

## BOOK REVIEW

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Ganguly, Sumit. **Conflict Unending: India, Pakistan Tensions Since 1947**

(New Delhi: Oxford University Press), 2001, 187 pp; Price USD\$18.50.

Among the South Asian states, relations between India and Pakistan have been one of hostility over a period of fifty years since India achieved independence in 1947 from the British Raj. It is the same year when Pakistan was carved out from the erstwhile British India as a separate independent nation. The prime reason of hostility between the two nations have been over the disputed valley of Kashmir. Both India and Pakistan have fought four major wars and a number of low intensity conflicts over their respective claims over Kashmir.

Why Kashmir is important to decision makers in both New Delhi and Islamabad? What factors explain the continuing tension, hostility and violence? In what ways, acquisition of nuclear weapons by both India and Pakistan has raised the spectre of wider conflict, perhaps a catastrophe possible? What are the implications of nuclearisation for war and peace in the Sub-continent? Sumit Ganguly's book under review makes a serious and sincere effort in delineating the systemic and sub-systemic examination of India-Pakistan relations.

To begin with, Ganguly has revisited some of the scholarly explanations offered for the ongoing hostile relations between India and Pakistan. The Primordialists, for example, argue that for all

practical purposes, the Hindus and the Muslims are separate nations very much rooted with their own set of religious beliefs distinct from one another and that 'India as a predominantly Hindu state could not develop a cooperative relationship with Pakistan, the putative hold of the Muslims of South Asia, and vice versa.'(p.2)

Although the primordial argument has some validity, it still does not adequately address the question as to why India, particularly its nationalist leaders at the time of the country's independence with deep commitment to civic nationalism, had to settle for an adversarial relationship with Pakistan. As a new emerging entity, Pakistan was yet to take the task of nation building in its stride. One can also argue whether a monolithic Hindu polity ever existed as the Hindu religion at its core is a mix of plural faiths practised in many different ways with varied customs and rituals. Similarly, although Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the prime architect behind the creation of Pakistan, was a staunch nationalist committed to separate homeland for Muslims, yet millions of Muslims chose to opt for India rather than Pakistan as the country of their domicile in the post-1947 phase.

There is another competing explanation that trace the origin of Hindu-Muslim conflict to highly selective and manipulative British colonial practices. It is true that the British rule in India had elements of colonial constructions particularly in the post-1857 Sepoy mutiny onwards leading up to Lahore Declaration and in the eventual culmination of the two-nation theory in 1947. However, it will be an oversimplification in historical terms as Hindi-Muslim conflict had a larger shadow with the advent of the early Muslim incursions to India beginning in the 11th century AD.

A third explanation for the simmering tension between India and Pakistan point to overt militarisation of Pakistan since the 1950s due to latter's alliance relationship with the United States in the shape of CENTO and SEATO. Although it is true that the Pakistan's military

has played a very significant role in escalating India-Pakistan hostility, historical evidence pointing to US role is off the mark. The first India-Pakistan war took place in the aftermath of independence in 1947; a period during which US had at best a marginal leverage over Pakistan in military terms. Moreover, before the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, it was India which was the main beneficiary of military assistance from the United States in the wake of its shock defeat at the hands of China in the 1962 China-India war. And, finally, even after 1965, the United States cut off military assistance to both India and Pakistan as a punitive measure for the outbreak of hostilities.

Ganguly's book provides an alternative explanation taking into consideration of the shortcomings of the above explanations. This alternative explanation, as Ganguly surmises, has three distinct components.

The first element underlying the Indo-Pakistan hostility is the 'fundamentally divergent ideological constituents of the dominant nationalist elite in the Indian and Pakistani anti-colonial movements.' (p.5) In case of Pakistan, there was a turf war between Jinnah loyalist who favored a Muslim majority policy for the new nation, whereas for Liaquat Ali Khan and his followers, nothing short of an Islamic state would suffice. Similarly, within India, the Nehruvites favoured a secular polity whereas the Hindu Mahasabha (precursor to R.S.S) was committed to an overt Hindu nationhood in the Hindu dominated India. This issue is connected to the second factor, the irredentist claim of Pakistan to Kashmir. For Pakistan's leaders, incorporation of the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir into Pakistan's domain will be construed as a triumph in its strive for overarching Muslim identity whereas for civic nationalist leaders of India, thwarting that goal and design of Pakistan and clinging on to Kashmir will be construed as a true vindication of India's secular credentials.

