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Understanding the India-Pakistan Enduring Rivalry

A Conference Report

Prepared by

William Hogg (McGill University)

T.V. Paul (McGill University)

Prepared for

The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (DFAIT)
and

The Security and Defence Forum (DND)

December 2003

Abstract

The long standing enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan poses important theoretical and policy problems to both academics and policy makers. The conference *Understanding the India-Pakistan Enduring Rivalry*, and the papers presented, tried to develop answers to questions surrounding the sources of its enduring nature, and offer insight into possible solutions while at the same time trying to bridge the gap between different fields of political science, and between theorists and policy specialists. Leading scholars from both international relations and comparative politics were, for possibly the first time, sitting around the same table. The conference report concludes by offering possible policy options for Canada in relation vis-a-vis the enduring Indo-Pakistani rivalry.

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Conference Abstract Summary

The long standing enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan poses important theoretical and policy problems to both academics and policy makers. The conference **Understanding the India-Pakistan Enduring Rivalry**, and the papers presented, tried to develop answers to questions surrounding the sources of the conflict, explanations of its enduring nature, and offer insight into possible solutions to the often violent rivalry, while at the same time trying to bridge the gap between different fields of political science, and between theorists and policy specialists. Leading scholars from both international relations and comparative politics were, for possibly the first time, sitting around the same table discussing and debating these questions. Important contributions were also made by policy specialists. The conference report concludes by offering possible policy options for Canada in developing its position vis-a-vis the enduring Indo-Pakistani rivalry.

The conference began with opening remarks by John Galaty, Associate Dean of Arts at McGill University, and chair of the McGill University Peace Studies Committee. His comments revealed some of the underlying themes that he thought the conference would deal with including issues of territoriality and the clash of competing world views, as embodied in different religions and domestic political systems and historical traditions in both India and Pakistan. Overall, there seems to be a need to win the "hearts and minds" of those who can affect the outcome of the conflict.

T.V. Paul opened the conference with a paper entitled "Power Asymmetry and the India-Pakistan Enduring Rivalry". Paul argued that there is little in the way of an international relations theoretical framework to explain the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan. What has been done well is work by area specialists. It is hoped that this conference will help bridge the gap between international conflict studies and field specialists. Paul continued by pointing out that the terms associated with examining the India-Pakistan conflict, such as "enduring rivalry" and "protracted conflict," are contentious. He continued his presentation with a historical overview of the conflict, where the conflict has specific qualities of its own from an IR perspective:

- Power asymmetry between the parties involved
- Status quo vs. revisionist states
- Characteristics of balance of power theory
- The role of great power intervention
- The nuclear variable
- September 11th, 2001

He concluded his presentation by outlining the core questions that the participants were to answer in their paper presentations:

1. To what extent is the India-Pakistan conflict an enduring rivalry? How does it differ from other examples of enduring rivalries? Why have some enduring rivalries ended but not this one?

Conference Summary

(Prepared by William Hogg, PhD Candidate in Political Science, McGill University
For submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada).

The conference: **“Understanding the India-Pakistan Enduring Rivalry,”** organized by Professor T.V. Paul of McGill University, was the culmination of almost two years of work. The conference was generously sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade’s John Holmes Fund, the McGill University Peace Studies Program (through a grant from the Arsenault Foundation), the McGill University Conference Grant Fund, and the McGill University/Université de Montréal Research Group in International Security. It was held at the Holiday Inn Midtown, Montreal, December 6, 2003.

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1. To what extent is the India-Pakistan conflict an enduring rivalry? How does it differ from other examples of enduring rivalries? Why have some enduring rivalries ended but not this one?

2. What specific factors explain the persistence of this conflict? (Main factors may include: power asymmetry; incompatible national identities; differing domestic power structures; irredentism; great power involvement; nuclear weapons)
3. What changes are required in the factors identified that could bring an end to the conflict?

