As both the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan are still disputing the sovereignty over the Jammu and Kashmir region, it is unsurprising that there have been border skirmishes as recently as 2020 and 2021. This conflict over a region situated in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent can be traced back to the years following the formation of the two countries disputing it. Since 1947, India and Pakistan have been involved in three major conflicts and numerous border skirmishes due to this particular region. Moreover, in 1971, the Republic of India helped the rebels in East Pakistan to obtain their independence from Pakistani rule and form the Bangladeshi state. Unfortunately, the Republic of India has more than one problematic relationship with its neighbors: in addition to the conflict with Pakistan, the border with China is also riddled with tensions. In effect, in 1962, the tensions with China erupted into the Sino–Indian War.

In the present research, we focus on identifying the reasons behind these territorial disputes, and on how these conflicts are characterized by periods...
of calm, followed by heightened tensions and fighting. Moreover, we show that the conflicts are still escalating, as no government can assume responsibility for a loss of territory. Although these conflicts have led to millions of refugees, thousands of deaths, and numerous casualties, which have also been portrayed in traumatic Indian novels, the citizens of these Asian countries do not see a possible solution for these unsolved problems in the near future.

The Evolution of the Indian–Pakistani Conflict

BEFORE INDIA and Pakistan obtained their independence in 1947, the British Empire controlled a large part of this South Asian region, either through direct or indirect rule. The British Raj was under direct rule by the British Crown since 1858, while the princely states functioned as tributary regions in which the indigenous rulers had the power over domestic affairs, while the foreign affairs were dealt with by the British. In 1947, the British Empire had to grant independence to the Indian territories, as the British forces had become weaker. In order to prevent a bloodbath, the British Raj was partitioned into two states using a religious criterion. Afterwards, the princely states had to choose whether to integrate into India or Pakistan. Unfortunately, the situation of the Jammu and Kashmir princely state was complicated, as it was a mostly Muslim state with some regions that had large Hindu majorities. Therefore, the Maharaja of that time, Hari Singh, wanted to transform the Jammu and Kashmir princely state into an independent country. This proved to be an impossible wish, as the new state of Pakistan severed the supply of food and goods to Kashmir and a large Muslim community in Poonch rebelled.

The first Indo–Pakistani War, or the First Kashmir War, did not break out because of the tense relationship with Pakistan or the local civil unrest, but because of “the invasion of Kashmir by Pathan tribesmen from Pakistan on October 22, 1947.” Following this invasion, the Maharaja was forced to appeal to the Indian state and request help from the Indian Government. After “accepting the accession, which made Kashmir a constituent region of India, the Government of India airlifted on 27 October armed forces that quickly pushed back the Pakistani invaders.” By November, the Indian Army had managed to secure the Srinagar airfield and force the Pakistani troops to retreat, capturing the city of Baramulla. In December 1947, the advance of the Indian forces faced a setback due to lack of supplies and proper equipment. Furthermore,

the “Azad Kashmir” (literally, “free Kashmir”) forces compelled the Indians to retreat. In the spring of 1948, the Indians launched a counter-offensive that led to
more direct Pakistani involvement in the war. In a battle near the city of Poonch, the Pakistani army used mountain guns to support the Azad Kashmir forces. Later in the year, regular Pakistani army units entered the fray as the Indian army made important territorial gains.3

In this context, the Indian state asked for the help of the United Nations, an organization that managed to negotiate a ceasefire and wanted to organize “a plebiscite in Kashmir in order to determine the future status of the state.”4 This led to the end of the First Kashmir War on 5 January 1949.

