



TERRITORIAL, ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS AFFECTING REGIONAL SECURITY IN SOUTH ASIA

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: Kashmir issue, Durand Line, ethno-political issues, Aksai Chin, Arunachal Pradesh, Kingdom of Sikkim, CPEC, foreign policy strategy, China, USA, Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Tibet, Kashmir, security, border issues.

Received: 07.02.2024

Accepted: 12.02.2024

Published: 17.02.2024

Abstract: Historical comparative, event analysis, etc. methods of political analysis based on events were used in this study. The opinions of Western, Pakistani, Indian, Chinese and Russian scientists on the research issue were equally analyzed. The opinions of politicians and experts of major think tanks were studied in detail to cover the topic more broadly. The article provides an in-depth analysis of current issues and their possible solutions.

INTRODUCTION

The South Asian region is a region with a number of geostrategic features. In particular, South Asia borders the Indian Ocean to the south, the Middle East region to the west, China and Southeast Asia to the east, and Central Asia to the north. It is rich in natural resources and has wide access to the world's oceans. Currently, the South Asian region politically consists of 8 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Republic of Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. Geographically, the region includes the eastern part of Iran and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China. South Asia is home to one-fifth of the world's population and is the most densely populated region.

Relations between India and Pakistan have been strained for a long time due to a series of serious disagreements that arose almost immediately after their independence. In 1947, the partition of India took place. It led to tension over the status of Kashmir and as a result many military clashes between the two countries. Even if we take into account that these two countries of South Asia have common geographic, historical, cultural and economic ties, their relations are full of hostility and suspicion. The length of the state border between the countries is 2912 km. After the breakup of British India in 1947, new sovereign states were formed: The Union of India and the Dominion of Pakistan. The main reason for the conflict between India and Pakistan is the dispute over the ownership of Kashmir. As a result of the 1947-1949 war, India controlled about 2/3 of the region's territory and Pakistan controlled about 1/3 of the region's territory. The Kashmir conflict led to conflict between the two countries, which generally continues to this day. Unlike India, Pakistan considers the Kashmir conflict to be an international dispute and reserves the right to discuss the issue in international forums, allowing other

countries to mediate. He demands a plebiscite based on the relevant UN resolutions. Pakistan says that it is impossible to start negotiations with India on other issues without resolving the Kashmir issue. India, on the other hand, opposes the recognition of the Kashmir issue as an international dispute and rejects the possibility of any plebiscite. India's main demand is for an end to "cross-border terrorism" and for Pakistan to end its direct support to Muslim militants in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. India and Pakistan are the main actors in the South Asian region, which includes several countries as a geopolitical structure, and the relationship between the two countries is seen as a factor determining the international relations of this region. The geopolitical situation of South Asian countries is unique. Only India has a common land or sea border with all other countries in the region. India is about 74% of the area, 77% of the population, more than 83% of the gross national product and a similar situation exists militarily. This determines the natural superiority of the country in the region and the specific features of the interregional situation. Pakistan's geostrategic position at the intersection of South Asia and the Middle East allows it to rely on the military and economic potential of Islamic countries. Geopolitical reality plays a major role in the system of interstate relations in the region. The division of the border after independence from the long-lasting colonial system in the region has caused a number of cross-border disputes. There are a number of unresolved problems in the region.

- Kashmir problem;
- The problem of recognition of the Durand line;
- Ethno-political problems;
- Disputes in water resources use;

In addition, according to the textbook "Modern International Relations" published under the editorship of A.V. Torkunov, the problems in South Asia are: religious differences and the spread of fundamentalism in all countries of the region; Psychologically, India is perceived as the central state of the region, which in the past ruled the peripheries; existence of different national values and traditions; He pointed out that there is a big difference between the countries in terms of political system and economic development.

