



THE ART OF DIPLOMATIC PROTEST AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN THE MODERN SOCIETY

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Abstract:

Disputes over territorial borders or disagreements over trade and alliances between sovereign states, empires and caliphates have always been resolved through acts of protesting by emissaries and envoys. Such acts were practised from ancient and mediaeval times until now to fulfil significant purposes: deterring military intertwining, deescalating tension and reducing military activities whenever discontent or disapproval between states occurs. The objective of such practice is not only to avoid war but also to express discontent or disapproval upon sovereignty issues, human rights violations, and other sensitive disputes. Through qualitative methodology, this research offers to investigate the scope of diplomatic protest, the variety of forms of diplomatic protest and, significantly, its effectiveness in suppressing tension in modern society, especially in Malaysia in the ASEAN region. The research extends its critical argument through India-Pakistan tension over the Kashmir dispute. It is hoped that the findings of this research will achieve the benefits bestowed on modern society and Malaysia specifically. The findings are highly context-dependent and vary on a fact-by-fact basis, with power dynamics intertwined and the political will between parties to resolve the issues in a constructive dialogue.



Introduction

On the 31st of May 2021, two (2) F5E Hawks from No. 6 Squadron Labuan Air Base scrambled to intercept a squadron of light transport aircraft approaching the coastline of the Sarawak Flight Information Region (FIR). Upon visual contact, the People's Liberation Army Air Force from the People's Republic of China (PRC) turned back 60 nautical miles (NM) north of East Malaysia (Low, 2021). The incident triggered the Malaysian government and was treated as "a serious matter that threatened national security and aviation safety". Having said that, the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) twittered to protest the PLAAF formation flight. Meanwhile, Hishamuddin Hussein, Foreign Minister and hitherto a defence portfolio minister for the Malaysian government, criticised Beijing, describing PRC actions as a breach of Malaysian airspace and sovereignty (Ahmad, 2021). This is not the first occasion alike whereby the Malaysian government protested through a note of objection in expressing her concerns for such an incident. In 1974, Malaysia, Singapore and neighbouring countries in the region entered into an arrangement giving the authority to Singapore to manage and provide air traffic control services. This arrangement further empowered Singapore to manage airspace over Southern Johor territory up until today (Stewart, 2021).

As the result of numerous airspace intrusions under the pretext of "air traffic control" services, the Malaysian government questioned Singapore's "bone of contention" in honouring the 1974 agreement. Since then, endless notes of objection were sent and answered between these two (2) respective countries (Ismail, 2020). Malaysia's national airspace sovereignty was then tested again in 2018 when the Singapore Civil Aviation Authority (CAAS) introduced a new Instrument Landing System procedure for Seletar Airport (Amir Yusof, 2018). According to the note of objection sent to Singapore, the location of Seletar Airport and the ILS operation may have prejudiced the rapid development of Pasir Gudang's area since the ILS operation includes radar usage which is obstructed in that particular area. Taking into consideration the severity of the situations, this article's prime objective is to examine how far the note of objection's effectiveness as a political tool in international relations allows countries to express their concerns internationally without escalating the situation to even more severe actions in a layman's context.

Problem Statement

While diplomatic protest is widely recognised for its ability to de-escalate tensions and create space for negotiation, its effectiveness varies significantly. In short-term disputes, it can serve as a practical conflict management tool. However, in entrenched conflicts such as the India–Pakistan dispute over Kashmir, diplomatic protest alone has often proven insufficient, sometimes being perceived as symbolic, weak, or lacking enforcement potential. This highlights a critical gap in understanding the conditions under which diplomatic protest can achieve meaningful outcomes and when it requires supplementary measures.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to three main domains. Academically, it offers a longitudinal analysis of diplomatic protest, tracing its historical evolution while linking it to contemporary case studies and international relations theory. This enriches scholarly understanding and identifies limitations that invite further research. In the field of diplomatic practice, the study provides actionable insights for policymakers and negotiators, outlining conditions for effectiveness and strategies to enhance credibility. Nationally, it reaffirms diplomatic protest as a cost-effective and legitimate means of safeguarding sovereignty, particularly for small and middle powers, and underscores the value of leveraging multilateral platforms to amplify state positions in disputes.

