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The rivalry revisited

THE SOURCES OF DISCORD

What animates the Indo-Pakistani conflict? The question is far from trivial. This rivalry, which originated almost immediately after British colonial withdrawal from and the partition of the British Indian Empire in 1947, has proven to be remarkably durable.[1] It has resulted in four wars (1947–48, 1965, 1971 and 1999) and multiple crises.[2] The structural origins of this conflict have been explored at length elsewhere.[3]

This book, focused on Indo-Pakistani relations between 1999 and 2009, will attempt to answer a critical question: does the *security dilemma* (the *spiral model*) or the *deterrence model* best describe this relationship?[4] This attempt to squarely place the rivalry in the

1 For a particularly thoughtful account of the process of partition and the drawing of the Indo-Pakistani border see Lucy P. Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia: The Radcliffe Boundary Commission and the Partition of the Punjab* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

2 Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

3 For an Indian perspective on the British transfer of power see V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 1997); for a Pakistani perspective see Chaudhry Mohammed Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1983).

4 For a clear discussion of these two models see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 81.

context of central propositions from the security studies literature is a fundamentally novel endeavor.

The novelty of this approach is twofold. First, despite the persistence of this rivalry over six decades, the literature on the subject is scant.[5] What little does exists is either descriptive or historical in orientation and there have been few attempts to examine the rivalry through theoretical foci.[6] Second, this lack of scholarly attention to the sources of discord is puzzling, as the two states have been incipient nuclear-armed rivals for well over two decades and became overt nuclear weapons states in 1998. Furthermore, one of the two rivals, India, has long had aspirations to emerge as a great power. Indeed, according to some scholars, it has already achieved great power status.[7]

Some recent literature, mostly focused on Pakistan, while not explicitly alluding to the concept of the *security dilemma*, has nevertheless suggested that the sheer structural differences between the two states at the time of their emergence from the detritus of the British colonial empire in South Asia, led the weaker state, Pakistan, to fear its behemoth neighbor. To varying degrees, these works suggest that misgivings about India precipitated Pakistan's anxieties and set the stage for the rivalry.[8] Before turning to a discussion of

5 See for example Jyoti Bhusan Das Gupta, *Indo-Pakistan Relations, 1947–1955* (Amsterdam: De Brug Djambatan, 1958); Sisir Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1967); Russell Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict* (New York: Pall Mall, 1968).

6 For an attempt at theorizing about the conflict see T.V. Paul (ed.), *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); for a critique thereof see Sumit Ganguly, "War, Nuclear Weapons and Crisis Stability in South Asia," *Security Studies* 17, no. 1 (2008): 164–184.

7 Manjeet S. Pardesi, "Is India a Great Power? Understanding Great Power Status in Contemporary International Relations," *Asian Security* 11, no. 1 (2015): 1–30.

8 See for example, Ayesha Jalal, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); also see Aqil Shah, *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). It should be noted that Shah's argument, in some significant degree, differs from that of Jalal. Whereas Jalal suggests that India's size and initial intransigence set off Pakistan's fears, Shah argues that the Pakistani military establishment helped stoke those fears for its own parochial interests. An important exception to these analyses, and whose argument comports with mine, is C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Fair's argument

the *security dilemma* and *deterrence models* and their applicability to the Indo-Pakistani conflict it appears necessary to provide a brief account of the evolution of the rivalry.

The rivalry, from the outset, became structured within the territorial dispute over the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Briefly stated, the problem of the Kashmir dispute can be traced to the process of British colonial disengagement from the subcontinent. At the time of independence and partition there were two classes of states in British India. These were the states of British India and the so-called princely states. The latter had enjoyed nominal independence as long as they recognized the British Crown as the paramount power in South Asia and deferred to the British on matters of defense, foreign affairs and communications. Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy, had decreed that the princely states had to join either India or Pakistan based upon their demographic composition and their geographic location.[9] Kashmir posed a unique problem because it was a Muslim-majority state but with a Hindu monarch and abutted both India and Pakistan.[10] In the

is that Pakistan is not a security seeking state but a "greedy state." She traces the roots of Pakistan's behavior to its national ideology.

