



SOUTH ASIA

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Officer Block 2 and Enlisted Block 3

# An Introduction to the South Asia Region

CENTER FOR ADVANCED OPERATIONAL CULTURE LEARNING

# **Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization (RCLF) Program**

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## Introduction

One must distinguish between the study of regions, countries, and cultures. Chapters 1 through 6 in this document introduce a region and provide some information about its countries and their relationships. They do not introduce a culture or cultures. Those chapters simply provide knowledge about the region and the environment in which people with different cultures live.

Regions and states do not have a single culture; instead they have multiple, diverse cultures. Cultures are not necessarily bound by national borders. There may be multiple cultures in a single state, while people sharing a single culture may live in more than one state.

The case study in Chapter 7 is about one specific culture in the region. Building upon the information provided in chapters 1 through 6, Chapter 7 introduces one of the many cultures in the South Asia region, using concepts discussed in the Operational Culture General document.

## Why This Region is Relevant to You as a Marine

According to Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, U.S. PACOM Commander, USPACOM's actions in the nation's rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region are a visible and enduring demonstration of U.S. commitment to the region. Actions are reflected in a continued and steady investment in forces, infrastructure, and engagement in the Indo-Asia-Pacific and are designed to defend the homeland, strengthen and modernize our alliances and partnerships, maintain our access to the global commons, deter aggression, and prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>1</sup>



Sgt Travis A. Thomas, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, hands out crayons to students of the Bal Bhavan School in Goa, India (Source: USPACOM)

South Asia is one of the most populous regions on earth, with a population over 600 million that has doubled since the early 1970s.

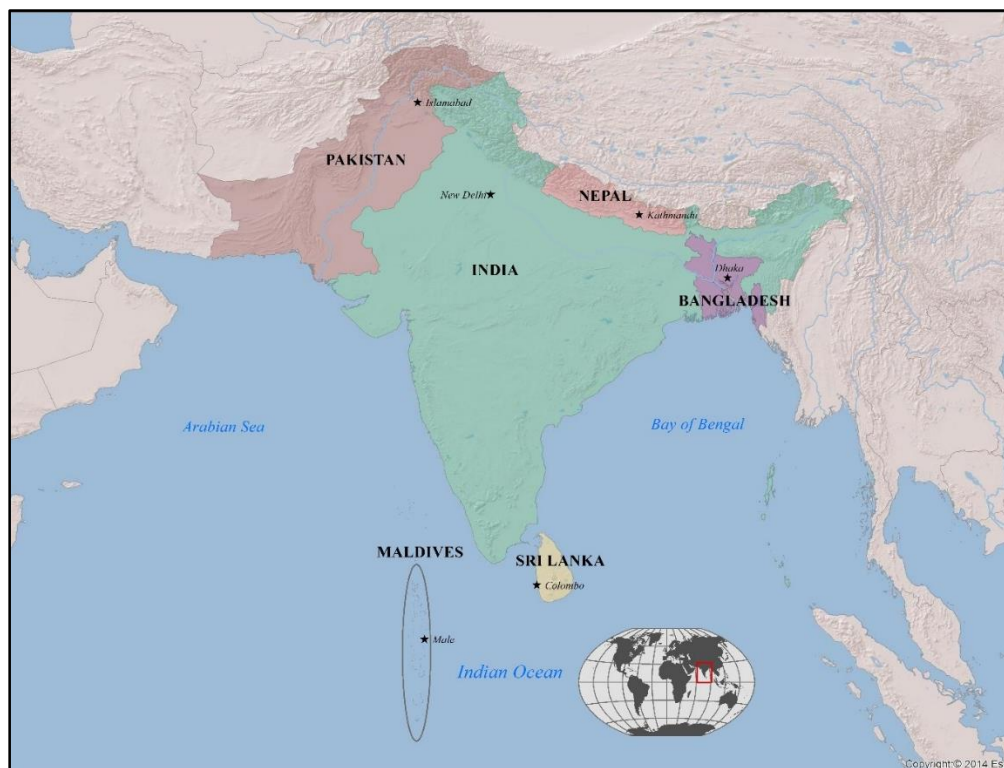
The impact of natural disasters in the region affect the United States directly and significantly. The U.S. has a large political and economic investment in the region, particularly in India and Pakistan. In addition to massive human casualties, natural disasters also affect the U.S. economy. Furthermore, due to extensive bilateral cooperation with the region's militaries, when disaster strikes, the U.S. military is often a first responder to these catastrophes; and often remains at the disaster scene to support the recovery, clean-up, and reconstruction. As a Marine assigned to the South Asia region, your growing understanding of the cultural and security-related aspects of this particular region can give you the tools to help you better navigate should you be deployed to the region.

## Geographic Overview

### Why a Geographic Overview Matters to You as a Marine

Geographic features include physical and biological factors tied to location, topography, climate, soil, environmental hazards, flora, and fauna. These features influence human and social characteristics such as beliefs, behaviors, social organization, economy, and politics, to name a few. This is not to say that geography determines how people and societies behave, but rather that it has varying effects on what they believe and do.

The locations of rivers, mountains, deserts, and coasts have great influence on where people live, what crops can be raised, and what modes of transportation are suitable. Climate and weather influence how people dress, work, and earn a living. Natural disasters like hurricanes, flooding, and earthquakes can devastate a region, and dislocate a great number of people.



Source: CAOCL

The South Asia region encompasses more than one million kilometers. It is bordered by Afghanistan to the west, China to the north and east, the Pacific Ocean to the east, and the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea to the south. The region includes the countries of Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

The region is commonly referred to as “The Subcontinent”. Looking at South Asia on a map, it appears to be part of Eurasia: a massive peninsula jutting southward from the Eurasian Himalayas. However, South Asia is a geographically distinct region within Asia. The region is home to deserts, plateaus, rainforests, mountains, as well a myriad of languages, cultures, and belief systems.

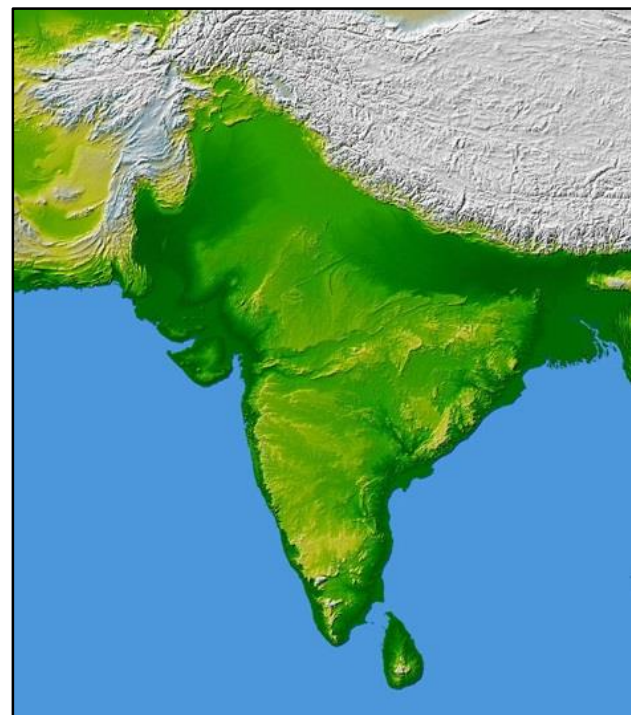
The country of Bhutan, with a total population of just over 700,000, is located in the region, north of Bangladesh. Bhutan does not have diplomatic relations with any of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, including the United States. While The U.S. has no diplomatic or trade relations with the country, USAID contributes to a program, implemented by the NGO, International Republican Institute (IRI), to strengthen newly elected parliamentarians’ understanding of their roles and responsibilities. A few Bhutanese military officers have attended courses at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, a U.S. DOD Institute in Hawaii whose mission involves building capacities and communities of interest to advance Asia-Pacific security.

## Topography

South Asia is bordered by the Himalayan Mountain Range to the north, the Karakoram and Hindu Kush Mountains to the northwest, deserts to the west, dense forests and hills along the Burma (Myanmar) border to the east, and the Indian Ocean to the south. South Asia’s topography is very diverse; it consists of a variety of mountains, plateaus, dry regions, intervening structural basins, and beaches.

The landforms of the subcontinent are divided into three major physical regions: the Northern Mountains, the River Lowlands, and the Southern Plateau.

The Northern Mountains (the Himalayas, the Karakoram, and the Hindu Kush) form a formidable barrier that for centuries has shielded the people from direct contact with their northern neighbors. The Himalayas, the world’s tallest mountain range, are a product of plate tectonics, a geologic phenomenon involving massive upheavals of the earth’s crust. The Indian subcontinent, once connected to Africa, split apart and slammed into the Eurasian continent, thus creating the Himalayas. The Himalayan watershed feeds the three main river systems of the Asian continent: the Indus, the Yangtze, and the Ganga-Brahmaputra.



Source: USGS

South Asia's river lowlands are the region's most significant physical features. The Indus River, one of the most utilized waterways in South Asia, supported one of mankind's earliest civilizations – the 3500 BC Indus Valley civilization. The Ganges River flows from the Himalayas into a broad region called the Gangetic Basin. It runs through India and joins up with the Brahmaputra River to form a wide delta in the country of Bangladesh. The Ganges and Brahmaputra form a region called the North Indian Plain.

The country of **Bangladesh** is 130,170 sq km (80,883 mi) and is roughly the size of the state of Missouri. Much of this country is comprised of low-lying land, with the Bay of Bengal located to the south. The Ganges, the Brahmaputra, and the Meghna are Bangladesh's three main rivers. The Jamuna Flood Plains, the Bhar Basin, the Madupur Tract, and the Northeastern Lowland are in the north. The Meghna Flood Basin is in central Bangladesh. The highest point in Bangladesh is in the Mowdok range, at 1,052 m (3,451 ft), in the Chittagong Hill Tract of the southeast part of the country.

The climate of Bangladesh is mostly tropical, with a very mild winter that lasts from October to March; a hot and humid summer season from March to June; and a warm and humid monsoon season that lasts from June to October. Natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, and tornadoes occur yearly.

**India** lies in the center of the South Asia region. Approximately one-third of India's border is coastline; it shares a border with six countries, including most of the other countries discussed in this South Asia region reading.

As the largest country in the region -- and one of the largest countries in the world -- India covers 2,973,190 sq km, roughly half the size of the United States. The terrain of this country varies widely. Geographically, India can be roughly divided into three regions: the Himalayas, the Indo-Gangetic Plain, and the Deccan.

The Himalayan mountain range spans 2,400 km (1,500 mi). It runs through the northeastern portion of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Bhutan, and Nepal. The Indian portions of the Himalayas are divided into three belts: the Outer, Lesser, and Great. Because of the movement of the Indian peninsula against the Eurasian Plate, this area of the Himalayas remains tectonically active. This means that earthquakes and landslides in this region are common.

The Indo-Gangetic Plain extends from Pakistan's Sindh province to India's Punjab state in the west, where it is watered by the Indus River; the plain continues eastward to the Brahmaputra River valley in India's Assam state. The Indo-Gangetic Plain is the most densely populated region in India. The Ganges River basin forms the central and principal part of this plain. The eastern portion is made up of the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers, and is characterized by annual flooding caused by seasonal monsoon rains.

The southern region, the Deccan, is separated from the rest of the country by the Nilgiri Hills. The Deccan includes hill and forest zones, as well as the arid Deccan Plateau. The Deccan Plateau covers most of central and south India, forming a triangle in the southern half of the country. Coastal plains are narrow, and abrupt cliffs edge both coasts (Eastern and Western Ghats). The Deccan Plateau contains most of India's mineral wealth: copper, iron, gold, manganese, and coal.



The tropical nation of **Maldives** is a chain of about 1,200 small coral islands (atolls) and sandbanks in the Indian Ocean, southwest of India. These islands extend more than 820 km (510 mi) from north to south, and 130 km (80 mi) from east to west. Male, the capital island of Maldives, is about 645 km (400 mi) southwest of Sri Lanka.



Maldivian beach (Wikipedia)

The low-lying islands of Maldives (none rising to more than six feet above sea level), are expected by some experts to be completely submerged in the next hundred years.

The rainy season in Maldives is from May to August. From December to March the northeast monsoon season brings dry and mild winds. Barrier reefs protect the islands from dangerous monsoon tidal surges. The tropical climate of Maldives is nearly perfect all year, with average annual temperatures ranging between 76-86 °F.

**Nepal** is a country roughly the size of Florida; it is bordered by China to the north and India to the east, south, and west. The country is divided into three main geographic regions: the world-famous Himalayas, the central Mahabharat Range and the Churia Hills (known as the middle hills), and the southern Terai.

The Himalayan mountain range covers nearly 75 percent of the land area of Nepal.<sup>2</sup> The most famous Himalayan peak, Mt. Everest, is also located in Nepal. Climates in the Himalayas range from tropical at the base of the mountains to perennial snow and ice at higher elevations.

The middle hills account for 65 percent of the country's land mass and nearly half of Nepal's population. This area receives most of the country's rainfall, due to the monsoon winds that blow in from Bangladesh. It is also home to the majority of the country's flora and fauna, including hundreds of indigenous bird species.

The southern Terai is an extension of the Gangetic plains of India. It is fertile and suitable for farming. Prior to the 1950s, this area was a malarial subtropical forest, inhabited only by wildlife. However, following the near-eradication of malaria from the area, many people from the middle hills migrated to the Terai in search of farmland. Today, nearly half of all Nepalese live in this region.

**Pakistan** covers slightly over 796,000 sq km (307,374 sq mi) -- almost twice the size of California. The country can be divided into three distinct geographic areas: the northern highlands, the Indus River plain, and the Balochistan Plateau.

The northern highlands include parts of the Hindu Kush, the Karakoram Range, and the Himalayan mountain ranges. There are a few passes through these mountain ranges where they border

Afghanistan. The northern highlands are arid and cold; with extreme variations in temperature, both seasonally and daily.

The Indus River and its six tributaries run south to the Arabian Sea. It is the main source of water for Pakistan; this river delivers runoff from the mountains and glaciers to two major reservoirs. The Indus River plain is formed by silt from the Indus River, and is home to the majority of the country's arable land. Pakistan also has over 650 mi (1046 km) of coastline on the Arabian Sea, with the main port city of Karachi.

The Balochistan Plateau covers nearly half of the total land area of Pakistan; it is very mountainous and has little water. The Suleiman Mountains cover the northeast corner with the Bolan Pass leading into Afghanistan, while the Kharan Desert is known for its sudden severe sandstorms. Much of Pakistan has an arid climate, but is subject to monsoons for half of the year, making portions of the country humid and subtropical.

**Sri Lanka** is a large island nation located 19 mi (30 km) off the southern tip of India. Sri Lanka is considered a southerly extension of the Deccan Plateau due to the geographic similarities, and is only separated from mainland India by the Palk Strait. The center of the island is made up of a mountainous area known as the Central Highlands. The highlands are surrounded by a diverse plain, the elevation of which ranges from sea level to about 300 m (1,000 ft). This plain accounts for much of Sri Lanka's total land area.

The weather of Sri Lanka is tropical; the island receives more than 50 inches of rain a year.<sup>3</sup> However, regional differences in rainfall split the land of Sri Lanka into a wet zone and a dry zone. The wet zone includes the highlands, where precipitation is fairly heavy. The annual totals here range from 98 inches along the coast to more than 150 inches in the highlands.<sup>4</sup> However, the dry zone receives far less rain, with annual totals ranging from 30-70 inches. Seasonal droughts are not uncommon in the dry zone.

### **Weather Phenomena and Natural Disasters**

Most of the South Asia region is warm or hot all year. Economic development is greatly affected by the region's high temperatures, rising sea levels, and natural disasters. With the exception of Nepal, the region has three main seasons. The winter season is mild and damp; it lasts from October to March. Summer is hot and damp, lasting from March to June. The monsoon season is from June to October.

Violent storms occur over South Asia between April and October, often leaving people homeless due to high winds and flooding. Because weather systems travel more easily across water, rain and high winds tend to have a greater impact on civilian life and military operations in the islands of South Asia than on the mainland areas.

### **Monsoons**

Because the large Eurasian land mass heats up faster and cools down quicker than the equally large Indian Ocean, a seasonal reversal of winds occurs. These are called monsoon winds, from the Arabic word, *mquisim*.

