INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF SOUTH ASIA

The South Asian Security Environment

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • November 17, 2026 • 18 min read



South Asia is often described as one of the **most dangerous and least integrated regions** in the world. It has two nuclear-armed rivals (India and Pakistan) and a third nuclear power on its border (China). It has experienced several inter-state wars, long-running insurgencies, terrorism, mass migration and frequent political crises. At the same time, its states have very weak regional cooperation. To test the claims of structural realism, we must first understand this **security environment** in full.

Meaning of security

- **Traditional (state-centric) security**: protection of the **state's territory, sovereignty and political independence** against external military threats. This is the realist view.
- **Broadened security**: Barry Buzan (*People, States and Fear*, 1983) identified five sectors of security: **military, political, economic, societal and environmental**.
- **Human security**: the UNDP **Human Development Report 1994** (influenced by the Pakistani economist **Mahbub ul Haq**) shifted focus to the security of people: "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want".
- **Non-traditional security (NTS)**: threats that are non-military and often transnational, such as terrorism, migration, pandemics, climate change, water scarcity, drugs and human trafficking.

Key features of the South Asian security environment

1. **Enduring rivalries**: India–Pakistan (since 1947) and India–China (since the late 1950s).
2. **Nuclearisation**: India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons in May 1998; China has been nuclear since 1964.
3. **India-centric asymmetry**: India's size and centrality shape the fears of all its neighbours.
4. **Intertwined internal and external threats**: ethnic, religious and separatist movements cross borders and become inter-state issues.
5. **Non-state actors**: terrorist and militant groups operate across borders.
6. **Extra-regional powers**: the USA, the Soviet Union/Russia, China and Gulf states have long shaped regional conflicts.
7. **Weak regional institutions**: SAARC has not functioned effectively; there is no regional security arrangement.
8. **Non-traditional threats**: poverty, climate change, water disputes, natural disasters, migration and pandemics affect millions.

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A short history of conflict in the region

Period	Major security events
1947–1949	Partition violence; first India–Pakistan war over Kashmir
1962	India–China war
1965	Second India–Pakistan war
1971	Bangladesh Liberation War; third India–Pakistan war
1974	India’s first nuclear test (Pokhran-I)
1979–1989	Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; Pakistan becomes a frontline state
1983–2009	Sri Lankan civil war; IPKF in Sri Lanka (1987–90)
1989 onward	Insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir
1998	India and Pakistan nuclear tests
1999	Kargil war
2001–02	Parliament attack and Operation Parakram (military standoff)
2008	Mumbai terror attacks
2016, 2019	Uri and Pulwama attacks; India’s surgical strikes and Balakot air strike
2017, 2020	Doklam standoff and Galwan clash with China
2021	Taliban return to power in Afghanistan
2025	Pahalgam attack and Operation Sindoor (India–Pakistan); Pakistan–Afghanistan border clashes

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The India–Pakistan Rivalry

The India–Pakistan rivalry is the **central security problem** of South Asia. Scholars such as T.V. Paul (*The India–Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*, 2005) call it an **"enduring rivalry"**: a long-lasting, intense conflict marked by repeated crises and wars.

Roots of the rivalry

- **Partition and identity**: two states founded on opposing ideas of the nation (secular India vs Muslim homeland Pakistan).
- **Kashmir**: the main territorial dispute since 1947, divided by the **Line of Control** (LoC, named in the Simla Agreement of 1972). India sees Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India; Pakistan sees it as the "unfinished agenda of Partition".
- **Power asymmetry**: Pakistan, much smaller, seeks parity or balance against India through alliances, nuclear weapons and asymmetric means.
- **Military's role in Pakistan**: the army's institutional interests and identity are built around the India threat.
- **Cross-border terrorism**: India accuses Pakistan of supporting militant groups (Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed) as instruments of policy; Pakistan denies this and accuses India of backing insurgents in Balochistan.
- **Other disputes**: Siachen Glacier (since 1984), Sir Creek, river waters.

Wars and crises

- **Wars**: 1947–48, 1965, 1971 and **Kargil (1999)**.
- **Major crises**: Brasstacks (1986–87), the 1990 Kashmir crisis, Operation Parakram (2001–02), Mumbai (2008), Uri and the surgical strikes (2016), Pulwama and the Balakot air strike (2019).
- **Nuclear shadow**: after 1998, every crisis has carried the risk of nuclear escalation. This is studied as the **"stability-instability paradox"**: nuclear weapons prevent full-scale

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war but may encourage limited conflict and terrorism under the nuclear umbrella (Unit III).

