



**SPECPOL**

UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL POLITICAL  
AND DECOLONISATION COMMITTEE

**SPECPOL**

**STUDY**

**GUIDE**

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**SPECPOL**

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

ESTEEMED DELEGATES,

WELCOME TO THE MOST SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF SMUN'26 - SPECPOL! CONGRATULATIONS ON BEING ALLOTTED TO THIS EXTRAORDINARY COMMITTEE!

THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONISATION COMMITTEE, SPECPOL, IS YOUR PLATFORM TO DISPLAY DIPLOMACY IN CLOSE LINK WITH NEGOTIATION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING WHETHER YOU ARE NEW TO MUNS OR YOU ARE A WELL-VERSED PRO, IT DOESN'T MATTER.

HERE, REPRESENTATIVES OF GLOBAL NATIONS COME TOGETHER TO DELIBERATE, DISCUSS AND DEBATE ON PRESSING ISSUES IN THE WORLD. AFTER CAREFUL THOUGHT AND RESEARCH, WE HAVE DECIDED UPON THIS RECENT GLOBAL EVENT AS OUR AGENDA - THE ONGOING SITUATION BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN. IN THIS VOLATILE WORLD, THE SHIFTING DYNAMICS OF POLITICS ALONGSIDE TRADE AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES, EVERY ISSUE SEEMINGLY SMALL SPARKS INTO A WILDFIRE BRINGING IN ALMOST EVERY MAJOR AND REGIONAL COUNTRY INTO IT. IN THIS CONTEMPORARY ERA, WHERE TALKS OUGHT TO HOLD MORE VALUE COMPARED TO BOMBARDMENT, THE FUTURE IS IN THE HANDS OF THIS GENERATION. YOU ARE THE FORTHCOMING POLICYMAKERS WHO ARE TO DETERMINE THE WORLD'S WAY THROUGH CRISES AND THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO STEP INTO IT. ANALYSE, ORGANISE AND DELIVER - THAT'S THE WAY.

AS YOU STEP INTO THE SHOES OF HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL AND DIPLOMATIC DELEGATES TO REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF AN ENTIRE COUNTRY, WE ARE HERE TO GUIDE YOU, ASSIST YOU AND HELP YOU ALONG THE WAY. THIS AGENDA, AMONG THE VARIOUS OTHER TENSIONS IN THE CURRENT WORLD, HAS ITS OWN SOPHISTICATED IMPACTS OF WHICH OUR PRIMARY FOCUS IS GOING TO BE REGIONAL INSTABILITY. THIS STUDY GUIDE IS JUST AN INTRODUCTION AS TO HOW AND ON WHAT LINES YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO RESEARCH BUT IT'S BY NO MEANS THE END. THERE IS NO END TO RESEARCH BUT THIS IS YOUR PATH TO THE BEGINNING. BY THE TIME YOU REACH THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT, YOU WILL REALISE THAT YOU HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING AND A STRONG GRASP OVER THIS AGENDA.

SO, STEP FORWARD INTO YOUR ROLE WITH CONFIDENCE, DELIVER WITH SHEER BOLDNESS AND GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT IRRESPECTIVE OF YOUR EXPERIENCE BECAUSE YOUR ULTIMATE TAKEAWAY FROM THESE TWO DAYS IS YOU ARE LEARNING, GAINING KNOWLEDGE AND SHAPING YOURSELF INTO THINKING IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF WORLD-CLASS LEADERS.

ALL THE BEST, AND LOOKING FORWARD TO A FRUITFUL, ENTHRALLING AND EXCITING CONFERENCE!  
FEEL FREE TO REACH OUT TO ANY OF US FOR ANY QUERIES, QUESTIONS OR DOUBTS!

BEST WISHES AND REGARDS,  
THE EXECUTIVE BOARD  
SPECPOL  
SMUN'26

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (SPECPOL) IS ONE OF THE SIX MAIN COMMITTEES OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY. THE COMMITTEE DEALS WITH A VARIETY OF POLITICAL ISSUES, SUCH AS DECOLONIZATION, PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS, REFUGEES, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND ISSUES RELATED TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY. THE COMMITTEE HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS CAUSED BY COLONIALISM AND FOREIGN OCCUPATION AND IN DISCUSSING CURRENT ISSUES THAT PLAGUE THE PLANET TODAY. THE COMMITTEE MEETS ONCE EVERY YEAR TO DISCUSS THE ISSUES MENTIONED IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AGENDA AND TO PASS RESOLUTIONS THAT WILL ADDRESS THESE ISSUES. AS THE COMMITTEE BRINGS TOGETHER REPRESENTATIVES FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD, IT IS AN IMPORTANT FORUM FOR DISCUSSING THE VARIOUS ISSUES THAT PLAGUE THE PLANET AND FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS.

THE AGENDA- DELIBERATING ON THE IMPACT OF REGIONAL INSTABILITY DUE TO THE ONGOING SITUATION BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS AGENDA AND THE RELEVANCE OF THIS TOPIC IN THE CURRENT TIMES IS EXEMPLIFIED THROUGH THE TENSIONS THAT EXIST BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN, AND THE IMPACT THAT THEY HAVE HAD UPON THE CIVILIANS OF THOSE TWO NATIONS. THE ISSUES THAT EXIST BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS, SUCH AS MILITANCY, REFUGEES, BORDER DISPUTES, ECONOMIC INSTABILITY, AND HUMANITARIAN ISSUES HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE CONTINUED CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. FURTHERMORE, THE IMPACT THAT SUCH A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS HAS HAD UPON THE REGION OF SOUTH ASIA IS INDICATIVE OF THE CHALLENGES THAT EXIST NOT ONLY IN THOSE TWO COUNTRIES, BUT ALSO AS A RESULT OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THEIR CIVILIANS. OVERALL, THEREFORE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THESE ISSUES THAT EXIST BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS, AND TO TAKE STEPS TOWARDS FINDING SOLUTIONS FOR THOSE ISSUES. WELCOME, DELEGATES TO THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (SPECPOL)!

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

AGENDA: DELIBERATING ON THE IMPACT OF REGIONAL INSTABILITY DUE TO THE ONGOING SITUATION BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN.

SINCE 2023, RELATIONS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN HAVE SHARPLY DETERIORATED DUE TO TERRORISM CONCERNS, BORDER CLASHES, REFUGEE DEPORTATIONS, AND GROWING POLITICAL TENSIONS. ON 1 NOVEMBER 2023, PAKISTAN INITIATED A NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN TO DEPORT UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS, PRIMARILY TARGETING AFGHAN REFUGEES, CITING NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS AND THE RISE IN MILITANT ATTACKS WITHIN PAKISTAN. THIS LED TO A MAJOR HUMANITARIAN CRISIS, AS HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF AFGHANS WERE FORCED TO RETURN THROUGH BORDER CROSSINGS SUCH AS TORKHAM AND CHAMAN.

