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Why has the India-Pakistan Rivalry Been so Enduring? Power Asymmetry and an Intractable Conflict

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Why has the India-Pakistan Rivalry Been so Enduring? Power Asymmetry and an Intractable Conflict

T. V. PAUL

The India-Pakistan conflict is one of the most enduring rivalries of the post-World War era. Thus far, it has witnessed four wars and a number of serious interstate crises. The literature on enduring rivalries suggests that the India-Pakistan dyad contains factors such as unsettled territorial issues, political incompatibility, irreconcilable positions on national identity, and the absence of significant economic and trade relations between the two states, all cause the rivalry to persist. In this article I present a crucial neglected structural factor that explains the endurance of the rivalry. I argue that the peculiar power asymmetry that has prevailed between the two antagonists for over half a century has made full termination of the rivalry difficult in the near-term. Truncated power asymmetry is a causal factor in this rivalry's persistence, as rivalries between a status quo power and a challenger state that are relatively equal in their capabilities at the local level are the most intractable and nearly impossible to resolve quickly. The duration of many other asymmetric rivalries can also be explained using a framework of global superiority versus local parity in power capabilities that exist between the antagonists.

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INTRODUCTION

The India-Pakistan rivalry has persisted for more than half a century and it shows no signs of permanent resolution in the near-term. During this period, the rivalry has been punctuated by four wars and a number of interstate crises. International relations (IR) theory offers limited clues as to why this rivalry has continued for so long. One of the more promising strands of the IR literature focuses on enduring rivalries and suggests that the India-Pakistan dyad contains a multitude of factors that inhibit a permanent resolution. They include: unsettled territorial issues, political incompatibility, irreconcilable positions on national identity, and the dearth of significant economic and trade relations between the two adversary states. The stasis in this rivalry has also been attributed to the absence of an appropriate internal or external shock that could act as a catalyst for change.¹

In this article I argue that a crucial, neglected structural factor causing the persistence of this rivalry is a peculiar power asymmetry that has prevailed between the antagonists for over half a century. This asymmetry makes a full compromise difficult for both states in the near and medium terms. I call this asymmetry “truncated,” meaning that although India’s aggregate power capability is considerably greater than Pakistan’s, a number of factors mitigate and reduce that disparity, especially in the Kashmir theater of conflict. More specifically, despite India’s much greater strength (global superiority) in terms of gross national indicators of power (territory, population, economy, and overall military forces), its superiority has been mitigated locally by the particular terrain of the Kashmir theater; Pakistan’s adoption of asymmetric strategies and tactics; great power balancing between the two states; and, since the late 1980s, Islamabad’s possession of nuclear weapons. Structural variables, such as power distribution at both the general and local levels, help to explain the persistence of the India-Pakistan rivalry because it is not purely a conflict over territory (spatial conflict), or identity.

In the first section of this article, I examine the key scholarship on enduring rivalries and asymmetric conflicts. This is followed by a discussion of the existing literature on the India-Pakistan case and a structural explanation that is based on the peculiar asymmetric power configuration between the two states. The case study is presented as a “plausibility probe” for testing the argument that if two states in an asymmetric dyad with global power discrepancy (in terms of overall strength) versus local parity engage in conflict, the rivalry can endure for a long period of time without resolution. The effort here is to explain how this causal mechanism applies to one case, that is, the India-Pakistan rivalry, which is both asymmetric and enduring.

¹ For comprehensive assessments of the causes of this enduring rivalry, see chapters in T. V. Paul, ed., *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Other case studies are warranted for confirming this argument and the causal mechanisms that link power asymmetry with enduring rivalries in its fullest extent.²

CHARACTERISTICS OF ENDURING RIVALRIES

Enduring rivalries are characterized by strategic competitions that extend over a long period of time of over a generation or more that involve the same pair of states, and that have multiple crises and wars. These rivalries are typified by a number of militarized disputes, defined as “a set of interactions between or among states involving threats to use military force, displays of military force, or actual uses of military force. . . . These acts must be explicit, overt, nonaccidental, and government sanctioned.”³ Sustained hostile interactions, in terms of severity, intensity, and duration, are the distinctive characteristics of an enduring rivalry.⁴ Rivalries tend to originate from major events, or from internal or external political shocks such as wars and crises, and over one or more of these issues: territory, ideology, identity, and major strategic interests, including global or regional power position.⁵ Once the conflicting positions on these issues become embedded, both sides stick to their stance and a stasis continues until another political shock occurs that alters their long-held positions.

Enduring rivalries can also be termed “embedded conflicts,” that is, a conflict in which a number of issues relating to survival, identity, and power position become embedded at both interstate and societal levels. With respect to intensity, a rivalry can become societal, with powerful domestic constituencies that value the positions and privileges they enjoy as a result of the conflict emerging. Because relative gains matter more than absolute gains in these conflicts, parties may view each other in zero-sum terms. State elites and the public may perceive the opponent’s gains as their own losses and vice-versa. They may develop substantial mistrust regarding each other’s intentions and capabilities, fearing that the opponent will use newly acquired capabilities against them because its intentions are generally

² “Plausibility probes are preliminary studies on relatively untested theories and hypothesis to determine whether more intensive and laborious testing is warranted.” Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 75.

³ Charles S. Gochman and Zeev Maoz, “Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1916–1976,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28, no. 4 (December 1984): 587.

⁴ A rivalry must last at least twenty to thirty years and contain six to eight militarized conflicts to be considered “enduring.” Paul Diehl and Gary Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 44, 48.

⁵ Gary Goertz and Paul F. Diehl, “The Initiation and Termination of Enduring Rivalries: The Impact of Political Shocks,” *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (February 1995): 30–52.

perceived as negative. Thus a fundamental characteristic of an intense enduring rivalry is that rival states see each other as possessing the physical capacity and intention to hurt each other militarily. The opponent's acquisition of additional capabilities is thus generally perceived as increasing its coercive threat.

Why Some Rivalries Persist

The key explanations for the persistence of an enduring rivalry include the strategic nature of the issues in dispute (vital territorial disputes, irreconcilable ideologies or national belief systems, incompatible national identities); absence of imaginative leadership; and lack of economic interdependence between the rival states.⁶ Accordingly, the reversal of a majority of these factors could result in the de-escalation and resolution of the conflict.⁷ More specifically, from this perspective, the termination of a rivalry occurs when a leader with imaginative policies arrives and/or the territorial conflict ends.

A fundamental structural cause for a rivalry's persistence is that both parties, especially the challenger state, are able to sustain a conflict for a long period of time. A hypothesis in this respect is that states that are relatively equal in power tend to have the most intractable conflicts. If the power differential is exceptionally high, the weaker party will invariably lose and it therefore has the highest incentive to abandon the conflict before it becomes embedded or enduring. The stronger power can ignore the weaker side, as it needs only limited capabilities to withstand the asymmetric challenge. It is rare that the weaker party in a highly asymmetric situation can acquire the means to harm the stronger side physically.

Tug-of-war and arms wrestling analogies are appropriate here. These tests of physical endurance tend to continue as long as both contestants are relatively equal in strength. The fight generally ends when one side weakens and gives up. Similarly, if two states are relatively equal and neither is about to weaken, their leaders may have little incentive to abandon the conflict, because giving up the fight can be very costly for elites in terms of internal and external reputation and, in some cases, in terms of political power itself. The domestic institutional structures and interest groups that are created to win the rivalry will have little or no interest in ending the conflict

⁶ Paul R. Hensel, Gary Goertz, and Paul F. Diehl, "The Democratic Peace and Rivalries," *The Journal of Politics* 62, no. 4 (November 2000): 1173–88; Paul K. Huth, *Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes, 1950–1990* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

⁷ On de-escalation, see Karen Ressler, "Shocks, Expectancy Revision and the De-escalation of Protracted Conflicts: The Israeli-Palestinian Case," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 6 (November 2000): 699–720.

without achieving their goals; these powerful domestic spoilers can thwart any attempts at peace by national leaders.⁸

Thus some rivalries tend to persist and become embedded because the relative capabilities of the antagonists allow them to continue the conflict. Leaders and the public expect that their country's strength vis-à-vis their opponent is sufficient to force it to concede one day; as a result, they hold a certain bargaining power. Several studies confirm this contention. Vasquez, for example, has argued that rivals in enduring conflicts tend to be relative equals. If the power disparity is too high, the stronger power in general will be able to impose its will on the weaker side over time. The weaker side will be forced to give up the conflict, as it will not be able to sustain the human and material costs of continuing it.⁹ Similarly, Thompson argues that in a strategic rivalry, "competitive states view each other as belonging more or less in the same capability league." Even when a rivalry exists between a very strong state and a very weak one, the stronger side must not perceive the opponent as capable of acting as a competitor.¹⁰ However, according to another study based on aggregate data, a large number of conflicts, both isolated and enduring, tend to be asymmetric (80 percent of the 229 cases covered during the period 1816–2001). As rivalries progress, "the probability that an asymmetric rivalry will continue should diminish because of the superior position of the stronger side in the relationship. Therefore, we should expect to see the number of disputes occurring between asymmetric rivals diminish over time: that is, the rivalries with the most disputes should be between states of relatively equal capability or in symmetric rivalries."¹¹

Studies on war have shown that "conditions of approximate parity and shift toward parity are most strongly associated with war."¹² This is why power-transition theorists, in contrast to their balance-of-power counterparts, argue that the overwhelming preponderance of a status quo power is a necessary condition of peace. The logic here is that if there is rough equality in power, both sides could foresee possible victory in a conflict, whereas if one side, especially the status quo power, has a clear military advantage the weaker party has little incentive to use war as a means to obtain its goals.¹³ As

⁸ See Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security* 22, no. 2 (autumn 1997): 5–53.

