

ONE

Approaching India's Military and Security Policy, with a Detour through Disaster Studies

From the 1930s onward, India was known for two things: poverty and the charismatic politician-saint Mahatma Gandhi. Through Gandhi's influence, the practice of nonviolence became understood globally as a legitimate and effective political strategy. Gandhi, of course, would have said that it was more than a strategy—that ends must be equated with means, and that a violent strategy of political liberation was incompatible with true freedom. Martin Luther King Jr. was (via Gandhi's writings) one of his greatest students. As a civil rights activist in the United States, I understood how important nonviolence was to the movement's success and in preserving American values and democratic practices. The pattern was repeated in South Africa by Nelson Mandela, and in a host of other states, as well, with varying degrees of success.

This paper does not deal with Gandhi's influence on the American civil rights movement—a subject that deserves its own essay—but with American academic interest in how the India of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru managed the use of force, both domestically and abroad. It begins with my own research puzzle. I was the first American, and perhaps the first scholar, to explore these issues. But the narrative also moves down two other tracks: one the study of Indian military history, which

was forced on me by circumstances, the other a study of India's foreign and security policy, which evolved naturally from my interest in the armed forces' internal role. All three are tightly connected: contemporary affairs are the growing roots of history, and the links between domestic politics and foreign policy are especially strong in non-Western states, although it took me several years and the guidance of many friends to understand what now seems obvious. My work on India took a detour in 1977 when I wrote a book on the political and organizational response to a mass disaster, the Andhra Cyclone. This is a field where there has been very little, if any, American interest, but it is worth discussing because India's future will include more and more such events.

The Puzzle

The worst words from the mouth of a potential student advisee are: "Professor, what should I study?" Privately, I would think of suggesting going into real estate or getting an M.B.A., but my response usually is: "What is your 'puzzle'? What issue or problem really motivates you; what keeps you up at night?" Only that level of intensity will get a graduate student over the hump of prelims, advanced training, and field research in a difficult country, and keep them motivated when the writing just does not seem to be coming along, when money is running out, and when advisers cannot help.

My first puzzle can be simply stated: How do states manage their armed forces, rather than being managed by them? More broadly, how is the use of deadly force contained in such a way that it is directed toward real enemies and not toward the goal of obtaining power within the state? In brief, force may sometimes be necessary, and the state must be prepared to use it, but how do we prevent those who wield power in the name of the state from using it for their personal advantage, and derailing normal politics?

Trying to solve this puzzle was what led me to India and Pakistan, the perfect comparative pair. They had started off with exactly the same army, they shared a South Asian culture, their political leaders came out of the same background, and they even shared a struggle against the British in the creation of an independent India. Yet by the early 1960s it was evident that Pakistan had become a praetorian state and India's democracy was

thriving under Nehru's leadership. Why did they diverge? Was it Nehru's personality, some aspect of the army itself, or were outside forces an influence here? Further, are there any lessons for other "emerging," "developing," or "non-Western" states in the Indian experience?

Later there was a second puzzle. How did a poor state manage its international politics? How did it remain more or less neutral or nonaligned? I had been U.S. trained in arms control and the logic of nuclear deterrence. Why did India reject nuclear weapons at a moment when they seemed to be the weapon of choice for the superpowers and China, which exploded its first nuclear device in 1964?

Preparation

It was perhaps naive to propose these questions. They were not only unasked in the South Asian context by scholars; they were also frowned on by the Indian government. This made preparation both interesting and difficult. It was interesting because a burgeoning literature on civil-military relations in non-Western states could be applied to India. Most of it dealt with two themes: the "man on horseback," or how the military came to power in a large number of new states, and how the military could assist in the developmental process.¹ No one had asked these questions of India, although the first was relevant to Pakistan, then still governed by the Pakistani army in the person of Field Marshal Ayub Khan.

For my generation, it was assumed that any serious research on India would involve language training and a background in Indian culture and society, thus courses in Hindi (continued at the missionary language school in Landour), Indian philosophy (taught by the great A. L. Basham on a visiting professorship at Wisconsin, which led to my first published article—see chapter 2), and extensive reading in Indian society and culture, guided by Joseph Elder and Henry C. Hart. As for research, I was on my own. There were no experts in the United States on Indian civil-military relations and few on Indian foreign policy. Improvisation followed: I met and worked with Morris Janowitz of the University of Chicago, who had written the first book on the military of non-Western states, and later had contact with Samuel Huntington, author of the majestic and still-relevant *The Soldier and the State*.²

The Accidental Historian

My research visa application, submitted through the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) was delayed for well over a year.³ Still waiting for a visa, I explored the few American sources. The Ames Library at the University of Minnesota was a treasure trove. It contained a good collection of Indian army caste handbooks and many key documents, but there was no faculty member there with expertise in Indian military affairs. I made the best of a bad situation by going to London to work in the India Office Archives, the Public Records office, the British Museum, and even the library of the Ministry of Defense, which allowed me to survey its unclassified material (with no barrier to the classified section, a situation that was rectified after the Profumo scandals).

