

Geopolitics of South Asia

Intitulé du cours / *Course title*

Discipline <i>Academic field</i>	Social sciences
Enseignant <i>Teacher</i>	Alix Philippon
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Niveau de formation <i>Academic level</i>	BA
Volume horaire <i>Hours</i>	20 hours
Langue <i>Language</i>	English

Description du cours / *Course outline*

This course aims at exploring and deciphering, beyond breaking news, the complex issues of a region considered to be central for world security, located at the crossroads of the Middle East, South Asia and Central Asia. The course highlights the articulations between the domestic, regional and international geopolitics of mainly three countries: India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Objectifs pédagogiques du cours / *Course objectives*

The aim of this course is to deconstruct the logics of wars and conflicts in South Asia and to initiate students to the complex geopolitics of this region by diving into the political and religious sociology of three South Asian countries, their interactions, as well as their relations with other regional neighbors and Western powers, notably the US. Students have to become familiar with different ethnic, religious and sectarian groups and understand how these different identities and belongings are interwoven and fuel regional tensions. Indeed, local domestic conflicts can easily take on greater dimensions and be articulated to regional and/or international conflicts. Students are more specifically initiated into the « profane » underpinnings of the main regional conflicts (War on Terror, Kashmir,...) and to the logics of Islamic activism and Hindu nationalism. If religious references are indeed mobilized in these conflicts to legitimize them, it doesn't necessarily mean that there is direct causal relations between religions and political action.

Compétences acquises / *Learning outcomes*

Students will acquire a wealth of knowledge in terms of area studies on South Asian religions, history and politics. They will also gain new conceptual and analytical tools to better understand the many factors of geopolitical conflicts, and the regimes of justification that made violence acceptable. The course is not so much rooted in International relation than in political sociology, including sociology of mobilization, of violence and conflicts. Students will thus be better armed to evade all essentialist discourses on the « religious » causes of conflicts and the so-called polarization of the world and learn how to detect the political instrumentalisation of religious identities and manipulation of historical memories.

Plan de cours par séance / *Course content for each session*

After a general introduction on the geopolitics of South Asia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and India are each introduced in their history geography, politics, ethnic and religious diversity as well as the various conflicts in which they are engaged.

I/ PAKISTAN : A « dangerous » country with a strategic location?

1/Domestic geopolitics between a variety of ethnic groups and a complex Muslim politics

-Ethnic issues

-the religious challenges

2/Regional and international tensions at the crossroads of empires old and new

-US, China and the new great game

-The Afpak: Pakistan and the double speak on the War on Terror ?

-The structural hostility with India and the Kashmir issue

II/AFGHANISTAN : the massive failure of the war on Terror

1/General introduction + a timeline of recent Afghan history

2/Why has the war in Afghanistan failed to defeat the Taliban ?

-Stagflation

-corruption

-the warlords

3/For a sociology of the (Neo)Taliban movement

III/ SHINING INDIA?

1. From secular democracy to Hindu nationalism

2. The Naxalites, the greatest domestic challenge?

3. Relations with neighbors and beyond: China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Israel and the BRICS

4. India's soft power: from yoga to Bollywood

Références bibliographiques / Bibliography

Mariam Abou Zahab et Olivier Roy, Réseaux islamiques, la connexion afghano-pakistanaise, Autrement, Paris, 2002

Michel Boivin, Le Pakistan et l'islam, Téraèdre, Paris, 2015

Usama Butt and Julian Schofield (ed), Pakistan, The US, Geopolitics and Grand strategies, London, Pluto Press, 2012

Gilles Dorronsoro, Revolution unended. Afghanistan, 1979 to the present, NYC, Columbia, 2005

Laurent Gayer, Mondes rebelles, Asie du sud, Paris, Michalon, 2009

Laurent Gayer et Christophe Jaffrelot (ed), Milices armées d'Asie du sud, Paris, Presses de Science Po, 2008

Antonio Giustozzi (ed), Decoding the new Taliban, insights from the Afghan field, Hurst/Columbia, 2009.

Christophe Jaffrelot et Aminah Mohammad Arif, Politiques et religions en Asie du Sud, Le sécularisme dans tous ses états ?, Paris, éditions de l'EHESS, 2012

Anatol Lieven, Pakistan, a hard country, Penguin Books, London, 2012

Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in conflict, India, Pakistan and the unending war*, London, IB Tauris, 2003

L'Inde, une modernité controversée, Alternatives Sud, Vol 18-2011/3

Mini CV de l'enseignant / *Mini CV of the teacher*

Alix Philippon is a specialist of Pakistan where she has lived many years in the course of her research and where she has taught one year at Habib University in Karachi in 2020-2021. She has notably worked on the politicization of Islam and more specifically of Sufism. She has also lived one year in Iraq between November 2021 and May 2023 and started new research on Sufism in this country. Her publications include the book *Soufisme et politique au Pakistan. Le mouvement Barelwi à l'heure de la 'guerre contre le terrorisme'*, Paris, Karthala, 2011.