These remarks led into two theoretical presentations on current International Relations (IR) theory and the enduring rivalry. Paul Diehl (University of Illinois) and Gary Goertz (Arizona State University) presented (*in absentia*) "Theorizing Enduring Rivalries: Application of the India-Pakistan Case," applying their past work on other examples of long standing inter-state rivalries. Their paper attempted to both chart the origins and conditions leading to the rivalry between India and Pakistan, and offer some possible ways of terminating the conflict. They started the paper by highlighting the explanatory weaknesses of the current IR literature in explaining the India-Pakistan enduring rivalry. They posited the theory of "punctuated equilibrium" to better explain the origins and development of the conflict. Three phases of the theory were highlighted:

1. Political Shock leading to
2. Stasis, leading to
3. Embedding of the rivalry

In the first phase, an internal or external shock causes a rivalry to begin (in this case it is argued that the joint independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 served as this shock). But these shocks only help set the stage for the rivalry. What is necessary, and present in this case, to continue the rivalry is a question of territorial possession. In this case, Kashmir served as the keystone in developing the enduring rivalry, acting as a symbolic, economic, and strategically important region for both India and Pakistan. The authors noted that 81% of all enduring rivalries are based on territory.

They continued their paper by examining why the enduring conflict reached the phase of stasis. Only 5.4% of conflicts between states ever reach this point. Why do most die out quickly, but not this one? One would be the lack of a preponderance of power in the conflict – Pakistan has the advantage territorially and strategically in a short conventional war but India has the advantage in any protracted war, as it has the larger resource base. But due to the role of great power intervention, conventional conflicts between the two do not extend beyond short periods. This is due to the nuclear equation, where both sides are nuclear weapons holding states. The international community has a vested interest in making sure that the conflict does not escalate beyond border skirmishes. While some would argue that any one of these factors should help end the rivalry, in essence they have led to its embedded nature.

They concluded by examining possible ways to terminate the conflict. But their evaluations were not optimistic – solutions are not probable in the short term. Democratization of Pakistan is not a solution, as statistically the rivalry heats up during a transition to democracy in Pakistan. Second, it is not sure that a democratic Pakistan would be more conciliatory on the Kashmir issue. Third, it is not clear that

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democratization in Pakistan would ever work, as the military has often had a preponderant role in relations with India, even during periods of democracy in Pakistan.

Common external threats that could unite India and Pakistan together to combat it, and as such ending the rivalry, do not exist.

Future internal or external political shocks, such as rapid shifts in alliance structures, civil war in either Pakistan or India, or the arrival of revisionist or visionary leaders on both sides of the conflict could lead to the termination of the conflict. But these are not really predictable, and as such do not serve as strong bases for expecting rivalry termination.

"India-Pakistan Conflict in the Light of General Theories of War, Rivalry and Deterrence," presented by John Vasquez (Colgate University), asked whether the India Pakistan rivalry fits into theories of war as developed by empirical research. Issues such as territoriality and the value placed by decision makers on realist theory and international relations make the conflict one that fits well with general theories of war. Nuclear weapons, and the assumption of deterrence theory that a broader war will not occur if both sides have them, does not seem to fit in this case. The presence of territorial disputes, a lack of tolerance for the status quo, a lack of experience with great wars, a lack of distinct rules of the game, a lack of crisis management techniques, and little arms control makes nuclear weapons a dangerous variable in this conflict, and as such we cannot rely on deterrence theory to assure against nuclear conflict in the region. He concluded by stating that the India-Pakistan conflict is not atypical in its persistence, caused mostly by a high degree of irredentism and territorial asymmetry, plus the role of incompatible identities (where Kashmir is linked closely to both India's and Pakistan's national identity).

In the discussion period that followed the presentations, questions arose regarding the role of territoriality in the conflict, the development of the conflict pre-1947, deterrence theory and the India-China conflict, the separation of identity conflict and territorial conflict, the role of conflict points outside Kashmir (ie. The Punjab and Afghanistan), the notion of territoriality and falsifiability. Specifically, Michael Brecher (McGill University) argued that Kashmir is much more than simply a territorial conflict, where issues of state formation in Pakistan and state legitimization in India rely on this territory.

