For long the United Kingdom sat back and watched as researchers published various accounts laying responsibility for the dramatic partition of the Sub-continent at its door. The India Office Records and Private Papers (located in the premises of the British Library) offer a significant quantity of archival documents, such as the reports of Viceroy Lord Mountbatten sent to His Majesty’s Government, that bear witness to the strong mutual dislike for one another shared by India’s and Pakistan’s future leaders. The communalist violence that marked the departure of British colonial power was to permanently mark the two neighbours. The first armed conflict between New Delhi and Karachi was over the status of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir whose population, in both provinces of Jammu and of Kashmir, was at the time Muslim majority. What came to be known as the Kashmir issue was also the immediate cause of the second Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, as well as the short Kargil conflict of 1999.

As early as 1947, the two rivals had appraised the strategic position occupied by the princely state, even as each sought to affirm its power across South Asia. Moreover, Pakistan was quick to be concerned at the hegemonic ambitions that its larger neighbour was not slow in trying to exercise. Both, against the backdrop of the Cold War, sought to draw in the support of the great powers in order to reinforce their defence capacity. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, they strived to position themselves in the new world order, as Afghanistan became a focus of global attention in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks of 2001. India, for its part, exploited the changed international environment to try to discredit demands for ‘azaadi’ put forward at the end of the 1980s onwards in the part of Jammu and Kashmir it administered. The reconstruction of Afghanistan, after the fall of the Taliban administration, put into question the hegemony exercised over that country by Pakistan, through its efforts to gain ‘strategic depth’. Islamabad and Rawalpindi to this day remain alarmed at the prospect of India encircling Pakistan by using its influence in Afghanistan to this end. New Delhi, meanwhile, claims to be simply renewing the ancient ties that earlier existed across the region.

With Pakistan and India celebrating seventy years of independence, beyond the issue of sustainable development, it is appropriate to look at the sensitive issue of peace and security in South Asia. Researchers are thus encouraged to contribute to the reflection on relations between India and Pakistan, as well as those between one or both of them and Afghanistan. A historical dimension should not be excluded, not least since the SDPI is celebrating its own twenty-fifth anniversary of service to sustainable development, something for which peace and security are a *sine qua non*.

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