TENSIONS FURTHER ESCALATED ON 18 MARCH 2024, WHEN PAKISTAN CARRIED OUT AIRSTRIKES IN AFGHANISTAN'S KHOST AND PAKTIKA PROVINCES AGAINST ALLEGED TEHRIK-I-TALIBAN PAKISTAN (TTP) HIDEOUTS. THE TALIBAN GOVERNMENT STRONGLY CONDEMNED THE STRIKES AS A VIOLATION OF AFGHAN SOVEREIGNTY, AND RETALIATORY FIRING WAS REPORTED ALONG SECTIONS OF THE DISPUTED DURAND LINE. PAKISTAN CONTINUED ACCUSING THE TALIBAN OF ALLOWING TTP MILITANTS TO OPERATE FROM AFGHAN TERRITORY, WHILE THE TALIBAN DENIED THE ALLEGATIONS AND BLAMED PAKISTAN'S INTERNAL SECURITY FAILURES.

THROUGHOUT 2024 AND 2025, SECURITY CONDITIONS CONTINUED TO WORSEN AS ATTACKS BY THE TTP AND ISIS-K INCREASED ACROSS THE AFGHANISTAN–PAKISTAN

BORDER. FREQUENT HUMANITARIAN CLOSURES NEGATIVELY AFFECTING ECONOMIC AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE ONGOING TENSIONS HAVE RAISED SERIOUS REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS REGARDING TERRORISM, REFUGEE DISPLACEMENT, HUMANITARIAN INSTABILITY, AND OVERALL SECURITY IN SOUTH ASIA. IN FEBRUARY 2026, PAKISTAN PRESIDENT DECLARED OPEN WAR.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE TALIBAN ARE A PREDOMINANTLY PASHTUN, ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST GROUP THAT RETURNED TO POWER IN AFGHANISTAN IN 2021 AFTER WAGING A TWENTY-YEAR INSURGENCY. IT CONTROLLED MOST OF AFGHANISTAN FROM 1996 TO 2001. IT WAS OUSTED IN OCTOBER 2001 WHEN U.S. AND ALLIED FORCES INVADED THE COUNTRY. FOLLOWING THE U.S.-LED INVASION, TALIBAN LEADERSHIP RELOCATED TO SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN AND ACROSS THE BORDER TO PAKISTAN, FROM WHERE THEY WAGED AN INSURGENCY AGAINST THE WESTERN-BACKED GOVERNMENT IN KABUL, AFGHAN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES, AND INTERNATIONAL COALITION TROOPS.

WHEN THE US LED COALITION FORMALLY ENDED IN 2014, THE AFGHAN NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY FORCES (ANDSF) WAS TOLD TO LOOK AFTER AFGHANISTAN'S SECURITY. HOWEVER, THEY FACED MANY OBSTACLES IN HOLDING TERRITORIES AND DEFENDING POPULATION CENTERS. THE TALIBAN ON THE OTHER HAND CONTINUED TO ATTACK THE RURAL AREAS AND SUICIDE ATTACKS IN MAJOR CITIES. THIS LED TO THE ANDSF WITH HEAVY CASUALTIES OF THE ATTACKS. THE WAR WENT ON FOR NEARLY SIX YEARS WHEN THE US DECIDED TO SHIFT MILITARY STRATEGY BY AIR STRIKES AGAINST DRUG LABS AND OPIUM PRODUCTION SITES. TALIBAN SEIZED FARAH PROVINCE AND GHAZNI PROVINCE TEMPORARILY UNTIL THE US AND AFGHAN TROOPS REGAINED CONTROL.

IN FEBRUARY 2020, THE UNITED STATES AND THE TALIBAN SIGNED THE DOHA AGREEMENT, WHICH ESTABLISHED A TIMELINE FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN IN EXCHANGE FOR TALIBAN COMMITMENTS TO PREVENT TERRORIST ACTIVITY AND ENGAGE IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT. DESPITE THE TALIBAN'S PROMISES TO RESUME ATTACKS SET BY AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES AND CIVILIANS. ALTHOUGH PEACE TALKS BETWEEN THE TALIBAN AND THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT BEGAN LATER IN 2020, THEY ACHIEVED LITTLE PROGRESS AS VIOLENCE CONTINUED AND THE TALIBAN GAINED SIGNIFICANT TERRITORIAL CONTROL.

IN APRIL 2021 US PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED THAT THE TROOPS WILL LEAVE AFGHANISTAN BY SEPTEMBER 2021. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE TALIBAN KEPT ON CAPTURING THE TERRITORIES. BY JULY 2021, 95% OF THEIR WITHDRAWAL WAS COMPLETED WITH ONLY 650 TROOPS LEFT TO PROTECT THE US EMBASSY IN KABUL.

THE TALIBAN EVEN WENT ON THE VERGE OF DIRECT ASSAULTS ON MULTIPLE URBAN AREAS. THEY CAPTURED MORE THAN TEN CAPITALS.

AFTER RETURNING TO POWER IN 2021, THE TALIBAN IMPOSED A SERIES OF STRICT LAWS THAT SEVERELY RESTRICTED WOMEN'S RIGHTS, LIMITED HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS, AND DREW WIDESPREAD INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM. AT THE SAME TIME, AFGHANISTAN FACED WORSENING HUMANITARIAN AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES, INCLUDING REDUCED FOREIGN AID, DEPLETED WATER RESOURCES, AND INCREASED EXTREMIST GROUPS SUCH AS ISIS-K AND AL-QAEDA CONTINUED TO STRENGTHEN THEIR PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN, DESPITE TALIBAN COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS AND INCREASED COOPERATION WITH PAKISTAN ON BORDER SECURITY.

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## TIMELINE OF THE RECENT TENSIONS

2025:

- OCTOBER 12-
  - SUMMARY: THE SOUTH ASIAN NEIGHBOURS' FIGHTING IMPACTED HEAVILY AS OVERNIGHT DOZENS OF FIGHTERS WERE KILLED IN NO ORDINARY FIGHTING BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN. IN FACT, THIS WAS THE MOST SERIOUS BORDER CLASH EVER SINCE THE TALIBAN GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER IN KABUL, THE HEART OF AFGHANISTAN.
  - THE PAKISTAN MILITARY REPORTED THAT 23 OF ITS SOLDIERS WERE KILLED IN RECENT CLASHES, WHILE THE TALIBAN SAID 9 OF ITS FIGHTERS DIED. TENSIONS HAVE INCREASED AFTER ISLAMABAD DEMANDED THE TALIBAN ACT AGAINST MILITANTS LAUNCHING ATTACKS FROM AFGHAN TERRITORY. THE TALIBAN, IN POWER SINCE 2021, DENIES THAT PAKISTANI MILITANTS OPERATE WITHIN AFGHANISTAN. BOTH SIDES CLAIM TO HAVE INFLICTED MUCH HEAVIER CASUALTIES ON THE OTHER WITHOUT PROVIDING PROOF: PAKISTAN CLAIMS OVER 200 TALIBAN AND ALLIED FIGHTERS WERE KILLED, WHILE AFGHANISTAN SAYS IT KILLED 58 PAKISTANI SOLDIERS.
- OCTOBER 19-
  - SUMMARY: THIS DATE SAW THE AGREEMENT TO AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE BETWEEN THE TWO CONFLICTING NATIONS AFTER THE EFFORT OF QATAR AND TURKIYE. THE TALKS MEDIATED BY THESE NATIONS LED TO THE NEIGHBOURS TO AGREE TO FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CEASEFIRE.
  - FOLLOWING A WEEK OF INTENSE BORDER CLASHES—THE DEADLIEST FIGHTING BETWEEN THE SOUTH ASIAN NEIGHBORS SINCE THE TALIBAN TOOK CONTROL OF KABUL IN 2021—BOTH AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN ANNOUNCED ON SUNDAY THAT THEY HAD REACHED AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE DURING NEGOTIATIONS IN DOHA. PAKISTAN'S DEFENSE MINISTER KHAWAJA MUHAMMAD ASIF WROTE ON X ON SUNDAY THAT THE TRUCE "HAS BEEN FINALIZED" AND THAT BOTH SIDES WOULD RECONVENE IN ISTANBUL ON OCTOBER 25 TO TALK OVER "DETAILED

- MATTERS.” THE PARTIES REACHED A COMPREHENSIVE AND SIGNIFICANT CEASEFIRE, ACCORDING TO A STATEMENT RELEASED BY TALIBAN SPOKESPERSON ZABIHULLAH MUJAHID. THE PURPOSE OF THE FOLLOW-UP SESSIONS, ACCORDING TO QATAR’S FOREIGN MINISTRY, WHICH MEDIATED THE NEGOTIATIONS ON SATURDAY ALONGSIDE TURKEY, IS “TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CEASEFIRE AND VERIFY ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN A RELIABLE AND SUSTAINABLE MANNER.”

- OCTOBER 28-

- SUMMARY: QATAR AND TURKEY’S EFFORTS TO BROKER PEACE TALKS BETWEEN THE SOUTH ASIAN NEIGHBOURS IN ISTANBUL ON SATURDAY, 25TH OCTOBER ENDED WITHOUT A RESOLUTION AS A COMMON GROUND WAS NOT IDENTIFIED IN THE SECOND ROUND OF THE TALKS. IT WAS A BLOW FOR PEACE IN THE REGION AFTER THE DEADLY CLASHES IN OCTOBER.

- THE PEACE TALKS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN AIMED TO END DEADLY BORDER VIOLENCE, THE WORST SINCE THE TALIBAN’S 2021 TAKEOVER. BOTH SIDES AGREED TO A CEASEFIRE IN DOHA ON OCTOBER 19 BUT FAILED TO REACH A LONG-TERM TRUCE IN ISTANBUL DURING TALKS MEDIATED BY TURKEY AND QATAR. EACH BLAMED THE OTHER FOR THE FAILURE. PAKISTAN ACCUSED THE TALIBAN OF BEING UNWILLING TO RESTRAIN THE PAKISTANI TALIBAN, A HOSTILE MILITANT GROUP OPERATING FREELY IN AFGHANISTAN. AFGHANISTAN DENIED CONTROL OVER THIS GROUP, WHICH RECENTLY ATTACKED PAKISTANI FORCES.

- THE CLASHES BEGAN AFTER PAKISTANI AIRSTRIKES TARGETED THE PAKISTANI TALIBAN LEADER IN KABUL, LEADING TO TALIBAN ATTACKS ALONG THE 2,600 KM BORDER. THE BREAKDOWN RISKS STRAINING THE CEASEFIRE. PAKISTAN’S DEFENSE MINISTER WARNED ON OCTOBER 25 THAT FAILURE TO AGREE TO A CEASEFIRE COULD LEAD TO “OPEN WAR.”

- DECEMBER 3-
- SUMMARY: QATAR AND TURKEY'S EFFORTS TO BROKER PEACE TALKS BETWEEN THE SOUTH ASIAN NEIGHBOURS IN ISTANBUL ON SATURDAY, 25TH OCTOBER ENDED WITHOUT A RESOLUTION AS A COMMON GROUND WAS NOT IDENTIFIED IN THE SECOND ROUND OF THE TALKS. IT WAS A BLOW FOR PEACE IN THE REGION AFTER THE DEADLY CLASHES IN OCTOBER.
- POST THE AFGHAN TALIBAN'S VOW TO RESPOND TO THE DEATH OF NINE CHILDREN AND A WOMAN IN THE PAKISTAN AIRSTRIKES IN THE EASTERN PROVINCES, A NEW ROUND OF PEACE TALKS BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN FAILED TO EASE TENSIONS, THOUGH BOTH AGREED TO MAINTAIN THEIR FRAGILE CEASEFIRE, OFFICIALS SAID. THE TALKS IN SAUDI ARABIA FOLLOWED A SERIES OF MEETINGS HOSTED BY QATAR, TURKEY, AND SAUDI ARABIA AFTER DEADLY OCTOBER BORDER CLASHES.
- ISLAMABAD ACCUSES AFGHAN-BASED MILITANTS, INCLUDING SUICIDE BOMBERS, OF RECENT ATTACKS IN PAKISTAN. KABUL DENIES RESPONSIBILITY FOR SECURITY INSIDE PAKISTAN AND REJECTS ALLEGATIONS THAT AFGHAN SOIL IS USED BY ANTI-PAKISTAN MILITANTS, CALLING THE CLAIMS INCONSISTENT. ISLAMABAD DEMANDS A WRITTEN COMMITMENT FROM KABUL TO ACT AGAINST THESE ANTI-PAKISTAN GROUPS, BUT THE TALIBAN SAY THIS RESPONSIBILITY LIES BEYOND THEM.

2026:

- FEBRUARY 27-
- ACCORDING TO A PAKISTANI MILITARY SPOKESWOMAN, 22 AFGHAN MILITARY TARGETS WERE ATTACKED BY PAKISTANI AIRSTRIKES, KILLING AT LEAST 12 PAKISTANI SOLDIERS AND 274 TALIBAN OFFICIALS AND MILITANTS IN A 24-HOUR PERIOD.