The 2025 crisis: Pahalgam and Operation Sindoor

- On **22 April 2025**, a terror attack at **Pahalgam** in Jammu and Kashmir killed 26 civilians, mostly tourists. India blamed Pakistan-based groups.
- India responded with diplomatic and economic measures, most importantly putting the **Indus Waters Treaty (1960) "in abeyance"**, the first time the treaty had been suspended despite earlier wars.
- On **7 May 2025**, India launched **Operation Sindoor**: missile and drone strikes on nine sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir that India described as terrorist infrastructure (Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed). Pakistan called it an act of war and retaliated; both sides exchanged drone, missile and artillery fire. The US Congressional Research Service described it as **the worst fighting between the two nuclear powers in decades**.
- A **ceasefire** was announced on **10 May 2025**, after talks between the two Directors General of Military Operations; the USA claimed a role in brokering it, while India said it was agreed bilaterally.
- **One year on (May 2026)**: India said the treaty would stay in abeyance until Pakistan "credibly and irrevocably" ends support for cross-border terrorism, and the border remains highly militarised. Pakistan describes India's use of water as a new form of coercion.

Significance for realism

- The rivalry looks like a textbook case of realism: an **arms race**, a **security dilemma**, **alliances** with outside powers, **nuclear deterrence** and repeated wars.
- But identity (religion and nationhood), domestic politics (the army in Pakistan, public opinion in India) and **non-state actors** (terrorist groups) are central to it. These are exactly the factors structural realism ignores, which the later topics will examine.

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The India–China Rivalry

China is not a South Asian state, but it borders India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan and is deeply involved in the region. Many scholars therefore treat **China as part of the South Asian security system**, or speak of a wider "Southern Asia".

Roots of the rivalry

- **Border dispute**: about 3,488 km of disputed boundary along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**: **Aksai Chin** in the west (held by China, claimed by India) and **Arunachal Pradesh** in the east (held by India, claimed by China as "South Tibet"). China rejects the McMahon Line.
- **Tibet**: China's control of Tibet (1950) removed a buffer; the Dalai Lama's asylum in India (1959) remains a sensitive issue.
- **1962 war**: China's victory left a lasting sense of humiliation and mistrust in India.
- **China–Pakistan "all-weather" partnership**: border agreement (1963, including the Shaksgam Valley), nuclear and missile cooperation, arms supply and the **China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** through Pakistan-administered Kashmir, which India opposes.
- **Competition for influence** in South Asia and the Indian Ocean (the "string of pearls" idea: Chinese-linked ports such as Gwadar, Hambantota, Chittagong and Kyaukpyu).
- **Asymmetry**: China's economy and military are several times larger than India's.

Recent crises and thaw

- **Depsang (2013)**, **Chumar (2014)**, **Doklam (2017)** on the Bhutan–China–India trijunction, and the **Galwan clash (June 2020)** in eastern Ladakh, in which 20 Indian soldiers and an officially smaller number of Chinese soldiers died, the first deaths on the LAC since 1975.
- After 2020, both sides deployed tens of thousands of troops. Relations began to improve only after the **October 2024 disengagement agreement**, which ended the prolonged

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standoff and covered patrolling in **Depsang and Demchok**.

- Leaders' meetings in **Kazan (October 2024)** and **Tianjin (August 2025)** guided further talks. In **August 2026**, the Special Representatives (Ajit Doval and Wang Yi) met in Beijing and agreed to keep seeking a **"fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable"** boundary settlement, with the next round due in India in 2027. Commentators noted that the talks moved from disengagement towards discussing **boundary delimitation**.
- **Analysts' view**: a "stability without strategic trust": disengagement coexists with heavy militarisation and new infrastructure on both sides.

Significance for realism

- The India–China relationship fits realist ideas of a **rising-power rivalry**, **balancing** (India's closer ties with the USA, Japan and Australia through the **Quad**) and the **security dilemma** in the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean.
- But it also shows **economic interdependence** (China is one of India's largest trading partners), diplomacy through institutions (BRICS, SCO) and periods of thaw, which liberal theories highlight.

India-centric Asymmetry and the Smaller Neighbours

South Asia's security environment is shaped by a basic fact: **India is far larger than all its neighbours combined**, and it sits at the geographic centre of the region. This creates an **asymmetric power structure**.

