
Message from the Executive Board

Respected Members of Parliament,

The Executive of the **INDIAN CABINET** being simulated at **VISMUN 2025** welcomes your participation in this conference. We plan to channelize our efforts in making this a big learning experience.

Considering the nature of the conference, we look forward to making this more of a learning engagement while keeping up the spirit of competition and the essence of debate. We expect the debate to comprise of substantive points, logical analysis of facts and suggestions and advancement of political opinion. The meet is an endeavour to emulate the socio-political realities of India by bringing to light the various layers of polity and governance. With this committee, we aim to give you an insight into the complex political realities, the powers and responsibility of a stakeholder towards the Nation and above all bring out the leader within you.

The stakeholders should remember that not only a thorough and in-depth research, but a sense of political acumen and lobbying skills will be their key to success in this meeting. You should not only restrict your research to the recent developments but also dig the history and get acquainted with the whole concept since the agenda in hand is a crucial one. The portfolios are expected to be well versed with their party policies and understand the alignments prevailing in the country.

This guide, although very comprehensive and factual, provides a basic idea of the topics likely to be argued upon and may vary from those of the respective party or portfolio's ideologies. In no way is this guide to confine a participant's research. The guide consists of subjective and factual data with legal arguments, but this is just to make the participants understand the ways in which they must make their addresses.

We expect you to revert to us for any help with understanding or proceeding with the research in case you have any doubts or contentions till the end of the conference. Wishing you the very best,

Adv Shivansh Shrivastava

PRIME MINISTER

Abhisek Khuntia

CABINET SECRETARY

Enhancing Regional Security and Cooperation in South Asia Amidst India-Pakistan Tensions

Introduction to the Committee

The Indian Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) serves as the highest decision-making body on matters of national security, defense strategy, and foreign policy in India. Chaired by the Prime Minister, it comprises senior ministers including those responsible for External Affairs, Defense, Home Affairs, and Finance, along with key advisors such as the National Security Advisor and the Chief of Defence Staff. This committee operates in a high-stakes environment, analyzing intelligence, assessing threats, and formulating responses that safeguard India's sovereignty while promoting regional stability. In this context, the CCS is deliberating on the agenda item: *Enhancing Regional Security and Cooperation in South Asia Amidst India-Pakistan Tensions*. Delegates must simulate CCS members, drawing on real-time intelligence and diplomatic insights to recommend policies that mitigate risks, strengthen alliances, and foster economic interdependence. These recommendations should emphasize India's role as a "net security provider" in South Asia, prioritizing proactive diplomacy, robust defense postures, and multilateral engagements to counter adversarial influences and build resilient partnerships.

Topic Overview

South Asia, a vibrant and densely populated subcontinent encompassing eight diverse nations including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, is home to approximately 2.09 billion people—representing over a quarter of the global population—and boasts economies that have been expanding at an average annual rate of around 5.8% in recent years, driven by sectors like information technology, agriculture, and manufacturing. This region brims with extraordinary potential, from its rich cultural heritage and youthful demographics (with a median age under 30 in most countries) to its vast natural resources and strategic location bridging the Indian Ocean and Central Asia, yet it remains chronically undermined by deep-seated instability that manifests in multifaceted ways. Among the most pressing challenges are longstanding territorial disputes, such as those over the rugged, snow-capped Himalayas and fertile river valleys; persistent cross-border terrorism involving militant groups that exploit porous frontiers; the ever-looming specter of nuclear proliferation, with both India and Pakistan maintaining arsenals estimated at over 160 warheads each amid doctrines of credible minimum deterrence; and acute climate vulnerabilities, including devastating floods, cyclones, and droughts exacerbated by global warming, which displace millions annually and strain already fragile infrastructures. At the heart of these tensions lies the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan, a bitter feud rooted in the traumatic partition of 1947, which has fueled cycles of conflict, proxy warfare, and diplomatic standoffs, casting a long shadow over regional harmony and economic integration. India, emerging as the undisputed heavyweight of the region with a nominal GDP projected at about \$4.34 trillion in 2025 and a robust military expenditure of roughly \$75 billion allocated for the 2025-26 fiscal year—funding advanced acquisitions like Rafale jets, S-400 air defense systems, and indigenous missile programs—asserts its dominance through a proactive foreign policy framework. This includes

