

Matt Yglesias

Aug 20th, 2009 at 8:28 am

India and Pakistan in Afghanistan



Yesterday's Wall Street Journal had a very interesting article about India's [extensive aid projects](#) in Afghanistan and the discomfiture said projects cause Pakistan. And I think Justin Logan is absolutely right to suggest that COIN enthusiasts have an unfortunately tendency to neglect these kind of state-vs-state dynamics [in their analysis of the situation](#).

The United States will, at some point, either decide we “won” “the war” in Afghanistan and then leave or else that we “lost” “the war” in Afghanistan and then leave. Pakistan and India can't leave. And they never really win or lose definitively. The centrality of the India-Pakistan conflict in shaping conflict throughout the region isn't really anything anyone involved in the “Afpak” debate denies, but it's as if the issue is too hard so people decide they'd really rather not seriously incorporate it into their analysis.

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Filed under: [Afghanistan](#), [India](#), [Pakistan](#)

14 Responses to “India and Pakistan in Afghanistan”

1. *Scoooore!* Says:
[August 20th, 2009 at 9:04 am](#)

Actually Matthew it is quite refreshing to see pundits

admit that they can't calculate the imponderables of the AfPak conflicts and spare us their brain farts.
 If only they expanded that nimbus of honesty and simply went out of business.
 American "experts" throw a lot of darts at the board and if one hits and happens to coincide with a moment of "improvement" they declare that dart the solution until the next seismic event.
 That was Bush's brilliance: he stuck it out until a moment of synchronicity allowed him to declare a win.
 Thus Obama's cry of Surge On!
 Will he next decide to wall off Kabul?

2. *bob h* Says:

[August 20th, 2009 at 9:43 am](#)

The centrality of the India-Pakistan conflict in shaping conflict throughout the region isn't really anything anyone involved in the "Afpak" debate denies, ..

But does this conflict really exist outside the minds of the Pakistani military and "intelligence" services? It is difficult to imagine that democratic India really represents a threat to Pakistan. Pakistan has been described as an army in search of a nation, and that army needs a major conflict as a rationale for its existence.

3. *Midland* Says:

[August 20th, 2009 at 9:48 am](#)

Nope, Obama's going to trade the Taliban withdrawal in exchange for selling out Al Queda. After that, the Afghans are on their own.

Maliki, to the extent he understands the situation in his own country at all, probably understands this. He has to make his own accommodations with the Taliban, the chiefs, etc.

The deal will be struck between now and the fall of 2011, and the sooner the better. McChesney has that much time to produce results to cover the withdrawal.

4. *Pete* Says:

[August 20th, 2009 at 10:14 am](#)

#3 - Maliki? Do you mean Karzai?

5. *charlie* Says:

[August 20th, 2009 at 10:29 am](#)

I would suggest you ask Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka what they think of Indian interference. It is an unfortunate fact that foreign policy for India's near abroad involves a lot of finger stirring, which is exactly what they are doing in Afghanistan. So, yes, some of the fear the Paks feel is real.

And the failure isn't appreciating the Indo-pak dimensions; it is a failure to understand the root cause of the Afghan conflict is Pathan unhappiness with the current, corrupt, Karzai regime. Solve

that problem and others will go away.

6. *mojozone* Says:

[August 20th, 2009 at 10:36 am](#)

the paks have been using afghanistan as a buffer zone against india.

7. *Hector* Says:

[August 20th, 2009 at 10:44 am](#)

Charlie,

Don't be ridiculous. India's 'finger stirring' was necessary to keep order in the region, and India helped liberate Bangladesh from a genocidal Pakistani regime that had killed 3,000,000 Bengalis. I really don't give a f*ck what the Nepalese think about it.

Pakistan has a somewhat legitimate claim that India should give up Kashmir, since India's claim to it is weak. That would be a good idea, but there will need to be security guarantees and protections for Hindu and Buddhist minorities. At the moment Pakistan is not in a stable situation to provide them. Independence might be a decent idea though.