The religious partition of India in 1947 was followed by the bloody exodus of millions of Hindus, Sikhs to India and Muslims to Pakistan, after which even economic ties were almost severed. The Kashmir conflict is one of the longest-running and unresolved conflicts not only in South Asia but also in the world. Experts compare it with examples of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Palestine, the Korean crisis, and the post-Soviet region with Nagorno-Karabakh, the "Russian Spring" in Ukraine, and others. Its distinguishing feature is the protracted confrontation and bloody conflicts that have caused the death of at least a million people. As a result, about 18 million people have been forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries. In the first six months since the start of hostilities alone, about 7 million Muslims have left India and crossed over into Pakistan, with an influx of almost five million Indians trying to welcome them. In addition, at least 500,000 people became victims of the conflict on both sides. 3 major wars were fought between India and Pakistan over territorial ownership and ended with the nuclear arms of the two major powers of South Asia. However, Kashmir remains one of the disputed territories between India, Pakistan and China. The reason for this is the geopolitical location of the region and the conflicting interests of each country. Today, two disputed territories between India and China are Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh. Arunachal Pradesh is located in the far east of India, and Aksai Chin is located near the northwest of India, at the junction of China, India and Pakistan. It is known that since the 1960s, due to the occupation of 38,000 sq. km of Kashmir by China (Aksai Chin district), India claims,

in turn, China also claims Arunachal, an Indian state with an area of 90,000 sq. km. laying claim to Pradesh. This led to the conflict between the two in 1962.

Another disputed territory is the kingdoms of Sikkim and Tibet. In 1975, the Kingdom of Sikkim was occupied by India, and China still considers this region an independent state. In 2003, mutual territorial recognition took place between the two countries. The Indian government has recognized Tibet as an inviolable part of China, and the Chinese government has recognized Sikkim as a part of India. Possession of at least part of Kashmir is of particular importance to Pakistan, as it cuts off India's direct access to the Central Asian region and Afghanistan, and Pakistan shares a border with its ally China. India considers China's position in Aksai Chin as a threat to its sovereignty. Because Aksai Chin is located at a higher altitude closer to Delhi. In any conflict between China and India, China can send its army deep into India's heartland in less than two hours. Aksai Chin is a Chinese satellite that monitors operations in India and across Central Asia.

For China, CPEC is part of the ambitious Belt and Road initiative to achieve global and regional dominance. For Beijing, CPEC is a regional link, providing it with strategic and military power through investments in the region's economy. India has expressed its displeasure over the recent decision by China and Pakistan as the CPEC passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which New Delhi sees as a violation of "India's sovereignty and territorial integrity". One of the problems threatening regional security in the South Asian region is the problem of the Durand Line. The Durand Line was established in 1893 as an international boundary between India and the Emirate of Afghanistan by Mortimer Durand, a British diplomat in the Indian Civil Service, and Abdu Rahman, the Emir of Afghanistan, to mark the boundary of their respective spheres of influence.

The Durand Line crosses the Pashtun tribal areas and passes through the Balochistan region in the south. This line politically separates the ethnic Pashtuns living on both sides, as well as the Baloch and other ethnic groups. It separates Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan of northern and western Pakistan from the northeastern and southern provinces of Afghanistan. From a geopolitical and geostrategic point of view, it has been described as one of the most dangerous borders in the world. Geopolitical and geostrategic analysts describe this place as one of the most dangerous places in the world, stained with a long history of bloodshed and wars. Moreover, the origin of the Durand Line remains one of the least studied aspects of the border conflict. Hamid Hadi argued that Karzai had not formally called for support for the creation of a "Free Pashtunistan", so the Pashtuns had missed an opportunity to renegotiate the Durand Line agreement with Pakistan and the international community. This later made it possible to use this issue as a convenient platform for establishing terrorist bases in this area.

It is very important for Pakistan to maintain the Durand Line because otherwise more than 60% of its sovereign territory will be disputed. Pakistan is adamant that Afghanistan should recognize the Durand Line Treaty and agree to respect the 2,640-kilometer border between the two countries. The Durand Line Agreement has never been ratified by the legislatures of either side and is therefore said to have no legal basis. Economically, Baluchistan's dependence on the territory of Pakistan deprived Kabul of its historic access to the Arabian Sea. Periodic clashes and tensions between Pakistani and Afghan security forces along the disputed border have strained already deteriorating bilateral relations. In early May 2017, violent clashes near the Chaman border post left at least 13 people dead and more than 80 injured, most of them Pakistanis. While Pakistan's security establishment has been able to demonstrate how it can manipulate Afghanistan's internal affairs to its advantage by creating financial, military and diplomatic opportunities for the ISI to emerge as the Taliban's leading power broker,

