

South Asia

A Topic Proposal for the National Federation of High Schools Topic Selection Committee

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August 5-7, 2022

Introduction

As a mixed year in the topic rotation, 2023-24 offers debaters an opportunity to explore a rich yet novel subfield of international relations literature. Though critical to American foreign policy, South Asia has received minimal attention in policy debate topics. It offers several promising and timely avenues for a rich year of debate: the relationship between India and Pakistan, the region's strategic importance in the face of a rising China, and the fallout from America's withdrawal from Afghanistan, among others.

South Asia consists of six to eight countries, depending on who you ask: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka; and arguably Afghanistan and the Maldives. This region has been neglected in policy debate resolutions. India has made a single appearance in a high school or college resolution (1992-93, RESOLVED: ""That the United States should substantially change its development and assistance policies toward one or more of the following nations: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.") While Afghanistan played a central role in the military presence resolutions (2010-11 in high school and 2015-16 in college), even the oldest of today's high school debaters were still in elementary school. And no other South Asian country has ever appeared in a topic. While recent resolutions, such as China and arms sales, included some conversation of South Asian politics, their depth was cursory, at best, in generally broad resolutions.

Three broad geopolitical shifts in the region and the broader world make South Asia especially crucial to America's foreign policy today. First, a lighter American role in Afghanistan has affected the regional security theater. While its ultimate impact is unclear, it certainly motivates a broader rethinking of America's ties to South Asia. Second, America has long promised a pivot to Asia, incentivized by regional commerce and, more importantly, China's belligerence in the Asia-Pacific. South Asian countries, especially India, are a significant source

of potential leverage. Third, the resurgence of global terrorist groups, like al-Qaeda and ISIS, in the region could motivate additional changes in American posture.

Most importantly, the optimal course of action is up for debate. A South Asia topic applies familiar arguments about international relations, like China containment or Russian spheres of influence, to a brand new region. It incentivizes novel, creative research, such as South Asian politics and undertheorized kritikal ground. And the region itself has deep personal significance to many members of the debate community, including the topic author. In this vein, I offer the following controversy area and resolutions for consideration.

Justification of Controversy Area

Before introducing the proposed slate of resolutions, I will justify the controversy area as a whole. This helps prove its viability and potential for a year of intellectually engaging debates.

As a broader frame for the controversy area, Bill Batterman of Woodward Academy has posited three generally useful conditions for a topic (Batterman, 2021). First, that it will likely be interesting to study. Second, that the affirmative must deviate significantly from the status quo. Third, that the topic includes a reasonably limited set of affirmatives likely to produce high quality debates. We will return to these three conditions after discussing various criteria.

Timeliness

America's relationship with the South Asian region is an actively evolving topic. None of the three changes identified in the introduction – Afghanistan, a rising China, and regional terrorism – are likely to change before the 2023-24 season. In reality, all of them will likely be evolving topics even then.

First, the situation in Afghanistan remains highly volatile. The Taliban has consolidated power within the country and has begun to challenge the Afghanistan/Pakistan border and the Pakistani military (Mir, 2022). Dozens of militant groups, including al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, have started using Afghanistan as a base for attacks on Central Asian states like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (O'Donnell, 2022). At the same time,

the Afghan resistance, led by the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan, still opposes the Taliban and the other terror groups (Rubin, 2021). These tensions will almost certainly remain unresolved in the next few years. American policymakers must identify potential responses in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and South Asia broadly.

Second, despite a decade of talk, America's pivot to Asia has yet to yield any real strategic results. This diversion partly stems from more pressing investments in other parts of the world, like the Middle East and, more recently, Ukraine (Tharoor, 2022). It has also been caused by shifts in administrative foreign policy (Birgbauer, 2022). President Barack Obama first introduced the pivot and established broader frameworks for multilateralism in the region. Due to strengthening global terrorism organizations and Iran, he instead prioritized the Middle East. President Donald Trump eschewed multilateralism and withdrew from institutions like the Trans-Pacific Partnership. While his unpredictable rhetoric and actions unsettled China, he did not establish a strategic framework that countered China's rise. President Joe Biden hoped to shore up alliances but has instead found himself countering old issues in the Middle East, like the Iran deal and the Afghanistan withdrawal, and has also had to manage the Russia-Ukraine conflict. As a result, while a decade of literature lists the pros and cons of the Asia pivot, this policy shift has hardly occurred, despite China's increasing economic and military might. Consequently, changes to America's South Asia policy can begin to implement this broader change in foreign policy priority.

