

3 The India-Pakistan conflict in light of general theories of war, rivalry, and deterrence

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Introduction

This chapter examines the India-Pakistan conflict in light of international relations theory. What can some of these theories tell us about the causes of the conflict, why the conflict goes to war, why it persists, and whether nuclear weapons will increase or decrease the probability of war? Two major theories will be the focus of the analysis: the steps to war explanation and classical deterrence theory, with an emphasis on the former. The chapter will begin with an overview of the steps to war explanation. It will then review some of the research on that explanation. Next, this explanation will be utilized to see how it can explain the India-Pakistan conflict and what new insights it might offer. Then, deterrence theory will be reviewed and criticized in light of the steps to war explanation. Lastly, the possibility of deterrence failure in the India-Pakistan conflict will be discussed.

The steps to war explanation: an overview

The steps to war explanation attempts to make sense of a welter of empirical findings on war by thinking about what these findings tell us about the foreign policy behavior between two or more states that makes them go to war. Since I have presented this explanation both in detailed and summary form, I will give only a brief overview here.¹ Out of this foreign policy perspective comes the idea that as states adopt certain goals and objectives and then take action to support those objectives, they engage in behavior that has the effect of increasing hostility and threat

perception. This has both external effects (in terms of a state's relations with an opponent) and internal effects (in terms of the number of foreign policy hardliners and accommodationists). The end result is that certain foreign policy actions can be seen as a series of steps to war in that each step increases the probability of war.

The explanation posits that territorial issues are an underlying cause of war. Of all the issues over which states contend, territorial issues can be regarded as the most likely to become life and death issues worthy of going to war. They are highly salient and tend to fester unless both sides can resolve the issues to their mutual satisfaction or one side can achieve an overwhelming victory over the other. In the absence of these outcomes protracted conflict and even recurrent wars are not surprising, even if not the modal pattern.

For obvious reasons, territorial disagreements are most likely to occur between neighbors, and empirical evidence supports the claim that most wars and rivalries involve neighbors.² Whether a territorial disagreement goes to war, however, depends on how it is handled. The same is true for whether territorial conflicts persist – how they are handled, given the domestic and external context, will have a major impact on whether the contending states become enduring rivalries, as we will see when we examine the India-Pakistan case.

The foreign policy practices of a state, how it handles issues between itself and those that contend with it, are posited as the proximate cause of war. These practices, including the institution of war, should not be seen as given. It is assumed that war is a social invention that is learned in history and changes in history. It is also argued that leaders, diplomats, and others create folklores or diplomatic cultures that guide states and inform their leaders when it is appropriate to handle a situation with the use of force.

In the West, one of the most important roles of realist thinking, beginning with Thucydides and going down to Morgenthau and beyond, is that it has provided a folklore that tells leaders how they should act when faced with security issues. Realist folklore or culture informs leaders that, in the face of security issues, they should increase their power. The two main ways of doing that for realism are to either make alliances and/or build up one's military. The problem, however, as realists recognize, is that this gives rise to a security dilemma in that taking these actions makes one's opponent insecure and encourages them to do the same thing. The end result can often be that alliance making leads to counter-alliances and

My thanks to T. V. Paul, Daniel Geller, Marie Henahan, David Stuligross, and the anonymous reviewers of the book for valuable comments. The responsibility for the analysis remains mine alone however.

¹ See John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); John A. Vasquez, "Reexamining the Steps to War: New Evidence and Theoretical Insights," in Manus Midlarsky (ed.), *Handbook of War Studies II* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 371–406.

² Stuart A. Bremer, "Dangerous Dynads: Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816–1965," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36 (1992), 309–41; John A. Vasquez and Marie T. Henahan, "Territorial Disputes and the Probability of War, 1816–1992," *Journal of Peace Research* 38 (2001), Tables I–IV.

military buildups lead to arms racing. One of the ironies of realism is that, among relative equals,³ each of these steps increases insecurity, threat perception, and hostility. In this sense, they can be seen as steps that bring each party closer to war.

States adopt these practices not only to increase their security, but also to press their claims or defend their positions. Alliance making and military buildups not only signal resolve, but also provide a means of attaining foreign policy objectives. To attain an objective, however, a state must do more than make alliances or build up its military; it must take action, and in the face of action, a target must defend itself. Realism sees the threat and use of force (and a host of realpolitik tactics) as one of the main ways (and of course it is the only unilateral way) of bringing about changes (or redistributions) in the existing allocation of valued things in the international system. Since territory is so salient, resorting to the threat or use of force is not apt to result in many concessions, especially among equals. It is more likely to lead to a stalemate or simply to no resolution at all. Nevertheless, because the issue is salient to leaders (and to hardliners within the polity) territorial disputes tend to recur. The theory posits that crises and militarized interstate disputes that recur promote escalatory behavior and increase the number and influence of hardliners domestically, even though this may not occur in a straight uninterrupted linear fashion. Eventually, a crisis emerges that escalates to war.

Power politics can be seen as a set of proximate causes of war in that it tells leaders how to handle security issues, including territorial issues. It is a *proximate* cause in that it is closer to the outbreak of war. It is a *cause* in that if issues could be handled in other ways, then war could be avoided, or at least have a higher probability of being avoided. Power politics, because it involves a way of handling issues that increases the probability of war, will increase the probability of any issue going to war and not just territorial issues.

³ Equals is defined here in terms of status, which is assumed to have some relationship, but not a perfect one, to material capability in terms of demographic, economic, and military resources. All major states (e.g., Britain, Germany, Russia, Japan, etc. in the late nineteenth century) are treated as equal to each other, and all minor states are treated as equal to each other, even though they have different capabilities. At their birth India and Pakistan are equal in status, both being minor states, even though India has greater capability on a number of standard measures. See Russell J. Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002), 197-99; Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press 2001), 19; Baldev Raj Nayyar and T. V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major Power Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Later, especially after the Bangladesh War, India seems to be emerging as a dominant state in South Asia, and in the long run India can be seen as a potential major state. Pakistan tries to counter this by acquiring nuclear weapons – the quick technological fix.

The point here is not to deny that the structure of the situation also promotes power politics, but to maintain that the institutionalization of realist ideas in the diplomatic culture makes leaders more aware of and more likely to follow realist strategies, as well as more likely to see them as legitimate ways of handling certain situations. Realist theory becomes a way of predicting what kinds of policies leaders will adopt to handle highly salient security issues. Realist theory, however, underestimates the extent to which these policies actually encourage a decision for war.⁴

The language of “steps” is meant to convey that the pursuing of certain objectives by adopting realist practices, such as the making of alliances, buildups of the military, and resorting to the threat and use of force, increases the probability of war each time one of these is adopted. These steps, however, should not be seen as necessarily following a particular sequence. Alliances may precede or follow military buildups, and militarized disputes are likely to punctuate the entire relationship, thereby occurring before and after certain practices are adopted. While there might be a sequential pattern to the steps that can be theoretically derived and/or inductively established, such precision is not necessary at this stage of research. What is important is that the presence of more than one step, regardless of its order, results in an increase in the probability of war.