India's perspective

- India sees South Asia as its **natural sphere of influence** and wants a stable neighbourhood free from hostile outside powers.
- **"Indira Doctrine"** (1970s–80s): India would not tolerate external intervention in a neighbouring state's conflict that could harm Indian interests; neighbours should seek help from India first. Examples: the 1971 war, the India–Sri Lanka Accord and IPKF (1987),

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Operation Cactus in Maldives (1988), the Nepal trade and transit dispute (1989–90).

- **Gujral Doctrine** (1996–97): India would give more to its smaller neighbours **without asking for reciprocity**, to build trust. It led to the Ganga Water Treaty with Bangladesh (1996).
- **“Neighbourhood First”** policy (from 2014) and **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region, 2015), later expanded as **MAHASAGAR** (2025): connectivity, development aid and security cooperation.

The smaller neighbours’ perspective

- They often see India as a **dominant or hegemonic power** and fear interference in their domestic politics.
- To reduce dependence, they practise **balancing or hedging**, mostly by building ties with **China** (and sometimes the USA, Gulf states or others).
- **Nepal**: the 2015 border blockade and boundary disputes (Kalapani, Lipulekh, Susta); balancing with China (BRI agreements).
- **Sri Lanka**: Chinese loans and the **Hambantota port** lease (2017); Chinese research ship visits that concerned India.
- **Maldives**: shifts between “India First” and “India Out” positions.
- **Bangladesh**: close ties with India under Sheikh Hasina; after August 2024, relations became strained (the issue of Hasina’s stay in India, minority concerns), while the new BNP government seeks a more balanced foreign policy.
- **Bhutan**: the closest security partner of India; accepts Indian guidance and benefits from hydropower cooperation, but is negotiating its boundary with China.
- **Pakistan**: openly balances India through China and other partners.

Concepts to use

- **Regional hegemony** (Mearsheimer): India as a potential regional hegemon.
- **Balance of threat** (Walt): neighbours fear India because it is close and powerful.

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- **Bandwagoning**: Bhutan's close alignment with India.
- **"Small state" security dilemma**: small states fear both abandonment and domination.
- **Hedging**: keeping options open with several powers instead of fully balancing or bandwagoning.

Role of Extra-regional Powers

Outside powers have always been part of South Asia's security environment. Regional rivals have invited them in to balance each other, and great powers have used the region for their own strategic aims.

The Cold War period (1947–1991)

- **USA and Pakistan**: Pakistan joined **SEATO (1954)** and **CENTO/Baghdad Pact (1955)** and signed a mutual defence agreement with the USA (1954). It became a **frontline state** against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (1979–89). US military aid strengthened the Pakistani army.
- **India and the Soviet Union**: India followed **non-alignment** but grew close to the USSR, especially after the **Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation (August 1971)**, which helped India during the Bangladesh war. The USSR became India's main arms supplier.
- **USA in 1971**: the USA "tilted" towards Pakistan and sent the **USS Enterprise** into the Bay of Bengal, an episode that deepened Indian mistrust.
- **China**: built close ties with Pakistan after 1962, helping its nuclear and missile programmes.

After the Cold War

- **USA–India convergence**: after the 1998 tests and sanctions, relations improved quickly: the **Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement (2005–08)**, defence agreements (LEMOA 2016, COMCASA 2018, BECA 2020), and the **Quad** (India, USA, Japan, Australia) revived in

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2017. The USA sees India as a balancer against China in the **Indo-Pacific**. Relations have also seen strains, such as trade disputes in 2025.

- **USA–Pakistan**: close again after 9/11 (“major non-NATO ally”, 2004) during the war in Afghanistan, then strained over terrorism; renewed engagement in 2025.
- **Russia**: remains a key defence partner of India (S-400 air defence system) and an energy supplier, while improving ties with Pakistan and engaging the Taliban.
- **China**: the most important outside power today, through trade, the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, ports, loans and arms supplies, especially to Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives.
- **Gulf states**: major sources of remittances and energy. In **September 2025**, **Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed a “Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement”**, under which aggression against either is treated as aggression against both, a significant new external link in the regional security picture.
- **Japan, the EU and others** provide aid and investment, and Japan is a key Quad partner of India.

Effects on regional security

- **Positive**: outside powers have sometimes helped de-escalate crises (US diplomacy in Kargil 1999, 2001–02, 2019 and 2025).
- **Negative**: they have armed rivals, encouraged dependence, and brought great-power competition (US–Soviet in the past, US–China now) into the region.
- **Realist interpretation**: regional states use outside powers to **balance** each other, and great powers use regional states as partners in their own balancing (a “penetrated” regional system, in Buzan’s language).