Third, regional terrorism has only increased. In addition to Afghanistan, terrorist organizations have increased their strength across the subcontinent. Historic threats, like Hizafat-e-Islam in Bangladesh and ISIS in the Maldives, have recently grown in strength after recent drawdowns (Kapur, 2022; Gough, 2021). Because of broad commercial ties between countries, other regional nations like Nepal are potential staging points for international terrorism (Gupta, 2021). This broad rise in novel non-state actors likely requires changes in American policy.

Scope, Range, and Interest

South Asian policy has deep significance for debaters across the country. The issues discussed above – the rise of China, conflict with Russia, and the battle against global terror – have characterized America’s foreign policy challenges over the last two decades. Students will thus have broad conceptual familiarity with these issues. But South Asia offers a unique lens not covered in coursework or daily news. As a result, its scope and range can facilitate good debates for four types of debaters: (1) novices, (2) national circuit policy, (3) kritikal debaters, (4) lay circuits. Though we will delve more into specific arguments in later sections, we will broadly motivate them here.

This blend of old and new can attract interested novice students while avoiding the overwhelming jargon and new concepts of many foreign policy debates. It’s relatively easy to construct an interesting yet accessible novice packet: an Afghanistan affirmative about regional stability; an India affirmative about the bilateral relationship; and an India affirmative about China containment, for example. Similarly, novices can be given core positions that are digestible and re-explainable. Generic disadvantages about Chinese backlash to American policy; specific disadvantages about bilateral relationships; and counterplans proposing alternative changes to the bilateral relationship are intuitive, clear points of clash.

Second, the topic’s vertically rich nature makes it excellent for national circuit policy debaters. In its most expansive form, it focuses on a group of six to eight countries. This naturally limits the total number of affirmatives that can arise and gives the negative a stable, reliable set of generic positions – think one counterplan and one disadvantage per country. But those constraints facilitate conversations with simple causal arguments that are easily debated. Would increasing American cooperation with the Taliban help stabilize Afghanistan, or should we instead arm rebel movements in Afghanistan? Should the United States actively oppose China through cooperating with South Asian countries, or instead bolster our relationship with Southeast Asian states? These debates are easily facilitated within this controversy area. They

provide robust link-level debates that access the big-picture impacts that policy debaters love: war with Russia or China, nuclear terrorism, and regional instability, to name a few. Plus, affirmative and negative teams that research deeply can build unique angles on the core positions. It's straightforward to construct an arsenal of advantage counterplans, country-specific disadvantages, and innovative affirmative advantages.

Third, a South Asia topic encourages novel takes on popular debate kritiks. Traditional international relations kritiks, like capitalism, feminist international relations, and critical security studies, have deep literature bases directly related to South Asia (Barthwal-Datta and Basu, 2017; Singh, 2017). Prominent humanities scholars have situated the literature base of structural identity kritiks like anti-blackness and settler colonialism in conversations about South Asian Americans. For example, the "DesiCrit" theoretical framework analyzes South Asian American racialization through the lens of critical race theory (Harpalani, 2013). On a more personal note, South Asians are an enormous minority group in the debate community. While not every student is South Asian, many teams have South Asian students and see South Asian debaters at tournaments. This topic provides a valuable access point for students who otherwise never explore their history and culture in their usual academic lives. An academic framework that accommodates these students can be deeply empowering for them, and a unique educational experience for teams as a whole.