the "Neighborhood First" policy, which emphasizes building goodwill with immediate neighbors via aid, infrastructure projects, and cultural exchanges, and the "Act East" policy, which deepens ties with Southeast Asian nations to counterbalance influences in the Indo-Pacific, all while positioning India as a reliable "net security provider" committed to maritime security, disaster response, and counter-terrorism efforts across the Indian Ocean rim. In stark contrast, Pakistan grapples with severe economic headwinds, including a nominal GDP estimated at around \$412 billion in 2025, crippling external debt surpassing \$130 billion (much of it owed to multilateral lenders and China), high inflation rates hovering near 20%, and structural issues like energy shortages and political instability, prompting it to seek alliances with external powers—most notably China—for financial bailouts, military hardware, and infrastructure support, which in turn heightens suspicions and frictions with India by altering the regional balance of power. Mechanisms for regional cooperation, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)—a bloc uniting these nations with a collective GDP approaching \$4.9 trillion but frequently paralyzed by Indo-Pakistani bilateral disputes that have stalled summits and initiatives since 2016—and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which concentrates on enhancing connectivity around the Bay of Bengal through ambitious projects valued at over \$124 billion, including highways, ports, and energy grids linking India, Thailand, Myanmar, and others, provide promising avenues for collaborative progress in areas like cross-border trade (currently under 5% of total regional commerce), shared energy resources such as hydropower from the Himalayas, and joint disaster management frameworks to combat frequent natural calamities like the annual monsoon floods that affect tens of millions. The landscape has been further complicated by recent geopolitical upheavals, notably the intense but brief 2025 India-Pakistan conflict from May 7-10—a four-day crisis sparked by a deadly terrorist attack on April 22 in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, that claimed 26 lives and prompted Indian missile strikes on Pakistani targets, escalating into drone swarms, ballistic missile exchanges, and border skirmishes before a U.S.-brokered ceasefire halted the violence amid fears of nuclear brinkmanship—and China's expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments in Pakistan, which have surpassed \$65 billion through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), funding highways, power plants, and ports like Gwadar that not only bolster Pakistan's economy but also extend Beijing's strategic footprint, raising alarms in New Delhi about encirclement and debt-trap diplomacy. These developments vividly highlight the imperative for India to spearhead de-escalation strategies, such as confidence-building measures and backchannel dialogues, while robustly addressing hybrid threats including sophisticated cyberattacks that have targeted critical infrastructure like power grids and financial systems, as well as rampant disinformation campaigns on social media that amplify nationalist sentiments and erode trust across borders..

Historical Context

The traumatic partition of British India in August 1947, which cleaved the subcontinent along religious lines amid widespread communal violence that displaced over 15 million people and claimed up to two million lives in riots and massacres, sowed the seeds of deep-seated animosities between the newly formed nations of India and Pakistan, fueling a cycle of mistrust, territorial ambitions, and recurring military confrontations that have defined their bilateral relations for decades. This rivalry erupted into four major wars, each marked by intense battles, significant human costs, and unresolved grievances: the first in 1947-48, triggered by Pakistan's support for Pashtun tribal militias invading the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir to contest its accession to India, resulting in a United Nations-brokered ceasefire