⁹ John A. Vasquez, "Distinguishing Rivals that go to War From Those That Do Not," *International Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (December 1996): 531–58.

¹⁰ William R. Thompson, "Explaining Rivalry Termination in Contemporary Eastern Eurasia with Evolutionary Expectancy Theory," Montreal: *REGIS Working Paper No. 17* (November 2005): 2–3.

¹¹ James P. Klein, Gary Goertz, and Paul F. Diehl, "The New Rivalry Dataset: Procedures and Patterns," *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 3 (May 2006): 341.

¹² Daniel S. Geller, "Power Differentials and War in Rival Dyads," *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (June 1993): 189.

¹³ A.F.K. Organiski, *World Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 364–66; see also Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke, eds., *Parity and War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

Blainey argues, "Wars usually end when the fighting nations agree on their relative strength, and wars usually begin when fighting nations disagree on their relative strength."¹⁴

This logic of preponderance of one state over the other as a pacifying condition is challenged in balance-of-power theory, which is based on the premise that two states or coalitions of states are unlikely to go to war if there is an approximate parity or equilibrium in their capabilities. According to this theory, it is usually the stronger state that goes to war in order to dominate its weaker opponents. Hegemony of a single actor is the most dangerous condition, because the hegemon will be encouraged to impose its will on others. When a hegemonic state emerges, weaker states, fearing domination or extinction, will therefore flock together in order to prevent conquest or domination by the stronger side.¹⁵

This balance-of-power logic has fundamental problems when confronted with situations in which a stronger state is content with the status quo but a weaker state becomes an aggressor due to dissatisfaction with a territorial or political order. For the weaker party to go on the offensive, however, it requires some advantage that enables it to sustain the conflict for an extended period. Although equality of capability is often difficult to measure, it is fairly accurate to argue that challengers in a rivalry dyad must have some capacity to maintain an enduring rivalry. If the power differential is too high, then logically the weaker party should eventually give up the conflict. Although there are exceptions to this general principle, such as the U.S.-Cuba rivalry, they are few in number.¹⁶

There is also a difference between the challenger and a status quo power in terms of their capabilities and their respective roles in the perpetuation of a conflict, a point that balance-of-power theory ignores. Relative equality in capabilities matters most for the challenger in a rivalry, as the role of the challenger is crucial to explaining a rivalry in terms of its progression, escalation, and de-escalation. For instance, in his analysis on territorial conflict Paul Huth focuses attention almost exclusively on the challenger. He justifies his position as follows:

¹⁴ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 114.

¹⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), 127. See also Inis L. Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1964), 56. For the theory and its various dimensions, see T.V. Paul, James Wirtz, and Michel Fortman, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004). On the role of power capabilities, see Kugler and Lemke, eds., *Parity and War*; Randolph M. Siverson and Michael P. Sullivan, "The Distribution of Power and the Onset of War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27 (September 1983): 473–94; Wayne H. Harris, *The Power Capabilities of Nation States* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1973).

¹⁶ The ethnic conflict literature also gives prominence to relative power capabilities of the protagonists to explain the persistence of a conflict. For example, see Charles King, *Ending Civil Wars*, Adelphi Paper no. 308 (London, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1997).

The reason for my theoretical focus on the challenger is that it is the actions and decisions of the challenger that are the fundamental causes of conflict and accommodation over disputed territory. It is the challenger that issues a claim to territory, decides whether to pursue its claim aggressively or to seek a settlement, while the target responds to these actions. Thus, a theoretical analysis of the emergence, escalation and peaceful resolution of territorial disputes that focuses on the behavior of the state that consistently assumes the initiative at each of these stages (i.e., the challenger) should provide substantial insight into the dynamics of territorial disputes.¹⁷

Huth's examination of 129 cases of territorial conflicts between 1950 and 1990 reveals that the effects of military balance are curvilinear, that is, "very weak and as well as very strong challengers were less likely to engage in high levels of escalation compared to challengers who were closer to parity in military capabilities." He contends that the "assessment of relative military strength seems to be an important component of a challenger's decision to threaten or resort to the use of military force."¹⁸

One critical issue in this context is how satisfied the two states in a rivalry are with the status quo. A highly dissatisfied challenger is more prone to initiate war than a satisfied status quo power. If it has some resource endowments to compensate for its aggregate material weaknesses, a dissatisfied challenger may still launch a conflict. It may believe that it can gain its objectives because its conflict propensity may be magnified by decision-maker pathologies, psychological misperceptions, or risk-taking tendencies, as well as by its domestic politics, especially if the latter is based on identity politics. But none of these variables seems as significant as the power differential variable because, without the resources to fight, even a decision-maker suffering from misperceptions cannot continue a highly asymmetric conflict for very long. Persistence of a rivalry thus requires the weaker challenger to have some crucial endowments that it can use to continue the struggle.

However, a challenger and a status quo power need not be relatively equal in all aspects of national power. Even if the parties do not possess parity in aggregate power terms, they may be equal in one or two crucial measures of power. For instance, the party with the weaker aggregate power may be stronger in the theater of conflict, or it may have some other logistical advantage. This may be referred to as the stronger power's global superiority but local inferiority or equality.¹⁹ The main factors that can compensate a weaker state for the overall asymmetry are strategy, tactics, will, qualitatively

¹⁷ Huth, *Standing Your Ground*, 33. See also Douglas Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 24–27.

¹⁸ Huth, *Standing your Ground*, 114 and 118.

¹⁹ I owe these categories to an anonymous referee.

superior weaponry, and alliance partners.²⁰ The global power asymmetry can thus be truncated or mitigated in the theater by the presence of these factors, which are beyond easy manipulation by the larger state.

A truncated power asymmetry between rival states has many consequences. First, it makes the costs of a conflict manageable (or not overwhelmingly burdensome) for both states, especially the challenger, although the conflict may still considerably affect its overall national and human development. The decision not to pursue a de-escalation process can be derived from a belief on the part of the challenger's elite that continued struggle will eventually yield an advantage, despite immediate social, economic, and human costs.²¹ Second, neither rival state is able to achieve decisive battlefield success or to impose a solution on the other coercively. Third, in such dyads, neither member can convince the other that its position is reasonable and therefore acceptable.²² The wars they fight tend to be inconclusive and characterized by truces and ceasefire arrangements that do not change the territorial or political dynamics in any meaningful way. If the rivals are nuclear states, the stability/instability paradox can become a major factor, potentially leading to repeated crises that remain short of major war due to mutual nuclear deterrence. A challenger in such a dyad could initiate a crisis at the conventional level to achieve its tactical and strategic aims, anticipating that war would not escalate to the nuclear level.²³

Fourth, truncated power asymmetry can generate a peculiar bargaining situation with a strategic interaction problem for the antagonists. These are situations "in which the ability [of one party] to gain his ends is dependent to an important degree on the choices or decisions that the other participant will make"; what one nation does in a strategic context depends partly on its perceptions of what its opponents will do.²⁴ These perceptions are determined by capability and resolve. If the opponents have a power relationship defined by truncated asymmetry, the result may be a stalemate, as both look for opportunities to advance their positions but are unable to make much headway since small concessions by either party will not resolve the conflict. Finally, a truncated power asymmetry can also generate peculiar domestic

²⁰ T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ch. 2.

²¹ Louis Kriesberg, *International Conflict Resolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 203.

²² An analogous situation occurs between dyads engaged in diplomatic negotiations. According to one study, negotiations involving dyads of low power asymmetry tend to deadlock because neither has the power to force the other to move. I. William Zartman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, "Symmetry and Asymmetry in Negotiations," in *Power and Negotiations*, eds. Zartman and Rubin (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 272.

²³ On the stability-instability paradox, see Glenn Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," in *The Balance of Power*, ed. Paul Seabury (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965), 184–205.

²⁴ See Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 5.

political and institutional dynamics in both states that would help perpetuate the conflict.

Some of the existing literature on conflict termination argues that a condition of “mutually hurting stalemate” is necessary for accommodation (that is, when both parties realize that the costs of continuing the conflict are unbearable and that the prospects of winning it on their own terms are dim). The conflicting parties must realize that the “costs of maintaining hostile policies are growing or threatening to grow” and that unilateral gains are unlikely to occur. They should also believe that “the status quo is likely to deteriorate in terms of values such as security, influence and stability as a consequence of continued hostile relations.”²⁵ Rivalries where such a hurting stalemate does not occur rarely end with an easy resolution.

