

## The Dynamics of Violence along the Kashmir Divide, 2003-2015

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Violence across the Kashmir divide is growing. The ceasefire agreement reached between India and Pakistan along the Line of Control (LoC) dividing the old princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in November 2003 is now unrecognizable. This ceasefire agreement, reached between Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, was respected until 2008. From 2008 through 2012, there were occasional spikes in firing across the LoC. This situation changed in late 2012 – around the time that India began to build additional bunkers along the LoC. Firing across the LoC increased further in January 2013, with reports that two Indian soldiers were killed, their bodies mutilated, and one beheaded.<sup>2</sup> While the situation along the LoC calmed somewhat in the following months, violence again surged from late summer through November 2013 when firing became a common occurrence. Ceasefire violations have continued since Narendra Modi's May 2014 inauguration and his government's stated intent to respond forcefully to ceasefire violations by Pakistan along the LoC.

This research was undertaken to examine two questions: first, what is the trend line with respect to violence along the LoC since the 2003 ceasefire? Second, does a pattern exist between ceasefire violations and diplomatic progress – in this paper marked by high-profile bilateral meetings between Indian and Pakistani officials?

To preview my findings, first, I find significant evidence – both from my research and government reports – that the Kashmir divide has become far more volatile since late 2012, and that this volatility has remained high since the May 2014 inauguration of Prime Minister Modi.<sup>3</sup> Modi's deterrent threat – to respond manifold to Pakistani ceasefire violations – has not diminished violence across the LoC. Though other analysts have put forth this general observation, my research offers precise data which provide detail to upticks in volatility.

Second, I find the spoiler hypothesis wanting. The “spoiler” theory hypothesizes that ceasefire violations, rather than occurring at random or in a tit-for-tat fashion, are planned provocations by sub-state or non-state actors to signal displeasure that a meeting has been scheduled, or to slow forward momentum on trade and more normal bilateral relations. However, my regression analysis does not support the hypothesis of a link between high-level meetings and

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<sup>2</sup> Sandeep Dikshit, “India Shoots down Pak talk of UN probe,” *The Hindu*, January 16, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-shoots-down-pak-talk-of-un-probe/article4294414.ece?ref=relatedNews>

<sup>3</sup> Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Defence, “Violation of Ceasefire on the LOC,” March 17, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=117195>

ceasefire violations. Since late 2012, ceasefire violations have occurred whether there have been diplomatic initiatives or not.

## **Background and Approach**

The 435 mile stretch along the Kashmir divide has been termed the LoC since the 1972 Simla Agreement. What India terms the International Border, and what Pakistan terms the Working Boundary, runs southward from the LoC. This essay focuses on violence across the LoC.<sup>4</sup>

Violence along the LoC does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it reflects the general state of relations between India and Pakistan. Increased violence along the LoC is noteworthy for several reasons. It could portend triggering events leading to a severe crisis, as was the case prior to and during the 2001–2002 “Twin Peaks” crisis. That crisis, sparked by the December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament by the Pakistan-based extremist groups Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad, saw more than 2,600 incidents of firing along the LoC.<sup>5</sup> Increased firing along the LoC also makes improved bilateral ties and crisis resolution harder. Nuclear dangers are reduced when the LoC is quiet; they are more worrisome when Indian and Pakistani troops exchange heavy fire along the LoC.

There is no comprehensive database of ceasefire violations along the LoC. Indian and Pakistani sources – both government and non-government – report contradictory figures with regard to the number of ceasefire violations each year.<sup>6</sup> These sources do, however, agree that firing along the LoC increased markedly in 2013.