One of the problems in applying general international relations theories to a specific case is that sometimes these theories may not have had many tests to see if the general patterns they posit actually hold across history. While such applications of theory to current situations can be enlightening, they also can lead to misleading conclusions if the theory upon which they are based turns out to be empirically inaccurate. Since the initial publication of the steps to war explanation a number of empirical studies have been conducted that have tested aspects of the explanation. A review of this research will help us see the extent to which various aspects of the explanation have empirical corroboration.

Previous research

One of the main things we now know about territorial disputes that we did not know before 1996 is that they are, in fact, highly war prone. This has been established by a number of studies employing different research designs and databases, so that the finding seems to be robust.⁵ It should

⁴ See Vasquez, *The War Puzzle*, 114-17.

⁵ Paul Hensel, “Charting a Course to Conflict: Territorial Issues and Interstate Conflict, 1816-1992,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15 (Spring 1996), Table 2; Paul

be noted that most of these studies define a militarized interstate dispute (MID) as over territory only when official representatives make specific claims of territory in another state's jurisdiction *before* the actual threat or use of force made in relation to that claim.⁶ In this way, the concept of territorial dispute is not so elastic as to make every war a war over territory simply because battles may be fought to hold and capture territory or territory may be exchanged after a war even though it was not officially claimed before.⁷

The research on territorial disputes has also found that territorial disputes are more apt to recur between the parties, which suggests that dyads that have territorial disputes are more apt to become enduring rivals, a prediction that has been subsequently substantiated by research.⁸ There has been research also on whether certain types of territorial claims, like those related to ethnic conflict, are more apt to escalate to more intense levels of military confrontation.⁹ One of the reasons that ethnic territorial issues are the most likely to escalate is because domestic hardliners demand that leaders take more drastic actions and oppose attempts to compromise.¹⁰ The tendency of ethnic territorial issues to generate domestic hardline constituencies may be an important factor for explaining why territorial disputes recur,

especially when the two sides are relatively equal. Such hardline behavior can even extend to the point where non-state actors take matters into their own hands by engaging in communal strife or attacking the other side, something which has frequently happened in Kashmir.

The research on the other steps to war – alliances, rivalry, and arms races – is too extensive to review here in detail. Nevertheless, an overview of the research most relevant to the model reveals a general consistency with the claim that taking these steps is often associated with war, although little of this work examines the steps in combination with each other. Evidence on alliances shows that certain types of alliances increase the probability of war.¹¹

Research on recurring crises finds that as disputes between the same two parties repeat, war is more likely.¹² Pairs of states or dyads that have recurring disputes are conceptualized as rivalries,¹³ and a key conclusion of this literature is that most wars that have been fought since 1816 have rivals in them.

Early research on arms races supported the claim that militarized confrontations between major states that occur in the context of an ongoing arms race are more apt to escalate to war. This research, however, generated a heated debate as to whether there really is a relationship between arms races and the escalation of disputes to war or whether these findings are a function of the research design and measures.¹⁴ Recent research, however, has shown that while the relationship between arms races and a given MID escalating to war is at best of only moderate strength (although statistically significant), the probability of an MID between the parties arms racing escalating to war within five years is fairly high during the pre-nuclear era.¹⁵

Sensie, "Geographic Proximity and Issue Salience: Their Effects on the Escalation of Militarized Interstate Conflict," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15 (1996), 151, 153–54; Vasquez and Hennehan, "Territorial Disputes and the Probability of War," Tables I–IV; Hemda Ben-Yehuda, "Territoriality, Crisis and War in the Arab-Israel Conflict, 1947–94," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 21 (2001), 78–108.

⁶ See Daniel Jones, Stuart Bremer, and J. David Singer, "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15 (1996), 178.

⁷ Without a rigorously narrow definition of territorial disputes, the territorial explanation of war would be tautological. For an empirical examination of whether the territorial explanation is tautological, see Vasquez, "Reexamining the Steps to War," in Midlarsky (ed.), *Handbook of War Studies II*, 383–86. This study shows that the territorial explanation of war is testable and falsifiable. This analysis shows that only 28.7 percent of the 2,034 MIDs are coded as territorial and that policy disputes with 46.3 percent are the modal dispute in the data. It should also be noted that coding of territorial MIDs was done by those who had no knowledge of the territorial explanation of war, since it did not exist at that time, and therefore there was no unconscious tendency of finding territorial disputes because the coder thought it was going to go to war.

⁸ See respectively, Paul Hensel, "One Thing Leads to Another: Recurrent Militarized Disputes in Latin America, 1816–1986," *Journal of Peace Research* 31 (1994), 281–98; John A. Vasquez and Christopher Leskiv, "The Origins and War Promeness of Interstate Rivalries," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001), 295–316.

⁹ Paul Huth, *Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*; A. Bikash Roy, "Intervention Across Bisecting Borders," *Journal of Peace Research* 34 (1997), 3–14. One example of this just prior to the Second Kashmir War are the calls in Pakistan for Ayub Khan to fight a jihad to liberate Kashmir; see Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises*, 224–25, 227–28.

¹¹ See Douglas M. Galtier, "Alliances: Why Some Cause War and Why Others Cause Peace," in John Vasquez (ed.), *What Do We Know about War?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 145–64; Paul Sensie and John Vasquez, "Alliances, Territorial Disputes, and the Probability of War: Testing for Interactions," in Paul Diehl (ed.), *The Source of War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Jack S. Levy, "Alliance Formation and War Behavior: An Analysis of the Great Powers, 1495–1975," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 25 (December 1981), Table 7.

¹² Russell Leng, "When Will They Ever Learn? Coercive Bargaining in Recurrent Crises," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27 (September 1983), 379–419.

¹³ Paul Diehl and Gary Goertz, *War and Peace in International Reality* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); see also Frank Whetton Wayman, "Rivalries: Recurrent Disputes and Explaining War," in Vasquez (ed.), *What Do We Know about War?*, 219–34.

¹⁴ Michael D. Wallace, "Arms Races and Escalation: Some New Evidence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 23 (March 1979), 3–16; Paul Diehl, "Arms Races and Escalation: A Closer Look," *Journal of Peace Research* 20 (1983), 205–12.

¹⁵ Susan G. Sample, "Arms Races and Dispute Escalation: Resolving the Debate," *Journal of Peace Research* 34 (1997), 7–22; Susan G. Sample, "The Outcomes of Military Buildups: Minor States vs. Major Powers," *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (2002), 669–92.

The steps to war in the India-Pakistan conflict

To what extent are these findings and the steps to war explanation relevant to the India-Pakistan conflict? Can such aggregate findings and theory elucidate specific historical cases? Table 3.1 lists the various steps to war. It will be interesting to see how many of these steps can be found in the India-Pakistan case. Territory as an underlying cause will be treated first and the power politics proximate causes second.