I became, in effect, a historian. Having been trained in both international relations and comparative politics, I understood how armies face outward and inward. Now I was to see how their roots extended into the past. Self-taught, I learned something of the historian's trade, and that historians usually did not have puzzles, only time periods.⁴ My focus became learning how the British Indian army fit into British imperial strategies (see chapter 3), the relationship between the caste system and military recruitment, the attitude of Indian politicians in the interwar period to the army, and the Indianization of the army's officer corps. All of these themes became chapters in my dissertation and eventually in my first book. Also valuable were materials I uncovered on the role of the princely states' armies, and how they were incorporated into the British Indian army. One lesson from my political science background was that the control of legitimate force was the mark of a state, and a state could be defined by the extent that it could impose its will, by force, on a particular geographic region. This was a critical factor in the partition of the Indian army by the British. Once the Indian National Congress had agreed to the army's partition, the emergence of a sovereign Pakistan was inevitable. When the competence of the Pakistani state proved questionable, the army itself assumed command and displaced the politicians, with American approval.

Other than the retired officers working on regimental histories, there were no scholars interested in the army's role in India. However, I did take the opportunity to interview many high-ranking British (and Indian) officers of the British Indian army who had retired to the London area.

Thus, I had long and fruitful sessions with two former commanders of the Pakistan army (Generals Douglas Gracey and Frank Messervy), several Indian King's Commissioned Officers who settled in the United Kingdom, and, above all, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, who told me that the greatest failure of his life was his inability to prevent the partition of the old British Indian army. "The Auk" understood the need to establish a Pakistan, but giving it its own army would only invite war between the two successor states. He was correct.

This was both new and interesting, and it did much to help me unravel elements of my central puzzle: What in the British tradition was passed on to India and Pakistan, and what was not? I also met and learned from the great British Indian civil servant Philip Mason, who had been British India's defense secretary during World War II. Mason was later to write one of the definitive histories of the Indian army, but at that time he was engaged in creating the new Institute of Race Relations.⁵ Mason was especially helpful on the wartime period and the role of the Indian National Army (INA) (see chapter 4), the breakaway army sponsored by Germany and Japan that eventually mounted an attack on India from Burma. The INA represented a crack in the unity of the old Indian army. It was interesting to explore the conditions under which it was formed, and even more interesting to learn from Mason and others how Nehru ensured that the INA would not find an independent role in free India.

Of the scholars in London, Hugh Tinker and Peter Lyon shared their own understanding of how the British had trained an army in India that performed very well militarily, but took two different paths after partition. They were helpful but sometimes baffled by my interest in a country, and a problem, that was so distant from usual American obsessions regarding India, which were the spread of communism, the Soviet hand in India, and population control.⁶

1963–65: In India

With a visa finally in hand in November 1963, my wife and I departed London for New Delhi. Many of my academic peers had made the passage to India by sea. In preparation a copy of Murray's *Handbook for Travelers to India, Pakistan, and Ceylon* was purchased. Murray's handbook has a chapter on not only how to behave on board but one on what to do in the

passage through the Suez Canal. This obviously did not interest us as our generation was the first to fly to India.

Nor was the chapter on what to buy in preparation for the trip of much use: I went to one of the “tropical” outfitters, where they still sold solar tops, but the prices and the ridiculousness of it all led me to walk out empty-handed. If I was going to go to India, it would be on my own terms, as an American and a veteran of civil rights marches and sit-ins. My research tools were high-tech, and I splurged on a tiny Olympus portable typewriter, later learning how to repair it and wind on Indian ribbons when the originals wore out.

During this first trip to India—1963–65—my family and I lived with a scheduled caste Indian member of parliament, which piqued my interest in caste and the Indian army (see chapter 5, “The Untouchable Soldier”). I was already alert because of an interest in racial integration in the American military, and I used whatever references to African Americans in the U.S. military I could find. That essay was written in the pre-Dalit years, but the Dalits were already on the horizon, partially in the person of my own landlord, B. P. Maurya, one of the most assertive of the neo-Buddhist ex-scheduled caste politicians. He scorned the Indian National Congress’s untouchable leaders, such as Jagjivan Ram, but later joined Congress himself—after developing secret ties to Indira Gandhi. One of the opportunity costs of my growing interest in strategic matters was that I never returned to the subject of the role of caste and class in the Indian military after completing *The Indian Army*.

The Sapru House Maelstrom

After arriving in Delhi, we stayed briefly at the newly opened India International Centre, but we left because it was more than my AIIS stipend allowed, eventually finding housing in the brand-new Defense Colony. A spare bathroom became an office, and I was, at last, in business as a research scholar in the country I had studied for three years. When the summer came, we retreated to Landour, where we took courses at the Landour Language School, then run by various Christian missions, and struggled with a goose quill so we could write Devanagari properly.⁷

The unofficial Delhi headquarters for foreign scholars working on foreign policy and related issues was Sapru House, then India’s premier (that

is, only) center for the study of international relations. Sapru House at the time housed both the Indian Council of World Affairs and the School of International Studies (SIS). Later, the Institute of Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA) moved in, further livening up the scene. Sadly, when SIS left to form one component of the new Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), the library was divided. Later the council itself fell on hard times.

At Sapru House I made my first and best connections with Indian scholars and retired diplomats. Sisir Gupta, not much older than me, was a mentor and friend who taught me much about how India really worked. He had just completed a book on alliances and foreign policy and was then writing a classic book on Kashmir.⁸ Gupta was an Indian patriot, but he understood and wrote how India had damaged its own case in Kashmir. No one else in Sapru House had the slightest interest in my research, but I was a rare American and thus the object of much good-natured kidding about the Vietnam War, race relations in America, aid to Pakistan, and other egregious U.S. policies.

