Question of Kashmir

Background:

The dispute over the region of Kashmir, between India, Pakistan, and China, has destabilised the political environment of the Indian Subcontinent for six decades. There has been almost no progress resolving the problem. All parties (India, Pakistan & China) are nuclear powers, which brings a heightened sense of crisis at any time the threat of war flares between the two countries. The main parties in this debate are India and Pakistan, with China playing a third-party role.

India controls 55% land area of the region and 70% of its population; Pakistan controls around 35% of the area; China controls the remaining 20%.

The Indian Army has the strongest presence in the region and has been accused of horrific human rights violations, yet many soldiers have not stood trial. However, it must be said that both sides are accused of crimes.

Current situation:

Both sides (India & Pakistan) claim all of Kashmir, but neither fully occupy both sides. China is also embroiled in the fray, with their claim over, and administration of, the area Aksai Chin (claimed by India as well). Thousands of military personnel are located at the border, with many more within the territories on either side of the border.

As of now, the UN Line of Control demarcates the areas of administration: Pakistan administers the territory to the northwest of the line, India administers the territory to the southeast. As a result, this has led to the third side of the conflict: the call of the Kashmiris for an independent Kashmiri state. Their right to self-determination is clouded by many questions as to what their true 'intent' is when removed from influences from both Indian and Pakistani governments.

Recent developments and rising tensions:

There have been heightened tensions since a suicide bombing carried out on 14 February 2019 in which 40 Indian security personnel were killed. A Pakistani-based militant group, Jaish-e-Mohammad, claimed responsibility for the attack. India blamed Pakistan for the bombing and promised a "robust" response. India has regularly stated Pakistan was utilising militants to destabilise Indian-administered Kashmir, and Pakistan is known for (allegedly) harbouring international terrorist organisations. Pakistan, obviously, denies any involvement. Twelve days later, India & Pakistan carried out airstrikes against targets on each other's territory. The strikes were started by India on February 26. India said it was a "pre-emptive strike" directed against a terrorist training camp, resulting in the deaths of a "large number" of terrorists.

Indian-administered Kashmir has held a special position within the country historically, under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, giving it significant autonomy. Article 370 gave Indian-Kashmir its own constitution, a separate flag, and independence over all matters except foreign affairs, defence, and communications. On August 5, 2019, the Indian Government revoked that seven-decade-long status. Public gatherings were banned, and tens of thousands of troops were sent in. Foreign embassies told tourists to vacate the region with immediate effect. This order has had significant effect, as the government has brought in a new anti-terrorism law which now extends to Kashmir which has led to the roundup of human rights activists in the region, most recently in November 2021 with the arrest of Khurram Parvez.

Pakistan's Prime Minister, Imran Khan, vowed to challenge India's actions at the United Nations and take the matter to the International Criminal Court. A number of nations including Australia, Canada, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, the UAE, and the United States have expressed their concern with some calling for restraint. Iran and Turkey have offered to mediate the crisis.

In 2020, the UN Secretary-General called for the implementation of UNSC resolutions on Kashmir including the holding of a plebiscite among Kashmiris on whether they wanted to join India or Pakistan.

The Question of Colonisation of Outer Space

Background:

Outer space colonization is the concept of establishing permanent human settlements beyond Earth. The idea of colonizing space has been around for many years, and there are several proposed methods for achieving this goal, including building habitats on the Moon, Mars, and other celestial bodies, as well as creating self-sustaining spacecraft that can travel through the solar system. There are many challenges to overcome to colonize space, including the development of advanced technology and infrastructure, finding sources of food and water, and protecting humans from the harsh radiation and extreme conditions of space. Despite these challenges, there is growing interest in space colonization due to the potential benefits it could provide, such as access to new resources, the ability to establish backup habitats for humanity, and the expansion of scientific knowledge. Space agencies such as NASA, private companies such as SpaceX, and international organizations such as the European Space Agency are actively researching and developing technologies to make space colonization a reality. However, there is still much work to be done before humans can establish permanent settlements beyond Earth.

Information surrounding the topic and things to consider:

- The cost of a crewed mission to Mars is estimated to be in the billions of dollars, with some estimates as high as $100 billion.
- NASA's Artemis program aims to establish a sustainable human presence on the Moon by the end of the decade, with plans to build a lunar outpost and conduct crewed missions to explore the Moon's surface.
- The International Space Station (ISS) has been continuously inhabited since 2000 and has hosted astronauts from over 10 different countries.
- Mars is considered the most viable planet for human colonization, with plans for crewed missions to Mars being developed by NASA, SpaceX, and other space agencies and companies.
- In 2021, China became the second country to land a rover on Mars, following the United States, and plans to conduct a crewed mission to the Moon in the near future.
- There are several proposed methods for space colonization, including building habitats on other planets, creating self-sustaining spacecraft, and terraforming planets to make them more habitable for humans.
- The long-term effects of space colonization on human health and well-being are not yet fully understood, and there are concerns about the potential physical and psychological risks of extended space travel and habitation.