Finally, this topic facilitates the most important aspect of good lay debates: deep, specific clash over the plan's human and economic consequences. Put another way, community judges generally care about human life and economic cost when evaluating the affirmative plan. They are often not the biggest fan of counterplans, kritiks, and other national circuit arguments. Thus, when the affirmative can monopolize the moral high ground, it becomes very difficult for the negative to win debates. The negative must be able to read specific, germane disadvantages to affirmative plans. Every affirmative on this topic has at least two such positions: a regional relations disadvantage and a China disadvantage. These, combined with arguments about

harms and solvency, give the negative sufficient challenge to the affirmative's relative moral imperative. And of course, that imperative can be easily constructed. Affirmatives about regional terrorism, the ongoing instability in Afghanistan, and similar human costs can certainly persuade judges about the importance of changing American policy.

Quality and Material

This controversy area allows high-quality, balanced debates over the course of a full season. These debates will expose students to a wide variety of views and issues, helping them develop critical thinking skills.

Thus far, we have broadly justified the controversy area of South Asia. We'll parameterize this a bit more by the topic's direction and stem. The optimal direction is likely an "increase" of American engagement with South Asia. Although bilateral cooperation and relational engagement both broadly exist, far more literature advocates an increase of cooperation than a decrease. Of course, because cooperation does generally exist, this damages the uniqueness and general viability of generic negative disadvantages. To address this, we should select a type of cooperation likely to incur specific disadvantages. Based on publicly accessible material, military cooperation is much more likely to do this. While humanitarian or development assistance are certainly important, no real disadvantage exists to them outside process and politics arguments. But military assistance or cooperation can potentially damage bilateral and regional ties. As a result, centering a resolution on bolstering America's military ties to South Asia can remedy uniqueness concerns and ensures stable ground for the negative. If the region as a whole seems too expansive, an excellent topic can be centered on three countries: Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan.

Within this, the flavor of specific debates depends on the term of art chosen. Four phrases recur contextually in relevant articles about South Asian military policy: "military engagement", "defense cooperation", "security assistance", and "security cooperation". The

remainder of this section will define each of these terms briefly, with full definitions in the Definitions section later in the paper. It will describe what a topic looks like with each term.

Security assistance and cooperation are quite broad and refer to a variety of government-to-military activities. Most pertinent for debate, the former refers to the State Department's actions with foreign militaries, and the latter to the Defense Department's. The statutory authority for the former stems from the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and later the Arms Export Control Act of 1976; these acts charged the Secretary of State with responsibility to supervise military assistance, including military education and training. The State Department's authorities have expanded over time and now include "the transfer of conventional arms, training ... forces for combat, law enforcement training, defense institution reform, humanitarian assistance, and engagement and educational activities" (Epstein and Rosen, 2018). In recent years, particularly since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Congress has granted the Department of Defense with new authorities to engage in "security cooperation" with foreign militaries. This "[builds] foreign partner capacity through programs to train and equip foreign security forces, notably in the realms of counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and defense institution building."

Unfortunately, the contents of each phrase are quite poorly defined and can refer to many kinds of defense activities. An "assistance" topic certainly lends itself to more squirrely affirmatives: strictly based on the above definition, affirmatives could train police in Pakistan (Abbas, 2011), provide humanitarian aid to Afghanistan (O'Hanlon and Howard, 2022), or help educate the Indian military. In the context of this topic, I do not think the additional affirmative cases sound the death knell for the negative on a counterplan and process-friendly circuit: the number of countries and of solvency advocates is still limited, and either phrase can build an executive actor – even a specific agency – into the resolution. It is possible that in lay-friendly circuits, the possibility of small policing and humanitarian affirmatives may tilt debates too far in favor of the affirmative – but it should not be disqualifying at this junction, as such circuits are

also much more compelled by in-depth harms and solvency arguments than the national invitational circuit.

On the other hand, a “security cooperation” topic has a more limited range of affirmatives, but “say no” or counterplans about conditions may become quite strong for the negative. A Defense Department actor also significantly helps with establishing disadvantages about Chinese or Russian military responses. While foreign countries will likely not be alarmed by a small police program in Pakistan, expanding military-to-military cooperation in the Indian Ocean would certainly command a more extensive response. But perhaps the most disqualifying part of a “security cooperation” topic is that it is the object of the 2022-23 NATO/emerging technologies resolution. Students will have just had a season debating and understanding the term and will be extremely versed in its implications for disadvantages, counterplan competition, and more. While South Asia debates will play out very differently – as a different area with different incentives – it is an important commonality to acknowledge.