Objectives of the Research

The objective of this study is to analyse the effectiveness of diplomatic protest in managing short-term and long-term disputes with consideration of a case study of the Indian and Pakistani disputes over Kashmir. Secondly, it is of the utmost importance to identify the limitations of diplomatic protest in entrenched conflicts and to propose best practices for enhancing diplomatic protest as a strategic tool.

Scope of the Study

This research focuses on the role of diplomatic protest as a conflict management tool, covering three historical periods: ancient and mediaeval roots, the Westphalian system, and the 19th century to the present. Geographically, examples are drawn globally, with emphasis on Asia. Case studies include the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir, the Treaty of Kadesh, the Fashoda Incident, the First Anglo-Dutch War, and South China Sea disputes. Analytically, the study applies perspectives from realism, diplomacy studies, and conflict resolution.

Limitations

The study is limited to formal, documented diplomatic protests and excludes unofficial or covert diplomatic channels. While it draws on diverse case studies, the focus is on the protest mechanism itself rather than the entire spectrum of diplomatic engagement.

Method of the Study

This research uses a qualitative approach to examine the historical development, effectiveness, and limitations of diplomatic protest. The study draws on a combination of primary sources, such as treaties, diplomatic notes, and archival records, as well as secondary sources, including scholarly works, books, and policy reports. Selected case studies such as the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir, the Treaty of Kadesh, the Fashoda Incident, and the South China Sea disputes are used to illustrate different applications and outcomes of diplomatic protest. The analysis, on the other hand, is conducted thematically, identifying recurring patterns such as historical context, perceived credibility, and impact on dispute resolution. A comparative lens is applied to assess similarities and differences across the cases, helping to determine the factors that contribute to success or failure. This method provides a well-rounded understanding of diplomatic protest as a strategic tool in both historical and contemporary settings.

Historical Background

For centuries, diplomatic protest has been used as an effective political tool of international relations, especially to suppress tensions. The development of diplomatic protest evolved alongside international diplomacy until it reached the modern state system. History saw

diplomatic protest as a formal communication between at least one (1) state to another, whilst the objectives also evolved from expressing objections to policies, statements and other beneficial concerns (Koji Kagotami & Wen Chih Wu, 2022). In addition to it, it provides channels to the states in expressing disapproval, which is presented in a structurally civilised method in order to deter sanctions, military intertwining or diplomatic cut ties (Julia et al., 2017). Following these facts, the development of diplomatic protest, hence, can be explained through three (3) main eras: the ancient and mediaeval roots, the Westphalian System and the pre-19th century up to now.

Ancient and Medieval Roots

States, kingdoms and empires saw the art of expressing discontent or disapproval through emissaries and envoys delivering messages to their rivals. Although the methods of expressing discontent were less structured or civilised, the objectives of sending messages through emissaries and envoys remain the same: to deter military interventions or any other severe actions. The disputes were simpler, ranging from border disputes to trade disagreements. Ancient Egypt and the Hittites in the 13th century saw the earliest methods whereby the rulers used basic foundations of diplomatic protest to express disapproval and avoid further conflicts in the Battle of Kadesh (Spalinger, 2003). This war, which was led by Rameses II and King Munatalli II, though neither side claimed victory, was recorded as the most significant historical development regarding diplomatic protest. The war resorted to peace through a series of negotiations and diplomacy. The exchange of correspondences, raised complaints and behaviour in war transpired in detail and ultimately led to the “Treaty of Kardesh” (Bell & Christine, 2009). In addition, the rivalry between them managed to resolve differences and more complex issues, including violations of territorial sovereignty, trade disagreements and breaches of international agreements (Constantinou et al., 2023).

In mediaeval Europe, the Church plays an important part in being a mediator issuing diplomatic protests between Christian monarchs. The Popes frequently issued diplomatic notes to those who violated papal authority, invaded neighbouring countries or practised unjust means of warfare (Grzymala-Busse, 2024). Pope Gregory VII, for example, had sent a diplomatic protest to King Henry IV when the latter tried to appoint bishops of his choice. In this case, a new tool, which is excommunicando, was introduced, manifesting the blend of religious influence and diplomatic tools in mediaeval Europe’s international relations (Blumenthal, 2016). The ancient and mediaeval roots saw the significant development of forms of diplomatic protest practised by states, rulers, and emperors to convey grievances and manifestations to prevent war and resolve differences through alternative dispute resolutions ranging from countless correspondence to papal protest (Teresa Zavadilova, 2022). Even though the effort to prevent war failed, it shows that the diplomatic protest with a variety of tools served as a strategic means to maintain international relations between rivalries.