In April 1965, after some border conflicts, the Pakistani army launched Operation Desert Hawk in the Rann of Kutch. After three months of intermittent engagement, India and Pakistan signed an agreement to settle the Kutch dispute through arbitration by the International Court of Justice on 30 June 1965.5

The signing of the agreement did not mean the conflict between India and Pakistan was over, as Pakistani officials, with the approval of President Ayub Khan, prepared “Operation Gibraltar.” The operation began in May 1965, with hundreds of Pakistani men, both soldiers and civilians, prepared to infiltrate the Indian territory, receiving special training in a camp located in West Punjab. The Pakistani infiltration started on 5 August 1965, but it “failed to ignite the desired indigenous rebellion against India.”6 Pakistan’s army had deployed, during “Operation Grand Slam,” the M48 tanks received from the United States of America, but

India’s strategic planners were much wiser . . . , opening the floodgates of their nearest dams and trapping Pakistan’s tank corps in deep mud, then launching a three-pronged attack across the Indo–Pakistani international border in Punjab, aimed at the defenseless capital of Lahore.7

Although India’s army could have conquered the whole Kashmir region, by

September 22, 1965, both sides agreed to a UN mandated ceasefire. . . . On January 10, 1966, Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahdour Shastri and Pakistani President Ayub Khan signed an agreement at Tashkent (Uzbekistan), agreeing to withdraw to pre-August lines.8

As a result of the increased civil unrest in West Pakistan caused by the perception that most decision-making was in the hands of individuals from East Pakistan, in
1971, the leaders of Pakistan ordered the launch of “Operation Searchlight” in
order to arrest political leaders, disarm potentially disloyal Bengali personnel in
the police and the army, and crush the militant rebellion by force. This operation
led to the killing of many disloyal Bengalis, but also to the death of hundreds of
thousands of innocent people. Therefore, on 27 March, Major Ziaur Rahman,
ashamed by the actions of the leaders of East Pakistan, declared the independence
of Bangladesh and proclaimed himself as the temporary leader of the Republic of
Bangladesh over the radio. Furthermore, as millions of people were seeking asy-
luum in India, the Indian government decided that it was better for their country to
intervene in the civil war. Consequently, at the request of the Bangladeshi leaders,

*India launched a land, air and sea assault on East Pakistan and in just 13 days
was able to force Pakistan’s army to surrender at Dhaka, and took 90,000 soldiers
as prisoners of war. East Pakistan became the independent country of Bangladesh
on December 16, 1971. Hostilities between India and Pakistan continued till July
1972, when both countries signed the Shimla Agreement.*

During the war, the secondhand Pakistani submarine Ghazi was sent to attack
the Indian aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, the pride of the Indian Navy, but did
not manage to locate it. Therefore, the commander of the obsolete submarine,
Zafar M. Khan, started to lay mines near the port of Visakhapatnam, but due to
the mines or the depth charges thrown by the destroyer INS Rajput, the Paki-
stani submarine was sunk.

Although the Pakistani Government had managed to cope with the loss of
East Pakistan, the issue of the southwestern border with India was never clari-
fied. The situation regarding the Line of Control (LoC) in the region of Jammu
and Kashmir “began to deteriorate in the first week of May 1999, when clashes
were reported between Pakistani and Indian troops in the Kargil sector of Indi-
an-held Kashmir. India alleged that Pakistan-backed Mujahideen had occupied
the Kargil heights in connivance with regular Pakistani armed forces. The Kargil
heights—a post left unmanned by India” was one of the advantageous points
held by Pakistan in the 1947–1948 war, afterwards captured by the Indian army
in the 1965 war. Although at the beginning of May,

*Indian troops stationed locally launched several unplanned and uncoordinated
assaults to evict the intruders and to blunt the anticipated criticism of their lack of
vigilance, . . . they were repulsed and suffered heavy losses.*

As both Pakistan and India managed to become nuclear powers in 1998, the In-
dian military leaders were afraid to escalate the conflict by using the entire force
of the Indian army in the Kashmir area and decided to only focus on the Kargil region and under no circumstance go beyond the Line of Control. Therefore, the Indian commanders sent

20,000 troops into the contested area . . . employing ground and air power on its side of the LoC to evict the intruders. After initially offering firm resistance, the Pakistani forces were left to face relentless, successful Indian attacks.\textsuperscript{14}

Furthermore, United States President Bill Clinton, in fear of a nuclear war, had forced the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, to pull all Pakistani soldiers from the conflict area. Therefore, by July, the Indian forces retook the initial position on the Line of Control in the Kashmir area and the war came to an end.