In the second session, Russell Leng (Middlebury College) discussed the role of learning in his paper "Realpolitik and Learning in the India-Pakistan Rivalry." He began by questioning why India and Pakistan find themselves in a never-ending series of crises and wars. He argued that a combination of factors, involving changes in the regional and international environment, the role of learning, and psychological factors all play a role in making the conflict an enduring one. Leng's presentation focused on the role of learning, arguing that India's learning process has shown that Pakistan is not a trustworthy adversary, and that realism works vis-à-vis Islamabad. Pakistan, on the otherhand, has learned that it cannot get Kashmir through direct armed invasion. Rather, it has learned that through creating instability and getting external parties involved in Kashmir that it can have an effect, although not the one it perceives. Both states have also misinterpreted

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the role of nuclear weapons, where India argues that it can carry out a policy of "hot pursuit" of insurgents into Pakistan as it has a second strike capability, while Pakistan argues that nuclear weapons allow Pakistan to continue its insurgency into Kashmir.

Ashok Kapur (University of Waterloo) also dealt with the role of lessons learned from past actions in the conflict for India and Pakistan for future policy choices. In his paper "Major Powers and the Persistence of India-Pakistan Rivalry" he examined the role of great powers in the conflict. Kapur argues that Pakistan has learned that it cannot win Kashmir through conflict, and it cannot rely on creating instability and soliciting international involvement, especially after the Kargil war. The third lesson it must draw is that it needs to deal directly with India, especially since India continually refuses to allow international mediation over the issue. Kapur saw the change in the attitudes of the US and China toward the Kashmir conflict and the change in India's relations with these two principal major power actors as having a positive effect on the possibility of peaceful negotiations between India and Pakistan. Thus, changing alliance relations are forcing Pakistan to rethink its diplomatic and military strategy vis-à-vis India. In India's case, the lesson learned is that peace is possible only by talking and convincing the generals, who hold the real power in Islamabad even when civilian leaders are in official positions, that negotiating is the only option.

Both Leng and Kapur were questioned on several points during the discussion period. The issue of learning the right lessons in the conflict was discussed. What happens if either state is not learning the right lessons? What causes lessons to be learned? What have the two actors learned? Is learning the same in both states?

The third session dealt with domestic causes of the enduring conflict. Vali Nasr (Naval Postgraduate School) examined the formation at the domestic level of Pakistan's national interest in "National Identities and Pakistan-India Conflict." He argued that the main political battles on the ground are between the Army and Islamists. As such, Kashmir is a domestic political question. But within Pakistan there are many different branches of Islam, and this hinders the development of a strong Pakistani national identity. This lack of a clear national identity increases the intensity of the conflict over Kashmir, as until there is a sense of what Pakistan is, Kashmir will act as a beacon for national identity, and prolong the conflict.

Steve Saideman (McGill University) discussed the role of the domestic politics within India, Pakistan and Kashmir itself in the continuance of the enduring rivalry. His argument is that enduring rivalries are a product of the domestic politics of the different participants. His paper "At the Heart of the Conflict: Irredentism and Kashmir" presented an examination of the supporters and opponents of irredentism within the three regions. If we could successfully identify those key supporters and opponents, we can develop incentives and disincentives to affect their decisions vis-a-vis the conflict. He pointed out that the key difference between the India-Pakistan and the India-China territorial disputes is the role of irredentism in the former conflict.

Reeta Tremblay and Julian Schofield (Concordia University) presented the paper "Institutional Causes of the India-Pakistan Rivalry," where they outlined the role of institutions and regime constraints in the ongoing rivalry. The paper relied on the traditions of public policy analysis, whereby constraints and opportunities are placed on decision-makers within each state. Each state's regime structure affects their decisions with regard to the ongoing conflict. The key actor for Tremblay and Schofield is Pakistan, as it moves frequently between military regimes and hybrid military/democracies. It is the shift from authoritarian to quasi-democracies that affects to a certain extent the intensity of the enduring rivalry. The role of policy communities was also examined with the illustration of the case of the 1960 Indus River water sharing Treaty.