Thus the configuration of capabilities between the antagonists is important for understanding a rivalry’s persistence and chances for termination. Thompson argues that enduring rivalries of strategic or positional variety tend to end when both parties or either party loses its “competitive status” or ceases “to be perceived as projecting threat.” This occurs only when (1) one side “is defeated decisively and acknowledges defeat,” (2) one side “acknowledges defeat without war,” and (3) one or both sides “experience political-economic exhaustion and/or intense civil war.” Of the 173 rivalries during the past two centuries that he studied, an overwhelming majority ended through decisive defeats or exhaustion, acknowledgment of inferiority whereby “one way or another one side lacked the ability to continue the competition.”²⁶

The Literature on Asymmetric Conflicts

A brief discussion of the literature on asymmetric conflicts is relevant here because this article aims not only to provide an explanation for the persistence of the India-Pakistan rivalry, but also to delineate the kind of asymmetry with the highest potential for producing an enduring rivalry. Andrew Mack’s pioneering study on asymmetric conflicts sought to explain why metropolitan powers did not win in cases such as the United States in Vietnam, or France in Vietnam and Algeria. For Mack, the success of the Vietnamese and Algerians at sustaining their asymmetric conflicts against much stronger metropolitan powers cannot be explained by ordinary power-based analysis. According to Mack it was the ability of the insurgents to gain political victory from a situation of military stalemate or defeat that determined the final outcomes. The insurgents’ higher-than-normal resolve or interest explained both their persistence and how they eventually made political gains over materially

²⁵ Tony Armstrong, *Breaking the Ice* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993), 32; Kriesberg, *International Conflict Resolution*, 145.

²⁶ Thompson, “Explaining Rivalry Termination...,” 4–5.

stronger adversaries.²⁷ With regard to the same cases, other scholars examined factors such as a “willingness to suffer,” defined in terms of insensitivity to casualties, as an explanation for the relative success of the weaker side.²⁸

In the interstate context I have carried this logic forward, arguing that a weaker state can initiate a war against a stronger power if it pursues a limited aims/fait accompli strategy, possesses temporary advantages in terms of offensive weaponry, has the support of a great power as an alliance partner, and has militarily oriented decision-makers. I examined these hypotheses with regard to six cases of war initiation by relatively weak actors and found that general deterrence and superiority in overall aggregate capability often cannot prevent wars with weaker challengers.²⁹ Carrying the research agenda further, a recent study by Arreguin-Toft looked at the issue of how weaker challengers can win wars. The key variable to explain the failure or success of a stronger state in comparison to a weaker actor is the interaction of the two sides’ specific military strategies. He hypothesized that strong actors are likely to win in wars with weak actors where both use a direct strategy, whereas a strong actor can lose if it relies on a direct offensive strategy while the weaker side relies on an indirect defensive strategy, especially in a drawn-out conflict.³⁰ In recent years, asymmetric conflicts also received increased attention as U.S. defense planners began to focus on asymmetric challenges by both state and nonstate actors, especially those posed by terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda.³¹

Although these studies look at factors that encourage weaker actors to initiate wars, or the failure of stronger powers to decisively defeat their weaker adversaries, they may also be relevant to understanding enduring rivalries that are characterized by several militarized inter-state conflicts and crises/wars. However, theorists of enduring rivalries have not yet fully applied the literature on asymmetric conflict in their works. Their debate over the particular configuration of power is somewhat limited, as they deem variables

²⁷ Andrew Mack, “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict,” *World Politics*, 27, no. 2 (January 1975): 175–200.

²⁸ For instance, see Steven Rosen, “War Power and the Willingness to Suffer,” in *Peace, War and Numbers*, ed. Bruce Russett (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1972), 167–83.; Eliot A. Cohen, “Constraint on America’s Conduct of Small Wars,” *International Security* 9, no. 2 (fall 1984): 151–84; John E. Mueller, “The Search for the Breaking Point in Vietnam: The Statistics of a Deadly Quarrel,” *International Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (December 1980): 497–519; A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, “Davids and Goliaths, Predicting the Outcomes of International Wars,” *Comparative Political Studies* 11, no. 2 (July 1978): 141–80; Michael P. Fischerkeller, “David versus Goliath: Cultural Judgments in Asymmetric Wars,” *Security Studies* 7, no. 4 (summer 1998): 1–43.

²⁹ Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*.

³⁰ Ivan Arreguin-Toft, “How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict,” *International Security* 26, no. 1 (summer 2001): 93–128; see also Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³¹ On the challenges that the United States faces in asymmetric warfare, see Roger W. Barnett, *Asymmetrical Warfare* (Washington D.C.: Brassey’s, 2003); Steven Metz and Douglas V. Johnson II, *Asymmetry and U.S. Military Strategy* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2001).

such as territory more important than power or strategy. Here I make an effort to link the enduring rivalry literature with the asymmetric conflict literature by means of a case study on the India-Pakistan rivalry. I build on the literature on asymmetric conflicts by distinguishing between different types of asymmetry that most affect an enduring rivalry. The asymmetry need not be both global (overall capability) and local, and whether an asymmetry is of one type versus the other can have key consequences for conflict patterns. The fundamental objective of the article, however, is to elucidate the particular power configuration that has sustained the India-Pakistan rivalry for over half a century.

THE INDIA-PAKISTAN CONFLICT AS AN ENDURING RIVALRY

In this section I attempt to explain the persistence of the India-Pakistan conflict using the truncated asymmetric power argument (global superiority versus local parity) identified in the preceding discussion of enduring rivalry between states in an asymmetrical dyad. The onset of this rivalry occurred as a result of a massive political shock in 1947 with the partition of India into two states at the end of British colonial rule. Although it began as a result of a dispute over territory and identity, the conflict became embedded over time as other systemic-, regional-, state-, and individual-level factors contributed to its persistence.³²

Explanations for the Persistence of the India-Pakistan Rivalry

The two factors that most scholars have focused on to explain the persistence of the India-Pakistan conflict are: its territorial dimension and the contrasting national identities of the two states.³³ According to explanations based on territory, the chief cause of this enduring rivalry has been the inability of the parties to agree on a mutually acceptable settlement over the disposition of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. The two countries were born in conflict, as the 1947 partition of the subcontinent did not fully settle the distribution of territory. Pakistan contested the state's accession to India on the irredentist ground that the majority of the population affected was Muslim. On the other hand, India was unwilling to give away the portion of

³² For analyses of these factors, see Paul (ed.) *The India-Pakistan Conflict*. On the history of the conflict, see Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Raju Thomas, ed., *Perspectives on Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict in South Asia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

³³ On the ideological divergences between India and Pakistan, see Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 25–28. On the Indian political system, see Atul Kohli, ed., *The Success of India's Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Kashmir it controlled, arguing that such a concession would be tantamount to a second partition of the subcontinent on the basis of religion. India's behavior is not unique; new states, especially multiethnic ones, tend to be extremely wary of territorial concessions because they are attempting to consolidate their hard-won independence and territorial integrity. They tend to fear that conceding some territory to an opponent or allowing it to become independent could lead to the unraveling of the state by encouraging other subnational movements to rise up with similar demands in other parts of the country. It is thus argued that India cannot afford to give up Kashmir as that will generate nationalist movements elsewhere.³⁴

Pakistan, the revisionist state seeking territorial readjustment, also cannot compromise, as wresting the predominantly Muslim state from Indian control has been its major foreign policy goal since independence. Political leaders are inclined to stand firm on territorial issues in order to maintain or enhance support from their domestic political constituencies. No wonder nearly 80 percent of all enduring rivalries have been partially driven by territorial issues.³⁵ Accordingly, until these territorial issues are resolved, rivalries will tend to continue, and the India-Pakistan rivalry is no exception.

There is no doubt that the unfinished territorial division, emanating from the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, is a key source of the conflict. We still need to explain the particular structural dynamics that made territorial compromise so difficult in this case. While a territorial explanation helps explain the origins of the enduring conflict, it does not account for why neither party has been able to compromise or force a settlement. Further, the accounts based on territorial conflicts do not focus on territorial conflicts that have been settled, especially in recent years (such as between China and Russia, and China and Vietnam). Similarly, China and Pakistan settled their conflict over Kashmir. Although it includes a long-running territorial dispute, the India-China rivalry has become less intense over the years as both states have moved forward with their trade relations, even as their negotiations on territorial demarcations have dragged on.

³⁴ Empirical evidence suggests that states are unwilling to make territorial concessions, not because of the intrinsic value of the territory in dispute, but for reputation reasons, that is, fear of future challenges emerging if the state does not act strong now. For this logic, see Barbara F. Walter, "Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict," *International Studies Review* 5, no. 4 (December 2003): 137–53.

³⁵ Paul Diehl, Gary Goertz, and Daniel Saedi, "Theoretical Specifications of Enduring Rivalries: Applications to the India-Pakistan Case," in *The India-Pakistan Conflict*, ed. T.V. Paul, chap. 2; John A. Vasquez, "The India-Pakistan Conflict in Light of General Theories of War, Rivalry, and Deterrence," in *The India-Pakistan Conflict*, ed. T.V. Paul, chap. 3. On the role of territory in enduring rivalry, see John A. Vasquez and Marie T. Henahan, "Territorial Disputes and the Probability of War- 1816–1992," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 2 (March 2001): 123–38; H. Ben-Yehuda, "Territoriality and War in International Crises: Theory and Findings, 1918–2001," *International Studies Review* 6 (December, 2005): 85–105; P. R. Hensel, "Charting a Course to Conflict: Territorial Issues and Interstate Conflict, 1816–1992" *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15 (spring 1996): 43–73.