8. *Hector* Says:

[August 20th, 2009 at 10:45 am](#)

Actually the best situation for the Hindu and Buddhist minorities might be to leave Kashmir and seek a better life in India. It would be unpleasant to see Kashmir go the way of Swat, but if that's the horse they want to buy then let them ride it.

9. *Midland* Says:

[August 20th, 2009 at 10:49 am](#)

#3 - Maliki? Do you mean Karzai?

My bad. The two of them should, of course, be comparing and studying their lists of "Things to Do Before the Americans Finally Leave."

10. *Kolohe* Says:

[August 20th, 2009 at 11:38 am](#)

...India's extensive aid projects in Afghanistan and the discomfiture said projects cause Pakistan. And I think Justin Logan is absolutely right to suggest that COIN enthusiasts have an unfortunately tendency to neglect these kind of state-vs-state dynamics....

What if they thought about them and in this particular case said "so what?" It would be one thing if India was providing military support to Afghan parties, but if you object to irrigation and other infrastructure projects, doesn't that make you, well, evil?

At this rate, you're on a trend to out-realpolitik Kissinger.

(and if you're really going to realpolitik it, doesn't the fact that the US will either declare victory

and leave or not declare victory make it a double 'so what' on whom is funding particular completely civilian infrastructure projects? Everyone will still hate everyone, we won't be there anymore, but at least some people will finally have clean drinking water.)

11. *FedUpIndian* Says:

[August 20th, 2009 at 2:38 pm](#)

IMHO, it's fine for India to build roads, power-lines, dams, and children's hospitals, but I draw the line at fortified biscuits. One reason polio is still endemic in Nigeria, Pakistan, India and other countries is that many Muslims refuse to vaccinate their children since they believe that polio vaccinations are a sinister Western plot to sterilize Muslim children. How do we know those damn Hindus are not fortifying those biscuits with something that will reduce the Muslim mojo? And women's vocational training centers? Doesn't that violate the code of Pashtunwali? Will these Hindu atrocities never end? As the article says, India should follow Pakistan's example and not interfere in Afghanistan.

12. [Matthew Yglesias » India and Pakistan in Afghanistan / Afghanistan Today](#) Says:

[August 21st, 2009 at 1:05 am](#)

[...] post: Matthew Yglesias » India and Pakistan in Afghanistan Share and [...]

13. [Matthew Yglesias » India and Pakistan in Afghanistan / Afghanistan Today](#) Says:

[August 21st, 2009 at 1:06 am](#)

[...] they declare that that's the solution until the next seismic event. ... Original post: Matthew Yglesias » India and Pakistan in Afghanistan Share and [...]

14. *shahida* Says:

[August 21st, 2009 at 3:18 am](#)

Why is it so difficult to understand that India encourages trade with every single neighbor? It has made Pakistan Most Favored Nation over a decade ago and requested time and again to get on with trade, education and transport and forget mind territorial conflicts for a little while. India gives scholarships to any no. of Sri Lankans, Bhutanese, Tibetans, Bangladeshi etc. sharing its educational institutes which are already overwhelmed with Indian applicants. It has created hydro-electric power in Bhutan which it buys back, it has planted fruit in Nepal which it helps process and buys back. All the border countries may send in goods without duty while India pay them duty when it exports its own goods. But maybe people do not understand neighborliness, prefer US style attacks. Easy to say Hindus should leave Kashmir when Pakistan wants Delhi just because some Muslim ruler ruled there centuries ago. Well Pakistan used to be ruled by Hindus for centuries, but no Hindu wants Pakistan territory. In fact, after every America funded and armed attack on India by Pakistan, Pakistan has lost and India has returned all territory won during the conflict. Once 90,000 soldiers and officers were given safe return, the officers treated honorably. Maybe this conduct is hard to understand for those who believe a particular name for god's is important.

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