- Space colonization has the potential to provide access to new resources, such as water and minerals, and could be a solution to some of the environmental and resource challenges facing Earth.
- The ethical implications of space colonization are a subject of debate, including issues related to property rights, governance, and the preservation of celestial bodies as scientific and cultural resources.

Key Issues:

Technological challenges
Space colonization involves overcoming significant technological challenges, such as developing advanced propulsion systems, creating sustainable habitats, and finding ways to protect humans from the harsh conditions of space.

Resource management
Establishing human settlements beyond Earth will require careful management of resources, including water, food, and energy. Space colonies will need to be self-sufficient and sustainable to survive and thrive in the long term.

Health and safety
The long-term effects of space travel and habitation on human health and well-being are not yet fully understood. There are concerns about the potential physical and psychological risks of extended space travel and the effects of radiation exposure.

Governance and property rights
The legal and ethical implications of space colonization are complex and require careful consideration. There are debates about property rights and governance in space, as well as concerns about the preservation of celestial bodies as scientific and cultural resources.

Environmental impact
Space colonization has the potential to alleviate some of the environmental pressures facing Earth, such as overpopulation and resource depletion. However, there are also concerns about the potential environmental impact of human activity beyond Earth, such as contamination of other planets or moons.

Overall, space colonization is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires consideration of many different factors. While the potential benefits of space colonization are significant, there are also significant challenges and risks that must be carefully managed and mitigated in order to ensure the success of future space colonization efforts.

Previous Legislative Action:

These are some of the key milestones in the legislative history of space colonization; a complex and ongoing process which involves many international treaties, agreements, and laws.

- 1967 Outer Space Treaty: This treaty, signed by more than 100 countries, established the principles of peaceful exploration and use of outer space, and banned the use of nuclear weapons in space.

- 1972 Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects: This treaty established the liability of spacefaring nations for damage caused by their space objects.
- 1979 Moon Agreement: This treaty, signed by only a small number of countries, established the principles of the peaceful exploration and use of the Moon and other celestial bodies, and declared these bodies to be the common heritage of mankind.
- 2015 U.S. Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act: This law established the framework for commercial space activities in the United States, including provisions for private ownership of resources extracted from celestial bodies.
- 2020 Artemis Accords: These accords, signed by several spacefaring nations including the United States, Australia, Canada, and Japan, establish principles for international cooperation in space exploration and use, including transparency, peaceful purposes, and sustainable practices.

5 important questions to consider:

- *How will humans sustain themselves in space?*
  This question encompasses issues such as food, water, air, and waste management, and requires the development of new technologies and systems to support long-term human habitation in space.

- *How will space colonization impact the environment?*
  Space colonization has the potential to significantly alter the natural environment of other planets and celestial bodies, and it is important to understand and minimize the environmental impact of human activity in space.

- *What are the ethical implications of space colonization?*
  Questions related to property rights, governance, and the preservation of celestial bodies as scientific and cultural resources are all important ethical considerations in the context of space colonization.

- *How will space colonization impact society and culture?*
  The establishment of permanent human settlements beyond Earth could have significant impacts on human society and culture, and it is important to consider the social, political, and economic implications of space colonization.

- *What are the risks and challenges associated with space colonization?*
  Space exploration and colonization involve many risks, including physical and psychological risks to astronauts, technological risks associated with complex space systems, and geopolitical risks related to international cooperation and competition in space. Understanding and managing these risks is essential to the success of space colonization efforts.