Although these two factors explain the overall state of adversarial relations between India and Pakistan, the immediate cause of the war, in 1947-48, 1965, 1971, and 1999, was the results of what the author describes as 'opportunistic' events where one or both countries saw significant window of opportunities/vulnerabilities to extract/inflict significant concessions/casualties.

In a sub-systemic analysis of the 1965 India-Pakistan war, Ganguly has provided a litany of factors that prompted Pakistan's ruling military junta to decide on a policy of offense. First, Pakistan believed that the Indian armed forces were not prepared to defend against an overwhelming conventional attack as it was India which blinked first in the Rann of Kutch in early 1965. Second, the Pakistani decision makers felt that there was widespread popular support among the residents of Indian held Kashmir valley for integration with Pakistan, particularly in light of the theft of the sacred hair of Prophet Muhammad from the Hazratbal shrine. And, third, Pakistan's military planners instead of going for a protracted war against India which they thought to be suicidal for Pakistan, opted instead for a pick and choose strategy along the selected sectors of the long India-Pakistan border. Finally, President Ayub Khan and Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at the end of their eight-day trip to China in March 1965 concluded that in the event of a possible war with India, China would come to the rescue of Pakistan.

The decisive defeat of Pakistan in 1965 at the hands of India had far reaching ramifications primarily in rejuvenating the Bengali sub-nationalism in Pakistan's eastern wing. The imposition of Urdu language as the national language in the then East Pakistan, the inadequate Bengali representation in the Pakistan's elite Civil Service and the Armed Forces and the highly discriminatory allocation of revenues and foreign assistance in favour of West

Pakistan over East Pakistan, flared up further in the years to come culminating in Pakistan's 1971 war with India and in the eventual birth of the independent nation of Bangladesh.

Ganguly has also dwelt in considerable length on the nuclearisation by India and Pakistan in the summer of 1998 and the rationale behind the nuclear tests. For India, the Pokhran II explosion was a culmination of decades of scientific research coupled with its drive to be treated as the pre-eminent power in South Asia and in matching China in terms of status and prestige in the international arena with membership in the exclusive nuclear club. For Pakistan, the nuclear test that soon followed India's, was its (Pakistan's) obsession to acquire an atom bomb at any cost in order to match India, and as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto once said, to go nuclear even if Pakistan had to 'eat grass.' It remains to be seen, however, whether nuclear deterrence, as the Indian and Pakistani political elite have forecasted, is going to be a viable one in view of the possibility of either of the country misperceiving and miscalculating one another's intentions and capabilities.

Although Ganguly has done a superb job in its cogent analysis of the complex dichotomy of the India-Pakistan relations, there are certain inherent contradictions and shortcomings in his work. For example, while trying to explain the onset of religious fundamentalism in Pakistan among a section of intelligentsia, he never explains the role of the Jamaat that played a very key role in this regard. Second, while giving a clean chit to US for its hands off attitude in India-Pakistan conflict, the author is conspicuously silent on Nixon-Kissinger duo's infamous tilt toward Pakistan in the 1971 war. Third, the author has described Pakistan's Kargil incursion as a tactical move. If so, what Pakistan had to gain from a military point of view or even from a public relations standpoint from such a venture? Why Pakistan had to reverse course and to what

consequences? The author could have shed more light on these aspects.

Overall, **CONFLICT UNENDING** is an outstanding work that examines and evaluates India-Pakistan conflict in a comprehensive manner covering all the major wars between these two countries since 1947. The book will be a definitive guide and of invaluable service to students and scholars alike, particularly those who have an abiding interest in conflict studies as well as in South Asian area studies.

**Dr. Mohammed Badrul Alam**  
Professor of History and Political Science  
Miyazaki International College, Japan