- MARCH 12-
- CHINESE MEDIATION EFFORTS SUCCEEDED IN EASING TENSIONS BETWEEN AMBASSADOR TO PAKISTAN, JIAN ZHONG AND PRIME MINISTER SHEHBAZ SHARIF MET LATE IN FEBRUARY WHICH INCLUDED A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT XI JINPING TO CEASE HOSTILITIES.
- MARCH 13-
- THE RULING TALIBAN CLAIMED THAT THE FUEL DEPOT OF PRIVATE AIRLINE KAM AIR NEAR AFGHANISTAN'S KANDAHAR AIRPORT WAS BOMBED BY PAKISTAN. IT ALSO SAID THERE WERE STRIKES ON RESIDENTIAL AREAS IN KABUL RESULTING IN THE DEATH OF 4 PEOPLE AND INJURY OF MORE THAN A DOZEN.
- MARCH 17-
- SUMMARY: ON TUESDAY, 17TH MARCH, THE AFGHAN TALIBAN GOVERNMENT SAID THAT THE AIRSTRIKE BY PAKISTAN ON A DRUG REHABILITATION CENTRE IN KABUL LED TO THE DEATH OF MORE THAN 400 PEOPLE AND 265 WERE WOUNDED BY THE SAME. PAKISTAN ANNULLED THE ACCUSATION STATING IT HAD BOMBED A MILITANT CAMP AND TERRORIST INFRASTRUCTURE.
- ACCORDING TO THE TALIBAN GOVERNMENT, THE DRUG REHABILITATION CENTRE WAS FORMERLY A MILITARY BASE THAT WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A CIVILIAN FACILITY APPROXIMATELY TEN YEARS AGO, WAS THE OBVIOUS TARGET OF THE ATTACK.

- ACCORDING TO PAKISTAN, IT STRUCK CAMP PHOENIX, CHARACTERIZING IT AS A "MILITARY TERRORIST AMMUNITION AND EQUIPMENT STORAGE SITE," WITH SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS POINTING TO SIZABLE AMMUNITION STORAGE FACILITIES. THE PAKISTANI MILITARY ADDED THAT THE FACILITY "REPORTEDLY ALSO HOUSED SCUD MISSILES OF THE SOVIET ERA" IN ADDITION TO BEING USED TO STORE DRONES AND DRONE-LAUNCH EQUIPMENT.
- "WE ALSO KNOW THAT THE SITE WAS USED FOR TRAINING OF SUICIDE BOMBERS," IT CONTINUED, ACKNOWLEDGING INTELLIGENCE THAT THE LOCATION HAD ONCE BEEN A DRUG REHAB FACILITY. THE AFGHAN TALIBAN HAVE NOT REACTED, AND PAKISTAN HAS NOT OFFERED PROOF FOR ITS ASSERTIONS.

## IMPACT IN THE REGION

### • HUMANITARIAN RIGHTS

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN IS NOW IN ITS THIRD WEEK, WITH AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES AND NO SIGNS OF ABATING. BETWEEN 26 FEBRUARY AND 17 MARCH, 289 CIVILIAN CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN RECORDED IN AFGHANISTAN. PAKISTAN HAS CONDUCTED AIRSTRIKES, ARTILLERY, MORTAR, AND DRONE ATTACKS ACROSS AT LEAST TEN AFGHAN PROVINCES, WHILE DE FACTO AUTHORITY (DFA) FORCES HAVE LAUNCHED GROUND ASSAULTS ON BORDER POINTS AND CARRIED OUT DRONE STRIKES INSIDE PAKISTAN, INCLUDING ON PAKISTANI MILITARY POSITIONS IN KOHAT AND RAWALPINDI. FREQUENT AIRSTRIKES HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED BY PAKISTAN, LIKE THOSE ON 14 AND 16 MARCH. THIS ALSO LED TO THE DISPLACEMENT OF CITIZENS TOO. REPORTS SAY THAT 115,000 PEOPLE HAD BEEN DISPLACED BY THE CONFLICT. PRIORITY NEEDS INCLUDE SHELTER, WATER, HEALTH SERVICES AND FOOD ASSISTANCE. PROTECTION CONCERNS HAVE ARISEN IN DISPLACEMENT SITES. AUTHORITIES HAVE ORDERED INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE (IDPS) IN SEVEN DISPLACEMENT SITES TO RETURN TO THEIR AREAS OF ORIGIN IN CHAWKAY AND NURGAL DISTRICTS IN KUNAR PROVINCE, WITH TWO SITES ALREADY FULLY VACATED.

## • ECONOMIC RIGHTS

PRICES FOR KEY STAPLES, INCLUDING IMPORTED RICE AND VEGETABLE OIL, HAVE INCREASED BY 20–40 PER CENT SINCE DECEMBER 2025. HUMANITARIAN CARGO REMAINS STRANDED IN PAKISTANI PORTS WHILE ACCRUING DEMURRAGE FEES. ESCALATING CONFLICT IN IRAN AND THE WIDER REGION HAS INCREASED UNCERTAINTY FOR HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS, EFFECTIVELY PAUSING THE IRAN TRANSIT ROUTE THAT PARTNERS HAD EXPLORED AS AN ALTERNATIVE SUPPLY CORRIDOR.

REGIONAL INSTABILITY AND ESCALATING CONFLICT IN IRAN HAVE FURTHER DISRUPTED HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS, FORCING AID ORGANIZATIONS TO PAUSE THE IRAN TRANSIT CORRIDOR THAT HAD BEEN CONSIDERED AS AN ALTERNATIVE SUPPLY ROUTE. THESE DISRUPTIONS HAVE LIMITED REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY AND COMPLICATED HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS ACROSS AFGHANISTAN.

## • REGIONAL INSTABILITY

THE PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN WAR HAS INCREASED REGIONAL INSTABILITY ACROSS SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA BY INCREASING TERRORISM, CROSS-BORDER VIOLENCE, REFUGEE DISPLACEMENT, AND ECONOMIC DISRUPTION. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN FREQUENT CLASHES ALONG THE DURAND LINE, AND THE GROWING ACTIVITIES OF MILITANT GROUPS SUCH AS THE TTP HAVE RAISED SECURITY CONCERNS FOR NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, INCLUDING IRAN, CHINA, AND THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES. THE INSTABILITY HAS ALSO DISRUPTED REGIONAL TRADE ROUTES, TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS, AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, NEGATIVELY AFFECTING ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND CONNECTIVITY IN THE REGION. IN ADDITION, THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES HAVE PLACED PRESSURE ON NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL AID ORGANIZATIONS, WHILE CONTINUED TENSIONS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN HAVE COMPLICATED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND BROADER EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN PEACE AND STABILITY IN SOUTH ASIA.

## • IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT

THE ONGOING TENSIONS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY HINDERED DEVELOPMENT IN BOTH COUNTRIES BY DISRUPTING TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY. FREQUENT BORDER CLOSURES AND INSECURITY ALONG TRANSIT ROUTES HAVE SLOWED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, DELAYED THE MOVEMENT OF GOODS, AND DISCOURAGED FOREIGN INVESTMENT.