“Defense cooperation” seems to provide a compelling middle ground for a South Asia military topic. It can encompass much of both security assistance and cooperation, without allowing humanitarian assistance affirmatives and creating artificial mechanism counterplans. Its general definition is extremely broad and refers to “activity undertaken by DoD with its allies and other friendly nations to promote international security ” (DAU, 2018). While overly broad definitions can be dangerous, this term appears often in both government documents and relevant literature, which provides some limit to the number of affirmatives. It also bakes in Defense Department action, which helps negative counterplan and disadvantage preparation. The term has been contextually defined in past US-India defense frameworks to include “regular military exercises, enhancing military education and training, increasing intelligence exchange, and collaborating in multinational operations” (Abercrombie, 2019). It is overwhelmingly present as a contextual term in South Asian policy literature (Lalwani et al, 2021). Its generality lets debaters access higher-level conversations about changing postures in South Asian countries,

like India's focus on Pakistan and China instead of a blue water navy, rather than nuts and bolts of specific programs. These conversations can include cyber defense, intelligence sharing, and more.

Although the phrase "military engagement" appears in many articles about South Asian policy, its use seemed more specific than the highly general official Department of Defense definition: "routine contact and interaction between individuals or elements of the Armed Forces of the United States and those of another nation's armed forces" (Department of Defense, 2011). This definition has no real qualifiers or contextual use present in the literature, it is simply used as filler phrasing at times. While its extreme generality can be compelling, it offers no real limit or guidance for affirmatives.

Balance

Here, we will enumerate possible affirmatives with specific negative positions, as well as generic negative positions.

Affirmative: India

India would likely be the largest country in a South Asia topic. Possible plans could increase security cooperation to bolster Afghan stability (Mohan, 2021); overhaul the defense cooperative framework within specific domains, such as cyber, space, or nuclear (White, 2021); generally increase security cooperation in a particular domain, like maritime security (Thakker and Sahgal, 2019); or increase military tech transfer and development (Unjhawala, 2022). Collectively, these represent the entire gamut of advantage areas.

Affirmative: Pakistan

Pakistan affirmatives will play a significant role in this topic as well. Despite America's withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan's close ties with China ensure its relevance for America's regional planning (Wilson Center, 2021). Its relationships with Russia and India add additional wrinkles to that same regional architecture. Possible affirmatives could build intelligence cooperation or cooperate on long-distance counterterrorism missions (Jaishankar, 2021).

Affirmative: Afghanistan

Afghanistan is likely the third largest country in this topic. Some affirmative plans exist. For example, the affirmative could expand cooperation with the Taliban to counter the Islamic State (Schroden and Powell, 2021). More generally, cooperating with the Taliban will be necessary to avoid significant death and economic unrest within Afghanistan and in Central Asia broadly (O'Hanlon et al, 2021). Afghani and Central Asian stability will be potential advantages to practically every affirmative. Afghanistan's security situation constantly changes, and India and Pakistan each have potential and well-discussed roles to play.

Disadvantage: China/Russia

The negative has a variety of possible generic positions. Disadvantages about Chinese and Russian response provide strong international relations generics that clash with many affirmatives. China has significantly increased its military presence in the Indian Ocean (Colley, 2021). Disadvantages centered on an escalatory Chinese response will be a crux of the negative strategy. Russia significantly hampers bilateral and regional relationships between the U.S. and many South Asian countries today (Kugelman, 2022). Disadvantages about the Russian sphere of influence or relations will likely link to many South Asia affirmatives. Specifically, as a major weapons provider to both India and Pakistan, American efforts to build up those countries' weapons bases may damage the Russian economy and weapons exports (Purzycki, 2022). In particular, disadvantages have a strong correlation with solvency: affirmatives that can claim to solve India or Pakistan relations effectively will likely spark responses from China and Russia. These responses should both interact with affirmative solvency and risk external tensions – the hallmark of a strong generic on an international relations topic.

