



**Pugwash Workshop on
South Asian Security
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Report
by Jeffrey Boutwell

This workshop was co-hosted by the Pugwash Conferences and the Geneva International Peace Research Institute (GIPRI) and involved 32 participants from seven countries meeting over two and a half days to discuss major points of tension between India and Pakistan and ways of building confidence between the two and finding a resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Both Pugwash and GIPRI gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Swiss government. As is customary with reports of Pugwash workshops, the views expressed are solely those of the rapporteur.

Conventional Confrontation and the Risk of Nuclear Escalation

A central focus of the workshop was the risk that future military confrontations along the Indian-Pakistan border, and the Line of Control in Jammu-Kashmir, might lead to the use of nuclear weapons.

Discussion began with a few participants voicing the opinion that the risk of large-scale conflict between the two countries remains remote, and that belligerent postures in Delhi and Islamabad are rooted primarily in domestic politics. In this light, neither country at present has much of an incentive to change current policies which perpetuate the stalemate between them. Even if conventional war did break out, according to this view, a military stalemate would be the most likely outcome. In addition, nuclear use by miscalculation or by accident is unlikely, and nuclear pre-emptive strikes are not a likely option. What is needed is for both sides to lower the inflammatory rhetoric.

Others disagreed strongly with this thinking, arguing that nuclear use by accident, miscalculation, or unauthorized use is very much possible. This view held that both countries have been on the brink so often that risk-taking has become ingrained in policy-making; the (unfortunate and dangerous) consequence being that both India and Pakistan feel large risks can be taken because these won't lead to all out conflict.

In terms of the major issues fueling the conflict between them, cross-border terrorism is for India the key issue; it simply must stop. One Indian characterized India as a status quo power confronting a revisionist power that uses and manipulates terrorism for its own ends. The dilemma for New Delhi is how to respond: military mobilization, punitive actions, diplomacy? The point was made forcefully by one participant that Pakistan seems to feel that its nuclear weapons have given it a free hand to pursue low intensity warfare without fear of conventional retaliation. India can not countenance staying in the box, and will have to respond, perhaps with preemptive options.

A Pakistani response is that India is manipulating the meaning of terrorism when it talks of Pakistan using its nuclear shield to promote terrorism, and that India greatly over-simplifies the problem of controlling terrorism (as India should know from its own domestic terrorism). Given instability in Pakistan, the Pakistani government will need political cover (talks on Kashmir, economic relations) as a quid pro quo for cracking down on cross-border and domestic terrorism. Another participant asserted that Pakistan's national security policy has changed substantially in the post 9/11 environment, and India should recognize and acknowledge these changes. Moreover, Pakistan has accepted its military imbalance with India and won't try and engage in an arms race in every area.

[Although not discussed at length during the workshop, press reports shortly before the meeting that North Korea had admitted to violating the 1994 Agreed Framework by building up a stockpile of highly enriched uranium, and that Pakistan had aided these efforts in return for North Korean ballistic missiles, could only further complicate the situation.]

The Nuclear Dynamic

Discussion followed on perceptions of the role of nuclear weapons in South Asia. For some in India, there is the assumption that nuclear weapons greatly reduce the possibility of major conflict and will facilitate an ultimate settlement between India and Pakistan. Others clearly feel the opposite, that perceptions of a 'nuclear stalemate' greatly enhance the risk of conventional conflicts (e.g., Kargil). Whatever Pakistani assumptions might be, however, about the role of India's nuclear weapons, the opinion was voiced that Pakistan should not take 'no (first) nuclear use' by India for granted.

The same dichotomy of opinion is found, not surprisingly, in Pakistan, with some

believing that nuclear weapons in South Asia are self-deterring, with little risk that a conventional conflict will lead to the use of nuclear weapons. Others believe that, while Pakistani views on nuclear weapons have matured since the early 1990s, with a greater realization of the consequences of their use, there is still a tendency to underestimate the dangers of 'going nuclear.' Credit was given to Pugwash for helping to educate Pakistan's strategic community on the dangers of nuclear weapons, but more such efforts are needed, especially in terms of public awareness of the dangers of nuclear war.