THE CONFLICT HAS ALSO FORCED BOTH GOVERNMENTS TO FOCUS MORE RESOURCES ON SECURITY AND MILITARY OPERATIONS INSTEAD OF EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SOCIAL WELFARE. IN AFGHANISTAN, INSTABILITY AND REDUCED HUMANITARIAN ACCESS HAVE WORSENERD POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT, WHILE IN PAKISTAN, RISING MILITANCY AND REFUGEE PRESSURES HAVE STRAINED PUBLIC SERVICES AND ECONOMIC PLANNING. OVERALL, THE CONFLICT HAS WEAKENED LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION.

## • IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE AFGHANISTAN–PAKISTAN CONFLICT HAS STRAINED INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND INCREASED GLOBAL CONCERN OVER REGIONAL SECURITY, TERRORISM, HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS. PAKISTAN’S AIRSTRIKES HAVE DRAWN CRITICISM FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS, WHILE THE TALIBAN GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO FACE DIPLOMATIC ISOLATION DUE TO ITS POLICIES AND SECURITY CONCERNS.

THE ONGOING INSTABILITY HAS ALSO AFFECTED RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES SUCH AS IRAN, CHINA, AND THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES, ALL OF WHICH ARE CONCERNED ABOUT TERRORISM, BORDER SECURITY, AND REFUGEE FLOWS. ADDITIONALLY, REPEATED TENSIONS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN HAVE COMPLICATED INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO PROMOTE REGIONAL COOPERATION, ECONOMIC CONNECTIVITY, AND LONG-TERM PEACE IN SOUTH ASIA.

## MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS’ INVOLVEMENT IN THE CRISIS

### • PAKISTAN:

IN 2026, PAKISTAN MILITARIZED ITS WESTERN FRONTIER FROM A CHRONIC SECURITY HEADACHE INTO AN EXISTENTIAL BATTLEFIELD. AFTER A WAVE OF DEADLY ATTACKS THAT ISLAMABAD CLEARLY LINKED TO THE TEHREEK-E-TALIBAN PAKISTAN (TTP) AND ITS AFGHAN AFFILIATES, PAKISTANI AUTHORITIES DECLARED A “STATE OF OPEN WAR,” TRANSFORMING THE CONFLICT FROM THE MURKY WORLD OF BORDER SKIRMISHES TO A CLEAR STATE-TO-STATE CLASH. THIS DECLARATION EFFECTIVELY SIGNALLED A DEPARTURE FROM THE OLDER “FRONTIER MANAGEMENT” APPROACH AND SUGGESTED THAT PAKISTAN NOW VIEWS THE AFGHAN SIDE OF THE BORDER AS AN ACTIVE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS RATHER THAN A FIXED BOUNDARY.

**SPECPOL**

STRATEGICALLY PAKISTAN HAS OPTED FOR A DOCTRINE OF FORWARD-DEFENCE, PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE. INSTEAD OF FENCES, POSTS, AND REACTING WITH FIRE ON ITS OWN SIDE, IT IS NOW CONDUCTING DEEP-PENETRATION AIRSTRIKES AND ARTILLERY ATTACKS IN AFGHAN PROVINCES LIKE KUNAR, AND EVEN ON THE FRINGES OF KABUL, CALLING THESE PRECISION STRIKES AGAINST “TERRORIST INFRASTRUCTURE” AND CROSS-BORDER FACILITATION HUBS. PAKISTANI OFFICIALS SAY MILITANTS HAVE USED “INTACT AFGHAN MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE,” AND DESTROYING THOSE ASSETS IS NECESSARY TO CLOSE INFILTRATION ROUTES. THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR: THE THREAT NOW COMES FROM ANYWHERE, AND IS A LEGITIMATE BATTLEFIELD, NOT NECESSARILY WITHIN INTERNATIONAL BORDERS.

THEY JUSTIFY THIS BY A NARRATIVE OF NECESSITY. ISLAMABAD SEES ITSELF AS THE VICTIM OF REPEATED CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM, WHICH KABUL HAS EITHER NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONTROL OR HAS QUIETLY TOLERATED. THE TTP AND OTHER GROUPS ARE PORTRAYED AS A SYSTEMIC THREAT TO THE PAKISTANI STATE, AIDED BY AFGHAN INACTION. FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE, THE MILITARY OPERATION IS POSITIONED AS A DUTY TO PROTECT PAKISTANI CITIZENS AS OPPOSED TO A CHOSEN WAR OF AGGRESSION. THE STATE SAYS ALL TARGETS ARE VETTED MILITANT OR FACILITATION SITES, AND THAT ANY CIVILIAN CASUALTIES ARE DUE TO MILITANTS USING POPULATED AREAS AS COVER.

PAKISTAN HAS TAKEN A HARD LINE NOW AND SAYS “NO TALKS, NO NEGOTIATIONS” UNTIL ATTACKS FROM AFGHAN SOIL STOP. THIS ENDS YEARS OF QUIET BACK-CHANNEL CONTACTS AND BORDER TALKS. BY SHIFTING THE BLAME ENTIRELY TO KABUL, ISLAMABAD HOPES TO CORNER THE TALIBAN INTO A BINARY CHOICE: DISMANTLE THE NETWORKS THREATENING PAKISTAN OR FACE SUSTAINED STATE-LEVEL MILITARY PRESSURE. PAKISTANI OFFICIALS, CONFRONTED WITH REPORTS FROM THE AFGHANS AND THE UN OF CIVILIAN DEATHS AND DAMAGE TO UNIVERSITIES, HOSPITALS AND HOMES, TEND TO DISMISS THESE AS EXAGGERATIONS OR PROPAGANDA TO OBSCURE THE PROBLEM OF TERRORISM.

## ● AFGHANISTAN:

THE CENTRAL STORY OF THE TALIBAN IS OF “UNPROVOKED AGGRESSION” AND “WAR CRIMES”. AFGHAN OFFICIALS, FOR THEIR PART, HAVE CONDEMNED THE PAKISTANI STRIKES AS UNPARDONABLE ATTACKS ON ISLAMIC BROTHERHOOD AND REGIONAL NORMS, AND REPEATEDLY DESCRIBED THEM AS WAR CRIMES WHEN CIVILIANS ARE KILLED. MAJOR NEWS OUTLETS ECHOED PUBLIC STATEMENTS HIGHLIGHTING REPEATED INCIDENTS OF STRIKES ALLEGEDLY HITTING HOMES AND CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE IN BORDER PROVINCES AND KABUL. THE REPORTS DETAIL THE DEATHS OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND STUDENTS AND DAMAGE TO UNIVERSITIES, HOSPITALS AND A DRUG REHABILITATION CENTRE, WHICH KABUL SEES AS EVIDENCE THAT PAKISTAN IS TARGETING AFGHAN SOCIETY AS A WHOLE, RATHER THAN ENGAGING IN NARROWLY FOCUSED COUNTER-TERRORISM.