The situation of the Jammu and Kashmir area is still unstable, as both India and Pakistan refuse to organize the plebiscite suggested by the United Nation and, therefore, rely on a temporary ceasefire. The refusal to organize the plebiscite is most likely due to the fact that neither country wants to give up the Jammu and Kashmir region to its rival. To this climate of uncertainty, we can add that terrorist groups from Pakistan use the Kashmir conflict as a reason to attack the Indian army, such as the 2005 Srinagar bombing of an Indian military vehicle or the attack of the Jaish-e-Mohammed insurgents on the Indian army head-quarters near Uri in 2016. Furthermore, the decision of the Indian Government to revoke the autonomy of the Jammu and Kashmir region in 2019 did not help the situation, as it caused the locals to revolt against the Indian Government.

We can argue that the solution proposed by the United Nations, of organizing a plebiscite in the Kashmir and Jammu region, is not possible due to the interest of both states to fully annex this region. However, the solution provided by UN representative Sir Owen Dixon in his report of 1950–1951 is more feasible. He proposed

the division of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into four main regions: Jammu, Ladakh, the Vale of Kashmir including Muzaffarabad, and Gilgit-Baltistan. According to his Plan, the district of Poonch was to remain to Pakistan. He proposed that of the four regions, Jammu and Ladakh should go uncontested to India and the Northern Areas to Pakistan. He concluded that in the Valley a plebiscite might be held to decide about its future.\textsuperscript{15}

Another possible solution to the Kashmir conflict is “along the lines of Northern Ireland’s Good Friday Agreement. In both cases there is an internal and external dimension to the disputes.”\textsuperscript{16} Some steps were made in that direction,
as a symbolic bus service was created in 2006 between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, for the family members that live on opposite sides of the Line of Control. In 2008, “duty-free barter trade for twenty-one items produced on either side of the LoC was allowed.” Regrettably, in 2019, the Indian Government “suspended the trade between the two sides” and implemented stricter border measures alongside the Line of Control.

The Sino–Indian Conflict

In the middle of the twentieth century, the relationship between India and China was thriving.

India was one of the earliest nations to recognize the PRC [People’s Republic of China], rather than the Taiwan-based Republic of China, as a sovereign state. In the midst of the Korean War, Indian diplomats at the United Nations proposed UN membership for the PRC as a necessary part of the ceasefire.19

As India constantly supported continental China, on 29 April 1954, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his counterpart Zhou Enlai signed the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India, which stipulated that they would respect each other’s territorial integrity, would not interfere in each other’s internal affairs, would develop a mutually beneficial trading relationship, and would live in peaceful harmony.20 Although the prime ministers of the two countries signed an agreement, a clear border was not established, since the Indians recognized the McMahon Line established by the British through the 1914 Simla Convention, but contested by the Chinese, as the declaration had only been signed by the Tibetans and the British. The McMahon Line was recognized by the Tibetan Government before Tibet was annexed by the People’s Republic of China in 1950 and became an autonomous region of China.21 In 1959, the Tibetan uprising forced the Dalai Lama to flee to India and request asylum, which was a deal breaker for the Chinese, as the Indians were helping an enemy of the People’s Republic of China. Moreover, by 1958 the “Chinese had commenced building a highway from Tibet to Xinjiang through Aksai Chin, in what was then Indian territory.”22

During the summer of 1962 there had been some skirmishes between the Indian and Chinese troops stationed along the border, which led to the death of numerous Chinese soldiers. “On September 8, 1962, 60 Chinese troops surrounded and intimidated the [Indian] Dhola post.”23 By 11 September 1962, the Indian army was
In October 1962, the Indian leaders urged the Indian battalions dispatched to Namka Chu to drive the Chinese soldiers out of Thagla, but this was an impossible mission, as commander Lt. Gen. Brij Mohan Kaul was only given “two weak infantry battalions, ill-equipped, lacking war-like stores and ammunition, and devoid of artillery support.” On 20 October 1962, Chinese artillery bombarded the Indian position and “little by little, the superior volume of the Chinese AK-47s overwhelmed the Indians.” Furthermore, the Chinese also launched an attack in November on Rezang La and Chushul. Afterwards, on 21 November, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai declared a ceasefire as they had managed to secure the Line of Actual Control, which was declared by the Chinese prime minister in 1959 as the correct border, as it included control of the Aksai Chin region.