9 It is necessary at this juncture to state quite forthrightly that a controversy exists about the drawing of the borders at the time of independence and partition. A noted British historian, Alastair Lamb, has alleged that Lord Mountbatten influenced Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the London barrister who was entrusted with the task of delineating the boundaries of the two nascent states in drawing the partition line to ensure that a portion of Kashmir actually touched India. Lamb's allegation holds that the territory ceded to India was not a Muslim-majority region and therefore should not have been granted to India. Furthermore, Lamb claims that the Instrument of Accession, under the aegis of which Kashmir went to India, was signed after Indian troops had already landed in Srinagar. The first claim, on the basis of a careful examination of the demographic features of the border at the time of independence, can actually be refuted. The second remains a matter of debate and conjecture. For the purposes of this analysis the critical issue of the fairness of the drawing of the borders is deemed uncontroversial.For a response to Lamb, see Prem Shankar Jha, *Kashmir 1947: Rival Versions of History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

10 For the origins of the controversy see Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy* (Hertingfordbury: Roxford Books, 1991). For a superb rejoinder to Lamb based upon a careful sifting of demographic data see Shereen Ilahi, "The Radcliffe Boundary Commission and the Fate of Kashmir," *India Review* 2, no. 1 (January 2003): 77–102.

event, Maharaja Hari Singh, the monarch of Kashmir, chose not to accede to either state.[11]

As Hari Singh vacillated, Pakistan embarked upon a military strategy to wrest the state from India. It involved sending in Pakistani troops disguised as and mingled with local tribesmen to help foment a revolt against Hari Singh's rule.[12] As the Pakistan-aided rebels advanced toward Srinagar, the summer capital of his state, Maharaja Hari Singh, in panic, appealed to India for assistance. Prime Minister Nehru agreed to provide assistance but only if two conditions were met. The maharaja would have to accede to India and in the absence of a referendum to ascertain the wishes of the Kashmiri population, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, the leader of the principal, secular, popular party within the state would have to grant his imprimatur to the process.[13] Only when Abdullah gave his consent did Nehru permit Indian military forces to be flown into the state to stop the Pakistani-assisted tribal advance.[14]

The Indian military contingent managed to stop the Pakistani military onslaught but not before one-third of the state fell to the invaders.[15] On the advice of Lord Mountbatten the case was referred

11 His reasons were fairly straightforward. He did not wish to join Pakistan because as the ruler of a Muslim-majority state, who was not known for his benevolence toward his Muslim subjects, he feared that he would not fare well in a state that had been created as the homeland for the Muslims of South Asia. He also did not wish to join India because he knew that a socialist-leaning prime minister, Nehru, would strip him of most of his vast privileges. His fears, thereby, were hardly unfounded. For details see Jyoti Bhusan Das Gupta, *Jammu and Kashmir* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968); the obverse of this problem, up to a point, obtained in the princely state of Hyderabad where the Nizam, a Muslim ruler, presided over a Hindu-majority population. The difference, of course, lay in that Hyderabad did not share a border with Pakistan and was completely landlocked.

12 The particulars of Pakistan's military strategy can be found in Akbar Khan, *Raiders in Kashmir* (Lahore: National Book Foundation, 1975).

13 On Abdullah's imprimatur see Leo E. Rose and Richard Sisson, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1991); on Abdullah's popularity in the state see Ian Copeland, "The Abdullah Factor: Kashmiri Muslims and the Crisis of 1947," in D.A. Low (ed.), *The Political Inheritance of Pakistan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

14 Lionel Protip Sen, *Slender Was the Thread* (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1969).

15 The most dispassionate account of the Pakistani invasion and India's response can be found in Andrew Whitehead, *A Mission in Kashmir* (New York: Penguin, 2008).

to the United Nations on January 1, 1948 under the aegis of Chapter Seven of the United Nations Charter, which deals with matters pertaining to breaches of international peace and security. Following much discussion and the passage of multiple resolutions, the United Nations called for a ceasefire on January 1, 1949. This ceasefire was codified in the creation of a Ceasefire Line (CFL) that reflected the disposition of troops at the time.[16]

Subsequently, the issue quickly became embroiled in the politics of the Cold War. The Western powers, most notably the United Kingdom and subsequently the United States, did not deal dispassionately with the subject but instead allowed their geopolitical interests in Pakistan to shape their policies.[17] Nevertheless, the United Nations did pass two critical resolutions, which enjoined Pakistan to withdraw its troops, asked India to create conditions conducive to holding a plebiscite and then to conduct a plebiscite to determine the wishes of the Kashmiri population. As is well known, Pakistan refused to comply with the initial step and India, in turn, failed to follow through on the subsequent expectations. The matter followed a desultory course in the United Nations for almost two decades. Eventually, in the 1960s the UN lost interest in the subject.

In the aftermath of the disastrous Sino-Indian border war of 1962, India desperately sought military assistance from both the United States and the United Kingdom. Aware of India's strategic vulnerability, the two powers played a critical role in inducing bilateral discussions between India and Pakistan. These discussions stemmed from the Harriman/Sandys Mission, which had brought Averell Harriman, a US Assistant Secretary of State, and Duncan Sandys, a British Member of Parliament and Commonwealth Secretary to India. They successfully persuaded Prime Minister Nehru to hold talks with Pakistan with a view toward seeking a resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Faced with a looming military threat from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and dependent on both diplomatic and military support from both powers, Nehru had reluctantly agreed to hold talks. Between December 1962 and May 1963 a set of bilateral talks were held in a number of different locations