The role of territory

One of the initial things that the steps to war explanation can tell us is what is driving these wars and how typical are they in terms of their underlying causes. The steps to war explanation asserts that territorial conflict is frequently an underlying cause of war. Among neighbors, the explanation goes further and says that: "*Ceteris paribus*, two states bordering on each other will early on in their history use aggressive displays to establish a border in an area where they both have frequent contact."¹⁶

The India-Pakistan case provides an interesting test of this proposition on borders because two new nation-states are being created from a colonial empire through a process being structured by the former colonial power in light of those demanding independence. In general, the entire process of colonial independence and contemporary state creation provides a set of cases for seeing the extent to which borders are demarked through aggressive displays. One path-breaking study maintains that whether the borders of new states are challenged militarily depends very much on how the states come into existence.¹⁷ If new states arise through revolution or other forms of violence, they are more apt to have their borders challenged by neighbors. If these states arise through a more evolutionary process and their borders are consistent with the norms of the time, then the probability of their being challenged goes down. Thus, among sub-Saharan African states that gained independence peacefully in the 1960s, an agreement is reached through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that the borders made by the colonial powers will be honored and recognized. This has the effect of preventing many interstate wars,¹⁸ but such borders are not always recognized internally

Table 3.1 Steps to war

Rise of Territorial Disputes (underlying cause) handled in a power politics fashion (proximate causes):
Recurrent disputes
Alliance making
Arms races
One Crisis Escalates to War

and have been associated with civil wars and ethnic conflict. Whether such an OAU consensus will continue as certain states become stronger and more able to expand remains to be seen, but the territorial explanation of war would predict that it would. Nevertheless, even if it does not, sub-Saharan Africa has been spared the kind of warfare that was attendant at the birth of India and Pakistan or the birth of modern Israel.

India and Pakistan are states that are born in disagreement about their border and specifically about the future of Jammu and Kashmir. Note that there are several disagreements here: (1) initially the disagreement is not about the demarked border around Jammu and Kashmir (although where it is not clearly demarked will later become an issue) but about whether Jammu and Kashmir will accede to India or Pakistan or be independent; (2) whether the process agreed upon for accession has been properly followed; and (3) whether the norm of nationalism and self-determination should be the principle followed for the transfer of territory that is in dispute.

The territorial concerns at the time of independence and the fundamental territorial issues underlying the rivalry should not be interpreted narrowly as the concrete stakes associated with the "land" of Kashmir. According to the territorial explanation of war, what makes territorial disputes so intractable is that concrete tangible territorial stakes, like pieces of land, that are in principle divisible, become infused with "symbolic" and even "transcendent" qualities that make them intangible, perceived in zero-sum terms, and hence difficult to divide.

Symbolic stakes involve the idea that a given stake is important not for its intrinsic value, but because it stands for a number of other stakes.¹⁹ Reputational concerns play a key role in making symbolic stakes

¹⁶ Vasquez, *The War Puzzle*, 310; see also 140-41.

¹⁷ Zeev Maoz, "Joining the Club of Nations," *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (June 1989), 199-231.

¹⁸ Douglas Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁹ The Rann of Kutch is an example of symbolic stake. Here is a fairly worthless piece of ground that takes on importance because it stands for Kashmir. See Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises*, 215-16. For further elaboration on the concepts of concrete,

intractable.²⁰ Leaders will fight for a symbolic stake from fear that failure to do so will encourage further attacks or probes. Transcendent stakes frame issues in terms of fundamental disagreements over values (like democracy *vs.* dictatorship). These can easily become a fight for survival and one's way of life or culture, which in turn can be seen as a battle between good and evil. Such issues become zero-sum, and because they cannot be compromised, they fester and tend to end relatively quickly primarily when one side is completely destroyed.

None of the questions involving major territorial disagreements at the time of independence are successfully negotiated even though there are a number of intermediaries, including the United Nations, trying to prevent the demarcation of the border through war. The steps to war explanation and existing research on territorial disputes suggest that this is a situation where the conflict of which norm to follow (nationalism or the process laid out for accession) is going to provide an ambiguity where both sides will be unwilling to accept the outcome of the decision game that will result in their losing potential territory. The steps to war explanation assumes, as does Clausewitz, that war occurs when the goals of policy cannot be attained by the normal means available. This is precisely what happens in the First Kashmir War. Pakistan and nationalists in Kashmir who do not want to accede to India resort to arms because they feel that they will lose if they do not. Added to this is the dual notion that the decision game that will lead to Jammu and Kashmir acceding to India is rigged and in violation of the greater principle of nationalism and self-determination.

The First Kashmir War is fundamentally a territorial war. In one way or another all the subsequent wars (even the Bangladesh War) are derivative from the set of territorial concerns at the time of independence, as are most of the MIDs between the wars.²¹ From an international relations theory perspective, the India-Pakistan wars arise out of an initial typical war between neighbors over territorial boundaries. As a set of interrelated

symbolic and transcendent stakes, see Richard Mansbach and John Vasquez, *In Search of Theory: A New Paradigm for Global Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 61-67.

²⁰ Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 26-29; Barbara Walter, "Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict," *International Studies Review* 5 (2003), 137-53; Mansbach and Vasquez, *In Search of Theory*, 61-62.

²¹ On how the Bangladesh War is related to territorial dispute over Kashmir see Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises*, 256-57, 260-61. For a more detailed discussion see Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Succession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Put simply, the Bangladesh War is triggered by the huge influx of refugees into India, but at the same time India uses this opportunity to dismember and weaken its rival, while enhancing its own strategic position *vis-à-vis* Pakistan and China.

wars, they are not unusual in their causes and are fairly straightforward in terms of their underlying fundamentals. They are also typical in terms of how they compare to other wars fought since 1816. If one classifies wars in terms of what they are fought over and who fights them, then one finds that the modal interstate war since 1816 is the dyadic war over territory.²² Of these, the most common is between minor states fighting over territory.²³

The steps to war explanation posits, and existing empirical findings show, that territorial disputes that fail to be resolved tend to recur. This is because the revisionist state will not permit the status quo to persist unmoled. This too is the pattern in the India-Pakistan conflict with Pakistan assuming the role of the revisionist state. Figure 3.1 plots all the MIDs between the two parties from 1947 through 1992. The Y axis portrays the level of hostility with 1 equal to non-militarized action (these are not included in the data), 2 equal to the threat to use force, 3 equal to a display of force, 4 equal to an actual use of force, and 5 equal to those uses of force that result in war (with at least 1,000 combined battle deaths). The lightly colored lines portray the MIDs that each state had with the other. As can be seen, this is a very disputatious dyad; indeed it is one of the most contentious in the post-1945 era.

The steps to war explanation posits that territorial disputes are so salient that they will continue to fester unless they are resolved either through an overwhelming victory or through a mutually accepted settlement that recognizes the border as legal.²⁴ The India-Pakistan conflict is so disputatious because neither side has been able to attain that overwhelming victory, and as a result they have had a sufficient number of recurring disputes that they have become an interstate rivalry (conventionally defined as six or more MIDs within twenty years).²⁵ Again this is not unusual, as research has shown a pair of states that has a territorial dispute has a greater probability of developing an enduring rivalry than a pair of states that has policy or regime disputes.²⁶

²² There are fifty-one dyadic wars (of seventy-nine interstate wars) fought from 1816 to 1997, and of these fifty-one, twenty-six are between neighbors fighting over territory. The next ranked dyadic war between neighbors are fifteen policy wars, see John A. Vasquez and Brandon Valeriano, "A Classification of Interstate War," Paper Prepared for the International Studies Association Annual Meeting, Mar. 21, 2004, Montreal, 14.

²³ Minor states are defined in the post-1945 period in accordance with the Correlates of War project as none of the following: US, USSR, UK, France, China (after 1949), Germany (after 1990), Japan (after 1990). This variable refers to status not to capability.

²⁴ Vasquez, *The War Puzzle*, 146-49, 311.

