

India, Pakistan, Nepal. Geopolitical Rivalries in South Asia

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Neither allied Great Power can admit that their own missteps are the reason for the two major strategic failures that they're facing, with it being much easier to conveniently blame Pakistan as the regional bogeyman instead of taking responsibility for the blowback that they're receiving.

It's old news that the US regularly [scapegoats Pakistan](#) for its failings in Afghanistan, with Trump [recently resorting](#) to this rhetorical trope once again just the other day during a prerecorded interview that aired over the weekend, but this trend is now spreading throughout South Asia in an unusual direction. India, which has a habit of blaming Pakistan for the Kashmiri National Liberation Movement in spite of its own refusal to hold a UNSC-mandated referendum on the occupied region's status, has now all of a sudden taken to blaming its Muslim rival for majority-Hindu Nepal's recent anti-Indian protests. According to a report from [DNA India](#), the country's intelligence agencies attribute these manifestations to Pakistan's ISI, which is allegedly operating out of the Pakistani Embassy in Nepal and funding all sorts of anti-Indian behavior in the Himalayan country. As could be expected whenever India brings up the specter of supposed Pakistani involvement anywhere, they also claim that Islamabad is supporting "terrorists" there, too.

What's really happening, however, is much different than what India says. Pakistan is being used as a scapegoat for covering up New Delhi's many failings towards its former satellite state just like Washington does in Afghanistan, interestingly representing yet another example of the American hegemon's influence rubbing off on its new South Asian ally. Left out of the Indian media narrative about Nepal is that New Delhi de-facto blockaded the Himalayan country in 2015 as a form of indirect protest against its promulgated constitution at the time, which India feared would diminish the political influence of the Madhesi people who are considered to be under the sway of their much larger southern neighbor. This unexpectedly aggressive action prevented Nepal from receiving much-needed supplies from the outside world, thereby catalyzing a domestic crisis that dangerously veered on the edge of civil war before China urgently dispatched humanitarian aid to the beleaguered nation, setting into motion Kathmandu's geopolitical recalibration.

Nepal is now "balancing" between its Indian and Chinese neighbors after finally liberating itself from the former's neo-imperial grasp following the events of three years ago, though this has undoubtedly caused New Delhi to seethe with jealousy due to the "zero-sum" mentality that dominates its decision makers' perspective on International Relations. Indian media is full of stories fearmongering about how Nepal is allegedly becoming a Chinese 'forward-operating base' that presents a latent threat to the country's largest province of

Uttar Pradesh, with pundits now describing the porous border between the two previously “fraternal” nations as a serious security issue. For as afraid as India is of what it claims is China’s “creeping influence” in Nepal, its leadership is still scratching its head over how this all happened, unable to countenance that their own policies are entirely responsible for this unprecedented pivot in one of the world’s most geostrategically significant states.

Seeing as how India and China are making a public show out of their supposed “rapprochement” with one another for what can be assumed is a mutually agreed-upon bid to increase their respective leverage with the US, New Delhi can no longer obsess over Beijing’s influence in Nepal and accordingly decided to drag China’s all-weather ally Pakistan into this infowar campaign. It’s important to keep in mind that India’s general election is next year and that the ruling BJP Hindutva ideologues plan to play the tried-and-tested card of communal politics in order to win reelection. That’s why the “ModiMobs” (the author’s neologism for BJP-backed rioters) are converging on Karnataka’s Sabarimala temple after the Supreme Court ruling that allowed women of all ages to enter the religious site, as well as why the authorities are [preparing to provocatively construct](#) a Hindu temple on the site of a mosque in Faizabad (now renamed to “Ayodhya”) that was destroyed by rioters in 1992.

A thought-provoking but little-noticed observation outside of South Asia is that constitutionally secular India is plagued by Hindutva mob violence much more often – and to a deadlier extent – than Pakistan (a constitutionally Islamic Republic) suffers the same from its Islamist variant, though people outside of the region could be forgiven for not knowing this due to the Mainstream Media’s double standards when it comes to reporting on these two countries’ domestic disturbances. India, by dint of its government’s propagandistic sloganeering about being the “world’s largest democracy” and its recent military-strategic alliance with the US, isn’t held to account for any of this while Pakistan is spit upon by the global press for comparatively more minor incidences. Knowing this, India expects that the anti-Pakistani narrative that it’s propagating in Nepal at this specific time will be picked up by international media to further smear its rival’s reputation, as well as contribute to fanning the flames of communal tension at home that the BJP expects will earn it reelection next year.

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