16 For details see Ganguly, 2001, pp. 16–19.
17 Chandrasekhar Dasgupta, *War and Diplomacy in Kashmir, 1947–1948* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002).

in India and Pakistan. Despite much Anglo-American pressure on India to reach an accord favorable to Pakistan, Nehru's otherwise beleaguered regime refused to give ground.[18]

Indeed the failure of multilateral negotiations and these bilateral talks played vital roles in precipitating the second Indo-Pakistani conflict in 1965.[19] This war ended in a military stalemate. Following its outbreak the United States imposed an arms embargo on both states irritating both parties in the process. The impact on Pakistan, however, was considerably greater as the vast majority of its equipment was of American origin. In the aftermath of the war, the United States evinced little interest in the problem. The Soviet Union, sensing an opportunity to expand its influence in South Asia, stepped into the breach. To that end it invited Nehru's successor, Prime Minister Shastri and President Ayub Khan, to the Central Asian city of Tashkent to broker a postwar accord. Under the terms of the Tashkent Agreement the two sides agreed to return to the *status quo ante* and to abjure from the use of force to settle the Kashmir dispute.

A third war took place between India and Pakistan in 1971. This conflict, however, did not have its origins in the Kashmir dispute. Instead it can be traced to the exigencies of Pakistani domestic politics. In the wake of Pakistan's first free and fair election in December 1970, the Awami League, an East Pakistan-based political party led by Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, won an overwhelming victory in the province. In West Pakistan, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) swept the polls. Given this bifurcated electoral verdict the two sides needed to reach a power-sharing agreement. As negotiations ensued it became increasingly apparent that the PPP (and its military backers) had little or no interest in arriving at an accord that would involve a genuinely equitable arrangement.[20] Indeed by March 1971 the two parties found themselves in a virtual deadlock. Of course, the military, which had little or

18 For details see Rudra Chaudhuri, *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States Since 1947* (London: Christopher Hurst and Company, 2014), pp. 126–148.

19 On the origins of the 1965 war see Sumit Ganguly, "Deterrence Failure Revisited: The Indo-Pakistani Conflict of 1965," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 13, no. 4 (December 1990): 77–93.

20 Rounaq Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

no interest whatsoever in any power-sharing arrangement, abandoned the negotiations at the behest of the president and a coterie of senior generals.[21]

Meanwhile, the supporters of the Awami League in East Pakistan ramped up their demands and sought to extract an unprecedented degree of autonomy from the West. Their stance was hardly unreasonable given that since independence the West had, for all practical purposes, dominated the politics and economics of the country.[22]

As the impasse persisted, the Pakistani military embarked on a crackdown on East Pakistan's attentive public on March 26, 1971, especially in the capital city of Dacca (now Dhaka). Over the course of the week the Pakistan Army killed over one hundred thousand civilians.[23] Faced with this repression several million East Pakistanis fled the country and sought refuge in various Indian border states. By May of 1971, the refugee influx had reached nearly ten million.[24]

Faced with this refugee burden, India's policy-makers quickly concluded that they could ill-afford to absorb them into India's already turgid population. Though they went through the motions of seeking a diplomatic solution to the ongoing crisis, they started to formulate a contingency plan for the invasion of East Pakistan designed to break off the province from the West. Over the course of the next several months, even as some diplomatic activity ensued, India's security forces and intelligence services started to train, equip and support an indigenous Bengali insurgency movement, the Mukti Bahini (literally "liberation force"). Pakistani authorities protested India's covert involvement in the politics of East Pakistan but India's support did not flag. Unable to quell the internal rebellion, which was gathering steam thanks to India's efforts, the Pakistani Air Force struck at India's northern bases on December 6, 1971. This attack, which proved to be mostly

21 On this point, which challenges the conventional wisdom that the talks had broken down, see Jalal, 2014, p. 172.
22 Rose and Sisson, 1991.
23 The best treatment of this tragedy can be found in Gary J. Bass, *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide* (New York: Knopf, 2013).
24 Robert Jackson, *South Asian Crisis: India, Pakistan, Bangla Desh* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975).

unsuccessful, nevertheless provided India with the formal *casus belli* to invade East Pakistan.[25]

THE LONG PEACE AND ITS END

After the third Indo-Pakistani conflict in 1971, the region had seen a period of unprecedented, if cold, peace. In considerable part, this long peace in South Asia stemmed from Pakistan's decisive defeat in the 1971 war and the concomitant asymmetry in Indian and Pakistani military capabilities. Furthermore, the Pakistan Army, thanks to the military debacle in East Pakistan, had been mostly discredited, giving a civilian regime some control over the security establishment. Consequently, apart from some tensions in the wake of the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan when an arms transfer and military nexus was renewed between the United States and Pakistan, the Kashmir issue remained dormant until December 1989.