Michael Brecher, the Canadian author of a magisterial biography of Nehru, was working on a book based on extensive interviews with V. K. Krishna Menon and was a frequent visitor to Sapru House.⁹ Brecher's works on Nehru and Menon were essential for understanding how Indians approached the use of force and therefore the role of the military. Brecher later turned away from India, not least because of irritation over Indian policy toward the Middle East, and became one of the world experts on examining how states in general make and implement their foreign policies. Like many scholars, Brecher found that studying India toughened you up. By comparison, the rest of the world was easy.

Through Brecher I met and came to know Menon, then in sullen retirement because of his role in the 1962 India-China war, a fiasco, but still playing with his model airplanes and tanks, the only useful products of the defense production empire. Menon posed as an intellectual, mostly by keeping copies of books open and scattered around his bungalow, and his most notable quality was his vanity. He could afford this: an ailing Nehru was still prime minister, and Menon was allowed to stay on in his official bungalow. While there are Indians who implausibly later argued that Nehru was pro-nuclear (at best he wanted to keep open the nuclear option), Menon was clearly scornful and told me, "Bhabha's notes," after the

politician K. C. Pant gave a speech on whether or not India should go nuclear in response to the Chinese test.

One scholar, a Canadian like Brecher, shared my interest in the Indian military. He was Lorne Kavic, the author of the first comprehensive study of Indian defense policy.¹⁰ Kavic and I met on several occasions, once when we were interviewing the same retired Indian official. A former diplomat, Kavic's interests were slightly different from mine, but he did offer useful suggestions, and the book he ultimately published was of great value in outlining India's major strategic and defense concerns.

It was the journalists, rather than academics, who were of practical help, who understood my interest in the role of the armed forces in politics in India and Pakistan, and who shared my belief that this was a legitimate and important subject to write about. Selig Harrison, then writing his own pathbreaking book on India's future,¹¹ put me in contact with Romesh Thapar, the founder-editor of *Seminar*. Romesh and Raj Thapar, his wife, shared their thoughts and put me in contact with others, including General B. M. Kaul and friends (mostly retired) from the Indian army. The Thapars came from distinguished Punjabi families, and their relatives included a former army chief. I should note here that my visa was for a study of the role of the military in the *British* period, and I did my best to confine my work to pre-Independence developments. When General Kaul started to show me classified material from the 1962 war (in the hope that a favorable biography might result), I politely declined, as my first work in India was on the historical aspects of the army. I was able to establish contact with the Indian armed services, and the Ministry of Defense arranged several visits to cantonments and regimental training centers and gave me access to its own library, which was a treasure trove (and now off-limits to outsiders). Armies are conservative bureaucracies, and the infantry is the most conservative branch of them all, so visiting a Gurkha regimental training center, or the Rajputana Rifles (or, more recently, the Madras Regiment's Centre in Wellington, housed in a structure built in 1857 for British troops), was pure Raj, a form of time travel. The library of the United Services Institution of India (USI) became a second home, where Colonel Pyaralal, the secretary, was my guide. Fittingly, the library of the new USI building is named after him.

Meeting with Romesh Thapar and working in the USI opened up opportunities for publishing. Romesh commissioned several articles, at least

one of which appeared under a pseudonym, as it was part of the 1964 debate over the Indian nuclear program, a subject that was off-limits as far as my visa was concerned.¹² I argued that India had to think of the development of tactical nuclear weapons as well as strategic ones, as the threat from China across the Himalayas could be met with smaller devices. It was a silly argument, reflecting my own American strategic training. I find it chilling to see echoes of that argument in the ongoing debate over whether or not a “tactical nuclear war” can be fought between India and Pakistan. Publishing short articles and book reviews in the *USI Journal* was also very rewarding, and I received the usual sum of Rs 25 for each piece. This gave me a chance to engage at one remove the Indian military in questions pertaining to defense reform and policy.

During my first and second trips my research was as a historian, albeit one interested in the army's social, cultural, and policy dimensions. I discovered, by accident, that this was part of the movement toward the “new military history.” Over the years I have thus interacted with those historians who were interested in Indian military history, including several of my own students. While the standard of historians in India was high in places like the University of Calcutta, military history was a minor field, just as it was in the West. Military historians are often dismissed as the “drums and trumpets” crowd, interested in battles, regiments, and hardware, but not much else. My own self-tutoring in military history uncovered something quite different: a number of scholars, especially sociologists, had written on the social and cultural impact of armed forces, a literature largely ignored by the historians.¹³ While none of this group was interested in India, the connection between one of the world's most complicated and subtle societies, the state's use of force, and the emergence of a democratic India was self-evident. The Indian army had been reviled by the nationalists. Some wanted to create a people's army; others wanted to replace it with the INA. Nehru and his home minister, Sardar Patel, wanted none of this: they understood they had to have a monopoly over armed power, and that any group challenging that had to be crushed by any means, including the Raj's army. An analogous situation exists now in Nepal, with the communists eager to replace the regular Nepal army with their own cadres; only in this case advocates of a “people's army” may succeed.

It did not take long for the Indian army to become a patriotic force. Military action in Kashmir against invading tribals and elements of the

Pakistan army enabled India to retain much of Kashmir, and it transformed the army overnight into a national army. The colonial trappings were forgiven, and after the 1962 war, when there were questions raised about the predominance of the so-called martial races, the Indian government simply declared that all “races” or classes in India were martial (see chapter 5).¹⁴ The man who understood this better than anyone else, and who had written the seminal articles on the nationalization of the army and the martial races theory, was Nirad C. Chaudhuri, whom I had the good fortune of meeting several times in his Old Delhi home. His writings on the subject, which date back to the mid-1930s, form the starting point for a small but interesting literature on the relationship between society and army in India.

