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Lessons from Kashmir: Is Eastern Ukraine Next? Challenged Decolonization and Compromised Identities

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Lessons from Kashmir: Is Eastern Ukraine Next?

Challenged Decolonization and Compromised Identities

Senior Project submitted to
the Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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To my family,
for whom I will be eternally grateful

To Professor Sanjib Baruah,
for your guidance and inspiration

To my friends,
*for unforgettable moments and laughs
(and sometimes tears)*

To Ukrainian researchers,
for challenging my translation skills

Thank you.

надія помирає останньою
- ے ہرتی میں آخر امید

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Introduction

In the midstream of decolonization

Коней на переправе не меняют.¹
-Russian proverb

We are in a period of major changes and difficult processes in Eastern Europe since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and in South Asia since the exit of the British Empire. Kashmiris were promised a plebiscite in 1947² but have been waiting ever since; fast forward sixty-seven years to April of 2014³ when separatists in Eastern Ukraine declared sovereignty of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic through a referendum rejected by the greater part of the world. 1947 and 2014 were integral years for Kashmir and Ukraine respectively: the ascension of Kashmir to India and the Maidan revolution in Ukraine changed the political destiny of these regions. In response to Kashmir's ascension, a war between Pakistan and India broke out over the future of the region. Ukraine declared the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in Eastern Ukraine, sparking a violent conflict with support from outside actors (most notably Russia).

Both of these regions have entered the global conversation because of the violence that exploded in their formative years – Kashmir in the last century and Ukraine in this one. Conflict arises from complex and protracted issues that cannot be boiled down to a simple sentence, these issues move beyond any single school of thought or framing. Question a separatist from Donetsk, an insurgent in Kashmir, or the official governments in Kiev and New Delhi on why they fight

¹ Translated as: Don't swap horses when crossing the stream. A Russian proverb warning not to make major changes in the middle of a difficult process.

² "Plebiscite in Kashmir," Kashmir Library, accessed April 18, 2015, http://www.kashmirlibrary.org/kashmir_timeline/kashmir_chapters/plebiscite.shtml.

³ Iryna Havdiak and Artur Inderike, "Timeline," in *The Maidan Uprising, Separatism and Foreign Intervention*, ed. Klaus Bachmann and Igor Lyubashenko (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 478-480.

and what they want from such conflict, and the answers received will vary drastically. These multilayered, multifaceted clashes cannot and will not be solved in a day, but the question remains of how we can even begin to work towards a solution given the chaos.

This project was inspired partly from my own questioning of identity as a first generation American. Upon my birth, I was conferred the privilege of the American citizenship, of being a New Yorker. Had I been born in Ukraine, I would have been Ukrainian – an identity complicated by being from a Western Ukrainian city. My parents were once citizens of the Soviet Union, their parents Romanian, and the past generations Austro-Hungarian. We did not move – the borders did; does identity shift because of the flag that flies over our heads? Who we are, is one of the most fundamental questions anyone can ask whether in political thought or philosophical inquiry. The question remains a theoretical issue until we introduce the idea that identity resides in a space outside of self-identification: once political processes and realities are introduced, identity becomes something else entirely. We begin to identify by nationalities, language, religion – these identities come together to form communities, which in turn form polities. The question may be simple: members of a Kashmiri Muslim community could form a polity, just as much as members of a Ukrainian Orthodox Christian community. These states would operate as the national homes for these communities, but neither history nor contemporary politics work out that way.

Enter colonization, compromised identities, mixed identities, and the rise of multi-ethnic empires and nation-states aimed at modernizing and folding in the periphery – the story then became muddled. Fast forward to the rise of decolonization, a messy and sticky process that created new states charged with building a new national identity and institutions to make sure the fledgling nation does not slide backwards into subservience – but in the advent of new states,

centuries-old identity crises were suppressed and swept under the rug. These unresolved conflicts resulted in entire groups of people becoming disenfranchised by the very nations that declared their freedom in the name of forming one cohesive national narrative. The true mess began here, as the problematic side effects of decolonization and compromised identities boiled into conflicts and confrontations. On one side, marginalized groups with varying goals formed to fight against the postcolonial state, and on the other, the nation-states themselves fight to form and maintain a powerful, functional, and cohesive state.

Kashmir within India and Novorossiia⁴ within Ukraine offers us an a story and reality to consider and learn about some of the greater issues at play in the process of decolonization, where a chunk of time has passed since the independence of the United Kingdom's colonies and only recently did the countries of the Soviet Union attain their sovereignty. This temporal aspect allows us to trace a history in one conflict while comparing to developments in the other as they happen in real-time. Comparisons, however, are not so simple: does Ukraine really have similar issues to Kashmir and India? A major contextualization must occur in order to bring Ukrainian and Indian realities into the same playing field for comparison: pierogies are simply not the same thing as samosas. Once these issues are historicized and contextualized, it may be possible to draw lessons from one conflict in order to frame and understand newer issues. I will work to consider Kashmir as a formative issue for challenging decolonization and compromised identities, whose lessons can then be applied to newer conflicts that are only just taking shape.

Methodology

⁴ Novorossiia, or New Russia, is a historical term referring to a large part of Eastern and Southern Ukraine, including the major cities of Donetsk, Lugansk, Kherson, and Odessa. This paper uses Novorossiia as a term to describe Russia's influence in this region.

This project seeks to understand the connection between challenged decolonization, compromised identities, and postcolonial conflict zones. For the purposes of this project, challenged decolonization describes the difficulty of defining the “postcolonial nation,” where many problems that have their roots during colonialism have yet to be addressed, let alone solved. Challenged decolonization reaches beyond the political side of decolonization, where the colonial power officially withdraws its claim and a sovereign nation is born. Instead, challenged decolonization focuses on the next phase of challenges, moving out from the meeting chambers of parliaments and voting booths of referendums to the reality on the streets: this face of decolonization is contested, disputed, and challenged. We have not realized decolonization, nor do we fully grasp what an “end point” would look like.

It is here in the real world that the concept of compromised identities fits in – nationalism and identity politics is a particular problem for decolonization and the formation of states. John Plamenatz speaks of nationalism as “primarily a cultural phenomenon, although it often takes a political form.” Of note is the “eastern” form of nationalism formed in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America – the postcolonial world. Eastern nationalism has formed among “peoples recently drawn into a civilization hitherto alien to them, and whose cultures are not adapted to success and excellence by these cosmopolitan and increasingly dominant standards.” Partha Chatterjee comments on the liberal dilemma this causes: on one hand, the rise of independent states is framed as something good and necessary, but the nationalism that is behind such movements is viewed negatively.⁵ Chatterjee created a derivative discourse – these issues cannot be reduced to a problem of East versus West; nor is it particularly helpful to promote this

⁵ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 1-5.

divide. This project does not seek to consider such divisions, but rather to form a narrative of decolonization in order to formulate lessons and create a basis for comparison.

Nationalism and liberal statehood⁶, then, are at odds with each other. The non-western world, therefore, has the difficult task of finding a way to marry its different nationalities under a liberal state. This problem is particularly pronounced in the formation of India, which began to frame itself as a liberal, secular, and multiethnic state while underscoring its foundation as a homeland for Hindus. Ukraine, subsequently, inherited different forms of nationalism based on language, religion, and regional affiliation. These different forms of nationalism, however, manifest themselves in the identity politics seen on the ground, steeped in history and the complications associated with changing tides and dominant colonialism. Both India and Ukraine, however, experienced an interesting form of nationalism that can be defined as official nationalism, according to Chatterjee. This form of “official nationalism” results in an official cultural homogeneity from the top⁷ – this is seen in the Hindu underpinnings in Indian politics to the heavy Russification of Ukrainian society.

Nationalism combined with challenged decolonization has the potential for instability – a word of choice to describe the “unfavorable conditions so widespread throughout the formal colonial world⁸.” Raymond F. Betts posits that decolonized nations inherited a reality they were not prepared to handle, “they were ill prepared for the onrush of problems from without and constrained by the colonial structures and institutions found within.”⁹ Both Kashmir and Ukraine were once part of a greater empire that had the ability to control entire strata of political,

⁶ Liberal statehood is framed as the modern idea of states with borders, international recognition, and even having the legal right to use force.

⁷ Ibid, 20.

⁸ Raymond Betts, *Decolonization*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 62.

⁹ Ibid.

economic, and social life. Each had to contend with the question and problems of sovereignty, whether through the unilateral choice to enter a union or a referendum that declared independence. Under empire, identity can be ignored or suppressed – but once these issues begin to simmer, decolonized states find themselves scrambling to try and handle growing unrest that has a high probability of transitioning to violence and conflict.

This project is primarily comparative, looking at the issues present in both Eastern Ukraine and Kashmir in order to find common ground and lessons that can be drawn as steps further into solving the problem of challenged decolonization and compromised identities when violence erupts. Kashmir is first and foremost used as a historical precedent and seen as a region where the process of decolonization was confronted, giving a sort of launching point for the current situation in Ukraine, specifically in Eastern Ukraine. For the purposes of this project, there is a large focus on Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, as the issue of identity vis-à-vis postcolonial national politics is most pronounced. The case of Ukraine is taken to include only Donetsk and Lugansk, while mentioning the issue of the Crimean peninsula. Because of Crimea's complex history as a territory of Ukraine and its current status under de facto Russian control, political violence is not in the foremost issue. This project seeks to understand how challenged decolonization and compromised identities lead to political violence, and whether we can use historical cases as lessons for emerging problems.

Chapter summaries

This project is separated into three chapters dedicated to explaining and drawing lessons from Kashmir and Ukraine. The first chapter looks at the Kashmiri conflict, explaining its emergence through a historical narrative while paying close attention to how identity and political realities inform the present situation in Kashmir. The first chapter sets up the story by

contextualizing Kashmir within its political situation: the local reality within Kashmir, Kashmir vis-à-vis India, and the international conflict between India and Pakistan over the status of Kashmir. The chapter begins by defining Kashmir's status during the British Raj as an autonomous although subservient kingdom before moving to contemporary politics. Kashmir's history at that period can be indicative of why the region remains problematic – as the decisions of Kashmiri rulers largely ignored the reality on the ground and allowed for British control and manipulation beyond the autonomous agreement. Next, the chapter moves to the problem of state building and fragility as a potential driver in the sparking of the Kashmiri conflict after the British Raj, including the circumstances of Kashmir's ascension into India over Pakistan or independence. This chapter then outlines a cause and effect relationship of colonialism, challenged decolonization, compromised identities, and conflict as seen in Kashmir by looking at the identity politics at play in the region. The chapter concludes by questioning the Kashmiri conflict and India's role as a defender – do Kashmiris, and postcolonial lives by extension – actually matter to the state, or is it part of the greater issue of India's attempts at securing the state and national sovereignty?

The second chapter picks up this question by contextualizing and explaining the Ukrainian question in order to bring it to a comparable level to Kashmir. The chapter connects Soviet rule over Ukraine to the kind of relationship evident in the colonial world as a driving force for the subsequent issue of challenged decolonization and compromised identity issues in the 1990s. The chapter, however, dives deeper into the past than the Soviet Union, exploring the very formation of the Ukrainian national identity and the long history of suppression and liberation of the lands that will come to make up today's Ukraine. The issue of Ukraine's name is explained and expanded upon to define the relationship of Ukraine to Russia, the major political

player in the region. If following the logic of Kashmir, Ukraine's problems trace back to these issues, where the modern nation-state must contend with this historical past and successor states that hold similar colonial powers over these regions. The compromised identities in Ukraine are then looked at and explained as they pertain to the national question, leading to today's issues that are best explained as an identity crisis spilling into violence.

The final chapter brings Kashmir and Ukraine into a comparative perspective, finding common themes between the two and focusing on how the present situation in Ukraine can be reminiscent of Kashmir's past in an attempt to draw parallels and tease out greater lessons and takeaway points. This chapter first looks at the current political reality of Kashmir in a way that can be comparable and seen from different angles and applied to other regions. Primarily, it is the problem of both the Kashmiri and the Indian states' inability to form a cohesive identity that fits the historical narrative while working with the present issues in the face of decolonization. The chapter then moves to look at the current Ukrainian crisis stemming from the Maidan revolution of 2014 by introducing one of the major lessons from Kashmir: the problem of boundaries and state-building in regions where there is no single national identity that can be all-encompassing without creating one for the single purpose of unity. Next, the chapter introduces the idea of the Postcolonial Informal Empire and the problem of living on the periphery, something common between both Kashmir and Ukraine. The two have found themselves in the borderlands of nations that inherited the power of the former colonial empires – and have begun to act in a way reminiscent of those same empires they gained independence from.

This project seeks to not only understand the complex relationship between decolonization and identity, but also try to find a means for framing and understanding the conflicts that arise from such problems. The political reality of both Kashmir and Ukraine stems

from a difficult history and an even more complex transition from colonial dominance to sovereignty. Although an antidote to solve these problems does not currently exist, we can begin by using some of the ideas that will be brought up by this research project as a point of conversation and planning for a brighter future.

Chapter I

Paradise Lost

“For more than 50 years, India and Pakistan have been arguing and periodically coming to blows over one of the most beautiful places in the world, Kashmir, which the Moghul emperors thought of as Paradise on earth. As a result of unending quarrel, Paradise has been partitioned, impoverished and made violent.”

Salman Rushdie, *Kashmir, the Imperiled Paradise*

How did Kashmir get here?

Colonialism has left a lasting impact on the global system – the process of creating new borders, confronting uncomfortable pasts, dealing with often compromised identity politics, and the drive for independence continues to shape the political realities and regimes of the world. Decolonization has not yet been realized, as observed with the persistence of frozen conflicts in the postcolonial world. The process itself may never be realized, as the question of what it means to be decolonized has yet to be answered – framing the issue as somehow realizable assumes that there is a right way to decolonize. The international community tried to grapple with the problem of founding states, created from disintegrating empires – “Third Worldism” was born from these ashes to approach the unique problems the new nations face as a result of colonialism. Scholarly research began to realize that postcolonial nations were not simply created, that a process both messy and seemingly never-ending was created by colonization. This intersection of decolonization of governance and decolonization of the human element creates an exceedingly complicated and charged conflict: the drawing of borders and defining of nationalities by the colonial powers created compromised identities and violence. On one hand, there is decolonization on the state level: new institutions, defined borders, the creation of laws, and the creation of a political process without a colonial power. On the other, these fledgling institutions are charged with the job to create a national identity: what does it mean to be a citizen, who is a

citizen, and contending with identities that are already in existence. Decolonization, at its core, is the creation of a new foundation for states in a power vacuum left by the colonial powers. This is easier said than done, as proved by the countless problem regions which defy normative notions of the nation-state and what it means to be truly sovereign. The process could have an end, but that conclusion may not be something we necessarily like: Kashmir is one particular case that transcends history and has yet to come close to any sort of lasting resolution¹⁰.

The presence of frozen conflicts and decolonized, complicated regions is an issue of not only regional importance but also crucial in the international sphere: these issues are played out in the streets and in the halls of the United Nations, in congressional palaces and presidential offices. Decolonization and its sparking of problematic, frozen conflicts transcends artificially drawn borders. Kashmir is an example where there is a transcendence of borders due to four distinct dimensions: provincial-level conflicts within Kashmir, the national-level politics between India and Kashmir, a larger regional confrontation between Pakistan and India over Kashmir's sovereignty, and the international consequences of Kashmir. The process of decolonization of the British Empire in South Asia has caused a multi-faceted situation in Kashmir where there are levels of compromised identities and motivations. This proves to be a learning point for other regions with similar histories of colonization and the messy process of undoing years of colonial rule through decolonization.

The conflict in Kashmir can be traced to the messy partition of British India in 1947. The reality of colonial rule in South Asia was that the British did not have direct control of the whole territory, but their colonization practices were felt even in the independence of the princely

¹⁰ Sing, Waheguru Pal. "Introduction." In *Kashmir: New Voices, New Approaches*, edited by Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, Bushra Asif, and Cyrus Samii, 117. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006

states. In addition to the regions governed directly by British rule, there were small autonomous states ruled by hereditary rulers: these kingdoms, formed after the Mughal Empire, were able to function relatively independently if they pledged their allegiance to the British Empire. Scholarly work tends to agree that these states had their roots in pre-colonial rule, but their persistence and even flourishing was due to the negotiation of treaties between these elites and the new colonizing British. Kashmir was one such kingdom, steeped in ancient history and traditions – the princes of India, to legitimate their rule over respective lands, made agreements with the British East India Company for mutual economic and military aid¹¹. Kashmiri elites in particular had motives to cooperate with the British – during the Anglo-Sikh wars in the early nineteenth century; Gulab Singh (one of three brothers ruling over the majority of Jammu and Kashmir, then a vassal to the Sikh rulers) began to increasingly side with the British over the Sikh rulers. The British East India Company – pleased by the support they received from Singh during their conquests in the Punjab – rewarded Singh with the territories of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, thus defining the borders Jammu and Kashmir and setting the stage for future conflict during the Partition period¹². This, however, was not the end for the colonial presence of the British in Kashmir; although the prince of Kashmir officially ruled the state, the British saw economic prospects in the region. The British instituted control over “the political and economic administration of the state by posting their officials. In fact, after setting up the residency in 1885, the British directly intervened in the running of the affairs of the princely state.¹³” The British began to set up their own land revenue systems, restructuring preexisting frameworks –

¹¹ "People, princes and colonialism," introduction to *India's Princely States: People, Princes and Colonialism*, ed. Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati (London, UK: Routledge, 2007), 5-7.