Analysts acknowledge the ability of border skirmishes to scuttle diplomatic efforts, and some posit a link between diplomatic progress and these events. After the killings of five Indian

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<sup>4</sup> This version of the paper analyses ceasefire violations along the LoC. Some analysts have described the movement of firing from the LoC to the International Border/Working Boundary in 2014 as significant, claiming that “Firing along the Line of Control would not have attracted international attention.” See: Abhishek Bhalla and Gautam Datt, “Pakistan shocked by massive Indian Army retaliation after gov’ts fire-at-will directive,” *India Today*, October 9, 2014, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/loc-firing-ceasefire-violations-pakistan-rangers-indian-army/1/394785.html>. A forthcoming version of this paper will fold in data on ceasefire violations along the International Border/Working Boundary, and seek to explore whether there is any connection between firing along the IB/WB and diplomatic progress.

<sup>5</sup> Saikat Datta, “Heard-earned ceasefire gains being shot through since 2010,” *Hindustan Times*, October 9, 2014, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/spurt-in-violence-ends-decade-long-peace-at-indo-pak-border/article1-1273201.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> For example, in March 2015, the Indian Ministry of Defence reported 44 ceasefire violations along the LoC in 2010; 51 in 2011; 93 in 2012; 199 in 2013; and 153 in 2014 (See: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=117195>). Alternatively, in August 2014, the Ministry reported 62 violations in 2011; 114 in 2012; and 347 in 2013 (See: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=108494>). The Pakistani government reports ceasefire violations along the LoC and Working Boundary, reporting 24 violations in 2012; 59 in 2013 (See: [http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/questions/1380265407\\_732.pdf](http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/questions/1380265407_732.pdf)); and 243 in 2014 (Source: [http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/questions/1421070881\\_526.pdf](http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/questions/1421070881_526.pdf)). The Islamabad-based Jinnah Institute compiled reports of ceasefire violations along the LoC and Working Boundary from media sources and found 86 in 2011; 230 in 2012; 414 in 2013; and 224 in 2014 (See: <http://jinnah-institute.org/loc-in-crisis-2/>).

soldiers and repeated incidents of firing along the LoC in August 2013, *Dawn* opined that “deadly violence... [along the LoC] threaten[ed] to sabotage recent efforts... to improve ties.”<sup>7</sup> Aditi Malhotra wrote of October 2014 firing along the LoC and International Border/Working Boundary:

The current cross-border firings are Pakistan Army’s attempt to indicate its complete control over issues related to military and foreign policy. More importantly, many view the Pakistani Army as being the spoiler, not only destabilising democracy in its own country but also initiating obstacles for Indo-Pakistan peace.<sup>8</sup>

News reports highlight the proximity of these events to diplomatic progress. July 2015 firing along the LoC – including the shooting down of an Indian drone – came “after a thaw in relations with India was observed after the meeting between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi at Ufa.”<sup>9</sup>

I built a comprehensive database of ceasefire violations along the LoC, pulling records from Pakistani and Indian media sources; from the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), which maintains a timeline of violence in Jammu and Kashmir; and from the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), which maintains a database of border incidents in Azad Kashmir.

To test the hypothesis of a correlation between high-level India–Pakistan meetings and firing along the LoC, I created a second database of bilateral meetings since November 2003. High-level meetings are defined here as public meetings between Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers, Presidents, Foreign Ministers, National Security Advisors, Foreign Secretaries, and Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs). For the database’s purposes, meetings between heads of government (i.e. in 2014, a meeting between two Prime Ministers; or, in 2005, a meeting between the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan) are classed as “Tier 1” meetings; all other meetings are classed as “Tier 2.”

This data collection has limitations. As discussed above, Indian and Pakistani sources release often contradictory information regarding the number and nature of ceasefire violations along the LoC. Day-by-day reports of firing along the LoC also differ – a number of incidents reported in PIPS data were not reported in SATP data, and the inverse was also true. Given these constraints, I merged media reports, SATP information, and PIPS data, cross-referencing reported events where possible. Days with a ceasefire violation were coded 1, regardless of the severity or extent of the violation; days with no ceasefire violation were coded 0. I then calculated the rate of days with ceasefire violations over rolling one-week, two-week, 30-day, and 90-day periods, in order to track the frequency or rate of ceasefire violations since 2003.