Despite the obstacles to scholarship and the growing incoherence of Indian universities, there have been some important publications coming out of India.¹⁵ The Punjab, the army’s modern heartland, has been studied from the perspective of army recruitment and the impact of military settlements on local society. There has been little on contemporary relations among caste, class, and the army, in part because the subject is deemed too sensitive (the government will not release data), and in part because it would show that Muslim representation has declined steadily over the years in both the officer corps and the other ranks.

In contrast, there was excellent work on the way in which nationalist sentiments were creeping into the armed forces, and the availability of censored letters from soldiers during the First World War provided a rich database. This was mined by DeWitt Ellinwood and other scholars.¹⁶

1987–88: Phone Taps and Files

There were several important changes between my first research trip to India (1963–65) and the second (1967–68). At the personal level, my family and I were better able to adjust in terms of the mundane problems of housing, transport, and food, but we suffered a culture shock in the second visit. In 1963, before going, we understood that India was synonymous with poverty and we steeled ourselves against the worst. When we first faced it (in the Bombay slums and rural Bihar), it was “not so bad.” In 1968 we were unprepared as we had suppressed or forgotten what real poverty looked like. We were angrier at India’s failure to grow econom-

ically and the attitudes toward the poor of many of our Indian friends. These were also the years in which Indira Gandhi came to power, the years of growing anti-Americanism, and the years of political chaos in India.

The 1967 trip was when I learned that I had accumulated not one but several files, including one sitting on the desk of an Indian official in the Ministry of Defense. All of my publications were neatly stacked, along with notations and minutes regarding what I had written, as well as reports on contacts over the years. The Research and Analysis Wing and Ministry of External Affairs also had their own versions.¹⁷

Seeing my file, and working in British and Indian archives, also taught me something about government. When I joined the State Department's Policy Planning Staff in 1985, I asked for the file on nuclear dialogue with India. My secretary was surprised: the only files that existed were a few in my locked safe and those held in the secretary's office, chronicling his own statements, actions, and meetings. I was astonished; the much-vaunted American government had a weaker capacity to recall past events than the Indians, who fanatically kept up their files, minuting every conversation (including my interview with the officials I was meeting). Things have improved with computer-based data systems, but Indians are much better prepared for discussions with American counterparts than one would expect. Indeed, there have been instances when American negotiators had to be prompted or corrected by Indian and Pakistani interlocutors regarding America's own position on various issues.

My second trip also enabled me to do some more work on my first book manuscript, aided by some new tools of the trade. For me, burdened with a large manuscript that required constant revision, the great technological breakthroughs were Wite-Out and Scotch Magic Tape, both of which permitted revisions on hard copy (there was no such thing as soft copy, of course, except that which I retained in my memory). More important, the Ministry of Defense figured out how to handle me: as a journalist. I thus went on several press junkets, memorably one by Jeep from Srinagar to Leh. There I was greeted, as often happened, as Mr. Stephens, with the query as to where Mr. Cohen was. I just said he could not make the trip, which seemed to satisfy my army handlers.

This was also the trip when my research topic, the role of the armed forces, became a political issue. Nehru, egged on by Menon, had been suspicious of an army coup, but Indira was even more paranoid, or perhaps more willing

to use such fears to advance her own position. Edward Luttwak's imaginative *Coup d'État* became the subject of a parliamentary debate, and the government responded by saying that it would be banned in India.¹⁸ I had purchased a copy in London and anguished over whether I should destroy it or turn it over to authorities. My Indian army book did discuss the possibility of a coup, but it mostly focused on why Pakistan had gone down that road, arguing that one major accomplishment of free India was the containment of the military without lessening military professionalism (a judgment that I might not now make without some qualifications).

Most important, this was also the trip during which I met the indomitable K. Subrahmanyam, an IAS officer from the Madras (now Tamilnadu) cadre, who had developed an interest in security and defense policy, and who was the second director of the government-funded IDSA. My homage to "Subbu" is published elsewhere,¹⁹ but it should be noted that he was as passionate about reforming India's military structure as he was about protecting its option to acquire the most advanced military equipment of the day, the atomic bomb. He was very much like Morris Janowitz: neither man liked small talk, both were obsessed with the issue at hand, and both pressed their ideas relentlessly. IDSA commissioned and published an article by me on caste and recruitment. Since IDSA was to be an Indian-only outlet, I was deeply honored.²⁰

Having pretty much mined the subject of the internal role of the military in Indian politics, my thoughts began to shift to broader foreign policy concerns and United States–Indian relations, always a subject of lively debate at Sapru House and IDSA.²¹ During World War II an enormous amount of military aid was sent to India, helping build Asia's largest center for the repair of aircraft. Hundreds of thousands of Americans transited through Calcutta on their way to China and to do battle with the Japanese in Burma. There was a moment, after the war, when the United States was prepared to provide significant military and technological assistance to India, but this aid was framed in the context of the Cold War.²² Just before my first trip to India there was another military supply relationship, with a few hundred American officers helping rearm the Indian army and air force. This relationship cooled as India concluded that China was not the great threat that it had appeared to be in 1962.