¹² Shakti Kak, "The Agrarian System of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir," in *India's Princely States: People, Princes and Colonialism*, ed. Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati (London, UK: Routledge, 2007), 69.

¹³ *Ibid*, 81.

they retained traditional appointments of Kashmiri *jagirs* (land owners) but began to pick their own. These changes meant that there were landowners who were loyal to both Kashmir and to the British, creating new elites in the region based off of the traditional framework. The British then instituted a new assessment system for the land, including “occupancy rights, period of lease, payment of revenue in cash, and the institutional structure to collect taxes.¹⁴” These structures then played a role in helping perpetuate famines and food shortages, as the residency of the British government in Kashmir continually dissuaded the maharajah from purchasing grains to distribute to citizens. Britain’s informal rule over Kashmir aided in the drawing of the region’s borders and instituting of policies detrimental to the Kashmiris themselves to restructure the society became hallmarks of colonial Kashmir and decolonization process that tried to address these colonial practices.

Foundation of a new princely state created an interesting problem to come for the international community. Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh each had different demographics: Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists were a plurality in each region respectively, creating a state where each people were now under a single flag. This would become the precept for the future of Kashmir: the creation of a state where the new borders encompassed different ethnicities would soon become compromised.

Decolonization creates the issue of fragility in a region, where its foundations are faulty from the start: this distinctive type of statehood includes within its definition an inability for the state to provide basic services. This is felt on multiple levels, including the larger state and even on the regional level. The interplay between the consequences of decolonization on the state level – India – and on the regional level – Kashmir – is important to consider in order to fully

¹⁴ Ibid.

understand how each functions and plays off the other. Regional politics can oftentimes be very different than the state-level, but other times there is also a mirroring. This relationship is important to consider in learning lessons from conflict zones. On the government level, the postcolonial fragile state has an inefficient and corrupt institutional structure. Furthermore, the government cannot function based on rule of law, undermining its legitimacy through coercion. Economically speaking, the fragile state lacks any sort of national economy capable of sustaining a basic level of welfare and resource management. The fragile state must rely on the globalized economy and external interests, such as non-governmental organizations or foreign direct investment. The fragile state cannot provide its citizens many basic citizenship rights, partially due to a divided population based on ethnic backgrounds. This category of states has not fostered a community as a primary bond among its people at the national level¹⁵. Together, these common attributes of fragile states provide a beginning framework to work with when looking at emerging threats to state stability.

There is, however, an added dimension common among fragile states and destabilizing conflicts: a major questioning of identity and allegiances as they relate to the greater national framework of identity. Among other issues common across the postcolonial world, identity proves to be a “zero-sum game,¹⁶” and an irreconcilable sticking point. On one end is the state’s own identity framework and on the other end, an alternate identity at odds with state goals. Regions that are within fragile states, created by challenged decolonization, must contend with issues of identity that act as further destabilizing factors in an already messy situation. Identity

¹⁵ Lothar Brock et al., *Fragile States: Violence and the Future of Intervention* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012), 21.

¹⁶ David Kang, "Acute Conflicts in Asia after the Cold War," in *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 367.

readily connects fragile statehood with violent conflict – “many observes have claimed that the violence characterizing the ‘new wars’ in fragile states derives from the politics of identity¹⁷.” The caveat, however, is that “...It happens only when political entrepreneurs employ cultural identities to sort out friend and foe, and mobile groups into turning against one another in a process of escalating conflict¹⁸.” Such issues have been observed around the world in the post-Cold War era. Identity politics fuse together aspects of fragile statehood with intrastate violence, common among many in this class of states in the international community.

Kashmir: South Asia’s powder keg

This chapter will contextualize Kashmir as a product of the lengthy process of decolonization: if the conclusion is that the end result of decolonization is an unrealized state where frozen conflict rules, we can look at nations in the early stages of decolonization and make meaningful predictions about the future while examining ways to make a state with sturdy foundations a reachable goal for decolonization. Jammu and Kashmir proves to be an interesting case study to view the intersection between decolonized states, the sparking of subnational conflict, and compromised identity politics. Fragile sub-national entities often comprise a large part of the destabilizing factors in the overall fragility of a nation, following a modern trend towards intrastate conflict rather than interstate wars. Kashmir is also a region where there is a long-standing conflict between the powers which lay claim to the territory: Kashmir is both a historical case and a modern phenomenon. The case of Kashmir will be examined in a present-past: it will be studied historically while paying attention to the fact that it remains a very real problem in South Asian politics. This will give us a greater understanding of how decolonization, identity, and the foundations of state intermingle and give us tools for understanding emerging

¹⁷ Brock et al., *Fragile States: Violence and the Future*, 48-49.

¹⁸ Ibid.

conflicts in different parts of the world. Before diving into the question of Kashmir's status in the greater international community and its role in the decolonization narrative, the roots of the Kashmir issue must be examined. The long, tumultuous history can be divided into three overarching themes which add fuel to the conflict between India and Pakistan: the geographical importance of Kashmir, the question of a *Kashmiriyat* identity, and the political rhetoric along with the actions employed by both Pakistan and India when talking about the disputed region to draw out differences in identity and to mobilize communities to act. In the end, this chapter will discuss how postcolonial governments handle these problematic regions through military and political processes, exacerbating the overall issue of challenged decolonization. Kashmir is important to examine in the international community because it has, since the partition of British India in 1947, been at the center of three wars between India and Pakistan. Both Pakistan and India have access to nuclear weapons and have exercised their power to test them as the conflict escalated over the allegiance of the region. "The region not only has witnessed the most sustained level of violence anywhere in the world since the Cold War but is recognized as a crisis-prone nuclear flashpoint¹⁹." Kashmir itself plays an integral role in the international community, providing a heated point for debate on the intersection of decolonization and the importance of considering compromised identities in the creation of new states, the overall issues of faulty foundations, and in the greater considerations of how the world can respond to the Indo-Pakistani dispute over the region while maintaining modern definitions of successful statehood.

The modern region known commonly as Kashmir was, at the time of the partition of British India, a princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. This state occupies three distinct regions,

¹⁹ Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, "Introduction," introduction to *Kashmir: New Voices, New Approaches*, ed. Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, Bushra Asif, and Cyrus Samii (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 1.

each with a deep-rooted history, a religious, and ethnic identity: the Hindu-majority Jammu, the Muslim-majority Kashmir, and the Buddhist-majority Ladakh. These geographic demarcations along identity lines are important for the overall story of fragility, violence, identity, and overall decolonization. The origins of the Kashmiri conflict lie in the history Jammu and Kashmir itself. The British prime minister, Clement Atlee, during the period of partition declared, “His majesty’s government does not intend to hand over their powers and obligations under paramountcy to any government of British India²⁰.” The hope among the fifty-six princely states that enjoyed autonomy in British India was that independence was within reach. This idea then evolved to a second declaration, “all the states will in due course find their appropriate place with one or the other domination within the British Commonwealth²¹.” The power to choose seemed to stay in the hands of the princely states, but with a heavy handed nudge from either the forming India or Pakistan, making it all but a requirement to join one of the two. Most states, by the end of partition, joined the new Indian union or Pakistan, based in part on ethnic lines: Muslim-majority to Pakistan and Hindu-majority to India. Kashmir, however, stayed in a state of flux due to a series of events surrounding the Hindu Maharajah who ruled the princely state at the time of partition in 1947 and the political motivations of the newly created Indian and Pakistani leaders.

Maharajah Hari Singh was not particularly eager to join either India or Pakistan, despite a Muslim-majority population and the maharajah’s own Hindu identity. This changed, however, when infiltrators and tribesmen from Pakistan attempted to overthrow Hari Singh to force Kashmir to ascend to Pakistan, prompting the First Kashmir War in 1948. In August of 1947,

²⁰ Rekha Datta, *Beyond Realism: Human Security in India and Pakistan in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 32-33.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Mohamed Ibrahim Khan, the founder and leader of Azad Kashmir (fighting for Kashmiri ascension to Pakistan) contacted tribesmen in Pakistan to overthrow the Maharajah. Kashmir's geographical location made the choice between India and Pakistan a particularly sore point for the two fledgling nations. Kashmir finds itself in the middle of two coalescing nations along with a varying religious identity, representative of both the new nations: Muslims for Pakistan and Hindus for India. At the time of partition, Jammu and Kashmir had a Muslim-majority (75 percent) population that was concentrated in the sub-region of Kashmir while Jammu and Ladakh had a different religious plurality. Pakistan's insurrection into Kashmir and their approach to Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, prompted the Maharajah to seek direct military aid from India with the blessing of the leader of the National Conference in Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, which in return demanded ascension to their union. On October 27th, 1947, the Indian military officially intervened. This sparked a United Nations intervention, promise of plebiscite for the people to choose between India and Pakistan, and a path of conflict and war for the two nations and the region of Kashmir.

India and Pakistan both have, in their own opinions, legitimate claims to the region of Kashmir, especially as they pertain to security issues due to its location. The geo-strategic location of Kashmir has always been a priority for India, which Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru emphasized. Nehru claimed, even before Kashmir's official ascension to India that, "Kashmir, because of her geographical position with her frontiers...the Soviet Union, China, and Afghanistan, is intimately connected with the security and international contacts of India²²." From a security perspective, it is imperative that India continues its control over Kashmir. An independent Kashmir, however, was out of reach because of the perspective states' security

²² Ibid, 42.

analysis of the region's location. The Pakistani perspective is also intimately connected with these ideas, but with an added dimension of identity politics. Pakistan, created as an area of refuge and a homeland for South Asian Muslims, views the Muslim-majority Kashmir as an obvious addition to its territory. On the other hand, Kashmir would give Pakistan better defense capabilities²³. These geopolitical and state security goals keep Kashmir in the center of conflict, turning it into a true powder keg of South Asia and an area where human lives and identity politics takes a back seat to hard power and state security.

The idea of the borderland can inform the issue of decolonization, as subnational regions within postcolonial states often carry the added burden of being on either the edge of the former empire or on the edge of the new nation. "If state, regional elite, and local people are knit into a power structure in which the state clearly predominates, the creation of a borderland is also likely to be a relatively peaceful process,²⁴" but given that the creation of India and Pakistan along with the partitioning of Kashmir between the two was anything but peaceful and the state did not have the power to align all of these players, Kashmir was born as a problematic borderland. In the case of the Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, the region became an unruly borderland – power structures became less coherent and, although the Indian state dominates the regional politics, there was a failure to secure a commanding position over the local population. This sparked an insurgency which splintered into groups all vying to force the Indian state to give in to their demands, either an independent Kashmir, a Pakistani Kashmir, or even Islamist control. In response to this, the state attempts to enforce its sovereignty over the region, thus exposing itself as weak because "it oversteps the limits of its power and makes unrealistic claims to

²³ Ibid, 43-45.

²⁴ Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 227.

overlordship over civil society.²⁵” The policy then sparks militarization, which if it fails, the borderland will continue to be unruly and can even spark a reign of terror. All of these realities are present in today’s Kashmir, serving as a potential end-point for challenged decolonization that can be used to apply to different state interventions in other decolonized regions.

Identity as a catalyst: the problem of an in-between state

Kashmir continues to be a major issue of contention in the postcolonial narrative and its connection to identity, state security, and fragility. One of the primary drivers of the conflict, identity, is due to an issue of “three compromised nationalisms.” An argument exists of arguments which are at odds with each other, as one commentator pointed out, “At its core, the Kashmir problem is a result of three forces: religious nationalism represented by Pakistan, secular nationalism epitomized by India, and ethnic nationalism embodied in what Kashmiris call *Kashmiriyat*²⁶.” Although Pakistan views itself as the homeland for South Asian Muslims, Indian politics have started a different kind of argument: they are not the homeland for just the Hindus but all of the ethnic and religious groups of South Asia. The religious nationalism embodied by Pakistan, however, is flawed in its policies towards Kashmir, adding to the zero-sum game of identity conflicts. The Pakistani religious nationalist narrative falls short because of the consequences of Kashmir joining Pakistan:

“If Pakistan ‘liberates’ Kashmir from India, it runs the risk of seriously hurting 30 times as many Muslims as it ‘liberates’; if it does not try to ‘liberate’ rebelling Kashmiris, it compromises the very founding principle of its existence²⁷.”

²⁵ Ibid, 228.

²⁶ Ashutosh Varshney, "Three Compromised Nationalisms: Why Kashmir Has Been a Problem," in *Ethnonationalism in India*, ed. Sanjib Baruah (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2010), 127.

²⁷ Ibid, 132.

The logic for two separate nations for Hindus and Muslims was that they were not simply two different religions, but also two different ethnicities deserving of separate statehood. Pakistan embodies this dichotomy while India chose to increase a different kind of nationalistic rhetoric. For this reason, India views the argument that a Muslim-majority Kashmir must join the Muslim-majority Pakistan to be invalid. Indian nationalism focuses on the question allegiance to India, that “Indianness” is not confined to a Hindu religious identity. To prove this end, India must keep control of Kashmir as a Muslim-majority region, proving to itself and to the international community that it is a secular, democratic, and peaceful nation capable of fostering difference. This is not to say that Kashmir was without its insurrections from the Hindu side, quite the contrary in fact. In 1952, Hindu nationalists led a riot in Jammu against the overall push for Kashmir to resist full integration with India²⁸.

The idea of Kashmiriyat, of *Kashmiriness*, however, seems to provide a sort of answer to the question of identity’s role in conflict and how decolonization fits into the overall study of the “Third World” and the postcolonial. The complicated story of Kashmir’s location and the subsequent partition of India and Pakistan put the region between a rock and a hard place: a multiethnic population was forced to choose between a Muslim-majority nation and a secular-in-name-only Hindu-majority nation. A semblance of an answer to this question was a movement towards Kashmiri nationalism, holding the identity of Kashmiriyat as the most important aspect of Kashmiri society. A Kashmiriyat identity, by its very existence, offers hope and security for the residents of Kashmir by circumventing the divide of religion exacerbated by the politics of partition and outlining a framework of which to think about oneself in greater national and geopolitical narratives, albeit in a secular way. There is, however, one major drawback of

²⁸ Ibid, 134.

thinking about oneself in an identity of a region rather than choosing a national allegiance – the Kashmiri insurgency aims for an independence while other insurgent groups fight for a Pakistani Kashmir. Both of these groups have greatly impacted India's effectiveness in governing the region while employing terrorist tactics to reach their goals. Conflicting views of the future of the region have sparked terrorist attacks against India, both within Kashmir and across important Indian cities like Mumbai. President Bill Clinton described the region as the most dangerous place on earth, citing the nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan in addition to the contention over Kashmir as the primary reasons for his commentary. Indeed, the insurgency alone has claimed over 47,000 lives according to Indian authorities, while Kashmir's primary separatist group – All Parties Hurriyat – puts the number closer to 100,000 lost lives since the start of the insurgency in the late 1980s²⁹. The violence ensuing from these insurgent groups greatly diminishes the effectiveness of the Indian state to maintain institutional and democratic strength, provoking the nation-state to hold itself in higher esteem than human livelihood. Insurgency greatly diminishes the effectiveness of the state to maintain strength in a certain simply because the goal of the terrorists themselves is to provoke an overreaction by the governing apparatus – turning citizens against the state and sowing the seeds for an overturn in power.

Handling the fickleness of dispute

A major problem with analyzing conflict zones where control and sovereignty over them is disputed between multiple state actors is choosing how to frame the situation. Kashmir is disputed between, arguably, three parties: India, Pakistan, and a sovereign Kashmir movement. The current politics of control situation in Kashmir follows the Line of Control (LoC), established by the Simla Agreement that was signed in 1972, in the aftermath of the Bangladeshi

²⁹ "India Revises Kashmir Death Toll to 47,000," Reuters, last modified November 21, 2008, accessed April 26, 2015, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2008/11/21/idINIndia-36624520081121>.

Liberation War (which, oddly, was the only war fought between Pakistan and India which did not directly include Kashmir). The Simla Agreement, signed in the Indian city of Simla by Indira Gandhi – the prime-minister of India – and Zulifkar Ali Bhutto – the president of Pakistan – accepts the Line of Control as a de facto border between the two nations (although subsequent incursions violated the agreement for years to come, it remains one of the primary signed agreements between the two nations):

In Jammu and Kashmir, the line of control resulting from the cease-fire of December 17, 1971 shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognized position of either side. Neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from the threat or the use of force in violation of this Line³⁰.

In addition to the complicated situation between India and Pakistan, China also has a stake in the subject of the LoC and Kashmir through the Aksai Chin region. Although it is administered directly by the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, India ascertains that it is a part of the Ladakh region within Jammu and Kashmir. The Line of Actual Control keeps this view as a mere national myth, maintaining Chinese de facto control of Aksai Chin and creating another headache for defining the region of Jammu and Kashmir³¹.

To help alleviate some of this tension in deciding which sovereign stake to view the conflict from, there will be a focus on the Kashmir region as administered by India, both as a reason for fragility in the over-all state of India and as a flashpoint for inter and intrastate conflict. Upon the accession of Kashmir to India on the condition that the Indian military aid in

³⁰ Simla Agreement, last modified July 2, 1972, accessed November 26, 2014, <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/5541/Simla+Agreement>.

