct clash between India and Pakistan, Kashmir did serve as a proxy war. Pakistan was the first to make a move, sending material support and possibly troops into Kashmir to aid insurgents who were fighting to make Kashmir accede to Pakistan. This is when India responded with military action at the request of Kashmir. For this war to be considered a true preventative war, two conditions must have been met. First, Pakistan must have been a declining state at the initiation of the conflict. As mentioned previously, in preventative wars where commitment problems are the issue, a declining state attacks a more powerful state. After independence, Pakistan was at a disadvantage compared with India because it did not have governmental foundations laid by the British like India did. India didn't have to invest the huge

amount of energy that Pakistan did into building its infrastructure from scratch. Pakistan also formed from the mountainous and desert regions near the border of colonial India, so it did not have much land that was conducive to agriculture. The result was that Pakistan was less economically developed than in India (Mukherjee 71). In all of these ways, Pakistan fits the role of the declining state which Fearon talked about in his discussion of preventative war as an empirical expression of commitment problems.

The other condition that would make the war a preventative one is that Kashmir would also have to have been considered a strategically important area. The literature review established that Kashmir was of cultural and religious significance to both India and Pakistan. Wirsing, however, argued that religion was not the most valuable aspect of Kashmir because while leaders originally claimed that the conquest of Kashmir was a noble religious mission, that attitude faded with the passage of time (235). Wirsing provides a more convincing explanation of why Kashmir was and is important to both sides. He attributes it to the geographic access Kashmir has to the Indus River. In his “hydro-political model,” he explains that the Indus River is composed of six branches, and it is an important resource for irrigation, fresh water, and hydroelectric power in both countries. Even in the past few years, the Kashmir region has had the second highest untapped potential for hydroelectric power in India (231).

Although control of those branches was eventually divided between India and Pakistan in the Indus Water Treaty, this wasn't until 1960 (Wirsing 227). At the time of independence, Pakistan was a country made up of arid land that was poor for agriculture. It had historically depended on the water which originated in Kashmiri parts of the Indus. The Pakistani regions which received this water produced the food that supported its population and part of Kashmir's (Qayyum). If India gained more control over the Indus, it would also gain more control over

Pakistan (Wirsing 292). Knowing this was probably an important reason Pakistani leaders thought that it was so important to control Kashmir. India also recognized the advantage of having control over the waterway as shown by how it withheld water from Pakistan in 1948 during the first war over Kashmir (227).

It can be concluded that Pakistan's aggression in 1947 was what it considered to be a preventative war. It was at a disadvantage to India and knew this, so it made the first attack and went to war to win Kashmir in order to prevent India from acquiring the territory and having increased power over Pakistan through control of the Indus. Fearon said that preventative wars are started because of the conditions that a declining state fears will be placed on it by the other state if it gains more power. Despite Pakistan's efforts of the preventative war, this fear has come true and Pakistan has been forced to accept the status quo of Indian control over most of Kashmir and the Indus.

Fearon also said territorial disputes are often an expression of commitment problems. Once again, this piece of his theory fits with the Kashmir conflict. The wars occur when having complete control over the disputed territory would give one side bargaining leverage over the other. Clearly because of the importance of the access to the Indus, controlling Kashmir would give one side that advantage. Gaining it was so important to both sides that they were willing to take on the costs of the war. These territorial disputes are the ones that Fearon says often look like an indivisible issue, which explains why other researchers may have thought issue indivisibility was the reason behind the conflict's continuation ("Rationalist" 408). After India won the first war, it didn't want to compromise and lose any of its bargaining leverage over Pakistan. On the other side, Pakistan would not stop undermining India's control in Kashmir by supporting insurgents because the water from the Indus was vital to agricultural industry.

A further indication that the issue is not indivisible is that, although it has not been strictly enforced in reality, a territorial compromise was actually made. In 1971 a Line of Control (LoC) was created to divide Kashmir into two parts: one controlled by Pakistan and one controlled by India. It is true that India's territory is almost twice as big as Pakistan's and that Pakistan has continued to support insurgents who infiltrate India's territory. Still, leaders on each side were willing to make this agreement and later leaders have kept it in place even if not strictly observing it. This shows that both sides are somewhat open to compromise, though they may not have found the zone of agreement yet. With an issue that was indivisible, this would not be the empirical observation.

