

MAY 2007

From May 17-18, 2002, a prominent group of international relations and comparative politics scholars from across both Canada and the United States met in Montreal to discuss the role of balance of power in international relations, both in theory and in practice, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The final goal of the conference was the production of an edited volume on balance of power by a major academic press, and as such was a preliminary discussion and debate on the content and direction the volume will take. Many of the questions raised by the conference participants will be answered in the coming months as the papers are revised for publication.

The conference was organized around seven sessions spanning over two days. The conference began with presentations on the present state of balance of power theory at the global level, and the participants subsequently narrowed down their focus to balance of power in different regional sub-systems - - from Latin America to the Middle East through Asia and Europe.

The conference was organized by three prominent international relations scholars - T.V. Paul from McGill University, James Wirtz from the Naval Post-Graduate School, and Michel Fortmann from the Université de Montréal. The conference was graciously co-sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trades' (DFAIT) International Security Research and Outreach Program (ISROP), the McGill University/Université de Montréal Research Group in International Security (REGIS), Monterey Naval Post-Graduate School, and the Security and Defence Forum (SDF) of the Department of National Defence (DND). Without this support, the conference would not have been possible. We are especially grateful to Manon Tessier, who represented ISROP, for her help in preparing the conference.

After welcoming remarks by T.V. Paul, James Wirtz and Michel Fortmann, the first Friday session delved into a broad discussion of what balance of power is and how we understand it in today's world. Some of the main points discussed by T.V. Paul (McGill University) included:

- The need to broaden our understanding of balance of power from its traditional military usage.
- The need to respond to liberal critiques of balance of power by examining economic interdependence.
- The need to broaden our understanding of balance of power by looking at the different role played by hard balancing (traditional alliances and military build-up) and soft balancing (economics, new approaches to balancing).

Jack Levy (Rutgers University) offered a discussion on what great powers balance against and when, presenting a puzzle that throughout history, selected hegemonic countries or coalitions of countries have been balanced against,

- Louis XIV, Napoleon I, Germany in WWI and WWII, and the USSR post-1945.

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