³¹ Line of Actual Control: China and India Again Squabbling over Disputed Himalayan Border, last modified May 3, 2013, accessed November 26, 2014, <http://www.ibtimes.com/line-actual-control-china-india-again-squabbling-over-disputed-himalayan-border-1236401>.

repelling insurgency and tribal forces from Pakistan, the Indian representative to the United Nations submitted the following rationale for defense of the region:

“The Government of India felt it their duty to respond to the appeal for armed assistance because 1) they could not allow a neighboring and friendly state to be compelled by force to determine either its internal affairs or its external affairs; an 2) The accession of the Jammu and Kashmir state to the Dominion of India made India really responsible for the defense of the state³².”

This chapter treats Kashmir as an entity within India and the implications of such an arrangement, as India administers the majority of the region with Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan remaining in de facto control of Pakistan. The question of fragility, however, centers on problems of the nation-state in the definition of Westphalia, placing a question mark on the legitimacy of looking at regions rather than the more traditional state level. This section will tackle this assumption, looking at nation-states not by their political decisions in the macro sense but as fragile due to a regional conflict, an intrastate concern that then transcends borders to draw in neighboring nations. Specifically, the problem of Kashmir as a larger state security and ongoing decolonization issue stems from Indian policies, Pakistani actions, and Kashmiri resistance movements. These parties, vying for power, have created a situation where the conflict is ill defined as intrastate but also problematic in the theories surrounding the interstate view.

Conflict after World War II has taken a turn towards intrastate over interstate: that is many violent outbreaks occur within countries instead of between them, having the opportunity however to spread across borders³³. Numerically speaking, the trend shows that intrastate has been historically more common after World War II, with a peak in 1992 with forty-nine

³² S.H. Zaidi, "The Intractable Kashmir Issue: Search for a Rational Solution," *Pakistan Horizon* 56, no. 2 (April 2003): 67.

³³ Intrastate Conflict by the Numbers, last modified February 4, 2013, accessed November 28, 2014, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Special-Feature/Detail/?lng=en&id=158597&tabid=1453496062&contextid774=158597&contextid775=158596>.

recognized intrastate conflict zones. The latest numbers in this database from 2008 show thirty intrastate conflicts are compared to one interstate and six internationalized intrastate conflicts. This is an important consideration in the modern view of the postcolonial state and its role in the borderland: if conflict transcends borders, making them porous, how can the state defend itself and humans at the same time? The traditional view of the nation-state includes the idea of a border and a prohibition on cross-border interference of internal affairs. The theory of sovereignty, as a framework for this paradigm, defines physical border control as a major part of a state. The classical war model built upon experiences from the great wars is largely obsolete in relation of this new trend – thus requiring a look at the fragility in terms of the conflict rather than an issue of sovereignty and invasion. Claims over territory are important in this calculus as one of the causes of conflict, but the problem lies in the willingness of postcolonial states embroiled in conflict to put human lives first in their securing of problematic borderlands. The idea that “the provision of security, which includes the prevention of violence in social struggles, can be regarded as one of the central purposes of statehood,” demonstrates that states (like India, which retains de facto control over a large part of Kashmiri territory) have an imperative to defend its regions from violence. The failure, particularly in India’s case, to provide for the security of Kashmir creates fragility at the state level in addition to the more general regional struggle for control – bucking the notion that a nation-state’s borders are rigid and well-defined.

This chapter will view the debate over Jammu and Kashmir as follows: a region, disputed by three powers (India, Pakistan, and China), is mostly administered by India. This Indian region becomes then an issue of state security for the Indian government, both through internal insurgencies and through external threats of violence from Pakistan and China. In the process of maintaining control over state security, the remaining part of this chapter will dive into the

viability of securing a decolonized borderland as India struggles to maintain state security and actively taking steps which put into question the Indian government's commitment to human life by way of being equally important as state security and survival of the government.

The United Nations played a major role in the peace proceedings between Pakistan and India, ideally setting up a status quo that was acceptable to both Pakistanis and Indians. Upon complaints from the Indian and Pakistani representatives to the UN, the Security Council passed two resolutions: one setting up the UNCIP (United Nations Commission on India and Pakistan) in January of 1948. The Indian army then launched an offensive, bringing us back to the first war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. Interestingly, the UNCIP passed a resolution in August of that year ordering ceasefire and withdrawal of tribal forces and troops by Pakistan and then by India to hold a plebiscite sponsored by local authorities³⁴.

Now that the exceedingly brief overview and history of the Kashmir conflict has been explained, we can discuss why Kashmir is an important region to examine challenged decolonization and whether or not postcolonial states – defined as fragile states – can consider human wellbeing in their state security policies during times of conflict. Although pessimistic intuition and global experience of military clashes and civil strife draws us to a negative conclusion, Kashmir can be used as a historical yet very present case to use as a jumping off point to look at more contemporary examples of conflict zones within fragile states and the status of decolonization as a mission for national policies. Kashmir's present stability as compared to other "hot zones" in the world gives us the freedom to explore deeper into the history of Indian policy choices as it tried to stabilize the region and itself against an insurgency, conflict with neighbors, and a growing trend towards globalization.

³⁴ Zaidi, "The Intractable Kashmir Issue," 71.

A tough question to answer: Do postcolonial lives matter?

It is important to start with the status of the Indian nation in the macroscopic-sense; that is to look at India as a fragile nation dealing with an intrastate conflict. India ranks eighty-first in the 2014 Fragile State Index, published by the Fund for Peace, making it somewhat in the middle of fragile states. It is by no means South Sudan but India is a far cry from top the least fragile states like Finland or Sweden, making it a nation where some concern should be paid to national issues like Kashmir – the analysis of the Fund for Peace shows that India is a fragile state on the mend. We can unpack this further, as the most stable states remain in regions of the world where colonization did not have a direct impact on their identities or politics. On the other hand, most of the world’s toughest regions are the postcolonial “third” and “second” worlds. “In the 1970s, analysts predicted dire consequences... internal violence in India, citing rapid population growth, economic mismanagement, and extensive poverty and corruption³⁵,” but this trend has since changed. Now, the Fund for Peace explains, “India has turned itself around. It is the world's largest democracy, with a competitive economy and a representative political system³⁶,” owing much of India’s success to Westernization and the globalized economy of the current century. It will be most helpful to consider the evolution of Indian policies towards Kashmir and the rhetoric employed to justify legislation and actions taken to integrate the region into the greater country post-partition.

India’s policies towards Kashmir are as varied as the conflict is complex: on one hand, billions of dollars have been poured in to help Kashmir develop and join the rest of the country as an emerging economic powerhouse. New Delhi has since provided a large development fund

³⁵ Are There Examples of Fragile States That Have Recovered?, accessed November 28, 2014, <http://ffp.statesindex.org/faq-09-recovery>.

³⁶ Ibid.

for Kashmir in an attempt to appease the local population, creating a predicament where politicians from both Srinagar – the summer capital of Kashmir – and New Delhi “have no real interest in resolving the dispute,” because of heightened attention paid towards the region³⁷. Taking this economic argument further, Kashmir may very well be a thorn in India’s side as it rises in international prestige and economic power. The conflict within Kashmir and open hostilities between India and Pakistan could spark another armed conflict and distract Indian leadership from economic development both in the Kashmir region and across India, particularly with the issue of nuclear proliferation and a testiness surrounding the use of nuclear weapons.

India’s overall policies pertaining to Kashmir can be separated into four historical periods: 1947-1953, 1954-1971, 1972-1988, and 1989-present. Because of the constantly evolving rhetoric and bubbling discontent within Kashmir and across the border between Pakistani and Indian forces, this paper will focus on the historical nature of each period rather than on currently evolving developments to test whether Indian legislation is written with Kashmir’s people in mind. The first phase, directly after the partition and the first Indo-Pakistani War, involved the heavy-handedness of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who believed that “Our history and our circumstances had made Kashmir so closely associated with our feelings, our emotions, thoughts, and passions that it was a part of our beings³⁸.” This brought in the tough process of integrating Kashmir into India through war with Pakistan and direct military involvement.

³⁷ P.R. Chiari, "Sources of New Delhi's Kashmir Policy," in *Kashmir: New Voices, New Approaches*, ed. Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, Bushra Asif, and Cyrus Samii (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 121.

³⁸ Naeem Ahmed, "India's Changing Policy on Kashmir," *Pakistan Horizon* 53, no. 4 (October 2000): 24.

The second phase, once a majority of Kashmir was declared a part of India, was a backpedaling on the promise of a plebiscite in Kashmir. The period between 1954-1971 saw more direct conflicts between the Pakistan and India over Kashmir and India's ministerial level talks over the outcome of the region, coupled with India's passage of a critical law: The Armed Forces Special Powers Act. This act, passed in 1958 to manage the Naga rebellion by the Parliament of India, granted special powers to the armed forces to act in defined "disturbed areas," was subsequently expanded in 1990 to include Kashmir³⁹. Identity politics and decolonization initiatives were all but forgotten at the passage of this law which allows for armed forces, in an area that is declared disturbed, to: fire upon a person who is involved in acting against the law even if it causes death, arrest without warrant anyone who has committed cognizable offenses or is reasonably suspected of doing so, to enter and search any premise in order to make these arrests, and that army officers have legal immunity for carrying out these actions⁴⁰. Such a law opened the floodgates to human rights abuses and the killings of civilians in Kashmir. The third phase was met with greater optimism, however, with the signing of the Simla Agreement and a demarcation of the Line of Control. During this period, a successful election in Kashmir put Sheikh Abdullah into power in 1977, a popular Muslim leader with a warm relationship with New Delhi. Abdullah signed an agreement that Kashmir was a unit of the Union of India and peace was brought to Kashmir for the first time since partition⁴¹. The optimism quickly ended, however, with the beginning of an insurgency against India coming

³⁹ Sanjib Baruah, "Routine Emergencies: India's Armed Forces Special Powers Act," in *Civil War and Sovereignty in South Asia: Regional and Political Economy Perspectives*, ed. Aparna Sundar and Nandini Sundar (New Delhi: Sage, 2014).

⁴⁰ "Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958," Indian Armed Forces, accessed November 29, 2014, http://indianarmy.nic.in/Site/RTI/rti/MML/MML_VOLUME_3/CHAPTER__03/457.htm

⁴¹ Varshney, "Three Compromised Nationalisms: Why Kashmir," in *Ethnonationalism in India*, 148-149.

from Kashmir and the death of Sheikh Abdullah. The *intifada* from Kashmir caused terrorist attacks across the region and against government buildings in New Delhi and civilian centers in Mumbai. India's primary promise of Kashmir's autonomy was removed and direct military involvement, with troops numbering in the hundred thousands, descended into the region under the auspices that Kashmir was a "disturbed region." This sparked direct conflict between the Kashmiri uprising, Kashmiri civilians, and Indian troops – along cross-border tensions with Pakistan.

India's response to the insurgency and militant forces has been swift and brutal, causing daily deaths and hardships for Kashmiris in the valley. The numbers speak of a grim targeting: 150-300 Hindu deaths at the hands of Islamic militants and the majority of deaths, Muslim. These deaths have carried out primarily by the Indian armed forces but also by armed militants silencing dissent within the community. A majority of Hindus living in the Kashmir Valley have since migrated to the Hindu-plurality region of Jammu and to refugee camps near Delhi. Prior to 1990, more than 150,000 Hindus resided in the Kashmir Valley and since then, only a few thousand remain and the numbers are quickly dwindling down. Meanwhile, killings and massacres against Muslims have continued – a real tragedy unfolded in the "Imperiled Paradise." Postcolonial theory pays great attention to the human experience, to the way humans are treated and how they *feel* in response to such incidents. The emotional truth of Kashmir is that the tragic circumstances have reduced the population to this: Kashmiri Muslims feel "mutilated and defiled" by the security forces while Kashmiri Hindu migrants feel "uprooted and betrayed" by their government with instances of defilement by the insurgency and religious-fanatic faction – Mujahideen⁴².

⁴² Ibid, 153-154.

India's policies towards Kashmir have focused on securing the region in relation to Pakistan, insurgency forces, and the terrorist cells acting in the greater Indian territory – ignoring the need for a focus on humans and the assurance that an Indian Kashmir will foster a peaceful, flourishing existence. Kashmir has continued to be the same unruly borderland since the creation of India and Pakistan – a product of decolonization and compromised identity politics.

Kashmiris, since the time of partition, have known tragedy and seen an internationalization of their woes. In the process, nuclear proliferation, terrorist attacks, and political stalemates have made the situation worse and any hope for an answer to the conflict even further away. India has not been able to meet the need of securing the region of Kashmir even though it views the region as an integral part of the nation. This speaks to the greater process of decolonization and the consequences of a process unrealized – how can a state stop and think about the human narrative when juggling international and intrastate threats against the government? Kashmir can be viewed as the present-day reality of challenged decolonization and compromised identities – we can use Kashmir to see the potential future of fledgling states that are only entering the decolonization process.

Chapter II

Ukraine: (De)Colonizing the borderland

And bring that peaceful paradise,
 Your own Ukraine, before your eyes;
 Then let your heart, in love sincere,
 Embrace her mighty ruin here!
 -Taras Shevchenko

Ukraine's precarious position between Russia and the rest of Europe has, for centuries, made the land of sunflowers and wheat a battleground. Heroism has been ingrained into the very culture and language of Ukraine – there is a sense that the motherland is worth giving up your life to defend. Ukraine's very name reflects this history: Traditional etymology traces the nation to the Slavic word for borderland. Ukraine has, for much of its history, been on the edge of empires, from Western Ukraine's deep-rooted history with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to Eastern Ukraine's connection to the Russian Empire. These histories have manifested themselves in the modern Ukraine, including the language they speak, religious traditions, and even national identity. The issue is, however, what is this Ukraine, and can we truly call it a decolonized nation?

The current unrest in Ukraine, from the Maidan revolution to the conflict in its eastern provinces, has revitalized a conversation about the status of the country as postcolonial. Scholarly research has turned to looking at Ukraine as a country formed from a fallen empire, rather than a country that has never experienced what we call colonialism and the postcolonial narrative of state-building, reliance on colonial powers, and issues in foundation of a national identity. This chapter will situate Ukraine as a postcolonial country in the process of handling decolonization from the greater Russian Empire and subsequent Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, in particular, has had a revolutionary role in shaping the modern issues Ukraine faces today. The

Soviet Union has never been a nation-state in the traditional sense, but a “multinational empire disguised as a federation⁴³.” Each of the constituent republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was framed as having its own revolutions, bringing each state together to form a federation. Post-1991 Ukraine had to deal with many of the classic problems associated with what we traditionally think of as postcolonial issues. Born from these problems of decolonization and exacerbated by the political realities of the newly formed state, explosive identity politics formed. We see these very issues: West versus East, Russian-speaking versus Ukrainian-speaking, and Catholic versus Orthodox in all levels of socio-political life in the country. To understand the present situation in Ukraine, and to begin thinking about the future in order to make reliable predictions, Ukraine is situated in a postcolonial world. The chapter will conclude by looking at Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in particular, tracing the specific issues present in this part of the county as a direct consequence of colonization and identity politics.

Ukraine's shaky foundations

Ukraine's history of being on the edges of empire begins early in its history, even before this land became known as Ukraine. For the purposes of this project, and the understanding of the current problems Ukraine faces, we will primarily focus on contemporary Ukraine as a post-Soviet nation-state, while paying homage to early history of imperial expansion of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Russian Empire. This section will look at the claim that Ukraine is a postcolonial nation, coming to the conclusion that the problem of Ukraine is that its foundations are very much in line with normative theories and practice of post-colonialism and decolonization – while complicating these very ideas by creating a space where meaningful comparisons between postcolonial experiences can be made

⁴³ Mikhail A. Molchanov, "Borders of Identity: Ukraine's Political and Cultural Significance for Russia," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 38, no. 1/2 (March-June 1996): 177.

while respecting contextual differences. Modern Ukraine can easily be defined as an outcome of the imperial aspirations of both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union – with the Soviet Union taking on a heavy stance of Russification and de-Ukrainianization along the years (shaping the conversation of national identity for decades to come). This framing of the foundation of Ukraine as postcolonial can help inform the current situation in the eastern portions of the country, along with hints of the potential future. In addition to situating Ukraine as a product of its history, we can also begin to draw connections to other, more traditionally labeled postcolonial countries such as India and Pakistan, along with much of the current “third world.” Combining the “second world” with the “third world” can allow us to start looking at current unrest in the world as a product of a more global history of colonial expansion and subsequent decolonization.