Westphalian System

The Peace of Westphalia was cited as the beginning of the modern state system. When states recognised each other’s sovereignty as the result of the introduction of the principle of sovereignty, non-intervention and equality of state proposed by the treaty, diplomatic protest practices became important and increasingly significant international tools to manage and prevent tension (Croxtton, 1999). When rivalries between Catholics and Protestants, which started by German principalities for owning one religious group over another, other states stood up, believing that the accord had been breached (Croxtton, 2013). Diplomatic protest was

widely used not only when religious issues were of concern but also for issues related to trade and navigation rights as well (Britannica Encyclopaedia, 2024). The First Anglo War, for example, saw England issue this ‘art’ protesting the Dutch due to their refusal to accept the English Navigation Acts. A series of protests were channelled in a formal manner before resorting to war (Keen, 1991).

19th Century and Current Development

Mark and Freeman (2024) opined that this era shows how diplomatic protest changes to formalised through diplomatic roles or communiqués due to violations of international treaties and norms whilst international law began to take shape as a strong structure. Herrman (1989) had proven earlier by setting The Fashoda Incident as an example whereby France and Britain exchanged diplomatic notes concerning imperial overreach issues and rights to territory. After a series of protests, counter-protests and negotiations, France withdrew their forces peacefully, leaving peace behind the incident. In the current development, since the Treaty of Westphalia introduction, diplomatic protest evolution shows a great impact, especially in managing the balance of superpowers and the rapid changing of the global and geopolitical landscape (Baldwin, 1985). The development of diplomatic protest through formal channels was not only limited to between two (2) nations but also involved collective voice in bilateral and multilateral forums such as ASEAN and the United Nations (UN) (Armstrong, Farrel & Lambert, 2007). Issues over territorial disputes in the South China Sea between China and ASEAN countries show how diplomatic protest remains a significant tool in conjunction with negotiations, sanctions and resolutions made by international bodies (Storey, 2011). In a nutshell, Table 1 simplified that from the ancient and mediaeval roots, the Westphalian era, and the 19th century and up until now, diplomatic protest continues its significance as a fundamental mechanism in international relations to manage conflicts, express disapproval and seek resolution peacefully rather than waiting for military intervention.

Table 1: The Development of Diplomatic Protest as a Significant Fundamental Mechanism in International Relations Through Four (4) Different Eras

Era	Key Features of Diplomatic Protest	Notable Examples	Sources
Ancient & Medieval Roots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early use of emissaries/envoys to deliver disapproval messages. - Objective: deter war or severe actions. - Issues: border disputes, trade disagreements. - Methods less structured, but aimed at peaceful resolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Battle of Kadesh (13th century BCE): Egypt (Rameses II) vs. Hittites (King Muwatalli II) → led to Treaty of Kadesh. - Medieval Europe: Popes mediating disputes (e.g., Pope Gregory VII protesting King Henry IV’s bishop appointments; introduction of <i>excommunicando</i>). 	Spalinger (2003); Bell & Christine (2009); Constantinou et al. (2023); Grzymala-Busse (2024); Blumenthal (2016); Zavadilova (2022)
Westphalian System (1648 onwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergence of modern state system with sovereignty, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religious tensions between Catholics & Protestants post-Westphalia. 	Croxton (1999, 2013); Britannica Encyclopaedia (2024); Keen (1991)

	non-intervention, equality. - Diplomatic protest recognized as vital in managing tensions. - Used for religion, trade, and navigation disputes.	- First Anglo-Dutch War: England protested Dutch refusal to accept Navigation Acts before going to war.	
19th Century	- Formalization of diplomatic protest via official communiqués and diplomatic roles. - Linked to violations of treaties, norms, and imperial overreach. - Rise of international law structures.	- Fashoda Incident (1898): Britain & France exchanged protests over territorial claims; resolved peacefully after negotiations.	Herrman (1989); Mark & Freeman (2024)
Current Developments	- Expanded to bilateral and multilateral channels (e.g., UN, ASEAN). - Used in collective disputes, not just between two states. - Balances great power competition. - Linked with sanctions, negotiations, and international resolutions.	- South China Sea Disputes: ASEAN states protest China's territorial claims alongside negotiations and UN involvement.	Baldwin (1985); Armstrong, Farrell & Lambert (2007); Storey (2011)