Monsoon winds are formed by the difference in temperatures between the Asian continent and vast Indian Ocean. As the air temperature rises, it creates an area of low pressure that draws in cooler, wetter air from the south. Tropical weather resulting from the monsoon winds controls most of the climate in South Asia, resulting in some of the world's heaviest rainfall.



Heavy monsoon in Mumbai, India in August 2005 (Source: Wikipedia; photo by Hitesh Ashar)

While the rain itself does not typically pose a catastrophic threat to the population, the sustained precipitation can cause flooding. Additionally, the rainy season provides a breeding ground for germs and bacteria, which, in turn, can create a surge in water- and vector-borne diseases.

Illnesses such as cholera, typhoid fever, hepatitis A, malaria, and dengue fever affect the population in greater numbers during the monsoon season.

### **Tropical Cyclones and Typhoons**

Unlike in North America, where tropical storms are called hurricanes, Asia is subject to cyclones and typhoons. The names “cyclone,” “hurricane,” and “typhoon” all refer to the same weather phenomenon. When this weather disturbance occurs in the Northwest Pacific, it is called a “typhoon”; it is called a “cyclone” when it occurs in the Indian Ocean.

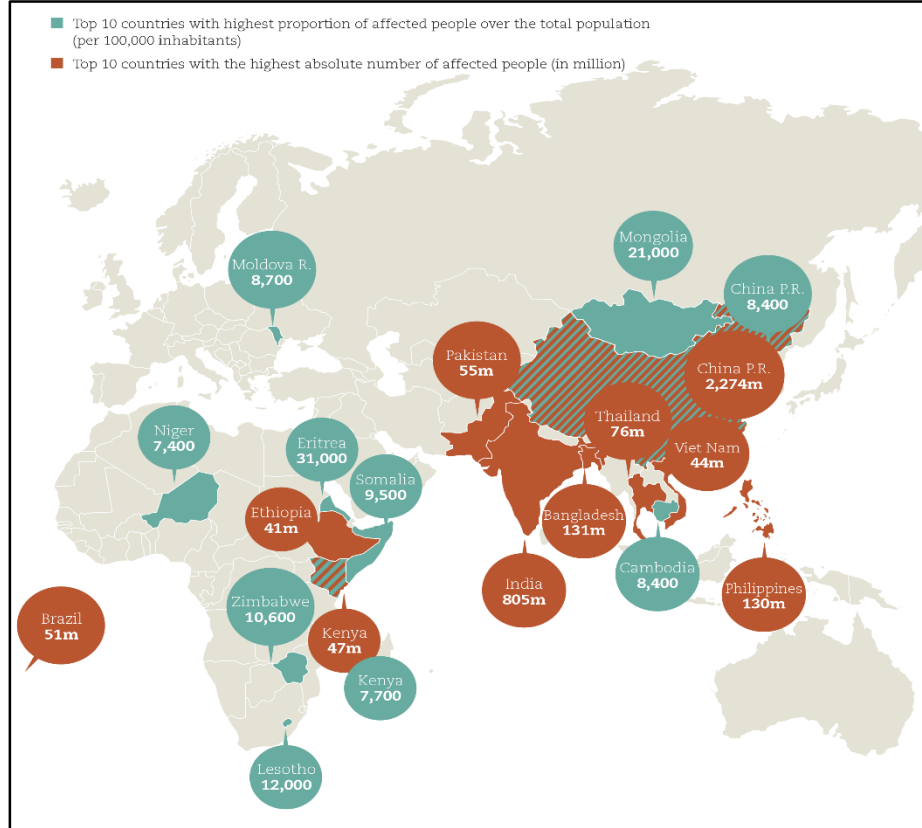
Much like the annual hurricane season in the Atlantic Ocean, the Indian Ocean’s cyclone season usually lasts from June through November, the months when the oceans of the Northern Hemisphere are the hottest. These cyclones form in the tropics around areas of low pressure, usually in the deep sea, and track westward. In April 1991, a cyclone that struck Bangladesh displaced close to 13 million people, and resulted in a nearly equal number of dead and injured (139,000).<sup>5</sup>

### **Earthquakes and Tsunamis**

Earthquakes are one of the most common and most destructive forces in the South Asia region, causing enormous damage to homes and infrastructure, and significant loss of life.

In April 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake occurred in central Nepal, with an epicenter approximately 50 mi from the capital city of Kathmandu. The U.S. military was a first responder to the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. Because of the military’s robust capabilities in the region, aircraft provided immediate logistical support to affected areas. Within days, a 20-person DoD Joint Humanitarian Assessment Support Team (JHAST) was in Nepal supporting relief operations.

Tsunamis can strike without warning. A tsunami tidal wave can be as high as 100 ft, much like the one that struck Sri Lanka in December 2004. This tsunami was caused by an earthquake – one of the world’s largest in the last 100 years – that occurred off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. The quake was so powerful that, by the time the tsunami reached the coast of Sri Lanka, it was strong enough to kill nearly 30,000 people and displace another 800,000.<sup>6</sup>



Source: UN/CRED

South Asian governments have struggled in the past to respond adequately to natural disasters, especially in regions that are far from a country’s capital or underserved by inadequate transportation networks.

The U.S. engages in bilateral and multi-lateral Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercises with countries in the region. For example, the Pacific Resilience Disaster Response Exercise & Exchange (DREE) is an annual engagement between the government of Bangladesh and U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) intended to promote emergency preparedness.<sup>7</sup> Despite joint exercises with the U.S. and other militaries in the region, many of these countries still are not adequately prepared (or lack the necessary assets) to handle these types of disasters.

### Environmental Degradation

Many countries in the region also face the issue of environmental degradation. Natural resources throughout South Asia, particularly forests, are quickly being depleted—primarily due to unregulated industrialization and people in underdeveloped rural areas relying on firewood for cooking and heating. Cutting trees for fuel and the “slash-and-burn” destruction of greenery to make way for development have contributed significantly to deforestation and air pollution.

Slash-and-burn is a method of agriculture in which existing vegetation is cut down and burned off before new seeds are sown.

The World Bank estimates that the degradation of Pakistan’s natural resources has cost the country at least six percent of its GDP (approximately \$6 billion) annually.<sup>8</sup> Nearly 50 percent of this cost is

attributed to illness and premature mortality caused by indoor and outdoor air pollution. Another one-third of the cost, or 1.8 percent of GDP, is due to death and illness resulting from waterborne diseases caused by inadequate water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. The remaining portion is attributed to reduced agricultural production due to soil salinity and erosion.<sup>9</sup>

## **Historical Overview**

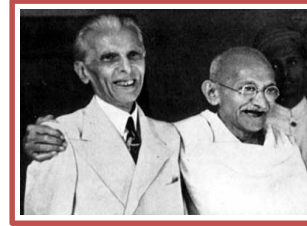
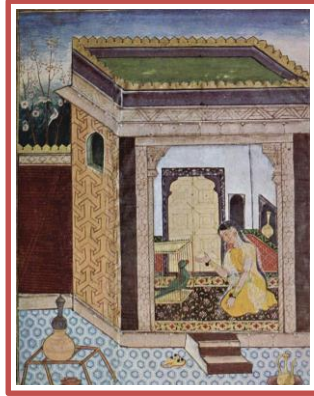
### **Why History Matters to You as a Marine**

History provides a knowledge of how people, institutions, and states in a region evolved into what they are today. It also provides insights into people's collective memory about their group and others. In other words, history not only shapes a region's current affairs, but also tells us something about the historical roots of the individual and group identities of its inhabitants.



Illustration of Gautama Buddha

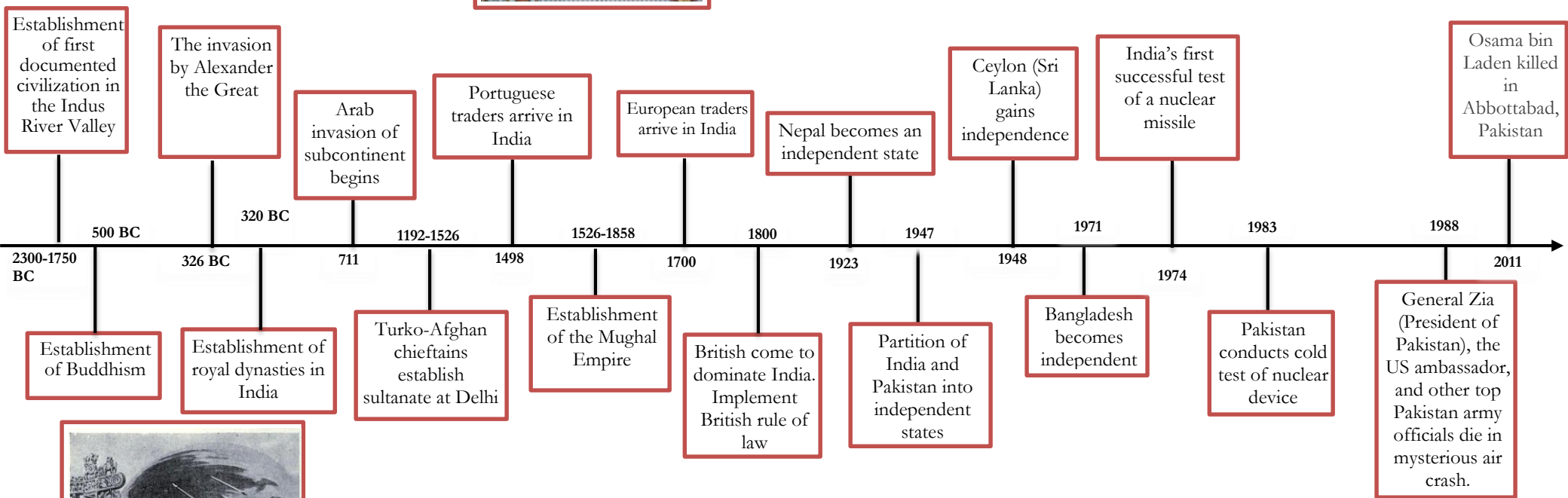
Mughal painting – 16<sup>th</sup> century



Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Mohandas Gandhi



President Zia-ul-Haq meeting with President Reagan



Alexander the Great in modern-day India



East India House, the London headquarters of British East India Company



India's land-based ballistic missile

## Introduction

### Vedic Period

The prehistoric Vedic Period of the South Asia region lasted from around 1500-500 BC, from the early days of the Aryan migration into the region through the age of Buddha. There have been volumes of historical texts documenting the Vedic Period; however, these documents were written centuries later, so the issue of what is historical fact and what is lore remains undetermined. What is clear, however, is that this was a period of spiritual and social flourishing. Philosophical concepts instituted in the Vedic period became cornerstones of the Hindu, and later Buddhist religions. It also ushered in the social structure known as the caste system, which still exists today.

Prehistory is defined as the period before the presence of written records. Knowledge about the prehistory period is acquired through archeological study.

Many anthropologists and historians believe that this area was historically occupied by the Indo-Aryans, who had migrated over the preceding centuries from the Iranian plateau. While not universally accepted, the prevailing theory is that Aryans were a people who spoke an Indo-European language, and arrived in northern India as pastoral, seminomadic tribes led by warrior chieftains. It is believed that they settled down as rulers over the native Dravidian populations, and formed tribal kingdoms. The Aryans brought with them a religion based on the worship of many deities, documented in collections of oral poetry and prose that were written down centuries later, and are known as the Vedas. Much of what is known about this period of the region's history is because of oral traditions, the transmission of the Vedas from one generation to another.

Magadha was an ancient kingdom in India that grew out of the Vedic tradition. Located in what is now northeastern India, Magadha was the nucleus of several larger kingdoms or empires between the sixth century BC and the eighth century AD. Its location had great strategic importance, as its position on the Ganges River allowed control over river trade and communication.<sup>10</sup> One of the most powerful of the four main kingdoms of India, the Maurya Empire expanded its territories from modern-day Bangladesh into much of northern India, all the way to Afghanistan. Under the Mauryan dynasty, the empire expanded throughout almost the entire subcontinent of India.

The Mauryan Empire also saw the arrival of Alexander the Great. After the assassination of his father in 336 BC, Alexander -- a mere 20 years-old -- became the King of Macedonia and set out to destroy the Persian Empire.<sup>11</sup> In 331 BC, he defeated the Persians in modern-day Iraq. In just 13 years, Alexander the Great conquered the Levant and continued his campaign through what is now Afghanistan and into the Indian subcontinent. His conquered territory included the Indus Valley and modern Afghanistan. When Alexander died, the empire was split apart as his generals fought over control of the throne. This included Alexander's conquests along the Indus Valley. The Mauryans battled with Alexander's legacy empire and regained control, but the fighting came at a cost, initiating the beginning of the decline of the Mauryan dynasty and its ultimate fall in 185 BC.

The Mauryan Empire was followed by the Gupta Empire. The rise of the Gupta dynasty saw the Magadha restored as a center of influence and power in the fourth century; this period is regarded as



a golden age in Indian history. The fields of astronomy and mathematics flourished during at this time, as did literature and drama.

The Guptas were Buddhists and were generous donors, allowing for a proliferation of Buddhist temples throughout the kingdom. At the same time, the Brahmins (the elite caste) were converting many to their religion, a spiritual belief now known as Hinduism. In the centuries that followed, Hinduism would replace Buddhism as the major religion in India, while Buddhism would continue to spread north and eastward into Asia.

## Mughal Empire

The first officially recognized military conquest of the subcontinent by Muslims came in 711 AD, during the Umayyad Caliphate, when the Arab general Muhammad Bin Qasim conquered the area of Sindh (in modern-day Pakistan). Muslim rule made further inroads into the subcontinent through successive Muslim dynasties of various ethnic descent, including the Ghaznavid (977-1186) and Ghurid (879-1215) Empires.

In the late fourteenth century a Turkic invader named Tamerlane, also known as Timur, conquered much of the South Asia region. Ruling from his base in Central Asia, Tamerlane commanded his troops to move deep into India, sacking the city of Delhi. Although Tamerlane's descendants fought each other over their shared inheritance, they managed to maintain control over most of the region until the early sixteenth century.

Islam spread further into this region with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) that ruled over a vast region covering most of northern India stretching into today's Pakistan and Bangladesh. In the early sixteenth century, Persians regained control over territory that extended into modern-day Pakistan. During the Safavid Empire, adherents of the Shi'a sect of Islam advanced from their stronghold in northwestern Iran and managed to conquer territories to the east. However, as soon as the Persian Empire was reestablished, it faced another great power to the west: the Ottoman Empire. As a result, both empires became locked in a contest that lasted centuries.

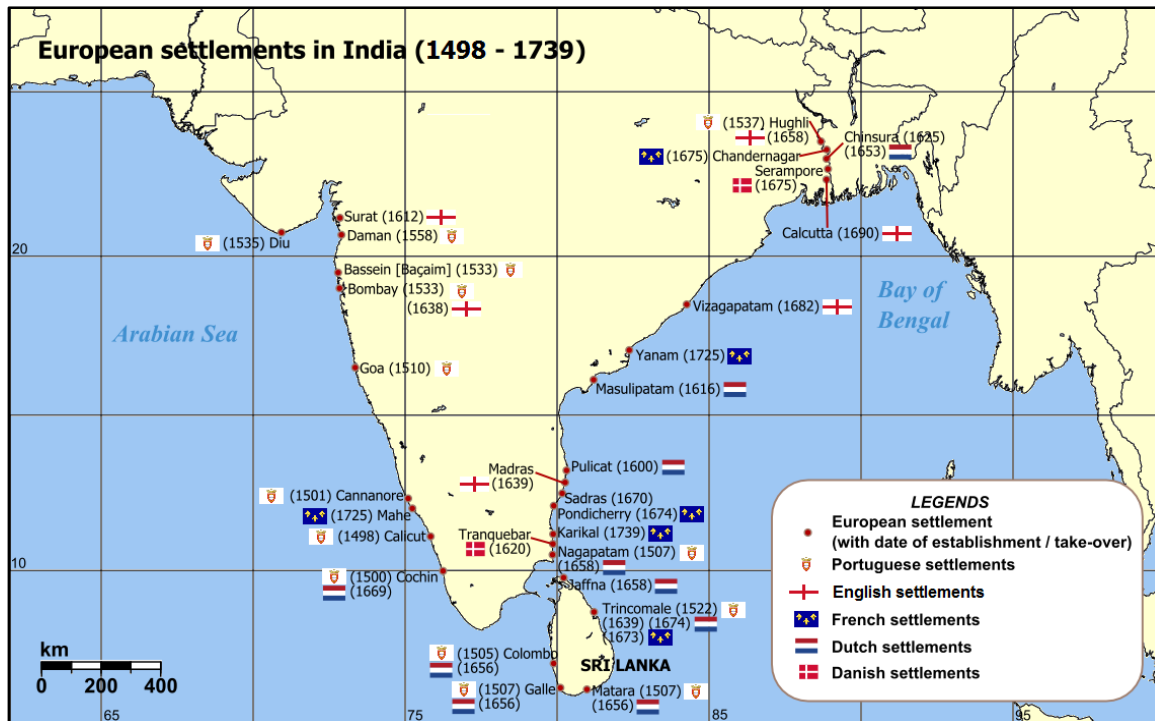
The Delhi Sultanate was replaced by the Mughal Empire (1526-1857), which expanded and consolidated Muslim rule that extended across the entire Indian subcontinent. Muslim emperors dominated the region from the early sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, and were responsible for consolidating Islam in South Asia and for spreading Islamic culture throughout the region. The



Source: Wikicommons

Mughals ruled a country with a large Hindu majority. However, for much of their reign the Mughals allowed Hindus to reach senior positions within the government and military. Mughal (and Muslim) political rule over South Asia steadily declined with the arrival of settlers from Denmark, England, France, and Holland. By 1858, Europeans had colonized most of the subcontinent.