Postcolonial theories have long skirted around the issue of the Soviet bloc – or the “second world.” Even Edward Said had largely ignored the complicated nature of the Russian and Soviet empires, referencing the issue in name only as being just as imperialist as the French and British empires.⁴⁴ The reason for this apparent ignoring of Russia’s imperialism could stem from, “the grave abuses committed by Russia as an imperial power have been obscured by its geographical contiguity with its colonies and by the sheer awfulness of its own twentieth-century history, which has enabled the Russians to claim victimhood with some plausibility and moral impact⁴⁵.” This argument in Russia has, however, fallen short of looking at Ukraine and many of the other former republics of the Soviet Union and guberniyas of the Russian Empire. Instead, Russian narratives have focused on the Foucaultian idea of internal colonization – that Russia experienced a prolonged self-colonization at the hands of Peter the Great in the Russian Empire,

⁴⁴ Taras Kuzio, *Ukrainian Security Policy* (n.p.: Praeger, 1995),

⁴⁵ Vitaly Chernetsky, "Postcolonialism, Russia and Ukraine," *Ulbandus Review* 7 (2003): 32-33.

resulting in botched decolonization in the twentieth century by the revolution and subsequent formation of the Soviet Union⁴⁶. This is an interesting point for looking at the way Russia views itself and its territories – self-colonization could incorporate the idea that Ukraine has always been part of a greater unified East Slavic nation, led by the Third Rome (Moscow). In addition, an interesting moment arises in the rhetoric surrounding Russia’s relationship with the historical Kievan Rus’, the birthplace of Orthodox Russian civilization. Indeed many parts of modern Ukraine are steeped in historical significance for the Eastern Slavs, leading to an idiosyncratic view of Ukraine in the eyes of Russia: Ukrainians are the little brothers of the Russians. This aspect of the way Ukrainian identity is, in large part, shaped by Russian views will be dissected further. Topically, these postcolonial narratives have skirted regions like Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Eastern Europe, although these regions have experienced direct and complex Russian involvement in local realities for centuries (whether through conquest or economic dependencies).

This project, however, focuses on the experiences of Ukraine as a postcolonial nation, dealing with the consequences of decolonization in a manner not unlike Kashmir’s experience in the partition of India and Pakistan. “Of all the subjects of the former Russian empire, Ukraine has had one of the most complicated and difficult relationships with the metropoly,⁴⁷” shaping the current situation in Ukraine (particularly Crimea and Eastern Ukraine) and its possible future outcomes. Following the narrative of colonialism, Ukraine’s marginalized position has also been reflected in the international stage: Ukraine’s history is often conflated with that of its neighbor, Russia across the globe, and as Mark von Hagen noted in his 1995 essay “Does Ukraine Have a

⁴⁶ Ibid, 35.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 36.

History?” Ukraine has been treated as an object rather than a study of history⁴⁸. Now that it is possible to look at Ukraine in the lens of decolonization, the complicated relationship between Russia and its former colonies can be examined further, offering us potential lessons for the larger study of colonialism and decolonization.

The first logical place to start an examination of Ukraine as a postcolonial nation would be in its relationship with the colonial power (namely, Russia). The lengthy process of suppressing Ukrainian culture in the Russian Empire (and subsequently in the Soviet Union) has been brutal and tragic – an issue that George Grabowicz describes as “...generic and constitutes a paradigmatic post-colonial issue.” Since the mid-seventeenth century onwards, Ukrainian culture has been institutionally oppressed in a way that was not dissimilar to the experiences of the Irish at the hands of the British. There is, however, an interesting aspect of the narrative that Ukraine is a decolonized country in that the colonial history lacks the dimension of race so often found in postcolonial studies – these are “White colonies.” To argue this point, it is helpful to view the problem in a similar vein to Russia’s own self-colonization, reducing the impact of race in the normative post-colonial narrative in Russia’s colonies,

There is a basic qualitative difference: decrees were passed limiting and prohibiting such languages and literatures as Ukrainian and Lithuanian, not Russian. Beyond that, membership in the dominant nation transcended class distinction: a Russian laborer could feel superior to a Ukrainian intellectual because the latter was a “khokhol,” by itself this is racial discrimination without actually invoking color of skin (although that, of course, was also a factor in both the Russian and the Soviet empire: one need only to recall the contempt for the “churki”). And when this becomes a pattern of behavior in the so-called ethnic territories, it is hardly distinguishable from the behavior and values of classical colonialism.⁴⁹

Ukraine – as a region within the greater Russian sphere of influence – has been altered in a deeply fundamental, cultural level. The idea of “Ukrainianness” and of a distinct Ukrainian

⁴⁸ Ibid, 37-38.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 38.

culture has been attacked over the centuries. In fact, Russian views of Ukraine have long been shaped by the differences between the two cultures, particularly in the spoken language. One famous example of Russian dismissal of Ukrainian culture has been popular Russian literary critic Vissarion Belinsky's notorious dismissal of Taras Shevchenko's poetry, for it was written in the Ukrainian language. Shevchenko, considered a national hero in Ukraine, was ridiculed for using the "wrong" language. On the other hand, Russian narratives of the prototypical Ukrainian have focused on Russian fondness of Ukrainian food, songs, and dance – creating an image of the pastoral Ukrainian, much in the vein of colonial stereotypes manufactured in imperial centers over their colonies.⁵⁰ The same issue is seen in the social mobility of Ukrainians within the empire – it was possible, much like in Ireland, for a Ukrainian to move up the social ladder, with a catch however. Ukrainians were allowed to reach high levels of government in both the Ukrainian SSR and the greater USSR bureaucracy if they had given up their national identity – a denationalization of identity. This meant that elites were required to be Ukrainian without being Ukrainian, prompting a migration of elites to metropolitan centers within Ukraine and to the larger cities in Russia proper.

How did these feelings of linguistic and national superiority play out in the political landscape of Ukraine? The story is much more complicated than a case of colonization. Policies stemming from the formation of the Soviet Union were unstable towards the problem of Ukrainian identity and culture, along with its place in a new Socialist federation. In the revolution of 1917-1920, the case for Ukrainian identity grew dire: the post-revolutionary climate in the region leaned heavily on Russification, along with the rising theory of the

⁵⁰ Mykola Riabchuk, "Culture and Cultural Politics in Ukraine: A Postcolonial Perspective," in *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine*, ed. Taras Kuzio and Paul D'Anieri (Wesport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 54.

“struggle of two cultures.” Supported by Communist party leaders in Ukraine, the theory maintained that Russian culture is the more sophisticated, urban culture and would slowly absorb the lesser Ukrainian culture in a “Darwinian contest of cultural strength.” The mainstream party elite in Russia and Ukraine soon condemned the theory, but these sentiments have been deeply ingrained in Ukrainian understandings of their place vis-à-vis Russians – even under the, apparent, united front of Communism. Ideas of Russian supremacy have been ingrained in Ukrainian society since the Russian Empire – the Ems Ukaz, for example, banned the use of Ukrainian language in print. The Russian Empire also persecuted hundreds of *bandurists*, wandering musicians in the Ukrainian countryside who sang in the native language.⁵¹ Cultural suppression is a defining feature of an imperial and colonial power, but if the next decades consisted of a sustained subjugation of the submissive culture by the dominant culture, then the story may be much simpler. The tides changed, however, with Stalin’s appointment of Lazar Kaganovich to oversee a program of *ukrainizatsiya* (Ukrainianization) to attract ethnic Ukrainians into the fold of the Communist party. There was, however, an ulterior motive to revitalizing the local culture that can bolster the colonialist argument: Stalin had handpicked and installed his own “man” to the job, meaning that Moscow had a firm control of just how this cultural revitalization would be carried out. Ukrainianization during this period was, however, at odds with the growing Communist idea that national boundaries and identities must be wiped out in favor of Soviet dominance⁵². These ideas were inherited from the Tsarist regime, as the “Soviet definitions of ‘colony’ and ‘colonialism’ reflect the traditional absence in Russia of a precise

⁵¹ Myroslav Shkandrij, "Subverting Leviathan," in *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times* (Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 215.

⁵² *Ibid.*

distinction between the problem of nationalities and the colonial question.⁵³” To this end, the Holodomor seemed to have solved the issue of both Ukrainian nationalism and the colonization or integration of Ukraine into a greater Soviet Union. The Holodomor of 1932-1933 was a widespread famine affecting Ukraine, causing the deaths of millions of people. The Soviet and subsequent Russian government have not recognized this event as a genocide, although there is a large corpus of evidence that this could have been an engineered act on the part of Stalin. Regardless of this academic debate, forced economic modernization and farming collectivization on the part of Stalinist policies created a massive famine, which undermined a large part of Ukrainian nationalist movements for years to come.⁵⁴ The “new Soviet man” was supposed to remove the issue of ethnic nationalism, but this only increased the role Russian culture and Russian identity played in the Soviet Union⁵⁵. Of course there would not be a focus on identity and ethnic difference if everyone in the Soviet Union identified as Russian. With the political and economic base of the country located in Moscow, the Russian language and Russian culture became a driving force across the Soviet Union, reversing any gains made in Ukrainian cultural revival.

Despite Moscow’s seemingly slower pace of Russification, the specter of the *khokhol* was deeply ingrained into the Russian psyche. Ukrainians were still portrayed as pastoral people, sometimes bordering on barbaric and brutal in their irrational nationalism. This is mostly how the Soviet narrative continued until the independence of Ukraine and the beginning of the

⁵³ Alexandre Bennigsen, "Colonization and Decolonization in the Soviet Union," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 1 (January 1969): 141.

⁵⁴ “Holodomor: Memories of Ukraine's Silent Massacre," BBC News. November 22, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25058256>.

⁵⁵ Lilya Kaganovsky, "How the Soviet Man Was (Un)Made," *Slavic Review* 63, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 578.

modern Ukrainian state: waves of Ukrainian national empowerment (controlled by the central Communist apparatus in Moscow) and waves of heavy Russification of culture and a removal of Ukrainian identity. Such waves helped to create a stark contrast in regions that were heavily urbanized (especially in the East and South of Ukraine) and those with more rural bases (mainly in the West). This makes for a weak foundation to a budding nation-state, one that is plagued in border issues, hostile neighbors, and domestic identity issues. The difficulty with Ukraine, and why the country continues to be a “problem region” in the world, is because of this faulty foundation.

Cultural colonialism was a major factor in solving the Ukrainian problem, but more direct Russian colonization in the form of the movement of people and redrawing of borders is also evident in the formation of modern Ukraine. One such issue was in the transference of the Crimean peninsula from Russia to Ukraine under the Khrushchev government in 1954. The Supreme Soviet (*Verkhovniy Soviet*) of the Soviet Union, Soviet of the Russian SFSR, and the Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR each approved the transfer. The transfer of the land at the time had (topically) little meaning above the symbolism, putting into question exactly why the land was transferred in the first place. Nikita Khrushchev, an ethnic Russian, had reportedly been extremely fond of Ukraine and gifted the land as a sign of goodwill. This could be true, but the realities of the decision would be catastrophic in the future. The Russian population within Ukraine increased by a million people, and the rhetoric surrounding this transfer was based in the uniting of the Ukrainian people with the Russian state – a symbolic gesture commemorating 300 years since the Treaty of Pereyaslav⁵⁶. Declassified papers from the time of the transference

⁵⁶ The positive view of the Treaty of Pereyaslav itself is contested in Ukrainian historical dialogues. Although Sovietologists and Russian historians view the treaty as a reunion of Russia and Ukraine, Ukrainian historians and intelligentsia regard it as a national disaster. The treaty

spoke of the “boundless trust and love the Russian people feel toward the Ukrainian people.” In addition, these communications spoke of a geopolitical and economic reasoning: “the territorial proximity of Crimea to Ukraine, the commonalities of their economies, and the close agricultural and cultural ties between the Crimean oblast and the UkrSSR.” This, however, was misleading: the cultural ties between Russia and Crimea were much stronger than with Ukraine, for the majority of the population in the peninsula was indeed Russian at 75 percent, while only 25 percent were ethnic Ukrainians. Enlarging the population of “native Russians” in Ukraine meant that there would be greater control over the Ukrainians by the Soviet Union, and by extension, the Russian government in Moscow. This act by the Russian SFSR and earlier acquisition of land from Poland and Romania during World War II resulted in the drawn borders and faulty foundations of today’s Ukraine – a hallmark of colonial rule, where the colonial power is able to draw the map in essentially any way it wishes. Modern Ukraine is a result of these acquisitions in territory, exacerbating demographic and historical differences between different regions of the country.⁵⁷

The country is in a complicated position, as it is going through three distinct transitory phases at once: “the movement from a dictatorship to a democracy, from a command economy to a free market, and from an empire to statehood.⁵⁸” In short, Ukraine is nation under construction – it is evolving from a constituent of empire with an uneven national identity to one with a

created a legal basis of external domination, resulting in assimilation of Ukrainian elite into the greater Russian culture by the eighteenth century. The commemoration of this event by transferring the Russian-dominated Crimea to Ukraine has its own dramatic irony; one needs only to invoke the idea of the Trojan Horse.

⁵⁷ Mark Kramer, "Why Did Russia Give Away Crimea Sixty Years Ago?," Wilson Center, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/why-did-russia-give-away-crimea-sixty-years-ago>.

⁵⁸ Mykola Riabchuk, “Culture and Cultural Politics in Ukraine: A Postcolonial Perspective,” in *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine*, 48.

unified civic and political national culture – a shaky undertaking, at best⁵⁹. How do we further define Ukraine as postcolonial, fitting the model of the colonial world? Riabchuk takes the stance that Ukraine is a postcolonial creole state, meaning that the state is dominated by descendants of Russian settlers and by Russified Ukrainians. He is able to maintain this view by looking at the modernization and urbanization in Ukraine, followed directly by large-scale Russification. Ukrainian cities, specifically those in the South and East, unsurprisingly the most industrial and urbanized, are heavily Russian speaking. Donetsk, Kharkov, Dnipropetrovs'k, Odessa, and Mariupol are among the largest urban centers with a Russian-speaking majority. Indeed even in Kiev, Russian remains the lingua franca.⁶⁰ This has fueled the West-East divide we so often see in the media today as a large factor in the Ukrainian crisis, prompting a conversation of identity politics as being intimately related to the postcolonial experience and decolonization.

Is it a question of who we are?

Compromised identity politics may be a hallmark of a postcolonial nation attempting to address a legacy of colonial rule, where differences in identities were disregarded and oftentimes actively put at odds with one another by the ruling power. National identity, in its most basic sense, is a “feeling of solidarity and unity among the people living in a state.”⁶¹ Ukraine has a long and complicated history of national identity, based on its shaky foundations and exacerbated by recent decades of stark differences in Ukrainian nationalist movements and political realities in the country and in its relation to other nations. A prominent Ukrainian dissident writer, Ivan

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 54-56.

⁶¹ Stephen Shulman, "The Internal-External Nexus in the Formation of Ukrainian National Identity: The Case for Slavic Integration," in *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine*, 103.

Dzyuba, lamented on the eve of perestroika policies, “Ukrainian culture is a culture with an incomplete structure.⁶²” With this in mind, it is important to consider the effects of compromised identities on decolonization as a process. If a connection can be drawn where compromised identities further complicate decolonization, leading to added tension, then a worthwhile conversation about the roots of the current conflict in Ukraine can be sparked. Understanding the root causes of Ukraine – and what we can learn from other regions’ experiences – can lead us down a road where we understand what each group involved wants and how to find a settlement for a complicated and dangerous problem. Global issues can be historicized in a way where there is a dialogue between current political stalemates and group motivations in these impasses as a result of specific historical narratives.

Leading up to the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukrainians largely approved of independence. The issue now was to centralize power and political legitimacy in Kiev, rather than in Moscow. For decades, Eastern Ukraine in particular looked to the driving force in Moscow for help and guidance rather than to the subnational governmental center in Kiev. This process was easier said than done, as Ukraine inherited a space that was also multi-ethnic and steeped in historical colonialism. One can break up Ukraine into two primary regions, which has become closely associated with the current unrest and how the international community frames Ukrainian geography. Western Ukraine has its historical base in a Polish, Hungarian, and Romanian past while Eastern Ukraine has known Russian domination for centuries. Western Ukraine became the center of the Ukrainian language and identity, while Eastern Ukraine became largely Russified. This resulted in three de facto national identities based on these historical differences among ethnicities and languages: Ukrainophone Ukrainians, Russophone

⁶² Mykola Riabchuk, “Culture and Cultural Politics in Ukraine: A Postcolonial Perspective,” in *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine*, 54.

Ukrainians, and Russophone Russians – these are oftentimes at odds with each other, especially in terms of aspirations of policies around orienting towards Europe or towards Russia⁶³. The latter two are undoubtedly concentrated in the East while the Ukrainian speakers dominate Western Ukraine. There exists two Ukraine's in this framework: the Western regions of the country never fully internalized Soviet rule. Western Ukrainians continued to baptize their children as Greek Catholics and continued to celebrate their much more Central European identity⁶⁴. Eastern Ukraine, on the other hand, has a much different situation: "Donetsk represents what the Soviets built...the brave new world of victorious revolution and proletarian internationalism."⁶⁵ Eastern Ukraine is indistinguishable from dozens of regions across the former Soviet Union. We can further complicate the issue for ourselves by looking at nationalist tendencies in Ukraine and how strata of Ukrainian society fall into these categories, in addition to their spoken language:

Ethnic Ukrainians and Russian nationalists, who incorporate Ukrainian ethnic nationalists in the late Soviet era; civic nationalists who encompass the entire democratic ideological spectrum, support Ukrainian independence and an inclusive, civic state; and finally, Soviet nationalists who reject the very idea of an independence Ukrainian state.⁶⁶

Together, these identities overlap and complicate the issue of an independent Ukraine – informing the very political systems that are today tearing the country apart and complicating relationships with other countries and supranational entities, specifically in Ukrainian interactions with Russia, the CIS, the EU, and NATO.

⁶³ Ray Taras, Olga Filippova, and Nelly Pobeda, "Ukraine's Transnationals, Far-Away Locals, and Xenophobes: Prospects for Europeanness," *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no. 6 (September 2004): 835.