Source: Illustrated by the author

Objectives of Diplomatic Protest

Diplomatic protest is best served as a formal expression of disapproval towards certain acts committed by one state to another. The act may be a violation of international laws or norms, agreements, or the protesting state's rights. There are several objectives of diplomatic protest, and it can be laid down as follows:

To Express Discontent or Disapproval

Normally diplomatic protests were sent formally to express disapproval where the method is non-violent in nature. Its work is to signal dissatisfaction, manifest the effort to change the state's behaviour, and possibly start negotiation between the state's rivalries (Rochester, 2011). Bull in 1997 opined that a state must express discontent through diplomatic protest in order to defend any interest, stand in a position, and safeguard sovereignty without involving military power. Lauren and Craig conquered this view when the sovereignty of a state, including territorial integrity, is breached or compromised. They further insist that the diplomatic protest should be sent promptly to convey that the behaviour is unacceptable and must stop to prevent

escalations. In the territorial race of the South China Sea, Hishamuddin Hussein (Foreign Minister of Malaysia) described China's action as a breach of Malaysia's airspace and sovereignty when 16 PLAAF aircraft were roaming. Kota Kinabalu Flight Information Region in combat mode (Taipei Times, 2011). In short, Malaysia expressed discontent with addressing the behaviour toward China's attitude and, at the same time, safeguarding state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Upholding International Law and Agreement

When a state violates international law, treaties, or agreements, the protesting state should disapprove through diplomatic protest. It acts as a reminder that all states are subject to international law and should respect the responsibilities bound by it. Any non-compliance with the international law shall face the consequences. Diplomatic protest is best served as a reinforcement of integrity and to preserve the legal system rationale (Aust, 2010). The territorial water rally in the South China Sea saw China claim the Nine-Dash Line area, which encompasses territorial water claims by several Southeast Asian nations as well. In 2016, when the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled that China had no legal basis under UNCLOS, China rejected the ruling (PCA, 2016). However, the United States issued a formal diplomatic protest in 2020 and disapproved of China's behaviour by rejecting China's maritime claim, which is in violation of UNCLOS and the ruling made by the PCA.

Clarifying Positions and Demands

In cases where demands for changes of behaviour failed, the state turned to diplomatic protest to clarify political or official stands. Through this protest, future actions may be indicated if the offending state refuses to meet the expectation of the international community (Farer, 2017). Due to the differences of norms, laws and customs between states, tension or conflict may arise because of miscommunication, misunderstanding or breakdown in relation. As such, diplomatic protest is often used to clarify positions and demands through explaining issues that arise from moral ground and legal requirements. The protest furthers the intention of the protesting state as to their expectation and future plan. Nevertheless, the protesting state is legally advised to outline the nature of disapproval with legal and political reasoning so that it may align with recognised international acceptance (Shaw, 2008). In the Falklands War, the United Kingdom (UK) issued a diplomatic protest to Argentina clarifying that the islands belong to the British historically and legally soon after the Argentinian forces invaded them. The UK demanded that the Argentinian forces withdraw from the island, and failure to do so means military action is inevitable. The demand failed as the Argentinian forces rejected the proposal. The Falklands War shows that the UK diplomatic protest was very clear in the political position where the demand was aligned with the recognition of the international community (Young & Kent, 2012).

Preserving Regional or Global Stability

Certain acts, either violent or non-violent, may disrupt peace, security, or balance of power. As such, diplomatic protests often turn into expressions of discontent which disrupt either peace or security within a region or in a global context (Aisish Kumar Sen, 2021). Usually the protests were issued to convey that the behaviour of the offending state is a threat not only to the protesting state but also to the region or globally (International Crisis Group, 2024). Economic acts may also disrupt regional and global stability. It includes the action of blockade, economic sanction and restriction on trade routes (Davies & Engerman, 2006). In 2020, an incident on the "Line of Actual Control" within the Gulman Valley between China and India claimed

hundreds of casualties. India issued a diplomatic protest claiming China had breached the border agreement when they conducted military activities near the vicinity. The Indian emphasised that China's behaviour not only heightened tension between states but also disrupted the stability within the Asian region. Furthering the behaviour will only prejudice the peace and stability in the disputed region (Lt Gen Prakash, rtd, 2024).