One participant stressed that it is important to lay bare what the India-Pakistan strategic dialogue is all about. A nuclear confrontation in South Asia would have horrific consequences for the subcontinent, as well as strategic implications for the outside world, and various major powers will exert themselves accordingly. Optimistic predictions that conventional conflict would not go nuclear could be undermined by several factors. One such is the difficulty both sides might face of sustaining major conventional operations for any length of time (one analyst has maintained that the Indian army has logistic capabilities for only 2-3 weeks of sustained conventional conflict), thus increasing the pressures for nuclear weapons use. More ominous is the role of non-state actors in provoking India and Pakistan; terrorist attacks in South Asia have become more provocative following 9/11, and this is the wild card that is most potentially destabilizing.

Some participants felt that the militaries in the two countries recognize that the confrontation is a no-win situation, and that it is the politicians who are responding to and/or exploiting domestic political pressures in sustaining the conflict. This is especially true in terms of the actions of non-state actors being exploited for political purposes. Yet, assumptions about the low probability of major conflict could themselves become self-deluding dangers. And, more generally, there are the economic and political costs of maintaining the military confrontation, both in terms of money spent and investment lost in a region seen as unusable.

One participant suggested that both the following propositions are true: that there is a low probability of actual conflict, yet extreme international concern that such a conflict could occur. It is this concern, especially over nuclear war and over the ability of the two countries to control their nuclear weapons and fissile material, that will keep the US and the international community centrally involved in South Asian affairs. For different reasons, it was also argued that both India and Pakistan at times manipulate this nuclear concern to keep US and the world involved in South Asia.

Others do not share this confidence in the military being able to control the situation. Things can go wrong, and short timelines for decision making compound the problem. Senior leaders in both countries have intimated a willingness to use nuclear weapons if need be, and there are the worrisome developments of more extreme elements in both governments. It was also noted that scientists should play a stronger role, but don't, in policymaking in both countries, in part because of secrecy laws that greatly constrain those scientists who worked on nuclear and other programs.

Even if the risk of nuclear war is low; US concerns about nuclear war stem from the imbalance in conventional forces and Indo-Pakistani misperceptions about each other's red lines. For example, the Kargil stand-off was one thing, but conflict across their joint border would be significantly different, in terms of the Indian army threatening major Pakistani cities or lines of communication, or where Indian air force superiority could inadvertently or deliberately lead to pre-emption of nuclear assets, leading to Pakistani threats to use nuclear weapons.

There is an inherent fallacy in thinking that deterrence is a stable condition, that India and Pakistan have somehow reached a deterrent plateau; deterrence is a dynamic condition that is subject to change. Moreover, deterrence is weakening as nuclear weapons lose their terror value for elites and publics in both countries (others disagreed about this, feeling that elites in both countries are well aware of what nuclear war would mean, and are self-deterred accordingly).

If there was one silver lining to the crisis that began with attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001 and led to troop mobilization in early 2002, it is the increased interest on both sides (and in the international community) to find ways of resolving the long-standing Indian-Pakistani confrontation, and the need now to seize this opportunity.

Defusing the Nuclear Confrontation

Any discussion of ways to reduce the likelihood of nuclear weapon use in South Asia must begin with dispelling misconceptions about nuclear weapons and nuclear strategy. Given short flight times between the two countries (8-12 minutes for known missile systems), radars and satellites will provide precious little 'early warning'. Precisely because there would be essentially no time for political decision-makers to order retaliatory attacks in the case of genuine attack, one participant feared that each or both countries might feel impelled to pre-delegate launch authority to commanders

in the field in order not to lose their nuclear forces to preemptive attack. Such a posture, of course, would produce its own instability, in that nuclear forces could be launched mistakenly, in response to false alarms (e.g., geese on the radar), miscalculation (a mistaken belief that actual events, such as mobilization at nuclear bases or other actions, are preludes to imminent nuclear attack), or misperception (a mistaken belief, even in the absence of any evidence, that the other side should be and is preparing a nuclear attack).