²⁵ See Diehl and Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry*, 45; and Diehl, Goertz, and Saeedi in this volume.

²⁶ Vasquez and Leskiw, "The Origins and War Proneness of Interstate Rivalries," 305-07.

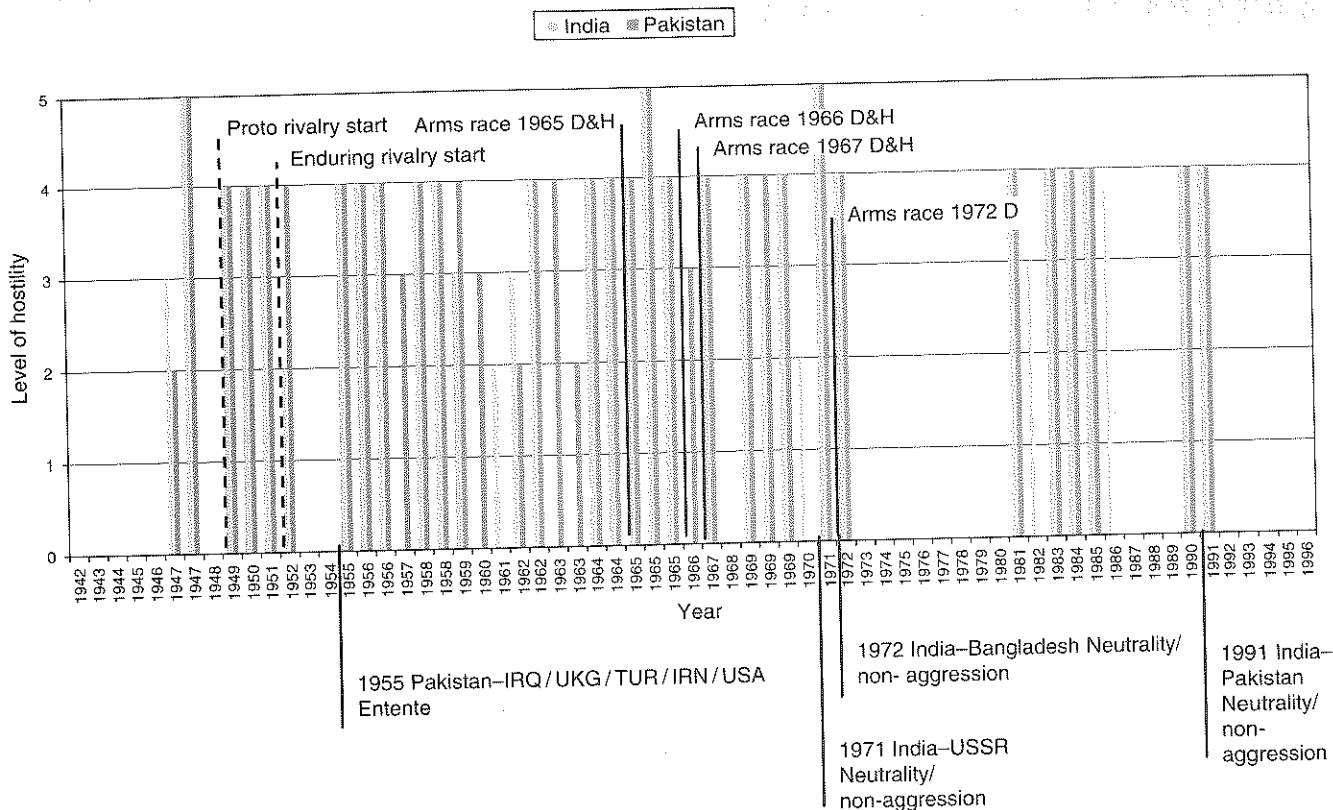


Figure 3.1 India-Pakistan relations, 1947-1991

The disputes and wars fail to produce victory primarily for two reasons: first, each side is relatively equal in status, and, second, international intervention prevents the wars from becoming fights to the finish. Nevertheless, one of the remarkable things about this rivalry from a realist perspective is that the two states, although equal in status, are relatively unequal in capability and that Pakistan persists in pursuing the issue and initiated three of the four wars (if one includes the Kargil armed action as a war) even though it is typically the weaker of the two. This was true early on, as pointed out by Sumit Ganguly, when military hardware was divided on a 30:70 ratio in favor of India, and especially the case after the Bangladesh War, which led to Pakistan's dismemberment.²⁷ Nevertheless, there are times when this asymmetry is not very large in Kashmir, the main theater of the conflict.²⁸

Although much work has been done on the seeming irrationality of such asymmetric conflict,²⁹ the steps to war explanation can provide a couple of insights. First, it maintains that hardliners push leaders to take more forceful and often more escalatory action. They often prevent leaders from granting concessions and making compromises that might settle the dispute. The Pakistani leadership has certainly felt this pressure at various times, and if we are to take it at least partially at its word, they have even been drawn into MIDs by the actions of nationalist groups not fully under their control. In states with salient territorial disputes, there is always an incentive for leaders to ride to power on a nationalist tiger, but once in power they then have to satisfy that constituency and failure to do so will result in losing power. In Pakistan this simple model will not account for the various leadership changes, which are complex; nevertheless, leaders do feel compelled by their own beliefs and nationalist hardliners not to allow the Kashmir issue to slip off the agenda.³⁰

Second, the steps to war explanation maintains that coercive strategies are not abandoned until they fully run their course. Realists and hardliners can always explain why force failed by maintaining that the strategy and tactics were not sufficiently escalatory – they held back, i.e., the state did not go to war or did not fight the war correctly. So long as the existing strategy has not met with success, hardliners feel a more escalatory strategy or a war fought in more favorable circumstances will lead to

²⁷ Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, 19.

²⁸ See Paul in this volume, who points out that at times nearly half of India's troops are on the border with China.

²⁹ For example, see T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

³⁰ For an analysis of how identity and the Kashmir issue are important for framing domestic politics in Pakistan, see Nasr in this volume.

success. There is a reluctance to abandon the coercive realist path until all the strategies embodied in its logic have been tried. Russell Leng has shown that this kind of thinking has led crises to become more escalatory as they repeat; in this way coercion leads to coercion and wars to more wars.³¹

Leng's definition of "crisis" involves characteristics that make them a more hostile sub-set of MIDs in general. Nevertheless, the kind of escalatory pattern he describes as taking place across crises is only partially evident in the India-Pakistan rivalry depicted in Figure 3.1. Rather than a straight linear relationship, the general pattern is a fairly high level of severity with a periodic low-level dispute.³² What is remarkable about the India-Pakistan case (see Figure 3.1) is how many MIDs reach level four. This pattern however does not necessarily contradict Leng since the five-point MID scale is very broad with four being any use of force without regard to the degree of force other than that it produces fewer than 1,000 battle deaths.³³ Leng does not specify an escalatory trend across wars, and it is less clear whether there is an upward trend across wars in this case, although the Bangladesh War can be seen as more severe, especially in terms of its consequences, than those before, as can the nuclear posturing in 1998-99.