Moreover, to some international relations scholars, territory has been declining as a source of conflict. Kal Holsti sees a major decline in territory as a source of conflict since 1945, observing, during this period, "it has attained a level (31 percent) less than one-half of what it had been in the eighteenth century and about 30 percent lower than it had been between Waterloo and the outbreak of the Second World War."³⁶ The puzzle, then, is why some states find territorial compromises easy to arrive at, while others (such as India and Pakistan) refuse to make concessions in this regard. In addition, a careful analysis of the India-Pakistan conflict reveals that it is not purely about territory, but is also a competition over regional power status. The territorial dispute seems to be a manifestation of the "multi-dimensional power struggle between India and Pakistan over regional dominance."³⁷

A second explanation for the persistence of the India-Pakistan rivalry contends that the two countries' national identities and religious belief systems are irreconcilable and that, as a result, they are bound to compete. Specifically, India's democratic and secular identity and Pakistan's nonsecular, Islamic, and authoritarian identity are key to the rivalry's endurance.³⁸ This argument also has powerful resonance in the international relations literature on democratic peace, that is, the theory that democracies tend not to fight each other but are more likely to end up in conflict with nondemocracies.³⁹ Another strand of this argument is that the India-Pakistan conflict is about state construction and two differing images of statehood. The Indian nationalist movement and postindependence constitution were based on secular and civic nationalism, while Pakistan was founded on the basis of religious and ethnic nationalism. In this view, the success of India's secular polity would challenge the very foundation of Islamic Pakistan.⁴⁰

The literature on identity offers some interesting ways of understating such conflicts. Identity can be based on a number of shared factors, such as

³⁶ Kalevi J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflict and International Order, 1648-1989*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 308.

³⁷ Robert Wirsing, quoted in Aziz Haniffa, "Creative Approaches to Kashmir's Conflict," *India Abroad*, 8 October 2004, 13. According to a study, "sometimes contested territory produces rivalries, while other times, rivalries lead to territorial claims. In still other cases, rivalries and contested territory emerge simultaneously," thus showing the complex relationship between territory and rivalry. Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, "Contested Territory, Strategic Rivalries, and Conflict Escalation," *International Studies Quarterly*, 50, no. 1 (March 2006), 146.

³⁸ States Barnds: "Hindu-Muslim communalism, the historic curse of the subcontinent, had led step by step to an unyielding hostility that imprisoned the leadership and the peoples of India and Pakistan." William J. Barnds, *India, Pakistan and the Great Powers* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 43. For an extreme version of the religious-identity argument, see John G. Stoesinger, *Why Nations Go to War*, 5th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), chap. 5. See also Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Quest for Saladin* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³⁹ On this, see Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁴⁰ Cited in Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 5. For a powerful view on the role of religion in Pakistani politics, see Baldev Raj Nayyar, *The Geopolitics of Globalization* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), chap. 12.

ethnic origins, religious ties, physical traits, historical experiences, and an individual's place of birth. These factors can also generate shared beliefs about the "other," that is, states or individuals with whom one's group is in conflict. Competing identities contribute to enduring rivalries because of socialization regarding mistreatment by the other group(s) and because "conflicts related to highly significant identities have a tendency to persist, since threats to those identities are not easily put aside."⁴¹ When identity is combined with territorial dispute, intractable conflicts are generated. States can develop intense nationalisms revolving around adversarial identities and the sense of victimhood.

Although identity-based explanations can account for many of the details surrounding partition and the initial divergences between India and Pakistan, they cannot fully explain the rivalry's endurance for more than half a century or why wars and crises have erupted only during certain periods and not others. Identity becomes salient for an enduring rivalry only when leaders use it to mobilize their followers to achieve conflict objectives. There is a strong basis for this argument, as shown by the literature on ethnic conflicts.⁴² It is a fairly well-acknowledged fact that ethnic groups can live together peacefully despite having differing identities. Even ethnic groups with competing identities can coexist without war for long periods of time. Under certain conditions, however, such as the emergence of entrepreneurial leaders who believe in ethnic domination or who use the ethnic card to gain or hold power, mobilization for conflict increases. For such leaders to sustain a conflict they must have certain resources. These can include external support, especially in terms of finances and weapons, as well as the availability of advantageous strategies and tactics. This logic also applies to clashes of identity in the interstate context. As I discuss below, for a rivalry based partially on competing identities to endure, structural factors must enter into the dynamics of the conflict.

⁴¹ For these, see Louis Kriesberg, "Identity Issues: 'Us' versus 'Them'," in *Beyond Intractability*, <http://crinfo.beyondintractability.org/essay/identity-issues/>, July 2003. On identity, see Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 5; Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 2; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁴² For instance, Gagnon argues that violent ethnic conflicts are "provoked by elites in order to create a domestic political context where ethnicity is the only politically relevant identity. It thereby constructs the individual interests of the broader population in terms of the threat to the community defined in ethnic terms." V. P. Gagnon Jr., "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (winter 1994–1995): 130–66. Similarly, Fearon and Laitin argue that despite the increase in the number of civil wars in the post-Cold War period, "more ethnically or religiously diverse countries have been no more likely to experience significant civil violence" and that "factors that explain which countries have been at risk for civil wars are not their ethnic or religious characteristics," but are conditions such as poverty, state weakness, political instability, rough terrain, and large population size. James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (February 2003): 75–90. Likewise, Amartya Sen contends: "Violence is fomented by the imposition of singular and belligerent identities on gullible people, championed by proficient artisans of terror." Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 2.

In the case of India and Pakistan, another problem with identity-based explanations is that Hindus and Muslims have been living together in the Indian subcontinent for over a millennium. They still do so in most parts of India; only in some areas has there been violent Hindu-Muslim conflict.⁴³ Religious identity gains a political character only when the political elites use it for their particular national goals. Thus political religion is often a foil for the continuation of a conflict caused by other variables. While Pakistani elites of all persuasions have used religion to mobilize the people for the struggle with India, many Pakistani leaders, including founding father Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto and General Pervez Musharaff, have not been particularly religious. Their main goal has been to attain geopolitical parity with India, which they have viewed as a challenger to Pakistan's vital national interests. In addition, the conflict with India has been one means by which Pakistan's leaders could unite the country's competing sectarian and ethnic groups.⁴⁴

Identity based on religion has become a dividing issue in the Indian case as well, given the rise of Hindu fundamentalism since the 1980s. However, this development occurred after forty years of secular rule by parties such as Congress and other coalitions, during which time the conflict with Pakistan became embedded. Further, if the identities are incompatible, how do we explain the active peace efforts by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government of Atal Behari Vajpayee in 1999 and 2003? That the BJP, which harbors extremist groups such as the *Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh* (RSS), would engage in peace negotiations poses a challenge to the identity argument.

There is no denying that different conceptions of national identity have played a complex role in the India-Pakistan conflict, with Pakistan becoming more reliant on religious ideology to sustain the conflict over time. The Pakistani military and political parties have used the Islamic identity to defend their own political positions and interests, which benefit from the perpetuation of the rivalry. The absence of an unambiguous national identity thus allows the territorial conflict with India to serve as a beacon for national unity, thereby prolonging and embedding the conflict.⁴⁵ Although incompatibility in terms of identity and institutional systems is important for understanding enduring rivalries, these are often intertwined with deeper, structural factors that make a conflict persist and become embedded.

⁴³ See Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ Vali R. Nasr, "International Politics, Domestic Imperatives, and Identity Mobilization: Sectarianism in Pakistan, 1979–1997," *Comparative Politics* 32, no. 2 (January 2000): 171–90.

⁴⁵ Vali Nasr, "National Identities and the Pakistan-India Conflict," *The India-Pakistan Conflict*, chap. 8. According to another scholar, Islam became "the central issue in Pakistan's politics because of a conscious and consistent state policy. . . . The country's population remains fractured by ethnic and linguistic differences, with Islam used as the common bond in an attempt to unite it." Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between the Mosque and Military* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005):321.

TABLE 1 India and Pakistan: Comparative National Indicators

	Population (2004)	Area (sq km)	GDP (2003)	GDP (ppp) (2003)	PCI (ppp) (2003)	Eco Growth (2003)	Def. Exp (2004)	Armed Forces (Active)
India	1.065 bn	3,288	\$592.5 bn	\$3.03 tn	\$2,900	8.3%	\$19.1 bn	1,325,000
Pakistan	159.2 mn	796	\$69.6 bn	\$318 bn	\$2,100	5.5%	\$3.3 bn	619,000

(Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2004-05*; CIA, *World Factbook*, 2005. Economic figures are in U.S. dollars.)

TRUNCATED POWER ASYMMETRY AS A CAUSE OF THE PERSISTENCE OF THE INDIA-PAKISTAN RIVALRY

Although the two factors examined above—territory and identity—have contributed to the origins and persistence of the India-Pakistan rivalry, a dominant variable is yet to be identified. I argue that the India-Pakistan rivalry persists because of the peculiar power dynamics involved, a truncated power asymmetry as described in the first section of this article. As a result, there has been relatively little incentive for compromise for either state.

As shown in Table 1, the differentials between India and Pakistan in terms of aggregate indicators is approximately: population: 6:1; size: 4:1; GDP: 8.5:1; defense expenditures: 6:1; and total number of active forces: 2:1. Only in per capita income is the ratio closer.

Despite these glaring disparities in aggregate size and capability, three crucial factors make the power distribution between the two states one of truncated asymmetry: military balance in the theater of contest (buttressed by geography and terrain); the strategy and tactics of the rivals; and the role of great powers as balancers between the two states.

The two states fought three major wars (1947–48, 1965, and 1971) and a minor one (1999) and have experienced a number of crises, but none of these events has altered the power asymmetry in any significant way. The 1971 war had the most pronounced impact, resulting in a military debacle for Pakistan and the separation of the eastern wing of its territory. The secession of East Pakistan consolidated Pakistan's military assets in the Western front, helping it narrow the capability asymmetry with India along the international border and in the Kashmir theater. India was unable to translate its victory in 1971 into a lasting political settlement that could have altered the dynamics of the conflict. At the Simla conference in 1972, Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto managed to extract concessions from India by promising not to raise Kashmir in international forums, a promise on which Pakistan would later renege.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ On this, see P. R. Chari and Pervez Iqbal Cheema, *The Simla Agreement 1972: Its Wasted Promise* (New Delhi, Manohar, 2001).

