



ZMO-Kolloquium 2011/2012

Not all about Islam: Current Political Conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and Asia

Thursday, March 29th, 2012, 6 pm

The Origins of the Dispute over the Durand Line

Lecture by Dr. Elisa Giunchi

Venue:

Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin

The Durand Line has been a source of friction between Pakistan and Afghanistan for decades, and the dispute over its status has had far-reaching effects for the whole region. In the 1950s and 1960s the dispute caused Afghanistan to increasingly turn to the Soviet Union and thus become more embroiled in the dynamics of the Cold War. Gradually the border issue also became part of the Indo-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir and the competition for regional hegemony. From the 1970s onwards, the porosity of the Durand Line gained a functional role in Islamabad's project of controlling Afghanistan, as it has allowed Pakistani military and intelligence to fuel anti-government guerrilla forces as a means to pressure Kabul. This policy was perfected under Zia ul-Haq and continued after subsequent governments. In the meantime, the presence of extremist groups and drug traffickers in these areas as well as energy considerations heightened the importance of the border area in the eyes of regional and international powers. The border issue has thus become part of a complex web of geostrategic and economic interests. This presentation aims to illustrate how the Afghan and Pakistan authorities have used the dispute over the Durand Line since the late 1940s as a geostrategic tool and have in particular referred to differing identities (ethnic vs. religious) to further their own agendas.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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Elisa Giunchi holds a Master degree in Islamic Studies and a PhD in History from the University of Cambridge (England). She teaches History and Institutions of Islamic countries at the University of Milan (Italy) and she is also senior research fellow at ISPI, where she coordinates the South Asia programme. Elisa Giunchi is part of the editorial board of some Italian academic journals and has authored several books and academic articles on Pakistan and Afghanistan, including most recently "The reinvention of the shari'a under the British Raj: In search for authenticity and certainty", *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 68, n. 4, 2010.