The only exception was a crisis that took place in 1987. This stemmed from India's attempt to respond to Pakistan's involvement in an indigenous insurgency that was wracking the state of Punjab. The origins of the Punjab insurgency have been discussed at length elsewhere.[26] In the mid-1980s, Pakistan had become deeply embroiled in the insurgency and was providing the insurgents with sanctuary, training and material support.[27] Given that Punjab is located in the Indian heartland, its policy-makers decided that a strong dissuasive message should be sent to Pakistan.

As circumstances would have it, the Indian Army was under the leadership of a flamboyant, US-trained officer, General Krishnaswami Sundarji. General Sundarji was keen on modernizing the Indian military and wanted to pursue a more assertive military doctrine. He was interested in testing an indigenously developed system of radars and telecommunication equipment. To that end, he

25 Much of this is discussed in Srinath Raghavan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).
26 On the Punjab insurgency see Gurharpal Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case Study of Punjab* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).
27 Hamish Telford "Counter-Insurgency in India: Observations from Punjab and Kashmir," *The Journal of Conflict Studies* 21, no. 1 (2001): 1–27.

sought and received permission to carry out a very substantial military exercise, code-named Brasstacks, in the Rajasthan desert bordering Pakistan. The sheer length of the exercise, spanning several months, its extraordinary size, involving close to 150,000 soldiers and its east–west axis provoked Pakistani anxieties.[28] (Most military exercises, in the past, had been held along a north–south axis to avoid conveying any impression that the exercise was a prelude to a possible war.)

Not surprisingly, Pakistan chose not to return some key units to its peacetime stations following the termination of its own winter military exercises "Sledgehammer" and "Flying Horse." Instead, it placed them at some strategic salients along the Indo-Pakistani border. These Pakistani military moves, in turn, led to serious misgivings in New Delhi and generated fears of a possible war. Such fears were not entirely unfounded, given the deeply disturbed situation within the Punjab and the links between some of the Punjabi separatist groups and Pakistan's intelligence agencies. As tensions mounted, US and Soviet diplomats (and intelligence specialists), who had followed the emergence of this spiral, used their good offices to intercede in both Islamabad and New Delhi in attempts to defuse the situation.

As the crisis drew to a close, one of the principal architects of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, Abdul Qadir Khan, gave an interview to a noted Indian journalist, Kuldip Nayar, in which he asserted that Pakistan was well within reach of fashioning a nuclear weapon. It is not wholly clear if Khan's revelation constituted a deliberate attempt at nuclear signaling. However, Indian authorities did take this disclosure seriously and boosted their own covert nuclear weapons program.[29] Though the crisis did not escalate into a war thanks to timely superpower intercession, it reinforced in New Delhi existing misgivings about Pakistani military regimes and of General Zia-ul-Haq, the Pakistani military dictator, in particular.

28 Steven R. Weisman, "On India's Border, A Huge Mock War," *New York Times*, March 6, 1987.

29 Much of this discussion about the Brasstacks crisis has been derived from Kanti Bajpai, P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Stephen P. Cohen and Sumit Ganguly, *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and the Management of Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar Books, 1995).

General Zia, of course, perished in a mysterious plane crash in the summer of 1988. His abrupt death led the Pakistani military to return to the barracks. Their decision not to cling on to power stemmed from US pressures as well as a realization that the populace had tired of military rule. Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of the Pakistani president, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who General Zia had sent to the gallows, assumed office in an election that was deemed to be free and fair. Shortly thereafter she evinced a willingness to start discussions with India to try and improve relations. These efforts, quite apart from the ingrained hostility of the security establishment, quickly proved to be abortive.

In December 1989, an indigenous, ethno-religious insurgency erupted in the Indian-controlled portion of the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir. The internal dimensions of this crisis, like that in the Punjab, also stemmed primarily from various shortcomings in India's federal order. The incipient peace process that Bhutto, along with her Indian counterpart, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, had initiated was now placed in jeopardy.[30] The abrupt onset of the rebellion in Indian-controlled Kashmir effectively ended these nascent discussions.

Shortly thereafter the insurgency threatened to spin out of control as Indian authorities proved wholly incapable of coping with it. Within the year of the outbreak of the insurgency, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI-D) worked assiduously to transform it from a grassroots uprising into a well-orchestrated, religiously inspired and externally supported extortion racket.[31] The Indian state initially responded in a ham-fisted fashion to quell the insurgents. Its initial approach was to use extensive force against the insurgents. Ironically, this strategy produced perverse results. It had the effect of further inflaming the sentiments of the local population and widened the scope of the insurgency.

30 On the origins of the insurgency see Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

31 For the role of the ISI-D see Arif Jamal, *Shadow War: The Untold Story of Jihad in Kashmir* (New York: Melville House, 2009) and Praveen Swami, *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir, 1947–2004* (London: Routledge, 2007).