
CANADA'S RE-ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIA

Arthur G. Rubinoff

No state reacted more harshly to India's May 1998 nuclear tests—or maintained sanctions directed at New Delhi that were counter-productive to its own economic and political interests longer—than did Canada. Ottawa's hostile reaction to the Pokharan tests was the product of long-standing disenchantment with India. After pursuing a special relationship based upon a common middle-power perspective and shared British Commonwealth experience in the 1950s, Canadian-Indian relations deteriorated into irrelevance because of incompatible interests over such issues as Kashmir, the operation of the Indo-China Control Commission, and Suez. They reached their nadir in 1974 following India's detonation of a nuclear device believed to have been conducted with Canadian materials. Bilateral relations never recovered, despite significant immigration from India to Canada and cooperation over terrorist issues connected to the explosion of an Air India plane that resulted in the death of over 200 Canadian citizens. However, relations reached a new low after the 1998 nuclear tests because of the human-security agenda of then-Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, which promoted global nonproliferation rather than Canada's bilateral interests with India. His policies had adverse consequences for political, economic, and cultural linkages, as the Canadian government's retrenchment of diplomatic contacts resulted in diminished trade and an attack on the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute by Indian diplomats who were insensitive to Canada's tradition of academic freedom.

Arthur G. Rubinoff is Professor of Political Science at The University of Toronto. This article is the revised version of a paper presented to the Canadian Association of Asian Studies, Quebec City, May 26, 2001. The author would like to thank Reeta C. Tremblay for her comments and suggestions.

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Despite the attempt of Axworthy's immediate successor John Manley to revive bilateral ties by promoting economic activities, there appears to be little substantive basis or political will for a meaningful relationship in the future. Manley's effort to re-engage with India may have been a brief window of opportunity. While there are signs that momentum for re-engagement has been restored, Bill Graham, Canada's recently appointed foreign minister, has demonstrated little interest in South Asia.

Cold War Partnership

Canada's formal involvement with India dates to the British Empire's military operations in World War II. After New Delhi achieved independence in 1947, Ottawa regarded India as "the major power of Asia."¹ Canada pursued a close relationship with the former British colony, whose size, similar imperial past, common democratic federal systems, and multiethnic cultures "seemed to make it an ideal partner in the Asian Cold War."² The two countries shared an identity of perceptions on the need to enhance relations between Asia and the West, foster third-world development and promote multilateral organizations. Canada worked on creating an intercontinental and interracial grouping in the British Commonwealth of Nations that would serve as a bridge between the established Western democracies that were members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the newly independent Afro-Asian states. The early bilateral relationship was cemented by the personal relationship that Canadian Prime Ministers Louis St. Laurent and Lester Pearson had with Jawaharlal Nehru. A democratic India under Jawaharlal Nehru became Canada's partner in Asia because China had chosen communism. Support for a democratic India "allowed Canada the semblance of autonomy in its foreign policy, enabled Ottawa to reach out toward other emerging Afro-Asian countries, provided a sense of distance from the dominant voice of the United States within the Atlantic Alliance, and fostered a belief that Canada would be an 'honest broker' in world affairs."³

During the Cold War, Canada was sympathetic to the American goal of containing the Soviet Union, but was concerned that Western military assistance to Pakistan would upset the regional balance of power. While the

1. W. M. Dobell, "Canadian Relations with South Asia," in Paul Parnchand ed., *From MacKenzie King to Pierre Trudeau: Forty Years of Canadian Diplomacy, 1945–1985* (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1989), p. 354.

2. Greg Donaghy, "Nehru's Reactor: The Origins of Indo-Canadian Nuclear Cooperation, 1955–1959," paper presented to Canadian Asian Studies Association, Quebec City, May 27, 2001, p. 3.

3. Salim Mansur, "Canada and Pakistan: At the Beginning," in Arthur G. Rubinoff ed., *Canada and South Asia Political and Strategic Relations* (Toronto: Centre for South Asian Studies, the University of Toronto, 1992), p. 50.

United States brought Pakistan into its South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) pacts, Canada's relationship with India intensified. According to Ashok Kapur, "A tacit international division of labour existed between Canada and India. India's task was to moderate China and build a bridge between that country and the West. Canada's task was to moderate the U.S.A. towards Asia and to moderate India towards the U.S.A."⁴ The fact that New Delhi and Beijing had close relations enabled India to become "China's window on the world."⁵

The 1950s were the period of most intense Canadian involvement in South Asia, as security concerns like the containment of China coincided with humanitarian assistance considerations. India, which received more than \$2 billion in direct aid, became the largest recipient of Canadian external assistance. Under High Commissioner Escott Reid, bilateral ties blossomed into what was termed "a special relationship,"⁶ an expression that would become a euphemism for self-delusion.