As the exact position of the border between China and India was once again not established in a common document agreed upon by both countries, in December 2022 a new “clash [erupted] between Chinese and Indian troops along the two countries’ 2,100-mile-long contested border.” Furthermore, it is possible to say that the neighboring country, Nepal, is also adding fuel to the fire, because in 2020 Nepal announced “that they prepared a new map for the country . . . , [and] in addition to [the] disputed Kalapani territory, [they also included] . . . a small Indian settlement (Susta) . . . into Nepal.”

The Indian Border Conflicts in Literature

The Indian border conflicts are an important theme in Indian literature, as “the grim reaper claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, while a further ten million people were uprooted from their ancestral homes” after the integration of the princely states into India or Pakistan. The main focus of the Indian writers is on the partition of India and Pakistan, as this is the reason behind the Indian–Pakistani wars and border skirmishes. One of the most well-known novels that deal with this theme is Khushwant Singh’s 1956 novel, *Train to Pakistan*. The novel presents the fictional village of Mano Majra, in the new independent Indian state, where people do not know much about the partition of India and Pakistan and about
communal riots . . . [How] both [Hindus and Muslims] shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped. From Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west: to Noakhali in East Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus; to Bihar, where Hindus massacred Muslims.31

When they find out about the evil things the independence had brought, they think that “we were better under the British. At least there was security.”32 Although both Muslims and Hindus had been living in peace in this small village, the local authorities decided that the local Muslims were to be put on a train and sent to Pakistan. Firstly, the decision was made because a train from Pakistan had arrived in the small village’s railway station, and it was filled with dead Sikhs, which enraged the local Sikhs. Secondly, we believe the decision was also political, as this was an important border village where goods trains passed, and the government could not risk putting this strategic position in danger, on the chance that local Muslims could become Pakistani spies. Unfortunately, mobs of people planning to avenge the deaths of the individuals on the train that had arrived from Pakistan killed the Muslims gathered in order to be sent to Pakistan. Juggut Singh, who was in love with a Muslim girl, decided to sacrifice himself and stop the people from killing the Muslims, even if this meant he would end up dead.

Another shocking story of the Indian partition is the one written by the Indian American author Veera Hiranandani in her journal-style book from 2018, The Night Diary.33 The text describes the life of Nisha, born to a Muslim mother and a Hindu father, after the partition of India and Pakistan. As only Nisha’s mother was a Muslim and they lived in the city of Mirpur Khaz in Sindh Province, which became part of Pakistan, her family became discriminated, and her brother started to be bullied. Therefore, her father decided to take his family and run to India, but it was a dangerous journey, as people were constantly attacking them. In the end, the family managed to escape Paki-
stan and start a new life in India, but the horrors that they had witnessed on the road traumatized Nisha and her family.

Salman Rushdie’s 1981 novel, *Midnight’s Children*, also deals with the partition of India and Pakistan, as many references appear in the writing. Unlike the previous novels, it visits the past and recent developments of the initial conflict.

There were conflicts between Muslims and Hindus before the Partition, like the one on August 19...; and street violence between Muslims and Hindus in Bombay on September 4, 1946... There are political and social tensions between Hindus and Muslims after the Partition: two wars over Kashmir, and one over the creation of an independent Bangladesh. All these events were depicted in the novel and made great impact on the plot.35

The story is presented by Saleem Sinai, who was born in the exact moment when India achieved its independence on 15 August 1947. Saleem tells his family story to Padma Mangroli, Saleem’s lover. The most dramatic episode in the novel occurs during the Second Kashmir War, during which

Everyone related to Saleem was killed except Jamila Singer and the family of his uncle Mustapha. The war resulted in pangs and suffering, loss of life and violence. Sallem survived in the war,36

but became an orphan. What differentiates Rushdie from the first two writers is that he combines historical truths with magic realism.

