

Global Journalist: Argentina's search for a new President and Indian-Pakistani conflict over Kashmir's mountains

Abstract: On this Jan. 03, 2002 episode, Stuart Loory focuses on Argentina's tumultuous search for a new President – one with no links to previous regimes – and the increasing tensions between India and Pakistan over the Himalayan mountains: both countries want to own the Jammu and Kashmir regions. The guests explain the roots of these issues.

Bios

[Stuart Loory](#) was a long-time reporter and editor for the Chicago Sun-Times and CNN. He was the inaugural Lee Hills Chair in Free Press Studies at the Missouri School of Journalism. He [died in 2015](#).

Michelle Wallen (ph) worked as The Wall Street Journal's Buenos Aires Correspondent in the early 2000s.

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V.S. Jayaschandran is an Indian journalist who has been the senior editor and [Editor-in-Charge](#) of [The Week](#) magazine. He has been with the publication for over two decades.

[Muhammad Ziauddin](#) was a Pakistani [veteran journalist](#). His 60-year long career spanned multiple publications such as The News International, The Express Tribune and Dawn, in which he was Islamabad's resident editor. He [died in November 2021](#).

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Stuart Loory 00:11

Welcome to Global Journalist on KBIA. This is the program that says mid-Missourians, indeed many Americans, are interested in international news. I'm Stuart Loory of the Missouri School of Journalism. As we begin a new year, we turn to two subjects that have not been much in the news during the torment of terrorism in this country in the year 2001. The first is Argentina, which threatens a violent economic catastrophe that could rock the Western Hemisphere. That country is now governed by its fifth President in the last two weeks, because of the difficulty of bringing order there. The United States has been blamed by many as forcing the economic policies on Argentina that have led to this predicament. In one of the most incredibly beautiful parts of the world, Jammu

and Kashmir at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains in South Asia, India and Pakistan threaten war over territory that has been disputed since the two countries were divided 50 years ago after British colonial rule. What makes the situation there so grave in the thoughts of many around the world is that both countries, despite serious poverty, possess nuclear weapons and modern means of delivering them: their use, of course, would be a worldwide problem of tragic consequences. To discuss these two situations today, we have, in Buenos Aires Argentina, Michelle Wallen (ph), a correspondent there for the Wall Street Journal. In Washington, Edgar Krebs, correspondent there for La Nueva Provincia, a provincial Buenos Aires newspaper. In Kochi, India, Jayaschandran, senior copy editor of This (sic, it's The) Week magazine. And in Islamabad, Pakistan, Ziauddin, resident editor of the newspaper Dawn. Let's start in the Western Hemisphere. Michelle Wallen (ph), Eduardo Duhalde has now been in office for two days, and he promises some radical measures to try to lift Argentina from its crisis. First, if you could just explain to our listeners what the crisis is, that would be helpful.

Michelle Wallen (ph) 02:28

Well, the crisis basically originated in the fact that Argentina is in its fourth year of recession. The President, who was elected two years ago, was unable to do make any progress on, on turning the economy around, and it got to a point where the situation was just unsustainable economically, which led to street protests, and he was forced to resign. So, Duhalde, as you said, the fifth President in, in two weeks, is forced to take very dramatic measures to try and get the economy moving again. He's scheduled to swear in his Cabinet today, and has promised to make big announcements tomorrow on, on, on what direction the economy is going to go.

Stuart Loory 03:13

Okay, Michelle (ph), you have a story in The Wall Street Journal today indicating that the big part of the crisis comes just from the fact that the Argentine peso is tied to the United States dollar. And you say that if the peso is freed from the dollar and allowed to float, that this could help solve the problem.

Michelle Wallen (ph) 03:36

Hum, yes. One of, one of the sort of unique characteristics about Argentina is that it has this currency system -- and has had for the last decade -- which pegs the, the local currency one to one with the dollar. It was one of its Argentina's really great achievements in the early 1990s because it ended a lot of currency instability and hyperinflation. But over the years, it's turned into sort of more of a burden than an achievement, and it's, it's made it so that Argentina can't react to external shocks or other economic problems because with the currency or with monetary policy, because by, by pegging the currency, it sort of does away with any kind of monetary or currency policy, so...