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<sup>7</sup> “Spoilers threaten Pakistan-India peace process,” *Dawn*, August 15, 2013, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1035860>

<sup>8</sup> Aditi Malhotra, “India’s Changing Pakistan Policy,” *South Asian Voices*, October 22, 2014, <http://southasianvoices.org/indias-changing-pakistan-policy/>

<sup>9</sup> Mateen Haider, “Pakistan military shoots down Indian ‘spy drone,’” *Dawn*, July 15, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1194644/pakistan-military-shoots-down-indian-spy-drone>

## Findings

My research confirms commonly-held views that violence along the LoC has been increasing at a notable rate since late 2012, but does not confirm views of a correlation between diplomatic progress – in this case marked by high-level visits – and increases in ceasefire violations.

### *Cross-LoC Violence*

In 2013, violence along the LoC was the highest since the 2001–2002 “Twin Peaks” crisis. Ceasefire violations were reported on 21 percent of days. Violence in 2014 and 2015 has remained high. Ceasefire violations were reported on 20 percent of days in 2014, and 23 percent of days in the first three months of 2015. By way of comparison, ceasefire violations along the LoC were reported on only ten percent of days in 2012, and seven percent in 2011.

Prime Minister Modi’s government has warned Pakistan that it would respond severely to ceasefire violations. For example, then-Defence Minister Arun Jaitley in October 2014 threatened to inflict “unaffordable” costs on Pakistan.<sup>10</sup> In December 2014, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar said that if attacked, Indian forces would “react with double the force.”<sup>11</sup> These deterrent threats have not diminished violence along the LoC.

Upticks in violence can occur for many reasons unrelated to high-level visits. For example, in an article in *The Hindu*, Praveen Swami linked the January 2013 violence to a series of tit-for-tat reactions that started when India began to build new bunkers near the LoC in fall 2012. Pakistan objected to this fortification of Indian positions, reportedly even ordering Indian troops to cease construction over loudspeakers.<sup>12 13</sup> Swami also linked a spate of firing along the LoC in August 2013 to the killing of four Pakistani men in late July. He wrote that the event was

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<sup>10</sup> “Modi, Jaitley warn Pakistan,” *The Hindu*, October 9, 2014, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pakistan-must-stop-unprovoked-firing-arun-jaitley/article6484771.ece>

<sup>11</sup> Dinkar Peri, “Respond to violations with double force: Parrikar,” *The Hindu*, January 1, 2015 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/retaliate-with-double-force-parrikar-on-truce-violation-by-pakistan/article6741432.ece>

<sup>12</sup> Praveen Swami, “Runaway grandmother sparked savage skirmish on LoC,” *The Hindu*, January 10, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/runaway-grandmother-sparked-savage-skirmish-on-loc/article4291426.ece>

<sup>13</sup> Prior to its completion in 2004, Pakistan objected to the Indian construction of a fence along the LoC on the grounds that it violated previous bilateral agreements, including the 1972 Simla Agreement that established the LoC. Pakistan now contends that any construction within 500 meters of the LoC or Working Boundary violates a 2010 agreement. See: “Fencing work does not violate Shimla accord,” *The Hindu*, December 18, 2003, <http://www.thehindu.com/2003/12/19/stories/2003121905571100.htm>, “A grandmother, a new bunker lead to India-Pakistan clashes,” *Dawn*, January 11, 2013, <http://www.dawn.com/news/777986/a-grandmother-a-new-bunker-lead-to-india-pakistan-clashes>, and Mateen Haider, “India violating pact, constructing bunkers too close to working boundary: FO,” *Dawn*, October 23, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1139854>



measures.<sup>15</sup> Under these circumstances, continued and increasing violence along the LoC not only poses a barrier to improved ties, but also makes crisis management more difficult and the risks of escalation greater.