Signalling Domestic and International Audiences

It is of the utmost importance that the information conveyed in the diplomatic protest is appreciated not only between disputing states but also by the international audiences (Chister Jonsson & Martin Hall, 2003). The objection of diplomatic protest thus functions to signal citizens, political groups, and internal and international actors that the government is actively protesting the national interest that aligns with the international recognitions (Becker Steven, 2022). On the other hand, diplomatic protest may project or portray the offending state's credibility in handling the situation, and the public opinion weighs upon it. When the 2001 terrorist attack occurred in India, Pakistan was blamed by India through the diplomatic protest. The protest signalled India's political stand toward terrorism and gained support internally and internationally. At the same time, the protest also signalled that the Pakistan government's credibility in responding to the terrorism issue is disputable (George Pekovich & Toby Dalton, 2016).

Seeking Redress or Correction

Amongst the most important objectives of issuing a diplomatic protest is to receive a prompt corrective action or remedy, such as reparations, cessation of activities, and reversal of decision. The protest works as a pressure on the offending state to change the behaviour or address the violations. In cases of reparations, the corrective actions may involve financial compensation, an official apology, and fair treatment when material or physical damages are concerned (Shelton, 2006). In 2019, the Philippines demanded immediate withdrawal of Chinese vessels from their waters and further demanded that China avoid the Philippines' waters with consideration for respecting the UNCLOS in the future. Although China refuses to comply with the demand, the democratic bloc and the rest of the ASEAN countries support the Philippines' redress and objections.

Documenting and Records of Objections

Documenting and recording the objections or protests to actions or policies of the offending states is a strategically brilliant move. Each and every lodge of complaint is officially a formal record of disapproval. A series of disapprovals offers a strategic value to the protesting country in setting up precedent and potentially building a solid case against the offending state. The reason lies in the protesting state's intent to uphold legal and moral stances on issues relating to sovereignty, territorial dominance, and human rights (Bhupinder Singh, 2024). Historical elements with legal backgrounds on them can be leaned upon in the international court either to oppose or propose redress or corrections (Rapp, 2020).

Maintaining Diplomatic Dialogue

Shuxian Luo (2022) emphasised that the long process of protesting gives strategic value rather than severing relations or taking unilateral actions. It conveys the intention of a state to end a dispute through a series of dialogues without mentioning military interventions. The process includes the raising of disapproval in a two-way communication which offers an exchange of views, requesting clarifications and remedying charges within the international norms and

values (Vukovic, 2020). Diplomatic protest between Türkiye and the US on issues relating to Kurdish forces offers formidable agreement when the attacks upon Kurds could destabilise the region. The US protested that Türkiye's involvement would prejudice international efforts in combatting ISIS.

Mobilizing International Support

Diplomatic protest in certain ways with the right tools may have a significant impact for those who seek to rally support and build coalitions. Usually this strategy is often used by states with less military power, for instance, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei and others. It is proven to be cost-effective, has a low risk of escalation and has the highest possibility of avoiding tension (Michelle Maiese & Heidi Burgess, 2020). Hence, the strategy used by Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and the Philippines in the territorial race of the South China Sea is considered a brilliant move in mobilising international support led by the US since it was also recognised by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016.

Form of Diplomatic Protest

For the purpose of this article, the variety of forms of diplomatic protest, ranging from Note Verbale, Note to Summon Ambassador, Public Statement and Press Release, Recall of Ambassador or Downgrading Diplomatic Relation and Economic Sanction, will be discussed summarily based on the seriousness of the subject matter and significant agreement for the 21st-century issues.

Note Verbale (Official Diplomatic Notes)

It is a formal written communication which is delivered through embassies and varies in political tone from strong to strongly worded. It ranges from words of congratulation to a tone of rejection, depending on the severity of the issue. As a tool of international relations, a note verbale is issued either in personam between states or as a collective effort of two (2) or more states in a joint note. The note usually issued is in a non-escalatory mode yet significant because it can be used as a reference in the future and indicates an open invitation to a dialogue over confrontation.

Summoning Ambassador

This is a direct, face-to-face type of protest intended to convey a message of urgency with a more personal gesture or touch upon displeasure. Although it is rarely executed, it shows the significance of the protest and manifests a high amount of guilt (Sebastian Stragio, 2023). Summoning an ambassador offers direct and immediate communication. It also offers the opportunity to the offending state to defend and present the rationality of the actions taken. At this stage, the response could clarify misunderstandings between states as well. In the demise case of Mahsa Amini, the EU countries summoned the Iranian Ambassador over Iran's treatment of protestors' policies. Though the records disapproved of Iranian actions, through a direct line of communication, Iran still had the opportunity to rationalise their policies to the EU (Diana Eltahawy, 2021).