Stuart Loory 04:31

That makes Argentinian goods very expensive around the world.

Michelle Wallen (ph) 04:34

Means, exactly, exactly. So, one of the measures that the government, this new government is, is, is almost certainly going to have to take is devaluing the currency either letting it just float -- which most currencies in, in the world do, you know? And markets just set the value of the currency based on different economic conditions in the country -- or it's also in order to kind of take an intermediate step between absolutely fixed currency and a free-floating currency, they're also considering coming up with some sort of basket of goods, or basket of currencies against which the, the peso would, would be linked so.

Stuart Loory 05:19

Yeah. Edgar Krebs (ph)?

Edgar Krebs (ph) 05:21

Yes.

Stuart Loory 05:21

If the peso is devalued, does that mean that a lot of American businessmen are going to lose money?

Edgar Krebs (ph) 05:28

This is a very, very complicated situation, but obviously it's going to be like watching, like Darwin did when traveling in South America on board the Beagle, in Valparaiso. He, he was witness, the witness of a, of a, of a big sea convulsion that caused the Andes to fall several meters. And so, all of a sudden in Argentina, if the peso is unpacked from the dollar, you will have a completely new economic landscape. Many local business, businessmen, will business will, will, will go bankrupt. Many people with, with their savings in dollars, will, will lose those savings, and you will have a very difficult economic situation that will be also very difficult social situation.

Stuart Loory 06:20

Michelle (ph), I think you indicated in your piece this morning that American banks stand to lose a lot of money.

Michelle Wallen (ph) 06:29

Yes, I mean, a lot of it depends what sort of impact it has on, on U.S. businesses and then all kinds of foreign investment in Argentina depends a lot on how the government handles the devaluation and how, how orderly it all is. One, one thing that it's always important to remember in these sorts of situations is that foreign investors have been losing a lot of money in Argentina just because of four, four years of, of, of recession. So, all businesses are really, really suffering. And this, a devaluation for a foreign investor has its good and bad points. It does mean that if you're dependent on income in pesos, that will be worth less in dollars, but it also means that for wages and other costs, they're cheaper for you, and investment in factories and plants and that sort of thing are, are cheaper for you. And a lot of one other thing to remember is that a lot of the foreign investment is in commodities, energy, oil, natural gas, that sort of thing. And those markets are very international, and a lot of them are traded in dollars already, so they would be less impacted by a devaluation.

Stuart Loory 07:46

Okay, now let's talk a little bit, not about money, but let's talk about the impact on the Argentinian people. The middle class, it is said, has been virtually destroyed by what's going on. Obviously, the poor are in very, very bad shape, there have been riots in Buenos Aires and other cities over, over food. What is going to happen? What are the implications of not solving this crisis?

Edgar Krebs (ph) 08:20

You're asking me?

Stuart Loory 08:22

Well, Edgar (ph), you go first.

Edgar Krebs (ph) 08:24

Alright, well, I know what's obviously quite unusual about this crisis -- Argentina has lived from crisis to crisis from decades -- but it always had at the end of a crisis, the glimmer of a provisional myth to

get it through. The myth came in the shape of believing in a certain leader that would be the salvation. That leader could be Perón, could be a military officer, could be Alfonsín, and the honeymoon with that leader has always lasted very little. In this case, there is no glimmer of hope, because there's no provisional myth of salvation. So, the crisis has no bottom, and it hasn't unraveled yet. The person that has taken office, Duhalde, is just the strongman be amongst the Peronistas. So, the most likely character to take office, because the Peronists remain the most populous popular political party in the country, but he's in for a very rude road, a tough road ahead, mainly because that very essential thing, the provisional myth of hope, has been totally crashed in the last ten, ten, years.

Stuart Loory 09:43

Michelle (ph), what about the army? It has been, it's very active in trying to bring order to Argentina, as Edgar (ph) points out. Why is it not asserting itself right now?