If a given leader will not try the unused strategies, then domestic constituencies will push the leader from office or even try the strategies on their own. Territorial disputes are particularly prone to such tendencies because leaders do not want to give in, and hardliners' constituencies will not permit them to give in. Some research on Latin America is informative in this regard in that it shows that even when leaders try to avoid responsibility for giving in on a territorial issue by turning it over to an arbitration board, they end up either reneging on the agreement if it goes against them or being overthrown.³⁴ Within the India-Pakistan case, the most recent example of this tendency is the overthrow of Nawaz Sharif by Musharraf after the Kargil War, although Sharif provoked the coup by not permitting General Musharraf's airplane to land.³⁵ Nevertheless, Sharif felt boxed in by Pakistan's hardliners, especially

those in the military, and expressed this concern during his White House meeting regarding Kargil.³⁶

What theoretical conclusions can be reached about the India-Pakistan case in light of the above analysis? The analysis maintains that territory is the key to this and most other conflicts between neighbors. Ideological, religious, or cultural rationales, even if believed by actors, may intensify a territorial dispute, but they are not the fundamental cause, especially in terms of determining whether an issue has a high probability of escalating to war. At best these rationales are epiphenomena produced by the natural tendency to infuse territorial stakes with symbolic and transcendent attributes, or, at worse, attempts to rally domestic and external supporters. In this sense, this analysis agrees with Steve Saideman that territory is the key in terms of explaining the rivalry and its wars.³⁷ Likewise, it agrees with Ashok Kapur, that the religious *vs.* secular state issue is not fundamental.³⁸ It follows that territory is the key to resolving the rivalry and avoiding future war.

Conflicts between neighbors over territory are seen as both natural and difficult to avoid. In the absence of clear natural borders or a history of an established border, the territorial explanation of war posits that two states will use aggressive displays to establish a border. Given that the British departure did not delineate the borders of the two states and get all sides to recognize them, but instead established a process for creating independent states, disagreement is not surprising. Interestingly, the British did get recognition of existing borders of many individual states. The dispute was not over the border of Kashmir, but the process of determining whether it would adhere to India or Pakistan, or be independent. Despite this concern over legality, the territorial explanation would anticipate that loopholes would be exploited and then lead to conflict when the borders were not mutually accepted.³⁹

Having said that territory is a key, it is equally true that some types of territorial disputes are more intractable than others. In particular, ethnic disputes that center on the control of the same territory are highly conflict-prone. The main reason for this, as stated earlier, is that they give rise to headline constituencies that push for their issue. In doing so, they often

³¹ Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises*, 260.

³² See Diehl, Goertz, and Saeedi in this volume.

³³ See the discussion in the next section on rivalry where research using a more refined measure provides support for Leng's hypothesis on escalation across MIDs.

³⁴ Beth Simmons, "See You in Court? The Appeal to Quasi-Judicial Legal Processes in the Settlement of Territorial Disputes," in Paul Diehl (ed.), *A Road Map to War: Territorial Dimensions of International Conflict* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999), 205-37.

³⁵ Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2004), 176.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 164; see also Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 865.

³⁷ Saideman in this volume. ³⁸ Kapur in this volume.

³⁹ Ambiguity in norms for transferring territory usually leads to conflict, as can be seen whenever there was an ambiguity in the norm of dynastic succession (e.g., could succession occur through the female line) or when there is a conflict of norms as between dynastic succession and nationalism, on both these questions, see Evan Luard, *War in International Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 87, 110; Vasquez, *The War Puzzle*, 148-49.

infuse territory (which is a concrete material tangible stake that is divisible) with symbolic and transcendent (involving fundamental values) qualities that make it intangible and difficult to divide. The inability of either India or Pakistan to impose their preferred position has meant that they have become long-term rivals, where Pakistan, as the weaker revisionist state, will not give in and/or try to become stronger in order to change the status quo. In such cases, the weaker revisionist state tends to follow the kinds of power politics strategies suggested by realist culture, which simply increase the probability of war.

The role of power politics

In *The War Puzzle* it is stated:

When territorial disputes are not settled, relations with neighbors become a struggle for power. Much of power politics thinking probably derives from such experiences. So long as there is a struggle for power over contiguous territory, then world politics is a struggle for power, but once boundaries are settled, world politics has other characteristics ... This suggests that the very idea of power politics and its practices are derived from an inability to settle territorial questions. Power politics is not the key fact of existence, as the realist paradigm would have us believe, but may simply be an epiphenomenon of territoriality. Realism and the practice of power politics come out of a particular set of struggles and construct a world appropriate to those struggles.⁴⁰

As the quotation above suggests, power politics and strategic thinking are most apt to occur when territorial disputes are at the center of relations. These disputes transform whatever relationship two states might have into one of intense hostility and rivalry. This has been the case with India and Pakistan, as well as other states, that are "born feuding."⁴¹ Power politics are endemic to (an enduring) rivalry. The reason for this, as outlined in the first section of this chapter, is that realist thinking tells diplomats and leaders to increase their power when faced with security issues. The two ways to do that are through the making of alliances and the building up of one's military.

Figure 3.1 denotes when during the history of the India-Pakistan conflict each side has had outside alliances and when they have been engaged in an arms race.⁴² The figure demonstrates that all three steps to

war have been present in this conflict: recurrent disputes, outside alliances, and arms racing. It is also significant that alliances come early on and arms races later, which is also consistent with work on the steps to rivalry,⁴³ although India's outside alliance does not come until after the first major period of arms races. The graph does not show the nuclear arms race which we could assume to be occurring at least around 1998, the period of overt nuclear testing and signaling. On the basis of the graph, it can be concluded that the India-Pakistan conflict, on the whole, has all the steps to war listed in Table 3.1. Not every single war, however, especially the first, has been preceded by each step. As can be seen in Figure 3.1, the First Kashmir War has none of the steps, the Second Kashmir War has all the steps, and the Bangladesh War lacks an arms race.

The steps to war explanation assumes that alliance making and military buildups occur in order to increase capability so that one can compete more effectively. These in turn lead to counter-alliances and arms races, which in turn lead to increased hostility and a hardening of positions. There is evidence that this motivation is present in the India-Pakistan case. Pakistan as the weaker state is always hopeful that support from allies, especially the US and Britain, will give it an edge, if not carry the day by providing better equipment or by diplomatic intervention.⁴⁴ Likewise, it looks to China as a potential ally after the Chinese-Indian border conflict and war. However, there is a distinct tendency for the Pakistanis to exaggerate the support of potential allies,⁴⁵ even though at the UN the US will tilt toward Pakistan, especially before the end of the Cold War. On the Indian side, there are fears that Pakistan's allies, particularly the US and Britain have, from the beginning, supported Pakistan as a way of keeping India down and managing the Indian subcontinent for their own purposes through a policy of divide and rule.⁴⁶

Because Pakistan is continually declining, it feels that time is not on its side and it tries to time its war activities for when it can have the support of outside parties. This is seen in 1965 with China before the Second Kashmir War when Pakistan thought it had the promise of Chinese military assistance should war break out.⁴⁷ Pakistan is also bolder when it feels the US needs it, as it did after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a condition again present after September 11.

⁴⁰ Vasquez, *The War Puzzle*, 147-48. ⁴¹ Wayman, "Rivalries," 230.