The use of magic realism enables him to create his own version of history from the marginalized perspective, ... and to comment on the social and political problems of postcolonial India.37

This inclusion of magical realism is done not only through the voice of the main character, but through all the characters of the book, when discussing Indian
politics or the social context: they seem to talk about a fantastic world, not the real historical one.

Jon Cleary’s 1966 novel, *The Pulse of Danger*, explores the story of a group of botanical researchers returning from their expedition to Thimbu in 1962 during the Sino–Indian War, which had caused the death of thousands of people. The researchers become afraid for their lives as they hear on the radio that the “Chinese have crossed the border east of . . . [their location], over into the North-East Frontier, and into the west, too, in Ladakh.” Not long after the news, they encounter an Indian officer that had captured a Chinese general on Bhutan’s territory. Lieutenant-Colonel Dalpat Singh of the Indian Army was the commander of a battalion in the North-East Frontier Agency station near the Chinese border, but his camp was attacked by the Chinese military and he, together with a group of eighteen men, fled “west over the mountains into Bhutan.”

While fleeing to Bhutan, they ran into a “Chinese border post, well inside the border. . . . [They] manage to avoid them, but unfortunately . . . then ran into a second post.” Even if Singh lost all his subordinates, he managed to defeat the Chinese forces and capture the Chinese General Li Bu-fang. Although the Indian officer tried to bring his prisoner to India, in order to prove himself worthy of his military rank and expose the Chinese invasion plans, by the end of the novel both military men fall into a chasm in the Himalayan mountains.

**Destruction**

Although many readers could argue that Humphrey Hawksley’s 2000 novel, *Dragon Fire*, is a fantasy novel, it could be seen as depicting a possible alternative reality, as the tensions between India and its neighbors are not de-escalating. The novel brings to the attention of the close readers sensitive topics such as Tibet’s occupation by China, the Indian–Pakistani
conflict, the Sino–Indian conflict, the Taiwan conflict, and the dangerous nuclear capabilities of China, India, and Pakistan.

China, at this moment, “is still obliged to advocate better trade and investment cooperation and to see India as a multilateral economic partner,” but this economic cooperation can end if India crosses the red line of the territorial integrity of China or interferes in the internal affairs of the communist state. In the novel, Humphrey Hawksley suggests that the Chinese state could become a fierce enemy of India, if the Indians would dare to launch a military mission in Tibet, which is Chinese territory. Emphasizing this point, the novel begins with the provocation of China through the secret mission carried out by the Special Frontier Force, which is meant to rescue the Buddhist monk Lhundrub Togden, an important leader against the Chinese rule over Tibet. Although it is unlikely that such an operation would be launched in real life, we should not forget that the Indian Government granted asylum to the Dalai Lama in 1959 and that the exiled Tibetan Government operates in Dharamshala.

At present,

*China does not support Pakistan’s position on the Kashmir issue. Pakistan wants to resolve the matter through internationalization. China, in contrast, along with the US and the EU, among others, believes that the dispute should be resolved through bilateral talks.*

but if India were to become an enemy of China, it is possible for the communist government to shift its policy and support Pakistan’s claims. In *Dragon Fire*, because India supports the escape of the Tibetan leader, the Chinese Chief of the General Staff, Tang Siju, and Defense Minister Lueng Liyin secure a deal with Pakistan. In the novel, the Pakistani Government offers to fight against the terrorists that might attack Tibet or Xinjiang from Pakistan or neighboring coun-
tries, while they get access to Chinese surveillance technology and obtain “East Wind DF-21 missile[s] and launchers and the KS-1 theatre-defense missile.”