Washington refused to change its policy on Kashmir, or break off with a formal ally, Pakistan, concluding that if the price of a new relationship

with India was the abandonment of Pakistan, then it was too costly. Just as important, India was seen as increasingly pro-Soviet—the India–Soviet arms deal that provided MiGs to India went through in 1962. Except for a few scholars and the occasional diplomat and developmental expert, most of the Americans I met in India (and in the United States) who were interested in foreign policy issues were focused on Soviet–Indian relations.²³ The ranks of Americans were swollen by those who tracked the various communist parties. Calcutta and Kerala were especially “hot” topics to study.²⁴ One by-product of the extension of the Cold War to India was that I met, sometimes under hilarious conditions, numerous Soviet “scholars,” some who were genuine, others who were KGB operatives.²⁵

However, my real tutors were Indians, and a few American scholars, who, not knowing anything about current trends in the field of international relations, told me, in the words of the soft-spoken Paul Brass, “It’s domestic politics—that’s what determines Indian foreign policy!!!” or words to that effect. Brass (and many Indian academics) had worked on ethnic, state, and regional politics in India, and while they did not closely follow Indian foreign policy, they understood that in India, as in all other non-Western “developing” states, there was an intimate linkage between domestic politics and foreign and security policy. Whether it was trade with neighbors (or its absence), ethnic overlap, migration, cross-border incursions, or the ties of religion, language, and identity, India could not be treated as a black box, where foreign policy decisions were made in isolation of domestic realities. The academic work that formalized this truth came later, and it was done, fittingly, by such scholars as Mohammed Ayoob, an Indian who had worked at Sapru House, SIS, and later in Australia and Singapore.²⁶ Ayoob’s work on “Third World” security policy consolidated and formalized what was obvious, but it was interesting to see how long these ideas were rejected by the American academic establishment, perhaps because they came from an Indian and not an American. The South Asian contribution to the international politics literature has been superbly summarized by Kanti P. Bajpai and Harish C. Shukul.²⁷

India Watching from Japan

After publishing *The Indian Army* and becoming involved in the movement to stop Pakistan’s brutal military actions in what was to become

Bangladesh, my own research interests shifted.²⁸ From looking at the impact of society, culture, and politics on the role of the Indian military within India (and Pakistan), I wanted to explore how India conducted its relations overseas and, in particular, how it used force abroad. Alas, in its wisdom, the Indian government decided to punish the most pro-Indian elements in America, the academic India watchers. A scheduled research trip to India in the early 1970s was canceled when India shut off access to American scholars working on “sensitive” (read contemporary) subjects. This was understandable. Governments do self-defeating things. But what was incomprehensible was the attitude of the AIIS apparatchiks.²⁹ It was: “We won’t fight for your visas and academic access now, as long as we can get a few of us in India to study Tamil temple paintings and attend conferences on the nuances of fourteenth-century Sanskrit.” This is a close paraphrase.

Thus began the long retreat from an interest in contemporary India, which contributed to a weakening of overall American expertise, just at the moment when contemporary India began to stir. This closing down of India was the confluence of two interests: that of the anti-American elements in the Congress Party, the External Affairs Ministry, and the intelligence services, and that of the few American scholars who were still able to pursue innocuous research in India. There was resistance in the AIIS, but it failed, and we lost a generation of students who wanted to study contemporary political and social issues in India.

The attitude of Indian colleagues did not help. When Rajni Kothari published an article in an issue on “academic colonialism” in *Seminar* he was echoing the Left and anticipating Edward Said.³⁰ Indian academics were jealous of Americans who had seemingly extravagant resources and used new methodologies (Indian academia was still largely British trained, and many Indians had absorbed British disdain for the American upstarts). Americans were doing actual field research, especially those who were studying local and state politics, which set them apart from many of our Indian colleagues. Above all, I believe Indian academics were influenced by the pervasive anti-Americanism of the Indian government, which had concocted an axis in which the United States, China, and Pakistan were conspiring to keep India from “rising” or “emerging.” This anti-Americanism was so pervasive that when I made a brief trip to India as a tourist to see what my chances were of getting a visa, I was taken into an office of two

friends at JNU. They locked the door and explained that they had been prohibited from even answering aerograms requesting an affiliation with JNU. It was very sad; even sadder was the decline of JNU's American Studies program, which became the world's only anti-American American Studies program. (Chapter 6, on the military under Indira Gandhi, was written at this time, and during the Emergency I saw banners hanging outside my former bungalow on New Delhi's Janpath proclaiming that "India is Indira, and Indira is India.")

The upshot was that many American scholars contemplated abandoning India as a professional field. I know that several of my contemporaries have shifted to other subjects entirely. Taking the opportunity to spend a year as visiting professor in Japan, I became a long-distance India watcher, and soon established contact with the tiny community of India experts in Tokyo and other cities. Interestingly, this opened up some new research avenues. The Japanese had been the chief sponsor of Subhas Chandra Bose's INA, and there were even some English-language archives pertaining to Bose and the INA. I was also able to meet some Indian and Japanese sympathizers of the INA (I had met many ex-INA officers in India in 1964), but decided to leave the subject to others to write about at length.³¹

For the most part the attitude of Japanese officials and scholars was: "Why don't you study Japan, instead of this backward and irascible state, India?" I asked myself the same question, but I decided that the learning curve of becoming a Japanese specialist, including language training, would be too steep and that India was still an interesting and important country. However, being "Kissingerized" was valuable.³² I was able to see more clearly how the American community of India watchers viewed the rest of the world through Indian eyes, which was useful but also at times detrimental to objective analysis. The Japanese had their own perceptual problems toward India. It was easy to see how they were easily offended by what they regarded as a poor country acting in such a high-handed and arrogant fashion.