MEANWHILE, THE TALIBAN HAVE A COUNTER-ACCUSATION LAYER WHICH FLATLY DENIES PAKISTAN’S CLAIMS. KABUL DENIES SHELTERING GROUPS SUCH AS THE TTP, ACCUSING PAKISTAN OF HARBORING ITS OWN HOSTILE ELEMENTS AND WEAPONIZING THE “TERRORISM” LABEL TO JUSTIFY MEDDLING IN AFGHAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. IN THIS FRAMING, ISLAMABAD IS TRYING TO KEEP AFGHANISTAN IN A CLIENT-STATE POSITION, WITH MILITARY PRESSURE AND THE COUNTER-TERRORISM NARRATIVE AS TOOLS TO DICTATE KABUL’S STRATEGIC CHOICES. IT TURNS THE CONFLICT INTO A COMPETITION FOR POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE AND REGIONAL STATUS.

MILITARILY, THE TALIBAN REFER TO THEIR ACTIONS AS DEFENSIVE RESISTANCE. ATTACKS ON PAKISTANI BORDER POSTS AND POSITIONS ARE JUSTIFIED AS LEGITIMATE SELF-DEFENCE AGAINST INCURSIONS AND BOMBING CAMPAIGNS. THE OPERATIONS HAVE TWO GOALS: TO SHOW RESOLVE TO PAKISTAN, AND TO SHOW THE AFGHAN PUBLIC THAT THE EMIRATE CAN TAKE ON A LARGER AND BETTER-EQUIPPED ARMY. FOR TALIBAN LEADERS, THE CONTINUING RESISTANCE IS PART OF PROVING THEY ARE A REAL STATE ACTOR, CAPABLE OF PROTECTING NATIONAL TERRITORY, EVEN UNDER HEAVY BOMBARDMENT.

**SPELCPOL**

## ● UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

THE UNITED STATES' STRATEGY IN THE PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN CORRIDOR IS THAT OF A FINE BALANCE. THE UNITED STATES' CONTINUED CLASSIFICATION OF THE TALIBAN AS A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION HAS CREATED A CREDIBILITY DEFICIT FOR THE TALIBAN ON THE GLOBAL STAGE. SINCE 2021, THE UNITED STATES' PRIMARY CONCERNS HAVE BEEN THE CONTAINMENT OF TERRORIST THREATS AND THE CONTINUED USE OF PAKISTAN AS A PARTNER IN COUNTERING THOSE THREATS. THE UNITED STATES HAS CONTINUALLY ARGUED THAT THE COLLAPSE OF THE SECURITY OF PAKISTAN WOULD RESULT IN AN UNCONTROLLABLE POWER VACUUM IN THE REGION, WHILE THE THREAT FROM THE TALIBAN IN AFGHANISTAN, WHILE PRESENT, IS CONTAINED TO A SPECIFIC REGION THAT CAN BE MANAGED BY THE UNITED STATES. HOWEVER, A RECENT STATEMENT FROM A UNITED STATES GENERAL REQUESTING A REVIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES SUGGESTS THAT WHILE PAKISTAN IS A UNITED STATES PARTNER IN THE REGION, THE UNITED STATES IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED WITH THE INSTABILITY OF THE REGION.

"THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTS PAKISTAN'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF," THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT SAID IN A STATEMENT ON FEBRUARY 27, 2026. "WE SUPPORT PAKISTAN'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST ATTACKS FROM TALIBAN-CONTROLLED TERRITORY." SUCH RHETORICAL SLEIGHT OF HAND PROVIDES ISLAMABAD WITH CRITICAL "POLITICAL COVER," PORTRAYING PAKISTANI MILITARY INCURSIONS AS LEGITIMATE DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS RATHER THAN AGGRESSIVE VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. BY TAKING THIS STANCE, WASHINGTON IS, IN EFFECT, ENDORSING PAKISTAN'S SECURITY ARGUMENTS WHILE INCREASING THE DIPLOMATIC COSTS ON THE TALIBAN FOR THEIR FAILURE TO SECURE AFGHAN TERRITORY. THE ENDORSEMENT IS MEANT TO HELP PAKISTAN SHAKE OFF INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION IN THE WAKE OF THE FEBRUARY STRIKES AND HELP KEEP ISLAMABAD'S SECURITY NARRATIVE THE DOMINANT ONE IN WESTERN DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES. THE STRATEGIC EFFECT OF THIS TWO-TRACK POLICY, SUPPORTING MILITARY RIGHTS AND CALLING FOR DE-ESCALATION, IS TO AVOID A COMPLETE SLIDE INTO REGIONAL WAR. BY CALLING FOR RESTRAINT AND CIVILIAN PROTECTION ALONGSIDE SUPPORT FOR SELF-DEFENSE, THE UNITED STATES SIGNALS TO REGIONAL ACTORS THAT ITS SUPPORT FOR PAKISTAN IS NOT A "BLANK CHECK" FOR UNLIMITED ESCALATION. WASHINGTON KNOWS THAT A FULL-SCALE WAR WOULD BE DETRIMENTAL TO ITS BROADER INTERESTS IN SOUTH ASIAN STABILITY AND MIGHT EVEN INVOLVE OTHER NUCLEAR-ARMED ACTORS. SO THE AMERICAN PLAN IS TO GIVE PAKISTAN ENOUGH TACTICAL LEVERAGE TO SUPPRESS BORDER THREATS WITHOUT CREATING A HUMANITARIAN OR MILITARY DISASTER THAT WOULD LEAD TO A MORE DIRECT, AND COSTLY, U.S. INTERVENTION.

## ● CHINA:

BEIJING'S INTEREST IN THE PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN CONFLICT IS SHAPED BY ITS ROLE AS A "PRAGMATIC BALANCER" WHOSE MAIN CONCERNS ARE GEOECONOMIC RATHER THAN IDEOLOGICAL. FOR THE CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC) AND THE LARGER BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI), CHINA'S VIABILITY IS AN EXISTENTIAL NECESSITY, AND THAT REQUIRES A STABLE BORDER REGION. BEIJING'S REGIONAL POLICY IS CENTERED AROUND THE SECURITY OF CHINESE PERSONNEL AND THE PHYSICAL INTEGRITY OF MULTI-BILLION-DOLLAR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS. ANY PROTRACTED CONFLICT BETWEEN ISLAMABAD AND KABUL COULD SPILL OVER INTO PAKISTANI PROVINCES WHERE CHINESE ASSETS ARE MOST DENSELY CONCENTRATED, POTENTIALLY TRIGGERING A RETREAT OF CHINESE CAPITAL.