Michelle Wallen (ph) 10:00

Well, for all of the problems that Argentina has, one of the problems it doesn't have is that is the threat that the military could take over democracy. After the last military dictatorship, people really just absolutely rejected the army and their capacity to run the country, and that still is very strongly felt. So, while, yeah, in the last couple of weeks, we've seen, obviously, with so much, so many violent protests, we've seen more sort of police presence, there is no talk of, of the army taking over a formal role to govern, govern the country. But yes, we are seeing, as you were saying, the middle class and the poor all really suffering because of the situation. One of the interesting effects of this crisis has been that the middle class -- which is in, in Argentina, doesn't tend to protest actively in the streets -- over the last couple of, of weeks, and really one of the, the biggest factors that brought the, the first President down was just spontaneous protests by the middle class, going into the streets, banging on pots and pans, demanding that the government do something to resolve all of these economic problems.

Stuart Loory 11:21

You heard Edgar Krebs (ph) say that there is no leader waiting in the wings, from where you are in Buenos Aires, is, is that so? Is there just no hope of resolving this crisis now?

Michelle Wallen (ph) 11:34

Well, there's a whole political change happening in that Argentines are really calling for a new kind of leadership, cleaner leadership, more efficient, less tied to old, the old political parties. But so far, even though people are really demanding it and demanding less corruption, no, there hasn't. No new

leader has emerged. And yes, as, as Duhalde is really in the minds of most Argentines, and, and for that reason, we saw protests immediately after he was chosen to serve as President. Really represents more of the, the same old stuff, you know, a long-time Peronista with a reputation for corruption and other sort of dirty deeds.

Stuart Loory 12:29

When you say Peronista, in the United States, of course, that recalls memories of Juan Perón and the, and the bad fascist time in Argentina. But Peronism has now seemed to have gathered more respect than it once had. Why is that?

Michelle Wallen (ph) 12:53

I think a lot of that had to do with changes over the last 10 years. I mean, there still is Pero... Peronism is a very inclusive sort of movement in that you have all kinds of different factions who believe all kinds of different things. But under the presidency of Carlos Menem, who, who was President for Argentina during the 90s, he really implemented lots of economic reforms, market-oriented reforms, and that really tried to integrate Argentina into the global economy in a way that hadn't happened before.

Stuart Loory 13:33

Okay. Michelle (ph), I'm sorry, but we have to take a break. This is Global Journalist on KBIA. I'm Stuart Loory. We'll be right back.

Stuart Loory 13:47

Welcome back to Global Journalist. You may listen to this program again, ask questions or make comments by going to www.globaljournalist.org or, by calling us here in mid-Missouri at 573-882-9641. Let's move to South Asia now and talk about the, the conflict that is going on in Kashmir. And let's start with Mr. Schandran, Jayaschandran in Kochi, India. Mr. Schandran, there are indications that the Indian government is beginning to take seriously Pakistan's attempts to control militants, militant Muslims in Kashmir. Is that so?

V.S. Jayaschandran 14:38

I think they are taking the situation seriously, but I frankly, don't think that this war mongering or these noises will lead to war. I don't think there will be a full-scale war. There is some firing going on on the border, but this is a regular practice between India and Pakistan in times of tension, but I don't think this will lead to a full-scale war. But at the same time, India will be taking the issue seriously,

and perhaps the, the, the two governments will be trying to talk to each other. I hope there will be sanity and good sense in both the government, and they will avoid a war.

Stuart Loory 15:23

Yeah, I'm sorry. Mr, Uddin, in Islamabad does it also look like a war is going to be avoided?

Muhammad Ziauddin 15:32

Well, I will not rule out the possibility, because India has spent so much money, perhaps a couple of billion dollars to, to move its troops to the borders. And, and the kind of frenzy, war frenzy which the Indian government has kicked up in the country, it needs to have something to show to the people of India to scale down whatever it has done, and unless we know what exactly would be defined as victory by the Indian government for the benefit of its own people, I would not like to speculate whether it would end without a war this, this charge atmosphere.