Other participants dismissed these concerns, arguing that each country has in place strict command and control procedures for authorizing the use of nuclear weapons.

Whatever the reality, at a minimum both India and Pakistan should adhere to their current moratorium on nuclear testing, but the greater need is to go beyond this to explore ways of limiting nuclear weapons on both sides in ways that can strengthen stability and reduce pressures for preemption. In doing so, it will be important to note the different utility (perceived and real) that nuclear weapons have for India and Pakistan, and these need to be taken into account when discussing strategies for reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons in South Asia.

There followed a general discussion of pre-emption: its effectiveness or lack thereof, the possible destabilizing effects of even discussing it, and the action-reaction cycle of increasing forces to prevent risk of preemption.

Among the confidence-building measures discussed for reducing the threat posed by nuclear weapons were:

- agreements not to develop and deploy tactical nuclear weapons;
- pre-notification of missile test launches and military exercises;
- improvements to the crisis hotline between India and Pakistan (making it a dedicated, hardened and continuous communications link);
- maintaining a de-alerted posture (separation of warheads from delivery systems)
- improving security and safeguards of nuclear weapons and nuclear facilities, to prevent terrorist or unauthorized seizure.
- no increase of forces in Silcik;
- naval CBMs (incidents at sea);
- military to military discussions (even on social and regimental issues);

- discussions between Indian and Pakistani nuclear scientists on such issues as accidents of weapons in transit, or reactors, to help governments devise response plans;
- planning of nuclear risk reduction centers as discussed in the Lahore principles.

Other proposals included having the US and Russia share their expertise on reducing the risk of nuclear accidents (even if it means recognizing the nuclear status of India and Pakistan). There was of course support for India and Pakistan joining the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Fissile Material Cut-Off regimes, though both are highly unlikely until substantial progress is made on the Kashmir and terrorism issues. In the area of conventional forces, suggestions were made for no forward deployment of military forces, for restraints on the deployment of landmines along the international border or line of control, and for actual removal of landmines along the border given that landmine maps do exist.

Resuming Dialogue: Kashmir and Terrorism

All participants agreed that the major obstacle at present is a lack of confidence that the other side is genuinely interested in moving forward to a resolution of outstanding issues. Given the mistrust generated by the Agra Summit in July 2002, there was general sentiment that the two sides should return to the 1999 Lahore principles.

There was also some hope that the Kashmir elections in October 2002 may have opened up a 'political space' for renewed efforts to seriously discuss solutions to Jammu and Kashmir. The Kashmiris themselves have become more central to resolving the issue of J&K, both in terms of their sacrifice (more Kashmiris have died in internal conflict than Indians and Pakistanis in their three wars) and credibility gained from their recent election. A combination of these recent free, fair and inclusive elections with a growing climate against violence (many Kashmiris have "plague on both your houses" attitude towards India and Pakistan at the moment) and decreased legitimacy of militancy (i.e., those who claim to commit violence in the name of Kashmiris) has opened up new possibilities. The new government of Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed appears open to dialogue with all. The international community needs to support and strengthen this process, and all parties need to suspend any support for violence of whatever form (Pakistan in terms of cross-border terrorism, India in terms of special operations forces accused of human rights violations).

Kashmiri support for devolution of authority needs to be carried forward, along with demilitarization of the conflict and reconstruction of the society and economy. It will be important not to permit Indian or Pakistani versions of the end game block Kashmiri exploration of possible solutions. What is important for Kashmir is an exit strategy for all three parties that is perceived as honorable and which can be implemented. The work of the Kashmir Study Group was mentioned in this regard, proposing Kashmiri independence with limited sovereignty.

