



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on March 9, 2010

India-Pakistan 'Proxy War' Complicates Afghanistan

After several attacks on Indian targets by militants in Afghanistan, officials and analysts claim that the governments of Pakistan and India are waging a proxy war there.

"The place to watch for developments on relations between India and Pakistan right now is more likely to be Kabul than Kashmir," [noted](#) Myra MacDonald, a Reuters reporter and author of a book on the Siachen War between India and Pakistan. And indeed, other regional experts agree.

Two recent attacks on the Indian embassy triggered suspicions of Pakistani involvement as early as 2008. And in late February of this year, a suicide bomber in the Afghan capital of Kabul killed at least seven Indian nationals, some of whom worked for the Indian government.

So Indian officials are reportedly wondering if Pakistan's intelligence agency had a hand in the attacks. Accusations were also made against Pakistan after the infamous 2008 Mumbai shootings.

"Pakistan is confident that so long as it helps the US against the Taliban and Al Qaeda it does not have to fear any adverse consequences from its continued use of terrorism against India," [noted](#) security analyst Bahukutumbi Raman, a former top counter-terrorism official with India's foreign intelligence service. "It is this confidence which should explain its inaction against the Lashkar-e-Toiba and other Punjabi terrorist organizations whose activities are directed against India."

After the February 26 attack on Indian interests, the Indian foreign ministry released a statement hinting at the motivations behind the bombings. "These are the handiwork of those who are desperate to undermine the friendship between India and Afghanistan, and do not wish to see a strong, democratic and pluralistic Afghanistan," it said. And who might want that? Pakistan, according to experts on regional relations.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's regime has accused the Indian government of improper meddling as well. "We have strong evidence [that India is] using Afghanistan against Pakistan's interests and to destabilize Pakistan," said a spokesman for the Pakistani foreign ministry cited by AFP in an article entitled "India, Pakistan's 'proxy war' in Afghanistan." "Obviously we do have concerns vis-a-vis India," he added without going into more detail or specific allegations.

India and Pakistan have fought a series of conflicts since they became independent from Great Britain in 1947. And both countries currently possess nuclear weapons. The disputes have surrounded a number of issues, but one of the main focal points of tensions recently has been the contested region of Kashmir. Now, the battle seems to have extended into neighboring Afghanistan.





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Pakistan's government has a history of supporting Islamic fundamentalists, including the Taliban who ruled Afghanistan until the U.S.-led invasion. But, the U.S. government has been supportive of such movements as well, even arming, funding and training Osama bin Laden and his men, allegedly to repel the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

After the collapse of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, India quickly moved to establish close diplomatic ties with the new NATO-backed government. It also became the largest donor in the region — providing more than a billion dollars in aid so far. But the Pakistani government apparently sees these inroads as a threat.

"Increasingly Pakistan and India have become engaged in some kind of proxy war in Afghanistan," explained Rahimullah Yusufzai, a Pakistani analyst cited by the AFP. "That is not only destabilizing Afghanistan but also impacting on the very uneasy relationship between Pakistan and India."

Media editorials in the United States are calling for more involvement from the Obama administration in pushing the two governments back to discussions. Both the [New York Times](#) and the [Christian Science Monitor](#) opined that Pakistan needed to put more of its troops on the border with Afghanistan. "For the sake of both countries' security, they need a sustained dialogue and a sincere common effort to build trust," claimed the *Times* in its editorial. "The two have much to talk about, including terrorism, their nuclear rivalry, Kashmir and their counterproductive competition for influence in Afghanistan." The U.S. government "should nudge harder" to bring both governments back to the negotiation table, it concluded.

But the United States does not really need to be involved in relations between two rivals half-way around the world. In fact, it has no constitutional authority to be waging war in Afghanistan without a declaration of war by Congress, or to be prodding governments into discussions. Pakistan and India should work out their problems on their own, and the United States should promptly withdraw from the whole region and mind its own business. The Founders warned against foreign adventurism, and now, as the United States government borrows itself into oblivion, Americans must heed that advice.



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