⁶⁴ Mykola Riabchuk, "Ambivalence or Ambiguity? Why Ukraine Is Trapped between East and West," in *Ukraine, the EU and Russia*, ed. Stephen Velychenko (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 70-71.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 74.

⁶⁶ Taras Kuzio, *Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives on Nationalism: New Directions in Cross-Cultural and Post-Communist States* (Stuttgart, DE: Ibidem, 2014), 252.

These cultural identities and nationalist definitions of self along with a relationship to the “state” emerge in the political and economic stage in their opinions of an appropriate closeness to Russia. Conventional wisdom tells us that the inhabitants Eastern and Southern Ukraine, where the majority of Russophones can be found, favor Ukrainian independence only in terms of economic benefits, as they can more easily sway the economic future of Ukraine in comparison to the more much larger Russia. The promise of higher standards of living may not be enough to hold the country together, as seen in the Ukrainian crisis beginning in 2014. In the early history of Ukrainian independence, shortly after 1991, the emergence of market Capitalism and ability for the industrialized East to sell its resources was enough to (tentatively) recognize the legitimacy of Kiev. The continued support of the Russian language – and by extension, pro-Russian, anti-nationalist testaments – by the government in Kiev was instrumental to maintaining Ukrainian territorial integrity.⁶⁷ History and the current situation in Ukraine have taught us that the leaning of the Ukrainian government in its early years, including ambiguity towards the West and support for Russia, was not a constant. Pro-European sentiments especially stemming from Western portions of the country drove a wave of Ukrainian nationalism, from the unrest in the Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kiev to the creation of a new government (that quickly banned the Communist Party from the Verkhovna Rada). We must now question: What does being Ukrainian mean?

This is a much more complicated question to answer – as it reaches beyond Ukrainian speakers in the West and Russian speakers in the East. Centuries of colonial rule have blurred these issues of identity in order to favor direct Russian dominance. The modern issue of Ukrainian identity is informed by this history of dominance and “othering” that was created:

⁶⁷ Kuzio, *Ukrainian Security Policy*, 13.

Ukrainian nationalists were painted as extremely dangerous and likened to Nazis; regardless of the veracity of these remarks, words like a “Banderaite” became ethnic slurs. The othering of the Ukrainian identity culminated in the view that identifying strongly with being Ukrainian became less modern – it became provincial, archaic, and backward. Russian culture and, to a greater extent, Russian identity was crafted as modernized, urban, and necessary for cohesion in a multi-ethnic empire, such as the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The “indigenous population” of Ukraine, the Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians, were made into an oppressed majority over centuries of oppressive practices. The question remains in contemporary Ukraine, and in regions where this view of the “provincial Ukrainian” persists, of the ability for these backward, “country bumpkins” that are the Ukrainian-speakers to successfully manage a country and make the “proper” decisions. These Ukrainians must create a political system without oppressing the Russian-speakers in the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine while also following the orders of the country’s big brother, Russia. Whether or not the Ukraine as a whole is willing to move towards or away from Russia is a non-issue, as there is an expectation on the part of the decolonization narrative that the postcolonial still pay homage to the colonial power.⁶⁸

Applying theory: Without nuclear weapons, with many problems

Decolonization as a process is complicated in itself, but the additional feat of finding some sort of textbook step-by-step guide to transitioning from dependence to sovereignty is at a different level. With “second world” countries like those in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Balkans, experiencing similar effects of decolonization as those traditional “third world” countries, it would seem to be an easy connection. Ukraine as an example of a potentially postcolonial, decolonized nation-state is a contestable idea, indeed. The Soviet Union certainly

⁶⁸ Kuzio, *Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, 254-255.

did not view their possessions as colonies under any circumstances, with mainstream Soviet rhetoric condemning Western colonialism. It is with an irony only fitting for Eastern Europe that Premier Nikita Khrushchev explained in a speech that,

“the Soviet people adhere to the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Communism is the most humanist of ideologies. It is strongly opposed to all and every kind of oppression, to all and every kind of exploitation. The Soviet people consider the colonial system, under which the bulk of the world’s population were doomed to poverty and disfranchisement, to be a shameful, unjust page in the history of man. That is why, in keeping with Lenin’s precepts, we have always come out strongly in [favor] of liberating all peoples from colonial bondage.⁶⁹”

In practice, this propaganda of the Communist anti-colonialism coming from Khrushchev himself fell apart at the seams if considering the colonialist attitudes found in the Russian/Soviet subjugation of its constituent republics.

The true nature of decolonization and the ability for a country to be defined as postcolonial can be found in the process of moving from dependency to sovereignty. Ukraine experienced increased momentum of national liberation coupled with demands for sovereignty that continued throughout the Soviet period. This also excludes independence movements that flourished in the early history of the Soviet Union and during the Russian Civil War, where independent Ukrainian governments were founded and subsequently crushed by the Bolsheviks. Decolonization defined through a lens of a prolonged process rooted in the historical past of a region can be particularly helpful in viewing Ukraine and explaining ongoing issues, which were present in 1991 and the foundation of an independent Ukraine.

As the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics disintegrated and moved towards independent states, many of these countries still felt as if Moscow held the reigns to their futures. With this in mind, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was formed to help retain power

⁶⁹ Nikita S. Khrushchev, *The National Liberation Movement* (Moscow, USSR: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), 15.

structures (albeit symbolic) similar to those found in the Soviet Union. Namely, Russia took to the helm of the newly formed CIS. Ukraine's history with the CIS was particularly difficult, as many of the early Ukrainian leadership did not trust that the CIS would be a beast of a different nature than the Soviet Union. At the same time, Ukraine was left with an outdated Soviet military, economic, and physical infrastructure coupled with the fact that Ukraine let go of its inherited nuclear weapons arsenal – any confrontations with Russia was, unequivocally, out of the question. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union created deeply rooted colonial problems, leaving a newly independent Ukraine with Soviet infrastructure but no path towards decolonizing itself from its past. Decolonization is a tricky word to define and even more challenging to carry out, leaving most parties involved in moving a country from dependency to sovereignty unsatisfied. Decolonization in itself is a “clutch of fitful activities and events, played out in conference rooms, acted out in protests mounted in city streets, fought over in jungles and mountains.⁷⁰” Ukraine could be viewed as built in a day, so to speak, as it declared independence and the government immediately found itself charged with building a nation, doing away with a Soviet past, and contemplating the issues of potential de-Russification policies.

Can we conceptualize Ukraine as a decolonized country? This would largely depend on how decolonization is defined. In the traditional sense, decolonization involves doing away with colonialist rule – this happened in Ukraine if Russian and Soviet rule over Ukraine is defined as colonialism. There is another, more interesting interpretation of decolonization that is more revolutionary and drastic than a simple process; if we understand decolonization to mean “that which sets out to change the order of the world, is a program of complete disorder,” or a “violent phenomenon,” and a “total, complete, and absolute substitution,” then defining Ukraine as

⁷⁰ Raymond Betts, *Decolonization*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 1.

decolonized is difficult. In reality, Ukraine underwent a very strange series of events leading up to its independence that puts into question just what we consider decolonization⁷¹. The events in Ukraine in 1991 could be defined as a compromise between pro-Russian, pro-Soviet Communists and opposing anti-Soviet national democrats. The Communists accepted an independent Ukraine in return for a continuation of the “ancien regime” of the Soviet Union (although, officially decommunized and decolonized). Ukraine did not experience the bloody revolutions, nor did it experience a smooth pullout of Russia. Ukraine continues to straddle two worlds: the first is where Ukraine is in the midst of decolonization, of doing away with a colonial Russian past while the other Ukraine looks to keep the status quo of its colonial past, all under the guise of de-jure independence⁷².

A new perspective on decolonization can be drawn from Ukraine’s experiences that can be of use for greater comparisons between different experiences of colonial rule. Ukraine is currently in a transitory period, but for much of its modern history (the 1990s) the colonial status quo has controlled the country, and continues to inform the current unrest, political instability, and regional violence. Decolonization is somewhere between a violent break from the ancien regime and a nuanced dialogue between the old order and a slowly developing new reality. If this definition of decolonization is true, then Ukraine has experienced a slowly developing new reality that is deeply ingrained in the previously established and continuously validated status quo of the Soviet Union but is currently experiencing a violent response to this assertion (violence against this system and violence for the continued propagation of the colonial old regime rule).

⁷¹ Mykola Riabchuk, “Culture and Cultural Politics in Ukraine: A Postcolonial Perspective,” in *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine*, 48-49.

⁷² *Ibid*, 49-50.

Despite the lack of early violence in its decolonization process, Ukraine experienced decolonization in a remarkably similar way to other nations that are traditionally associated with colonial rule. Ukraine's borders were, for the most part, artificially drawn and the country's relationship to the former ruling power has been one of subordination since independence. The political processes of Ukraine have also been heavily informed by the country's colonial past along with the direct conversation and (most recently) conflict with the parent of such a history. The 1990s collapse of the Ukrainian economy sparked nostalgia in the Southern and Eastern portions of the country for the command economy of the past, and pro-Russian sentiments rose in response to such nostalgia. These regions of the country have a much more intimately connected economic history with Russia – it is the South and East that also supported a move for independence because of the perceived economic benefits. Now that the economy was in worse shape, nostalgia for the colonial past spiked. The economic side of the colonialism story is an integral part to the current political situation in Ukraine – Moscow commanded the economy and now that the future of Ukrainian prosperity rested in the hands of Kiev, it was integral that the industrialized East and South received direct benefits. Western Ukrainians, on the other hand, voted and supported based on identity politics and the promotion of the Ukrainian heritage – prompting the Kiev government to find a way to bridge the two focuses. Proving impossible, a succession of Ukrainian nationalist and pro-Russian leadership took the post with promises aimed at the different regions of the country. These problems were in fact a result of a larger legacy from the Soviet Union – a multi-ethnic empire with a command economy could not marry these issues together, bringing about the fall of the empire and the creation of new, postcolonial states that subsequently inherited these very issues.

The elite discourses of these issues in Ukraine are integral to understanding how decolonization functions on the national level – it is one thing for these differences to play out on a regional or even local scale, but the future of the country is in the hands of what happens in the halls of the Verkhovna Rada and on the streets of Kiev, or in the Maidan. This is where changes in Ukraine’s road to the future can be drastically altered, as seen in the popular uprising and overhaul of 2014 and the Orange Revolution years earlier. The Ukrainian political system is one of a multi-party democracy with a prime minister and a president at the helm. Most of these parties have a drastically different outlook on Ukraine, mirroring the postcolonial problems inherited after the fall of the Soviet Union – the very issues of identity and decolonization have a national and even international significance. These parties can be categorized as largely supporting the future of Ukraine in the following ways: Ukraine as Europe, Ukraine as Alternative Europe, and Ukraine as Greater Europe. Each viewpoint has manifested itself in the official discourse, proving for a rocky relationship between Ukraine and its former colonizing power, Russia.⁷³

Ukraine as Europe is currently garnering a large amount of attention, as this viewpoint frames Ukraine as being “fundamentally different from a non-European Russia.” This movement was instrumental in rebuilding a Ukrainian identity that did not trace its roots to a common history with Russia – in fact, it was the opposite: it was this view that helped to create a postcolonial narrative for Ukraine, that the Ukrainian people experienced oppression from the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and even contemporary examples of Russia’s energy policies. This coupled with the idea that “Ukraine was imagined as an inherently European nation – as part of a European civilization that had deviated from its natural path due mostly to external

⁷³ Stephen White and Valentina Feklyunina, *Identities and Foreign Policies in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 135.

pressures (i.e. Russian and then Soviet oppression)” was integral in the Eurointegration movement and pivoting Kiev away from Moscow and towards Brussels.⁷⁴ This view has also informed a great deal of Ukrainian foreign policy, especially in the relationship of Ukraine to the traditional Russian sphere of influence: Ukraine supported Azerbaijan in their war against Armenia (a close ally of Russia), Georgian conflict with Abkhazian separatists, and even (rumored) involvement in Chechen separatist movements in Russia.

The Alternative Europe model harkens back to the by-gone days of the Soviet Union and a cultural closeness to Russia and Belarus as East Slavic nations. Alternative Europe was a way for Ukraine to move back into a colonial relationship, under an authoritarian leadership (which was viewed as the only way to preserve unity). To remove the colonialist framework from this view, as many Russian and pro-Russian sources counter, “The Russian Empire was imagined not as an ethnically Russian center that had colonized neighboring lands, but as an entity here the ancestors of modern Ukrainians had plays as important a role as the ancestors of modern Russians.” Ukraine’s self-identification with Belarus and Russia helped shape this Alternative Europe model as a brotherly confederation of peoples, best united under a common East Slavic flag.⁷⁵

Finally, Ukraine as part of a Greater Europe seems to be growing in popularity as an option for Ukrainian neutrality between an expanding European Union and a long-established Russian sphere of influence. This model posits that Ukraine has longstanding connections with both Europe and Russia but is unique in its own right – it does not fit entirely with the group of European nations and the group of pro-Russian nations. This particular viewpoint is nuanced in that it opens a conversation for Ukraine’s future which can be at the same time pro-European and

⁷⁴ Ibid, 139.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 140-141.

pro-Russian, or neither, as there is a focus on the pragmatic rather than normative discourse. It does not necessarily matter if Ukraine is more European or more Slavic, what matters are the possibilities for benefitting from these relationships (economic benefits, for example).⁷⁶ The problem, however, is that this model does not inform a Ukrainian history nor does it attempt to reconcile a colonial past with a postcolonial present, nor does it touch on the process of decolonization.

These models help us create an image of the current Ukraine as in a state of decolonization, where the country as a whole is constantly renegotiating its history, its relationship to the colonizer, its relationship to potential partners like the European Union, and contending with issues of compromised identities that have boiled over to incite direct conflict. The official discourse has fluctuated between all three of these models, moving from administration to administration, and particularly after the Orange Revolution and the current aftershocks of the Maidan. The feeding of ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities between the regions into how greater Ukraine functions on the international scale is hugely important in understanding its future – Ukraine has many options to choose from in this path towards becoming a modern nation-state. Each model informs how the country is likely to move next, from the fervent pro-Europeanism of the Tymoshenko group during the Orange Revolution to the quiet pro-Russian sentiment under Yanukovich. Now, Ukraine's path is again unclear: a pro-European Kiev with a staunchly pro-Russian Donbas and effectively anti-Ukrainian Crimea. The postcolonial framework maintains that the path to nation-statehood and foundation of a functional state are made particularly difficult by decolonization. This is seen directly in the way that Southern and Eastern Ukraine have been so heavily Russified, that any changes to the

⁷⁶ Ibid, 141-143.

dominance Russian culture in the country are perceived as a direct attack on the Russian identity. The Maidan movement and subsequent overthrow of the pro-Russian government is also born from this same issue: Ukraine's identity crisis is a direct product of colonization and complicated decolonization. We can begin to compare how different states respond to decolonization, especially at a subnational and interstate level: taking Kashmir's present situation and viewing Ukraine's predicament in a similar light can unlock the potential outcomes and the future of the war in Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. The next chapter will finally bring these two histories together: Kashmir's compromised identities and Ukraine's identity crisis under the umbrella of decolonization and provide a framework to be able to make conclusions about the future. Ukraine's national anthem sings of a Ukraine that has not yet perished and dreams of a day when Ukrainians will be able to rule a free land of their own: a wish complicated by decolonization, an imperfect and challenging process.

Chapter III

Looking forward: lessons for the future

From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called
in question by absolute violence.
-Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Kashmir's present conflict and the future woes of Eastern Ukraine are not found in a vacuum – they are, in fact, part of a greater narrative of disastrous attempts at decolonization, state building, and the formation of compromised identities (although, the presence of these issues across the globe give us a point of departure for meaningful comparisons for a better future). The issue now is to look at the potential connection between Kashmir's present and the future of Eastern Ukraine: Will the region follow in the footsteps of Kashmir to become a disputed territory and gain the reputation of being the world's most dangerous region? The main concern from the all sides in the Ukrainian conflict is whether or not Ukraine will become the next Kashmir – a frozen conflict without a sense of reconciliation coupled with identity politics that are disastrously compromised. To answer this question, it is imperative to contextualize Kashmir and Eastern Ukraine as a product of their own, unique positions. It is foolhardy to draw lines between two regions with different histories and narratives in the name of simple comparisons to suit a broader narrative of decolonization and post colonialism. We can, however, look at the connection between these two regions in light of their similarities and differences and ascertain any kind of lesson that could be learned from these situations to understand the extent of global trends and emerging norms in a globalized, postcolonial world with regards to compromised identities. If a model of looking at decolonization and compromised identities can be formulated, this brings us a step closer to understanding the post-colonial world and furthering development agenda that is useful for the international community.

This chapter will set out to draw a connection between the present situation in Kashmir and the potential future of Eastern Ukraine through their compromised identity politics and the idea of the Postcolonial Informal Empire – an effect of not only successor states and their spheres of influence, but a continuation of imperial structures. First, the present situation of Kashmir will be considered: defining if Kashmir a frozen conflict and what this could mean for Ukraine. Next, I will turn to the problem of Eastern Ukraine and its potential future outcomes: do we have enough evidence to connect this region with Kashmir? Finally, a future of Ukraine will be drawn as a product of issues of decolonization and compromised identities – the combination of periphery, informal empire, challenged decolonization, and compromised identities are able to coalesce into violence. I will ultimately attempt to answer the primary issue at hand: Is the present-day Kashmir a snapshot of what Eastern Ukraine will look like?