Other elements cited were the importance of adhering to democracy and non-violence; the non-permanence of the LOC as an international boundary (borders should be soft and porous); common municipal functions (infrastructure, tourism) built into maximum autonomy for Kashmir; Indian and Pakistani military protection of the borders; and giving Kashmir a semi-international presence (observer status in international bodies).

Specific mention was made of international monitoring of the LOC to demonstrate Pakistani good faith in stopping cross-border terrorism, recognizing there are indigenous religious extremists in K&J that are independent of Pakistani control. Reinforcement of UNMOGIP would be natural, but India will see this as UN intrusion into the Kashmir dispute (one Indian countered that India is not averse to international facilitation on J&K, but to international mediation). Mention was made of involving SAARC in monitoring the border, while British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw has proposed an international helicopter-borne monitoring force. Others were less sanguine about the effectiveness of such monitoring, when incursions across the LOC are rapid and easy?

The Way Forward

Participants focused on how the group can take advantage of points of leverage in proposing next steps. Much emphasis was put on fully implementing the various components of the 1999 Lahore Declaration, wider discussion of CBMs, especially nuclear, and exploring resolution of the Kashmir/terrorism issues. One participant noted that measures such as CBMs are fine in themselves, but what is needed is a vision of future goals that will motivate people to reaching a final goal and ending 50 years of conflict.

Regarding the Lahore Declaration, various elements that were agreed to have not been fully implemented. Even in times of tension, such measures as: bilateral consultations

on security concepts and nuclear doctrines; unilateral measures to reduce risks of accidental or unauthorized use; and upgrading of the communication hotline to reduce misunderstanding/misinterpretation of events would go far in solidifying a basis for further progress. Other steps mentioned in this regard included restoring the High Commissioners in Delhi and Islamabad, resumption of trade and air/ground links, and reducing inflammatory rhetoric.

In terms of CBMs, a wide array of military and non-military CBMs already exist, and a paper outlining a strategic restraint regime (nuclear and conventional CBMs) tabled by Pakistan deserves discussion. There could also be joint patrols and monitoring of the Line of Control and evaluation of whether Pakistan is restraining cross-border terrorism.

The issue of joint patrols of the LOC was floated in July 2002, and Pakistan responded with UNOMIP; such patrols would have automatically brought a ceasefire into place, and this would also have strengthened higher level politico-military contacts that could strengthen crisis management. Also recommended was reinstating the ceasefire in Kashmir and permitting Kashmiris to go to Pakistan for talks.

A Helsinki analogy might be appropriate for the India-Pakistan confrontation, with three baskets of issues that could be discussed: Kashmir/terrorism; nuclear/military; and trade/social interaction.

Looking at the longer term, participants stressed emphasizing the benefits of peace to both countries. One example given was the total collapse of the Pakistani educational system (higher education is only available to two percent of the of population) and its desperate need for resources, which could come in part from academic exchanges with India. Regarding trade and economic activity, economic actors need to be brought into the discussion to explicate the benefits of peace, recognizing that greater bilateral, trade, while in the interest of both India and Pakistan, will still be affected by tensions (as are tourism, transportation, communications, etc.). A good example is the potential for a natural gas pipeline through Pakistan to India, and the fact that alternatives through Bangladesh are being explored instead. Nonetheless, economic CBMs and regional infrastructure projects could help create constituencies for improved relations.

In any event, track II dialogue should not be constrained by governments, and international engagement by NGOs, foreign leaders, journalists, and others are important in shaping attitudes and policy in the two countries.

One participant thought that, although political will for improving bilateral relations is currently lacking, especially in Delhi, there are grounds for optimism about progress over the next six months, especially with US facilitating. Of course, all bets are off should there be an invasion of Iraq.

A next meeting was scheduled for May 2003 in Geneva, with agreement that concrete agenda items and papers would be prepared and distributed well in advance so participants can fully explore possible areas of agreement.