Emerging Disagreements

However, the common denominators of Indo-Canadian relations were not strong enough to survive the lack of congruency that surfaced over issues like Korea, Indo-China, or Hungary.⁷ The ability of Canada to achieve its objective in South Asia of having good relations with two Commonwealth partners and fulfill its international role had been tested early by the Kashmir dispute. Kashmir—a dispute remote from Canada but central to India and Pakistan—tested Ottawa's growing partnership with New Delhi. As has been observed, "Canada was not above sympathizing with India's outlook [in international forums] but voting in a tactically different way."⁸ A Canadian proposal tabled by General A. G. L. McNaughton, the president of the Security Council in February 1948, was more than a compromise. It "recommended that the U.N. supervise and bring about a ceasefire, a mutual reduction in forces, and ultimately a plebiscite that would ascertain the will of the people of Jammu and Kashmir."⁹ As such, the Canadian position was unacceptable to India. Moreover, the Conservative government of John Diefenbaker that came to

4. Ashok Kapur, "Canada and India," in *ibid.*, p. 59.

5. Dobell, "Canadian Relations with South Asia," p. 354.

6. Escott Reid, *Envoy to Nehru* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 24.

7. See Reid, "Epilogue," and John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis eds, *Mike, the Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson*, Vol. 2: 1948–1957 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973) for a discussion of these issues. Pearson, p. 118 called Nehru "one of the most subtle and difficult men to understand whom I had ever met."

8. Dobell, "Canadian Relations with South Asia," p. 354.

9. Mansur, "Canada and Pakistan: At the Beginning," p. 46.

power in 1957 felt it had more in common with Pakistan's Ayub Khan than India's Nehru.

Differences that emerged in the peacekeeping mission of the International Control Commission established by the Geneva Conference of 1954 were to have an even more profound effect on the future of Canadian-Indian relations. India felt that Canada had become "an apologist" for the United States-backed South Vietnamese regime, while Ottawa felt India "invariably" voted with Poland, which supported the Communist position.¹⁰ More important than voting differences was the antipathy that scores of Canadian diplomatic and military officers derived from their service with their Indian counterparts. This reservoir of ill will created a "strong anti-India feeling" within the Ministry of External Affairs¹¹ that became a factor in Ottawa's future attitudes toward New Delhi.

Nuclear Disillusionment

The Liberal Government's unforgiving reaction to the 1998 Indian nuclear tests was conditioned by the May 18, 1974, so-called "peaceful" detonation that Ottawa suspected was "surreptitiously"¹² carried out with nuclear materials supplied from Canadian-provided reactors. Ironically, Canada had originally insisted on March 30, 1955, that a reluctant New Delhi accept Canadian nuclear technology through the Colombo Plan. The proposal "cleared Cabinet with only perfunctory discussion."¹³ Such assistance, it was felt at the time, would reinforce the bilateral partnership, emphasize the peaceful—as opposed to military—uses of nuclear technology in Asia, preempt Soviet competition, showcase Canadian engineering talent abroad, and stimulate research and industrial activity in both countries.¹⁴ Underlying this political and commercial rationale was the naïve assumption "that Ottawa and New Delhi would adopt similar policies"¹⁵ based on their shared opposition to nuclear weapons. It is clear that both countries misperceived the other's viewpoint. Even though both say their ultimate objective is world disarmament, Canada maintained that it must be a member of a nuclear-armed NATO until the world disarms. India, which chose to remain outside the American

10. Dobell, "Canadian Relations with South Asia," p. 359.

11. Ivan L. Head and Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *The Canadian Way: Shaping Canada's Foreign Policy 1968–74* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), p. 127.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

13. Donaghy, "Nehru's Reactor: The Origins of Indo-Canadian Nuclear Cooperation, 1955–1959," p. 6.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 4; and J. L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, *Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 292–93.

15. Donaghy, "Nehru's Reactor: The Origins of Indo-Canadian Nuclear Cooperation, 1955–1959," p. 6.

security umbrella, said it would not disarm until the other existing weapons states relinquish their nuclear weapons.

The government found “the precedential nature” of the May 1974 explosion to be “terrifying.”¹⁶ It expected other near-nuclear states to follow suit and develop their own nuclear capabilities. The thought that Canada might have inadvertently contributed to India’s nuclear military capacity evoked “a widespread and bitter sense of betrayal”¹⁷ in Ottawa, even though New Delhi had broken no agreement with Ottawa and publicly declared that it believed the existing five-power nuclear regime was discriminatory. Although the Indo-Canadian arrangement had been negotiated before international safeguards to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons were in place, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau had subsequently warned Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in writing about the consequences of developing nuclear weapons. With Foreign Minister Mitchell Sharp arguing that “trust between the two countries was gone,”¹⁸ the government of Canada, without dissent, immediately suspended its nuclear cooperation with India, as well as all but food and fertilizer assistance, and an agreement to roll over debt.

However, “As incensed as the Canadian government was, its actions amounted to a suspension, not a termination, of nuclear cooperation with India.”¹⁹ For two years, a divided Canadian government “sought a means by which it could reconcile continued nuclear partnership with its commitments to non-proliferation.”²⁰ When an agreement to resume nuclear assistance subject to cabinet approval was reached, Allan MacEachen, who had replaced Mitchell Sharp as minister of external affairs after the 1974 election, led the attack against the document that had been produced by his own department, even though Trudeau “forcefully” supported it.²¹ Several other cabinet ministers—including, presumably, current Prime Minister Jean Chrétien—“remained either outraged or deeply disappointed at what they regard as duplicity on the part of the Indians.”²²

16. Head and Trudeau, *The Canadian Way*, p. 125.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

18. Mary Halloran, “Mrs. Gandhi’s Bombshell: Canadian Reactions to India’s Nuclear Detonation, 1974–1976,” paper presented to the Canadian Association of Asian Studies, Quebec City, May 27, 2001, p. 6.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

20. For details on the division, see Ashok Kapur, “The Canada-India Nuclear Negotiations, Some Hypotheses and Lessons,” *World Today*, 34:8 (August 1978), pp. 311–20. On nuclear partnership, see Halloran, “Mrs. Gandhi’s Bombshell: Canadian Reactions to India’s Nuclear Detonation, 1974–1976,” p. 8.