Violence along the Kashmir divide highlights nuclear risks associated with any India–Pakistan crisis and the wisdom of exerting greater effort to improve bilateral relations. Even as new threats to international security emerge, there is significant evidence that the border between India and Pakistan, that President Bill Clinton termed in 2000 the world’s “most dangerous place,” has become dangerously volatile since late 2012. The LoC is the only place on Earth where two nuclear-armed rivals regularly exchange fire, and the rate of these exchanges is growing. The governments of India and Pakistan are doing little to address international concerns over the violence occurring across the Kashmir divide, violence that could magnify existing tensions.

Furthermore, the level of firing along the LoC is reminiscent of firing along the LoC before and during the 2001–2002 “Twin Peaks” crisis, although at a lower level. The first “peak,” sparked by the December 2001 militant attack on the Indian Parliament in New Delhi, was preceded by an October militant attack on the Jammu and Kashmir state assembly building, shelling and small arms fire across the LoC, and a number of skirmishes between Indian military forces and militants.<sup>16</sup>

Not all major crises begin with or involve violence along the LoC. For example the 2008 Mumbai attacks, linked back to Pakistan, were not directly preceded by increased firing along the LoC. Nor did firing start up during the ensuing crisis – a clear indicator of the interests of leaders to defuse the crisis. The 2008 crisis was an outlier, however. Activities and violence along the LoC or inside Kashmir sparked previous crises between India and Pakistan in 1984, 1990, and 1999, as well as in 2001–2002. The recent pattern of increased violence across the LoC makes positive diplomatic movement between India and Pakistan less likely. In the event of another triggering event, whether from extremist groups based in Pakistan or elsewhere, conditions are ripe for a crisis, and firing along the LoC will complicate crisis management.

#### *High-Level Meetings and Ceasefire Violations*

Using a series of bivariate regressions, I attempted to test for a correlation of high-level bilateral meetings and LoC ceasefire violations.<sup>17</sup> The central question investigated was whether

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<sup>15</sup> Krepon and Thompson, “Introduction,” in *Deterrence Stability and Escalation Control in South Asia*, (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2013), 13-14. [http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/Deterrence\\_Stability\\_Dec\\_2013\\_web.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/Deterrence_Stability_Dec_2013_web.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Michael Krepon and Polly Nayak, “US Crisis Management in South Asia’s Twin Peaks Crisis,” 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2014), 49-51.

<sup>17</sup> Eight bivariate regressions using two Independent Variables (IV) and four Dependent Variables (DV). IVs: “Yes/No” (1/0) coding for whether a Tier 1 meeting occurred on D Day, and “Yes/No” (1/0) coding for whether a Tier 1 and/or Tier 2 meeting occurred on D Day. DVs: the rate of firing in a one-week period around D Day (D Day

high-level meetings and visits might explain the timing of firing along the LoC. The regressions sought to determine whether high level meetings shared a correlation with higher levels of violence – in one-week, two-week, 30 day, and 90 day periods. After testing for a correlation with any high-level meetings, I narrowed the analysis to Tier 1 meetings. I found no statistically significant relationship. Ceasefire violations do occasionally occur in the same time period as high-level bi-lateral meetings, as shown in the tables and charts below, but not in a predictable or routinized manner.

Table 1: High-Level Meetings between Indian and Pakistani Officials and Firing along the LoC

Date	Meeting	Firing in Two-Week Period
9/14/2005	Manmohan Singh and Pervez Musharraf meet at UNGA	No
9/16/2006	Singh and Musharraf meet at Non-Aligned Movement Summit	No
8/2/2008	Singh and Yousuf Raza Gilani meet at SAARC Summit	Yes
7/16/2009	Singh and Gilani meet in Egypt	No
4/29/2010	Singh and Gilani meet at SAARC Summit	Yes
3/30/2011	Singh and Gilani meet at Cricket World Cup	No
11/10/2011	Singh and Gilani meet at SAARC Summit	No
3/27/2012	Singh and Gilani meet at Nuclear Security Summit	Yes
9/29/2013	Singh and Nawaz Sharif meet at UNGA	Yes
5/26/2014	Sharif attends Narendra Modi inauguration	Yes
11/27/2014	Modi and Sharif meet at SAARC Summit	Yes