⁴² These data are drawn from the politically relevant alliance data set of the steps to war project (see Senese and Vasquez, "Alliances, Territorial Disputes, and the Probability of War" for a brief description) and from Susan G. Sample's arms race data for minor states in her, "The Outcomes of Military Buildups: Minor States vs. Major Powers." My thanks to Susan Sample for sharing her data. "D&H" in the figure refers to whether both the

Diehl and Horn measures of arms races apply, see Sample, "Arms Races and Dispute Escalation" for the definitions. My thanks also to Hilde Ravio (who worked as my research assistant) for including these two variables on the MID plot.

⁴³ Brandon Valentino "The Steps to Rivalry," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Vanderbilt University (2003).

⁴⁴ See Leng, *Bangladesh and Learning*, 217, 225, 228. ⁴⁵ Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, 27. ⁴⁶ Kapur in this volume. ⁴⁷ Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, 42-43.

India, as the stronger side, is less in need of a formal ally, particularly since during the Cold War it can rely on the Soviet Union to protect it in the UN Security Council, as it does by either exercising or threatening to exercise its veto on India's behalf. Nevertheless, the US alliance with Pakistan and its tilt toward Islamabad puts domestic pressure on India's leadership to abandon India's non-alignment policy and align with the Soviet Union, which eventually does happen in 1971, finally giving India its counter-alliance. In the interim, it does react to Pakistan receiving support from outside allies, as the steps to war explanation anticipates, by digging in its heels, as Nehru does when he rejects the idea of a plebiscite and fundamentally shifts his view on the role of the UN after the US and Pakistan sign their military pact.⁴⁸

The India-Pakistan conflict provides some insights for the steps to war explanation in that it illustrates, at least for one case, the interactive effect between alliance making and arms races, as well as the impact of these on hardliners in each side. Alliances and informal alignments often result in military buildups, some of which become full-fledged arms races as denoted in Figure 3.1. This linkage, which is probably typical of many minor states, occurs because both Pakistan and India rely on credits from major states to buy very expensive armaments. When Pakistan gets aid from the US, including new weapons systems, this puts pressure on India, which at times complains directly to the US, as when the latter agrees to sell AWACS systems to Pakistan.⁴⁹ On the other side, India sees itself as having to rely on the Soviet Union to ensure that it can maintain its edge over Pakistan after the Bangladesh War.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, when all is said and done, what produces the arms race in the first place is the territorial dispute over Kashmir and Pakistan's belief that it cannot change the status quo without increasing its power. This affects India in that if India does not arm, then it can be exploited by Pakistan. This can be seen in 1965: when Ayub Khan thinks Pakistan is more than a match for India after the Rann of Kutch skirmishing, he attacks.⁵¹ Further re-enforcing Pakistan's perception that only an increase in its power will make India negotiate is India's feeling that it is

militarily superior and therefore does not need to negotiate. Leng argues that Khan, like Anwar Sadat of Egypt, launches a war not in the expectation that he will necessarily win (although he seems to believe that at times) but that this will lead to mediation where he will have a chance for gains.⁵²

Fueling the arms race is the presence of outside rivalries and conflicts, in particular the Chinese-Indian border dispute. After the Sino-Indian War of 1962, India reacts to its defeat with a substantial military buildup, including not only increased procurement of weapons, but also increasing the number of military personnel.⁵³ This puts more pressure on Pakistan, especially since India is getting aid from the US. The fear in Pakistan is that India, which already has an edge, will now be beyond Pakistan's reach, if nothing is done.⁵⁴ At the same time, the conflict with China draws India closer to the Soviet Union, which has its own incipient conflict with China. This bond becomes tighter as China and the US move toward a rapprochement under Nixon.⁵⁵

As would be anticipated by the steps to war explanation, these various military buildups do not lead to one side's conceding to the other; rather they lead to more intense efforts to court allies and gain weapons and to a deterioration of relations, as when American military aid increases toward Pakistan after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.⁵⁶ It is at this time that India also moves closer to the USSR than it probably wanted to, in order to balance Pakistan's new weapons.

This case also shows that when alliances become unreliable, states turn to their own military buildups as a way of compensating. This is seen most dramatically when the US does little to prevent the breakup of Pakistan during the Bangladesh War (contrast this to Soviet and US intervention to save their allies in the 1973 Yom Kippur War). Some have argued that this realization plays a role, although obviously only a partial role, in Pakistan's attempt to acquire nuclear weapons.⁵⁷ Here, we have the idea that with nuclear weapons Pakistan will not have to rely on a reluctant ally in a situation where its very existence might be threatened.⁵⁸ Although splits between the military and civilian leadership make the

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 25; see also Escott Reid, *Envoys to Nehru* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), which is a primary source for Ganguly.

⁴⁹ Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, 83, for an overview, see Dennis Kux, *Disenchanted Allies: The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

⁵⁰ Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, 81.

⁵¹ Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises*, 221, 224-25, 257; see also, Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan: Pakistan's First Military Ruler* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 203, 211, cited by Leng, 224-25.

⁵² Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises*, 221. See also Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, ch. 6. Nawaz Sharif attempted a similar strategy during Kargil (see the discussion below), although it is less clear whether the Kargil action was initiated for that purpose or whether Sharif is exploiting the situation after the fact.

⁵³ Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, 103. ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 37-38. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 52, 64-66.

⁵⁶ Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, 82. ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵⁸ T. V. Paul maintains that the failure to gain security guarantees from the major states plays an important role in triggering Pakistan's decision to go nuclear, see Paul, *Power versus Prudence: Why Nations Forge Nuclear Weapons* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 133.

current evidence unclear, it seems that even after Pakistan has nuclear weapons, it tries to manipulate its ally by initiating a crisis or war hoping to draw in the US as some sort of intermediary that will force India into serious negotiations. During Kargil the US and Clinton resist such manipulation and insist on Pakistani withdrawal, while simultaneously Clinton moves closer to India.⁵⁹ After September 11, the threat posed by al-Qaeda and the new critical issue of terrorism leads the US to repair its strained relations with Pakistan and Musharraf, again illustrating how outside conflicts can affect the dynamics of the India-Pakistan rivalry.

The repeated crises and the interaction of alliances and military build-ups play a crucial role in orienting both sides toward emphasizing strategic thinking and possible windows of opportunity and vulnerability. As would be expected in a territorial rivalry, states behave in the kind of realist worst-case scenario; contrary to some thinkers, Pakistan and India do jump through windows of opportunity. Thus, every one of the three wars after the First Kashmir War can be seen as being initiated when one side thinks it has an edge that it did not have before, even though in Pakistan's case, in three of the four wars it is clearly weaker. In the Bangladesh War, which India initiates, it takes the opportunity of Bengali resistance and the problem of dealing with a huge number of refugees to support the creation of a separate state that will dismember Pakistan and weaken it even further, while ending the potential threat of a two-front war.⁶⁰ The steps to war explanation would expect such strategic thinking to occur in enduring rivalries because of the threat perception and hostility generated by repeated crises and the interaction of alliances and arms races. The steps to war explanation differs from realism, however, in that it sees this kind of behavior as the hallmark of enduring rivalries and not the only kind of relationship that is present in world politics.

In addition, the India-Pakistan rivalry exhibits the kind of escalation across crises and wars that Leng anticipates. Leng finds this to be the case where hostility begets hostility with each crisis leading each side to learn this from the previous crisis.⁶¹ In addition, Valeriano finds that in the India-Pakistan rivalry prior to each of the three major wars the severity of escalation from one MID to the next increases. His data reveal an increased severity level from the time period between the first and sixth MID.⁶²

⁵⁹ Talbott, *Engaging India*, 165; Clinton, *My Life*, 865.