Setting up Kashmir

A crucial issue to both Eastern Ukraine and Kashmir is the presence of contested and compromised national identities – creating a source for dispute and a critical factor in the resolution of these conflicts. One cannot separate the problem of identity from the present situation in Kashmir and the uncertain future of Eastern Ukraine, as each group is engaged in a struggle for validation in their respective regions and even recognition in the international community. To dive into the problem of identity, we must look back to the overarching issue of decolonization as a driving force to these two tense situations. Kashmir is set within a larger question of the two-state partition of the British Raj, leading to the creation of Pakistan and India in 1947. The partition became a classic example of decolonization – the creation of two states, borders, and institutions as they became adopted into the dominant nation-state system, regardless of local realities and understandings of space and territory.

Subsequently, Kashmir found itself stuck between the artificially drawn borders of Pakistan and India. Pakistan was created as a homeland for South Asia's large Muslim population, reflected in the institutional structures of the country while India was supposed to be the homeland for the Hindus but took on a more diverse, pluricentric model for their state. Jawaharlal Nehru questioned this idea of the two-state solution: "For if nationality is based on religion, there are many nations in India."⁷⁷ India began to lay the foundation for a government that tried to fold in these issues of religion; Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, and Muslims in addition to Hindus call the country home. India thus took a turn to secular nationalism – Indians are Indians, no matter the religion. The process of decolonization attempts to create a national identity in conversation with its colonial past while dealing with many of the classical issues inherent in identity politics. If we are to take the Constructivist logic of international politics that, "roles and identities are shaped by shared ideas, and reproduced and modified by ongoing interactions,"⁷⁸ then a strong tie can be created between India's attempts at creating a national identity and the local realities of Kashmir. Identity born from the process of decolonization can be shaped as a catchall, especially in India's case. This, however, has been challenged recently with the rise of Hindu nationalism in the national stage (with the election of a Hindu-nationalist party and subsequent rhetoric issued by the state) and on a more local level, even in Kashmir with elections reflecting this turn towards a Hindu-focused government – complicating the frozen status of the conflict⁷⁹. Kashmir, however, is interesting in that it is a multi-religious

⁷⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, *On Communalism* (n.p.: Hope India, 2006), 206.

⁷⁸ Alison Brysk, Craig Parsons, and Wayne Sandholtz, "After Empire: National Identity and PostColonial Families of Nations," *European Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 2 (2002): 206.

⁷⁹ "Jammu and Kashmir Election Results," Times of India, accessed April 18, 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/assembly-elections-2014/JK-election-results2014/election2014home/state-jnk.cms>.

region whose territory is largely administered by India, with chunks under Pakistani and Chinese sovereignty. The government of India sees the continued control of Kashmir as an issue of grave importance, a test of its strength as an emerging nation. A failure to secure Kashmir as Indian would cause a domino effect in other hotspots across the country on the grounds of regional, political, religious, and ethno-linguistic differences.

Kashmir has two layers that drive its status as a frozen conflict – the domestic issues within both Pakistani and Indian Kashmir and the international confrontations between Pakistan and India⁸⁰. The internal problems of Kashmir stem from decolonization's disastrous effects on identity by creating unanswerable and compromised identity politics. At the same time, decolonization reared its head in the problem of legitimate sovereignty over Kashmir: who has the right of control? India, Pakistan, and even a grassroots independence movement all claim to have sovereignty over a united Kashmir, subverting the drawn borders between India and Pakistan.

Kashmir is one of Asia's primary frozen conflicts that has persisted far beyond the days of partition and initial steps of decolonization: three wars have been fought between India and Pakistan since the partition and yet little has changed in regards to policy and local realities⁸¹. Starting in the 21st century, however, there seemed to have been a slow thaw in relations between New Delhi and Islamabad, along with renewed contact between Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistani-administered Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. This was first apparent in April 2005 when a bus service was created to cross the Line of Control (LoC) between

⁸⁰ Amitav Acharya and Arabinda Acharya, "Kashmir in the International System," in *Kashmir: New Voices, New Approaches*, ed. Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, Bushra Asif, and Cyrus Samii (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 157-158.

⁸¹ GPD, "Early Chill in Kashmir?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 48 (November/December 2004): 5077.

Srinagar in Indian Kashmir to Muzaffarabad in Pakistani Kashmir – sparking international attention and renewed hopes that this frozen conflict will soon be resolved. An important step forward for many in light of the war fought between India and Pakistan in 1999 across the LoC and the terrorist attacks in 2002 in New Delhi that resulted in heightened militarization in both India and Pakistan. The bus service reconnected the two lands, allowing those exiled to visit ancestral lands. Renewed talks in 2004 between India and Pakistan helped shape the next few years in the Kashmiri peace process.⁸² The international community praised this development, a simple bus line seems to have renewed optimism about the future of the conflict, with Condoleezza Rice noting that the administration was “very impressed with what India and Pakistan have achieved...It is quite remarkable when you see where they have reached. They opened the bus service in Kashmir, which would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. They are looking at broader economic ties.”⁸³

Optimism soon faded, however with a natural intervention: the great earthquake in October 2005 completely crippled Pakistan-administered Kashmir while the bus route between the two capitals dwindled to little more than a trickle. Since then, Kashmir fell back into its frozen conflict status: demonstrations in August 2008 sparked a redeployment of Indian troops to the region. Just a year before, Amnesty International charged the Indian government with violations of basic human rights, including systematic arrests, detentions, enforced curfews, and testimonies of rape and torture. Fresh protests sparked in 2010 due to the deaths of two young men who were detained by Indian forces resulted in the deaths of another 107 people. The next

⁸² Cyrus Samii, "Kashmir: From Persistence to Progress?," in *Kashmir: New Voices, New Approaches*, ed. Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, Bushra Asif, and Cyrus Samii (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 225-226.

⁸³ Sumantra Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka* (n.p.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 160.

month, India announced that it would release hundreds of students and young people arrested in the months of unrest.⁸⁴

Interstate conflict remains one of the defining features of the Kashmiri conflict: on one end is Pakistani interest for integrating all of Kashmir into its sovereignty while across the border, India views Kashmir as an integral part of its (officially) multi-ethnic, secular democracy. The LoC has remained one of the most contentious borders in the world, with conflict flaring up every few years or even sooner. Towards the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015, India and Pakistan renewed the conflict with heavy cross-border fire and shelling forcing thousands of civilians to flee the area. No matter how many peace talks and processes have been started between the two countries, regardless of international mediation, the conflict continues to wage on.⁸⁵

This back and forth combined with internal strife has left the issue of Kashmir frozen – India and Pakistan are not actively engaged in a declared war while any sort of lasting peace agreements are nowhere to be found, bringing us to the present situation of Kashmir. With the election of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2014 into the ruling majority party in India, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, a more nationalistic stance towards Kashmir from New Delhi has been forming. At the same time, local politics in Kashmir have mirrored this shift with BJP

⁸⁴ "India: Urgent investigation needed as protests continue in Kashmir," Amnesty International, last modified July 22, 2013, accessed April 19, 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2013/07/india-urgent-investigation-needed-protests-continue-kashmir/>.

⁸⁵ "Kashmir villagers flee amid India Pakistan cross-border fire," Deutsche Welle, last modified January 6, 2015, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.dw.de/kashmir-villagers-flee-amid-india-pakistan-cross-border-fire/a-18172651>.

taking 25 of the 87 available seats in the Muslim-majority region⁸⁶. Separatists and militants in Indian Kashmir rejected the vote, with the militants stepping up attacks across the region in an attempt to intimidate potential voters. Now that the BJP has a controlling stake in national Indian politics and a powerful voice in local Kashmiri politics, the present situation in the region has become further complicated. BJP has in the past rejected Kashmir's special status as an autonomous region – in fact, they believe that the regional parliament should be dissolved as part of a campaign to unite India. To do this, BJP would have to alter the very constitution of the country to remove special statutes granting Kashmir heightened autonomy. Currently, however, Prime Minister Modi seems to have shifted this policy to a stauncher stance on anti-terrorism and dealing with the mass numbers of refugees present in Kashmir.⁸⁷ One statistic reported by the prime minister in an address to members of the Kashmiri Shia Muslim minority numbers the migrant population of Kashmir at 20 percent of the overall population of Kashmir – with the majority of these people being displaced due to terrorist activities on the part of the insurgency. To this end, the Indian military has stepped up its presence in Kashmir – much to the chagrin of Pakistan⁸⁸.

The insurgency plays a major role in the problem of solving Kashmir's frozen conflict: major attacks or demonstrations staged by insurgent groups cause the Indian government to intervene further, prompting more major attacks and continuing the vicious cycle. The full-scale insurgency, consisting of numerous groups with conflicting goals, continues to take central stage

⁸⁶ "Jammu and Kashmir Election Results," Times of India, accessed April 18, 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/assembly-elections-2014/JK-election-results2014/election2014home/state-jnk.cms>.

⁸⁷ Rekha Chowdhary, "Modi's roadmap for India's Kashmir and Pakistan policies," East Asia Forum, last modified May 16, 2014, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/05/16/modis-roadmap-for-indias-kashmir-and-pakistan-policies/>.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

in Kashmir: India has dropped many of its political approaches to solving the issue, opting instead for mobilization of armed forces. By 1991, the Indian government adapted their military framework and flooded the region with somewhere between 600,000-700,000 personnel.

India has not been the only power to assert itself in the greater Kashmir region, however. Separatist leaders have asserted the independence of Kashmir since the beginning of the partition process, asserting that the former princely state has a right to self-determination. The Azadi Kashmiri narrative has been critical of all sides involved in the conflict: “Today the so-called ‘Azad’ (liberated) Kashmir has been occupied by Pakistani capitalists,⁸⁹” wrote M. Bashir Asef, the Convener of the United Kashmir Liberation Front in 1971. Asef attacks Pakistan further, invoking narratives of decolonization used in the aftermath of partition, “Pakistani capitalism, which is a part of the international imperialism based on colonial exploitation, today is at a very dangerous juncture.⁹⁰” In fact, he was not incorrect in this assertion: Pakistan’s focus has been on promoting dialogues of unity and demonizing Indian occupation of Jammu and Kashmir, rather than a direct involvement in creating a foundation for a state in the aftermath of partition and after the LoC was established through the numerous Indo-Pakistani wars. Pakistan, however, has some direct similarities to the Ukrainian issue in the form of its infamous oligarchy – “Pakistan’s Kashmir strategy is now in a state of flux, though still dominated by a civil-military oligarchy that seems bent on forcibly altering the status-quo in Kashmir.⁹¹” Like much of Ukraine’s eastern provinces, select families and characters control Pakistani Kashmir. The rise of oligarchical societies can be a symptom of the post-colonial, decolonized world; indeed a similar situation is

⁸⁹ M. Bashir Asef, "Azad Kashmir: A Colony of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," *Pakistan Horizon* 2, no. 2 (November 1971): 4-5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Navnita Chadha Behera, *Demystifying Kashmir* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2006), 103.

also present in the Indian side of Kashmir. Article 370 of the Indian constitution was meant to give Jammu and Kashmir sweeping autonomy, a privilege that no other state in India has. The 1970s saw an uptick in suspicion about this article, specifically because it seemed to only serve two purposes: further isolation of Kashmir within India and empowering the existing oligarchical power structure of 1000 or so families, which controlled much of Kashmiri politics “without fear of interference from New Delhi or other Kashmiris.”⁹²

Although both the Pakistani and Indian governments maintain that they are acting for the benefit of the overall population while demonizing each other's policies, few polls have been conducted to see what the Kashmiri people themselves actually think of their state vis-à-vis the two primary actors in the region. One wide-ranging poll conducted on both sides of the LoC attempts to give us some insights on the fault lines in Kashmir and could afford a certain glimpse at what Eastern Ukraine might look like if the region becomes further caught between two countries.

Independence garners a plurality of support from both sides of the LoC: 44 percent of Pakistani Kashmiris and 43 percent of Indian Kashmiris would prefer to see Kashmir as an independent state. On the other hand, twenty-one percent overall said that they would like to join India. This statistic is slightly misleading – only one percent of Pakistani Kashmiris voted for this, while the Hindu-majority Jammu overwhelmingly supported this move on the Indian side. Asef’s claims of colonialism in Azad Kashmir may have been wrong, as the poll also reported that fifty percent of residents on the Pakistani side of LoC support Kashmir joining Pakistan, while two percent on the Indian side back such a move⁹³. This tells us that identity and self-determination are intimately related and further complicate the Kashmir problem as a

⁹² Maroof Raza, *Wars and No Peace over Kashmir* (n.p.: Lancer, 1996), 66.

⁹³ Robert Bradnock, "Counting in Kashmir," *The World Today* 66, no. 6 (June 2010): 27-28.

decolonized region. Decolonization brings out these issues of identity and allegiance, while ignoring the truths on the ground – control is not about the needs of the people, but about the needs of the state – the state must assert its rule in the power vacuum created by a withdrawing empire. The Princely State of Kashmir was not given the opportunity to act in self-determination, thus it was torn and became a part of two different successor states with differing views and missions. This has allowed for India and Pakistan to joust over Kashmir, conflating the issue into an international dispute. The added dimension of nuclear capabilities and near-constant cross-border confrontations has drawn international attention to the frozen conflict, even when India and Pakistan begin to deliberate opening conversations for compromise. “As India and Pakistan gingerly re-open the door to negotiation, this poll suggests that for millions of Kashmiris there is an overwhelming desire for peace, and a peace in which they can fully participate.⁹⁴”

The true danger of other nations becoming the "next Kashmir" stems from the inability for successor states to compromise over stretches of land left over from empire that do not easily fit into particular categories in either ethnic, religious, or ideological lines. Kashmir transcends the partition on the basis of Muslim and Hindu, as the self-identification of *kashmiriyat* demonstrates. These complicated issues of identity become ever more difficult to address if placed into a context where a previous power structure (i.e. colonial rule) suddenly is dismantled. The successors to this system are then charged with undoing the damage done, but this seems to simply not happen - at least in a way that ends in any sort of agreement. We can see how the issue of Kashmir turns from a heated war into a simmering status quo, and draw parallels to other

⁹⁴ Ibid, 28.

problematic regions in the world that are only just beginning to show symptoms of challenged decolonization, where the problems are simply thrown into the fire to explode into conflict.

The Ukrainian dilemma

The current situation in Kashmir is stuck between a rock and a hard place, and this could be very telling about the future of Eastern Ukraine. As we turn to the analysis of a theoretical future rooted in the issues of decolonization and compromised identities, we can separate the issues in terms of the near future and what the possible reality of Ukraine years down the line may be: the conclusion of the issue may not be an end at all; instead, Ukraine's eastern oblasts are starting to resemble the frozen conflict of Kashmir – and this will not bode well for peaceful transitions from colonial to a decolonized modern society. Problems such as where Eastern Ukraine fits in the region will undoubtedly dominate the discourse between not only Ukraine and Russia, but with international actors and Eastern Europe as a whole. The issues of Eastern Ukraine could very well simmer into the tension we can observe in present-day Kashmir. An article published in October 2014 in Reuters outlines that the future of Eastern Ukraine – the Donetsk Basin – is a European Kashmir, where Ukraine, separatists, and Russia will engage in a tug-of-war for control⁹⁵. Ukraine as a postcolonial, decolonized nation-state has experienced similar issues to those faced by India and Pakistan in creating, forming, and promoting the foundations for a functioning national governing apparatus. Taking Kashmir as the primary source of comparison for Eastern Ukraine, this section will compare the current situation in Kashmir with what is currently occurring in the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts in Eastern Ukraine, as a consequence of decolonization.

⁹⁵ Thin Lei Win, "Ukraine Is the 'Kashmir' of Europe," Reuters, last modified October 22, 2014, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-2803760/Ukraine-Kashmir-Europe--Russia-expert.html>.

The conflict in Eastern Ukraine has multiple dimensions, similarly to the issues of Kashmir. On the national level, the Ukrainian government based in Kiev does not accept a self-administered referendum of independence carried out in the heavily Russified regions of Donetsk and Lugansk shortly after the election of a pro-European, pro-Ukrainian majority in Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada. The government in Kiev has been accused of fascism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Russian sentiments, prompting an insurgency-like paramilitary response in the two eastern regions, prompting a declaration of independence for the People's Republic of Donetsk and the People's Republic of Lugansk. On the other hand, there is an international dimension of conflict between Russia, Ukraine, and (broadly speaking) the West. Ukraine has accused the Russian government of intervening in its eastern provinces, breaking its sovereignty and internationally recognized borders. In turn, Russia has accused the West of meddling in Ukrainian affairs, orchestrating the entire Maidan movement to destabilize the region to threaten Russian security interests. As a result, Russia has annexed the Crimea, a region historically associated with Russia and only transferred in the 1950s to Ukraine. Finally, the West views Russian provocation towards Ukraine as a threat to NATO nations and the European Union, all under the auspices of a despotic president - Vladimir Putin, prompting in economic sanctions and even military posturing from both all sides. One thing does remain clear, however: the problem of Eastern Ukraine transcends the Donbas region, as the war on the ground in Donetsk and Lugansk is felt by the Ukrainians who are conscripted from across the country to defend the father land, whose government tells them that their territories are threatened; by the Russians who feel their security is under attack; and the West that feels uneasy towards a robust form of Russian aggression.