Public Statements and Press Releases

The most appropriate form of protest because it is cost-effective, less formal but highly important, especially to draw international attention. It uses the power of media to highlight discontent or disapproval of matters relating to human rights abuses, international law violations or sovereignty issues (Matush, 2023). By going public, a rally of international

opinion can be issued briefly with very minimal political impacts. Public statements and press releases were used by the US and their allies to condemn the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022. The strategic rally seemed cost-effective and had a high impact by adding pressure to Russia to stop the invasion (The White House, 2022).

Recall of Ambassadors or Downgrading Diplomatic

It is a reverse execution to summoning an ambassador. It is a serious form of protest with the high levels signalling disapproval whereby it manifests further diplomatic actions if the issue discussed remains status quo. Apart from other tools, recall of an ambassador is more popular, as it is a simple, strong and more significant gesture. Although the action is more serious, the intention for further communication is still open. Recalling an ambassador works as an escalatory tool and is still flexible in nature, especially when there is a possible resolution. This means recalling the ambassador may be cancelled, or the ambassador himself may be reinstated to his original position if the issue is resolved (Cook, 2018).

Trade or Economic Sanction as Protest Measure

Trade or economic sanctions are also used as a diplomatic protest with specific targeted trade or economics to manifest disapproval. It is unpopular yet intended to make the offending state feel that every action taken had a negative impact (Pape, 1997). Trade or economic sanction is still practised in cases relating to human rights violations, illegal annexations or cyberattacks which demand the offending state respond promptly. Considered a middle ground between a mere protest and military intervention, it allows serious non-violent actions to put pressure on the offending state (Kroenig & Lantis, 2018).

Formal Complaints to the International Organisations

Lodging a complaint formally to the international organisation processes is pretty much the same as lodging a complaint in criminal or civil cases. The objective remains the same, but the complaint is opted to organisations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Such complaints are usually lodged as a collective effort concerning the same facts, including cases relating to violations of multilateral pacts, trade regulations and environmental treaties (Merrill, 2011). The process to use such a tool must begin with the gathering and compilation of all facts and evidence in building a strong case. This evidence and these facts will be adduced before the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), which will be assessed by a mediator. In cases where the issue remains status quo, the cases will be referred to the ICJ. Any decision made will be legitimised with causal effect according to the principle of precedent, meaning the decision is also binding in the latter case (Barton, 2018). Again, the Philippines' protest against China over the South China Sea rally gained recognition from the tribunal through the recording of demand and claims. The ICJ also maintains the decision deterring China from encroaching on the Philippines' water.

The Effectiveness of Diplomatic Protest in Suppressing Tension- The case study of India-Pakistan over Kashmir (2019)

Diplomatic protest's effectiveness as an international relations tool in suppressing tension depends on its functions. It is important for a state to choose the best tools to achieve the objectives. Each tool had significant functions if used in the right way. Even though each tool works differently, they nevertheless serve the same purpose: to express grievances without military intervention, providing strong stances on contentious issues and articulating space for

de-escalation. Hence, this article tends to analyse diplomatic protest effectiveness through a case study of India–Pakistan tension over the Kashmir (2019) pretext.

Tension between India and Pakistan over Kashmir had happened since 1947, after their separations. In 2019, the tension once again spiked when India revoked the status of Jammu and Kashmir. Long story short, India violated UN Security Council Resolution for illegal annexation (Ganguly, 2020). In this case, Pakistan used a specific tool by lodging a formal complaint to the international organisation, including the UN. The gist of the complaints contained the disapproval and opposition to India's decision to revoke Kashmir's status. The objective of Pakistan's formal complaint is to document Pakistan's opposition towards India's illegal act, which violated international law and a decision made by the UN council. India, on the other hand, disputed Pakistan's interference in its internal affairs (Wirsing, 2020). Schofield (2021) opined that when Pakistan lodged a formal complaint upon Kashmir's revocation status, it had given advantages to Pakistan. The process of documenting objections involved recording evidence for future planning, yet the rooms or channels for communication are still open. Pakistan foresees that open communication is vital to prevent escalation of tension that might end with war between two (2) nuclear-armed neighbours.