Stuart Loory 16:23

If I may ask both of you, and Mr. Schandran and you go first on this, what is the problem in Kashmir? What is the dispute over?

V.S. Jayaschandran 16:35

The dispute in Kashmir is a very old one that started in 1949 when India went to the UN with a complaint about Pakistan trying to take parts of Kashmir from India. At the time of accession of Kashmir to India, that dispute has been lingering for a long time. In 1972 there was an agreement between India and Pakistan called the Shimla Agreement, at which they decided to, to sort out the problem through talks. Then we, we had about war just before that, in 1971 after that, there has been no war except a military conflict in 1999, three years ago. And in between that there has been a resurgence of militant activity in Kashmir. Now, India believes that the main problem is terrorism supported by Pakistan government and Pakistan's inter service intelligence, which they believe attacked the Indian parliament last month.

Stuart Loory 17:41

Okay, now if I, if I can ask Mr. Uddin to explain the dispute from his side.

Muhammad Ziauddin 17:47

Yeah. Jaya... Jayaschandran is right. India went to the UN in 1949 but what he skipped to say state was the, that the UN Security Council Resolution. It said that there will be a plebiscite inside the disputed territory, and the people of that territory -- that is Kashmir and Jammu -- people, will be asked which country they would like to join. And that resolution has not been implemented, and that is actually the dispute. Obviously Pakistan tried to get India to discuss this, or rather take to join Pakistan in holding a plebiscite inside Kashmir. And then again, when it failed, there were wars. In 1965 there was a war between India and Pakistan on this issue. Then in 1972 India turned a civil war inside a part of Pakistan into a terrorist, you know, kind of a thing in Bangladesh. And after that, there was another war in Kargil, again disputed territory in Kashmir. So, I mean that, that unless there is a, a the Security Council resolution is implemented, this dispute would linger on.

Stuart Loory 19:09

Mr. Schandran, and why not plebiscite?

V.S. Jayaschandran 19:11

Plebiscite was agreed to in 1949 by UN Council, United Nations Committee for on India and Pakistan. India was willing to hold the plebiscite, I think at the time, and Nehru, Prime Minister Nehru agreed to that. But later, of course, Pakistan was not actually very keen on holding the plebiscite. It was not very keen. Later, in later years, of course, there was a demographic change in Kashmir because of militancy. A lot of people have moved out of Kashmir, the state of Jammu and Kashmir. So now the situation is very complicated for the Indian Government to hold a plebiscite. Besides, there has been a sort of plebiscite, in the sense that India has conducted a number of elections, democratic elections in Kashmir. So, the Indian government now does not seem to be keen on holding a plebiscite, because it has been holding elections in Kashmir.

Stuart Loory 20:11

Okay, Mr. Uddin, to what extent are the militants, the Muslim militants in Kashmir related to the fundamentalist militants who created such a problem in Afghanistan?

Muhammad Ziauddin 20:32

Well, we'll have go back then, to go back in the history. It, it was in 1989 when, perhaps because of neglect or deprivation, whatever you can call the people inside the Indian held Kashmir started, rather protesting the neglect, and this turned into a civil disobedience. And then it became militant also. This is, I'm talking of within the Indian held Kashmir. And it carried on until about 1992-93 this

was perhaps the time when the Taliban were also emerging in Afghanistan. And sometime in 1994-95 when Osama bin Laden had come to Afghanistan, this militancy inside the indigenous, militancy inside the Indian held Kashmir was added up by cross border militancy also. I mean, this had, I mean, the Government of Pakistan had no control over it. I mean, even, even Mr. President Bush (unintelligible) only about couple of days back, said that the Government of Pakistan, I mean, these militants are trying to create trouble between Pakistan and India. So this, there is a link between al Qaeda and the militancy inside the Indian held Kashmir. But to accuse the Pak... Pakistan government, state of Pakistan, the people of Pakistan having been involved in this is full rather exaggeration.

