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## The Military and Democracy in Pakistan and Bangladesh

South Asia includes countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, bounded naturally by the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean. The region is marked by linguistic, social, and cultural diversity, with political systems ranging from stable democracies to alternating civilian and military regimes.

Pakistan has experienced multiple military takeovers by leaders like Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Zia-ul-Haq, and Musharraf, often overthrowing elected governments. The military, clergy, and landowning aristocracy have maintained significant influence, justifying military rule as necessary for national security, especially due to conflicts with India. Western powers, particularly the United States, have supported Pakistan's military regimes for strategic reasons.

Bangladesh became independent in 1971 after a struggle led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman against West Pakistani domination. The country shifted from parliamentary to presidential government in 1975, with Mujibur Rahman abolishing all parties except his own. Following his assassination in a military uprising, Bangladesh experienced further military rule until mass protests restored multiparty democracy in 1991.

## Exam Question

**Q:** What factors have contributed to the instability of democracy in Pakistan?

**A:** The instability in Pakistan's democracy is due to frequent military takeovers, the influence of the military, clergy, and landowning aristocracy, ongoing conflict with India, and support from Western powers for military regimes.

## Exam Question

**Q:** How did Bangladesh transition to democracy after independence?

**A:** After independence in 1971, Bangladesh experienced military rule following the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Mass public protests in 1990 led to the resignation of military ruler Ershad and the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1991.

## Monarchy and Democracy in Nepal and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka

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Nepal was a Hindu kingdom and constitutional monarchy until 2008. A pro-democracy movement in 1990 led to a new democratic constitution. However, political instability continued with the King abolishing Parliament in 2002. Massive pro-democracy protests in 2006 led to the end of monarchy and establishment of a democratic republic.

Sri Lanka's politics post-independence was dominated by the majority Sinhalese community, leading to ethnic tensions with the Tamil minority. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fought for a separate Tamil state, resulting in a long civil war. India intervened with the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in 1987, which withdrew in 1989 without resolving the conflict. Despite this, Sri Lanka has achieved economic growth and human development.

## Exam Question

**Q:** What led to the end of monarchy in Nepal?

**A:** The end of monarchy in Nepal was due to a strong pro-democracy movement, massive protests in 2006 led by political parties and Maoists, and the King's earlier dismissal of Parliament in 2002.

## Exam Question

**Q:** What was the cause of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka?

**A:** The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka arose from the dominance of the Sinhalese majority and neglect of Tamil concerns, leading to militant Tamil nationalism and armed struggle by the LTTE for a separate Tamil state.

## Conflicts and Efforts of Peace in South Asia

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India and Pakistan have had ongoing conflicts since independence, especially over Kashmir. Wars in 1947-48, 1965, and 1971 failed to resolve the issue. Strategic disputes include control over the Siachen glacier and arms acquisition. Nuclear tests have led to a military balance reducing the chance of full-scale war. Water sharing and border demarcation disputes also persist.

India and Bangladesh have disagreements over river water sharing and regional issues but maintain bilateral talks. Nepal and India share a special relationship with cooperation in trade and resources despite occasional tensions. India's relations with Sri Lanka are affected by ethnic conflict, while ties with Bhutan and the Maldives remain cordial.

## Exam Question

**Q:** What are the main causes of conflict between India and Pakistan?

**A:** The main causes include the Kashmir dispute, wars fought in 1947–48, 1965, and 1971, strategic control over regions like Siachen glacier, nuclear arms race, and border and water sharing disagreements.

## Exam Question

**Q:** How do India and Bangladesh manage their bilateral relations despite differences?

**A:** India and Bangladesh engage in bilateral talks to address issues like river water sharing and regional security, maintaining cooperation despite occasional disagreements.

## India and Its Neighbours

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India is the world's largest democracy, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leading since 2014. Pakistan is a parliamentary democracy with a history of military rule. Bangladesh is led by the Awami League under Sheikh Hasina. Sri Lanka is a democratic republic recovering from civil war.

South Asia faces economic growth and challenges such as poverty, inequality, and informal labor markets. Regional cooperation initiatives include SAARC and BIMSTEC. Security issues include terrorism, border disputes, and nuclear proliferation. Social factors involve religious diversity, gender inequality, and caste systems. Environmental challenges include climate change, air pollution, and deforestation.

SAARC, established in 1985, promotes regional cooperation but faces political challenges. The South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) aims to reduce trade tariffs but fears of Indian dominance persist. India and Pakistan have made peace efforts through summits and trade agreements. China's partnership with Pakistan and US influence in the region affect regional dynamics.

## Exam Question

**Q:** What are the main objectives of SAARC?

**A:** SAARC aims to promote regional cooperation, peace, and development among South Asian countries through collaboration in economic, social, and cultural fields.

## Exam Question

**Q:** How do external powers influence South Asia?

**A:** China's strategic partnership with Pakistan and economic ties with India, along with the US acting as a mediator and investor, influence South Asia's political and economic landscape.

## Solved Example: India and Pakistan Relations

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**Question:** Explain India's changing relationship with Pakistan.

**Solution:**

India and Pakistan have a history of conflict and violence, especially over Kashmir. However, there have been efforts to manage tensions through agreements and peace initiatives. Friendly relations flourished with social activism and the opening of bus and railway routes. The 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack severely damaged ties. Frequent ceasefire violations by Pakistan contribute to ongoing hostility. Thus, the relationship is a mix of conflict and attempts at peace.

## Practice Set

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## Easy

- List the countries included in South Asia.
- Who was the founding leader of Bangladesh?

## Moderate

- Explain the role of the military in Pakistan's politics.
- Describe the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

## Challenging

- Analyze the impact of regional cooperation initiatives like SAARC on South Asia.
- Discuss the challenges faced by Nepal in its transition from monarchy to democracy.

## Answer Key

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- South Asia includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the founding leader of Bangladesh.
- The military in Pakistan has frequently taken over the government, influencing politics and often justifying rule for national security.
- The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority, leading to a civil war led by the LTTE.
- SAARC promotes regional cooperation but faces challenges due to political differences and fears of dominance by larger countries.
- Nepal faced challenges such as political instability, ethnic diversity, and the abolition of Parliament by the King during its transition.

## Quick Reference

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- **SAARC:** South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, established in 1985.
- **LTTE:** Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, militant group in Sri Lanka.
- **IPKF:** Indian Peace Keeping Force sent to Sri Lanka in 1987.
- **Bangabandhu:** Title for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, meaning Friend of Bengal.
- **Military Rule:** Periods when the military controls the government, often suspending democracy.

## Glossary

### Democracy

A system of government where the people elect representatives to govern.

### Military Coup

A sudden overthrow of a government by the military.

### Ethnic Conflict

Disputes between different ethnic groups within a country.

### Constitutional Monarchy

A monarchy limited by a constitution, where elected bodies have power.

### Regional Cooperation

Collaboration among neighboring countries to promote peace and development.

Year	Event	Significance
1947	India and Pakistan gain independence	End of British rule; beginning of new nations
1971	Bangladesh becomes independent	Creation of a new country after war and conflict
1985	SAARC established	Promotes regional cooperation in South Asia
1990	Pro-democracy movement in Nepal	Led to democratic constitution and reforms
2005	Maldives adopts multi-party system	Transition to democracy