Zarstman and Toural in 2007 foresaw the effectiveness of a formal complaint to the international organisation. They saw the complaints as a continued effort in facilitating further negotiations. A series of protests with recorded legitimate evidence through formal complaints can give advantages to build up a foundation for future discussion or mediation. Further discussion or mediation will open the opportunity for a middleman to arbitrate the issues. Zarstman and Toural were right when Pakistan ended up calling for international mediation through UN good offices and other available forums. Pakistan's acts portray their willingness in seeking resolution without further escalation (Hussain, 2020). Diplomatic protest effectiveness through formal complaint to the international organisation can be assessed if it can mobilise international support in order to build a coalition. Luttwak (2001) explained that a documented formal complaint gives the protesting state the opportunity to present the facts and conduct a rally for international support, especially to influence the international community to put collective pressure on the offending state.

Collective pressures may include proposing an economic sanction or political isolation. Malone (2004) conquered by highlighting how international support can legitimise a country's claim and uphold their stances. He furthers that with the involvement of international actors, negotiation may be facilitated, open for discussion and provide a harmonious environment for solving issues at hand. Pakistan managed to rally and gained support, particularly from the UN and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). On top of that, they managed to rally support from close allies like China and Turkey as well.

The advantage of having “backup” support from the UN, OIC and allies helps pretty much to legitimise Pakistan's claim and reverse India's decision. Soon after, many countries were then supporting Pakistan by expressing their concerns over Kashmir's dispute. In a nutshell, Pakistan used a formal complaint to seek leverage from international organisations and the world at large. The most critical feature in India-Pakistan tension over Kashmir is that both nations have maintained diplomatic channels despite intense disagreement. The way Pakistan handles the situation enables international organisation support, actors, and allies to increase

domestic and international pressure on India and at the same time leave room for open discussion.

Findings

The world perspectives toward the effectiveness of diplomatic protest cannot be negated in suppressing tension. It is a significant mechanism in creating space for mediation and offering further notable action in the future by disputing states. However, until recently, India-Pakistan tension over Kashmir remained unsolved. Diplomatic protest may be an effective tool for suppressing tension for short-term disputes, offering short-term resolution. Zarstman in 2008 further explained that long-term disputes such as the India-Pakistan case will still remain unsolved because the protest alone and its feature were not designed to prevent certain perceptions of the offending state, which perceives that the protest itself is unnecessary, insignificant and a low priority. Ganguly and Bajpai (2005) view India's perception of Pakistan's protest as weak, empty and a mere formality. India's assessment of the protest shows Pakistan has limited options to enforce their demands and create a power imbalance between both countries (Cohen, 2013). In short, the effectiveness of diplomatic protest in suppressing tension in the short and long term can be simplified as in Table 2.

Table 2: The Effectiveness of Diplomatic Protest in Suppressing Tension in a Short and Long Term Based on the Case Study of India –Pakistan Dispute Over Kashmir

Aspect	Details	Sources
General View on Diplomatic Protest	Seen as a significant mechanism to suppress tension, create space for mediation, and allow for future actions by disputing states.	General statement
Short-Term Effectiveness	Works effectively in short-term disputes, providing temporary resolution.	Zarstman (2008)
Long-Term Limitations	For long-standing disputes (e.g., India–Pakistan over Kashmir), diplomatic protest alone cannot resolve the issue because it does not address entrenched perceptions.	Zarstman (2008)
Perception of Offending State	Offending state (India) may view protests as unnecessary, insignificant, and low priority.	Zarstman (2008)
India's View on Pakistan's Protests	Perceived as weak, empty, and mere formalities.	Ganguly & Bajpai (2005)
Impact on Power Dynamics	India interprets protests as evidence of Pakistan's limited enforcement options, reinforcing a power imbalance.	Cohen (2013)

Sources: Illustrated by the author

Conclusion

The most appreciated fact about diplomatic protest is that it allows a country to express concerns without escalating or turning to acts of war. As discussed earlier, the effectiveness of diplomatic protest depends on specific circumstances. In other words, the effectiveness of protest warrants power dynamics, willingness to engage in a constructive dialogue and the ability to choose the right tools in expressing disagreement. In the India–Pakistan case, the facts clearly show that even though it is proven that diplomatic protest efficiency is undisputable, it only applies to a short-term resolution. However, the case study offers both

countries to engage in a controlled environment while keeping a high possibility of peace within the region.

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