FINAL PARTICIPANT LIST

Prof. Mohammad Hamid **Ansari**, Visiting Professor, Academy of Third World Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, **India** [formerly: Vice Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University, India; Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations; Ambassador to UAE, Australia, Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia]

Prof. Kanti **Bajpai**, Professor of International Politics, Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru Univeristy, New Delhi, **India**

Mr. Abdul Basit, Counsellor (Disarmament), Permanent Mission of **Pakistan** to the United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland [formerly: Director (Disarmament), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad]

Dr. Jeffrey **Boutwell**, Executive Director, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, Washington, DC, **USA** [formerly: Associate Executive Officer, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cambridge; Staff Aide, National Security Council, Washington, DC]

Mr. Pran **Chopra**, Member, Advisory Council, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, **India** [formerly: Visiting Professor, Centre for Policy Research; Editorial Director, Press Foundation of Asia, Manila; Chief Editor, The Statesman Group, Calcutta, New Delhi]

Prof. Paolo **Cotta-Ramusino**, Secretary General, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs; Professor of Mathematical Physics, University of Milan, **Italy**; Director, Program on Disarmament and International Security, Landau Network – Centro Volta, Como, Italy [formerly: Secretary General, Union of Italian Scientists for Disarmament (USPID)]

Lt. Gen. (ret) Asad **Durrani**, recently Ambassador of **Pakistan** to Saudi Arabia [formerly: Director General, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI); Commandant, National Defence College; Ambassador to Germany]

Prof. Pervez **Hoodbhoy**, Member, Pugwash Council; Professor, Department of Physics, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, **Pakistan**

Gen. (ret) Jehangir **Karamat**, Chairman, Board of Governors, Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), Islamabad, **Pakistan**; Senior Fellow, United Institute for

Peace, Washington, DC (from April 2003) [formerly: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of Army Staff, Pakistan Army; Visiting Fellow Brookings Institution Washington DC]

Mr. Farooq M. **Kathwari**, Chairman, President and CEO, Ethan Allen Inc., Danbury, CT, USA; Chairman, Kashmir Study Group

Amb. Aziz Ahmad **Khan**, Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, Pakistan

Prof. Maurizio **Martellini**, Secretary General, Landau Network-Centro Volta (LNCV), Como, **Italy**; Professor of Physics, University of Insubria, Como, Italy

Prof. Amitabh **Mattoo**, Professor of Disarmament Studies and Director, Core Group for the Study of National Security, Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, **India**; Member, National Security Advisory Board appointed by the Prime Minister of India

Dr. C. Raja Mohan, Strategic Affairs Editor, *The Hindu*, New Delhi, **India**; Convenor, Indian Pugwash Society [formerly: Senior Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi (1983-92)]

Lt. Gen. (ret) Satish **Nambiar**, Director, United Service Institution of **India**, New Delhi [formerly: Director, General Military Operations, Indian Army Headquarters (1991-92); First Force Commander and Head of Mission of the United Nations Forces in the former Yugoslavia; Deputy Chief of Staff, Indian Army (1994)]

Prof. Ramamurti **Rajaraman**, Professor of Theoretical Physics, School of Physical Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, **India** [formerly on the faculty at: The Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore; The Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton; Delhi University; Cornell University, Ithaca]

Adm. Laxminarayan **Ramdass**, Chair, Pakistan-India Peoples Forum for Peace & Democracy, Maharashtra, **India** [formerly: Chief of the Naval Staff, India (1990-93)]

Hon. Maharajakrishna **Rasgotra**, President, ORF Institute of Asian Studies, New Delhi, **India**; Honorary Advisor, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation; Co-Chairman, Indo-French Forum; Member, India-Sri Lanka Foundation [formerly: Member, Government of India's National Security Advisory Board (2002-2001); Visiting Professor, JNU, and Regents' Professor, UCLA (1987); Foreign Secretary to the Government of India (1982-85); Ambassador of India to France (1979-82), the