21. Halloran, “Mrs. Gandhi’s Bombshell: Canadian Reactions to India’s Nuclear Detonation,” p. 12. While Trudeau’s motivations—including possibly playing “devil’s advocate”—are unknown, his behavior was highly unusual in a parliamentary system.

22. Head and Trudeau, *The Canadian Way*, p. 127.

The 1974 nuclear detonation and Mrs. Gandhi's June 25, 1975, imposition of a State of Emergency, which restricted civil liberties, caused "a dramatic shift in Canadian perceptions of and attitudes toward India."²³ This antipathy carried over to Ottawa's reaction to the next round of tests 24 years later.

Benign Neglect

In accordance with a 1973 study that proclaimed "India was the permanent 'sick man' of Asia whom it was futile to try to help," relations after the 1974 detonation were downgraded to be "commensurate with India's position in South Asia, . . . not especially friendly or close."²⁴ Africa, rather than South Asia, became the focus of Canadian aid efforts for the Trudeau administration and subsequent Liberal governments, and the relationship with New Delhi deteriorated even further into what Ashok Kapur has termed "Canada's own phase of benign neglect" or indifference.²⁵ Ironically, Canadian interest in South Asia declined just as the region grew in strategic importance because of the Persian Gulf and Afghan situations.

The 1970s saw retrenchment in Asia by both the United States and Canada.²⁶ Washington retreated from the subcontinent as a consequence of its protracted war in Vietnam. Over the decade, Canadian and American policies toward the region became more congruent because of concerns about nuclear proliferation, conflicts in the Persian Gulf, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The end of the Cold War caused Ottawa and New Delhi to concentrate on regional matters, as Canada and the United States formed an economic unit through the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and India joined the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).²⁷ It also reinforced the low priority that both Ottawa and Washington attached to South Asia. As Washington's and Ottawa's policies diverged from India's over issues like Afghanistan, Canada's distinctiveness

23. Halloran, "Mrs. Gandhi's Bombshell: Canadian Reactions to India's Nuclear Detonation, 1974-1976," p. 13.

24. Barrie M. Morrison, "Canada and South Asia," in Peyton V. Lyon and Tareq Y. Ismael, eds., *Canada and the Third World* (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada, 1976), p. 43.

25. Kapur, "Canada and India," p. 62.

26. See Arthur G. Rubinoff, "Commonalities and Dissimilarities in American and Canadian Approaches towards the Indian Subcontinent," *Contemporary South Asia* 1:3 (1992), pp. 393-405, and "Comparing American and Canadian Perceptions and Policies towards the Indian Subcontinent," in J. S. Grewal and Hugh Johnston, eds., *The India-Canada Relationship* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 43-61.

27. K. Subrahmanyam, "Emerging International Trends after the Cold War; Scope for Indo-Canadian Interaction," in Grewal and Johnston, *The India-Canada Relationship*, p. 78.

from the United States began to blur in India. It began to be viewed by Indians as an American “dependency.”²⁸

Security Issues

Ottawa’s interest in the region was rekindled in the 1980s by cooperation between India and Canada over the South Africa question and issues related to immigration and terrorism, originating from the subcontinent because of the civil war in Sri Lanka and civil strife in the Punjab. It took the bombing of an Air India plane with considerable loss of Canadian life in 1985 to once more focus Ottawa’s attention on South Asia, which had become Canada’s second leading source of immigrants. The Canadian government again took notice of the subcontinent because the high volume of immigration from the region has domestic political consequences. In the last two decades immigration, rather than the promotion of commercial linkages, has been the principal concern of the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi.

Immigration

Until the mid-twentieth century, immigration from India was restricted, and those people—primarily Sikh males—who came to work in Canada’s agricultural, railroad, and forest industries faced overt discrimination.²⁹ South Asians in Canada numbered only around 7,000 in 1960. As recently as the Census of 1971, only 67,900 people of South Asian origin resided in Canada, but the total number of South Asians was three times that figure if immigrants of South Asian descent—largely non-Sikh—who came from the Caribbean, Fiji, East Africa, and elsewhere are included. In the mid-1970s, the Liberal government, “with one eye fixed on the voting strength of the increasing number of Canadians who are recent immigrants,” made family reunification the basis of entry.³⁰ As a result, 200,000 South Asians came to Canada between 1971 and 1982, “making them one of the largest immigrant flows of the period.”³¹ India is now Canada’s second leading source of immigrants after China. The total number of South Asians of all origins, by the government’s own figures, is now nearly one million, or one out of every

28. John G. Hadwin, “Some of the Realities of the Indo-Canadian Relationship,” in Grewal and Johnston, *The India-Canada Relationship*, p. 30.

29. See Hugh Johnston, “Patterns of Sikh Migration to Canada 1900–1960” in Joseph T. O’Connell et al., eds., *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Centre for South Asian Studies of the University of Toronto, 1988), pp. 296–313.

30. John R. Wood, “East Indians and Canada’s New Immigration Policy,” *Canadian Public Policy* 4:4 (Autumn 1978), p. 564.