The beginning of the current woes in Eastern Ukraine stems from the Maidan revolution – the replacing of the Yanukovich government in Kiev signaled that Eastern Ukraine might have lost its hold on the future of the country. The drama of the Maidan revolution spilled into the eastern portions of the country, where coal is the primary source of economy. The Donbas region has been particularly problematic, prompting an insurgency turned all out offensive war between the self-identified nations of Lugansk People’s Republic and Donetsk People’s Republic, and Ukraine. It would be important to note the historical narrative of the Donbas region, paying particular attention to how its status of being not only on the edge of the former Soviet and Russian empires, but also on the edge of modern Ukraine, has preempted the modern crisis. It is most telling to see how Russia, the dominant power in the region, sees the Donbas in addition to Ukrainian narratives and self-identification of the Eastern Ukrainians themselves. Indeed, President Vladimir Putin of Russia declared that not only the Donbas, but the whole of Southern and Eastern Ukraine (Novorossiia, *New Russia*) are intimately part of the Russian sphere:

what was called Novorossiia back in the tsarist days – Kharkov, Lugansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Nikolayev, and Odessa – were not part of Ukraine back then. The territories were given to Ukraine in the 1920s by the Soviet government. Why? Who knows. They were won by Potyomkin and Catherine the Great in a series of well-known wars. The center of that territory was Novorossiysk, so the region is called Novorossiia. Russia lost these territories for various reasons, but the people remained.⁹⁶

Vladimir Vladimirovich makes an interesting point: Does Ukraine have a claim on the Donbas, or are they simply as colonizing as the former Russian Empire and Soviet Union? History tells us that this is not the case: the Donbas has been home to a distinct Ukrainian narrative for centuries, centering primarily on the Zaporozhian Cossacks, while the term Novorossiia was created by an imperial expansion reminiscent of New Amsterdam or New France colonial heritages. Looking

⁹⁶ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 120.

closer, the heavily urbanized centers of the Donbas are surrounded by a landscape distinctly Ukrainian, steeped in a nationalistic Ukrainian history. Donetsk and Lugansk were claimed as part of an independent Ukraine during the Russian Civil War. Now that the Ukrainian question has been contextualized, the problem of the Maidan can be thoroughly discussed as it pertains to the future of Eastern Ukraine as an integral part of the nation. The Maidan revolution saw a mass mobilization unseen since the 2004 Orange Revolution, resulting in a regime change. This has since sparked outrage and separatist insurgencies in the eastern portions of the country, prompting intervention by Russia and a series of economic and geopolitical actions that heightened uneasiness between the West and Russia. This also preempted a physical intervention by Russia on behalf of the Russian-speaking majority in the Crimea, resulting in the occupation and integration of the region into the Russian Federation – a move contested by much of the West and heavily disputed by Ukraine. These issues are not located in a vacuum; the actions of Russia, Ukraine, and the West have been building as a result of historical colonization and a messy period of decolonization that further fractured and compromised national, ethnic, and religious identities within Ukraine. This story seems familiar – a narrative played across the world time and time again, but lessons may finally be learned from the regions already in the process of decolonization and those that are finally beginning to feel just how bumpy the road to the postcolonial may be.

Decolonizing identity

This project seeks to understand the issues of decolonization and compromised identities as a result of a historical narrative and as a point for “lessons learned.” If there can be a conceptualization of decolonization and compromised identities, lines may be drawn across the globe to connect and understand problems facing postcolonial regions, and identify markers of

emerging troubles. Historicizing Kashmir may give us the tools we need to tread carefully in Ukraine, focusing on the real problems at hand rather than attempting to define Ukraine's problems as novel or surprising. Decolonization is a messy process, oftentimes ignoring issues exacerbated by or even directly created by colonial rule. We can begin to do this by tethering compromised identities and the problem of forging a nationality. Both Ukraine and Kashmir are currently in the midst of a certain identity crisis, but Kashmir makes for an interesting case as it has been experiencing the effects of decolonization and compromised identities for some time now, while Ukraine's crisis is only beginning to unfold as it moves away from the former metropolitan center. It may very well be possible that certain lessons can be learned from Kashmir's experiences in order to better understand subsequent waves of unrest across the globe. It may also be telling that Kashmir has yet to reach a status quo that does not include violence, insurgency, and continued clashes based on identities that have been compromised due to decolonization. What could be at the heart of both of these identity crises, steeped in history but very much relevant, and evolving in the present-day? Decolonization requires successor states to build institutions and decide not only the structure of the nation but also the historical identity narrative.

Nations are created based on principles of unity and the identification of the people as part of this nation – nation-building is in the business of fostering an identity in order to smooth the process of maintaining institutions and gaining support from the population. It is without a surprise that there are numerous aspects of decolonization that are common between Kashmir and unfolding actions in Ukraine. When faced with an insurrection, the Maharajah Hari Singh chose to ascend to India instead of forming an independent state – since then, the process of removing British colonial rule has been fraught with interstate wars and intrastate insurrections.

India-administered Jammu and Kashmir then came to enjoy a certain “privileged” status within India as an autonomous state in an attempt to maintain a Kashmiri identity that has been in the region for centuries beforehand, “Accession to India was conditional on Kashmir retaining its distinct cultural and regional identity. Article 370 assured the state all benefits of independent Kashmir without sacrificing the advantages of being a part of the larger Indian federation.” Instead, the constitutional amendment guaranteeing Kashmir its special status has come under fire, both within Kashmir and in Indian national politics. This sort of guarantee by a state for maintaining identities can be seen in many decolonizing regions, notably in Ukraine. After decades of Russification, the Ukrainian constitution attempts to reassert the Ukrainian identity in the nation by privileging the language as the only official language, while guaranteeing minority language support – with sizable Russian-speakers in the South and East of the country, this was a sort of slap in the face. Much like the Indian constitution alienates Kashmiri Muslims in guaranteeing the rights of the Kashmiri identity in a nation created for Hindus, the Russian-speakers in Ukraine were alienated as a result of finding themselves in an independent Ukrainian-majority nation (no longer receiving guaranteed privilege of Russian status by the metropolitan center in Moscow).

Identities are compromised in part by the very process of decolonization, the process of transition, and the creation of a national identity. Although Kashmir is not fully independent, these very issues arise in both dependent-Kashmir and an (internationally recognized) independent Ukraine. This profound split in identity has a strong influence on transitioning from colonial dependency to any semblance of independence. Ukraine in particular interesting, especially when considering the woes of the decolonized in other regions of the world – “Ukraine represents probably the most ambiguous case, being neither a clear-cut success story –

like its postcommunist neighbors to the west, nor a complete failure – like its neighbors to the east.⁹⁷ This dicey transition, Riabchuk posits, is due to a “muddling through” of national identity – an idea that can be identified in Kashmir as well. Kashmir’s muddling through of identity stems from factions that grew out of the British plan for partition of its colonies: separate nations for the Muslim and Hindu populations, separate homelands. This was supposed to fix the problem of identity, offering a compromise for rising nationalism, but the compromise ran into a problem in Kashmir. The community was multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic – but still under the name of Kashmir and having a Kashmiri identity. *Kashmiriyat*, driven by the first prime minister of Indian Jammu and Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah, “redefined existing national identities that were previously delineated along religious and ethnic boundaries.⁹⁸” In addition, this encompassing identity was able to fold in different peculiarities of the region, including refusal to support Pakistani insurgents in the Second Indo-Pakistan War and the variance of success for Muslim nationalism in Kashmir compared to Pakistan. It is interesting to note that this Kashmiri identity circumvents issues in such a way that Ukraine has not been able to foster. Ukrainian nationalism stems from a historical narrative of Ukrainian-speakers, mostly from the west of the country (where Greek Catholicism and Ukrainian Orthodoxy are in the majority) over the Russian-speaking east (where Russian Orthodoxy and Ukrainian churches subordinate to the Moscow patriarchate are in the majority) built the modern identity of Ukraine and Ukrainianness. Sheikh Abdullah attempted to build a new nationalism, irrespective of the reality that both India and Pakistan did not represent the voice of the Kashmiri people. Ukraine, for that matter, did not

⁹⁷ Mykola Riabchuk, "Ambivalence or Ambiguity? Why Ukraine Is Trapped between East and West," in *Ukraine, the EU and Russia*, ed. Stephen Velychenko (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 439.

⁹⁸ Karan Arakotaram, "The Rise of Kashmiriyat: People-Building in 20th Century Kashmir," *The Columbia Journal of South Asian Studies*, 27-28.

build a new identity but rather followed a nationalistic turn aimed at reasserting and privileging the long-suppressed Ukrainian identity in an independent nation.

In the process of decolonization, we can see a divergent path emerging in how the establishment of a nationality can play out. *Kashmiriyat*, even for its task of circumventing the issues of compromised identities, has yet to gain a foothold. Does this mean that a new national identity in Ukraine would also be ineffective? There is some support for this conjecture, as the Old Russian imperial regime first attempted to build the Eastern Slavic identity. The Eastern Slavic project tied Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians together as an identity with tethered histories and cultures. Regardless of the language spoken, these groups were related by their religion (Eastern Orthodoxy) and by their proximity to the Russian metropoly. The successive Soviet regime emphasized nationalities and an identity structure similar to the Eastern Slavic identity – one may identify as Ukrainian, but that only means that they are intimately related to Russians and Belarusians. We can apply this to the independence of Ukraine: although an overwhelming majority voted for independence in 1991, the majority of Ukrainians elected ex-Communist leader Leonid Kravchuk as the nation's first president – a break from the past was not entirely called for. The lesson from Kashmir's problems of marrying identity with decolonization is a problem for the future of Ukraine vis-à-vis the nation's current woes in Donetsk and Lugansk. The creation of a new identity still cannot undo entrenched identities that have been placed at odds with each other. In the process of decolonizing, Kashmir's identities were compromised because of the interstate conflict between India and Pakistan, while Ukraine's identities became compromised after the dissolution of the Soviet Union but the continuation of Russian identification in the country. The common thread is that decolonization helps compromise identities, which in turn hampers the process of building a national identity that can

subvert colonial rule. In both cases of Kashmir and Ukraine, an issue of existing on the periphery of informal empires that have succeeded the classical colonial empire can to be at the center of troubles in decolonization and establishing a nationality that can fuse compromised identities.

Life on the periphery: Rise of informal empires

A major commonality between Ukraine and Kashmir is that they are both affected by the rise of non-Western powers – Russia and India, respectively. The lessons gathered from Kashmir in order to build an image of the future of Ukraine could be traced back the rise of India (and subsequently Russia) as a Postcolonial Informal Empire (PIE)⁹⁹. India inherited the status of a large, emerging power after the British Empire withdrew, while Russia inherited the same from the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. The PIE differs from formal empires in a fundamental way: the structures of authority in the PIE allow for equality between all citizens. These polities emerged as successors to the empires they came from, as a result of direct colonial intervention, where an elite ruling class emerged that were either directly sent from the metropolitan center or an emerging local ruling class set into place by the colonial power. These elites began to maintain empire-like control in a different way than their colonial predecessors by attempting to form a national identity and partake in “people building” activities that encompassed and acknowledged different ethnicities and religions, but focused on a single identity. These practices, however, seem to have ended in a similar result. The rise of PIEs creates issues reminiscent of those found in formal empires of the past: peripheral states have an oftentimes-complicated relationship to the core of power, a relationship that creates a relationship where the periphery is reliant on or forcibly bound to the center. This connection results in a set of problems, notably conflict with the center and an exacerbation of conflicts of identity. Kashmir’s

⁹⁹ Dibyesh Anand, "China and India: Postcolonial Informal Empire in the Emerging Global Order," *Rethinking Marxism* 24, no. 1 (January 2012): 68-69.

relationship to New Delhi, for example, is steeped in issues of control and denial of plebiscites for independence promised by international organizations. This brings up a fundamental question:

How do the territories and people in the periphery, often with a distinct sense of ethno-nationalism defined in opposition to the majoritarian nationalism, relate to the center/core? This relation is imperial. It is based on territorial conquest/liberation in the recent past; on subjugation of the distinct groups of people and appropriation of their history, identity, life, and death as part of the grand story of one unified polity; on an asymmetry of power maintained through coercion and consent¹⁰⁰.

For Jammu and Kashmir, this meant a direct relationship with India while Pakistan-administered Kashmir also has this sort of complicated history. What lessons could be learned for the future of different regions on the periphery and how the complicated relationship of the Postcolonial Informal Empire enflames identity problems?

A large part of Indian rhetoric towards Kashmir deals with asserting the region as an integral part of the greater multiethnic, secular state; thus it denies any sort of role as a colonizing power. The PIE's "identity is formed around a sense of being a victim of Western imperialism¹⁰¹;" India views Kashmiri issues as an internal question while defining itself in a moral high ground (particularly in relation to Pakistan). We can see this framing of India's status as far back as Gandhi's nonviolence and Nehru's nonalignment – the state of India avoids direct connection to older imperialistic regimes fostered by British dominance. This also includes folding Kashmir into the greater narrative of history constructed in the aftermath of British rule: India celebrates thousands of years of continuity and plurality, meaning that Kashmir fits into the puzzle of greater India with all of its unique features. As for Kashmir in the state-level, Kashmiriyat identity and people-building activities work to do the same thing. The identity

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 73.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 74.

works to construct a narrative that fights opposition, but the buck stops at a certain point. Indian national security and the issue of national interests take precedence, regardless of local identity-building activities.

If there is an alternative narrative, why has the violence continued in Kashmir and across borders? The answer lies in the very construction of Kashmiriyat identity vis-à-vis Indian nationalism – the center (Hindu India) becomes majoritarian while the Kashmiri identities (Muslim, Pandit, Kashmiriyat) takes on the role of a minority on the periphery. The “unity in diversity” of the Indian and Kashmiri narratives is born from a majoritarian identity – the Hindu identity within India, for example, becomes codified as normative while all other identities are recognized as different or “Other.” Thus, we have an imperialist flavor of India as a postcolonial nation. Kashmiri resistance then focuses not on the reconstruction of India as a whole, but on reforms as a peripheral region, one that has become the other in the nation. The struggle for Kashmir is about ethno-nationalism, development, and livelihood. India’s response is then to assert its control over Kashmir, because this Other is rebelling against the majoritarian center, threatening security. We can see this in the passing of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act: if a region is proclaimed as “disturbed” the Indian armed forces are given special powers in the region that include searches without warrants, arrests without warrants, and even killings if there is a due cause. This applies to other regions in the periphery of India – but only in the peripheries, because it is these regions that give India the most trouble. On the Pakistani side, similar issues have arisen: the peripheral states of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are denied self-determination and are under supervision of the Pakistani government and intelligence community, resulting in searches and killings. Gilgit-Baltistan is particularly interesting because it serves as an opposite case of Kashmir: the region does not hold constitutional recognition in

Pakistan, while Kashmir receives special autonomous status, but ending in both regions subjected to direct intervention by the metropolitan center.¹⁰² These issues are then worsened by the continued violence that occurs regionally and internationally. For PIEs, the issue is convincing the nation's elite and majoritarian center that the state can act effectively to defend security interests; and in the case of India, fight extremism and insurgency. As long as the frozen conflict between India and Pakistan continues, gross negligence of human rights and the continued compromising of identity will perpetuate in a vicious circle.

Should we then treat these issues much like their colonial predecessors? Is framing these issues as exacerbated and continued thanks to Postcolonial Informal Empires the answer to solving the problems? We can attempt to apply the logic of the PIE to Eastern Ukraine, a region that is legally a part of Ukraine but very much a periphery (as with the rest of Ukraine) of Russia's informal empire. The crisis stems from the rhetorical analogy that Russia is in the position of an "older brother" to Ukraine, the "younger sister" – resulting in a peripheral, paternalistic relationship between Ukraine and the metropolitan center in Moscow. The ability for Russia to manipulate Ukrainian politics and identity gives it a certain power that is familiar in the Kashmiri question: India's relationship to Kashmir and Russia's relationship to Ukraine are not so different. Indeed when faced with Europeanization of Ukraine, Russia has reacted to defend its position as the primary actor; that Ukraine falls in its sphere of influence. A parallel can be drawn to the actions of India to maintain control in Kashmir through legislative and military procedures. Russia has even prepared legislation that it can legally enter Ukraine if it needs to defend its security interests, bypassing any sort of international legal framework. This has also resulted in Russian involvement in "protecting the rights of Russian speakers and

¹⁰² Behera, *Demystifying Kashmir*. 170-171

Russian citizens in other countries, which has resulted in framing the world as bipolar.^{103,104}”

There are those who are Russian-speaking and connected to the historical Russian narrative and the “Others” that are, by default, against Russian interests. Ukraine is then put into a position that it is either with Russia as its ethnic (Slavic) and historical (Kievan Rus’) sibling, or it is against it. The second option comes with the consequence that Russia then views its citizens or those who are ethnically Russian as in danger. If this calculus continues, Russia will begin to act less and less like a border between Eastern Ukraine and Southern Russia exists, and will treat it as a dependent and permeable (but independent) region, in the same vein as Kashmir’s relationship to India.

