

Account for the development of cultural difference in a continental/ sub-continental region you have studied, and describe the consequences which resulted

(30 marks)

The Sub continental region of India gained its independence from the British Empire in 1947, and as a result was partitioned into the Republic of India and Pakistan (which included East Pakistan at the time, later to be known as Bangladesh). The division of the sub continental region, primarily based on religion, created tensions throughout the region.

The Republic of India was created as a Hindu state and Pakistan as a Muslim/Islamic state. In 1947 the partitioning of the sub continental region showed that religious differences created a boiling pot of tension and conflict which resulted in 500,000 deaths and the largest mass migrations in modern history, with a total of 12 million Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus moving between the newly created states of India and Pakistan. This cultural/religious difference, which led directly to conflict, was most evident in the Kashmir region where three wars have taken place since 1947.

In 1947, during the partitioning of the sub continent, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was allowed accede to either Pakistan or align with the Union of India. Pakistani tribal groups, who believed the Maharaja planned to accede to India, invaded this region, with the objective of forcing the Maharaja Hari Singh to accede Kashmir to Pakistan. Another leading factor which led to this insurgency from Pakistan was Pakistan's belief that Kashmir should become part of Pakistan because of the dominance of Islam in the Kashmir region. The Maharaja himself was Hindu and sought protection from the Indian Hindu Republic. Where India says that the Maharaja acceded the Kashmir region to India and, therefore, India from that point on ruled over that region and protected it, the Islamic State of Pakistan say that the Maharaja had in fact fled the Kashmir region and did not have the authority to sign the Kashmir region over to the Indian Hindu Republic. This conflict was negotiated to a preliminary conclusion, whereby both parties agreed to a cease-fire, by the United Nations in 1948.

This cease fire was to last for only 17 years, when in 1965 Pakistan's failed 'Operation Gibraltar' led to a 5 week war called the Indo-Pakistan War. 'Operation Gibraltar' was a failed Pakistani invasion of Jammu and Kashmir, which led to war, resulting in thousands of casualties on both sides, finally coming to an end after a United Nations mandated ceasefire. The final and most worrying development, which came to the fore during the most recent 'Kargill War' of 1999, was the prospect of Nuclear war, with the advancement of both countries as nuclear powers during the 1990's—diplomacy was again the calming factor.

Therefore, as has been shown, cultural differences within the sub continental region of South Asia have led to frequent skirmishes and conflict, based on territory and justified on religious grounds.