Things get out of hand when the Pakistani military fires a Stinger missile on a helicopter that has aboard the Indian Home Minister and other Indian officials returning from an important meeting at the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce. Moreover, when the Indian Prime Minister, Hari Dixit, wants to reach the Pakistani Prime Minister, they realize that the Islamic state was taken over by Hamid Khan, the Army Chief of Staff, who demands the organization of a referendum in Kashmir, which the Indian Government rejects, and thus a war begins between India and Pakistan in the Kashmir area.

As Hari Dixit finds out about the secret agreement between Pakistan and China, and as the Kingdom of Bhutan is invaded by China, India is forced to act and help its neighbor. Fortunately, the Russian president persuades the Indian prime minister to order a ceasefire. Despite this Indian ceasefire, the Chinese attack an Indian submarine and afterwards, when Taiwan seeks to affirm its independent status, it also starts a war with Taiwan. As Hari Dixit feels that China is defying everyone, he urges the military to attack the


These attacks enraged the Chinese and made President Tao give the order to launch nuclear warheads towards Bombay. The Chinese hoped that after firing a nuclear missile at Bombay, India would surrender, but Hari Dixit decided to launch four nuclear missiles towards “Chengdu, Beijing, Zhongnanhai and Shanghai,” which triggered the launch of another Chinese missile towards Delhi, where the presidential headquarters was located.

Although *Dragon Fire* is a fictional novel, it is based on real problems in South, South-East and East Asia, and it imagines how a possible future may look. Sadly, the presented future is a post-apocalyptic one, in which a small conflict turns into a world war, where nuclear missiles fly between the belligerent nations, and nobody can stop them without risking their country joining a deadly war.

In conclusion, we need to underline that the Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the People’s Republic of China have frozen conflicts at the borders that can be awaken by a stray bullet fired by mistake by a soldier or just by an inappropriate word from a government official.
Although neither side will make compromises, these unsolved conflicts have caused thousands of deaths and millions of refugees during the numerous wars and border skirmishes. These victims are portrayed in literary works by brilliant authors such as Salman Rushdie, Veera Hiranandani, Kushwant Singh, Humphrey Hawksley and Jon Cleary, and the leaders of these countries should learn from past mistakes and read about World War I, the crimes committed by the Nazis during the Holocaust and the innocents killed by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombs, and find a solution to the unresolved conflicts in a peaceful way, through negotiations in which each side makes compromises. Otherwise, the post-apocalyptic world of Dragon Fire awaits us.

Notes

10. Iqbal and Hussain, 141.


18. Jacob, 17.


22. Guha, 27.


32. Singh, 52.


Abstract
India’s North Border Conflicts: Between Reality and Fiction

Ever since the Republic of India became an independent nation in 1947, the Indian state has strived to keep its territorial integrity, in spite of the numerous territorial claims made by neighboring states. Firstly, the Kashmir region is home to both Muslim and Hindu populations; therefore, when the Indian and Pakistani states were created, the region was split between the two new states. However, both states hold the belief that the entirety of the Kashmir region should be part of their territory. This situation sparked numerous local conflicts and four local wars (1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999). Secondly, another disputed area is located on the border with the People’s Republic of China, as the Chinese state does not recognize the McMahon Line, which was agreed upon by British India and Tibet. This led to the conflict in 1962 and to a tension-filled relationship between China and India. This paper approaches both the historical evolution of the conflicts and the way in which these two conflict areas are portrayed in literature. While Veera Hiranandani, in The Night Diary (2018), and Khushwant Singh, in Train to Pakistan (1956), focus on the conflicts between Muslims and Hindus after the partition of India and Pakistan, Salman Rushdie, in Midnight’s Children (1981), analyzes the traumas of the conflict in Kashmir. Furthermore, Jon Cleary, in Pulse of Danger (1966), presents the context of the Sino-Indian war. The most disturbing novel about the Indian conflicts is Humphrey Hawksley’s novel, Dragon Fire (2000), because the author presents an apocalyptic war between the Republic of India, on one side, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan allied with the People’s Republic of China, on the other side.

Keywords
South Asia, the partition of India, the partition of Pakistan, Kashmir conflict, Aksai Chin region, trauma literature