## European Colonialism



Source: Wikicommons

By the eighteenth century, the Persian and Ottoman empires were in gradual decline, and European ascending powers joined the South Asia regional contest. After expanding from its stronghold in Europe the Russians swept south, conquering Central Asia and the Caucasus Mountains. For their parts, Portugal, Holland, and England gradually gained economic control over the subcontinent and maritime Southeast Asia. Eventually, the British established full control over present-day Pakistan and India, and, in the process, ended the Mughal Empire.

Portuguese and Dutch merchants had been trading in the coastal areas of the region since the late fifteenth century. The Portuguese first arrived in the subcontinent in 1498, raising strong objections from indigenous Arab sultans. After defeating the local sultans in several battles, the Mughals ceded the territories of Bombay (modern-day Mumbai) and Goa to the Portuguese, who brought with them the intention of proselytizing Roman Catholicism throughout the region. While the main area of control for the Dutch was primarily modern-day Indonesia and the Southeast Asia islands, they also gained significant control of parts of the South Asian subcontinent. In 1604, the Dutch East India Company began trading in India, mostly in the Calcutta (modern-day Kolkata) region, and along the southern coast and Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka). The Dutch primarily traded spices, opium, and fabrics such as silk and cotton.

The British announced their presence in India by establishing a trading presence at multiple points along the Indian coast. Commerce was controlled by Britain's East India Company, which had been given a monopoly of all English-Asian trade by royal grant at its creation in the 1600s.<sup>12</sup> By the close of the seventeenth century India had become the focal point of the Company's trade. Indian cotton goods were imported into Britain in huge quantities to supply the demand for cheap, washable, lightweight fabrics. Initially, the relationship between India and Britain was mutually beneficial and largely unblemished.

For a while, British and Dutch traders operating in South Asia worked together to eliminate competition from the Portuguese. As a result, the Portuguese eventually began losing influence in the region, largely because it could not match Dutch and British financing, technology, and sea power. Eventually, however, the British and Dutch began to compete for control of this lucrative market. After a series of brief military skirmishes, the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 gave Britain full control of all former Dutch colonial possessions in South Asia. By 1825, Holland lost its last outpost on the subcontinent.<sup>13</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the British began to meddle in local Indian politics, and the relationship took on different characteristics. Britain's decision to intervene was due in part to changing conditions in India and partly because of the increased ambitions of the British living in India. The Mughal Empire had been dissolved and had been replaced by several regional states. This resulted in independent states making unilateral decisions about trading partners.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, France had become an unwelcome competitor for trade in the region. This trade rivalry ended when Britain used military force to assume control of Bengal (modern-day Bangladesh). The British moved firmly eastward and southward through India. The East India Company continued to dominate trade in the region, but many of its servants became administrators in the new British regimes. Armies, largely comprised of Indian *sepoys* -- but augmented and commanded by regular British regiments -- were used to defend the East India Company's new territories, to coerce neighboring states, and to quell internal resistance.<sup>14</sup>

A sepoy was an Indian soldier serving under British or other European orders.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, British trading patterns began to change, largely due to changes heralded by the Industrial Revolution. Machinery and technology in the West began to replicate the weaving and craftsmanship of Indian textiles at a cheaper price and a faster rate. Furthermore, the British demand for Chinese tea was growing, so the East India Company's trade efforts moved increasingly eastward. These factors, combined with a series of uprisings, led the East India Company -- a private company that essentially "owned" India -- to hand over control of India to the British Crown in August of 1858. From this point forward, India's administration became the responsibility of the Indian Civil Service (later, in 1886, called the Imperial Civil Service). In theory, government appointments were to be assigned equally between British and Indian, and based on merit through competitive examinations. However, by 1869 only one Indian actually held an appointed position.<sup>15</sup>

## Twentieth Century Nationalism

By the turn of the century, the subcontinent was seeking a greater degree of independence from the British Crown. Nepal was the first country in the region to become an independent state, winning its independence in 1923. Because of its unique geography, Nepal was never completely conquered or colonized. Since the seventeenth century, it had been a tributary state to China. During the expansion of the East India Company, Britain and Nepal went to war in 1814. As a result, Nepal became a *de facto* protectorate of Great Britain. Nepal accepted its new status in exchange for territorial concessions to Britain that amounted to a third of the territory once under Nepalese rule.<sup>16</sup> However, in 1923 Britain peacefully and formally recognized Nepalese sovereignty and ended its protectorate relationship with Nepal.

India was also seeking independence and more religious autonomy. The Hindu Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League were the parties at the forefront of this movement. The League and Congress were not able to agree on various issues regarding Muslim religious, economic and political rights, but it was during this period that the two biggest figures in India and Pakistan's modern history emerged: Mohandas Gandhi and Muhammed ali Jinnah. Both campaigned for independent states, divided along religious lines, and both are considered the architects of today's India and Pakistan.

Mohandas Gandhi (known more commonly as Mahatma) was a Hindu Indian, born in 1869. Although he had boyhood dreams of becoming a doctor, he traveled to London at the age of 18 to study law. After returning to India, he failed to find work there as a lawyer, and moved to South Africa where he was granted a one-year contract to practice law. It was in South Africa that Gandhi was confronted with the discrimination and racial segregation Indians faced from British authorities. At his first appearance in the courtroom, he was asked to remove his turban: Gandhi refused to do this and walked out of the courtroom. This experience in South Africa was a pivotal event for Gandhi: he would spend the rest of his life campaigning for Indian civil rights.

After spending several months in London during the outbreak of World War I, Gandhi returned to India in 1915, quickly becoming the leader of the India independence movement. He urged ethnic Indian government officials to stop working for the Crown, students to stop attending government schools, soldiers to leave their posts, and citizens to stop paying taxes and purchasing British goods. Shortly thereafter, he became the leader of the Indian National Congress. In his new leadership role, Gandhi advocated that the people of India use non-violence and non-cooperation in order to achieve self-rule.

After repeatedly serving time in prison for leading several large civil disobedience movements, Gandhi finally stepped down from his official role in politics in 1934. He then focused his efforts on education reform and eradicating poverty in rural areas. However, at the outbreak of World War II, Gandhi found himself again lured into the political arena. In 1942, he launched the "Quit India" movement, calling for the immediate British withdrawal: he was promptly arrested. However, after the British Labour Party defeated Churchill's Conservatives in 1945, the Party began negotiations for India's independence with the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, at which Gandhi played an active role advocating for a unified India. In the end, the opposing Muhammad ali Jinnah and the Muslim League prevailed, with the final plan calling for the partition of the subcontinent

along religious lines. After violence erupted in 1947 over the partitioning of the country, Gandhi toured the affected Muslim areas calling for peace, leading some Hindus to accuse him of being a Muslim sympathizer. Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu extremist named Nathuram Godse on January 30, 1948.

Muhammad ali Jinnah was an Indian Muslim, born in what is now Karachi, Pakistan. A successful lawyer by trade, Jinnah became interested in politics when he noticed the lack of Indian representation in British Parliament. In 1904, Jinnah attended a meeting of the Indian National Congress; soon after, in 1906, he became a member. In 1912, Jinnah attended a meeting of the All India Muslim League, prompting him to join the organization the following year. From that point forward, he actively promoted the state's right to self-government.

Initially, Jinnah collaborated with Hindu leaders in the Indian National Congress. However, he came to realize that the Hindu leaders were pursuing a political agenda different from the one that he espoused. While he still thought that Muslim rights could be protected under a united India, Jinnah left Congress and dedicated himself to the process of reforming the Muslim League. Over time, however, he began to believe more firmly that the only way to protect Muslim rights was to create a separate state on the subcontinent. It was during a 1940 meeting of the Muslim League that Jinnah first proposed a separate Muslim state of Pakistan.

In 1944, Britain drew up an outline for transfer of power. The South Asia subcontinent was divided into three territories: a Hindu majority in a region occupied by present-day India; a Muslim region to the northwest, in modern-day Pakistan; and Bengal and Assam, with a narrow Muslim majority. However, it was not until the end of WWII that Jinnah would realize his dream of an independent state of Pakistan. Although violence between Hindus and Muslims flared before independence took effect in August of 1947, Jinnah would live to be the first president of Pakistan, before dying from tuberculosis on September 11, 1948.

## **Post-World War II**

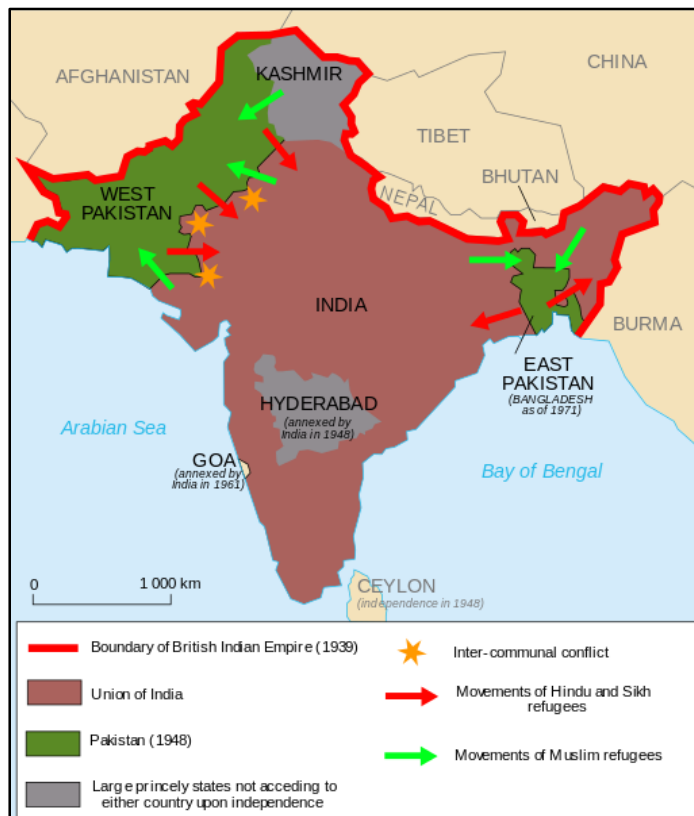
After World War II, Great Britain no longer had the resources with which to control its territory in South Asia. The year 1947 saw the end of British rule; India was subsequently divided into two independent states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. Pakistan was composed of two noncontiguous regions, East Pakistan and West Pakistan, separated by nearly 1,000 miles of Indian territory. The partition of the former British territory led to violent rioting and massive population shifts as Muslims in India migrated to Pakistan, and Hindus in Pakistan migrated to India. Large numbers of people died during this human migration, with estimates ranging from 200,000 to 1 million deaths.

Unlike other countries in the region, Maldives remained largely out of British control. The Portuguese were the first to establish a garrison there in the mid-sixteenth century, but remained out of the governance and politics of the small island chain. The control of the garrison was assumed by the Dutch in the mid-seventeenth century, who also never assumed any governance over the islands. When the British effectively expelled the Dutch from the region, they brought Maldives under British protectorate, but paid it little attention. It was not until a series of domestic disturbances in 1887 threatened the small population of British traders living on the islands that Britain formally enacted

a protection agreement, but still allowed it to be governed by a local sultanate. The agreement stayed in effect until 1953, when the sultanate declared the Frist Republic; soon after, the country became independent.

With the formation of Pakistan in 1947, the Bengalis of East Pakistan made up more than half the population of the country. However, the country’s politics were dominated by the Punjabis of West Pakistan. Bengalis believed that West Pakistanis received most of the profits from the commodities produced in East Pakistan. Eventually, the Bengalis grew frustrated and mobilized along ethnic lines, calling for independence from Pakistan.

India and Pakistan went to war again, this time over East Pakistan. In 1971, the Pakistan Army moved to secure control of East Pakistan by killing Bengali leaders and intellectuals. Hindus were also targeted during a two-month campaign that left three million dead, while ten million Bengalis fled for West Bengal, in India. In response, the Bengalis formed the Mukhti Bahini (Liberation Army), who were trained and armed by Indian forces. After a 10-month war for independence, the Indian army entered the area of East Pakistan, which from then on would be known as the country of Bangladesh, in early December 1971. Ten days later, the Indian Army and Mukhti Bahini forces defeated the Pakistan Army, leading to Bangladesh’s independence. The Republic of Bangladesh was first governed by Sheikh Mujibar Rahman, also known as “Mujib,” who was elected Prime Minister in 1973. Mujib led the Awami League, Bangladesh’s first political party.



South Asia prior to Bangladesh independence (Source: Wikipedia)

Sri Lanka was the last country in the region to gain its independence. Then called Ceylon, the country’s history of colonial occupation is much like that of Maldives. The Portuguese first gained control of the country, then the Dutch, and finally the British. Because of its proximity to the Indian mainland, the various regional initiatives for independence spilled over. By the turn of the century, Western politicians were calling for full independence for Ceylon as well. In 1947, a new constitution was drafted, and that same year the Ceylon Independence Act recognized Ceylon as an autonomous entity with allegiance to the British Crown. In 1948, the country became independent, while still retaining the name Ceylon and a British structure of government. Finally, after revising its constitution in 1972, Ceylon changed its name to the Republic of Sri Lanka. It retains close ties with the British Commonwealth.

## **People and Society**

### **Why People and Society Matter to You as a Marine**

Missions across the range of military operations require Marines to understand, and work with, foreign populations. Knowing the people in the region, including their ethnicities, languages, and religions, as well as the way they live in social entities, enables Marines to create a mental picture of the human dimension of the region.

### **Population Growth / Demography**

About one in four people on the planet live in the South Asia region. More than 1.5 billion people inhabit this densely-populated corner of the world. India alone covers an area that is only one-third as large as the United States, yet is home to four times as many people. Due to topography and climate, including rugged mountains and deserts, some areas in South Asia have significantly lower population density than others.

### **Population Distribution**

Geography heavily influences where the people of South Asia call home. The vast desert areas and inaccessible mountain ranges of the region are only sparsely populated, while the coastal areas and river valleys have a higher population density. For example, over 16 million people live in Pakistan's largest city, Karachi, while over 8 million people live in the country's second largest city, Lahore. National borders and border disputes have also had a great impact on the population distribution in the region. During the Great Partition of India and Pakistan, families were divided along religious lines and became citizens of different countries. Ethnic groups are keenly aware of each other's territories, but do not always adhere to national boundaries as drawn today in those less populated areas.