Pakistan's capabilities and strategies are pivotal to understanding the prolongation of this conflict. In the India-Pakistan dyad the challenger has initiated a majority of the wars and crises, while over the years the defender has shown a willingness to live with the territorial status quo. In this dyad, the defender often reacts to the military initiatives of the challenger rather than vice-versa.⁴⁷ At each stage of the rivalry, escalation and de-escalation have resulted largely from the challenger's choices, such as in 1947–48; 1965 (both Rann of Kutch and the war); the prolonged proxy war that began in 1989; and the 1999 Kargil conflict. The 1971 war was a mixed instance where both the challenger and defender took military initiatives. Although India took the initiative in supporting the secession of East Pakistan, it was Pakistan that opened the conflict on the Western front. India's mobilization of troops during the 2002-3 crisis (*Operation Parakram*) was a reaction to the attacks on the Indian Parliament by terrorists with links to Pakistan-based groups.⁴⁸ Based on this empirical record, it is reasonable to argue that the challenger's capabilities and strategies are more critical to the dynamics of this enduring rivalry than those of the defender.

Why Does Weaker Pakistan Initiate Frequent Wars/Crises?

The preceding discussion is designed to show that Pakistan's role as the main initiator of crises and wars in the India-Pakistan dyad is not accidental, but the result of a configuration of power capabilities, seen in terms of the theater and the global frames of reference, that has allowed it to sustain the rivalry. This power configuration has various consequences; some of these affect the domestic level and others the level of psychological learning by individual decision-makers.

The three most significant variables that make the power equation between India and Pakistan a case of "truncated asymmetry" are capability, strategy, and alliance politics. These factors also allow the weaker protagonist to engage in frequent military efforts to upset the territorial status quo.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Wayne A. Wilcox, "India and Pakistan," in *Conflict in World Politics*, eds. Steven L. Spiegel and Kenneth W. Waltz (Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers, 1971), 257–58; Barnds, *India, Pakistan and the Great Powers*, 71.

⁴⁸ The few incidents where India took the initiative include the 1984 occupation of the Siachen Glacier and the Brasstacks military exercise that led to the 1986–87 crisis. The former was justified as a preemptive action to thwart feared Pakistani occupation of the undemarcated heights in Kashmir, while the latter was a reaction to Pakistan's support for secessionist groups in India, especially in the Punjab. Neither was meant to radically alter the territorial status quo.

⁴⁹ Other asymmetric rivalries could also be prolonged as a result of the operation of these variables in different combinations. For instance, strategy and tactics may be the dominant factor that partially compensates the capability deficiencies of the weaker side, for example, a guerrilla force such as Hezbollah that confronts a more powerful Israel.

THE CAPABILITY FACTOR

Although in the South Asian context India is larger in physical size, GDP and overall military capability, it is not overwhelmingly preponderant in the conflict's key theater or on the international border. Until 1965 India's overall defense posture against Pakistan was based on "matching capabilities." After the 1965 war, India shifted its posture to maintaining "sufficient deterrence" or a "slight edge" in its force deployments. During this period India had seven divisions deployed, while Pakistan had six; Islamabad enjoyed qualitative superiority in tanks and aircraft. This condition had shifted by the early 1970s, and the change was a decisive factor in India's military victory in the 1971 war. Since 1971 India has maintained a slight edge in both qualitative and quantitative capabilities on its border with Pakistan, although in overall capabilities, India maintained a superior status throughout the 1970s and '80s.⁵⁰ This slight edge, however, has not been sufficient for an adequate defense of Kashmir or to deter limited probes by Pakistan, especially of the asymmetric variety. These limited probes, whether short wars or based on attrition-style guerilla operations, are meant to challenge India's general deterrence capabilities, since its global superiority does not deter such incursions in the local arena.⁵¹

The military capabilities the two states have deployed against each other have been on an almost equal footing for over four decades. There is near parity in terms of divisions deployed against each other, as about half of India's land forces are stationed on the border with China or other parts of the large country.⁵² The two-front problem is especially acute for India in times of crisis, when it has to keep an eye on Chinese troop movements as well. In contrast, Pakistan can concentrate its military assets along the Indian border, although in 2001, responding to the U.S. war on the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, Islamabad had to move a substantial number of troops to the northwest frontier areas.

The near parity in troop disposition, especially in the Kashmir theater, gives Pakistan several advantages in limited, asymmetric wars. The Kashmiri terrain often permits limited incursions and guerrilla operations to go undetected by Indian forces. The deployment of certain weapons, especially artillery, allows Pakistan to checkmate India during the initial stages of an armed conflict, and this option has been an asset in short wars.

⁵⁰ Raju G.C. Thomas, *Indian Security Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 22–23.

⁵¹ On the role of limited probes, see Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

⁵² The Indian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense acknowledged in April 2002 that India's conventional superiority vis-à-vis Pakistan's military was barely 1:1.2, and at the time of the Kargil conflict it stood at 1:1.1. Cited in Lt. Gen. (Retd.) V. K. Sood and Pravin Sawhney, *Operation Parakram: The War Unfinished* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), 158–59.

Only in a long war can India muster its aggregate superiority, but this option has been constrained by the diplomatic intervention of great powers and, since the late 1980s, Pakistan's possession of nuclear weapons. Further, Pakistan enjoys an "elongated geographical advantage, it operates completely on interior lines and can mobilize its holding formations to move into battle locations within a maximum time of 96 hours," and can concentrate its mobile offensive reserves, whereas it would take between seven to ten days for the Indian Army to concentrate for war, as its "strike formations are based deep inside the country."⁵³ A former Pakistani Army chief, General Mirza Aslam Beg, confirms this assessment when he states: "Out of the 370 battalions maintained by India, 210 are committed in Kashmir, and as such it did not have the capability of preempting Pakistan. While it would take India nine to ten days to mobilize its army in the event of war with Pakistan, it would take Pakistan no more than four days to do so."⁵⁴

Since the late 1980s nuclear weapons have emerged as a key factor in the capability equation that reduces the power asymmetry between the two states. In the Pakistani calculations, nuclear weapons and delivery systems, based on short- and medium-range missiles such as the Ghauri, Hatf, and Shaheen, and on aircraft such as the F-16, allow Islamabad to deter any large offensive that India might launch in response to Pakistan's limited probes. Pakistan also has a nuclear first-use policy, which implies that Pakistan will strike with nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack by India. India, on the other hand, follows a no-first-use policy, implying that it would retaliate with nuclear weapons only after absorbing a first strike by its opponent.⁵⁵ This discrepancy in nuclear strategies is also a reflection of the relative advantages in terms of overall conventional capabilities as well as the status quo and revisionist orientations of the defender and the challenger respectively.

The conventional capability equation has been changing slowly since 2002. India has embarked on a major defense modernization program that involves purchasing weapons systems aimed at neutralizing Pakistan's capabilities. Its fifteen-year-long, \$95 billion program envisages the purchase or manufacture of weapons systems that will give it an edge in the subcontinent vis-à-vis Pakistan and, to some extent, China. The emphasis is on acquiring airborne warning and control systems, fighter-bomber aircraft, surface-to-air

⁵³ Sood and Sawhney, *Operation Parakram*, 76–77.

⁵⁴ Presentation made at the Brookings Institution, Washington D.C., July 31, 2003, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, 2 August 2003.

⁵⁵ On this, see Peter R. Lavoy, "Pakistan's Nuclear Doctrine," in *Prospects for Peace in South Asia*, eds. Rafiq Dossani and Henry S. Rowen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 280–300; Rajesh M. Basur, *Minimum Deterrence and India's Nuclear Security* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); Rajesh Rajagopalan, *Second Strike: Arguments about Nuclear War in South Asia* (New Delhi: Penguin-Viking, 2005), chaps. 3 and 4.

missiles, cruise missiles, and advanced battle tanks. Building up naval capabilities, such as aircraft carriers, is also part of this program.⁵⁶ It remains to be seen whether India will achieve preponderance with respect to theater capability in the near future. With the help of China and the United States, Pakistan is also building up its military capabilities, although not at the same pace as India, given its economic problems. Even if India achieves conventional dominance, however, the nuclear deterrent will still act as a major constraint on any conventional offensive that it might mount in response to Pakistan's asymmetric challenges in Kashmir.