⁶⁰ Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises*, 244.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁶² See Valeriano, "The Steps to Rivalry," for his measure of escalation within rivalries. Severity is taken from Diehl's and Goertz's basic rivalry level (see Diehl and Goertz, *War and Peace in International Relations*, 2000, Appendix b).

This underlines the point that intense territorial rivalries are a material source for realist thinking and the practice of power politics. Just because realist folklore and ideas encourage power politics thinking, this does not mean that certain conditions – like territorial rivalries – do not also encourage certain ideas. The use of power politics makes it more difficult for the other side not to reciprocate, especially since such tactics promote the rise of hardliners in each side. A dramatic example of this is the conversion of Nehru, who starts out eschewing power politics and alliances and ends up embracing both. He was particularly affected by the 1962 war with China and later said of his earlier view that "we had been living in a world of unreality."⁶³

The acquisition of nuclear weapons has been the latest development in this enduring rivalry. The original acquisition by India may have had more to do with China than with Pakistan, although the book on that is still open.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Pakistan seems to fit what the steps to war explanation would posit about military buildups. Pakistan was in a position where its power *vis-à-vis* India was on the decline, with no hope of ever catching up on the demographic, economic, or military dimensions of capability. It had failed to win a single war to date and it lost badly in 1971. Its allies appeared unreliable and reluctant. It seemed that Pakistan could only get weapons and support from the US when the US needed Pakistan, as during the Afghan War and then after September 11.

The lure of nuclear weapons is that they are a quick fix. They can serve two purposes: they can be used as a last resort to protect existing territory and they can be used to play chicken games of nuclear diplomacy that might be a way of making gains on the Kashmir territorial issue.⁶⁵ Will they increase or reduce the probability of war in the future? The last section addresses this question in light of classical deterrence theory and the steps to war explanation.

Classical deterrence theory

Classical deterrence theory is based on the notion that nuclear weapons make war unwinnable if both sides have a second strike capability, since either side could utterly destroy the other after absorbing an

⁶³ Quoted in Nayar and Paul, *India in the World Order*, 115–16. My thanks to T. V. Paul for suggesting this theoretical point and pointing me to the quotation.

⁶⁴ See Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises*, 265 on the role of China.

⁶⁵ Paul, for example, states, "Acquiring an independent nuclear capability also seemed essential for dealing with India as an equal on Kashmir." Paul, *Potter versus Prudence*, 133 (see also note 42 on the same page).

attack.⁶⁶ Such Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) would make it irrational to initiate a war because it could not attain any political objective, and it would destroy the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of the state.

This has led some theorists to argue that the spread of nuclear weapons would increase the prospects for peace because everyone would be subject to the conditions of MAD.⁶⁷ Some of this is implied in the idea of a unit veto system, which sees a world of many nuclear states as able to veto the foreign policy goals of any other state by threatening nuclear war.⁶⁸ At some level, Pakistan and Israel hope that nuclear weapons will prevent them from being overrun by being able to destroy their opponents if they are going to be destroyed.⁶⁹

Will nuclear weapons bring peace to the India-Pakistan enduring rivalry? Much of the argument in favor of nuclear deterrence and peace rests on the single case of the Cold War and the avoidance of a nuclear war between the US and USSR. Yet many who see this case as evidence in favor of the proposition forget important things about the case. As I wrote as the Cold War was ending, nuclear deterrence did not work alone, but in conjunction with a number of irenic factors.⁷⁰ In fact, peace may have been preserved in the Cold War because a number of these factors prevented even the prospects of an all-out conventional war, like that of World War II. What are these irenic factors? There are six.

First, and the main difference between the India-Pakistan conflict and the Cold War is that there was no territorial dispute between the US and the USSR. Their dispute was ideological. The absence of a territorial dispute between the US and USSR made it easier for nuclear deterrence to work. The absence of any territorial disputes between these two parties may also explain why the US and USSR never directly fought a war with each other.⁷¹ Furthermore, the two times the Cold War came closest to

war – in Berlin and Cuba – were at the territorial frontiers of the two empires. If deterrence almost failed there, where the homeland territory of neither state was at stake, would it not fail at some point for the more salient and festering Kashmir territorial dispute?

Second, since the Soviet-American rivalry was essentially ideological, both sides learned to live with it, and there developed among both leaders and followers a tolerance of the status quo, best exemplified by the Helsinki Accord.⁷² Tolerance of the status quo has been at the heart of the disagreement between India and Pakistan. For more tolerance to occur, one or both sides would have to make major concessions. Pakistan and Muslim nationalists and other non-state actors would have to accept the LoC as the basis of a formal border, and this has been a major obstacle to any peace agreement. Instead, nationalists and hardliners are apt to do whatever they can to keep the issue on the agenda, even if this means taking matters into their own hands. India would have to simply concede the idea of keeping this state if a plebiscite went against the status quo, something that it has not been willing to do, as of yet.

Third, as John Mueller argues, the experience of the two world wars was a deterrent for both the East and the West.⁷³ No one wanted to fight another war like that in the 1950s or any other time. This restrained both sides. Mueller goes so far as to argue that nuclear weapons were essentially irrelevant to deterrence, and that the experience of the two world wars made both sides perceive the weapons in much more apocalyptic terms than was warranted, especially in the 1950s. Obviously, India and Pakistan have not had similar experiences in their wars with each other. Their experience has not made them see war as something that is abhorrent and must be avoided at all costs.

Fourth, nuclear deterrence stopped giving rise to repeated disputes after the Cuban missile crisis as the US and USSR developed a set of rules of the game. These are best illustrated by *détente*. India and Pakistan have not yet developed such rules, but as T. V. Paul and others have pointed out, it may take a while after the acquisition of nuclear

⁶⁶ Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); Thomas C. Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).
⁶⁷ See Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, Adelphi Paper 171 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981) and John J. Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer 1993), 50–66.
⁶⁸ Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: John Wiley, 1957).
⁶⁹ See Paul, *Power versus Prudence*, 132–41; for an informed review of the nuclear balance between India and Pakistan, see Daniel Geller in this volume.
⁷⁰ John A. Vasquez, "The Deterrence Myth: Nuclear Weapons and the Prevention of Nuclear War," in Charles W. Kegley, Jr. (ed.), *The Long Postwar Peace* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 205–23.

⁷¹ John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security* 10 (Spring 1986), 99–142. As with Gaddis, I am not counting the 1917 Allied intervention in which the US participated.

⁷² While this is mostly true for Western and Eastern Europe, sometimes a tolerance of the status quo also occurred in developing areas as the Cold War matured. This was especially true when there was a risk of expanded war. Thus, in the Korean War the US does not accept the status quo, but tries to roll back the communist regime, and in Vietnam, the US explicitly rules out a land invasion of North Vietnam for fear of Chinese intervention; see Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Even if one wants to argue that there was not much US-Soviet tolerance of the status quo in the developing world, that tolerance is still higher than anything in the India-Pakistan rivalry.

⁷³ John W. Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

weapons to stabilize relations. In this regard, it is hopeful that attempts have been made to adopt certain confidence-building measures that will help prevent accidental nuclear war – a real concern between two contiguous countries. Similarly, after Kargil there is an attempt to establish a naval hotline. There is also the mutual agreement not to attack each other's civilian nuclear facilities.