South Asia continues to have a relatively low percentage of its total population living in urban centers, compared to other areas of the world. India's population is 32 percent urban, Bangladesh is 34 percent urban, while both Nepal and Sri Lanka both have an approximately 18 percent urban population. Because the Maldives is considerably smaller in territory, the urban population is somewhat higher. For the first time since India's independence in 1947, the absolute increase in the country's urban population was higher than that in the rural population.<sup>17</sup>

The South Asia region tends to have higher birth rates than European or North American countries. The total child mortality rate in South Asia has dropped over the last few decades, due largely in part

to healthcare programs for infants and children administered by international organizations and NGOs. Population increase and rapid urbanization has given rise to several significant issues, including urban poverty, expansion of urban slums, an increase in crime and terrorism rates, homelessness, traffic congestion and air pollution. Dhaka, Bangladesh, with a population of 18.25 million, has the highest population growth rate in the world. About 28 percent of the population is poor and about 3.4 million people live in slums. Furthermore, close to one third of Dhaka's urban population do not have access to sanitation.<sup>18</sup>

## **Ethnic Groups**

The vast majority of the populations of the countries of South Asia generally fall into one of two large ethno-linguistic groups; namely, Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. Indo-Aryans are the majority and form the predominant ethno-linguistic group in northern India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Dravidians form the predominant ethno-linguistic group in southern India and the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka.

However, while the terms Indo-Aryan and Dravidian are terms used to describe ethno-linguistic identity according to the appropriate branches of the language family, these terms are not commonly used as a form of identification of self or others in the region. Rather, ethnic identity is strongly linked to the specific languages spoken by various communities in South Asia, or by the caste or clan one is born into. There are thousands of unique ethnic identities in the region, with populations for each ranging from hundreds of millions to small tribal groups with members in the hundreds.

In addition to the majority ethnic groups in India, the population also includes more than 300 officially designated "scheduled tribes." The tribal people, referred to as hill tribes or "original inhabitants" make up about eight percent (more than 65 million people) of India's population. For the purpose of affirmative action, the Indian government publishes lists of these tribes, as well as of some other disadvantaged groups, such as the former Untouchables. The various hill tribes are thought to be indigenous and tend to be ethnically distinct. These groups typically marry within their community and often live in large, adjoining areas, which are preserved by government policies restricting the sale of land to tribe members.

The population of Sri Lanka is much less diverse, but more volatile than some other countries in the region. The two main ethnic groups of Sri Lanka are the Sinhalese, comprising about 74 percent of the population, and Tamils, which make up almost 20 percent of the total population. The Buddhist Sinhalese and the Hindu Tamils have been in conflict with one another for over a century. There is nothing in the languages or religious systems of these groups that promote social segregation, however circumstances have favored one group over the other at different times in history, leading to hostility and competition for political and economic power.

## **Languages**

The region is home to dozens of major languages and thousands of minor ones. The most prominent languages spoken in South Asia are Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Gujarati, Nepali, Sinhala, Kannada, and Malayalam. English is also an official language for government and business purposes in much of the region as well.



There are nearly 250 million speakers of Bengali. It serves as the national language of Bangladesh and the official language of the state of West Bengal in India. Bengali is closely related to Hindi, and borrows words from Arabic, Urdu, Persian, and many other languages. While the written forms of Bengali vary little from one place to another, spoken Bengali includes many different regional dialects. Variation between dialects can be so great that people may not understand the language of a person from another district.

The government of Pakistan officially deemed Urdu the official language of Pakistan in 1948. The country's official languages are Urdu and English, and while Urdu is the national language and *lingua franca* even though only 8 percent of Pakistanis speak it as their first language. In 2015, the Minister of Planning, National Reforms, and Development announced that the country was eliminating English as a national language, and that all official governmental business would be conducted in Urdu.

### **Family and Social Structure**

Groups form social networks along lines of religion, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic standing. In rural areas, family kinship provides a safety net of mutual support and can provide marriage partners, business opportunities, as well as local and region wide political influence. Kinship ties promote the greater good of entire families and clans. Often, loyalty is given to one's family and ethnic group rather than to the state. Members of an extended family are expected to help each other on a reciprocal basis.

Major events as births, weddings, funerals, and major holidays play a key role in the development and preservation of important kinship ties. These occasions, whether festive or mournful, provide opportunities for people to share their food and drink with family and valued members of their communities. Many families would rather go into debt than be unable to throw a lavish party for all attendees. Networking with influential members of one's community strengthens the status of a person within that communal group.

Many of South Asia's Hindu communities still adhere to the caste system. As one of the world's longest surviving forms of social stratification, the laws of the caste determine a person's rights, who they can marry, and how they can be employed. The caste system is hereditary, meaning that children of a person of a certain caste is bound to that caste, regardless of his/her own intelligence or ambition. There are five levels in Hindu society. At the top are the Brahmins—the priests and teachers. Second are the Kshatriyas—the rulers and soldiers. Next are the Vaisyas—merchants and traders. At the bottom, or “from the feet” come the Sudras—laborers. A fifth group describes the people who are untouchable. Untouchables are outcasts, and are considered too impure to rank as human beings and are shunned. They are banned from temples, homes of other castes, and are made to eat and drink from separate utensils and in separate spaces.

While the caste system is less important among Bangladesh's Hindu minority than it is in India, it still plays a role Bengali culture. The inhabitants of major cities in Bangladesh, like Dhaka, Chittagong, and Khulna, have adopted modern social practices from the West. Urban areas now have people with modern professions and social classes. In the cities, social status is based on things like wealth,

profession, and education. Style of dress, manners, and what one does for entertainment, depend largely on social class. It is also still a major factor when choosing a marriage partner. Treatment of women in the marriage is often determined by her father's wealth; if she comes from a poor family, she may be treated poorly by her in-laws.

## Gender

Gender equality remains a problem in much of the South Asia region. Despite the region's sharp economic growth, increased microcredit programs, and women's rights groups, gender discrimination persists in all areas of life. The UN Gender Inequality Index ranks India below several sub-Saharan African countries, most notably in the areas of job opportunities and economic participation for women-owned businesses. India also ranks among the highest in the world for sexual assaults against women. Some of the reasons for this include inadequate court and law enforcement systems resulting in few convictions. Moreover, the lower societal status of women in Indian society leads to a large gender imbalance due to female infanticide, resulting in a lack of women in Indian law enforcement and other positions of power.

Honor killings of women continue to be a problem in the region. Pakistan, in particular, has garnered much media attention in the twenty-first century for its large numbers of reported honor killings. An honor killing is the homicide of a member of a family or social group by other members, due to the belief the victim has brought dishonor upon the family or community. The death of the victim is viewed as a way to restore the reputation of the family. Pre-teen girls and victims of rape are among those killed by family members for "dishonoring the family" through no fault of their own. According to a 2014 Pew research poll, more than 40 percent of Pakistanis believe that honor killings are often justified.<sup>19</sup> Despite international pressure, rights activists say the number of honor killings continue to climb in Pakistan. While the most commonly reported incident is usually death by stoning, honor killings include death by stabbing, gunshot, immolation, and strangulation.

In some countries in South Asia, a third gender is recognized. It also describes a social category present in those societies that recognize three or more genders. This category accounts for individuals that are not considered, either by themselves or by society, as male or female. Members of this third gender are known as *hijras* in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.



A hijra protest in Islamabad (Source: Wikicommons)

*Hijras* play a large role in Indian mythology and culture so the inclusion in society as a third gender is widely accepted by South Asian society. In India and Pakistan, the *hijras* are officially recognized as third gender by the government. In 2014, the Indian Supreme Court mandated that *hijras* are "a socially and economically backward class" which is a status given to other castes and ethnic minorities, and entitles them to job reservations as well as other social protections.

## Healthcare

South Asia's subtropical and tropical climates facilitate the development of parasites in soil and water and threaten the survival of their hosts (insects, animals, and humans that carry the parasites). The climate is also ideal for breeding mosquitoes, which carry life-threatening diseases.

Streams throughout the region are often used for sewage disposal. When these same streams are used for drinking and bathing water, chronic infections are promulgated. Sanitary conditions are improving, however, especially in cities. This has largely been the result of international aid programs targeting the health problems caused by unsanitary conditions. Poor sanitation makes diarrhea the most likely food and waterborne threat. Furthermore, as the economies of the region develop at an unequal pace, so too do populations' access to quality healthcare.

As one of the world's largest emerging economies, India's middle- and upper-class urban population has excellent access to quality healthcare. Because of its reputation for excellent healthcare, India is one of the main "medical tourism" destinations for international patients. India hosts about 1.27 million tourists from countries such as: the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada; in addition to patients from regional countries like: Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and China.<sup>20</sup> However, there is a significant gap in the quality of rural and urban healthcare. More than half of the population still lives in rural areas and has no or limited access to hospitals and clinics.



Entrance to a hospital in Janakpur, Nepal (Wikicommons)

These populations rely on alternative medicine and poorly-funded government programs in rural health clinics.

In Pakistan, health care is managed by provincial health departments – some provinces have better care than others. Health and sanitation infrastructure in urban areas is adequate, but is generally poor in rural areas. About 19 percent of the population and 30 percent of children under the age of five are malnourished. Many Pakistani doctors and medical professionals choose to migrate to other countries, contributing to a "brain drain" and shortage of skilled personnel in the country.

## Education

The quality of education in South Asia has improved drastically over the last few decades. Most countries in South Asia require that children attend school for a minimum number of years. The cost of an education from elementary school through high school is generally free. In the Maldives, elementary education is compulsory, and 99 percent of the population completes school through the fifth grade.<sup>21</sup> Since the country unified its education system in 1978, it has gone from 70 percent literacy, with women more likely to be illiterate than men, to an equal education system with a 98

percent total literacy rate. However, the country is dependent on expatriate teachers, and the quality of education is still unequal for students that live on islands far from the capital.

The education system in Pakistan has up to five levels: Elementary school (ages 5-10); middle school (ages 10-13), then two years of high school. To attend a university, a student must pass an examination at the end of the second year of intermediate college. Education is the responsibility of the provincial governments, with some provinces wealthier and better than others. Literacy rates vary regionally, and by sex. Girls' access to education in many areas is still greatly hindered; in tribal areas female literacy is 9.5 percent compared to overall national literacy of 68 percent.<sup>22</sup>



School children in Kerala, India (Wikicommons)

However, there remains a discrepancy in access to education in many of the countries in South Asia. In the region's countries with large Muslim populations, *madrassas* are the more common schools of instruction for rural populations. *Madrassas* adhere to Islamist principles, and are privately funded. Students are usually instructed in their local language or dialect. Most accredited universities in the region generally do not accept academic results from *madrassas*, so college-bound *madrassa* students will simultaneously attend public school.

## Religion

Religion is an important feature of the cultural topography of South Asia. It is more than just a set of rules and regulations; religion extends into social norms and traditions, including how people dress, marry, conduct funerals, raise their children, etc. South Asia has been the source of various major world religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. While most of these religions largely remain confined to South Asia, Buddhism has spread vastly from its origins, where it began in the Ganges River valley in north-central India in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, spreading to the distant regions of Northeast and Southeast Asia. The spread of Buddhism throughout the Asia-Pacific initially occurred through the Silk Road, eventually becoming the dominant religion of those areas, while diminishing in India itself, where Hinduism continued to remain the dominant religion. Today, Hinduism is the most prominent religion in South Asia, with roughly 80 percent of India's 1.25 billion people and 80 percent of Nepal's population identifying as Hindus.

### *Islam*

Islam was founded in 610 AD in Arabia (modern-day Saudi Arabia). Muslims first came into contact with the Indian Subcontinent (South Asia) as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century through Muslim traders doing business and settling on the west coast of India. Today, only 15 percent of the world's approximately 1.6 billion Muslims are of Arab descent; in fact over 60 percent of the world's Muslims live in Asia. South Asia is home to nearly 510 million Muslims, making the region home to nearly a third of the world's Muslim population. 11percent of the world's Muslims live in Pakistan, 10.9 percent in India,

and 9.2 percent in Bangladesh, with each of those countries being home to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> largest Muslim populations in the world, respectively, after Indonesia.<sup>23</sup>

The South Asian Muslim population is as diverse as it is vast. Religiously, Muslims are generally divided into two branches: the majority branch, Sunni and the minority, Shi'a.

The majority of Sunnis in South Asia follow the *Hanafi* School of Islamic jurisprudence under one of the two major movements, either the Barelvi or Deobandi. The Ahl al-Hadith movement is a smaller yet significant movement, and is a manifestation of the fundamentalist Salafi-Wahhabi ideology promoted and largely funded in Pakistan by Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf states. Each of these movements run their own mosques and schools (*madrassas*) throughout the region.

	2010		2030	
	ESTIMATED MUSLIM POPULATION	ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF GLOBAL MUSLIM POPULATION	PROJECTED MUSLIM POPULATION	PROJECTED PERCENTAGE OF GLOBAL MUSLIM POPULATION
<b>World</b>	<b>1,619,314,000</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,190,154,000</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Asia-Pacific	1,005,507,000	62.1	1,295,625,000	59.2
Middle East-North Africa	321,869,000	19.9	439,453,000	20.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	242,544,000	15.0	385,939,000	17.6
Europe	44,138,000	2.7	58,209,000	2.7
Americas	5,256,000	0.3	10,927,000	0.5

Population estimates are rounded to thousands. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Figures may not add exactly due to rounding.

Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • *The Future of the Global Muslim Population*, January 2011

As a minority sect, Shi'as have been a main target of extremist militant organizations, particularly in Pakistan, where they constitute between 10-15 percent of the Muslim population.<sup>24</sup> Pakistan is home to the world's second largest Shi'a Muslim population after Iran.

### ***Hinduism***

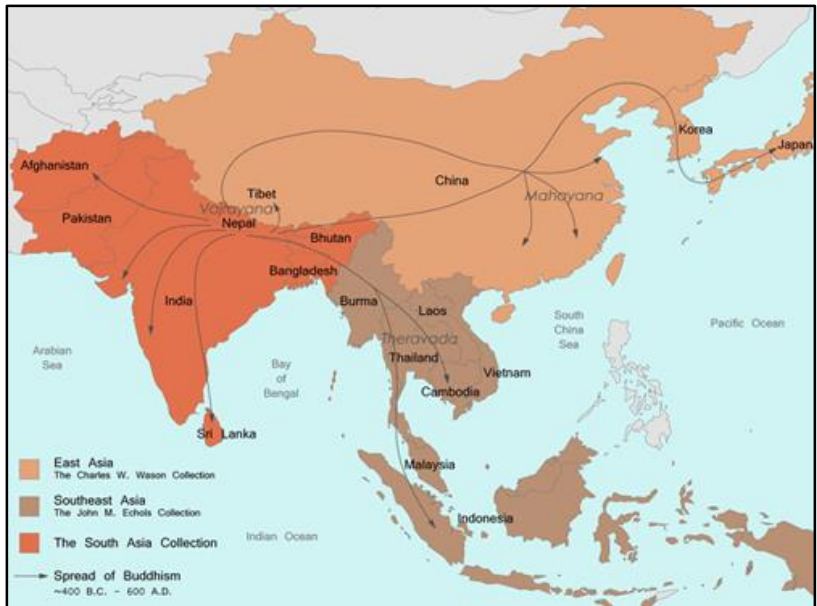
Hinduism is the world's third largest religion, after Christianity and Islam. It is widely practiced in all of the countries of the South Asia region, except Pakistan. Approximately 82 percent of Nepal's population is Hindu. India's population of 1.21 billion people is 81 percent Hindu. The religion dates back to 3000 BC. It is theorized that when Aryan-Indo-European tribes from Central Asia invaded Northern India, they brought their indigenous religion with them. Over time, the traditions, customs, and belief traditions developed into what is now known as Hinduism. Hinduism is also the predecessor of Buddhism. By repeated cycles of reincarnation, good works and positive *karma*, one eventually escapes the human condition fundamentally characterized by pain and suffering. Meditation, chanting, prayer, monastic living, and asceticism are often considered paths to enlightenment. With its multiple gods and maze of diverse sects, practices, and worship practices, Hinduism is far less well-defined and unified than Buddhism. Hinduism is also generally tied to the social caste system. In the 20th century, Hinduism also gained prominence as a political force and a source for national identity in India.

### ***Buddhism***

Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world, with approximately 360 million adherents. Approximately six percent of the world's population is Buddhist. The origins of Buddhism date back more than 2,000 years to a region in what is today southern Nepal. Buddhism split into the

Theravada and Mahayana sects around 100 AD. Mahayana spread eastward and northward in the centuries that followed, entering Tibet in the mid-650s A.D. There, it developed into a third sect called Vajrayana.