THE STRATEGY FACTOR

Partly due to its status-quo orientation, and partly due to constraints in terms of capability and terrain, the Indian strategy in Kashmir has been in general defensive and reactive, while the Pakistani strategy has been one of offensive-defensive. The basic tenet of Islamabad's strategy throughout the conflict has been to take the military initiative at crucial junctures, especially by relying on surprise. In 1947–48 and 1965 short-war calculations were thus paramount to Pakistan's strategy. In the immediate aftermath of the debacle of the 1971 war, that strategy became untenable for a time. In the wake of the 1989 Afghan War, however, a large number of Mujahids (holy warriors) became available, making an asymmetric strategy based on terrorism and guerilla tactics attractive. Meanwhile, the porous Kashmir border and, following fraudulent elections in 1987, the rise of militant opposition in Indian Kashmir made this strategy feasible.⁵⁷

For Pakistan, the new strategy was successful because it had several advantages in waging asymmetric warfare in Kashmir, especially by deploying a holding force and supporting insurgents at a low cost, generally by training and encouraging them to enter Indian-controlled areas. The mountainous terrain of Kashmir makes it difficult for India to seal off the border or conduct counterinsurgency operations effectively. Moreover, India has to rely largely on the Srinagar-Leh road to the area near the Line of Control, and its direct frontal counteroffensives may not succeed in advancing beyond the territory under its control. According to some Indian military commanders, securing areas of the Kashmir frontline requires a minimum of a 30:1 superiority.⁵⁸ Further, India is generally perceived in Pakistan as a "soft state" (despite being hegemonic), with several internal problems and insurgent movements

⁵⁶ See Jonathan Marcus, "India-Pakistan Military Balance," http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/17359... For the progress in arms purchases, see International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2005-06* (London, IISS, 2005), 254–56.

⁵⁷ International Crisis Group, *The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan* (Brussels: Asia Report No.95, 18 April 2005). See also Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), chap. 5.

⁵⁸ For this assessment, see Anthony H. Cordesman, "The India-Pakistan Military Balance," Washington DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies (May 2002), 3.

that offer opportunities for a determined opponent to engage in asymmetric warfare.⁵⁹

In case of war, the Indian strategy has been to defend Kashmir through conventional means but progressively escalate the conflict toward Pakistan's border along the Punjab and Rajasthan, forcing Islamabad to withdraw its troops from Kashmir. The assumption has been that in any conflict that lasts longer than a few weeks, Pakistan will not be able to sustain the two fronts—one in Kashmir and the other on the international border—and that India's overall superiority will thus come to bear on the outcome. The Indian calculation has been that the threat of escalation can act as a deterrent, dissuading Pakistan from initiating military hostilities in Kashmir. The Indian strategy is constrained, however, as New Delhi's forces in Kashmir are vulnerable to short, limited offensives. Surprise incursions by Pakistan have been difficult to detect and repel. In 1965 it took India's military escalation toward Lahore to force Pakistan to give up the conflict, and in 1999 India had to deploy considerable manpower and resources to eject the Pakistani intruders from the Kargil Hills. Although the Indian forces succeeded in ejecting most of the intruders from key mountaintops, Pakistani soldiers were able to hold on to nearly 25 percent of the area taken.⁶⁰ The possibility that India would escalate the conflict in order to cut off Pakistani supply lines to the intruders and mobilize its navy for a blockade prompted Pakistan to threaten nuclear retaliation. As the Pakistani army's position became untenable, Prime Minister Nawaz Shariff approached U.S. President Bill Clinton to intervene, who in turn convinced the Pakistani leader to announce the withdrawal of remaining troops from Indian areas before complete loss of face.⁶¹ It is fairly certain that even without the U.S. intervention India would have eventually been able to remove the remaining Pakistani intruders, as its retaking of the most critical Tiger Hills took place while the Clinton-Shariff talks were proceeding in Washington.⁶²

⁵⁹ Jean-Luc Racine, "Pakistan and the 'India Syndrome': Between Kashmir and the Nuclear Predicament," in *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation*, ed. Christophe Jaffrelot (London: Zed Books, 2002), 198–99.

⁶⁰ The Indian Army chief at that time conceded that "by the time Pakistan withdrew its troops, nearly 75% of the intruded area, including all high features dominating NH 1A highway had been retaken. Even after this political and military understanding to withdraw from remaining areas, Pakistan did not vacate three heights on our side, close to the LOC. After obtaining political concurrence, we had to attack these features on July 22–25, 1999." General V. P. Malik, "Kargil: Where Defence Met Diplomacy," *The Indian Express* (25 July 2002).

⁶¹ Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy and the Bomb* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), chap. 8. For the role that President Clinton played in his meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Shariff in Washington on July 4, 1999, see Bruce Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House," Center for the Advanced Study of India (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002).

⁶² On this, see General V. P. Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2006). See also "World: South Asia- Clinton Urges India-Pakistan Talks," http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/385534.stm (5 July 1999).

Since the early 1990s nuclear weapons have helped embed the asymmetry in terms of capability and strategy. Pakistani leaders have come to believe that they have obtained a “great equalizer” at the strategic level, since their missiles can hit most parts of India. According to Pakistani strategists, Islamabad’s nuclear weapons have “restored a balance of terror in the stand-off with its neighbor, for nuclear deterrence alone working from the weak to the strong, offers decisive power without requiring symmetry.”⁶³ Indeed, in the nuclear context India’s earlier conventional posture of deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment (that is, its strategy to respond to an attack on Kashmir by escalating the conflict across Pakistan’s vulnerable strategic underbelly in Punjab), may have become less plausible. Pakistan possesses both medium- and short-range nuclear-capable missiles that can hit most of India’s cities. The Indians realize this, as evidenced by their having adopted strategies such as full military mobilization and limited war with the hope that Pakistan would suffer economically and militarily in a contest based on long-term, active mobilization.

Following its less-than-satisfactory results from the 2001–2002 full mobilization, *Operation Parakram*, in April 2004 India unveiled a new military doctrine entitled *Cold Start*. The doctrine envisages a “blitzkrieg” strategy in regard to Pakistan in a future conflict that would involve joint operations by the Indian Army, Air Force, and Navy. The strategy involves “eight integrated armored division/mechanized infantry-division sized forces with varying composition of armor, artillery, infantry and combat air support.” It visualizes harnessing the full strike potential of India’s defensive and offensive forces through permanent forward deployment of the divisions from their present interior locations, thereby shortening the time required for offensive operations, and concentrated attacks on approximately eight locations. The Indian objective is to reduce the time needed to mobilize and attack so as not to allow external intervention to stop the offensive, to encourage the political leadership to take decisive action, and to achieve tactical and strategic surprise.⁶⁴ Although the doctrine moves India from a defensive/deterrent to a deterrent/offensive posture, Pakistan’s possession of nuclear weapons still acts as a constraint on the effective execution of the doctrine. The Indian expectation seems to be that the permanent deployment of forces nearer the border and the threat of quick response would compel a relatively weaker Pakistan to spread out its forces and hence restrict its limited probes into Kashmir.

If implemented fully, this doctrine may undercut some of the logic in Pakistan’s calculations regarding possible Indian response to a Kargil-type incursion. However, this doctrine still cannot address asymmetric challenges

⁶³ Racine, “Pakistan and the ‘India Syndrome,’” 199.

⁶⁴ On this, see Subhash Kapila, “India’s New ‘Cold Start’ War Doctrine Strategically Reviewed,” *South Asia Analysis Group*, Paper No. 991 (4 May 2004).

posed by Pakistan through terrorist means, as regular armies often face great difficulties in deterring or defending against such attacks. But troop deployments closer to the border definitely add to India's conventional capability in relation to Pakistan, as the slow mobilization of troops on the Indian side and relatively speedier mobilization on the Pakistani side partially generated the truncated asymmetry in conventional balance in the first place. The big challenge remaining for India is to achieve credibility regarding the question of how it can engage in a major conventional strike without provoking Pakistani nuclear response.⁶⁵

THE ALLIANCE POLITICS FACTOR

Great power alliance politics is the third crucial variable that makes the India-Pakistan power asymmetry truncated. During the Cold War era, especially in the eyes of Western officialdom and the Western media, India and Pakistan were bracketed as geopolitical equals. U.S. alignment with Islamabad reinforced this perception. Since the mid-1950s Pakistan has enjoyed intermittent alliance support from the United States, and since the 1960s there has been a de facto alliance between Pakistan and China. These alliance relationships have offered "borrowed power" to Islamabad and enabled it to reduce the power asymmetry with India. The United States found Pakistan's geostrategic location attractive in the context of the conflict with the Soviet Union. During the early stages of the Cold War Pakistan offered bases and staging posts for U.S. spy planes to watch Soviet nuclear and missile activities. The Eisenhower Administration treated Pakistan as the "the most allied ally." In 1954 the United States and Pakistan concluded a mutual defense agreement, and Pakistan was given membership in the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO).⁶⁶ During the 1960s and 1980s, the U.S. alliance helped Pakistan acquire weapons superior in quality to India's.

In the early 1970s Pakistan acted as a go-between for the United States and China in the diplomatic opening between the two states, and in the 1971 Bangladesh War the United States, under the Nixon Administration, tilted in Pakistan's favor. During the 1980s Pakistan was the frontline state and the conduit for U.S. assistance to the Afghan Mujahedeen forces fighting

⁶⁵ The risk of nuclear escalation from a limited conventional war is high in South Asia because of the close geographical proximity of the two states, the communal overtones of the conflict, the inability of Pakistan to control the Jihadis, and the problems associated with command and control and reliable second strike capabilities. For these, see Arzan Tarapore, "Holocaust or Hollow Victory: Limited War in Nuclear South Asia" (New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, *IPCS Research Papers*, February 2005).