Afghanistan and the North-western Frontier

Afghanistan links South Asia with Central Asia, Iran and the Middle East. It has been the region’s most unstable frontier for more than four decades.

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Key phases

- **Soviet invasion (1979–89)**: Pakistan, backed by the USA and Saudi Arabia, trained the Afghan mujahideen. This produced a huge flow of weapons, drugs and refugees, and the rise of jihadi networks (the “Kalashnikov culture”).
- **Civil war and the first Taliban regime (1992–2001)**: Pakistan supported the Taliban to gain **“strategic depth”** against India; Al-Qaeda found sanctuary there.
- **US-led war (2001–2021)**: after 9/11, the USA and NATO overthrew the Taliban. India became a major development partner of the Afghan republic. Pakistan was accused of playing a double game.
- **Taliban return (August 2021)**: the USA withdrew and the republic collapsed.

Pakistan–Afghanistan tensions since 2021

- Pakistan expected a friendly Taliban government, but relations have worsened over the **Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)**, which Islamabad says operates from Afghan soil. The Taliban deny harbouring it.
- Afghanistan has never accepted the **Durand Line**, and Pakistan has fenced much of the border and deported large numbers of Afghan refugees.
- In **October 2025**, the two sides fought their **heaviest border clashes since 2021**: Kabul accused Pakistan of air strikes inside Afghanistan; the Taliban attacked Pakistani border posts on 11 October, and Pakistan said 23 of its soldiers were killed while claiming to have killed about 200 Taliban fighters. Pakistan then struck targets in Kandahar and Kabul, and a temporary ceasefire was agreed on 15 October 2025. Pakistan’s defence minister alleged that the Taliban had become a “proxy for Delhi”.
- Border firing broke out again in **February 2026**, and by mid-2026 Pakistani commentators described the conflict as expanding.

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India and Afghanistan

- India supported the Afghan republic with about $3 billion in development aid (Parliament building, Salma Dam, roads).
- After 2021, India first closed its embassy but has gradually re-engaged with the Taliban government. The October 2025 clashes happened while the Taliban foreign minister was visiting India, which Pakistan saw as hostile.

Significance

- Afghanistan shows how **non-state actors**, **ideology**, **ethnic links across borders** (Pashtuns) and **great-power intervention** shape regional security, not just the balance of power between states.
- It also shows a **“triangle”** of rivalry: India and Pakistan compete for influence in Kabul, each fearing the other’s presence on its flank.

Internal and Non-traditional Security Threats

For most South Asian states, the most frequent and deadly threats come **from within** or from **non-military, transnational** sources. This is a key point for the critique of structural realism.

Internal security threats

State	Main internal threats
India	Insurgency and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir; ethnic insurgencies in the north-east (Naga, Manipur, earlier Mizo and Assam); Maoist (Left-wing extremist) insurgency; communal violence
Pakistan	TTP and other jihadi militancy; Baloch insurgency; sectarian violence; political instability
Bangladesh	Islamist militancy (e.g., the 2016 Holey Artisan attack); political violence; the Rohingya refugee crisis

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Sri Lanka	Legacy of the civil war (1983–2009); Easter Sunday attacks (2019); economic crisis and protests (2022)
Nepal	Maoist insurgency (1996–2006); Madhesi unrest; Gen Z protests (2025)
Afghanistan	Taliban rule; ISIS-Khorasan attacks; ethnic tension; humanitarian crisis

Terrorism and non-state actors

- South Asia has been among the regions most affected by terrorism in the world.
- Groups include **Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen, the TTP, Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, ISIS-K**, and earlier the **LTTE**.
- Terrorism blurs the line between internal and external security and makes deterrence difficult, because non-state actors have no clear territory to target.

Non-traditional security threats

- **Migration and refugees**: Partition (1947), Bangladesh (1971), Tibetans, Sri Lankan Tamils, Lhotshampas, Afghans and Rohingya. Illegal migration from Bangladesh to India is a sensitive political and security issue (Unit IV).
- **Water security**: disputes over the Indus (India–Pakistan; the treaty in abeyance since 2025), the Ganga and Teesta (India–Bangladesh), the Brahmaputra (China’s dams upstream) and Himalayan rivers (India–Nepal).
- **Climate change and disasters**: South Asia is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions: glacial melt, floods (Pakistan 2022), cyclones, sea-level rise (Maldives, Bangladesh), heatwaves and droughts.
- **Health security**: pandemics such as COVID-19.
- **Drugs and organised crime**: the “Golden Crescent” (Afghanistan–Pakistan–Iran) and the “Golden Triangle” (Myanmar–Thailand–Laos) on either side of the region.
- **Economic security**: debt crises (Sri Lanka 2022, Pakistan’s repeated IMF programmes), energy shortages and food insecurity.