Netherlands (1977-79), Nepal (1973-76); High Commissioner of India to the UK (1988-90); Deputy Chief of Mission, Indian Embassy, Washington DC (1969-72)]

Mr. Abbas **Rashid**, Coordinator, Society for the Advancement of Education, Lahore, **Pakistan**; Columnist, Daily Times, Lahore [formerly: Instructor in International Relations, Civil Services Academy (Federal Government); Contributing Editor, *The Muslim* (national daily newspaper); Acting Editor, *The Frontier Post* (National daily newspaper)]

Prof. George **Rathjens**, Professor Emeritus, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, Massachusetts, **USA** [formerly: Secretary-General (1997-2002), Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs]

Brig. Naeem Salik, Director, Arms Control & Disarmament Affairs, Strategic Plans Division, Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi, **Pakistan**; Visiting Professor, Defence & Strategic Studies Department, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

Dr. Gary **Samore (USA)**, Senior Fellow for Non-Proliferation, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, UK [formerly: Special Assistant to President Clinton; Senior Director, Non-Proliferation & Export Controls at the National Security Council]

Hon. Abdul **Sattar**, Member, Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Palais des Nations, Geneva [former Foreign Minister of **Pakistan**, Islamabad]

Amb. Prakash **Shah**, Member, Indo-Japan Eminent Persons Group; Director, Pathfinders International, Watertown, MA, USA; Advisor, Dodsal Group, Dubai [formerly: Permanent Representative of **India** to the United Nations, New York & Geneva; Ambassador to the Committee on Disarmament, Geneva; Ambassador of India to Japan; Special Enjoy of the UN Secretary general for Iraq]

Dr. Waheguru Pal S. **Sidhu**, Senior Associate, International Peace Academy (IPA), New York, NY, USA; Joint Co-editor, *International Peacekeeping* (since January 2001); Member, Editorial Board, *Global Governance* (since January 2001); Core Group Member, Mountbatten Centre International Missile Forum [formerly: Consultant, United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Missiles (2001-2002); MacArthur Research Fellow, St. Anthony's College, Oxford (1999-2000); Warren Weaver Fellowship for International Security, Rockefeller Foundation, New York (1997-1998); Research Associate, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London (1996-1997)]

Air Commodore. Jasjit **Singh**, Director, Centre for Strategic and International Studies ; Member, Pugwash Council; Member, Indian Pugwash Society [formerly : Director, Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi ; Director (Operations), Air Headquarters, New Delhi; Convener, Indian Pugwash Society]

Mr. Ravinder Pal **Singh**, Senior Research Fellow, Center for Pacific Asia Studies (CPAS), Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Prof. Jean-Pierre **Stroot (Belgium/Switzerland)**, retired Physicist ; Geneva Pugwash Office ; President of the Board of the Geneva International Peace Research Institute (GIPRI), Geneva, Switzerland [formerly: Director of Research, IISN, Belgium; Research Associate, CERN]

Amb. Shirin **Tahir-Kheli**, Research Professor, Foreign Policy Institute, The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC, USA

Shri Narinder Nath **Vohra**, Director, India International Centre, New Delhi, **India**; Co-Chairman, India-EU Round Table [formerly: Secretary, Defence Production, Defence Secretary & Home Secretary, Government of India, and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister; Chairman, National Task Force on Internal Security (2000); Member, National Security Advisory Board (1998-2001); Chairman, Military History Review Committee (2001-02)]

Staff:

Pugwash Rome Office: Claudia Vaughn, Pugwash Conferences, via della Lungara 10, I-00165 Rome, Italy, Tel. (++39-06) 687-2606, Fax: (++39-06) 687-8376, Mobile: (++39-333) 456-6661, E-mail: pugwash@iol.it

GIPRI: Charlotte Soumeire, rue de la Voie-Creuse 16, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland, Tel. (**41-22) 919 79 40, Fax: (**41-22) 919 79 43; E-mail: gipri@gcsp.ch