

ARLMUN IV

Special Political and Decolonization
Committee (SPECPOL)



Topic: Conflict and Self-Determination in
Kashmir

Chair: Saajan Chokshi

Co-chair: Jada Elfar

Letter From the Chair

Hello Delegates,

Welcome to ArlMUN and to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)! We're so excited to have you join us for our discussions on Conflict and Self-Determination in Kashmir. My name is Saajan Chokshi, and I'll be serving as your Chair for this committee.

I'm currently a student at Washington-Liberty High School, where I've been deeply involved in Model UN for several years, both as a delegate and as a chair. I've always been drawn to the intersection of politics, philosophy, and international relations which is why SPECPOL has been one of my favorite committees to staff.

I first became interested in the Kashmir conflict while researching global sovereignty and post-colonial statehood for my IB Global Politics class. The competing ideas of nationalism, identity, and human rights fascinated me, especially as they relate to how people define belonging and self-determination. Writing this background guide reminded me how complex yet important it is to understand every side of a conflict before trying to resolve it.

Outside of MUN, I enjoy hiking, playing tennis, and keeping up with current world events. I'm looking forward to hearing your perspectives, creative resolutions, and diplomatic approaches as you navigate one of the most historically charged topics in modern geopolitics.

As you prepare for the committee, remember that the best debates come from fully embodying your delegation's perspective, even when it challenges your own. If you have any questions about the background guide or the committee, please don't hesitate to reach out. I can't wait to meet all of you and see the nuanced debates that unfold over the weekend.

Best regards,

Saajan Chokshi, SPEPOL Chair

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Introduction

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) addresses a wide range of global issues including decolonization, refugees, peacekeeping operations, and the peaceful use of outer space. Among its core objectives is the promotion of political stability and self-determination in regions facing long-standing territorial disputes. One of the most enduring and complex of these conflicts is the question of Kashmir.

Kashmir, located in the northern region of the Indian subcontinent, remains one of the most militarized zones in the world. The region's history of competing national claims, cultural diversity, and aspirations for autonomy has made it a flashpoint for conflict between nuclear-armed neighbors India and Pakistan, with implications that reach far beyond South Asia. The people of Kashmir continue to live amid political uncertainty, human rights challenges, and security tensions. Understanding the balance between sovereignty and self-determination is crucial to forming meaningful solutions.

Topic: Conflict and Self-Determination in Kashmir

Overview:

The Kashmir issue centers on the disputed territory historically known as Jammu and Kashmir. Since the 1947 partition of British India into India and Pakistan, both nations have claimed the region in full but controlled parts of it in practice. India administers Jammu and Kashmir and the region of Ladakh, while Pakistan controls what it calls Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan. China also occupies the Aksai Chin region, further complicating the dispute.

The core of the debate lies in the principle of self-determination versus the principle of territorial integrity. Many Kashmiri communities seek greater autonomy or independence, while India and Pakistan frame their claims around national unity and security. The United Nations has been involved in mediation efforts since the late 1940s, though with limited success. Persistent border skirmishes, terrorism, and competing narratives continue to fuel tensions.

Historical Background:

In 1947, when British colonial rule ended, princely states were given the choice to join either India or Pakistan. The ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, initially sought to remain independent but later acceded to India after an invasion by tribal militias from Pakistan. This accession triggered the First Indo-Pakistani War (1947–1948), which ended with a United Nations-brokered ceasefire dividing the region along the Line of Control (LoC). The UN also passed Resolution 47 (1948), calling for a plebiscite to allow the people of Kashmir to

decide their future once certain conditions were met. However, the plebiscite has never taken place due to disagreements over demilitarization and governance.

The Second Indo-Pakistani War (1965) reignited hostilities, followed by the Simla Agreement (1972), which reaffirmed the Line of Control as a de facto boundary. In 1989, a large-scale insurgency erupted in Indian-administered Kashmir, driven by demands for independence and allegations of political repression. Pakistan was accused of supporting militant groups, while India was criticized for human rights violations. This period intensified distrust between the two nations.

In August 2019, India revoked the special autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir by repealing Article 370 of its constitution. This move further escalated tensions with Pakistan and renewed international debate on self-determination and sovereignty. Since then, the region has undergone administrative reorganization, communications restrictions, and increased military presence.