31. Norman Buchignani and Doreen M. Indra, with Ram Srivastava, *Continuous Journey, a Social History of South Asians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1985), p. 114.

thirty Canadians.³² Although their numbers are proportionately higher than those of their counterparts in the United States, expatriates in Canada have not been as politically active in the promotion of enhanced bilateral ties. Indeed, a segment of the large Canadian Sikh community has worked against New Delhi's interests.

Terrorism

The support of some in Canada's sizable Sikh community for an independent Khalistan replaced the nuclear question as the principal issue in the bilateral relationship of the 1980s. Ironically, the Sikh factor caused India to pay attention to Canada. By the spring of 1985, the Indian government and press viewed Canada as "a disaster waiting to happen,"³³ an assessment that was justified by the Air India bombing later that year. That tragedy, which illustrated the capacity of ethnic strife on the subcontinent to spill over to Canada, caused Ottawa to focus attention on the bilateral relationship once again. Their common interest in containing terrorism led New Delhi and Ottawa to sign a bilateral extradition treaty in 1987 at the height of the uprising in the Punjab, which, like the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka, is generously funded by expatriates in Canada. Since Sikhs are the largest Indian community in Canada, their support of a campaign for an independent homeland on the subcontinent has created practical bilateral problems for a government in Ottawa that has had to contend with a separatist movement in Quebec. The common interest Ottawa and New Delhi had in containing terrorism did not create the foundation for a new relationship. Nor was cooperation by Foreign Minister Joe Clark with his Indian counterparts against racism in Rhodesia and South Africa during the Mulroney years (1983–93) sufficient inducement to revive the special relationship of the earlier period.³⁴

In the post-Cold War unipolar world, there was no basis for meaningful economic or political cooperation between Canada and India. As a result, foreign policy matters between the two states remained on the back burner, subject to agreement or disagreement depending on the particular issue, but of little regional or international consequences. Canada's capacity and role in the region were clearly marginal in the 1990s.³⁵

32. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Canada & South Asia, Partners for a New Century* (Ottawa: Ministry of Public Works, 2001).

33. Bill Warden, "Sikhs in Canada-India Relations," *International Perspectives* (July/August 1987), p. 17.

34. See W. M. Dobell, "Canada and India: The Mulroney Years," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 25:3–4 (1990), pp. 131–45.

35. See Arthur G. Rubinoff, ed., *Canada and South Asia: Issues and Opportunities* (Toronto: Centre for South Asian Studies of the University of Toronto, 1988); *Canada and the States of South Asia* (Toronto: Centre for South Asian Studies of the University of Toronto, 1990).

A False Start over Economics

In the decade of the 1990s, American and Canadian attitudes toward India once more diverged, as New Delhi proved more important to Washington than to Ottawa. India abandoned its reflexive anti-Americanism and embarked on a program of capitalist economic reforms that "attracted the attention of both Wall Street and Main Street"³⁶ in the United States.

The economic reforms of Finance Minister Manmohan Singh during the government of Narasimha Rao also made India attractive to the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien when it swept to power in a 1993 landslide. In October of 1994, during a major trade mission to India, Minister for International Trade Roy MacLaren proclaimed that country to be "one of the most promising markets in the Asia-Pacific region for Canadian business."³⁷ The next year the Department of External Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) attempted to develop coordinated trade and investment policies with the provincial governments and private industry, in what was increasingly viewed as an attractive emerging market for Canadian investment. A document entitled "Focus India" laid the groundwork for a reinvigorated relationship with New Delhi. It set the stage for an ambitious "Team Canada" mission to India in January 1996, whereby Jean Chrétien, in the first prime ministerial visit to India in 25 years, was accompanied by seven provincial premiers, two federal cabinet ministers, and more than 300 business persons from 204 companies. Seventy-five commercial agreements worth \$3.4 billion dollars were signed, and Chrétien proclaimed, "Canada is back in India and we are here to stay."³⁸ However, Chrétien's demand that India give up its nuclear option and his attack on its child-labor policies engendered widespread criticism of "brazen insensitivity" while he was in the country.³⁹ A follow-up visit by Governor General Romeo Lablanc in January 1998 failed to generate enthusiasm in New Delhi. India's failure to reciprocate diplomatic visitors suggested that the newly emerging bilateral relationship was destined to be "unidimensional,"⁴⁰ rather than reciprocal, and not strong enough to survive the forthcoming turmoil over nuclear testing.

36. Robert M. Hathaway, "Unfinished Passage: India, Indian Americans, and the U.S. Congress," *Washington Quarterly* 24:2 (Spring 2001), p. 26.

37. Louis A. Delvoie, "Canada and India: A New Beginning?" *The Round Table*, no. 345 (1998), p. 57.

38. Quoted by John R. Wood, "Canada-India Relations: The Current Issues" in Reeta Chowhari Tremblay et al., eds, *Interfacing Nations: Indo/Pakistani/Canadian Reflections on the 50th Anniversary of India's Independence* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1998), p. 397.

39. See K. P. Nayar, "Canadian PM Puts up a Brazen Show of Insensitivity," *The Indian Express* (New Delhi), January 16, 1996), p. 9.