Another reason why commitment problems have perpetuated the Kashmir dispute for over sixty years is that a status quo of mistrust has been established. The reason commitment issues arise, Fearon says, is because one or more parties has a reason to believe that the other has an incentive to renege on a deal ("Rationalist" 381). Mistrust between India, Pakistan, and Kashmir was initially established because India didn't follow through with its promise of a referendum which was a term of Kashmir's accession. When India agreed to send troops to Kashmir in 1947, it was under the conditions that Maharaja of Kashmir Hari Singh sign the Instrument of Accession *and* that Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, leader of the largest secular political organization in Kashmir, agree (Ganguly, Blank, and DeVotta 2). Abdullah said he agreed because India promised that a referendum would be held after the war was over so that the people of Kashmir could decide their own fate (529). After the war was over though, Pakistan and India were unable to agree on the terms for the referendum, so time dragged on without one ever taking place (Indurthy 55). To this day Kashmiris want independence, but India has not allowed it. Although most Pakistanis now know that Kashmiris would prefer

independence, at the beginning of the conflict Pakistani leaders felt confident that if a referendum was held, Kashmir would accede to Pakistan (Jones 106-8). Pakistan felt that by not holding the referendum in which it thought Kashmiris would choose to accede to Pakistan, India had robbed it. This is why India's failure to follow through with its promise of referendum was so significant in creating mistrust between Pakistan and India. Perpetuating mistrust into the 21st century, India also failed to comply with the Indus Water Treaty of 1960. The Baglihar dam which India began constructing in 2002 violates the treaty by giving India too much control over Pakistan's water flow (Wirsing 228).

On Pakistan's side, President Musharraf further created mistrust between the two with an inconsistent stance on terrorism. He condemned the extremist terrorist groups that spawned in Pakistan, yet the attacks continued to happen. Looking at Indo-Pakistani relations over Kashmir in 2002 provides a case study that is a perfect example of the historical pattern of the dispute. On January 12, 2002, President Musharraf gave a speech in which he gave verbal support for Kashmir's struggle to throw off Indian rule. In the same speech he criticized extremist Pakistani terrorist groups for both destabilizing Pakistan and putting it at the brink of war with India. His speech was given in response to two recent terrorist acts that had been committed: an attack in October 2001 which killed 38 people at India's Kashmir state legislature and an attack in December 2001 which killed 8 people at India's Parliament building in New Delhi (Bose, "Beyond September 11"). Musharraf even banned two of the most extreme terrorist organizations, which likely weakened the insurgency in Kashmir. This showed that the issue was clearly not indivisible because it was generally thought that no Pakistani leader would be able to take a stance against terrorism without losing office, but the public did not criticize him for his

statement. The public was willing to compromise at least somewhat on the issue and so was Musharraf (Jones 106-8).

Yet because of the history of mistrust between India and Pakistan, India did not believe that Musharraf's statements were genuine. India held Pakistan accountable for the terrorist attacks and began sending troops to gather at the Indo-Pakistani border and the LoC (Dugger, "India Calls a Speech by Pakistan's President 'Dangerous'"). In response, Pakistan built up their troops along the borders as well, until there were more than a million in total. The external affairs minister, Jaswant Singh, said that India would not remove the troops until Pakistan stopped allowing terrorist infiltration of India and its Kashmir territory from the terrorist camps in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. Musharraf, however, continued to claim that Pakistan was not "allowing" infiltration ("India Calls a Speech by Pakistan's President 'Dangerous'"). These exchanges between India and Pakistan in 2002 are typical of the Kashmir dispute. Neither side trusts the other, so progress is rarely made and the conflict continues. It is not that the issue is indivisible, which is shown by how Musharraf and the Pakistani public were not completely opposed to some type of compromise, but the history of mistrust created commitment problems, and Indian leaders didn't feel that Pakistani leaders would or could follow through with stopping terrorist acts.