The final session dealt with Daniel Geller (University of Mississippi) and his presentation "The Indo-Pakistani Rivalry: Prospects for War; Prospects for Peace." He offered a pessimistic conclusion to the day's proceedings by outlining the high probability that there will be a major war between India and Pakistan, and that this conflict may include nuclear exchanges. He argued that there are many possible causes for an upcoming conflict, and as such it will be very difficult to predict and control. Territoriality is not the only issue involved. Issues such as the level of uneven economic development between the two parties may also begin to play a role as the enduring conflict continues.

Remarks were then offered by Theresa de Haan, Desk Officer for Pakistan at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) on the Canadian position vis-à-vis the enduring rivalry. She highlighted the recent thaw between Canada and India, as well as the evolution of Canadian policy vis-a-vis the two rivals. Canada is very committed to both India and Pakistan. Canadian policy has focussed on the role of constructive dialogue between the two rivals, as well as the role of Track II and civil society development in encouraging constructive dialogue between the states involved. But de Haan also highlighted some of the major constraints on a state like Canada to play a major role in the resolution of the rivalry.

T.V. Paul summarized the issues in the concluding session, highlighting some of the main ideas that arose during the presentations, including:

- What is the exact role of ideology and identity vs. strategic and territorial considerations?
- What is the role of historical factors pre-1947?
- Will economic growth and economic interdependence of the two states help in conflict resolution?
- How exactly does the nuclear issue play into the rivalry?
- How much of the rivalry is actually rhetoric and how much is actually real?
- What can be made of the linkages between the US and China vis-à-vis Pakistan and India and the development of the rivalry?
- How important is the time element in the rivalry?

During this session, Michael Brecher (McGill University) concluded by pointing out seven key areas that need to be worked on to achieve some sort of concrete peace:

- Imaginative leadership
- Mutual Exhaustion
- External pressure
- Leadership Learning
- Resolution of nuclear issue
- Real conflict management
- Integration of Kashmir into India

Role of Women

Two key presenters during the conference were women, as was one of the paper discussants. There were also several female graduate students present and actively participating in the conference. Reeta Tremblay (Concordia University) presented a paper on institutional causes of the enduring rivalry. Theresa de Haan (DFAIT) was also present and made an important contribution on Canada and the enduring conflict. Marie-Joelle Zahar (Université de Montréal) made important critical remarks on the domestic sources of the enduring conflict. What is important to note is that this issue area is one that is not strongly represented by female participants (researchers, academics), and as such to have three key contributors is representative of the important role women played in this conference.

Goals vs. Outcomes

Except for one inconvenience caused by the weather (Gary Goertz was not able to attend to present his paper due to a snowstorm on the East Coast), generally the conference met its planned goals successfully. All the papers were of a very high quality, and there has been significant interest shown by leading academic presses to publish the final edited volume. There was also very positive feedback by those present who were not presenting a paper. The discussants as well as the general audience were very impressed with the quality of the presentations and the breadth of the issues dealt with. It was also very constructive in that this is one of the very first efforts to combine the work of international relations scholars with area specialists in studying the India-Pakistan conflict. While at times there may have been minor communication problems between the two fields, it is assumed that these will easily be solved in the final versions of the papers.

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Appendix

Policy Options for Canada in the India-Pakistan Enduring Rivalry

William Hogg, Department of Political Science, McGill University

Canada's long-standing relationships with India and Pakistan have not been without their problems. Since its independence in 1947, India's relationship with Canada has been one of ebbs and flows. The close relationship between Indian Prime Minister Nehru and Canadian Prime Ministers St. Laurent and Pearson in the maintenance of a stable international system marked the beginning of close relations between the two states. This relationship declined in the 1970s with India's development of nuclear weapons using Canadian technology. The 1980s saw a significant revival of the bilateral relationship, with a growing Indian community in Canada supporting the development of Canadian policy towards India. The Air India incident aside, Indo-Canadian relations up until 1998 were strong. With the new round of nuclear tests by both India and Pakistan in 1998, a major strain in relations between India and Canada occurred, and these relations remained stagnant until 2001, with Canada finally pushing for the development of the "broadest possible political and economic relationship with India." India's growing economy was certainly a major factor in this change. However, it must be noted that Canada was slow to engage India, unlike the US and the EU.