Counterplan: Non-Military

Counterplans about non-military cooperation between the U.S. and South Asian countries will also serve as a strong functional limit against many affirmatives. For example,

rethinking the Pakistani relationship to center on civilian relations rather than military may resolve significant points of affirmative offense (Humayun, 2021). The U.S. could bolster economic or trade cooperation with India, rather than military (Batra, 2021).

When coupled with the China and Russia generics, this can create the best forms of policy versus policy debates on international topics: for example, an affirmative that increases our naval engagement with India to improve the relationship and deter China, versus a counterplan to increase economic engagement with a disadvantage about short-term Chinese belligerence before deterrence can become effective. These debates are incredibly educational for students of any experience level.

Disadvantages and Counterplans: Political Process

Depending on the mechanism chosen, various political process disadvantages and counterplans will become a core part of the negative arsenal. As per the above discussions, the affirmative is likely an executive action done through the Department of State or Defense. The negative can then access tradeoff disadvantages about the chosen Department, or process counterplans about Congressional or judicial inducement of those executive increases.

Resolutions

To parse through the following resolutions, there are four different components that can vary in the resolution:

- Direction of the action: Should the United States increase or reduce the scope of its engagement with South Asia?
- Military versus nonmilitary change: Should the change be made through military or nonmilitary means?
- Specific type of change: What specific subset of general (non)military policy should be changed?
- Area of change: Should the resolution center on the entirety of South Asia, or some subset of countries?

As detailed in the above sections, the topic author believes the ideal resolution includes an “increase” of “military” means with any country in South Asia (eight total). The ideal term is likely “defense cooperation”, based on the most qualified topic literature. It combines a clear plain meaning with contextually significant usage by topic experts; novices and advanced debaters alike will understand and use it effectively. A challenge comes in ensuring that a substantial change of military policy with a *single* country remains topical, rather than mandating that affirmatives defend substantial increases over the *entire* region (a task that is difficult to quantify). This is certainly the “framers’ intent” of any topic including the entire region. The following resolutions represent variants on the above questions, and include terms of art that are most commonly found in articles. Definitions are included below.

1. Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its defense cooperation with South Asia.
2. Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its defense cooperation with Afghanistan, India, and/or Pakistan.
3. Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its security assistance to South Asia.
4. Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its security cooperation with South Asia.
5. Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its security assistance and/or cooperation to Afghanistan, India, and/or Pakistan.

Definitions

Defense Cooperation

Defense cooperation refers to Defense actions undertaken with allies.

DAU '18 [Defense Acquisition University, corporate university of the Defense Department; 2018; "Defense Cooperation";

<https://www.dau.edu/glossary/Lists/GlossaryContentSource/DispForm.aspx?ID=27267&ContentTypeId=0x010075CE08309C803448877BEF42E0836454>]

Definition

Defense cooperation is a generic term for the range of activity undertaken by DoD with

its allies and other friendly nations to promote international security. Such activity includes, but

need not be confined to, security assistance, industrial cooperation, armaments cooperation, Foreign Military Sales (FMS), training, logistics cooperation, cooperative research and development (R&D), Foreign Comparative Testing (FCT), and Host-Nation Support (HNS).

Contextually, it must further national and mutual defense requirements.

US Code ND [22 US Code Section 2751; "Need for international defense cooperation and military export controls"; <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/2751>]

The Congress recognizes, however, that the United States and other free and independent countries continue to have valid requirements for effective and mutually beneficial defense relationships in order to maintain and foster the environment of international peace and security essential to social, economic, and political progress. Because of the growing cost and complexity of defense equipment, it is increasingly difficult and uneconomic for any country, particularly a developing country, to fill all of its legitimate defense requirements from its own design and production base. The need for international defense cooperation among the United States and those friendly countries to which it is allied by mutual defense treaties is especially important, since the effectiveness of their armed forces to act in concert to deter or defeat aggression is directly related to the operational compatibility of their defense equipment.