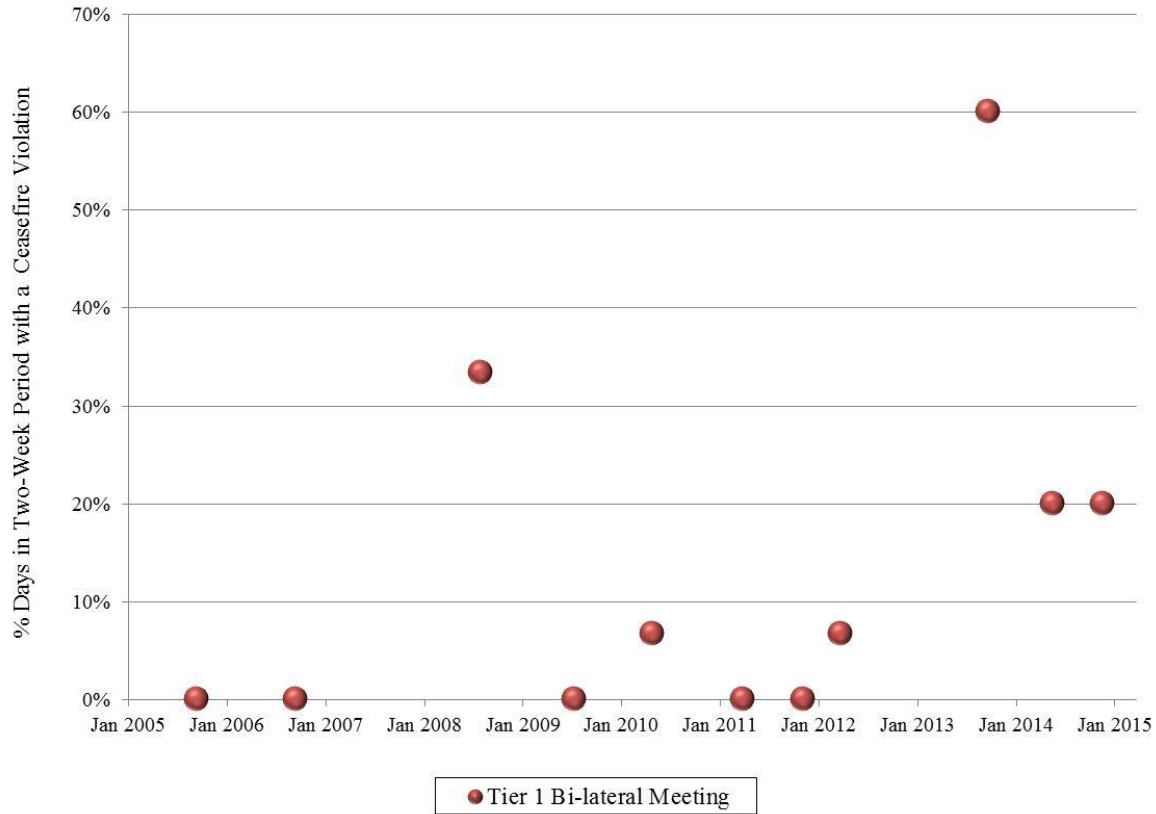
Chart 2 plots these high-level meetings against the rate of ceasefire violations (the percentage of days in a two-week period where at least one ceasefire violation occurred) in the two-week period (one week, both sides) surrounding that particular meeting.

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+/- 3 days), a two-week period around D Day (D Day +/- 7 days), a 30-day period around D Day (D Day +/- 15 days), and a 90-day period around D Day (D Day +/- 45 days).