40. Delvoie, "Canada and India: A New Beginning?" p. 61.

The Axworthy Doctrine

The most serious estrangement in Canadian-Indian relations since 1974 coincides with Lloyd Axworthy's tenure (January 1996-September 2000) as foreign minister. Axworthy was the champion of the left wing in an increasingly conservative Liberal Party of Canada.⁴¹ He came to office "with a deep interest in international affairs and a determination to make a difference."⁴² A deeply religious man who was more comfortable with clergymen than academics, the foreign minister attempted to conduct his office according to his Christian beliefs.⁴³ A disciple of Woodrow Wilson, who had been president of Princeton University where Axworthy earned a Ph.D. in urban studies, the foreign minister emphasized normative idealism that promoted the universal concerns of all the world's peoples over any state's—including Canada's—national interest. He called his doctrine "human security."⁴⁴

Axworthy believed that Canada was constrained by its limited capabilities and could only have influence through what Joseph Nye defined as "soft power," whereby ideas, cultural values, and institutions—rather than economic and military instruments—influenced international preferences.⁴⁵ Whereas Nye intended soft power to be used in conjunction with more coercive structural forms, Axworthy gave his doctrine independent currency in the post-Cold War era. As a result, what had been peripheral to Canadian foreign policy, which had traditionally specialized in conflict management,

41. Axworthy's political career spanned 27 years, including six years of service as one of the few Liberals in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and 21 in the federal Parliament. First elected as the member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry in 1979, he was re-elected in 1980, 1984, 1988, 1993, and 1997. Before becoming Canada's minister of Foreign Affairs, Axworthy had held several cabinet portfolios, including Employment and Immigration, Status of Women, Transport, Human Resources, and Western Economic Diversification. Axworthy's unilingual language capabilities impeded his leadership aspirations and delayed his expected appointment as foreign minister in favor of Andre Ouellet until a pending Quebec referendum was conducted after the November 1993 elections. Graham Fraser, "Mixed Memories of Axworthy's Foreign Policy," *The Toronto Star*, August 19, 2001, p. A2.

42. Fen Hampson, Norman Hillmer, Maureen Appel Molot, eds., *Canada Among Nations 2001: The Axworthy Legacy* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press), preface.

43. Jeff Sallot, "Minister Heeds Christian Gospel's Call to Social Action," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), May 1, 1999, p. 10.

44. See "Notes for an Address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs to the National Forum," Montreal, Quebec, January 22, 1999, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade 99/4; "Notes for an Address by the Honorable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Relations Princeton University, 'Kosovo and the Human Security Agenda'"; and Lloyd Axworthy and Sarah Taylor, "A Ban for All Seasons: The Landmines Convention and Its Implications for Canadian Diplomacy," *International Journal* 53:2 (Spring 1998), p. 202.

45. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead, the Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), p. 32.

now became central.⁴⁶ According to Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick, “human security gradually overwhelmed Canadian policy until it seemed that nothing else [including issues that required detailed and thoughtful responses] mattered.”⁴⁷ Axworthy’s activist agenda, which included a treaty that banned land mines, established an international criminal court, and protected civilians—especially children—in military conflicts, was designed to raise Canada’s international profile by promoting the country’s culture and values.⁴⁸ It was also believed that a corollary objective of Axworthy’s mission-oriented diplomacy was to win its practitioner the Nobel Prize for Peace, as his predecessor Lester B. Pearson had done.

While the Axworthy Doctrine of employing soft power exclusively was popular with the Canadian public for enhancing Ottawa’s international profile, it was widely criticized by prominent academics for its sanctimony⁴⁹; its hypocrisy in advocating sanctions against a democratic India while criticizing the United States for employing the same tactics against Castro’s Cuba⁵⁰; its inability to project Ottawa’s influence or protect its interests on the world stage⁵¹; and for being an unwise over-extension of mission—“diplomacy on the cheap”—at a time when the resources for the conduct of Canadian foreign policy were being drastically reduced. Axworthy, while claiming to promote an internationalist agenda, allowed development assistance to shrink by half to 0.24% of gross national product.⁵² Moreover, the foreign minister did not seem to realize that Canada’s participation in the Kosovo air war, under the premise that the end justifies the means, undermined a central tenet of his foreign policy, which held that human security was designed to protect innocent civilians of belligerent states.⁵³

46. Dennis Stairs, “The Changing Office and the Changing Environment of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Axworthy Era,” in Hampson et al., eds., *The Axworthy Legacy*, p. 35.

47. Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick, “The Axworthy Revolution,” in Hampson et al., eds., *The Axworthy Legacy*, p. 83.

48. See, for the context, Andrew F. Cooper and Geoffrey Hayes, eds., *Worthwhile Initiatives? Canadian Mission-Oriented Diplomacy* (Toronto: Irwin Publishers, 2000).

49. See Fen Osler Hampson and Dean F. Oliver, “Pulpit Diplomacy,” *International Journal* 53:3 (Summer 1998), pp. 379–406.

50. Arthur G. Rubinoff, “Canada’s Stand on India Is Far Too Harsh,” *Globe and Mail*, January 15, 1999, p. A19.

51. See Kim Richard Nossal, “Foreign Policy for Wimps,” *Ottawa Citizen*, April 23, 1998, p. A19.

52. Daryl Copeland, “The Axworthy Years: Canadian Foreign Policy in the Era of Diminished Capacity,” in Hampson et al., *The Axworthy Legacy*, p. 167, and Kim Richard Nossal, “Pinchpenny Diplomacy,” *International Journal* 54 (Winter 1998–99), p. 91.