Fifth, and related to the fourth factor, is that both the US and USSR learned how to manage crises so as to avoid a war and managed their respective interventions into ongoing wars, like Vietnam and Afghanistan, so as to prevent them from escalating to a conventional war between the two of them. As a result, the US and USSR have experienced more MIDs than India and Pakistan have, but none of them has ended in a war. India and Pakistan have not had this kind of success, and indeed have not so much sought to manage crises to avoid war, but have used them to time their wars for when it is perceived to be an advantageous or strategic opportunity to score some points. One thing we do know about nuclear deterrence from both the Cold War and now the India–Pakistan rivalry is that it does not prevent crises from developing. In fact, the belief that war is impossible because of MAD may lead some decisionmakers to take risks and play chicken games and give rise to the “stability-instability paradox.” Some of this sort of thinking may have been going on in Kargil.⁷⁴ Indeed, it appears that it was only when the US showed both Pakistan and India the kinds of casualties a limited nuclear exchange might produce and Clinton put pressure on Sharif to withdraw that the threat of escalation at Kargil was defused.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, there are indications that India and Pakistan can and have learned how to manage some of these militarized conflicts along the LoC, as well as terrorist incidents. Likewise, a number of MIDs since the Bangladesh War have not escalated to war and some of these outcomes can be attributed to conscious efforts at crisis management. Having said all of this, however, these efforts still have a long way to go before they reach the level of crisis management and preventive diplomacy achieved by Kennedy and Khrushchev after the Cuban missile crisis.

Sixth, arms control agreements between the US and USSR prevented the arms race from getting out of control. MAD did not just happen, it was

institutionalized and planned. Arms control played a role in limiting threat perception and in that way sought to avoid creating windows of vulnerability. We do not yet have that kind of arms control in the India–Pakistan enduring rivalry, although there have been some recent movements in that direction, which is a hopeful sign given that such measures usually occur once the states become more adjusted to the reality of the destructiveness of nuclear weapons and the dangers of MAD.

Nuclear deterrence during the Cold War worked with all these factors in its favor. Would it work if just one were absent? Would it work if several were absent, as seems to be the case in the India–Pakistan conflict? The point is that we do not *know*. Can we rely on a theory with such a slim base of evidence to preserve the peace when it comes to nuclear war? One of the main problems is that nuclear deterrence must work not only once, but for infinity. One slip and total destruction is the end game.

Deterrence theorists have assumed that nuclear weapons raise the provocation threshold so that what was once a provocation for war is no longer a provocation warranting going to war. There is no question that nuclear weapons have raised the provocation threshold, but have they raised it so high that there could be no provocation whatsoever that would make one side resort to nuclear war?⁷⁶ Even during the Cold War, the US abstained from a no-first-use pledge because it said it would use nuclear weapons to defeat an all-out conventional Soviet attack on Western Europe.

These criticisms raise serious questions about the ability of classical nuclear deterrence to prevent war in the India–Pakistan conflict, but they deal primarily with politically conscious decisions about war. In addition, there are still other paths to nuclear war that, even if the above were managed, need to be handled to avoid nuclear war. These involve questions of command and control and nuclear war through accident or miscalculation. It is encouraging that India and Pakistan have made attempts to establish certain rules of the game and to manage crises yet fundamental differences remain between this nuclear rivalry and that of the US and USSR.

A conflict that has had repeated wars with none of the underlying factors that have produced these MIDs being changed is apt to have more MIDs and more wars. Without altering these underlying factors, nuclear deterrence will be working in conditions highly unfavorable to its success. Relying on nuclear deterrence to produce peace is at best a high-risk strategy.

⁷⁴ See Leng in this volume. Also see Geller in this volume for a discussion of the “stability-instability paradox.”

⁷⁵ See Talbot, *Engaging India*, 167, particularly on Clinton's concerns about the danger of a nuclear war posed by Kargil. For a declassified analysis of casualties resulting from a nuclear exchange, see Robert T. Barcher, “The Consequences of an Indo-Pakistani Nuclear War,” *International Studies Review* 6 (2004), 135–62. See also Geller in this volume.

⁷⁶ On the concept of provocation threshold, see Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 277.

If a nuclear exchange is to be avoided, it is important that more aspects of the six factors that helped manage crises and eventually prevent crises between the US and the USSR be implemented by Pakistan and India. The first way to do that is to continue to implement confidence-building measures and other rules of the game and to adopt safeguards for avoiding an inadvertent nuclear war. Yet even with these improvements, the India-Pakistan rivalry still lacks four of the six irenic factors present in the Soviet-American rivalry: no territorial dispute, a tolerance of the status quo, a deep abhorrence of war (brought about by the two world wars), and arms control agreements regulating arms races.

Conclusions

Three major conclusions emerge from this analysis. First, at the heart of this rivalry is a territorial dispute that is seen as both symbolic and transcendent. This makes this case not unique or exotic, but quite typical of dyadic wars that have occurred between neighbors in the modern international system. The birth of these two states without having previously agreed on mutually acceptable borders has led to a series of crises and wars – once they decided to frame and handle this issue in a power politics fashion. Indeed most states that handle territorial issues in a power politics fashion have them recur, and as a result they become enduring rivals.

Why this is the case is due to two factors: (1) the unwillingness to compromise, which is a function of the ability of domestic hardliners to keep the issue on the agenda while simultaneously vetoing any compromise that would lead to peace, and (2) the relative equality of the two states that prevents one from completely defeating the other and unilaterally imposing a solution and a post-war settlement that would keep the defeated party weak or willing to abandon permanently its previous position. The acquisition of nuclear weapons by the parties makes this even less likely, while at the same time re-enforcing the status quo.

In this case, what is present that is often lacking with disputes among major states is that outside parties and allies play a prominent role in intervening to prevent a military settlement. Pakistan as the weaker side has exploited this tendency; yet no major states have been willing to move toward imposing a settlement.

Second, it is clear that the India-Pakistan case fits the steps to war explanation. With the exception of the first war, all the steps are present, and in a rough order that is expected. Territory is the factor driving disputes and the making of alliances and military buildups. The making of an alliance by one side leads to a counter-alliance on the other.

A military buildup by one side leads to an arms race. A classic security dilemma dominates relations.

The unwillingness to accept the status quo leads the revisionist state, in this case Pakistan, to initiate crises, which because of the salience of territory and the relative equality of capability, leads the issue to fester and crises to recur. This happens even with the fairly asymmetric distribution of capability present in this enduring rivalry, which illustrates that only overwhelming preponderance can prevent war – a simple asymmetric distribution cannot. The domestic dynamics of the steps to war model also seem to fit, in that hostile actions by one's opponent lead to an increase in the number and influence of hardliners in the other side, which leads them to take ever more hostile actions, which leads to more hardliners and an upward spiral often ending in war.

Third, classical nuclear deterrence theory may be flawed and is based on inferences derived from a single case. Nuclear weapons may not have been the main factor preventing a nuclear war between the US and USSR during the Cold War, even if it raised the provocation threshold. Instead at least six other factors can be identified as producing that irenic effect. To the extent that several of these factors continue to be absent from the India-Pakistan rivalry, it is risky to think that classical nuclear deterrence will continue to prevent nuclear war *ad infinitum*.