While commitment problems were the main cause of the continuation and start of the Kashmir conflict, there are other influences that have contributed as well and further explain the conflict. One such influence is that leaders on both sides have sent costly tying-hands signals to the leaders and the public of the opposing side and to their own populations. After these signals were issued, backing down would have caused the leaders to suffer audience costs and face the probability of being removed from office (Fearon, "Signaling" 69). Indurthy expressed the same

view saying that no Indian leader has wanted to be the one held accountable for the loss of Kashmir because there has been such popular support for keeping it (57). India's stance has been in not compromising which has placed the conflict at a stalemate status quo where India has control, but Pakistan will not back down and stop its attacks on Kashmir. Pakistan has fallen victim to tying-hands signals much worse than India has. This is because leaders have projected such a high resolve and importance of the issue to Pakistan's citizens. They have circulated extensive propaganda within the country for years so that the issue has become integrated into Pakistani culture (Jones 106-8). Musharraf was quoted as saying "Kashmir beats in the heart of every Pakistani" in his August 13, 2008 speech "(Musharraf Brings up Kashmir in I-Day Speech)". This is an example of a typical quote Pakistani leaders give in regards to the importance of Kashmir to Pakistan. The strong rhetoric is a tying-hands signal to the country. While the strong feelings about Pakistan's right to control Kashmir may be disintegrating with the Pakistani population in the past decade, it certainly had a strong influence on the continuation of the war prior to the 21st century. Without these tying-hands signals, leaders would not have felt that to condemn extremists would be to lose office (Jones 106-8).

Another theory that addresses an aspect of the conflict which Fearon's commitment problems explanation does not is Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter's theory of the spoiling strategy discussed in "The Strategies of Terrorism." Spoiling occurs when moderates of a terrorist group pursue peace agreements with the opposition. This worries extremists because it means they will lose their base of moderate support. Extremists may increase their violence during peace talks to destabilize the negotiations and convince the opposition that the moderates cannot be trusted (Kydd and Walter 406). This spoiling strategy is likely to be used when the moderates are viewed as being powerful and influential. Terrorist attacks that occur during peace

talks are then seen by the other party as a sign that either moderates do not have as much control as they try to project, or they are allowing terrorists to continue their violence (407).

Extremists have used this tactic in the Indo-Pakistani conflict over Kashmir. Terrorist attacks have continuously disrupted peace talks between India and Pakistan (Akhtar 49). The 2002 example shows that India does not believe Pakistani moderate leaders have control over the situation so they are not willing to negotiate until the extremist infiltration ends. Improving relations between the two countries were undermined in 2004 and 2005 as well because of terrorist attacks (Indurthy and Haque 19). Another example is that India and Pakistan had opened up peace talks in 2008, but India ended them after the terrorist attack on Mumbai (Akhtar 50). This was due to hard evidence that the attacks had been plotted within Pakistan (Indurthy 59). The extremists' use of the spoiling strategy has been very effective in keeping compromise or conflict resolution from happening.

Fearon's theory of commitment problems explains many aspects of why the dispute over Kashmir has carried on for over sixty years. Still, the theories of tying-hands costs and terrorist spoiling plots also help to explain two other factors that have perpetuated the situation. Although Fearon describes three empirical expressions of commitment issues, he doesn't describe situations that give rise to commitment issues in the first place. All that the article says is that they are the result of one or more sides believing the opposition has an incentive to renege on a deal. These other two theories give explicit and specific examples of situations that create commitment problems. Furthermore, as the spoiling theory shows, an incentive to renege is not necessary to create mistrust. The moderates of the opposition may wish to follow through with their end of the bargain, but may not be able to if they do not have as much control over the extremists on their side as they project. Pakistani leaders cannot convincingly say that they will

put an end to terrorist attacks when they do not have control over the extremists. That doesn't mean Pakistani leaders have an incentive to renege on the deal made, but it does mean they will not be able to follow through with it so Indian leaders have a problem committing to their end of the bargain.

Fearon's commitment problems theory also wasn't created to explain longterm conflicts like the Kashmir one. His three rationalist explanations of war were meant to be applied to wars that were a single, short-term military conflict. I have applied it to a long term conflict because it explains each war that erupted during the conflict and can also be used to explain the tensions in interim periods. The commitment problems theory could be improved if it explicitly addressed how it can be applied to longterm conflicts and tense relations between countries that do not escalate to military conflicts as well. The commitment problems are intensified as they continue to occur, and eventually they set up a legacy of mistrust that can keep inter-country relations poor indefinitely. Fearon's commitment problems theory is adequate, but there is clearly room for improvement.

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