Unlike other religions, Buddhists do not believe in a god or gods. They also do not believe in prayer or salvation. Buddhists believe they go through many cycles of birth, life, and death before they reach their ultimate goal of nirvana. Buddhists also believe in the four noble truths: suffering is a part of life, suffering is caused by desire and attachments, nirvana is reached when suffering has ended, and you must follow the eight-fold-path to end all suffering. The eight-fold-path is: right understanding, right thinking, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.



Spread of Buddhism (Source: Cornell University)

## **Government and Politics**

### **Why Government and Politics Matter to You as a Marine**

Most people live in states governed by formal and informal institutions. Marines need to know how power and authority are distributed within a state by studying the formal and informal structures of governments in the region. Additionally, Marines need to understand how people, groups, and institutions exercise power and authority -- in other words, what comprises politics in a state.

### **Introduction**

South Asia has seen drastic political transformation since the end of World War II. Independence from colonial rule brought undemocratic regimes, but political norms have changed over time; most of the countries of the region have evolved in a democratic direction since the 1980s. But, while the growing economies of the region have reduced poverty and fostered the growth of middle classes, the region still grapples with political unrest, which creates regional instability, and leads to a lack of cooperation between governments.

The types of government range in this region from democracies to socialist republics to parliamentary governments. None of these governments, however, are without flaws. Corruption and political manipulation often limit effective political representation for the average citizen. Nepotism is prevalent in the region, and has been a hindrance to political development. Personal connections based on tradition, religion, and centuries of practice are important and affect the region's social and political functions. These kinds of relationships are so intertwined that they cannot fail to have implications for the political systems of South Asia's various countries.

Political corruption exists in nearly all of the countries in South Asia, and affects all levels of society. Political parties, public administration, the judiciary, and the police all have levels of corruption, and it is perceived as a major problem in most of the countries. Political parties often lack transparency, and businesspeople must bribe civil servants even to carry out the normal functions of their jobs. Although the region has made improvements in the fight against corruption, patronage networks still influence public life and the malfunctioning of democratic institutions. The informal norm of hereditary leadership is also extremely common throughout the region.

## Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy, and the prime minister serves as head of the government. The country adopted its constitution 1972. It declares fundamental rights and freedoms to all citizens, states the fundamental principles of state policy, and establishes structure and functions of the three branches of government (executive, legislative, judicial). It also proclaims nationalism, democracy, socialism, and secularity as national ideals. Although it is a democracy on paper, Bangladesh faces challenges as the government does not always respect freedom of expression and the rights of the political opposition.



Student protests in Dhaka, Bangladesh (Wikicommons)

The rise of radical Islamists poses an additional threat to democracy in Bangladesh. In 1982, General Hussein Muhammad Ershad suspended the constitution and made Islam the state religion. This was the first time an element of political Islam had been adopted as government policy, although Islam had been a part of Bangladeshi national identity since the Partition of 1947, which created Pakistan as a homeland for former British India's Muslims.

As in many other countries, the president is the chief of state, but the prime minister is the head of the government. The Bangladesh constitution permits the president to act only upon the advice of the prime minister and cabinet. The prime minister and cabinet have the authority to appoint various officials; they also can veto any bill passed by parliament, but must send it back to parliament for additional review. As it is in the United States, the president of Bangladesh elects Supreme Court justices.

Bangladesh's legislature is a unicameral parliament called the Jatiya Sangsad. Parliament has 300 seats, 45 of which are reserved for women, and its members are elected by popular vote from single territorial constituencies.

The Sheikh Hasina Wazed, daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh, was the prime minister of Bangladesh from 1996-2001, and was elected again in 2009. She entered politics by becoming the head of one of Bangladesh's two main parties, the Awami League, after her father was assassinated in August 1975, along with most of his family and staff. Formally, Prime Minister Hasina holds her position because she was elected by the members of their parties. However, she holds the position largely due to inheritance, and not necessarily because she worked her way up through the political system.



## **India**

India is the world's largest democracy. It is the home of many languages, cultures, and religions; this diversity is reflected in its political system. Political power is shared between the central government and 28 states. However, this diversity, combined with India's caste system and regional tensions, often have an adverse effect on politics.

India's constitution was adopted in 1950, creating the framework for its modern political system. Like the United States, it has three main branches of government: the executive branch, the judicial branch, and the legislative branch. Also, as in the United States, the president is indirectly elected by an electoral college. The president serves as commander-in-chief, can grant pardon or reduce the sentence of a convicted person, and appoints various governors and other positions. The judiciary is also appointed by the president and is responsible for enforcing fundamental rights; issuing directions, orders, or writs; and may direct the transfer of any civil or criminal case.

Similar to the U.S. House and Senate, the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha are the two main legislative bodies of government. The Rajya Sabha has 233 members who are indirectly elected by the state legislatures. The Lok Sabha has 543 members who are elected by plurality vote in single-member constituencies and two additional members who are appointed by the president.

In January 2013, Rahul Gandhi assumed the office of the vice president of the Indian National Congress, one of the two major political parties in India (the other one being the Bharatiya Janata Party). He is the son of Rajiv Gandhi, former prime minister of India, and Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, who held the office of president of the Indian National Congress. He is also the grandson of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (no relation to Mohandas Gandhi). Many in India characterize Rahul Gandhi as a reluctant and inexperienced politician, whose placement in politics is due to his family's political dynasty.

## **Maldives**

The country's first constitution came into effect in 1932 under Sultan Muhammad Shamsuddeen III. The articles were based largely on Islamic tradition, and provided very little change from how Maldives had been governed for centuries. After several subsequent constitution changes, Maldives was declared a republic in 1953. In 2008, the president ratified a new constitution. This constitution was written over a period of four years following a long period of national unrest; it promised the people of Maldives a new "modern, multi-party, and democratic system."

The president of Maldives is the country's head of government and commander-in-chief. The legislature, known as the People's Majlis, is an elected group of 77 members. Judges are appointed by the president and the Judicial Service Commission, with confirmation by voting members of the Peoples's Majlis.

## **Nepal**

Nepal had a 300-year tradition of being a monarchy, until 1990, when a new constitution declared it a Federal Democratic Republic. The last king, Gyanendra, first reigned from 1950-1951, after his

father and grandfather fled to India during a political coup, leaving the 18-year-old Gyanendra the only member of the royal family left in country. After negotiations with India, however, the family returned to Nepal, and Gyanendra's grandfather re-assumed the throne after just one year. Afterward, there were a series of successions, including Gyanendra's father, brother, and nephew. Gyanendra re-assumed the throne in 2001, after his nephew, Dipendra, assassinated his father, Gyanendra's reigning brother, and other members of the royal family over a marriage dispute. Following the murders, Dipendra officially ruled Nepal for four days, then committed suicide.

The 1990 constitution – the country's fifth since 1948 – changed the nonparty system into a multiparty system. It also changed the king's role into one of a constitutional monarch rather than solely a monarch. It is widely believed that the then Prime Minister Girija Prasad viewed this constitutional change as an opportunity to become the first president of Nepal. However in 2006, the parliament eliminated all of the major powers of the king, including the right to veto. With this action, the king was reduced to a figurehead, although he continued in his official role of receiving diplomats. As part of a peace deal with Maoist rebels, parliament decided to abolish the monarchy entirely after the April 2008 elections. In May 2008, Gyanendra officially stepped down as the last king of Nepal.

The president serves as the head of state of Nepal, while the prime minister exercises executive power and heads the cabinet. Both the president and the prime minister are elected by parliament for five-year terms. The prime minister appoints members of the Supreme Court. The country's parliament is unicameral (one house) and consists of 601 members. More than 200 are elected by a plural vote, 355 members are elected through a closed-list proportional representation system, and 26 members are appointed by the cabinet.

## Pakistan

Since gaining independence Pakistan has experienced decades of political turbulence leading to frequent changes in the political order. On several occasions, the country's powerful military had felt compelled to intervene and impose order. As a result, military administrations have ruled the country for roughly half of its history, the latest in 1999-2008. Even when not directly ruling the country, the military stays involved in politics, exerting great influence over domestic and foreign policies, and frequently mediating conflicts between political parties. Although the overwhelming majority of Pakistanis are Muslim, the population is very diverse in terms of language, religious sects, class, and region. This diversity complicates the attempts to establish a stable political system; instead, the country is frequently destabilized by political crises and violence.



Benazir Bhutto was Pakistan's prime minister in 1988-90 and in 1993-96 (Source: Wikimedia)

The current Pakistani constitution stipulates a division of power between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. The constitution provides for a president as head of state, indirectly elected for a five-year term (eligible for reelection) by the country's bi-cameral parliament and the four provincial

parliaments. The executive branch of government is headed by the prime minister and his/her cabinet, who are elected by the parliament. The lower house of parliament has 342 members, each of whom serves a five-year term. Ten seats in the parliament are reserved for non-Muslims and 60 for women, who are chosen by the major parties. The upper house of parliament has one hundred members, each serving a six-year term. A portion of the members are chosen by provincial parliaments, while others are appointed.

The judicial system has several levels, including a supreme court, provincial high courts, and districts courts. Although Pakistan inherited the legal code of Great Britain, its legal system also has a religious dimension: the country instituted a code of Islamic laws, and a court of Islamic law, that operate alongside the secular legal system.

One of Pakistan's most notable leaders was Benazir Bhutto. She was the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a former prime minister and the founder of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The elder Bhutto was disposed in a *coup d'état* led by army leader Zia-ul-Haq; he was subsequently tried and executed. Three years after his execution, Benazir assumed the leadership position of the PPP. She became the first woman to head an Islamic state government when she was elected Pakistan's prime minister from 1988-90, and in again from 1993-96. During both terms, she had strained relations with the country's military. In 1999, corruption charges leveled against her prompted Benazir to move with her family to Dubai, where she lived in exile until 2007. That year, she decided to return to Pakistan to campaign for the PPP in the 2008 elections. On December 27, 2007, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated while leaving a PPP campaign rally.

## **Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka's current constitution has been in effect since its original promulgation by the National State Assembly in 1978. It is Sri Lanka's second republican constitution, and its third constitution since independence in 1948. Sri Lanka's president is the head of state, head of government, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka is appointed by the president and it has – as it is with the U.S. Supreme Court – ultimate jurisdiction in constitutional matters; their rulings take precedence over all lower courts. Parliament has the power to make all laws; each parliamentarian serves a six-year term.

Sri Lanka's presidency has been racked by scandal and corruption. Former president Mahinda Rajapaska was accused of multiple ethical violations, including nepotism and the stifling of free speech. Rajapaska appointed several members of his family to cabinet positions without consulting anyone. One of these positions included Sri Lanka's secretary of defense. In April 2015, parliament voted to impose a system of checks and balances on the country's powerful presidency, ending weeks of negotiations.<sup>25</sup> The new constitutional amendment limits a president to two, five-year terms, overriding an earlier revision that introduced unlimited six-year terms. Sri Lanka's constitution also mandates that the president consult the prime minister on all ministerial appointments.

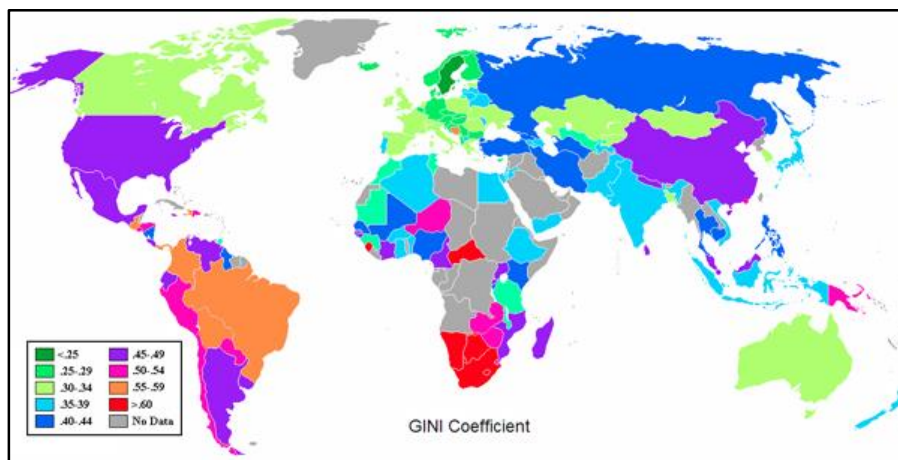
## Economic Overview

### Why Economy and Infrastructure Matter to You as a Marine

The goods and services that people exchange, the infrastructure they use to move those goods and services, and the formal and informal structures that make exchange possible all play critical roles in survival. A thorough understanding of a region is impossible without having knowledge of its economy because the region's political, social, and cultural trends both reflect and shape economic developments.

### Introduction

The economic system in South Asia has seen dramatic changes since the mid-twentieth century. Most countries in the region have moved rapidly from being suppliers of raw materials to their colonial powers to being active and significant participants in the world economy. Integration in the world market has led to economic growth in the region. South Asia has made significant strides in the last decade to close the wealth gap with the rest of the world and within their societies; some countries now have a **Gini coefficient** equal to that of the United States. Despite the economic growth, the region still has a very large number of people living in extreme poverty – nearly 40 percent of the world's poor (those living on less than \$1.25 a day) live in the region, with the majority living in the region's rural areas.

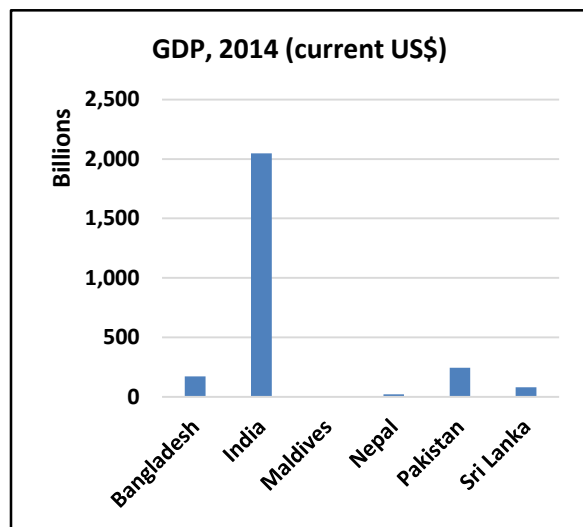


Source: CIA

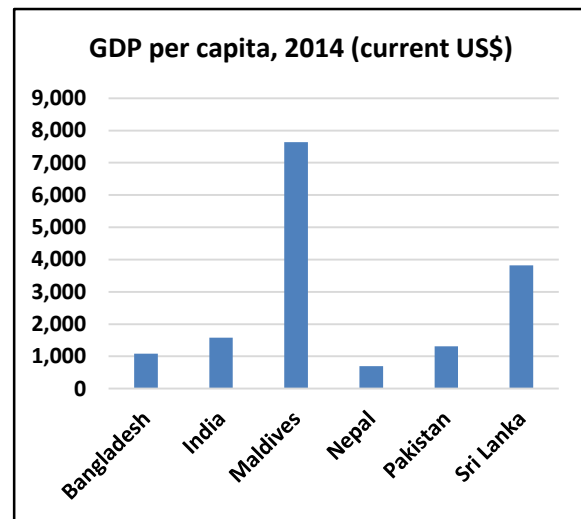
The **Gini coefficient** (also known as the Gini index or Gini ratio) is a measure of statistical dispersion intended to represent the income distribution of a nation's residents. This is the most commonly used measure of inequality with the higher the number indicating greater inequality.

India, in particular, has become a large market for global investors, as it has expanded its economic focus from the production of raw materials and agriculture to the export of more advanced goods, such as electronics and semiconductors, and its service-related sector. Despite the general trend of economic growth in the region, much of South Asia struggles with a significant income gap. Many countries in this region have severe levels of poverty issues, especially in rural areas where income grows at a much slower pace than in cities.

India has the largest economy in the region. It is a member of the association of the five largest emerging economies known as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). In 2014, India's GDP was over \$2 trillion, the world's seventh largest economy – more than eight times as large as the region's second largest economy, Pakistan's. At the other extreme, the GDP of the Maldives the same year was below \$3.1 billion. However, in terms of national wealth per capita, it is the Maldives that is the wealthiest country in South Asia.