53. “Notes for an Address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the United Nations Security Council, ‘The Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict,’” New York, February 12, 1999, DEFAIT 99/8.

The Axworthy Doctrine was also designed to demonstrate that Ottawa's foreign policy was distinguishable from that of the United States. Condemnation of India's nuclear tests by Canada also enabled the Chrétien government to deflect criticism of Finance Minister Paul Martin's conservative economic policies by the Liberal Party's left wing.

Canada's Reaction to the 1998 Nuclear Tests

The suddenness of India's nuclear explosions, which occurred within six weeks of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) taking power at the head of a multi-party coalition, stunned the governments of Canada and the United States and rendered Indian diplomats unprepared to defend the strategic necessity of the tests. The specter of people, including nuclear scientists, dancing in the streets was at odds with India's long-cultivated image of Gandhian nonviolence. Moreover, the tests were accompanied by confrontational rhetoric by India's leaders toward its neighbors. George Fernandes, the mercurial home minister, assailed China, and Home Minister L. K. Advani—under indictment for the storming of the Ayodhya Mosque in 1992—threatened Pakistan. As a result, there was far less criticism of Pakistan, when Islamabad followed suit with its own series of explosions.

Nevertheless, official American reaction to the 1998 Pokharan tests was relatively measured, because the Indo-American community in the United States—the wealthiest demographic group in the entire country—had transformed, within the U.S. Congress, the image of the Indian from that of a beggar seeking alms to one of a Silicon Valley computer technician.⁵⁴ Instead of looking to structure relations with a nuclearized India, Ottawa's reaction to the 1998 Pokharan tests resembled its condemnation of New Delhi's 1974 detonation, because Canada and India remained "prisoners of stereotypes and images rooted in the past (peering) at each other through the wrong end of a telescope."⁵⁵

In contrast to the American policy of engaging New Delhi, Foreign Minister Axworthy sanctimoniously attempted to isolate and punish India with sanctions following the 1998 nuclear tests. Axworthy, according to sources in his ministry, felt personally "deceived" by New Delhi over the nuclear issue and launched a "crusade" against India.⁵⁶ As a consequence, no state

54. See Arthur G. Rubinoff, "Changing Perceptions of India in the U.S. Congress," *Asian Affairs* 28 (Spring 2001), pp. 37–60.

55. David Holdsworth, "Canadian-Indian Partnership in the 1990s," in Howard Coward ed., *Peace, Development and Culture: Comparative Studies of India and Canada* (Calgary: The Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, 1988) pp. 57–60.

56. John Stackhouse, "Canada Set to Woo India and Bypass Rival Pakistan," *Globe and Mail*, March 3, 2001, p. A20. I have confirmed this report in my interviews with Canadian officials.

reacted more strongly to the Indian tests than did Canada, which recalled its High Commissioner; canceled Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) consultations regarding \$54.5 million of foreign non-humanitarian assistance over five years; suspended talks on the expansion of trade; banned all military exports to India; opposed non-humanitarian loans to India by the World Bank; and announced it would oppose New Delhi's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.⁵⁷ According to Axworthy, the tests were an opportunity to "use the tools of 'soft power'" to demonstrate that security is better achieved through multilateral ventures than the attainment of nuclear capabilities. Consequently, Canada took the lead at G-8 and other forums in labeling the South Asian tests as "a global challenge" to the nonproliferation regime, as well as a threat to regional peace and security and a waste of scarce resources.⁵⁸

While the pacifist-inclined New Democratic Party on the left claimed that the government's actions did not go far enough and accused the Liberal Party of contributing to the development of India's nuclear weapons program,⁵⁹ the leader of the Official Opposition, the Reform Party's Preston Manning—during a tour of Asia that included a stop in New Delhi—called for Canada to cancel the sanctions. Manning, who was critical of India for conducting nuclear tests, nevertheless urged the Canadian government to invite Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Ottawa so that he could directly explain why India considered them necessary. Manning's criticism of the Chrétien government's foreign policy was dismissed by most Canadian commentators as inappropriate while abroad and as a bid for support in the traditionally pro-Liberal Indo-Canadian community.⁶⁰

Political Fallout

At no time was Axworthy required to explain his policies in terms of the requirements of Canada's own interests. Indeed, Ottawa's actions—although popular at home—were counterproductive, as they had adverse consequences on political, economic, and cultural linkages. They also meant that Canada could play no role in helping India develop its nuclear doctrine, and reduced Ottawa's influence in a very important country. While the Canadian High

57. "Notes for a Statement by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 'India's Nuclear Testing: Implications for Nuclear Disarmament and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime,'" May 26, 1998, DEFAIT 98/40.

58. Louis A. Delvoie, "The South Asia Nuclear Tests: Causes, Consequences, and Canadian Responses," in Fen Osler Hampson, Michael Hart, and Martin Rudner eds., *Canada Among Nations 1999: A Big League Player* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 240.

59. *Globe and Mail*, May 13, 1998, p. A13.

60. *Vancouver Sun*, May 13, 1998, p. A3.