The Maidan revolution placed an emphasis in Ukraine on being fundamentally different than Russia; that the historical narrative presented by a united Eastern Slavic identity is not entirely accurate, and in fact erases the entire history of a unique Ukrainian ethnicity, religious tradition, and language. This outraged and prompted a crisis in Eastern Ukraine, but can we see Eastern Ukraine evolving into a Kashmir? Yes and no: Ukraine is, for all intents and purposes, a legally independent country that emerged through a referendum to leave the Soviet Union. Kashmir has been denied such rights for a plebiscite since Partition. This means that Ukraine’s actions are more independent, that the nation has the ability to sign treaties with the European Union, for example – only to deal with the consequences from Russia as an interstate conflict rather than an intrastate one. This is important consideration in using Kashmir as an example for

¹⁰³ Valery V. Kravchenko, "Російсько-українська криза 2014 р.: причини, характер, наслідки" (working paper, Donetsk National University, 2015), 3. Translation: Russian-Ukrainian Crisis, 2014: Causes, Nature, Implications. Translation my own, from the original Ukrainian.

¹⁰⁴ "Transcript: Putin says Russia will protect the rights of Russians abroad," Washington Post, last modified March 18, 2014, accessed April 19, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-putin-says-russia-will-protect-the-rights-of-russians-abroad/2014/03/18/432a1e60-ae99-11e3-a49e-76adc9210f19_story.html Translation my own from original Russian.

Eastern Ukraine's future, as the nation in which it is a part of can appeal for support while Kashmir cannot. However, this is if Eastern Ukraine is defined as a part of greater Ukraine, something that the secessionist movements in the Donetsk and Lugansk vehemently deny. To them, the illegitimacy of the new Kiev government and the Eastern Slavic connection of Eastern Ukraine to the Russian polity does not fit into the nationalist united Ukrainian rhetoric, how can they if the Russian speakers of Eastern Ukraine cannot even understand the national language based from the western portions of the country. The leaders of the Donetsk People's Republic and Lugansk People's Republic see the Kiev government as a product of Bandera nationalism, based on the highly controversial figure Stepan Bandera¹⁰⁵. The two breakaway governments view Ukrainian politics and culture as foreign to them, as an import from nationalistic tendencies of other regions in the country. There is nostalgia in this part of Ukraine, and among other breakaway regions in the postcommunist world for the Soviet Union – where national questions were suppressed by the nomenklatura in favor of a New Soviet Man, for example¹⁰⁶. A similar strain of historical nostalgia is ever-present in Kashmir as well, where the idea of self-determination continues to drive the overall conflict – denial of plebiscite by both India and Pakistan combined with an ever-present military conflict leave the situation with few options.

These issues can be framed as a product of challenged decolonization – where the right for self-determination and autonomy has been denied even in the vacuum left by a colonial

¹⁰⁵ Stepan Bandera was a leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and revered by many in the west of Ukraine, particularly in the historical region of Galicia. The east and south of the country have generally more negative views because of a perceived violent nationalistic stance against Russians, Poles, Hungarians, and Jews. Viktor Yushchenko, as president of Ukraine, commemorated Bandera by awarding him the honor of Hero of Ukraine; this move was protested by the European Union, Russia, and Poland; it was subsequently annulled by the Yanukovich presidency.

¹⁰⁶ Slava Gerovitch, "“New Soviet Man” Inside Machine: Human Engineering, Spacecraft Design, and the Construction of Communism," *Osiris*, no. 22 (2007):135-136.

power. For Ukraine, the problem stems from the presence of Russia and the country's proximity to the informal empire – even as Ukrainians attempt to build institutions and move away from Soviet rule. Kashmir's past experiences of attempting to fight for self-determination while other movements have hijacked such practices has resulted in violent outbursts and a systematic curtailment of human rights, setting Kashmiris back even further in their quest for decolonization while pinning identities at odds with each other. Ukraine is currently experiencing similar fallout from its own challenged decolonization: Ukrainians are now fractured into different factions, each hijacking the Ukrainian narrative to fit their own needs and missions, whether they demonize the Maidan revolution in Kiev or deny the validity referendums in Donetsk, Lugansk, and Crimea. These groups and their identity politics are a result of a process of decolonization that has been anything but smooth, the bumpy path towards a united Ukraine seems to be taking a shape resembling the long and complicated path of decolonization in Kashmir. The very location and historical narrative of both Ukraine and Kashmir has turned these regions into particularly difficult situations to fix. On one hand, Ukraine is stuck between the Europeanization of its country and the heavily Russified/Sovietized past. On the other, Kashmir is stuck between a complete denial of its rights to self-determination and a disastrous insurgency that has devastated human rights. For now, the Ukrainian conflict has largely stayed localized to Donetsk and Lugansk, with new agreements attempting to keep an uneasy ceasefire. However, will Ukraine follow in Kashmir's footsteps and erode into a conflict that will not only include intrastate actors but interstate ones as well?

Violent means to an uncertain end

Decolonization and compromised identities are issues that do not simply occupy the theoretical sphere to be discussed in universities and think tanks. These problems manifest

themselves on the streets of Srinagar and Kiev, in the border regions, and in the very policies that are prolonging the conflicts. Ukraine's place in the Russia's Postcolonial Informal Empire coupled with a history of colonization and pitting identities against each other has created a conflict that is beginning to resemble that of Kashmir's post-Partition reality. The Anti-Terrorist Operation underway in Eastern Ukraine has disrupted the lives of millions and killed thousands – what is being seen is an insurgency, a revolt, and a conflict along ideological, ethnic, and linguistic ties that is intensified by international pressures. Neither political violence nor its underlying factors can be confined to theory – but we can use examples of other experiences to attempt to make sense of what is happening across the globe.

We can see attempts at analyzing the Ukrainian crisis in the current literature: John Mearsheimer introduces the idea that the Ukrainian crisis may not be the fault of Vladimir Vladimirovich, but actually an effect of Western expansion through NATO to the traditional lands falling under Russian influence¹⁰⁷. The imperial undertones of such a statement are immediately seen – Ukraine is simply a buffer between greater powers, but can this really be the future of the region? The past of Kashmir is in a similar position, as the region is situation in the periphery of India, Pakistan, and even China. Wars have been fought over the region in order to secure Kashmir, but the same cannot be said about Ukraine just yet, but the current situation in both Kashmir and Eastern Ukraine are telling.

Violence is a means to an end: factions in Kashmir have used violent means for independence (or in India and Pakistan's cases, to maintain control), Islamic fundamentalism, against state tyranny, and so on. Now, Ukrainian factions are looking for very similar ends:

¹⁰⁷ John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141769/john-j-mearsheimer/why-the-ukraine-crisis-is-the-west-s-fault>.

independence for Donetsk and Lugansk, maintaining control for the government in Kiev, and the unification or collapse of a country. These issues are not located in a vacuum where they are exclusively problems of great power politics or a problem of challenged decolonization and compromised identities; it is in fact a combination of these problems. Great power politics informs the way colonization functions (or becomes unrealized), which in turn aggravates identity politics that have been compromised during a long history of colonization and manipulation. This has created the problem of a next Kashmir: Eastern Ukraine is in such a position that any party involved cannot simply ignore it – the Ukrainian government in Kiev seeks territorial integrity (all the more since the annexation of Crimea by Russia), separatists in the east seek independence for Russian-speakers, Russia seeks to maintain its political economic supremacy in Eastern Europe, and the European Union seeks to secure its eastern countries while following a principle of expansion. Kashmir has been in a stalemate combined with wars to maintain the status quo, and the same may be seen in Donetsk and Lugansk. The tug-of-war for Eastern Ukraine will not end in a clean solution, but this is expected after years of decolonization and compromised identities: Ukraine as a nation, like Kashmir as a region, was drawn by colonization that has not worn off and this has created conflict and stratification among the citizenry. Although Ukrainians sing that their nation has not yet perished, the issues at hand speak to a grimmer future for the nation of Ukraine. Like in Kashmir, very real symptoms of decolonization have not been addressed which has triggered conflict and precipitated human rights violations. The lessons from Kashmir tell us to tread carefully when empires fade away, paying close attention to the political situations in regions where identities simply do not fit together like expected and waves of unrest clash against emerging regimes. A united Ukraine

may not survive for long as the challenged decolonization and the nation's compromised identities continue to fuel violent conflict.

Conclusion

Anything but war

On the day I became Soviet leader, in March 1985, I had a special meeting with the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries and told them: “You are independent, and we are independent. You are responsible for your policies, we are responsible for ours. We will not intervene in your affairs, I promise you.”
-Mikhail Gorbachev

This project sought to examine the relationship between decolonization, identity, and conflict. Throughout this research, many differences as well as parallels cropped up that continued to problematize the effort to make meaningful connections. This brought the very idea of a comparative research project into question: English-speaking sources rejected the notion of a meaningful comparison of the Ukrainian experience to colonialism and subsequent decolonization. It was not until I tapped into Ukrainian academic sources that the picture began to come together in a way that was both meaningful and supported by previous academic research. The Ukrainian point of view fits into the greater puzzle of decolonization and the rise of conflict zones in the aftermath of colonial collapse – the parallels between the heavily researched Kashmir and the novel situation in Ukraine began to grow as I read through hundreds of pages of Ukrainian academic writing, all pointing to a postcolonial syndrome in the country.

It was because of this understanding of the Ukrainian conflict that I could finally begin to make an eloquent connection between Kashmir’s past, present status quo, and the future of Eastern Ukraine. The conclusion was not one I wanted to see: Kashmir was at the center of decades of conflict, including its status of a frozen conflict that entails cross-border shooting and gross violations of human rights regularly. Would Ukraine follow suit? It would depend on the reading of the evidence and the events that are unfolding daily in Ukraine. The Minsk II agreement signed in February of 2015 has kept an uneasy truce in the Donbas, with only

occasional artillery fire or clashes; however, the leaders of both the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic have expressed their doubt in the stability of the truce. The Minsk II protocol outlines stipulations that are reminiscent of the Simla Agreement meant to keep peace in Kashmir: Ukraine is to approve a new constitution that will grant sweeping autonomy for Donetsk and Lugansk, effectively instituting a federalization of the country. In addition, Ukraine would gain control of all borders to monitor the transference of foreign weaponry and personnel out of the country with representatives from the OSCE¹⁰⁸. Like the Simla Agreement, the Minsk II agreement involving leaders from the European Union, Russia, Ukraine, and the separatist forces in Eastern Ukraine, has also established a ceasefire line, while guaranteeing Ukrainian services in the region in a way that is similar to Indian control over most of Jammu and Kashmir in the aftermath of consecutive wars.

The primary findings of this project are valuable and raise further questions for research and discovery about challenged decolonization, compromised identities, and the emergence of conflict zones. One of the most useful deductions from this project is the effect of a nation or region in the periphery of a Postcolonial Informal Empire: both Kashmir and Ukraine find themselves under the influence of successor states to large empires and centers of control. New Delhi retains powerful control and influence over a large part of South Asia and the former British Raj, while Moscow wields power over much of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Eastern Europe. These nations are instrumental in the future of Kashmir and Ukraine, whether they like it or not.

The significance of this comparison is how we will handle not only these conflicts, but also others that find themselves under influence or control of an informal empire. It is worth

¹⁰⁸ "Ukraine ceasefire: New Minsk agreement key points," BBC News, last modified February 12, 2015, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31436513>.

noting that the other nations of the former Soviet Union have also felt similar effects of informal empire, most notably Georgia, which endured a direct invasion from Russia. Other nations in South Asia are heavily influenced by India, including Sri Lanka and Nepal. It is important to tread carefully when approaching bubbling conflicts because the neighborhood may not take well to an unstable nation in the backyard of a powerful imperial state.

The next insight from this research was outlining the importance of historicizing and contextualizing both Kashmir and Ukraine, as it is impossible to consider certain occurrences as having nothing to do with the past or the context in which these events occur. The conflict in these regions, although comparable, must be appreciated as intimately connected to their own realities and the histories leading up to such events. Kashmir, for example, was promised a plebiscite but did not receive one because of the wars between India and Pakistan, followed by a strong insurgency gave India the authority to circumvent all of these promises and even pass special laws that curtailed human rights in the region.

Eastern Ukraine's referendums, although illegal by both Ukrainian and international standards, occurred in a country that did not have the power to prevent them. While Kashmir is controlled by a state that has the capacity and the strength to impose laws while Eastern Ukraine is in a nation that simply does not have those capabilities. It is dangerous to compare apples and oranges, but it is helpful to consider both as fruits for comparison.

Looking wider, considering Ukraine as a periphery to Russia brings the comparison closer to Kashmir's relationship with India. Russia has the ability to violate international borders and annex entire provinces because of its position as the successor state to the Soviet Union. Similarly, India's position allows it to define Kashmir's stability and institute martial law in the name of security. There is a history leading up to these events that cannot be forgotten: Kashmir

was once a princely state, while Ukraine did not achieve a fully independent nation-state status until the fall of the Soviet Union; in inter-war periods a revolutionary independent Ukraine emerged only to be cut off within a few months. These events inform the way identities are created and framed in a given place, from Kashmir's *Kashmiriyat* to a new Ukrainian identity.

In the same vein, this project identified key areas of Kashmiri and Ukrainian identity politics that have been compromised and situated those events in a broader context. For Kashmir, the story is well known: Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists share the land. The Partition and creation of new Hindu and Muslim homelands put Kashmir in a position with only two options, both of which would end in conflict. Ukrainian identity is compromised in levels as a response to its historical ties to Russia and Central Europe: religion, language, and regional differences each has an impact on the discourse of national identity. On one hand, the West-East divide is well known and reported on in the rest of the world. On the other, the politics of internal borders, language policies, and religions are little understood and go unexamined in the broader literature. The problem of Ukraine's internal borders resembles those of Kashmir's demarcations between Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. Eastern Ukraine's demography is vastly different than the Western core of Galicia and even Central Ukraine's *dyke pole*¹⁰⁹. The line between these regions is as blurred as the borders of Kashmir and these regions become difficult to count as "belonging" to one group or the other.

Ukraine's language policies, however, are unique in that the language of a person is highly tied to a history of sociopolitical disenfranchisement and self-identification. The status of Ukrainian as an official language, as a sole official language is deliberate and significant, compared to the fluid linguistic borders in Kashmir. The very idea that Russian would not be

¹⁰⁹ *Dyke Pole* refers to Ukraine's heartland, stretching across much of today's portions of central, southern, and eastern Ukraine.

given special status wreaked havoc in many parts of Ukraine, where the language is spoken by most of the population, and even prompted Russia to threaten on the behalf of Russian-speakers in the country. Meanwhile, Ukrainian has always enjoyed a certain prestige in western portions of the country.

Religion in Ukraine is also valuable when compared to Kashmir's conflict along ethnic and religious lines. Ukraine's religious politics are highly fragmented, especially in their relations with the Moscow Patriarchate of the Eastern Orthodox Church, but these differences are shadowed by the overall identification of these groups as Eastern Orthodox. Moscow only recognizes one Ukrainian Orthodox Church, while other splinter groups that have a high number of followers are branded heretics; Western Ukraine also has a high proportion of Greek Catholics, a completely different vein of Christianity, causes tension in the region. The Crimean Tatars in the south of the country are Muslim, while there is still a percentage of Ukrainians who identify as Jews, Georgian Orthodox, and Armenians. This religious diversity complicates the story in Ukraine, but not to the extent of all out violence. Both Ukrainians and Russians, for example, use Anti-Semitism, as a rhetorical device in order to frame the other in a negative light to the West.

Future scholarship on the subject of challenged decolonization and compromised identities should focus on the connection between the two as they pertain to other fields, especially economic. The political economic realities of both Kashmir and Ukraine have much to do with the way the conflicts are handled by the involved parties: Kashmir's water sources and Ukraine's coal and gas pipelines are among the drivers for conflict and the unwillingness of many of the involved parties to seek a solution through compromise. One cannot ignore the intricacies of economy and how identity and the creation of institutions through decolonization

interact with the rise of conflicts. There is also the issue of the successor state: informal empires are not simply created because of a large land area; they are created because of deep economic roots stemming from former empires. Further research must also be considered in the public opinions of these regions: would Kashmir become independent and would Eastern Ukraine fully succeed? If Kashmir stays in India while Eastern Ukraine votes for sovereignty, how would that change the way we view these conflicts?

If we accept that Kashmir and Ukraine are comparable enough to draw meaningful connections and make informed predictions, the future of Eastern Ukraine and Ukraine as a whole do not look bright. The aftermath of Partition in South Asia sparked successive war between two fledgling nations, many of which were directly over the status of Kashmir. Although the succession and annexation of the Crimean peninsula did not prompt a war between Ukraine and Russia, the successful succession of Donetsk and Lugansk from Ukraine and annexation by Russia would lead to greater conflict. Now that the West is involved in the Ukrainian crisis, the likelihood of conflict could rise, as tensions remain high between Western NATO-aligned nations and Russia. Kashmir's problems stem from decolonization that has caused identity politics to crest into conflict, a similar story is forming in Ukraine. It is important to monitor the developments in Ukraine, as if they follow the Kashmiri narrative, the country is in for decades of instability and conflict. Kashmir's issues and violence have been center stage for decades, while the true extent of Ukraine's is only now unfolding. The international community has a chance to correct some of their mistakes in handling these kinds of conflicts in a meaningful way. For now, Ukraine may very well become the next Kashmir if lessons remain unlearned and the next steps in solving the Ukrainian crisis do not take into account the devastating effects of challenged decolonization and compromised identity politics.

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