Stuart Loory 22:07

Mr. Schandran, it seems to me that India is asking the government of Pakistan to control militancy in much the same way that the Government of Israel is asking Yasser Arafat's Palestine Authority to control militancy in that country. Is there a parallel there?

V.S. Jayaschandran 22:28

There is, Indi... some members of the Indian government have been talking about going into the other side of Kashmir and, and destroying the terrorist centers, the training centers and other camps there. But then much of Indian Government is not in favor of this policy, a hard pursuit that is going into the going across the border and then attacking the people. I think India should be defining itself its territories within India, then going into Pakistan or Pakistan occupied Kashmir.

Stuart Loory 23:06

If I could ask both of you, we have just a couple of minutes left, what is the outlook for a settlement there? What do you see as the situation in Kashmir? First of all, next year, and secondly, 10 years from now? Mr. Uddin, you go first.

Muhammad Ziauddin 23:27

Well, I see a Nobel Prize there. Nobel Peace Prize there. And anybody who did settle this issue, I mean, between the two countries, among the two countries, the countries, they will get a Nobel Peace Prize for this. Well, this, this the prospects are bright if India and Pakistan way to grapple this issue on the basis of, okay, let's settle it rather than scoring points.

Stuart Loory 23:54

When you say Nobel Peace Prize, but what you're saying is a situation there is not really possible. People get Nobel Prizes for trying to settle situations that, that don't get settled very easily.

Muhammad Ziauddin 24:11

That's what I mean.

Stuart Loory 24:13

And Mr. Schandran, how about you?

V.S. Jayaschandran 24:16

Kashmir is such an intricate issue that both India and Pakistan and the people of Kashmir can go on arguing about it forever. But if we make it a well structured conference of all parties involved, he can make a beginning in solving Kashmir problem. This, this will take time, but terrorism is not as complicated as Kashmir dispute. Terrorism is a manifestation, certainly, of the aspirations of the section of Kashmir. It is also reaction to some human rights violations in Kashmir. But to a great extent, Kashmiri terrorism in the government believes that is the creation of the Pakistan Government. Pakistan has been creating training and sheltering this organizations which are committed terrorist activity in Indian soil. So, we must find a way out of this terrorism. Terrorism can be easily tackled. All that is the courage for Pakistan to stop supporting terrorism. That is all what India demands, and India should show greater concern for human rights in Kashmir. This is certainly defeat terrorism.

Stuart Loory 25:12

Is there any...

V.S. Jayaschandran 25:13

That's what I believe.

Stuart Loory 25:15

If I may ask each of you, is there any role that can be played by other governments to help bring a settlement? The United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, whatever. Is there anything that any of these governments can do, or other governments? Mr. Uddin, you want to go first?

Muhammad Ziauddin 25:37

Yeah, yeah. There's, actually, India would like the world to help it out on the militancy, on the terrorism, but when it comes to Kashmir, it does not want any mediation. It wants to settle that issue bilaterally and one, but the two countries can settle it bilaterally, but then perhaps mediation would be better, and the Americans can play a very positive role here.

Stuart Loory 26:02

Okay, Mr. Schandran, do you want to make some comment on that?

V.S. Jayaschandran 26:06

I think I agree with Mr. Ziauddin. Because some other countries can certainly join in this discussions, because otherwise this will linger for a longer time, and more lives will be lost, and it might lead to war also, and if a war it breaks out, both have nuclear weapons and they can -- I don't know whether we will use it or not -- but there's a real danger of people using it. So we must ask mediation from other, other countries as well, even though Indian government says that there should not be any mediation by others in Kashmir.

Stuart Loory 26:37

Okay, I'm sorry, but we are out of time. Our guests today have been in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Michelle Wallen (ph) in Washington, Edgar Krebs (ph) in Kochi, India, Jayaschandran, and in Islamabad, Pakistan, Ziauddin. Our director is Mary Furness (ph), and our producer, Tianbo Huang (ph). For all, I'm Stuart Loory. Global Journalist will be back next week.