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- **Cyber security and disinformation**: a growing dimension in India–Pakistan and India–China competition.

Significance

These threats show that the **referent object** of security in South Asia is often the **people** or **society**, not just the state's territory. They cannot be solved by military power or balance of power alone; they need cooperation, development and good governance. This is a major limit of structural realism, which the next topics develop.

The Indian Ocean Dimension

South Asian security is not only continental. The **Indian Ocean** is increasingly important for trade, energy and great-power competition.

- **Strategic importance**: major sea lanes carrying oil and trade pass through chokepoints such as the **Strait of Hormuz**, **Bab-el-Mandeb** and the **Strait of Malacca**. Most of India's trade by volume moves by sea.
- **India's role**: India sees itself as a **"net security provider"** in the Indian Ocean, through naval presence, disaster relief (the 2004 tsunami response), anti-piracy operations and the SAGAR/MAHASAGAR vision. It has built partnerships with island states (Maldives, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Seychelles).
- **China's presence**: Chinese naval deployments since 2008 (anti-piracy), a base in **Djibouti** (2017), and investments in ports (**Gwadar** in Pakistan, **Hambantota** in Sri Lanka, Chittagong in Bangladesh, Kyaukpyu in Myanmar). Indian analysts call this the **"string of pearls"**; China describes it as commercial.
- **The Quad and the Indo-Pacific**: India, the USA, Japan and Australia cooperate on maritime security (the Malabar naval exercise).
- **Non-traditional maritime threats**: piracy, illegal fishing, drug and arms smuggling, maritime terrorism (the 2008 Mumbai attackers came by sea), and climate risks to island states like Maldives.

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- **Earlier ideas**: the 1971 UN General Assembly declaration of the Indian Ocean as a **“Zone of Peace”**, which India and Sri Lanka supported to keep great-power rivalry out.

Significance: the maritime dimension shows South Asian security being drawn into wider **Indo-Pacific** great-power competition, where realist ideas of balancing and hegemony are often used, but where cooperation on non-traditional threats is equally important.

Regional Security Cooperation: Attempts and Limits

SAARC and other regional bodies

- **SAARC** (1985) deliberately kept **bilateral and contentious issues** out of its agenda. It adopted a Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism (1987, with an Additional Protocol in 2004) and SAFTA (2004), but India–Pakistan hostility has paralysed it. No SAARC summit has been held since **Kathmandu (2014)**; the 2016 Islamabad summit was cancelled after the Uri attack.
- **BIMSTEC** (Bay of Bengal Initiative, 1997; includes India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand, but not Pakistan) has become India’s preferred regional platform, with security cooperation on terrorism and disasters.
- **Colombo Security Conclave**: a maritime security grouping led by India with Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and later Bangladesh.
- **SCO**: India and Pakistan both joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2017, but it has not eased their rivalry.

Confidence-building measures (CBMs)

- **India–Pakistan**: the **Agreement on Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations** (1988; lists exchanged every 1 January), the **Lahore Declaration** (1999), agreement on pre-notification of ballistic missile tests (2005), the DGMO hotline, and the LoC ceasefire (2003, reaffirmed in February 2021).

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- **India–China**: agreements of **1993**, **1996**, **2005**, **2012 (WMCC)** and **2013 (Border Defence Cooperation Agreement)**, which kept the border largely peaceful for decades until 2020.
- **Limits**: CBMs have often broken down in crises, and suspicion remains high.

Conclusion

The South Asian security environment is shaped by **enduring rivalries** (India–Pakistan and India–China), **nuclear weapons**, **India's central and dominant position**, the involvement of **outside powers**, the instability of **Afghanistan**, and a wide range of **internal and non-traditional threats**. Recent events (the 2025 India–Pakistan conflict and the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, the Pakistan–Afghanistan clashes, the slow India–China thaw, and the new Saudi–Pakistan defence pact) show that this environment remains volatile.