Helpful links:
[Space law and treaties - UN](#)

[YouTube Video - The Geopolitics of Space Colonization](#)

[Science Direct Article](#)

[Pros and cons of space colonisation](#)

[YouTube Video - Space Politics and the New Age of Colonialism](#)

[In depth Overview of Space Colonisation](#)

The Question of Palestine

Background Information

The question of Palestine refers to the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians over the land and sovereignty of the region historically known as Palestine, which includes present-day Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip. The conflict dates back to the late 19th century when Zionist Jews began immigrating to Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire, with the aim of creating a Jewish homeland. This led to tension with the Arab population, who saw the influx of Jewish immigrants as a threat to their own land and sovereignty. After World War I, the League of Nations granted Britain a mandate to administer Palestine. In 1947, the United Nations recommended the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, but this proposal was rejected by the Arab side, and Israel declared its independence in 1948, leading to the first Arab-Israeli war. The conflict has continued with numerous rounds of violence and negotiations over the decades. The core issues of the conflict include the borders and sovereignty of Israel and a future Palestinian state, the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and the ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The international community has been involved in seeking a solution to the conflict, with various peace initiatives and agreements put forward over the years, including the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the Trump administration's "Peace to Prosperity" plan. However, a lasting resolution has remained elusive, and the conflict continues to have a significant impact on the region and beyond.

Definitions

Zionism: A political ideology that advocates for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the historic land of Israel, which was the birthplace of the Jewish people and the site of the ancient Kingdom of Israel. The movement originated in the late 19th century in response to increasing anti-Semitism in Europe and gained momentum after the horrors of the Holocaust.

The Gaza Strip: A small Palestinian territory located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It is bordered by Israel to the north, east, and south, and by Egypt to the southwest.

Key Issues

Territory and Borders

The Palestinians seek the establishment of an independent state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, which Israel has occupied since the 1967 Six-Day War. Israel disputes Palestinian claims to these territories and has built settlements there, which the international community views as illegal. The exact borders of a future Palestinian state and of Israel are a major point of contention. The 1949 Armistice Lines (also known as the Green Line) have served as the de facto border between Israel and the West Bank, but the line is disputed by both sides.

Security
Israel insists on maintaining security control over the West Bank and Gaza Strip to prevent attacks by militant groups. The Palestinians argue that this amounts to ongoing occupation and denies them sovereignty and freedom of movement.

Refugees
The displacement of Palestinians during the 1948 war and subsequent conflicts has resulted in millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants. The Palestinians demand the right of return for refugees to their former homes, which Israel opposes as it would likely mean the end of Israel as a Jewish state.

Jerusalem
Both Israelis and Palestinians claim Jerusalem as their capital city. Israel has annexed East Jerusalem and declared the city as its "eternal and undivided" capital, while the Palestinians seek to establish their capital in East Jerusalem.

Recognition
The Palestinian Authority seeks recognition as a sovereign state by the international community, which would grant them greater diplomatic and economic power. However, Israel opposes this move and has lobbied against Palestinian statehood recognition.

Religion
The conflict has significant religious dimensions, with Jerusalem being a holy city for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The control and access to religious sites, such as the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, have been a major point of contention.

Previous Responses

Oslo Accords: In 1993, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the Oslo Accords, which established a framework for peace negotiations and led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority.

Gaza withdrawal: In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew its military and civilian presence from the Gaza Strip. The move was intended to reduce tensions with the Palestinians, but it also led to increased rocket attacks by Palestinian militant groups.

Barrier construction: In the early 2000s, Israel began building a barrier (also known as a wall or fence) around the West Bank to prevent attacks by Palestinian militants. The barrier has been criticized by Palestinians and the international community for its impact on Palestinian communities and for infringing on Palestinian territory.

Settlement expansion: Israel has built settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since the 1967 Six-Day War. Settlement expansion has been a major point of contention in the conflict, as Palestinians see it as a violation of their rights and a barrier to a future Palestinian state.

Intifadas: The First Intifada (1987-1993) and the Second Intifada (2000-2005) were periods of sustained Palestinian protests and violence against Israeli occupation. The intifadas led to increased international attention on the conflict and were a factor in the peace negotiations that followed.

UN resolutions: The United Nations has passed numerous resolutions related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including calls for a two-state solution and condemnations of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Questions to Consider

1. How have previous attempts at peace negotiations, such as the Oslo Accords and the Camp David Summit, failed to achieve a lasting solution? What lessons can be learned from these attempts?
2. How do different parties view the conflict and its potential solutions, including Israelis, Palestinians, and neighbouring countries?
3. What role do non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, and individuals play in promoting peace and reconciliation in the region?
4. How has media coverage of the conflict influenced public opinion and political decision-making, both within the region and internationally?
5. How can individuals and organizations work towards a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict, and what actions can they take to support the rights and well-being of Israelis and Palestinians?

Useful Links

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | Global Conflict Tracker (cfr.org)
Israel-Palestine: Political solution only way to end 'senseless' cycles of violence | UN News
How realistic is a two-state solution? – DW – 05/17/2021