Chart 2

### Historical Rate of Ceasefire Violations around Bi-lateral Meetings 2005-2015



Since the marked increase in violence in late 2012, ceasefire violations have regularly accompanied high-level bilateral meetings. However, the data still do not show a statistically significant relationship between ceasefire violations and high-level meetings, even during this period. Violence along the LoC has become the norm; it cannot be predicted by a forthcoming or recent meeting.

Even if one divides the data before and after the late 2012 increase in violence, significant skirmishes and prolonged periods with routinized ceasefire violations have occurred in the absence of high-level bilateral meetings each year since 2010. Table 2 details periods between high-level meetings where ceasefire violations spiked along the Kashmir divide.



Table 2: Violent Periods along the LoC without High-Level Meetings

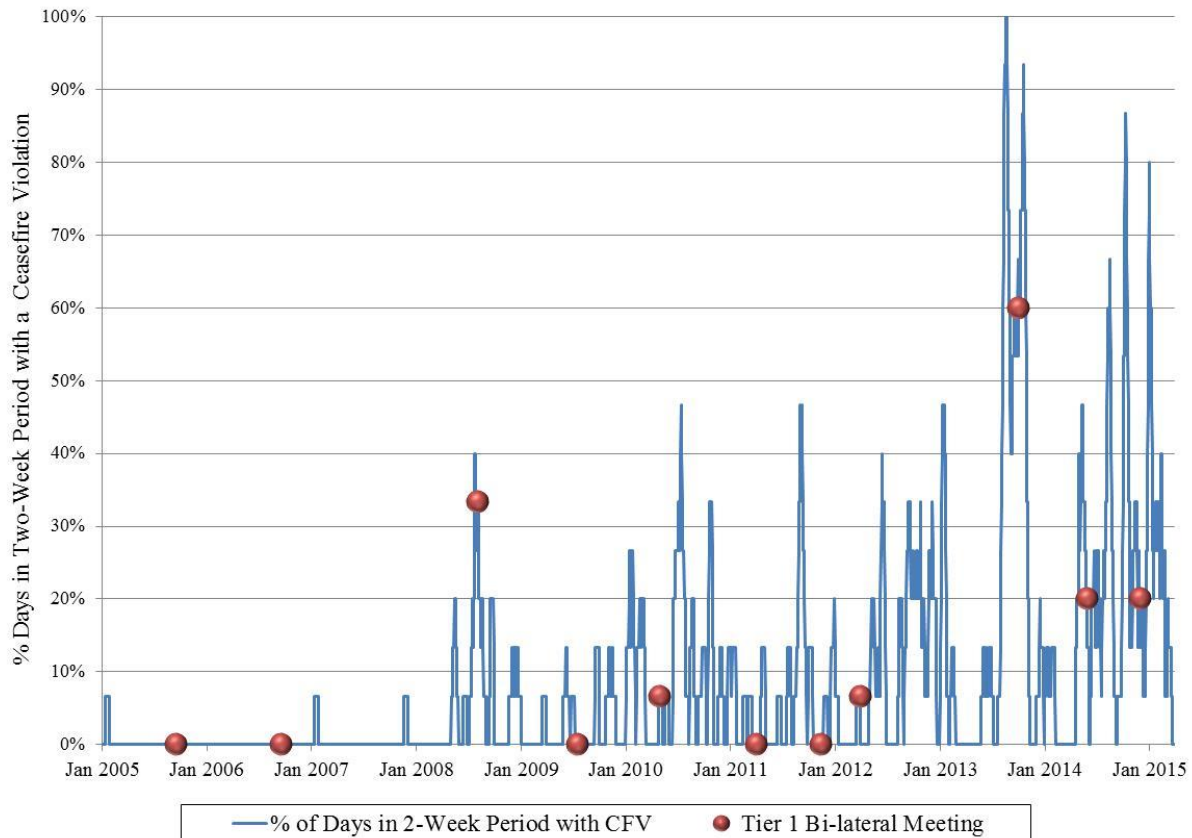
Time Period	Notes
January 2010	There are at least six ceasefire violations (including rockets and mortar fire) along the LoC and International Border.
June–August 2010	There were repeated ceasefire violations and firing across the LoC (including rocket and mortar fire) from late June through the end of August.
August– September 2011	Multiple ceasefire violations occurred from mid-August through early-September. Five Indian and three Pakistani soldiers were killed during this time period.
June 2012	Four ceasefire violations occurred June 11–19. Two Indian soldiers and two Pakistan Rangers were killed in June.
September–November 2012	Sporadic ceasefire violations along the LoC from September through November; later cited as precursors to January 2013 violence.
January 2013	Three Pakistani soldiers are killed in January, and two Indian soldiers are killed and their bodies mutilated during a period referred to as “the worst bout of fighting” in the previous ten years.
June, August 2013	Ceasefire violations begin to increase in June, but peak during August, when firing occurring on 21 days. Four Pakistani soldiers were killed in August, and five Indian soldiers were killed on August 6.
August 2014	Ceasefire violations begin in late July; there are at least eleven ceasefire violations in August.
October 2014	Ceasefire violations are reported on 14 days from October 1–28, with civilian deaths reported on both sides of the LoC.
December 2014–February 2015	Ceasefire violations begin in late December and continue through mid-February.