Canada's relations with Pakistan are less well developed than those with India. The political instability associated with the ebb and flow of democracy and authoritarianism has had a negative impact on Canada's relations with Pakistan. Both at the diplomatic and economic level, relations have been uneven since 1947. While Canada has played an active role within broader multilateral fora vis-à-vis Pakistan (such as the Commonwealth and the United Nations), the nuclear tests of 1998 froze relations between Canada and Pakistan. Since 1998, and especially since the military coup of 1999, Canada has attempted to critically engage Pakistan and assist it towards the development of a sustainable democracy.

Specifically with regards to the Kashmir conflict, the source of the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan, Canada has taken a supportive position towards India with regards to cross-border terrorism in the region, but Canada also supports the development of constructive relations between Islamabad and Delhi in resolving the Kashmir issue, with the goal of opening of the border between the two states. Canada has also participated in UN mandated peacekeeping operations in the region, and has also worked to ensure the functionings of democracy in the region by sending election monitors. At the rhetorical level, Canada has always been willing to lend a "helping hand", at the request of the two parties, in resolving the conflict. On the nuclear issue, Canada has pushed to get both states to sign onto the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. But this is unlikely, and it is important to de-link fully the nuclear issue and other broader bilateral issues if relations between Canada and the two states reach their full potential.

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Both from the conference proceedings and from external sources, there are several options available for attempting to achieve a solution for the enduring conflict. Some of these tools would be applicable to Canadian efforts to solve the conflict.

- International pressure for the solution of the Kashmir issue (especially through the war on terror). This increases the ability of outside states to mediate by putting pressure on New Delhi and Islamabad to sit down and negotiate. This may not be an easy task, as it may be opposed by India.
- Keep Pakistan active in the war on terror and making sure Islamabad honors its commitment regarding stopping cross border terrorism. By doing so it may demoralize the insurgents that are entering Kashmir, and reduce the conflict level.
- Increase the voice of Kashmiris in the resolution of the conflict. Conflict exhaustion may play a role in fostering change in parties' positions.
- Exploit the divisions within the insurgent militants. There is a division between Kashmiri and Pakistani actors, who have divergent goals in achieving a possible resolution to the conflict. Treating them as a single unit is the wrong way to approach the issue.
- De-link nuclear weapons from Kashmir conflict. They act as stimulant as much as a retardant for the perpetuation of the conflict.
- Focus on the domestic politics in Pakistan. Kashmir is an issue that is dominating other internal civil problems – ones that are much more important for the Pakistani population. Continuing to ignore them by the Pakistani leadership, especially by the military rulers, has created a highly unequal society that may lead to broader civil conflict.
- While it is not certain that transition to democracy in Pakistan will end the conflict, data shows that there is a much better chance of peace if both India and Pakistan are truly democratic. Track II initiatives in developing a democratic civil society should be continued. Here Western countries such as Canada can actively support the emergence of a civil society in Pakistan and the reform of its educational system, which is currently dominated by religious schools.
- There needs to be an effort to get India to look farther ahead than the status quo. Its preponderant position in the conflict has made it entrench its policy of simple containment, with little regard for finding a solution. This has to be changed for the conflict to be resolved. This could be done by offering India membership in key international groups (such as the G8 or the UN Security Council) in exchange for a major negotiated peace offensive. De-hyphenating India and Pakistan and recognizing India as a key world player may be crucial for encouraging it to become a peacemaker in the region.
- Finally, countries such as Canada can help the two states to forge economic ties as economic interdependence seems to be correlated with less conflict. Academic institutions in the two countries and elsewhere could produce scientific analysis of the enormous costs of the conflict and the benefits in settling it peacefully.

Almost all of these options have either been undertaken by Canadian officials in the past, or are available to Canadian policy makers given the diplomatic tools at their disposal. Granted, Canadian influence in foreign affairs, and especially in conflict resolution, has

been declining significantly over the past decade, and as such this may limit Canada's ability to affect change. But there are opportunities both at the multilateral and bilateral level for Canada to participate in the process of conflict resolution, and should be pursued with whatever vigor can be mustered.

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