Commission had been an important mission in New Delhi during the ambassadorship of John Paynter, it had become irrelevant during the tenure of Peter Walker a decade later. By contrast, Washington realized that India was not going to renounce its nuclear program, and therefore must be engaged in determining how to formulate a nuclear doctrine that manages the program. Hence, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and India's Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh held the most intensive discussions in the history of bilateral relations. Bill Clinton's visit to South Asia in March 2000, the first by an American president since 1978, engaged New Delhi on nuclear, human rights, anti-terrorism, and economic issues. Clinton and Prime Minister Vajpayee, who reciprocated with a visit to Washington the following September, signed a "vision statement" that promised to institutionalize the ongoing dialogue between the world's two largest democracies. In the meantime, Canadian diplomats were forbidden to discuss official matters of substance with their Indian counterparts. Moreover, Indian members of parliament were denied visas to visit Canada, and New Delhi refused Senator Lois Wilson permission to attend a meeting of the World Federalist Movement in Chennai in November 1998.

Economic Fallout

The tepid political atmospherics contributed to the freezing of the India-Canada economic relationship "at next to nothing."⁶¹ Each country produces little, such as textiles and agricultural products, that is absolutely essential or that cannot be had from elsewhere. Consequently, each hardly matters economically to the other. Yearly, two-way trade has remained consistently around an insignificant \$1 billion dollars, an amount that is half the daily value of Ottawa's commerce with the United States and less than is generated between Canada and Venezuela. In 1998, Canada's exports to India were just 0.1% of its world exports, while Canada's imports from India were a mere 0.3% of its world imports. Canada ranked 17th among foreign investors in India, with only a 1.4% share. By the same token, India's exports to Canada were only 1.6% of its total exports, and its imports from Canada were only 0.8% of its total imports. Economic ties were, thus, unable to provide an underpinning of stability to bilateral political and strategic relations and prevent their deterioration. As a result of the estrangement following the nuclear tests, \$3 billion in economic contracts, including \$51 million for power plants and communications facilities, were jeopardized.

61. Baldev Raj Nayar, "India-Canada Economic Relations: Retrospect and Prospect," Paper delivered to the Canadian Asian Studies Association, Quebec City, May 26, 2001, p. 1. Data cited below come from this source.

*Cultural Fallout: Attack against the
Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute*

Although Ottawa had cut most political ties and did not promote economic activity, cultural relations continued. The Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute headquartered in Calgary with its India office in New Delhi was the principal institution responsible for Indo-Canadian cultural ties. It had been founded in 1968 to promote bilateral cultural understanding through exchanges, academic fellowships, and the procurement of books for university libraries.⁶² It was originally funded from Canadian foreign assistance grants that were the equivalent of the U.S. PL-480 program. In its first 30 years of existence, Canadian scholars often resorted to “self-censorship” by avoiding controversial topics in order to obtain Indian government approval of their research projects.⁶³ Research on sensitive subjects such as communal riots or the disputed state of Kashmir was unlikely to be permitted. However, in 2000, Indian diplomats attempted to extend their censorship to activities funded by the CIDA but only nominally sponsored by the Institute in Canada.⁶⁴ They objected to a five-city art exhibition entitled “Dust on the Road,” produced in collaboration with a New Delhi-based activist group, which, in part through postcards, paintings, and photographs, depicted the rise of communalism and religious fundamentalism in India. It was one of six projects of the University of Western Ontario to which the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute had contributed \$5,000. Since 40% of the Institute’s \$1.4 million budget was contributed by the government of India—the rest comes from the government of Canada—Indian diplomats claimed it was within their jurisdiction. When the exhibition opened at Toronto’s Harbourfront Centre, Consul-General Chandra Mohan Bhandari disrupted the proceedings by filming the event and denouncing it as anti-Indian propaganda. High Commissioner Rajnikanta Verma defended his colleague by stating, “No government in its right mind, including the Canadian government, would fund an exhibition that attacks it.”⁶⁵

Shortly thereafter, Verma objected to panels on “Human Rights: Gender and Diversity Issues” and “Good Governance and Human Security” at a Shastri-funded conference of binational academics at the University of Waterloo entitled “Accommodating Diversity: Learning from the Indian and Ca-

62. Edward C. Moulton, “South Asian Studies in Canada, and the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute,” *Pacific Affairs* 51:2 (Summer 1978), pp. 245–64.

63. Micheal Brecher, “India and Canada: Origins and Assessment of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute,” in Rubinoff, ed., *Political and Strategic Relations*, p. 96.

64. See Eugene Correia, “Pressures on an Academic Body,” *Frontline* 17:19 (September 16, 2000), Internet edition.

65. Sharlene Azam, “Indian Envoy Unrepentant,” *Toronto Star*, Internet edition, August 29, 2000.

nadian Experiences.” Even though the conference’s \$27,000 funding had come from the CIDA and not the government of India, the Institute—in the process of negotiating its five-year grant with New Delhi—withdrew its support at the last minute and the event had to be cancelled. Verma’s undiplomatic interference in academic freedom was editorially denounced by the *Times of India*,⁶⁶ and 42 members of the Indian parliament signed a petition demanding his recall.