1977: A Detour to Disaster

Sensing that India was beginning to change in important ways, I declined an offer to train up as a Japan specialist and returned to study Indian foreign policy in 1977. Earlier I had been advised by several Indian officials

to lie about my research topic, but I have always felt queasy about either giving or taking such advice. However, by 1977 the situation had eased, and I proposed a study of Indian foreign and security policy, looking not at the role of the armed forces within India but their role abroad. Of course, the 1971 intervention was remarkable as the first and biggest (and only successful) military operation of the Indian armed forces outside India after Independence. With a grant from the Ford Foundation (AIIS was still uninterested in funding such research and indeed later turned down one of my finest students working on a similar project), I went to Andhra University, where a former student, C. V. Raghavulu, and a good friend, R. V. R. Chandrasekhar Rao, were faculty members. The Janata government governed uneasily in New Delhi and anti-Americanism had abated, but they still loved Indira in Andhra Pradesh. Her picture remained on government office walls even though she was out of power. I also learned something of regionalism in India, a lesson that was hard to acquire in New Delhi, and how the Telugus regarded themselves as a people apart, not to be dictated to by New Delhi.

An academic affiliation was arranged. Intellectually, this was good, as Rao was one of India's leading foreign policy experts. My project was to look at India as an emerging power, but I never got around to the subject (except for a few articles) as, literally, disaster intervened. My family and I were then living in Visakhapatnam, and on November 19 a powerful cyclone swept into Andhra, just twenty kilometers from us. All thoughts of research and scholarship would have gone out of the window, if we had any.

We were safe, but word of something awful trickled back to campus as students returned from visiting their homes. Probably 10,000–20,000 were killed immediately, and a huge area was devastated. I was no expert in disasters, but I had studied genocide and the role of armed forces in disaster relief, so Raghavulu and I visited the area. There followed a grant from the Indian Council of Social Sciences, a report, a book, and a lifelong interest in the politics and culture of disaster.³³ With one or two exceptions, I know of no foreign scholars who have studied disaster management in India.³⁴

This is exactly the kind of subject in which Americans should be interested. South Asia, like other regions of the world, is edging toward greater and greater extremes of weather, which has exacerbated already unpredictable river flows. It is very likely that in several years there will be large

population movements due to an increase in both flood and drought, and more areas of the subcontinent may become uninhabitable. Singapore, among other modern states, is planning for this, and it should be a high-priority research topic for Americans. Indian scholars and officials may be more aware of these trends, as shown by several recent articles and the inauguration of the private Emergency Management Research Institute in 2005 to supplement the National Disaster Management division of the Home Affairs Ministry.³⁵ As of 2015 the structure has been again altered, with the ministry retaining control and a major change in leadership.

As often happens, the unexpected opportunity proves to be more useful than the planned, organized research strategy. Both living in the South and working at the village and district level (I made several trips to the cyclone-affected area) expanded my understanding of India, as did teaching at an Indian university and observing firsthand how casteism had eaten away at a once great institution. Conversely, tours of the district with the Collector, who happened to be from a schedule caste (that is, untouchable or, now, Dalit), taught me about changes in the caste system. If I were to embark on a second academic career in India, it would start with a comparative study of how district governance, where the majority of Indians still live, has changed over the years.

1978: Passage to Pakistan

The 1977–78 trip to India not only offered a diversion into the disaster management field; it also provided me with an opportunity to visit Pakistan for the first time, perhaps the single most important event in shaping my understanding of *Indian* foreign and security policy. I had tried to go to Pakistan during my first India trip, but my visa application was rejected by the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. I went in 1978 as a tourist, traveling by bus and train, staying in two-star hotels, observing the country that was so demonized by my Indian friends. My conclusion was not that Pakistan or Pakistanis were better or worse. They were just different from India. They were similar in many ways (language, food, clothing, and culture), but different in their obsessions, fears, and, above all, their subjugation by corrupt politicians and incompetent generals.

By chance, I gave a brief talk at the American Center in Lahore. I suggested that Pakistanis should not rely on the United States and had to

come to terms with India. The press was there, and the story was read by General Zia ul-Haq, which led to an impromptu dinner at Army House with Zia and the junta. The dinner was acrimonious. Not being a diplomat, I impolitely, and in great detail, corrected what I thought were serious misstatements about India and America. When we concluded, I assumed that I would not again be welcome in Pakistan, but to my surprise Zia walked me to my car and asked if I would like to return and write a book on the Pakistan army. He had read *The Indian Army* and liked it. I returned several times, ultimately publishing *The Pakistan Army*, which he promptly banned.³⁶ Zia subsequently told me that it had to be banned because the Pakistani people were very “emotional” on some issues. He also told me that I should not worry, as more people would read a banned book. The general was not without a sense of humor, although he was a brutal man who did much to weaken Pakistan.