Some of these features (arms races, alliances, balancing, deterrence) seem to confirm **structural realism**. Others (terrorism by non-state actors, identity-based hostility, internal insurgencies, regime insecurity, refugee flows, climate and water stress) fall outside its state-centric and military focus. The next topic examines **what structural realism explains well** in South Asia, before the following topic examines **where it fails**.

Quick Revision

Item	Key fact
Simla Agreement	1972; ceasefire line renamed Line of Control
Indus Waters Treaty	1960, World Bank-mediated; held "in abeyance" by India since April 2025
Operation Sindoor	India's strikes on Pakistan, 7 May 2025; ceasefire 10 May 2025
India–China war	1962

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Galwan clash	June 2020
India–China disengagement agreement	October 2024 (Depsang and Demchok)
Indo-Soviet Treaty	August 1971
Pakistan in SEATO and CENTO	1954 and 1955
Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement	2005–08
Saudi–Pakistan Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement	17 September 2025
Pakistan–Afghanistan border clashes	October 2025; temporary ceasefire on 15 October 2025
Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace	UN General Assembly, 1971
Human Development Report on human security	UNDP, 1994 (Mahbub ul Haq)
Last SAARC summit	Kathmandu, 2014

Key doctrines: Indira Doctrine (no outside intervention in the neighbourhood), Gujral Doctrine (non-reciprocal generosity), Neighbourhood First (2014), SAGAR (2015) and MAHASAGAR (2025).

Exam Practice

Long-answer questions

1. Describe the main features of the South Asian security environment.
2. Why is the India–Pakistan relationship called an “enduring rivalry”? Discuss with reference to recent developments.
3. Examine the role of extra-regional powers in shaping South Asian security.
4. How does India-centric asymmetry shape the security perceptions of the smaller South Asian states?
5. Discuss the growing importance of non-traditional security threats in South Asia.
6. Analyse the significance of Afghanistan for South Asian security after 2021.

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7. Evaluate the role of SAARC and confidence-building measures in regional security.

Short-answer questions

1. Enduring rivalry
2. Line of Actual Control
3. Indira Doctrine
4. Gujral Doctrine
5. String of pearls
6. Human security
7. Operation Sindoor
8. Strategic depth
9. Colombo Security Conclave
10. Stability-instability paradox

MCQs (UGC-NET / OPSC style)

1. Which doctrine emphasised non-reciprocal concessions to India’s smaller neighbours?
   - (a) Indira Doctrine (b) Gujral Doctrine (c) Look East (d) Neighbourhood First
   - **Answer: (b)**

2. The Indus Waters Treaty was signed in:
   - (a) 1950 (b) 1960 (c) 1972 (d) 1996
   - **Answer: (b)**

3. The Galwan clash between India and China took place in:
   - (a) 2017 (b) 2019 (c) 2020 (d) 2022
   - **Answer: (c)**

4. Which of the following is NOT a member of BIMSTEC?

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- (a) Nepal (b) Thailand (c) Pakistan (d) Myanmar
- **Answer: (c)**

5. The concept of human security was popularised by the UNDP Human Development Report of:
   - (a) 1990 (b) 1994 (c) 2000 (d) 2005
   - **Answer: (b)**

6. The term “enduring rivalry” for India–Pakistan relations is associated with:
   - (a) T.V. Paul (b) Kenneth Waltz (c) Stephen Cohen (d) Barry Buzan
   - **Answer: (a)**

7. Match the following:
   - A. Doklam standoff – 1. 1999
   - B. Kargil war – 2. 2017
   - C. Operation Cactus – 3. 2025
   - D. Operation Sindoor – 4. 1988
   - **Answer: A-2, B-1, C-4, D-3**

8. Assertion (A): Smaller South Asian states often build ties with China. Reason (R): They seek to balance or hedge against India’s dominance.
   - **Answer: Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.**

9. Buzan’s five sectors of security do NOT include:
   - (a) Military (b) Societal (c) Environmental (d) Cultural
   - **Answer: (d)**

10. Which pair signed a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement in September 2025?
    - (a) China–Pakistan (b) Saudi Arabia–Pakistan (c) USA–India (d) Turkey–Pakistan
    - **Answer: (b)**

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Suggested readings

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- China, India hold border talks (Reuters via Express Tribune, August 2026)
- Beyond the LAC: India and China discuss delimitation (Open Magazine)
- Ceasefire declared after Pakistan hits targets in Kabul, Kandahar (Dawn, October 2025)
- Saudi Arabia, Pakistan sign defence pact (Arab News, September 2025)

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