⁶⁶ See Robert J. McMahon, *Cold War in the Periphery: The United States, India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 209–10; Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan 1947–2000* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002).

the Soviet Union, and this cooperation also resulted in massive U.S. economic and military transfers to Pakistan. Since September 11, 2001, Pakistan has become a pivotal state in the U.S. fight against al-Qaeda-led terrorist groups. While the United States gave aid with the intention of using Pakistan for its larger strategic goals, Pakistan's main goal has always been to increase its capabilities in relation to India and reduce the power disparity with its larger neighbor.⁶⁷

Pakistan's military and strategic relationship with China has also played a crucial role in its balancing with India. China has maintained its all-weather relationship with Pakistan in order to contain India, even when pursuing a policy of engagement with New Delhi.⁶⁸ Chinese support to Pakistan began to increase in the wake of the Sino-Indian war of 1962. This also coincided with increased arms transfers from the USSR to India. In the 1965 war Pakistan expected China to open a second front, although in the end this did not materialize. In 1971 China, along with the United States, supported Pakistan and offered significant material assistance.⁶⁹ In the 1980s China again gave major support to Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons and acquisition of missile technology and materials. In addition, China has been Pakistan's main source of conventional capabilities, including Type-59 tanks, Type-531 armored personnel carriers, missile boats, and F-7P jet fighters. Beijing has provided Pakistan manufacturing facilities for jet trainers, Type-69 tanks, HJ-8 anti-tank missiles, and HN-5A portable surface-to-air missiles. More significantly, China is reported to have given Pakistan a proven nuclear weapon design, enriched uranium, ring magnets for enriching uranium, dual-use diagnostic equipment, and an industrial furnace for nuclear weapons production, even though some of these transfers violated its commitments as an NPT signatory. Finally, China has provided Pakistan M-11 short-range ballistic missiles and components, and is reported to have helped in the production of Ghauri, a ballistic missile with a 1,500-km range.⁷⁰ This material and diplomatic support has been crucial in reducing the asymmetry between India's and Pakistan's military capabilities.

The choice of Pakistani decision-makers to engage in a continuous challenge to the territorial status quo, including initiating limited probes and

⁶⁷ According to a prominent scholar on Pakistan, the intermittent U.S. economic and military support has "encouraged Pakistan's military leaders to overestimate their power potential," and led to their reluctance to accept normal relations with India "even after learning through repeated misadventures that Pakistan can at best, hold India to a draw in military conflict and cannot defeat it." The aid has also "made Pakistan a rentier state, albeit one that lives off the rents for its strategic location." Haqqani, *Pakistan between the Mosque and the Military*, 323.

⁶⁸ On this, see T.V. Paul, "The Enduring Sino-Pakistani Nuclear/Missile Relationship and the Balance of Power Logic." *Nonproliferation Review* 10 (summer 2003): 1-9.

⁶⁹ See Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 247-53.

⁷⁰ On this, see Daniel L. Byman and Roger Cliff, *China's Arms Sales: Motivations and Implications* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1999), 14-16.

asymmetric warfare in Kashmir, can be traced to the three factors (capability, strategy, and alliances) that make the power asymmetry between the two states truncated.

Consequences

The result of this peculiar power asymmetry has been a general stasis in the conflict relationship between India and Pakistan, as neither the status quo power nor the challenger is able to make much headway. Despite this stalemate, the weaker party has continued a strategy of limited probes and terrorism, sending in specially trained Mujahids into Indian Kashmir. This challenge, using non-state actors, has kept the conflict festering and prevents the emergence of a clear winner. The truncated power asymmetry has generated different patterns of resolve and resentment in the two countries. The weaker challenger has more frequently sought to acquire territory through military means, including guerrilla/terrorist operations. The availability of qualitatively superior weaponry and the support of great powers, and asymmetric/limited-war strategies have been crucial factors in the challenger's choice in favor of military escalation.⁷¹

The peculiar power asymmetry has roots in the perceptions that each side holds of the other. Much of the Pakistani elite believe that India and Pakistan ought to be coequals geopolitically, and they see relative parity in military and diplomatic terms as a goal worth striving for, even at a high cost to their society. They are ardent believers in the Westphalian notion of *de jure* equality of states and balance-of-power politics. Accordingly, India's aim of achieving major power status is viewed with great alarm, and all available means are employed to avert this prospect.⁷² Pakistan fears that Indian hegemony in the subcontinent will adversely affect its security and power position.⁷³ The Indian elite, on the other hand, view India as a rising great power in Asia along with China. They see Pakistan not as a strategic and geopolitical equal with India, but as a country destined to remain a regional power.⁷⁴

The consequences of relative equality, in terms of perception and of actual capability in the theater, have been profound for the persistence of the rivalry. As a result the territorial dispute is not the single most important cause of the conflict and a territorial settlement in Kashmir may not end the rivalry.

⁷¹ See Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, chap. 6; Huth, *Standing Your Guard*, 114.

⁷² See Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "Pakistan's Strategic Culture," in Michael R. Chambers, ed., *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 305–28. In recent years this has manifested in the strident opposition to India becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

⁷³ Racine, "Pakistan and the 'India Syndrome'."

⁷⁴ Arun Shourie, 'Arch Enemy' or 'Naya dil,' three part series in *www.indianexpress.com*, 11–13 May 2005.

The truncated power asymmetry also implies that the costs of continuing the conflict have not yet been too unbearable for either protagonist. Defense takes less than 3 percent of India's GNP. Furthermore, although the death toll in Kashmir has been mounting in recent years, India has been able to compartmentalize the territory, and the conflict has not greatly affected the country's overall economic development. For Pakistan, the Kashmir conflict has inflicted severe but not unbearable costs. According to official estimates, Pakistan spends nearly 5 percent of its GNP on defense, although it takes about 25 percent of the federal government's expenditures. This amount does not include various hidden costs, such as for the nuclear program, or the opportunity costs of military rule and political uncertainty.⁷⁵ In the past Islamabad has been able to underwrite some of this defense expenditure with the generous financial and military aid from the United States, China, and Saudi Arabia.

Russell Leng argues that the Pakistani military demonstrates dysfunctional learning with respect to the utility of coercive bargaining with India. The Pakistani military and political elites seem to follow a pattern whereby, after each conflict, they convince themselves that the next time they just have to try harder in order to win. "The lessons drawn from one crisis led to misperceptions of intentions and miscalculations of comparative military power in the next crisis."⁷⁶ "Pakistani leaders have attributed Indian caution in the Rann of Kutch conflict [in 1965] to Hindu passivity, rather than the logistical and operational advantages of Pakistan" and, in recent years, India's caution when reacting to limited probes such as Kargil to Pakistan's nuclear capability.⁷⁷ Further, the overmilitarization of Pakistani society and the attendant pathologies of conflict behavior can also be partially traced to the peculiar power configuration in the subcontinent. Military rulers often magnify conflict relationships and take advantage of windows of opportunity as they marginalize civilian input into decision-making. The Pakistani military has often demonstrated these proclivities.⁷⁸

PATHS TO RIVALRY TERMINATION

Will the India-Pakistan rivalry end soon, and are there lessons pertinent to this conflict that can be drawn from other cases of enduring rivalries that have terminated? Rivalries can de-escalate in different ways. However, most

⁷⁵ Estimated from *The Military Balance*, 2004. See also Veena Kukreja, *Contemporary Pakistan* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), 62.

⁷⁶ Russell J. Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 260.

⁷⁷ Russell J. Leng, "Realpolitik and Learning in the India-Pakistan Rivalry," in *The India Pakistan Conflict*, 112.

⁷⁸ On this, see Julian Schofield, *Militarization and War* (New York: Palgrave Press, forthcoming).

past de-escalations have occurred as a result of one or more of the following: major shocks, such as wars or crises; expectational changes; the arrival of domestic policy entrepreneurs with sufficient political control to overcome internal commitments to older strategies; some level of reciprocity; or pressure from third parties.⁷⁹

Positional rivalries for geopolitical leadership and power status tend to end only when substantial changes occur in the balance of capabilities, or when a common enemy emerges. Historically, many major enduring rivalries have ended as a result of a widening gap in the antagonists' capabilities. The termination of the East-West rivalry and the Cold War was largely due to the initiatives of Mikhail Gorbachev, who made use of the Soviet Union's economic stagnation to initiate radical changes. A counterfactual here is whether the Cold War would have ended in 1991 had the Soviet Union maintained economic and military strength equal to that of the West. In that case Gorbachev would not have been under much pressure to initiate reforms. His reforms, however, spun out of control, and the collapse of the Soviet system followed. The Gorbachev team realized that a "renewed assault on us positions internationally would invite an escalatory response from a stronger rival."⁸⁰

The cost factor was also responsible for the end of the South African conflict and several civil war rivalries of the 1990s, showing that parties tend to negotiate when a conflict becomes unbearable. Conflict resolution, however, requires the arrival of both favorable general conditions and motivated leadership. The general conditions may be external (such as a change in the position of the chief ally) or internal (such as rapidly declining economic conditions). Visionary leaders are needed to translate windows of opportunity offered by changes in general conditions into diplomatic openings and an eventual end to the conflict.

In the India-Pakistan case, the dyad's structural elements in terms of capability dispositions, roles of major powers, and the strategies of the parties have remained obstacles to a permanent resolution. Moreover, the truncated nature of the asymmetric power relationship has been reinforced by the possession of nuclear weapons by the two states, especially by the challenger. The cost of the rivalry's persistence is yet to be felt intensely by either party. However, since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, there have been some changes in the structural factors that are reflected in the thaw that has occurred between the two countries since 2003.

⁷⁹ William R. Thompson, "Expectancy Theory, Strategic Rivalry Deescalation, and the Evolution of the Sino-Soviet Case," in *Evolutionary Interpretations of World Politics*, ed. Thompson, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 225.