Accordingly, it remains the policy of the United States to facilitate the common defense by entering into international arrangements with friendly countries which further the objective of applying agreed resources of each country to programs and projects of cooperative exchange of data.

research, development, production, procurement, and logistics support to achieve specific national defense requirements and objectives of mutual concern. To this end, this chapter authorizes sales by the United States Government to friendly countries having sufficient wealth to maintain and equip their own military forces at adequate strength, or to assume progressively larger shares of the costs thereof, without undue burden to their economies, in accordance with the restraints and control measures specified herein and in furtherance of the security objectives of the United States and of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Security Assistance

It's a specific group of programs under Title 22 of the US Code.

DASADDEC '22 [Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Defense Exports and Cooperation; "Security Assistance"; <https://www.dasadec.army.mil/Security-Assistance>; last modified 2022]

Security Assistance is a group of programs, authorized **under Title 22 of the U.S. Code**, by which the U.S. government provides defense articles, military education and training, and other defense-related services to eligible foreign governments by grant, loan, credit, cash sales, or lease. The State Department supervises and directs the U.S. government's security assistance programs, in consultation and coordination with the Defense Department and other government entities.

Security Cooperation

Requires the Defense Department.

Quinn '19 [Major Jason A. Quinn; 2019; Judge Advocate in the United States Army; the Military Law Review, "Other Security Forces Too: Traditional Combatant Commander Activities Between U.S. Special Operations Forces and Foreign Non-Military Forces," vol. 227]

Under this definition, "security sector assistance" includes the relevant policies, programs, or activities of any executive agency. Complicating matters, though, Congress has considered a proposed definition for "security sector assistance" that, in contrast to the presidential policy definition,¹³⁰ encompasses DoS programs, but not DoD or other executive agency programs.¹³¹ In addition, Congress has **defined "security cooperation" as DoD specific,**¹³² but it has **not defined "security assistance."**

The DoD adheres to the presidential policy definition and **further defines "security cooperation" as all its relationship building and foreign partner development activities,** including "security assistance," which the DoD defines as a subset of security cooperation that is funded and authorized by the DoS and administered by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.¹³³ The DoS, on the other hand, uses the term "security assistance" in a manner that contradicts the DoD's definition, employing it to describe any DoS or DoD assistance to foreign military or other security forces.¹³⁴

Includes all Defense interactions with foreign counterparts, while "security assistance" refers to the State Department.

DSCA '18 [Defense Security Cooperation Agency; 2018; "C1 - Security Cooperation Overview and Relationships"; <https://samm.dsca.mil/chapter/chapter-1>]

C1.1. - Security Cooperation (SC)

C1.1.1. Definition and Purpose. SC comprises all activities undertaken by the Department of Defense (DoD) to encourage and enable international partners to work with the United States to achieve strategic objectives. It includes **all DoD interactions** with foreign defense and security establishments, including all DoD-administered Security Assistance (SA) programs, that build defense and security relationships; promote specific U.S. security interests, including all **international armaments cooperation activities** and SA activities; develop allied and friendly

military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations; and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to host nations. It is DoD policy that SC is an important tool of national security and foreign policy and is an integral element of the DoD mission. SC activities shall be planned, programmed, budgeted, and executed with the same high degree of attention and efficiency as other integral DoD activities. SC requirements shall be combined with other DoD requirements and implemented through standard DoD systems, facilities, and procedures. See DoD Directive 5132.03.

C1.1.2. Distinguishing Between Security Cooperation and Security Assistance Programs. As the definition of SC above reveals, there are many types of SC activities. For the purposes of this Manual, it is important to be able to distinguish between SC Programs and SA Programs. Programs of both types are the means by which the United States provides defense articles, military training, and other defense services to our partner nations in support of U.S. National Security objectives, including Building Partner Capacity (BPC). They are distinguished by the statutes by which they are authorized and funded.

C1.1.2.1. Security Cooperation Programs. SC Program authorizations and appropriations are provided to the Secretary of Defense primarily under the annual National Defense Authorization and Appropriations Act. By statute or Executive Order, they are sometimes required to be exercised in coordination with the Secretary of State. These programs vary greatly in terms of the agency or DoD activity responsible and the manner in which they are planned for and funded. See Chapter 15 for more detailed information on individual programs.