IN FACT, BEIJING HAS CONSISTENTLY POSITIONED ITSELF AS A NEUTRAL PARTY, FROM THE INITIAL ESCALATIONS IN OCTOBER 2025 TO THE HEIGHT OF THE 2026 STRIKES. THE POLICY LOGIC FOR REFUSING TO TAKE AN OVERT SIDE IS TO PRESERVE "INTERLOCUTOR CREDIBILITY" WITH BOTH THE PAKISTANI MILITARY AND THE TALIBAN AUTHORITIES. IT HAS EXPRESSED "STRONG CONCERN" AND OFFERED TO PLAY A MEDIATING ROLE, PRESENTING ITSELF AS THE ONLY GLOBAL POWER ABLE TO TALK TO BOTH SIDES WITHOUT THE BAGGAGE OF HISTORICAL MILITARY INTERVENTION. THIS NEUTRALITY IS A TOOL OF INFLUENCE; IT ALLOWS BEIJING TO APPLY PRIVATE, HIGH-LEVEL PRESSURE ON BOTH CAPITALS TO ENSURE THAT BORDER HOSTILITIES DO NOT REACH A THRESHOLD THAT WOULD NECESSITATE THE SUSPENSION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OR THE EVACUATION OF CHINESE NATIONALS.

THE FUNCTIONAL IMPACT OF CHINA'S TRILATERAL TALKS WITH PAKISTANI AND AFGHAN OFFICIALS IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A "SECURITY-FOR-INVESTMENT" FRAMEWORK. BEIJING USES THESE FORUMS TO REMIND BOTH NEIGHBORS THAT THEIR SHARED ECONOMIC FUTURE—AND CONTINUED ACCESS TO CHINESE CREDIT—DEPENDS ON BORDER STABILITY. THIS "NEUTRALITY" GIVES BEIJING A UNIQUE DIPLOMATIC ADVANTAGE: BOTH THE TALIBAN AND THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT SEE CHINESE INVESTMENT AS THE KEY TO STATE LEGITIMACY AND ECONOMIC SURVIVAL, AND NEITHER CAN AFFORD TO IGNORE BEIJING'S CALLS FOR RESTRAINT. CHINA PROVIDES A REGIONAL ANCHOR BY USING ITS ECONOMIC CLOUT TO IMPOSE A DEGREE OF PRAGMATIC COOPERATION THAT SECURITY-ORIENTED APPROACHES IN THE WEST TEND TO LACK.

ACCORDING TO THE EAST ASIA FORUM AND REUTERS, THE 2025-2026 CONFLICT HAS BEEN A KEY "TEST OF CHINA'S REGIONAL INFLUENCE." BEIJING HAS INTENSIFIED ITS TRILATERAL DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY, WITH REPORTS NOTING THAT CHINA'S PRESSURE IS ON "STABILITY AND SAFEGUARDS." FOR THE U.S. IT IS A WAR OF SELF-DEFENSE; FOR CHINA, IT IS AN OBSTACLE TO THE COMMON GOOD.

## ● RUSSIA:

RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC CALCULATION IN THE PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN BORDER CRISIS STEMS FROM ITS HISTORICAL POSITION AS THE GUARANTOR OF SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA. MOSCOW'S MAIN CONCERN IS THE POSSIBLE "MILITANT SPILLOVER" INTO FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS THAT RUSSIA CONSIDERS AS "NEAR KIN ABROAD". RUSSIA BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND THE TALIBAN COULD CREATE A SECURITY VACUUM, ALLOWING FOR THE MOVEMENT OF RADICAL ELEMENTS NORTHWARD. MOSCOW IS BEING EXTREMELY PRAGMATIC IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE TALIBAN - SO THAT THEY ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH GOVERNING AFGHANISTAN, AND NOT EXPANDING BEYOND IT, AND AT THE SAME TIME PRESERVING ITS DECADES-OLD STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH PAKISTAN. THIS GIVES RUSSIA THE OPPORTUNITY TO PORTRAY ITSELF AS A STABILISING POWER THAT VALUES THE CONTAINMENT OF RADICALISM ABOVE THE ENDORSEMENT OF SPECIFIC TERRITORIAL CLAIMS.

IN LATE FEBRUARY 2026, DD NEWS AND THE WASHINGTON TIMES WROTE ABOUT AN OFFER BY MOSCOW TO SERVE AS A NEUTRAL FORUM FOR NEGOTIATIONS. RUSSIA SETS ITSELF APART AS A NON-PARTISAN ACTOR BY URGING "NEGOTIATION AND DIPLOMACY" AND DEMANDING AN "IMMEDIATE END" TO ATTACKS. THIS OFFER OF MEDIATION IS NOT A SIMPLE GESTURE OF HUMANITARIANISM, BUT A PLANNED MOVE TO STAY "DIPLOMATICALLY FLEXIBLE." IF RUSSIA DOESN'T TAKE SIDES, IT ENSURES IT REMAINS A RELEVANT STAKEHOLDER NO MATTER WHICH SIDE WINS OUT, WHETHER IT IS PAKISTAN'S MILITARY OR THE TALIBAN'S SOVEREIGNTY ARGUMENTS. THIS POSITIONING ENABLES MOSCOW TO EXPAND INFLUENCE IN SOUTH ASIA WITHOUT PAYING THE STRATEGIC PRICE OF TAKING SIDES IN A VOLATILE BORDER DISPUTE.

RUSSIA'S NEUTRAL POSITION IS ONLY EXPLICABLE AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE AMERICAN MODEL. WHILE THE U.S. PROVIDES "DEFENSIVE COVER" FOR PAKISTAN, RUSSIA'S REFUSAL TO BACK PARTICULAR CLAIMS GIVES IT MORE LATITUDE TO POSITION ITSELF AS A MORE BALANCED AND CREDIBLE MEDIATOR FOR REGIONAL ACTORS WARY OF WESTERN INFLUENCE. MOSCOW IS KEEN TO SECURE ITS SOUTHERN FLANK AND PREVENT A VACUUM IN THE REGION THAT COULD LEAD TO WIDER INSTABILITY. BY PRIORITISING "NEGOTIATION AND DIPLOMACY" OVER MILITARY SUPPORT, RUSSIA SIGNALS THAT ITS MAIN PRIORITY IS THE PRAGMATIC PRESERVATION OF THE REGIONAL STATUS QUO, POSITIONING ITSELF AS A "SECURITY BALANCER" THAT CAN EXPAND ITS INFLUENCE BY SIMPLY BEING THE MOST RELIABLE PROPONENT OF A CEASEFIRE.