that established the de facto Line of Control (LoC) dividing the disputed territory, with India suffering around 1,104 military deaths and Pakistan incurring approximately 6,000 casualties including irregular forces, leaving Kashmir as a perpetual flashpoint; the 1965 conflict, initiated by Pakistan's Operation Gibraltar involving covert infiltration of thousands of mujahideen into Kashmir to incite an uprising, escalating into full-scale armored and aerial warfare across the Punjab and Rajasthan fronts, with combined casualties exceeding 6,800 (India reporting 2,862 killed and Pakistan 3,800), ending in a stalemate under the Soviet-mediated Tashkent Agreement that restored the status quo but failed to address underlying issues; the 1971 war, sparked by Pakistan's brutal crackdown on Bengali separatists in East Pakistan amid a humanitarian crisis that saw 10 million refugees flee to India, prompting Indian military intervention in support of the Mukti Bahini guerrillas, culminating in the swift 13-day campaign that led to the surrender of 93,000 Pakistani troops, the creation of independent Bangladesh from Pakistan's eastern wing, and heavy losses including about 3,843 Indian soldiers killed and up to 9,000 Pakistani fatalities; and the 1999 Kargil intrusion, where Pakistani Northern Light Infantry and paramilitary forces covertly occupied strategic high-altitude positions in the Kargil district of Ladakh during winter, provoking a localized but fierce Indian counteroffensive under Operation Vijay that involved artillery barrages, infantry assaults, and air strikes, resulting in around 527 Indian deaths and 357-453 Pakistani casualties before Pakistan's withdrawal under international pressure, highlighting the risks of nuclear escalation in a post-1998 atomic era. Beyond conventional warfare, terrorism has emerged as a relentless and insidious flashpoint, often attributed to Pakistan-based militant outfits seeking to destabilize India through asymmetric attacks: the December 2001 assault on the Indian Parliament in New Delhi by five Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists armed with explosives and automatic weapons, which killed nine people including security personnel and a gardener while injuring 18 others, nearly sparking a full-scale war as India mobilized troops along the border; the November 2008 Mumbai attacks, orchestrated by ten Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operatives who infiltrated via sea and unleashed coordinated shootings and bombings at landmarks like the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, and Nariman House, claiming 166 lives (including 18 foreigners) and wounding over 300 in a 60-hour siege that exposed vulnerabilities in India's coastal security; the September 2016 Uri attack on an Indian Army brigade headquarters in Kashmir by four JeM militants equipped with grenades and assault rifles, resulting in the deaths of 19 unarmed soldiers in their barracks and barracks tents set ablaze, prompting India's first public acknowledgment of "surgical strikes" across the LoC; and the February 2019 Pulwama suicide bombing, where a JeM recruit rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a convoy of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) buses, killing 40 paramilitary personnel and injuring 35 in the deadliest attack on Indian forces in Kashmir, leading to India's retaliatory airstrikes on a JeM training camp in Balakot, Pakistan, which India claimed destroyed terrorist infrastructure while Pakistan denied significant damage. India has persistently accused Pakistan of providing safe havens, logistical support, and funding to UN-designated terrorist organizations like LeT and JeM, allegations bolstered by international scrutiny, including the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) placing Pakistan on its grey list for deficiencies in combating terror financing and money laundering multiple times—first in 2008, then from 2012 to 2015, and again from June 2018 until its removal in October 2022 after implementing 34 action items to strengthen legal frameworks, prosecute terror financiers, and enhance border controls, though concerns about enforcement lingered. These bilateral frictions have severely undermined regional multilateralism, particularly the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), established in December 1985 in Dhaka with eight member states to foster economic integration, cultural exchanges, and collective problem-solving amid shared challenges like poverty and climate change, yet achieving only modest success with intra-SAARC trade languishing at a mere 5% of the

region's total external trade (compared to 25% in ASEAN), hampered by non-tariff barriers, political distrust, and the requirement for unanimous decisions. SAARC's paralysis became evident when the 19th summit, scheduled for November 2016 in Islamabad, was abruptly canceled following the Uri attack, with India boycotting the event citing an uncondusive environment for dialogue amid cross-border terrorism, a stance echoed by Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Afghanistan, leading to no further summits since the 18th in Kathmandu in 2014—despite Pakistan's repeated proposals in 2025 to revive the forum through virtual meetings or agenda reforms to address economic cooperation without bilateral disputes. In response to SAARC's dysfunction, India has strategically pivoted toward sub-regional alternatives like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), founded in 1997 and comprising seven nations around the Bay of Bengal, focusing on pragmatic collaboration in areas such as trade, energy, and disaster management while excluding Pakistan to sidestep Indo-Pak tensions; in 2024-2025, BIMSTEC accelerated key connectivity initiatives, including the ambitious 1,360-kilometer India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway—a four-lane corridor linking Moreh in India's Manipur state to Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar's Tamu and Myawaddy, with India committing over Rs 1,177 crore (approximately \$140 million) for the 65-km Kalewa-Yargi stretch in Myanmar alone, part of an estimated total project cost exceeding \$484 million for the Myanmar segment and potentially \$2-3 billion overall, aimed at boosting cross-border trade volumes projected to reach \$10 billion annually by enhancing road, rail, and multimodal links to Southeast Asia and countering China's influence in the region.

Recent Developments (2024-2025)

The year 2025 witnessed a sharp escalation in India-Pakistan tensions, culminating in a four-day armed conflict from May 7-10, triggered by the April 22 terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir. This attack, executed by gunmen shouting Islamic slogans and targeting Hindu tourists, killed 26 civilians (25 Indians and 1 Nepalese), and was initially claimed by The Resistance Front (an LeT offshoot) before a retraction citing a hack. India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, striking nine terrorist sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir using BrahMos cruise missiles, SCALP-EG missiles, HAMMER glide bombs, and Rafale jets, claiming over 100 terrorists killed while minimizing civilian impact. Pakistan retaliated with Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos, deploying drones (including 300-400 Turkish-origin units), Fatah-I and Fatah-II ballistic missiles, and Chinese J-10C jets armed with PL-15 missiles, downing up to six Indian aircraft (including four Rafales) and claiming strikes on 26 Indian military targets. Intense drone warfare ensued, with India neutralizing over 600 Pakistani drones using S-400 systems (its first combat use) and Akash defenses, while Pakistan downed 77 Indian drones. Casualties totaled over 70: India reported 21 civilians and 8 military deaths; Pakistan claimed 40 civilians and 13 military losses, with disputed figures on terrorist casualties.