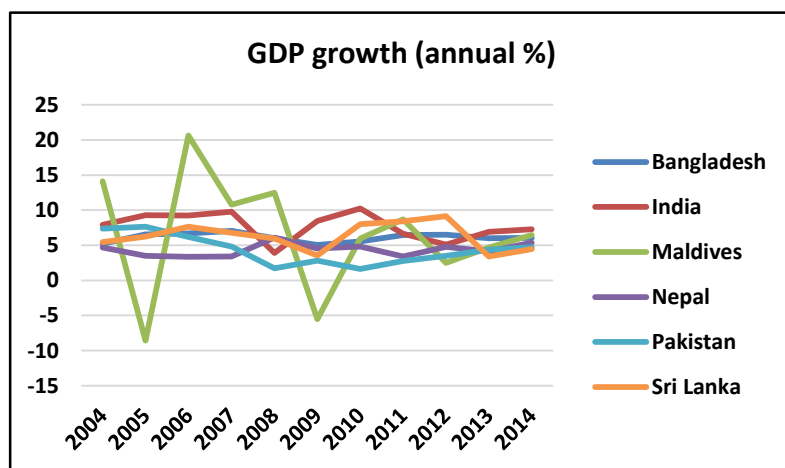


Source: World Bank



Source: World Bank

In recent years, South Asia's economies have seen a rapid growth (6.7 percent annually from 2000-2012), one of the best economic performances in the world. Accordingly, the percentage of people living in poverty decreased dramatically and the ranks of the middle class increased. However, the economic growth is still insufficient to keep up with the very high rate of population growth.



Source: World Bank

## Industries

### Rank ordering of industries starting with the largest by value of annual output, 2015:<sup>26</sup>

**Bangladesh:** jute, cotton, garments, paper, leather, fertilizer, iron and steel, cement, petroleum products, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, tea, salt, sugar, edible oils, soap and detergent, fabricated metal products, electricity, natural gas

**India:** textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, cement, mining, petroleum, machinery, software, pharmaceuticals

**Maldives:** tourism, fish processing, shipping, boat building, coconut processing, woven mats, rope, handicrafts, coral and sand mining

**Nepal:** tourism, carpets, textiles, small rice, jute, sugar, and oilseed; cigarettes; production of cement and brick

**Pakistan:** textiles and apparel, food processing, pharmaceuticals, construction materials, paper products, fertilizer, shrimp

**Sri Lanka:** processing of rubber, tea, coconuts, tobacco, and other agricultural commodities; telecommunications; insurance; banking; tourism; shipping; clothing; textiles; cement; petroleum refining; information technology services; construction

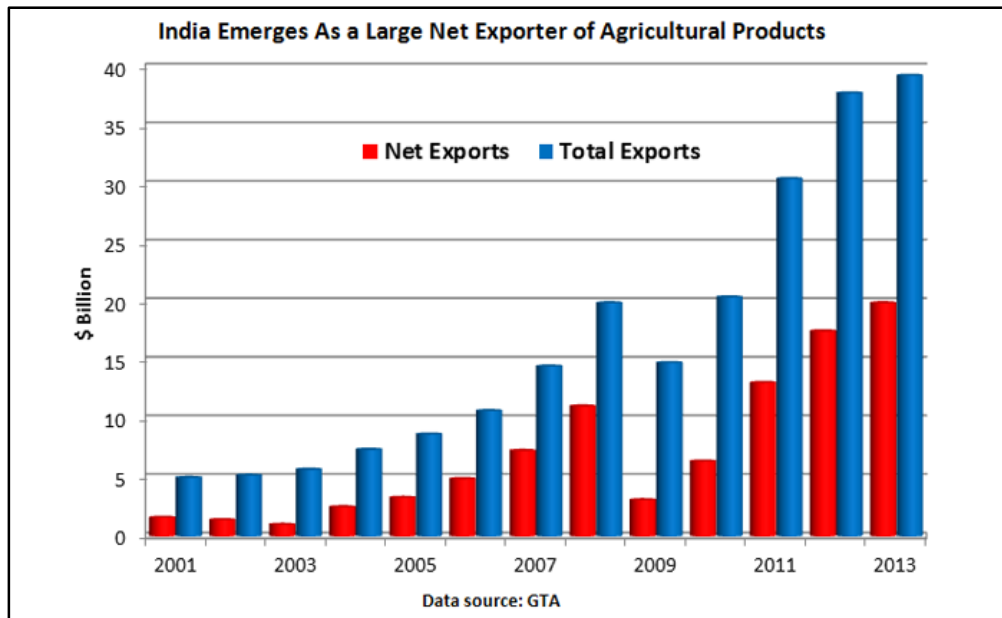
Although the countries in the region have made huge strides integrating into the world economy, they have reached very little economic integration among themselves. In fact, this is the least-integrated economic region in the world – countries trade more with states outside the region than within. Complex security issues among the countries impede economic cooperation and integration.<sup>27</sup> What also hinders economic integration among states in South Asia is the composition of each country's trade – all states' imports and exports are very similar. In other words, no country has a comparative advantage over its neighbors. Consequently, they trade with states outside the region rather than with each other.

## Agriculture

Cash crops are agricultural products grown for profit, with many South Asian cash crops they are sold via export markets. Regional cash crops include cotton, wheat, tea, rice, fish, and fruits and vegetables, among others. In most of South Asia, people living in the rural countryside are impoverished and rely on subsistence agriculture to survive.

Several countries in the region have become major exporters of these agricultural products. The cornerstone of agricultural production in South Asia is rice, with nearly every country engaged in some form of wet rice cultivation. In Pakistan, agriculture accounts for about 25 percent of GDP, and employs almost half of the country's labor force.<sup>28</sup> Indian exports grew from \$5 billion in 2003

to more than \$39 billion in 2013. India has now become the world's seventh-largest exporter of agricultural products in 2013, with the largest commodity being rice.<sup>29</sup>



South Asian countries engage in both wet and dry rice cultivation. The rice grown in the hilly areas is dry rice. Unlike wet rice cultivated in the low land areas where soil is covered in varying depths of water, dry rice cultivation, or upland rice farming, does not use irrigation and crops rely solely on rainfall for growth and development. Dryland rice farming takes place on well-drained soils above the flood line, where seasonal rainfall and the ability of the soil to retain water are the sole determinants of crop growth and development.



Rice paddies in Tamil Nadu, India (Source: Wikipedia)

### Manufacturing Industries

South Asia's manufacturing capacity has grown at a staggering rate over the first two decades of the 2000s. As the middle class population increases throughout Asia, including parts of the South Asia region, so does the demand for all kinds of manufactured goods. In addition to having growing populations, countries in South Asia on average, are investing more heavily in individual education so that their populations are, as a whole, becoming a larger and better educated workforce.

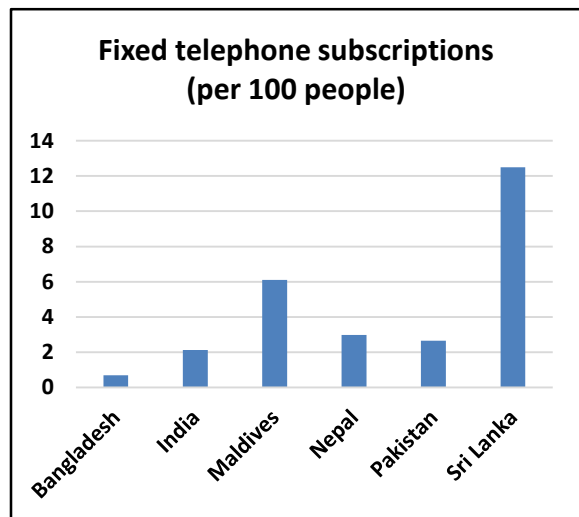
While international foreign direct investment (FDI) into South Asia has increased significantly, governments in this region have only recently liberalized trade and investment policies; regional governments are also just beginning to implement transparency regulations in order to combat corruption in economic sectors.

Recently, with the rise in wages in China, a large percentage the Chinese garment manufacturing sector has moved to Bangladesh. Garment production in Bangladesh doubled from 2004 to 2009, and has replaced jute as the country’s main export; in 2015 the production of garments accounted for more than 80 percent (\$5.6 billion) of Bangladesh’s total exports of \$7.1 billion.<sup>30</sup>

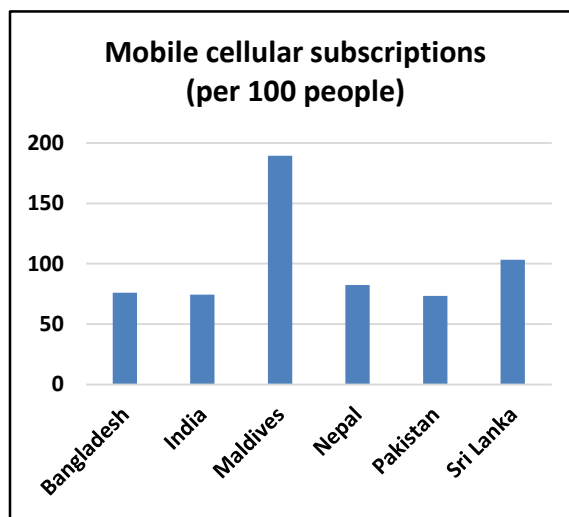
### Infrastructure

Despite the rapid economic growth in the last decade, South Asia still has very significant infrastructure problems. Transportation infrastructure is very poor and badly maintained, and many people in the region remain unconnected to a reliable electrical grid (only 71 percent of the population has access), a safe water supply (90 percent access), and a sewerage disposal system (59 percent access). In addition, national transportation systems are not connected, thus inhibiting travel and trade between neighboring countries. Insufficient transportation infrastructure, combined with an unreliable electricity supply, presents a significant hurdle to manufacturing and economic development. In addition, in terms of telecommunication access, as measured by fixed and mobile lines, the region ranks at the bottom among the world’s regions.

Only 25 percent of the population in South Asia has access to piped water.



Source: World Bank



Source: World Bank

The existing infrastructure of South Asia is insufficient to meet the needs of current populations, nor is it likely keep pace with the region’s high rate of projected population growth. One study estimates that South Asia will need to invest up to \$2.5 trillion to bridge its infrastructure gap over the next ten years.<sup>31</sup>

There are wide variations in the quality of infrastructure across countries in the region, and across regions within countries. Because they live in relatively wealthier countries, the citizens of the



Maldives and Sri Lanka enjoy access to a better-quality infrastructure and have greater access to electricity, phone services, the Internet, clean water, and well-maintained roads. In Nepal and Bangladesh, the two poorest countries in the region, functional infrastructure is, understandably, less accessible to much of the public.

## Natural Resources

The subcontinent is rich in natural resources, which include fossil fuels, fisheries, forests, gems, and minerals. It is estimated that India alone has proven oil reserves of more than 5 billion barrels. In the twenty-first century, wood and wood products account for a significant increase in Indian exports. The manufacture in India of secondary wood products, especially furniture, saw an eightfold increase in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Nepal is also known for producing a particular type of paper, known as *lokta*. Since the twelfth century, *lokta* paper has been crafted in an eastern region of India that would one day become the independent state of Nepal, but the arrival of industrialization in India in the 1960s nearly caused the collapse this cottage paper production industry. Efforts by NGOs in the 1970s helped to revive this ancient art. Supported by a network of supply chains and foreign bank investments, *lokta* paper is now used to make UNICEF greeting cards and other globally distributed print goods.



A letter from Tibetan Governor to a Nepalese official written on lokta paper (Courtesy: Wikipedia)

## Energy

Energy consumption in South Asia has increased dramatically in the twenty-first century. The use of commercial energy (fossil fuels and electricity) has increased by ten percent every year this millennium. Domestic energy production is increasing across the region in the form of renewable energy, waste materials, and coal. However, wood-burning still remains the largest source of energy throughout the entire region by a wide margin. Wood fuel accounts for more than 50 percent of Sri Lanka and India's fuel consumption. In 2009, the South Asia region accounted for 21 percent of all global production and consumption of wood fuel.

## Remittances

South Asia has high levels of labor migration. Many of these migrants send money, referred to as remittances, back home to their families. Generally speaking, diasporas from the South Asia region have higher levels of education than diasporas from many other countries. The median income of Indians living in San Francisco in 2010 was \$107,000.<sup>32</sup> Close kinship transnational marriages, among between Punjabi-Muslims living abroad and those back home, also

A remittance is a transfer of money by a foreign worker to an individual in his or her home country. Money sent home by migrants competes with international aid as some of the largest financial inflows to developing countries.

account for a significant amount of remittance income on the subcontinent. It is estimated that in 2007-08, remittances from Pakistanis living in the United States totaled \$1.7 billion.<sup>33</sup> A third factor that has allowed for increased remittances is the continually improving technology infrastructure that allows for families to email, participate in group religious activities, and transfer money electronically.

### **The Informal Economy**

A vibrant informal economy exists in much of South Asia as well. In terms of its contribution to GDP, the informal sector accounts for up to 60 percent of annual output in the countries of South Asia. There are many people in deep poverty who use the unregulated informal economy as a way to make ends meet. In local markets throughout the region, goods are often traded directly rather than purchased with national currencies. Street vendors, shoe shiners, garment workers, home businesses, garbage collectors, and drug and human traffickers are all part of the informal economy in South Asia. In India, the informal economy accounts for 90 percent of non-agricultural employment, and at least half of total GDP, making it one of the largest informal economies in the world.<sup>34</sup>

## Regional Security Issues

### Why Regional Security Issues Matter to You as a Marine

A thorough understanding of a region is difficult without an account of its most significant security challenges. These challenges tend to affect not only relations between states in the region but also the behavior of its people and the choices they make. Regional security issues encompass a host of topics ranging from wars between states, to insurgencies, organized crime, weak institutions, and systemic corruption. Some of them involve violence, while others weaken states and societies, and have the potential to turn low level conflicts into violent confrontations.

### Introduction

The countries that comprise South Asia have a long history of colonization by Western powers, particularly by the British. The United States had a less significant presence in the region until 1947 -- the year when partitioning of India would create the Muslim-majority state of Pakistan.

In recent decades, the U.S. has established positive relationships with the countries in this region. However, South Asia is rife with security issues that threaten not only its neighbors but also the U.S. Despite efforts to resolve disputes peacefully and to cooperate on issues of mutual concern, there are numerous contentious security issues that threaten the region including terrorism, territorial disputes, and political, ethnic, and religious conflicts. Therefore, the United States military remains actively involved in measures to prevent threats and curtail instability in the region.

### Territorial Disputes

#### *Kashmir*

Many of the countries that comprise South Asia have experienced a rise in territorial disputes, particularly since partitioning began in 1947. These disputes are primarily over national and regional borders that were arbitrarily delineated by outside parties. Disputes between India and Pakistan, India and China, and India and Bangladesh have been ongoing for

“The United States strongly supports all efforts between India and Pakistan that can contribute to a more stable, democratic, and prosperous region, but this is an issue that must be determined by the two sides. We believe India and Pakistan stand to benefit from practical cooperation and we encourage them to engage in direct dialogue aimed at reducing tensions.”

- State Department official statement

decades. These disputes are complicated: historic territorial divisions are often unclear or undocumented, and ethnic groups have traditionally occupied large swaths of land straddling these contested borders.

Kashmir is a disputed region located at the northern borders of India and Pakistan, just south of China. There are few bilateral conflicts that have been as resistant to mediation as the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan. Almost immediately after the 1947 partition, South Asia's newly established states became embroiled in territorial disputes. Kashmir's population is majority Muslim, but, at the time of partition, Kashmir's Hindu ruler announced that the region should become part to India.<sup>35</sup> This prompted both countries to claim sovereignty over the area. India wanted to keep the Muslim-majority state as part of its territory to demonstrate its tolerance as a secular state. For the same reason, Pakistan believed that Kashmir should be a part of its sovereign territory because the decision of statehood should be decided by its Muslim majority population.

The two countries fought two wars over Kashmir, first in 1947-48, and again in 1965. Following the break-up of Pakistan in 1971 (when Bangladesh became an independent state), Pakistan lost ground on its Kashmir claim. Reaching a stalemate and succumbing to international pressure, Pakistan and India accepted a ceasefire. By 1987, however, Kashmiri Muslims were dissatisfied with their lack of autonomy, and what many perceived as meddling by India in internal politics.

Tensions resurfaced when Pakistan began to not only support insurgents in the region, but also enabled Islamist fighters to enter Kashmir from Pakistan and other neighboring countries. By 1989, the dispute evolved into a full-blown insurgency; the conflict has regularly flared into violence ever since.