C1.1.2.2. Security Assistance Programs. SA is a group of programs, authorized under Title 22 authorities, by which the United States provides defense articles, military education and training, and other defense-related services by grant, loan, credit, cash sales, or lease, in furtherance of national policies and objectives. All SA programs are subject to the continuous supervision and general direction of the Secretary of State to best serve U.S. foreign policy interests; however, programs are variously administered by DoD or Department of State (DoS). Those SA programs that are administered by DoD are a subset of SC.

South Asia

Includes Afghanistan and Maldives.

USIP '20 [USIP China-South Asia Senior Study Group; 12/16/2020; "China's Influence on Conflict Dynamics in South Asia"; United States Institute of Peace;

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/12/chinas-influence-conflict-dynamics-south-asia>]

China has embarked on a grand journey west. Officials in Beijing are driven by aspirations of leadership across their home continent of Asia, feelings of being hemmed in on their eastern flank by U.S. alliances, and their perception that opportunities await across Eurasia and the Indian Ocean. Along the way, their first stop is South Asia, which this report defines as comprising eight countries—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—along with the Indian Ocean (particularly the eastern portions but with implications for its entirety). China's ties to the region are long-standing and date back well before the founding of the People's Republic in 1949.

It's debatable.

Britannica '22 [Encyclopedia Britannica; "South Asia"; last modified in 2022;

<https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Asia>]

South Asia, subregion of Asia, consisting of the Indo-Gangetic Plain and peninsular India. It includes the countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka; Afghanistan and the Maldives are often considered part of South Asia as well. The term is often used synonymously with "Indian subcontinent," though the latter term is sometimes used more restrictively to refer to Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.

Conclusion

A South Asia topic, focused on military cooperation, represents an excellent resolution for 2023-24. In particular, it satisfies the three criteria outlined earlier in this topic paper: first, student interest; second, deviation from the status quo; and third, a limited but high quality group of affirmatives. First, this report extensively outlined student interest from various angles. Afghanistan and India/Pakistan are among the thorniest and longest-running policy problems in the world. They have decades of historical relevance, and the recent downturns in America's relationships with Russia and China make the South Asian regional security theater more fraught than ever before. Second, while high-level defense talks exist, there are certainly novel policies that can be presented. As these policies claim to improve regional relationships or cement America's role, the strength of disadvantages grow as well. Third and finally, the number of policy proposals are limited, targeted, and high-quality. This topic has at-most six to eight countries, but a topic with only three – Afghanistan, India, Pakistan – would be timely, deep, and fascinating.

Summary

Title

South Asia

Resolutions

The following resolutions are sorted in authors' preference. They center on defense cooperation with South Asia and include phrases most commonly found in related articles.

1. Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its defense cooperation with South Asia.
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Affirmative Cases

On the affirmative, teams can articulate specific avenues for expanding cooperation with one or more South Asian countries – most prominently, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Potential advantages include regional instability, nuclear terrorism, and containment of China and Russia. Potential affirmatives include maritime, cyber, or space cooperation with India; counterterrorism cooperation with Pakistan or Bangladesh; and expanding cooperation with the Taliban in Afghanistan. These set the stage for timely and nuanced debates over the future of America's regional security architecture.

Negative Approaches

Due to the small size of South Asia, negative teams will be able to prepare country-specific counterplans and disadvantages, like national politics disadvantages and timely case turns. More generally, they will have strong disadvantages based on Chinese and Russian responses to deepened American military engagement. They will also have a strong “non-military” counterplan, coupled with disadvantages to the military process like tradeoff and diplomatic capital, that will limit out many smaller cases. Critical teams will have an array of options – classic international relations kritiks like capitalism and critical security studies, and more novel literature that explores the interplay of anti-blackness and settler colonialism with South Asian history.

Balance

America has discussed an expanded role in South Asia since the early Obama administration. While America has expanded much non-military cooperation, there is general consensus that its security architecture is deeply inadequate. It is far from obvious what should be done. As a result, many advantages, specific disadvantages, and nuanced counter-proposals all exist. Because there are at most six to eight countries in the region, even the smallest teams will be able to construct and update country-specific negatives, complete with specific counterplans and nation-specific disadvantages like national politics. This topic encourages deep and novel research, which makes for an evenly-divided year of debate.

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