Pakistan has seen this achievement as the Durand Line. could not turn it into a solid legality. Pakistan's sensitivity to this issue can be understood by the painful experience of losing the territory of present-day Bangladesh to Bengali nationalists in the 1971 liberation war. Pakistan's strong belief in the interconnectedness of the Afghan and Indian threats and Afghanistan's ability to undermine the Pakistani state alone or with Indian support has been a constant theme in Pakistan's military discourse. Any nationalistic or separatist tendencies within the Pashtun communities are considered against the territorial integrity of Pakistan and perhaps its national survival. While Afghanistan insists it does not recognize the Durand Line as its border with Pakistan, it has not yet made a clear position on the status of Pakistan's Pashtun-majority areas.

The Pashtun issue was not relevant during the Pashtun rule of Hamid Karzai (2004-2014). He called the Durand Line "a line of hatred that built a wall between two brothers", while he was in favor of friendly relations with Pakistan, but said he would never recognize the line as legitimate. emphasized. Ethnic point of view - if the Afghan logic that states should be formed based on ethnic origin is used in practice, Afghanistan itself will cease to exist as a state. According to Afghan logic, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmens in Afghanistan should also be allowed to join their nationalities in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, respectively. Second, there are at least twice as many Pakistani Pashtuns as Afghan Pashtuns. Therefore, if the Pakhtuns were to unite and unite in a single country, that country would not be Afghanistan, but Pakistan. It should be noted that at present, neither Pakistan nor Afghanistan are ethnically and religiously integrated countries.

In this context, the open border of the Durand Line can become the prospect of globalization, leading to flourishing trade, development and freedom of movement. The way out of a more political situation is an innovative strategy for the development of cooperation, rather than the continuation of enmity between countries.

CONCLUSION

As South Asia emerged as a geopolitical region, it became one of the disputed regions with several regional and transboundary problems due to long-term colonial policies. The problems of Kashmir and the Durand Line in the region are characterized by their parallelism and the fact that they are related to ethno-political situations that have created ethnic polarization. Despite the existence of ways out of the long-lasting conflict situation, the national-ethnic factor plays a decisive role as well as the influence of large external forces on the region. In addition, the prospects of stable development in Central and South Asia are closely related to the establishment of peace in neighboring Afghanistan. A stable, resilient and fast-developing Afghanistan is an important bridge between Central and South Asia, and can play an important role in the restoration of the historic Silk Road under modern conditions.

At the same time, it is important to realistically evaluate the possibilities of the Central and South Asian countries in solving the conflict in Afghanistan, to establish peace in this country and to establish comprehensive interregional cooperation. The existence of a number of serious problems that limit the development of relations between Central and South Asia shows that it is necessary to take a difficult path to develop non-standard solutions in order to integrate these two regions and establish a compromise peace in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the Pashtuns, as the largest ethnic group with a long history and a great position in power, are not only the oldest and largest group in Afghanistan, but also known as one of the largest ethnic groups in the world. At the same time, the population of Afghanistan is thirty-nine and a half million, and Pashtuns make up 42% of the total population. Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group, a part of the Afghan community, and occupy an important place in the socio-

political life of the country. Most Pashtuns are Sunnis and their social life is based on an unwritten "Pashtunwali" code of honor. Pashtuns do not want to live with ordinary people, on the contrary, they attach more importance to tribes. They have had the idea of establishing an independent state "Independent Pashtunistan" for many years. The creation of the state of "Independent Pashtunistan" is seen as a huge threat to official Islamabad. Because the creation of a possible Pashtun state will undermine the territorial integrity of Pakistan.

For this reason, the prevention of the movement to establish a state has become the main topic not only in the political processes of Afghanistan, but also in the politics of Pakistan. It should be noted that one of the main problems here is the use of the right of Pashtuns to self-determination, and the fact that Islamabad is based on the principle of the territorial integrity of the state. The formation of Central and South Asia as a geopolitical region has turned the interests of the leading countries into a field of conflict and geopolitical competition. The presence of the "Afghan problem" at the junction of the two regions has become a source of great danger for the regional security system. The persistence of such global problems and threats in South Asia and its border with Central Asia, the intensification of competition between the power centers, leads the countries of the two regions to reform their security policies.

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