

Chapter 79

A Region of Association and Turbulence

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ABSTRACT

The areas in and around India have always had a close association in building up of events which with time have attained historical and cultural prominence. In this study of cultural association the today's neighboring countries of Pakistan and Afghanistan have served as a passage of the influx of various cultures into the Indian subcontinent. The end of the Cold War highlighted the new threats which had emerged, not bound in the notions of safeguarding the integrity and sovereignty; they were way beyond territorial demarcations. These new threats were transnational in form with a much larger impact on the masses of the state. The rise and fall of Taliban in Afghanistan and the Anti India Islamic forces in Pakistan with the rise of India as a new regional power has led to new perspectives in concerns for the diplomatic and bilateral relations between these countries. What remains to be pointed is the level of porosity of borders and the ancient passes which have been routes for trade and inter cultural affiliations among these countries. The period of 2009-2015 was marked by various incidents which rocked the subcontinent bringing in strategic concerns to a new level. This article would study the historical linkages and cultural affiliations which binds the area of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India into a deeper relationship. Along with dwelling into the political scenario defined by bilateral and diplomatic ties which has taken up an important place in the times of changing perspectives of war and conflict.

INTRODUCTION

...the vast region that today encompasses northern India along with Pakistan and much of Afghanistan was commonly under a single polity, even as sovereignty over southern India was in doubt. Thus, for Indian elites, to think of not only Pakistan but Afghanistan, too, as part of India's home turf is not only natural but historically justified. The tomb of Babur is in Kabul, not in Delhi. This does not mean that India has territorial designs on Afghanistan, but it does mean that New Delhi cares profoundly about who rules Afghanistan, and wishes to ensure that those who do rule there are friendly to India. (Kaplan, 2012).

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As stated India stands at a predicament which has yet to be risen above the shifts of power dynamics in the region. Much influenced by the flow of culture from the western borders it has always shared a relationship with the state of Afghanistan even during the British raj. Pakistan on the other hand was a vital part of the Indian subcontinent until it was divided with the call of independence from the British Raj leading to partition of the Indian state into India (Hindu Majority) and Pakistan (Muslim majority).

BACKGROUND

The Indian subcontinent can be defined as a conglomeration of various cultures, ethnicities, notions and perceptions which exist and have thus continued since time immemorial. The region has been a so called transitory area from the west to the east. While the civilizations like that of Iran, Central Asia and the western side of the continent have influenced the culture of the region, India itself has been a source of influence to its eastern neighbors, be it the countries of Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, Myammmar and even China with the greatest weapon of religion. The borders of the region have been mountainous and less guarded leading to influx of people, religion, culture and various invasions from one region to another. Though the countries of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan have been closely interlinked on various terms but have also had some issues of contestation which have rocked the region from time to time meddling with the geographical and cultural affinity they share. The troubled past has lead to a trust deficit between the three which is apparent from the attitude that they have adopted against each other leading to a sense of rivalry that dominates the region. Each of these three countries of the Indian subcontinent have been interlinked troublemakers for the individual states. While the countries of Afghanistan Pakistan have had troubles with the issue of the Durand Line or that of Pakistani support for Taliban and Mujahidin forces which has led to instability in Afghanistan. Pakistan holds India as a betrayer with the Kashmir issue while Vice-versa Pakistan is accused of being a breeding ground of terrorism against the India state. While strategically Pakistan holds Afghanistan as a region where it can acquire “strategic depth” against India while also as a gateway to the untamed Central Asian resources. Afghanistan considers India as a friend which has always been there in the times of need contrary to the Pakistani belief of India being a regional bully. India has always maintained great relations with the Afghan nation except the era of the Taliban. The bitterness that India and Pakistan dates back to 1947 and the creation of a separate Hindu and Muslim state from British India. The history of the Indian and Pakistan nations have been one of territorial disputes, nuclear rivalry, disagreements over resource sharing, nonconventional security threats, internal security stresses, lack of development, abysmal social indicators, and a constant state of fluidity in their domestic politics (Narayanan, 2010).

The Kashmir issue and insurgency have been questioned time and again between the two nations. If a consensus is ever reached between the three on the issues of the Durand line(though now new more vital issues apart from this has risen between the two states) and the Kashmir issue economic and political prosperity of the region can be achieved while the three together can counter militancy with a firm hand. What can be firmly stated here is Freud’s theory of ‘Narcissism of Minor differences’ which in the wake of conjoined socio-political mechanisms joins the civilizations into a co evolutionary spiral of morbid fascinations and neurotic obsessions. Which as a result omit the rational calculation of interests as can be seen between the two countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

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