While the politics and the people involved in the Kashmir dispute have changed over the years, the basic issues remain; and both of the contending countries consider the Kashmir dispute a core interest. Pakistan controls roughly one-third of the state, referring to it as “Azad Kashmir”; India controls the remaining territory, calling it the state of “Jammu and Kashmir.”



Kashmir disputed area (Source: Wikimedia)

### ***Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin***

Aksai Chin lies east of Kashmir and borders China. Arunachal Pradesh is located north of the portion of India that is east of Bangladesh. Both areas are territory claimed by India and China. The borders

for these areas have never been clearly defined, and remain possibly the most contentious issue today between the two countries.

In 1913, representatives from China, Tibet, and British-controlled India met at the Simla Conference to determine the official boundaries of Tibet, and China's border with India. The British proposed a 550 mi (890 km) border, known as the McMahon Line between British India and Outer Tibet. Both Tibetan and British representatives agreed to the proposed boundary; however, the Chinese objected, saying that Tibet was not independent from China, and thus lacked the authority to sign treaties. The Simla agreement was also rejected officially by the Indian government; but after China's control over Tibet weakened during its civil war in the 1940s, the border issue went uncontested for decades. However, following India's independence from Britain in 1947, and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and its full annexation of Tibet, the sovereignty dispute over the Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh area was reignited.

Unable to reach any agreement on these two areas, the Chinese side launched simultaneous offensives in Ladakh and across the McMahon Line on October 1962. The war lasted exactly 30 days, with India suffering a huge defeat, and a ceasefire was called. It also led to the suspension of Sino-Indian diplomatic and commercial ties until the late 1980s. Since then, the two countries have normalized diplomatic relations, and have even engaged in joint tactical exercises. However, the two countries have never come to an agreement on defined borders, and brief skirmishes and stand-offs still occur with some frequency.

## **Violent Extremism**

Many of the extremist groups in the region are jihadist in nature, and apply ultraconservative interpretations of religion to justify violence. Some regional groups, like the Taliban, wield significant influence in Pakistan. In South Asia there are no permanent allies or enemies, as groups and warlords frequently shift alliances according to temporary interests and potential gains. While there are dozens of extremist groups operating in several countries in the region, the following have all been designated as "Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO)" by the U.S. Department of State; these groups are regarded as the most active, and are believed to pose the greatest threat to U.S. interests and regional stability.

With strong ties to al-Qaeda, the ***Haqqani Network*** is also allied with the Quetta Shura Taliban (QST), under the larger Taliban umbrella. Based in Miram Shah, the capital city of the North Waziristan agency of Pakistan, the group uses the city and surrounding villages as their stronghold to recruit, train, and arm insurgents. Haqqani-trained insurgents routinely engage in coordinated attacks against ISAF and Afghan forces in Afghanistan's southeast. The Haqqani Network is allegedly supported by the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI). It is also reported that the Pakistan army refuses to target the group's stronghold in North Waziristan, despite the group's many overt cross-border operations.

The Haqqani Network was officially declared an FTO in 2012; the group's attacks in Afghanistan, India, and on U.S. interests significantly strained U.S.-Pakistan relations. It took a bloody attack in 2015 by the Taliban on a school in Peshawar (that left 134 children dead) to finally convince the Pakistani government to officially outlaw the Haqqani Network.

Another Taliban movement in Pakistan, known as *Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP), is a coalition of militant groups from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Created in 2007 in opposition to the Pakistani government and military, the primary goals of the TTP include full control over the FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, and overthrowing the Pakistan government.

The TTP has maintained close ties with al-Qaeda and its senior leaders, as well as the Haqqani Network. The TTP has been responsible for many terrorist attacks against the government and civilians in Pakistan, including the attempted assassination in 2012 of education rights activist and Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai. The TTP has also targeted U.S. interests in Afghanistan; it has claimed responsibility for the 2010 failed car bomb attack in New York's Times Square.

The *Lashkar-e-Tayyiba* (LeT) is a group whose attacks are primarily targeted against India; it is one of the largest and most proficient of the Kashmir-focused militant groups. The LeT was founded in the early 1990s as the military wing of an already-established Pakistan-based Islamic fundamentalist organization, founded in the 1980s in opposition to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The LeT coordinates charitable activities through a front organization, Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD). They led Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts in Kashmir following the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir, and again in 2010 when Pakistan experienced widespread flooding. The LeT's strongest presence is in the Kashmir region; the group focuses the majority of its attacks against Indian troops and civilian targets in the disputed Jammu and Kashmir state, as well as on high-profile targets inside India. The LeT was responsible for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, in which 164 people were killed and 300 more injured.<sup>36</sup>

*Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LJ) is a militant offshoot of Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan, a Deobandi, anti-Shia group that emerged in the mid-1980s. The LJ primarily target Shia and other religious minorities in Pakistan. However, it is known to collaborate, and has overlapping membership with other militant groups in this region, including al-Qaeda and the TTP. It is suspected that the LJ collaborated with al-Qaeda in the 2009 attack on the Pakistan Army General Headquarters in Islamabad. The LJ has also been tied to high-profile kidnappings and killings of Americans. Violent acts attributed to LJ include the 1997 killing of four U.S. oil workers in Karachi, the highly-publicized 2002 kidnapping and execution of journalist Daniel Pearl, and the 2010 kidnapping of the son-in-law of the Pakistan's former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Tariq Majid.

## **Nuclear Armament**

Among the world's nine nuclear-armed countries, two are located in this region. Neighbors India and Pakistan both have nuclear weapons; the main targets of which are each other. Bilateral tensions, combined with their capabilities, make nuclear armament a continuing threat to their neighbors as well as U.S. interests. To add to the security risk, neither country is a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The NPT is an international treaty whose objective is to "prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament."<sup>37</sup>

India's nationalist leaders advocated for nuclear weapons even before independence, and established a national nuclear program in 1944. With technology assistance from Canada and the U.S., India's

supposedly peaceful nuclear program gained momentum in the 1950s. The main reason for the country's acquisition of nuclear power, however, was its territorial dispute with China. During the Sino-Indian War of 1962, India had lost territory to China. After being denied assistance by the Soviet Union during this battle, India began its own nuclear weapons development program, largely in reaction to the perceived Chinese threat.

In 1974, India successfully tested its first nuclear weapon, nicknamed the Smiling Buddha, much to the surprise of the U.S. and Canada. Even after its first test of a nuclear weapon, India maintained that its nuclear capability was "peaceful"; however, it would continue to develop dozens of nuclear weapons over the next 20 years.

Pakistan began its nuclear weapons program in 1972 with the declared goal of having a functional weapon by 1976. The program began under the direction of A.Q. Khan, a physicist educated in Europe. After a long development effort, Pakistan successfully tested its first nuclear-capable missile in 1998. One of the biggest concerns about Pakistan's nuclear program is the government's endemic instability and corruption: it is feared that this toxic political climate increases the risk of nuclear weapons and know-how falling into the hands of unfriendly forces. In the early 2000s, A.Q. Khan was involved in an international ring that sold nuclear weapons technology on the black market to North Korea, Iran, and Libya. Yielding to pressure from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and governments around the world, Pakistan officials eventually took Khan into custody. However, Khan was pardoned shortly thereafter by President Pervez Musharraf in 2004. Pakistan's nuclear program continues to be of great concern to the United States, especially given the proliferation of violent extremist groups in the region who seek to gain control over these weapons.

## Natural Disasters

The impact of natural disasters in South Asia affects the United States directly and significantly. In addition to massive human casualties, natural disasters affect the U.S. economy due to our many large economic investments in the region. Because of America's extensive bilateral cooperation with the region's militaries, when disaster strikes, the U.S. military is often a first responder. U.S. humanitarian response teams also often remain at the disaster scene to support recovery, clean-up, and reconstruction efforts.



Airmen from the 36th Contingency Response Group and U.S. Marines to prepare to unload a U.S. Marine UH-1Y Huey helicopter from a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III, at Tribhuvan International Airport in Nepal (Source: US PACOM)

Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Pakistan, in particular, are subject to annual floods and earthquakes. The frequency of these events, combined with the sheer number of people living in the region make the magnitude of these events catastrophic, as the devastation and loss of life is significantly higher than similar events in other parts of the world. Furthermore, the warm climate and poor infrastructure in many parts of this region facilitate the spread of water and vector-borne diseases after disasters strike.

In October of 2005, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake, the largest ever in Pakistan's history, struck, killing 80,000 people. An April 2015 earthquake near the Nepal capital of Kathmandu killed more than 8,000 people and injured 21,000 more. The 2010 monsoons killed nearly 2,000 people and flooding in northern India in 2013 killed nearly 6,000 people.

Complicating matters further, these disasters often provide opportunities for extremist organizations to mobilize and recruit. During the 7.7 magnitude earthquake that struck Quetta, Pakistan in October 2008, extremists groups operating in the FATA were able to reach some affected areas very quickly, providing water and much-needed supplies to quake victims. In many remote areas, they were able to mobilize much quicker than USAID and other non-governmental organizations, effectively monopolizing efforts in certain regions, providing these groups with recruitment opportunities and garnering sympathy for their cause.

### **Ethnic and Border Conflicts**

The partitioning of South Asia during the twentieth century displaced large populations and created complex ethnic conflicts; many of these conflicts remain unresolved. Territory was divided, leaving families and tribes separated by artificial boundaries. More than half a century later, the volatility created by these arbitrarily drawn borders is still being felt. While these regional conflicts pose less of an international threat than some of the other issues mentioned above, ethnic conflicts create political and economic instability; conflicts of this kind also tend to spill across borders, causing broader instability throughout the region.

The FATA is divided into seven districts known as 'tribal agencies' -- Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan -- and six frontier regions: Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu-Mir Ali, Lakki Marwat, Tank Jandola, and Dera Ismail Khan.

Most of the population along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border is tribal. The northwest border area that has never been under the full control of either the Afghanistan or Pakistan governments is referred to as the FATA. Each agency has its own dominant ethnic group, political structure, and economic base. The FATA straddles the Durand Line, a boundary demarcation imposed over a century ago by the British; to this day, Afghanistan does not formally recognize the legitimacy of the Durand Line.

Many of the agencies in the FATA have a centuries-old history of violent ethnic conflict between Sunni and Shia tribes. The two main tribal groups in the FATA are the Pashtun, who reside along the northern border, and the Baluch, who inhabit the southern half. Pashtuns and Baluchis have histories of protests and separatist actions; cooperation from both groups is essential to the success of any effort to impose stability in this regions. Among Pashtuns, there is an overwhelming sentiment



for the creation of “Pashtunistan” -- an independent homeland for the more than 40 million Pashtun people living on both sides of the Pakistan/Afghanistan border.

Further complicating problems in this already-volatile region, Taliban fighters have been using the FATA as their main transit point between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Additionally, the Pakistan military is comprised almost entirely of ethnic Punjabis, while Pashtuns fill the ranks of most Taliban fighters. The presence of Punjabi soldiers in the region fighting jihadists threatens to push Pakistan into an ethnic civil war. Because of its complicated history, the FATA remains largely ungoverned; it is an area ripe for continued conflict and instability.

The government of Bangladesh has struggled for decades with frequent internal conflicts involving the Rohingya ethnic minority population. These ethnic tensions threaten to destabilize the entire eastern half of South Asia.

The conflict between Buddhist majority and Muslim minority groups in Burma continue to be a problem for the Burma government and surrounding countries; this religious conflict routinely drives minorities out of Burma into neighboring countries, including Bangladesh. Surges of cross-border refugees create a need for camps, which in turn places economic stress on the countries where Rohingya refugees have sought sanctuary. This situation also leads to increased human trafficking and regional instability. Nearly 30,000 Rohingya live in official refugee camps in Bangladesh, where they are assisted by NGOs; these asylum-seekers are not legally permitted to work or leave the camps. Another 200,000 Rohingya refugees reside in unofficial camps or Bangladeshi villages; these people lack legal protections from arrest or abuse, and little to no humanitarian assistance.

Bangladesh is also home to a minority population of 200,000 Urdu speakers who sided with Pakistan during the Bangladesh-Pakistan civil war. The Bangladesh government penalized them for choosing sides in this conflict by taking away their homes and jobs. Lacking a better alternative, many of these people moved into overcrowded and, now, dilapidated urban camps. Many people living in what was then East Pakistan had hoped that their allegiance to Pakistan during the civil war might allow them to relocate, however, only a small percentage of these people were admitted into Pakistan. As a result, much of the Urdu-speaking population residing in Bangladesh continues to live in temporary settlements scattered throughout the country.

Bilateral relations between the United States and nearly all of the countries in this region have strengthened significantly over the last two decades. American engagement in regional political, economic, and military issues solidifies our alliances in South Asia and creates new partnerships. As the United States and the U.S. Department of Defense continues to implement the East Asia-Pacific Rebalance the critical role played by our South Asian partners in the success of this strategy cannot be understated.

## **Case Study: The Burosho people of Pakistan's Hunza District**

The case study in this chapter introduces a culture from the South Asia region, using the concepts introduced in the Operational Culture General (OCG) document (see attached document).

### **Introduction**

Pakistan is home to a diverse population comprised of numerous ethnic, religious, and other cultural groups. While the country's majority populations are ethnic Punjabis, Pashtuns, and Sindhis, there are dozens of other smaller minority groups living in all of Pakistan's provinces. The Hunza District lies at the far northeast edge of Pakistan's border with China and Afghanistan, and is home to several unique ethnic groups. Unlike the majority of the Pakistan population, many of the people of Hunza have features unlike other ethnic groups in the Southeast Asia region, including red or blonde hair and blue eyes.

The total population of the Hunza District is around 70,000 and is divided among three main valleys and three main ethnic groups.<sup>38</sup> The lower valley in the south is inhabited by the Shinaki ethnic group, who speak a language known as Shina. The northern part of the valley is home to the Wakhi ethnic group, who speak a dialect of the Persian language. The central part of the district is populated by the ethnic Burosho, also known as Hunzakuts, who make up the majority of the Hunza district, and speak a distinct language known as Burushaski.

For most of the nineteenth and twentieth century, most scholars believed the Burosho are descended from soldiers who came to the region with Alexander the Great's army in the fourth century BC. The ruling families in Hunza also unofficially claim to be direct descendants of Alexander the Great. While the ethnic groups of Hunza do not have a tradition of written history, their oral folklore tells of a European ancestry; the physical characteristics of the people in the region do seem to support this claim.

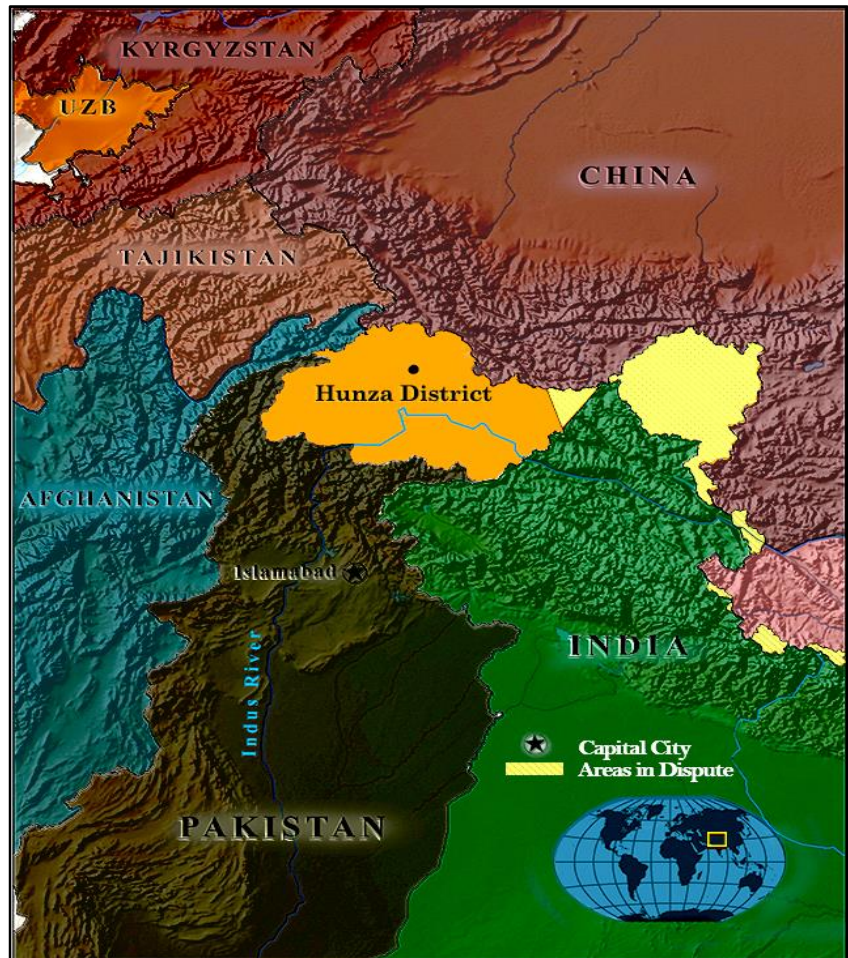
Before the arrival of the British in the late 1800s, the various tribes of Hunza conducted raids throughout Central Asia. During the period when Hunza was a state, the ethnic Buroshos made up the elite classes, and the more powerful Burosho families were exempt from taxes.<sup>39</sup> This case study will focus on the Burosho people.