The book on Pakistan created some problems. It was taken in Pakistan as proof of my pro-Indian sentiments (I had earlier published a book on India as an emerging power), and Zia was criticized for giving me access to the army. In India, the book was evidence, especially for those who had not read it, that I was now anti-Indian and had become sympathetic to the Zia regime. I was more surprised at the reaction of some American colleagues, who also assumed that I was somehow “pro-Pakistan” and anti-Indian. They had not read the book either. Their views were simply carbon copies of the attitudes of the country they knew the most about, India, whose prejudices and stereotypes they unfortunately had come to share. With the exception of a few scholars, including the late Leo Rose and Stanley Kochanek, both of whom had done fine work in India, Pakistan, and other South Asian states, our community had become as tribalized as South Asia. While real area expertise is an asset, there is a risk of falling in love with the first country that one studies deeply, handicapping the study of other states and cultures. This is evident in the work of many experts on the former Soviet Union who subsequently turned to India as a second area of expertise, and in the work of the China experts, who still see India through Chinese eyes as a weak and somehow lesser state.

“Emergent” India

My work on Indian foreign policy began in earnest when I was asked by the eminent scholar of Bengal and academic entrepreneur, Richard Park,

to coauthor a book on India (see chapter 7).³⁷ (The intellectual groundwork for this work was laid during my stay in Tokyo, where I not only studied Japanese history but that of China, as well.)

I agreed, and we eventually produced *India: Emergent Power?*³⁸ The question mark was important: we pointed out that the obsession with Pakistan and the weak economy would cripple India for the foreseeable future. Until India accommodated, defeated, or otherwise removed Pakistan as a regional rival, it would always be “hyphenated” with that country, and until it embarked on the kinds of fundamental reforms that were just getting under way in China, it would always be equated with poverty and misery. This was unfortunate, we noted, because India had accomplished much. Despite the Emergency it was still a democracy, its people were freer than in just about any other Asian state, and India’s cultural contribution to the world was self-evident.

From the late 1970s, my focus was more on foreign and strategic policy than the role of the armed forces, although the latter continued as a major theme in my work on Pakistan. The reputational change of India had not yet begun. That was noticeable only after the 2000 millennium software success story. By 2001, India, which was once identified with poverty, Mahatma Gandhi, and, latterly, Mother Teresa, was the place where the “techies” came from.

From the perspective of the American government and many foundations, the sole point of interest was India’s nuclear weapons. The 1974 test was not militarily productive, but it transformed official American policy toward India (and Pakistan). With heavy funding from the foundations, many scholars and experts turned to India in the hope of persuading it to forgo a nuclear weapons program. With few exceptions, they neither understood nor cared about the domestic compulsions that drove the Indian program, or the larger strategic and perceptual framework with which Indians viewed the world, and especially China and Pakistan. It was foolish to publicly state, let alone have as policy, that the goal was to “cap, roll back, and eliminate” India’s nuclear program. Doing so strengthened the hand of India’s nuclear hawks.

I witnessed the Indian nuclear debate from 1964 onward, but I wrote little about it until 1990 (except for the anonymous *Seminar* article). After that date I was able to work with and advise many nonproliferation experts who came to India to study and write about the Indian program. The best, such as George Perkovich, got it.³⁹ Others were convinced that their logic

overrode irrational and uninformed Indian fears, and that India had to concentrate on developing its economy, not on becoming a nuclear weapon state. I edited a book and wrote numerous articles that attempted to explain the gap between Indian and American perceptions, but in the end both sides were driven by deeply held suspicions, in some cases legitimate, and by the myths that had grown up around nuclear weapons.⁴⁰ On the Indian side, this included the assumption that nuclear weapons were the badge of a great power, and that their possession would ensure India's rightful place in the world. On the American side, there was a belief that stopping the Indian program was the key to stopping Pakistan and other states beyond the region. (Chapter 9 has as complete a statement of my views on the nuclear issue as I have written.)

The Indian and Pakistani nuclear programs precipitated a new fad, the Track II dialogue, and I was a regular participant for many years. However, by 1992 (when with the Ford Foundation) I decided that gathering the has-beens of both countries and exposing them to the anguished pleas of Americans not to do what America had done was a waste of my time. With the support of Perkovich and others, we launched the summer workshop for younger Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese scholars, now in its thirteenth year, and created the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies in Colombo. These represented an effort to improve the quality and range of the South Asian security debate. The workshop was later extended to include nonmilitary dimensions of security, such as ethnic violence, environmental degradation, gender issues, and migration.⁴¹

The alumni and faculty of these workshops, and of ACDIS, now include a good percentage of the contemporaneous Indian and Pakistani security communities. These are engaged in a lively debate over issues that were rarely discussed thirty or forty years ago. In Pakistan, this included the role of the armed forces in governance, hitherto a taboo subject for public discussion.

India: Emergent Power? was one of the first overall assessments of Indian power. But it took the 1998 nuclear tests, multiple India–Pakistan crises (1987, 1990, and 1999), and a change in economic policy before India was seen, as it always was, as Asia's third major state. The case for this was made at length in *India: Emerging Power*, which attempted to assess power and reputation along several dimensions: economic, military, and civilizational soft power.⁴² The recent trend of books that purport to compare

India and China—the “Chindia” idea—is not always useful and sometimes exaggerates India’s potential, but the books are a measure of India’s reputational transformation.