## INDIA:

INDIA'S RESPONSE TO THE PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN BORDER CLASH IS AN ELEGANT EXERCISE IN "NARRATIVE WARFARE" USING THE CRISIS TO SABOTAGE ISLAMABAD'S REGIONAL STANDING. THE CLASH OFFERS NEW DELHI A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY TO RHETORICALLY SIDE WITH KABUL, ISOLATING PAKISTAN AND QUESTIONING ITS ROLE AS A REGIONAL SECURITY PROVIDER. INDIA'S "AFGHAN SOVEREIGNTY" ADVOCACY IS NOT JUST A PRINCIPLED CALL FOR A POWER THAT RESPECTS THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ITS NEIGHBOURS, BUT ALSO A WAY TO DISTINGUISH ITS OWN CONDUCT FROM WHAT IT CALLS PAKISTANI MILITARY ENCROACHMENT. THIS ALIGNMENT IS LESS ABOUT SUPPORTING THE TALIBAN'S INTERNAL POLICIES AND MORE ABOUT A PRAGMATIC "DOUBLE-SQUEEZE" ON PAKISTAN FROM BOTH ITS EASTERN AND WESTERN BORDERS.

THE OFFICIAL STATEMENTS OF THE TIMES OF INDIA AND HINDUSTAN TIMES HAVE CONSISTENTLY CONDEMNED THE PAKISTANI CROSS-BORDER STRIKES. INDIA HAS BEEN THE LOUDEST CRITIC OF THE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES FROM THESE OPERATIONS, EXPLICITLY DESCRIBING THE STRIKES AS A VIOLATION OF AFGHANISTAN'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. THE STRATEGIC LOGIC IS TO DELEGITIMIZE PAKISTAN'S "RIGHT TO SELF-DEFENSE" ARGUMENT BY EMPHASISING THE HUMANITARIAN COSTS. NEW DELHI MUDDIES PAKISTAN'S STORY OF THE CONFLICT AS A MERE COUNTER-TERRORISM ISSUE BY EMPHASISING SUPPORT FOR THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE AFGHAN STATE, AND INSTEAD HIGHLIGHTS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER PAKISTANI MILITARY INTERVENTION IS LEGAL.

THE STRATEGIC FALLOUT OF INDIA'S POLICY IS THE GRADUAL EROSION OF PAKISTAN'S DIPLOMATIC INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN. INDIA'S REJECTION OF "PROXY INVOLVEMENT" ALLEGATIONS AND ITS CULTIVATION OF "PRAGMATIC TIES" WITH THE TALIBAN AUTHORITIES OFFER KABUL A LEVEL OF INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY AND DIPLOMATIC SPACE THAT PAKISTAN HAS LONG SOUGHT TO DENY. SUCH BACKING FOR THE NOTION OF AFGHAN SOVEREIGNTY, VIA POLITICAL AND HUMANITARIAN AVENUES, CONSTRAINS PAKISTAN'S ABILITY TO CONTROL ITS WESTERN BORDER SOLELY THROUGH MILITARY MEANS. FOR INDIA, THE APPROACH BOLSTERS THE NARRATIVE OF PAKISTAN AS A SOURCE OF REGIONAL VOLATILITY AND EFFECTIVELY USES THE BORDER CONFLICT AS A MEANS TO ENHANCE INDIA'S OWN CREDENTIALS AS A STABLE, RESPONSIBLE REGIONAL LEADER.

DISTILLING THE KEY DIFFERENTIATORS IN INDIA'S RESPONSE, IT IS CLEAR THAT NEW DELHI IS THE ONLY MAJOR POWER TO OFFER EXPLICIT CRITICISM OF PAKISTANI MILITARY ACTION REGARDING CIVILIAN LOSS. WHILE OTHERS OFFER "MEDIATION" OR "POLITICAL COVER," INDIA'S RESPONSE IS A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO THE LEGITIMACY OF THE STRIKES. REPORTING FROM THE HINDUSTAN TIMES UNDERSCORES THAT INDIA STANDS FIRMLY BEHIND THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-INTERFERENCE, UTILIZING THE CONFLICT TO REINFORCE ITS BROADER FOREIGN POLICY GOAL OF ISOLATING PAKISTAN ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE. THIS COMPLEX WEB OF BILATERAL INTERESTS LEADS TO A FINAL CONSIDERATION OF HOW MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS ATTEMPT TO CONSTRAIN THE CURRENT VIOLENCE.

## QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

- HOW CAN SUCH REGIONAL CONFLICTS BE PREVENTED AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION BE DEVELOPED ESPECIALLY IN SOUTH ASIA?
- WHAT WAYS CAN BRING AN END TO SUCH HISTORICALLY STRAINED RELATIONS AND ENHANCE COHESIVE DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS?
- HOW CAN THE RISE OF SUCH ORGANISATIONS TO POWER LIKE THE TALIBAN GOVERNMENT BE PREVENTED AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS BE IMPROVED IN SUCH REGIONS LIKE THAT OF AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN?
- HOW DO STRAINED RELATIONS BETWEEN OTHER COUNTRIES AND TENSIONS IN OTHER REGIONS OF THE GLOBE AFFECT OR TRIGGER SUCH REGIONAL DISPUTES AND HOW CAN THIS CHAIN REACTION BE PREVENTED AND DEALT WITH?

**SPECPOL**

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

- RESEARCH IS KEY. RESEARCH AS MUCH AS YOU CAN BEFORE THE COMMITTEE BEGINS. EXCESS RESEARCH IS NEVER BAD, BUT LACK OF RESEARCH IS HURT AS YOU WILL HAVE A TOUGH TIME ASKING, AND FACING QUESTIONS, UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES, ETC. IN NO SITUATION CAN IT BE THAT YOU HAVE RESEARCHED ENOUGH AS THERE IS NO END TO RESEARCH BUT BEING WELL-PREPARED IS THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE.
- DO NOT RESTRICT YOUR RESEARCH TO THIS STUDY GUIDE. IT JUST GIVES YOU A ROUGH FRAMEWORK ON THE LINES YOU CAN RESEARCH FOR THIS AGENDA.
- BE CONFIDENT AND PRESENT YOUR SPEECHES CONFIDENTLY. EVEN IF YOU ARE A FIRST-TIMER, DO NOT BE BOTHERED BY EXPERIENCE. EXPERIENCE IS JUST A NUMBER.
- DO NOT FEAR QUESTIONS. ANY LOGICAL AND RELEVANT FACT CAN BE CONVERTED INTO AN ANSWER.
- PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN THE COMMITTEE. ASK AS MANY QUESTIONS AS YOU CAN AND SPEAK AS MUCH AS YOU CAN IN COMMITTEE. EVEN IF YOU HAVEN'T RESEARCHED VERY MUCH, YOU MAY AS WELL MAKE GENERAL SPEECHES REGARDING THE AGENDA AND ASK SUBSTANTIAL QUESTIONS. EVEN RAISING MOTIONS, ACTIVELY VOTING, ETC. IS A GOOD THING TO DO AS IT SHOWS YOU ARE ACTIVE IN THE COMMITTEE.

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**SPECPOL**