⁸⁰ Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Economic Constraints and the End of the Cold War," in *Cold War Endgame*, ed. William C. Wohlforth (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 281 and 287.

First, the post-September 11 context has made the strategy of asymmetric war, based on terrorism and guerilla tactics, difficult to maintain. Pakistan's failure to achieve its objectives in the Kargil war had already exposed the weaknesses of escalating an asymmetric war. Since the September 11 attacks, the United States has been waging a "war on terrorism," and Pakistan has emerged as a frontline state. This has forced Islamabad to make changes to its strategy, especially since al-Qaeda and the Taliban forces are the main targets of the U.S. offensive. In addition, these groups have become a major threat to Pakistan itself.⁸¹ The pressures from the United States to wipe out al-Qaeda and other extremist Islamist groups have required eradicating the very same forces that Pakistan had been encouraging to enter Indian Kashmir as a way of fighting the asymmetric war.

Second, great power positions vis-à-vis the two states have changed, albeit in a limited way. Most significantly, the United States and China have altered their positions somewhat as a result of their improving relations with India. The U.S. position is the most crucial in this respect. Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, India-U.S. relations have improved significantly.⁸² China has also been steadily improving its relations with India in both the economic and political arenas. In this sense, changes in China's and the United States's approach have (in a limited way) helped to change the perceptions of the rivals, especially that of the challenger, thereby encouraging them to talk peace.

Finally, since the late 1990s, economic variables have begun to affect the power asymmetry between India and Pakistan. India's rapid growth since it initiated economic reforms in 1991 has widened the asymmetry in terms of economic capabilities. During the late 1990s Pakistan gained the label of a "failing state" and had to be rescued from defaulting on its loans with a package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and, subsequently, by a large infusion of aid from the United States (granted in return for Pakistan's support for the war in Afghanistan). With India's rapid growth, the Pakistani elite's hope of maintaining geopolitical parity seems to have been shaken. For the Indian elite, a realization has crept in that India's aspiration to become a leading economic and military power has been restrained by the enduring rivalry with smaller Pakistan. Finding a modus vivendi in Kashmir, if not a permanent resolution, would allow India to focus on its larger economic and geopolitical goals more effectively.⁸³

⁸¹ This is evident in Pakistani President General Musharaff's statement after his 20 April 2005 summit in Delhi with the Indian Prime Minister that military solutions were "not the option anymore." "The world has changed, especially after 9/11." newsvotes.bbc.co.uk/4/20/2005.

⁸² On this, see Talbott, *Engaging India*.

⁸³ For the Pakistani elite's calculations in this respect, see "Remarks" by Ambassador Jehangir Karamat at the International Development Conference, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 9 April 2005; Akmal Hussain, "Striving for Peace," www.dailytimes.com, 25 December 2003.

However, the changes that have taken place since 2001 are minimal and not sufficient to radically alter the two states' power positions, and therefore the conflict dynamics. Since the India-Pakistan rivalry encompasses both the territorial conflict and geopolitical positioning, a further widening of the gap in capabilities between the defender and the challenger may be essential for a full rapprochement to occur. This may take at least two decades of sustained economic and military growth on the part of the defender, as well as the significant repositioning of the great powers (China and the United States) with regard to the rivals.

RELEVANCE TO EXISTING LITERATURE ON ENDURING RIVALRY AND ASYMMETRIC CONFLICTS

This article has shown that scholars of both enduring rivalries and asymmetric conflicts need to focus on power differentials between opposing states in their explanations of the phenomena they investigate. The distinction between different types of power symmetry—global (overall) versus local (theater-specific)—is not properly identified in the literature. As a result, power distribution is generally discussed in global as opposed to local or theater-specific terms. General theories of war, such as balance of power and power transition, tend to look at power in the same way and miss nuances in the capability equations. To these schools, states' overall power, defined in military, economic, and demographic terms, is of primary importance. Local power configurations are generally ignored.

The "plausibility probe" of the India-Pakistan case suggests that local power matters tremendously in making an asymmetric rivalry enduring. It is indeed the local advantages that encouraged Germany to challenge superior coalitions in both world wars, and Japan to challenge Russia in 1904-5 and the United States in the Pacific in 1941. Similarly, limited local advantages gave incentives to Egypt and Syria in 1973 to initiate the war against Israel, and Argentina to take over the British-held Falklands in 1992.⁸⁴ To some extent, the Soviet Union was also able to sustain the Cold War for over forty years despite the overall inferiority of its capabilities because it had several advantages in terms of conventional capability in the European theater. North Korea's strategic and tactical advantages in theater are also powerful explanatory variables for the continuation of the Korean conflict as an enduring rivalry despite the huge power asymmetry between it and the South Korean-U.S. coalition it confronts. Similarly, the enduring China-Taiwan rivalry also lasts in part because of the limited tactical advantages and alliance support that Taipei enjoys despite China's overall superiority. The future power transition conflict between the United States and China, if

⁸⁴ On this, see Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*.

it develops at all, will also be of a truncated-asymmetric nature, as China is unlikely to achieve the kind of global capability that Washington possesses in military terms, but may achieve equality or even superiority in the East Asian context. China may also develop asymmetric strategies to checkmate the United States in the theater.⁸⁵

IMPLICATIONS

The relative capabilities of rival states matter significantly in determining the perpetuation or termination of an enduring rivalry, especially if the rivalry is over geostrategic position and dominance at both regional and global levels. In a dyad containing an active challenger and a status quo power, the capabilities of the challenger in comparison to the defender matter more for determining the persistence of the rivalry. A dissatisfied challenger's sustained violent conflict behavior is largely a function of its advantages in terms of capability, strategy, and alliance relationships, which make the conflict less costly. The India-Pakistan rivalry is a good example of the role of peculiar power configuration in rivalry persistence.

The India-Pakistan rivalry shows that balance of power and deterrence do not offer much hope for resolving an enduring rivalry of this kind. The mutual deterrence relationship may prevent large-scale wars, but it can lead to a festering, prolonged conflict with neither winner nor loser. Under such conditions, neither party would want to make concessions that would end the conflict. In addition, the relatively weaker side may try to precipitate different types of crises, knowing that a massive retaliation is unlikely. Similarly, an effective balance of power between a challenger and a status quo state can prevent large-scale war, but it offers no inducement to either side to give up the conflict. In fact, it reinforces the challenger's desire to continue the conflict so as to prevent its rival from acquiring regional or global preeminence. Preponderance of the status quo power may offer a better chance for peace, as in the cases of the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada relationships.⁸⁶ The preponderant power has to reassure the challenger of its serious intention to respect the challenger's sovereignty and territorial integrity, especially if the latter is a weak and highly insecure state.

In the India-Pakistan context, the prospect that the status quo power, India, will achieve overwhelming preponderance (similar to that of the United States in relation to Mexico and Canada which led to the end to these rivalries) seems a distant proposition. In the period of Indian military dominance—1971 to 1987—no major clashes occurred between the two

⁸⁵ Thomas J. Christensen, "Posing Problems without Catching Up: China's Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (spring 2001): 5–40.

⁸⁶ On the Canada-U.S. rapprochement, see Charles F. Doran, *Forgotten Partnership: U.S.-Canada Relations Today* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 22–23; 64–65.

states. This situation changed when Pakistan's economic and military capabilities were boosted by the United States, and Pakistan was able to adopt an asymmetric strategy as a result of the availability of Mujahedeen fighters coming out of the Afghan war. Pakistan's acquisition of a nuclear capability ensured that India would not be able to retaliate decisively in response to asymmetric challenges. The limited thaw in relations between the two states since 2003 has been facilitated by the changing power dynamics in the region, especially in terms of India's increasing economic and military capabilities, the changing positions of the great powers involved, and Pakistan's difficulties in waging asymmetric warfare through terrorist/guerrilla means in the wake of changes in the international system following the September 11, 2001, attacks.

The policy implications of this argument are that the structure of the India-Pakistan conflict is much deeper than simple territorial or identity-based explanations maintain. There is a need to go beyond the standard policy prescriptions that rely on regional balance-of-power politics that major powers have followed in the past. One of the key reasons territorial concessions by New Delhi are unlikely is that they will diminish India's geopolitical position and increase Pakistan's notion of geopolitical parity. Pakistan would like to acquire Kashmir not just for irredentist or religious reasons, but to achieve geopolitical equality with India. This is one of the key underlying reasons India will not concede additional territory to Pakistan and the latter will not easily settle for the status quo. This also explains why a territorial settlement in Kashmir may not fully end the conflict, which will endure so long as the geopolitical rivalry for strategic parity persists. Geopolitical rapprochements usually occur when a challenger ends the competition or a common enemy makes an alliance between the challenger and the status quo power a necessity. This outcome is more likely to occur when a widening power discrepancy with India encourages the rise of domestic coalitions in Pakistan that seek a more moderate foreign policy, as happened in the Soviet case. Indian gestures of cooperation by way of trade concessions, security guarantees, and confidence-building measures could embolden the forces of moderation in Pakistan, as trade with a very powerful neighboring market could become enticing for progressive forces seeking change. Increasing openness of the Indian market to Pakistan and deeper economic integration of the two states will help this process, as happened between the United States and Mexico and the United States and Canada.

Future research could apply the arguments developed in this article elsewhere, as they are generalizable to other enduring rivalries, such as those between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and Hezbollah, China and Taiwan, and the two Koreas. These arguments are also relevant to intractable ethnic conflicts such as the one in Sri Lanka.