In April 2025, renewed hostilities broke out between India and Pakistan following a deadly terrorist attack in Pahalgam, located in Indian-administered Kashmir, which killed twenty-six people. India accused Pakistan-based insurgent groups of orchestrating the assault, while Pakistan denied involvement and called for an independent investigation. In response, India suspended bilateral trade, closed border crossings, and announced its intention to review the Indus Waters Treaty. Between 6 and 10 May 2025, both countries launched a series of cross-border military strikes, with India targeting what it described as “terrorist infrastructure” and Pakistan claiming civilian areas had been hit. Exchanges of artillery and small arms fire along the Line of Control caused further casualties. A ceasefire was declared on 10 May 2025,

with reports indicating that both the United States and the United Kingdom played roles in mediating the truce. Although the ceasefire has largely held, other diplomatic and economic restrictions remain in place. Analysts note that the core disputes over sovereignty, terrorism, and the political future of Kashmir remain unresolved, leaving the region in a fragile and uncertain state.

Major Stakeholders and Organizations Involved:

India:

India maintains that Jammu and Kashmir are integral parts of its sovereign territory, based on the 1947 Instrument of Accession. The Indian government emphasizes counterterrorism, border security, and national unity. It opposes external mediation, asserting that the matter is strictly bilateral.

Pakistan:

Pakistan supports the right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir and references early UN resolutions to argue for a plebiscite (A UN Vote on the Issue). Islamabad highlights human rights concerns in Indian-administered areas and calls for renewed international engagement on the issue.

China:

China controls the Aksai Chin area and has territorial disputes with both India and Pakistan. It aligns diplomatically with Pakistan and opposes unilateral actions that alter the status quo, while seeking to protect its regional infrastructure interests such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The United Nations:

The UN established the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in 1949 to monitor ceasefire violations along the Line of Control. The Security Council passed several resolutions urging peaceful dialogue and self-determination but has not been able to enforce a long-term settlement.

Regional and International Actors:

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has expressed concern over the situation, supporting the Kashmiri people's aspirations for political rights. The United States, United Kingdom, and the European Union have called for restraint and dialogue but largely maintain neutrality, emphasizing the need for bilateral resolution.

Key Issues and Challenges:

1. Human Rights and Civil Liberties:

Reports of enforced disappearances, restrictions on expression, detentions, and limited media access have raised concerns. Both sides accuse each other of rights violations, while local populations face disrupted livelihoods and psychological trauma.

2. Security and Terrorism:

Cross-border militancy and counterinsurgency operations perpetuate cycles of violence. Attacks such as those in Pulwama (2019) have triggered military escalations, making peace efforts fragile and mistrust pervasive.

3. Self-Determination vs. Sovereignty:

While some Kashmiris advocate independence or union with Pakistan, others wish to remain

with India under greater autonomy. Balancing these competing aspirations within the framework of international law remains one of the most difficult aspects of the issue.

4. Geopolitical Tensions:

The proximity of three nuclear powers heightens global security concerns. External involvement from major powers and alliances adds complexity to negotiations.

5. Economic and Humanitarian Impacts:

Conflict has stifled tourism, trade, and infrastructure development in the region. Continuous instability affects education, healthcare, and youth employment, reinforcing cycles of discontent.

Past UN and International Action:

The United Nations has played a central but limited role in the Kashmir dispute. The early UN Resolutions 38 and 47 (1948) established principles for ceasefire and self-determination. However, subsequent efforts stalled as both India and Pakistan interpreted these resolutions differently. The UNMOGIP continues to monitor the Line of Control, but without enforcement authority.

Beyond the UN, bilateral efforts such as the Tashkent Declaration (1966) and Simla Agreement (1972) aimed to promote peaceful resolution through dialogue. Despite these frameworks, periodic violence continues. Confidence-building measures like cross-border trade and cultural exchanges have shown potential but remain vulnerable to political change.

International organizations and NGOs have also advocated for humanitarian assistance and monitoring, yet their access is often restricted. As a result, sustainable peace has remained elusive.

Questions to Consider

1. *How can SPECPOL encourage both sovereignty and self-determination without violating the UN Charter?*
2. *What mechanisms could ensure accountability for human rights violations in conflict zones like Kashmir?*
3. *Should the UN revisit or modernize its resolutions on the issue to reflect current realities?*
4. *How can economic cooperation between India and Pakistan contribute to long-term stability in the region?*
5. *What role should neutral actors or organizations play in facilitating communication and trust-building?*

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