### **Physical Geography**

The Hunza District lies in the Pakistan-administered area of disputed territory of Kashmir. Pakistan's Jammu and Kashmir state is comprised of Jammu, the Hunza District; Ladakh (on the Indian side)

and Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas (on the Pakistani side). The Hunza District also shares a border with Afghanistan and China.

Hunza was an independent principality for centuries; in the seventeenth century it became a tributary and ally to China. The region was ruled by a *Mir*, which is derived from the Arabic title *Emir*. Hunzas raided mountainous places where some groups of the nomadic Kyrgyz were the main inhabitants; they regularly sold Kyrgyz slaves to the Chinese. The region was a princely state while it was in an alliance with British India from 1892 to August 1947; was officially unaligned for three months; and then, from November 1947 until 1974, was a princely state of Pakistan. The modern-day boundaries of Hunza remain largely unchanged since the seventeenth century: today, this region is located in the northeastern part of Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan Agency.



(Source: CAOCL)

Gilgit-Baltistan covers an area of 28,174 sq mi (72,971 sq km).<sup>40</sup> The region's high elevation and its distance from the sea determine its climate. It is also the meeting place of the world's three highest mountain ranges: the Karakorum, the Hindukush and the Pamirs. Historically, these nearly impassable mountain ranges played a significant role serving as a geopolitical buffer zone in the time of The Great Game between the British and Russian Empires.

A princely state referred to those states on the subcontinent with a nominally sovereign monarchy under a local ruler in an alliance with a greater state power.

The Hunza region itself is approximately 5,000 sq mi (12,950 sq km).<sup>41</sup> The watersheds in the mountainous region of Hunza provide freshwater flows to sustain the agriculture-based societies, and directly or indirectly benefit more than 150 million people living in Pakistan. Terraced planting fields, interspersed with fruit trees,

Russia's advance southward marked a century-long struggle between Russia and Great Britain for dominance over Central Asia. This struggle is often referred to as The Great Game.

provide a visual reminder of the Burosho's rich agrarian history. The topsoil is relatively fertile, but climate and a wide range of temperatures limit the variety of agricultural products cultivated in this region.

## Social Structure

### *Ethnic Identity*

Historically an agrarian society, the Burosho population was divided between crop cultivators and those who earned a living in animal husbandry. Burosho people share very few physical characteristics with the majority of Pakistanis. The Burosho people often have red or blond hair, blue or green eyes, and light skin color. They also speak a language totally unintelligible to their neighbors. In addition to linguistic differences, many facets of the Burosho peoples' identity are rooted in Ismaili Shi'a Islam, rather than the Sunni principles adhered to in most other parts of Pakistan. The Burosho strength of ethnic identification, their unique traditions, and Ismaili identity set them apart from the other major ethnic groups in Pakistan.



Young Burosho girl (Source: WikiCommons)

In part because of their unique culture, physical features, and perceived healthy lifestyle, the Burosho enjoyed a small degree of Western notoriety at the beginning of the twentieth century. The British doctor Robert McCarrison, a pioneer in nutrition research, was assigned as a medical officer to Indian troops serving in the northwest mountain region of India. During that time, Dr. McCarrison worked in the Gilgit-Baltistan Agency and occasionally treated people from Hunza. He noticed that the people of the region seemed to age slower and live longer than the average for that time. He surmised that this was because of the regional diet, which consisted mostly of fruits and vegetables, whole wheat products, and dairy, -- but very little meat. At that time, this type of diet was nearly unheard of in the West. Back in his homeland, the British government was concerned with the health and well-being of its citizens, as industrialization and the resulting pollution were contributing to deteriorating health conditions in Britain. Dr. McCarrison's research and writings gained great notoriety back home, and introduced many Westerners to the people and culture of Hunza.

As this region became more geographically accessible, the people of Hunza acquired a romanticized reputation; people began to regard the Hunza people as being somehow superior to many of the larger ethnic groups found elsewhere on the Indian subcontinent. Emily Lorimer, wife of British India political official David Lorimer, wrote that the people of Hunza were “non-Oriental” and “free from inhibiting superstitions.”<sup>42</sup>

## *Family*

Burosho villages are built several hundred feet above the Hunza River gorge and are heavily fortified. The only access to these villages is by traveling on narrow one- or two-lane roads, located high above the river basin. Homes are built in very close proximity to one another and are constructed of rock and/or clay. The lower floor of a home has two sections: an uncovered courtyard for animals, and a living space for families. This traditional structure, known as a *ha*, houses a small extended family, usually comprised of 10-12 people, where household chores are divided among the group, and each family member has a defined set of tasks. However, with development moving into the region, traditional *has* are increasingly being torn down to make way for modern housing.



Traditional Burosho Ha (Source: WikiCommons)

The Burosho population is made up of four major clans and several minor ones. The major clans primarily inhabit the urban center of Baltit, while the minor clans are dispersed in other settlements. Intermarriage involving other ethnic groups is rare. Child marriage is also taboo. The average age for marriage in the Burosho culture is 17, for both males and females. Divorce is permitted, but is rare. Men are allowed to divorce their wives in cases of adultery. Women are not permitted to ask for divorce.

## *Gender*

In many pastoral/agrarian societies, raising or herding livestock is a male-dominated activity in neighboring cultures, like that of the Pashtun. The manner in which Burosho men and women are responsible for household tasks is different from other majority cultures in the region: chores are shared equally, and family cooperation is stressed. Although there are no gender restrictions on who performs certain tasks, manual labor tends to be done by males; tasks such as child-rearing, food supply management, and light gardening are typically the responsibility of female members of the household.

On average, the highest level of education achieved by females in Pakistan is low. Nearly 45 percent of the country's population is illiterate. In many regions, girls are prevented from attending school. However, in Hunza, at least three-quarters of the people – male and female – can read and write. Equal education has been a standard since 1934, when the first public school system was created in Hunza by the Aga Khan; as a result, every child in Hunza attains at least a high school education. Many Hunza youth continue their education at universities domestically and abroad.<sup>43</sup>

## *Language*

The Burushaski language is considered an “isolate,” meaning that it has no similarities with the other languages in Hunza, or with any of the Indo-Aryan or Indo-Iranian languages in the region. However, some Arabic and Persian loanwords can be found in Burushaski because of the influence of Islam. The written Burushaski language has evolved over the centuries, but remains primarily an oral language. This, combined with the fact that Urdu, not Burushaski, is being taught in schools, means that the language is at a greater risk of extinction than those that have a rich written history.

While there are no official numbers, the modern-day speakers of this language are estimated to be less than 90,000<sup>44</sup>, most of which live in Hunza in Pakistan, along with a small number of Burushaski speakers living in India. However, Urdu is the *lingua franca* of the region and the language of literacy; therefore, Buroshos are pressured to shift to the use of Urdu.<sup>45</sup> With globalization and improved mobility, the younger generation of Buroshos are moving to urban areas for better education and employment opportunities. As result of this migration, many city-dwelling Buroshos have a limited proficiency in Burushaski.

## **Belief System**

Pakistan, after Iran, is home to the world’s second largest Shi’a Muslim population, but Shi’ism is still a minority religion in the country. The majority of Shi’as in South Asia belong to the Ithna-Ashari (Twelver) sect of Shi’ism. Other than a small handful of Shi’a villages in the central part of Hunza, all of the people of this region are Nizari Ismailis, a branch of Ismaili Islam, which is itself an offshoot of Shi’a Islam. While Sunni Islam is the majority sect in the Southeast Asia region, other pockets of Ismailis can be found in Karachi and parts of India.

The Burosho Nizari Ismailis differ from the Twelver Shi’a primarily due to a difference in what each sect believes to be the legitimate lineage of authority and leadership of the community after the Prophet Muhammad. As Shi’as, both groups believe in the lineage of authority (imams) resting solely with the descendants of the family of Muhammad. Therefore, while the first six Imams that both groups accept are the same, the Ismailis get their name from their acceptance of Ismail Ibn Ja’afar as the legitimate successor of the sixth imam, while the Twelver Shi’as accept Musa al-Kadhim, the younger brother of Ismail, as the legitimate imam. The Twelvers only accept the authority of a line of spiritual succession that ended with the 12<sup>th</sup> imam. However, it is the belief of many Ismailis in this region – especially among the Nizari Ismailis -- that the succession of spiritual leadership continued over the centuries, and that this role is currently filled by the Aga Khan.

Buroshos were converted to Ismaili Islam in the sixteenth century by missionaries from Central Asia. Since Buroshos live in physical isolation from the more populated regions in Pakistan, they have historically been able to retain their unique traditions and belief system. Muslims dwelling in Hunza are different from a majority of Muslims living elsewhere in Pakistan: Islam, as it is practiced by the Hunza people, is observed in conjunction with indigenous sacred traditions and practices. Because of their apolitical stance on most issues, the Buroshos have been largely spared from scrutiny by the Pakistan government. However, like all minority religions in Pakistan, the Burosho Ismailis are always under the potential threat of persecution by the Sunni majority and extremist groups operating in nearby territories.

It was in the eighteenth century during the reign of the Persian Qajjar dynasty that the title of Aga Khan was first given to the Nizari Ismaili imam. The first Aga Khan moved to Bombay India and firmly established the Ismaili community there. Subsequent Aga Khans, including Sir Sultan Mohammad Shah, played a major role in Pakistan's independence movement.<sup>46</sup> Nizari Ismaili Muslims are scattered throughout the world and only account for a small religious minority in any state. Nizaris seek all manner of guidance from the Aga Khan, who they believe to be the only true interpreter of Islam.

The current Nizari Ismaili imam, Prince Karim Aga Khan, lives in a village outside Paris. He serves as the spiritual leader of the Nizaris, and leads numerous philanthropic organizations serving the needs of Burosho Nizari Ismailis and members of the Nizari Ismailis living in Asia and Africa. For Buroshos, the Aga Khan is the region's primary financial benefactor as well as a spiritual leader.

While Ismaili Islam is the belief system adhered to by nearly all of the population of Hunza, traditional superstitions still exist and play a significant role in Burosho society. Contrary to the assumptions of Emily Roberts in the early twentieth century, the Burosho maintain traditions and beliefs that pre-date their Islamic history. Buroshos still consult shamans and believe in mountain spirits. Shamans, known as *bitans*, possess spiritual powers, and are able to communicate with supernatural beings. They inhale the smoke of burning juniper branches, dance to a special music, drink blood from a freshly severed goat heads, and enter into ecstatic trances<sup>47</sup>. *Bitans* are said to run in certain families. Today's *bitans* are often the children and grandchildren of other *bitans*. Historically, *bitans* were both male and female in Hunza, but with the influence of Pakistan's modern culture, *bitans* are primarily male. In Burosho culture, these shamanistic rituals have no conflict with Islam, as the two systems are seen to complement each other.

## Political Structure

Even before partition, the governing of this territory was ambiguous. In 1935, the British acquired a sixty-year lease on Gilgit-Baltistan Agency from the maharaja of Kashmir. At the time of partition, the British left control of the region to a Kashmiri governor. In November of 1947, the local army, known as the Gilgit Scouts, joined other Muslim fighters from the FATA, Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), and Kashmir in a fight for Kashmir autonomy. In a matter of weeks, they expelled the Kashmir army from Gilgit and asked the Pakistan government to take over the administration of the region.

By swearing allegiance to Pakistan, the Gilgit Agency expected more active participation and representation in the government. However, from 1947-74, Pakistan governed Hunza as it had been governed by the British under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), a system established for the limited purpose of suppressing criminal activity. For nearly 30 years, the district was largely autonomous and had no representation in Pakistan's parliament. In 1974, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto eliminated the FCR and the princely status of Hunza, but its integration into Pakistan's governance structure has never fully been realized. In other words, Hunza maintains a high degree of political autonomy and governs itself with very little interference from authorities in Islamabad.

There is no deliberate age or gender stratification in the Burosho political system. The traditional head of state is the *mir* (now called governor) and is responsible for the distribution of justice as well as the maintenance of local customs and tribal festivals. Each village appoints a chief and a sergeant

at arms to enforce local laws and traditions. The *mir* also appoints several men -- *khalifas* -- to officiate at important social events such as weddings and naming ceremonies. However, these are limited appointments, as individuals do not perform these duties on a full-time basis. The last *mir* to officially hold the title was Mir Muhammad Jamal Khan. While the title has been officially changed to governor, the holder of this position still uses the honorary title of *mir*, and the local government functions in much of the same way it has functioned for hundreds of years. Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan, the current governor of Gilgit-Baltistan, is the son of Muhammad Jamal Khan. Local government officials and bureaucrats appointed by the *mir* also function in traditional capacities.

Despite the lack of political integration, Hunza has seen significant civil and military integrations. Mid-level and senior bureaucrats frequently travel to Islamabad to attend governance training programs, and government political jobs in Hunza are highly coveted. Younger Buroshkos are leaving the area to join the military, but return to troops stationed in the region. The constant threat of an India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir, combined with the threat encroachment by neighboring extremist groups ensure a constant military presence in the Gilgit Agency.



Baltit Fort, the former residence of the Mirs of Hunza  
(Source: WikiCommons)

### The Economy of the Culture

Due to physical and cultural isolation, the region is relatively underdeveloped economically. Nevertheless, the region has always been self-sufficient due to its agriculture sector and natural resources. The Burosho engage mostly in subsistence farming. Livestock such as cattle, yaks, and goats, are kept in farms; men also hunt small fowl. Main agricultural crops include potatoes, garlic, beans, peas, carrots, tomatoes, leafy vegetables, mulberries, apples, walnuts, almonds, plums, pears, cherries, grapes, millet, wheat, barley, rye, buckwheat, rice, spices, cucumbers, tobacco, and flax.<sup>48</sup> Fields are terraced and are irrigated by a complex system of drainage conduits.

Dowries are still commonplace in Pakistan, as in many other areas of the world, with more than 95 percent of all marriages involving some sort of dowry being paid from the bride's family to the family of the groom.<sup>49</sup> Today, dowries in South Asia are primarily composed of jewelry, money, and clothes. However, traditionally dowries more commonly included property and livestock. Therefore, the dowries contribute significantly to the economic health of the household.

The region is economically marginalized for several reasons: because of its geographic distance from Pakistan's political and economic centers, because of its minority population, and because of its harsh climate. Trade has historically never contributed in any significant way to the region's economy. Prior to British control, the Burosho would occasionally provide labor services for Chinese caravans in exchange for cooking tools, cloth, tea, and silk.



Most of the economic development in the region has occurred post-partition, with assistance from Aga Khan development networks. Many Burosho are employed by the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), whose mission is to work as a “catalyst for equitable and sustainable rural development in Northern Pakistan”.<sup>50</sup> Tourism is one of the primary economic drivers for the region today. The Aga Khan Historic Cities Program (AKHCP) in Pakistan has restored a number of major forts, traditional settlements, mosques, and public spaces in the high valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan Agency.<sup>51</sup>



Potato fields in the Hunza Valley (Source: WikiCommons)

## Conclusion

You might have noticed that the case study does not include all, or even many, of the concepts discussed in the Operational Culture General document. This is only natural; a comprehensive body of literature devoted to the study of a single culture is rare. In fact, Marines are frequently called upon to operate in areas where current information on local culture is scarce. What the OCG and the chapters in this document do is help Marines learn about their assigned region and acquire skills and concepts that will assist them in operating effectively in complex cross-cultural situations in any part of the globe when information is scarce or rapidly changing.

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