A new generation of scholars and experts, many of them Indians (some trained in the United States) and Indian Americans who have done research in India, have it right: this is a complex civilizational-state with expanding power, and its rise is dependent on its domestic stability, its policies toward neighbors (notably Pakistan), the rise of China, and the policies of the United States.⁴³ The literature that predicts a conflict between the rising powers (India and China), and between them and America the “hegemon,” is misguided: the existence of nuclear weapons by all three states, plus Pakistan, ensures that barring insanity, any rivalries between rising and established states will be channeled into “ordinary” diplomatic posturing, ruthless economic competition, and the clash of soft power. In this competition, India has some liabilities and many advantages, and the structure of the emerging world suggests a closer relationship between the United States and India, without ruling out much closer ties between China and India. There remain some questions: Can the present Indian leadership show magnanimity in dealing with Pakistan, and does it have the foresight to look ahead to new challenges, notably environmental and energy issues that require new skills and new international arrangements? Importantly, some of the best work on answering these questions is being done in India itself, and the work of Kanti Bajpai, Amitabh Mattoo, Harsh Pant, C. Raja Mohan, Rajesh Basrur, and others reveals the maturity of Indian thinking on strategic issues. It has not come too soon, as the challenges that India will face are growing, and those of Pakistan are even more daunting.

I also served two years in the Department of State, working for George Schultz, and chapter 14 was published shortly afterward and explains the two reasons why the Reagan administration pursued its opening to India. First, there was an interest in India itself—after all, it was the world’s largest democracy, a fact that appealed to many pro-democracy ideologues. However, *realpolitik* was a second factor—warmer relations with India were seen as protecting America’s alliance with Pakistan, and the India gambit had President Zia’s support. The strategic opening faltered, but it has been revived in recent years for many of the original ideological and strategic reasons—only now there is an additional economic incentive plus

a large and politically important community of Americans who have emigrated from India.

Trying to explain to an Indian audience in chapter 15 the way in which the United States made its South Asia policy, I argued that U.S. military aid to Pakistan deferred but did not end the Pakistani nuclear program—I am not sure if it even deferred it. Cutting aid would have risked the operation in Afghanistan, which was critical; my comment about increased openness in the Pakistani debate was naive.

Lessons

I draw six major lessons from my experience, and contact with India over a forty-five-year period.

First, when given a lemon, make lemonade. Accident and chance play a big role in the research process, but a scholar of India, or any South Asian state, has to have a frame of mind where setbacks are accommodated, and, if possible, turned to his or her advantage. Sometimes they open up new research avenues, as did my detour into disaster politics.

Second, time spent on subjects not central to a research plan can be seen as building intellectual capital. I learned to go into almost every interview with the attitude that I can learn something from even the most foolish person, and often the fools turned out to be shrewder and wiser than I had anticipated. Working on seemingly peripheral subjects may be a distraction, and certainly it extends the time it takes to complete the original research or writing goal, but it does not have to be without merit. I have called this the “doing something else syndrome.” When you cannot concentrate or focus on the prime research goal, do something else as long as it is productive in its own right. Type up notes, draft an op-ed piece, clean up your office, or work on your Hindi.

Third, tools that enable a lifelong learning process, such as language skills, are important investments (although I do not claim to be fluent in either Hindi or Urdu). Language provides a window to a world that might not otherwise be accessible (in my case, this recently came in useful in Hindi conversations with a Malayalee noncommissioned officer who knew no English). It also provides clues as to how a civilization interprets the world and how it organizes concepts. At the minimum, it provides access to a popular culture that is shared by the elite as well as the ordinary Indian citizen.

Fourth, India has now built its own strategic community. That community is as diverse as America's, or any other European or Asian state's, and it now produces many of the best experts on strategic issues and the role of the military. Yet it is inhibited still by nationalism and by archaic government practices that restrict information about nonsensitive matters to a degree that seems laughable. The government itself lags behind: there are no more than a few Indian politicians who really understand the armed forces and the use of power, and the expertise among the civilian bureaucrats who serve as the interface between the politicians and the generals is very weak. The official studies of the histories of the 1962 and 1965 wars have been written but have not been published. The same is true of the 1971 war. Indian politicians and scholars are still denied information about the caste and religious composition of their own army, material that the British used to publish regularly. Still, when it comes to insights into what Indian policy and strategy are likely to be, "get me an Indian" is the place to start, although many of those Indians are resident abroad where the working conditions are superior.

Fifth, American scholarship on contemporary Indian matters suffered greatly during the years of no access for those studying "sensitive" issues. This placed American academics at a disadvantage when it came to understanding India's transformation into a major state. Although the general decline of area studies is partly to blame, much of the responsibility rests with those who dominate these programs: the language, literature, and cultural experts who look to the past, not to the future. The Title VI programs need a new injection of money, but their custodians must learn to draw more on the strengths of other disciplines so they can better educate their students, the broader public, and the policy community about this new phenomenon: India as a major power.

Sixth, the distinction between Americans and Indians, and scholars of other nationalities, is increasingly blurred. The cultural gap between younger scholars of India regardless of their national origin is also narrowing. They simply have more in common than my generation did, and the availability of electronic forms of communication makes them world citizens of a sort. This also provides new opportunities for cooperation among scholars. Besides the retrograde hypernationalist websites, there are now books, articles, and websites that are the results of collaboration between scholars across the globe. The Cold War History Project is one model. To a limited

degree, the websites devoted to the armed services of India (but managed by civilians) are another. But the best one may be the way in which the global disaster management community has put everyone's "best practices" on the web. The time may be right for a serious, global, interdisciplinary effort that would return to my first puzzle, the role of the armed forces in politics and society. Given developments in Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, this will continue to be an issue that will preoccupy policymakers for the indefinite future.