A U.S.-mediated ceasefire on May 10, facilitated by President Trump, Secretary Rubio, and VP Vance, halted hostilities amid fears of nuclear escalation, though India denied agreeing to broader talks. Post-conflict, India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty (affecting 80% of Pakistan's water supply), closed the Attari-Wagah border (halting \$2 billion in annual trade), and banned Pakistani overflights, while Pakistan reciprocated with airspace closures and trade halts. In July 2025, Pakistan raised Kashmir at the UNSC, urging peaceful resolution, and in August, PM Shehbaz Sharif warned against water diversion as a "red line." Naval posturing in the Arabian Sea (August 11-12) involved India's Western Fleet near Karachi, while a symbolic

flagpole height contest at Wagah-Attari on August 15 escalated nationalist rhetoric. Pakistan announced an Army Rocket Force on August 14 to oversee missile programs, enhancing conventional deterrence.

SAARC remains dysfunctional; an August 2025 webinar on sustainable farming included both nations, but a fisheries project excluded Pakistan. Pakistan, China, and Bangladesh are proposing a new bloc to replace SAARC, aiming for integration without India, potentially intensifying regional divisions. International dynamics include China's supply of J-10 fighters and PL-15 missiles to Pakistan during the conflict, and a U.S. report in August 2025 highlighting human rights abuses on both sides.

India's Initiatives for Regional Security and Cooperation

Amid turbulence, India has pursued multifaceted diplomacy in 2024-2025 to stabilize South Asia. In October 2024, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar attended the SCO Summit in Islamabad—the first such visit in nine years—renewing the Kartarpur Corridor for five years to facilitate Sikh pilgrimages and signaling limited engagement. Economic diplomacy includes \$500 million credit lines to neighbors like Sri Lanka and Maldives for infrastructure, and investments in BIMSTEC connectivity, such as the \$1.5 billion Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project linking India to Myanmar. India engaged Bangladesh's opposition amid political shifts, held dialogues with Afghanistan's Taliban on security (including a May 2025 meeting on counter-terrorism), and supported Myanmar's ethnic armed groups to secure borders against insurgency spillovers. In the Indo-Pacific, India conducted joint maritime exercises with ASEAN nations (involving over 20 ships in 2025) and Quad partners, enhancing interoperability under the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, which allocated \$50 million for regional cybersecurity in 2024. Humanitarian efforts, such as \$100 million in aid to Nepal post-earthquakes and vaccine diplomacy (over 10 million doses to South Asia in 2024), position India as a reliable partner, countering China's influence in "swing states" like Bangladesh and Nepal through projects like the \$2 billion Teesta River management initiative. These measures aim for pragmatic stability, with India's CDS General Anil Chauhan emphasizing in June 2025 that initial air losses in the conflict were overcome without nuclear risks.

Challenges and Opportunities

In the complex landscape of South Asian geopolitics, India and Pakistan continue to grapple with deep-seated issues that hinder lasting peace. Cross-border terrorism remains a critical flashpoint, exemplified by the deadly Pahalgam attack on April 22, 2025, where 26 people, including a Nepali citizen, were killed in India-administered Kashmir. This incident, claimed by The Resistance Front (an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba), prompted India's Operation Sindoor on May 7, 2025, involving airstrikes on terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. While exact figures for 2025 LoC incidents are not comprehensively tallied in available data, such events underscore ongoing tensions, with India linking them to cross-border support for terrorism.

Nuclear dynamics add another layer of risk, as both nations maintain substantial arsenals that raise thresholds for escalation. As of January 2025, India possesses 180 nuclear warheads (an increase from 172 in 2024), slightly surpassing Pakistan's unchanged count of 170. These

stockpiles, amid delivery system advancements, heighten the stakes in any confrontation, with India increasingly focusing on longer-range capabilities to address threats beyond Pakistan, including from China.