At this writing the Memorandum of Understanding has still not been signed, pending a taskforce review of the Institute’s governance and performance. In the meantime, although some funds were recently released by the Indian Cabinet after lobbying by prominent people such as former Canadian foreign minister Flora MacDonald and son of the late Indian prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, no Canadian scholar funded by the Shastri Institute was able to conduct research in India for two years. Nor was the Institute able to procure Indian publications for its members’ libraries during that time. The government of India has demanded parity in the number of Indian representatives on the Institute’s board of directors and executive committee, as well as the rotation of Indians and Canadians serving as vice president in charge of the New Delhi office. As a result, the Institute, whose reputation was already damaged by financial and administrative scandals, has suffered an irreparable blow to its independence and academic credibility. Under the circumstances, its funding from the Canadian government also suffered. All of the Institute’s existing CIDA-funded projects—including undergraduate scholarships for development studies in India, the summer program in India, the summer language training course in Canada, the sponsorship of courses on modern Indian languages in Canada, the Women and Development grant competitions in India and Canada, seed grants to Canadian institutions, cultural grants to Canadians, media fellowships to Indians, the distinguished Indian visiting lectureships, the Social Sciences and Humanities fellowships awarded to Indians doing research in Canada, and partnership programs between Canadian and Indian institutions and scholars—have been terminated. After intense lobbying by Canadian diplomats and supporters of the Institute, these cultural and social science initiatives have been replaced by a CIDA-funded \$4.1 million Shastri Applied Research Project, the so-called SHARP program, which emphasizes knowledge-based information technology and distance education. It provides support for linkages between Indian and Canadian researchers, students, and institutions that focus on poverty reduction and related issues such as economic growth, environmental sustainability, gender equality, and health-sector capacity.

66. *Times of India*, September 4, 2000, p. 14.

The Search for a New Relationship

A thaw in bilateral relations anticipated after a visit by Raymond Chan, Secretary of State for Asia and the Pacific,⁶⁷ was delayed when fighting broke out between India and Pakistan in the Kargil region of Kashmir in the summer of 1999. While a Canadian desire to strengthen economic ties was a motivation in bettering relations with India, any improvement in them was dependent in a change of leadership in the Pearson Building.

Given Lloyd Axworthy's strong personal views on the issue, the renormalization of Indo-Canadian relations coincided with the departure of the former foreign minister in the fall of 2000. Coincident with Axworthy's departure to become director of the Liu Centre for the Study of Global Issues at the University of British Columbia, Joseph Caron, assistant deputy minister for Asia Pacific and Africa, signaled Ottawa's intention to pursue "a much more proactive . . . dialogue" with New Delhi.⁶⁸ Axworthy's successor, John Manley, whose father-in-law was born in Chennai, viewed India, along with China and Mexico, as a critical emerging market. His ministry stated that Canada would "pursue the broadest possible political and economic relationship with India."⁶⁹ The problem for Ottawa, however, is to find a diplomatic role it can play on the subcontinent in the new century. The resentment engendered in India by Axworthy's "evangelical" policies has rendered Canada ineligible to mediate the Indo-Pakistani dispute. Historically, Canada's function in the region was to act as a conduit between Washington and New Delhi when they had strained ties. Since the rapprochement between the United States and India, Canada has become irrelevant. The appointment of diplomats who were insensitive to Canada's tradition of academic freedom was a reflection of the relative unimportance New Delhi attached to its relations with Ottawa at the end of the century.

Despite Foreign Minister John Manley's re-engagement initiatives, which included the removal of most sanctions in April 2001, Indo-Canadian relations remain virtually stillborn. While Citizenship and Immigration Minister Elinor Caplan broke the ice in March and became the first Canadian cabinet minister to visit India since the 1998 nuclear tests, a proposed visit by Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew in October, designed to triple bilateral trade from its 2000 level of \$1.7 billion, was postponed until April 2002 following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States and the subsequent American military campaign in Afghanistan. That conflict, which divided Man-

67. See the *Globe and Mail*, May 7, 1999, p. A20.

68. Joseph Caron, "Notes for an Address to the Asia Pacific Summit at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, Vancouver, British Columbia, October 19, 2000.

69. "Notes for an Address by the Honourable Rey Pagtakhan, Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific) to the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and the India Trade Development Committee," Winnipeg, Manitoba, April 20, 2001.

ley's time as the chairman of the Cabinet security committee, has also made India a less attractive venue for investment. Despite Canada's stated intention to reverse its South Asian priorities,⁷⁰ it has once again promoted Pakistan's importance as a front-line state and relegated Ottawa's relations with India to the back burner. Since September 11, Canada's mutual security concerns with the United States have overshadowed all other foreign policy issues. Just before he embarked on a goodwill mission to India in January 2002, Manley relinquished his external affairs portfolio and was elevated to deputy prime minister with responsibility for coordinating continental security with Washington. He later added the post of finance minister to his responsibilities. Bill Graham, his successor as foreign minister, has identified relations with Africa, Europe, and Latin America as priorities.

While Manley's effort to re-engage India may have been a brief window of opportunity that was missed, momentum for re-engagement is again building. The appointments of Shashi Tripathi, an accomplished diplomat with experience in Ottawa who was serving as consul-general in New York, as the new High Commissioner in Ottawa, and Divyabh Manchanda, deputy director-general of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, as the new consul-general in Toronto, are positive signals that New Delhi is interested in enhancing bilateral relations. To this end, India's new foreign minister Yashwant Sinha visited Ottawa in September, and foreign minister Bill Graham and industries minister Allan Rock are scheduled to tour India in the new year.

70. John Stackhouse, "Canada Set to Woo India and Bypass Rival Pakistan," *Globe and Mail*, March 3, 2001, p. A20.