Chart 3 merges data from Charts 1 and 2. It plots Tier 1 bi-lateral meetings against the rate of ceasefire violations in a two-week period, and shows that roughly half of these meetings occurred during a period with no ceasefire violations. Only two of eleven meetings occurred when the rate of ceasefire violations was greater than 20%. No Tier 1 meeting occurred at a time when ceasefire violations were at a relative or absolute peak. This finding could indicate that officials are less likely to spend political capital for high-profile meetings when violence is increasing, and/or that officials are more likely to cancel those meetings during such periods. For example, India attributed the August 2014 cancellation of foreign secretary talks (although not a “Tier 1” meeting in my classification) to the Pakistani High Commissioner in Delhi’s meeting

with Kashmiri separatist leader Shabbir Shah,<sup>18</sup> but the weeks leading up to the planned talks had been marked by a large number of ceasefire violations.

On the contrary, political leaders have still met in periods of increased ceasefire violations: the August 2008 Singh-Gilani meeting at the SAARC Summit occurred after a short burst of firing along the LoC. The September 2013 Singh-Sharif meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly took place during a slowdown in firing during an exceptionally violent August, September, and November 2013.

**Chart 3** **High-level Bi-lateral Meetings and Ceasefire Violations**  
2005-2015



My research does not support the hypothesis of a direct, causal relationship – or even a correlation – between high-level bilateral meetings and upticks in violence along the LoC during the period of 2005–2015. Instead, ceasefire violations happened irrespective of high-level visits. Tit-for-tat exchanges and build-ups of tensions along the LoC explain patterns of violence more persuasively than do singular events such as high-level visits. At the same time, this potential for violence to escalate from relatively benign sources increases the difficulty of maintaining stability.

<sup>18</sup> Sanjay Kumar, “New Delhi Cancels India-Pakistan Talks,” *The Diplomat*, August 20, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/08/new-delhi-cancels-india-pakistan-talks/>

## **Conclusion**

The increase in violence along the LoC since late 2012 is a clear and concerning marker of the deterioration of India–Pakistan relations on a broader scale. Whether or not ceasefire violations can be attributed to signaling related to high-level meetings, they carry the risk of escalating into a larger crisis or standoff if accompanied by a triggering event. They also make the actual meeting of high-level officials more unlikely, and add another difficult dimension to crisis resolution. The ceasefire put into effect after the 2001–2002 “Twin Peaks” crisis has deteriorated badly. One way for India and Pakistan to stabilize relations would be to reestablish a ceasefire. India and Pakistan have not agreed to new confidence-building measures since 2007. Quieting the LoC would be a good place to start.