Regional cooperation through SAARC faces stagnation, with no evident progress on proposed summits for 2025. Pakistan's historical links to terrorism have contributed to boycotts, such as India's in 2016, leading to postponed meetings and limited advancements. Recent activities, like the SAARC-Japan Special Fund renewal in August 2025 for youth exchanges, show some functional continuity but highlight the organization's broader paralysis in addressing core political issues.

External Influences Fueling Rivalries

Outside powers exacerbate these frictions, particularly through economic and strategic investments. China's involvement via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) stands out, with cumulative investments reaching approximately \$68 billion from 2005 to 2024, heavily concentrated in energy (74% of the portfolio). Originally valued at \$46 billion and expanding to \$65 billion by 2022, CPEC has funded projects like coal-fired power plants and infrastructure, aiming to link Gwadar port to Xinjiang while bolstering Pakistan's economy. However, this has intensified proxy competitions, as India views it as encroaching on disputed territories and fueling regional imbalances.

Emerging Opportunities for Collaboration

Despite these hurdles, pathways for progress exist in economic, security, and environmental domains. Reviving the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) could unlock significant trade potential, with current intra-SAARC trade at around \$23 billion against an estimated \$67 billion opportunity. By reducing tariffs—aiming for 0-5% levels by varying deadlines (e.g., 2013 for India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka; 2020 for Afghanistan)—SAFTA promotes freer movement of goods, potentially boosting GDP growth by 1.4% and reducing poverty by 0.6% across the region.

On security, joint counter-terrorism efforts offer promise through mechanisms like the 2006 India-Pakistan Anti-Terrorism initiative, which facilitated intelligence sharing and investigations in four meetings before pausing after the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Renewed focus on such cooperation, including against proscribed entities, could disrupt terrorist networks and build trust.

Environmental collaboration via BIMSTEC presents another avenue, targeting climate challenges with annual disaster losses in the Bay of Bengal region estimated in the billions. The 2025 BIMSTEC Young Leaders' Climate Change Conference in New Delhi (February 20-24) gathered over 150 participants from seven member states to discuss mitigation strategies, sustainable development goals, and adaptation, aligning with India's regional policies like Neighborhood First and SAGAR.

Proposed Reforms for Greater Resilience

To overcome inertia, 2025 analyses suggest SAARC reforms, such as easing unanimity requirements that allow single-state vetoes and integrating women's leadership for more inclusive governance. Evidence from national contexts, like Nepal's gender quotas enhancing decision-making and Bangladesh's improvements in human development, indicates that women-led models prioritize transparency and long-term priorities. Drawing from ASEAN's successes in gender-inclusive integration, these changes could revitalize SAARC, fostering agile cooperation on shared crises like disasters and economic growth

Questions for the Committee

In a professional mode, the committee should deliberate on these guiding questions to formulate comprehensive policy directives:

1. How can India optimize backchannel diplomacy and leverage third-party mediators like the U.S. or SCO to de-escalate LoC tensions and compel Pakistan to dismantle terrorist infrastructure, drawing lessons from the May 2025 ceasefire?
2. What structural reforms to SAARC—such as streamlining decision-making to bypass unanimity or establishing sub-regional working groups—should India advocate to revitalize the organization while isolating bilateral disputes with Pakistan?
3. Given the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty and Pakistan's August 2025 warnings on water diversion, how should India develop joint monitoring and arbitration mechanisms to ensure water security without provoking further conflict?
4. In response to China's military aid to Pakistan (e.g., J-10 fighters during the 2025 conflict) and proposals for a new regional bloc, what strategies can India employ to deepen partnerships with South Asian swing states like Bangladesh and Nepal through targeted economic incentives?
5. How might India integrate advanced technologies, such as drone defenses and cyber capabilities demonstrated in the 2025 conflict, into a broader arms control dialogue with Pakistan to avert future escalations and reduce nuclear risks?
6. What role should India assign to humanitarian and economic diplomacy, including expanded credit lines and connectivity projects under BIMSTEC, to counter disinformation and build trust in the region post-2025 conflict?
7. How can India balance enhanced border security measures, such as fortifications around the Siliguri Corridor, with confidence-building initiatives like cultural exchanges to mitigate nationalist escalations seen in the August 2025 flagpole contest?
8. In light of the 2025 drone and missile exchanges, what multilateral frameworks, potentially involving Quad partners, should India propose for regulating emerging technologies in South Asian security dynamics?

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8. Research paper and Surveys.
9. Questions and Answers of the parliament



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