

Executive Summary

Afghanistan's security environment remained dominated by the confrontation with Pakistan during the reporting window, but the main shift this week was that the conflict's humanitarian and operational fallout became harder to separate from the security picture itself. Cross-border shelling and strikes continued across the eastern and southeastern belt, including reported attacks affecting Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Nuristan, Kunar, and Maidan Wardak, while a verified UN update put civilian casualties in Afghanistan at 185 killed or wounded between 26 February and 5 March and humanitarian reporting assessed over 100,000 newly displaced people across 10 provinces. By 11 March, additional reporting said 68,000 children had been displaced in eastern Afghanistan alone, underscoring how quickly the conflict is feeding into protection, education, food access, and service disruption.

- Cross-border violence remained the primary driver of instability, with fresh reporting on 11 March that Pakistani forces had fired hundreds of shells into Paktia, Paktika, Khost, and Nuristan over the previous 24 hours, killing civilians and displacing families.
- The eastern and southeastern frontier remained the main conflict belt, with continued fighting around populated areas and damage reported to homes, shops, mosques, and markets in several provinces.
- Humanitarian deterioration accelerated: UN-linked updates recorded 185 civilian casualties in Afghanistan from the fighting, while humanitarian reporting assessed 115,000 newly displaced people.
- Afghanistan's broader crisis deepened in parallel, with international briefings warning that more than 17 million people face acute food shortages, 4.7 million are at emergency hunger levels, and the 2026 appeal is only 10% funded.
- The internal environment remained coercive and brittle rather than stabilizing, with new UN findings on women's sharply reduced access to justice and UN experts condemning the Taliban's rising use of public corporal punishment.

National context

Afghanistan's operating environment this week was defined by the overlap between external confrontation and internal fragility. The Pakistan crisis remained the dominant security driver, but it is no longer best understood as a narrow border dispute. The pattern of repeated shelling, retaliation, civilian-area damage, and politically charged public mobilization suggests a coercive cycle in which both sides are trying to impose costs without moving to full conventional war. That still leaves a large amount of room for further escalation, especially around crossings, military posts, and districts that double as civilian settlements and trade zones.

At the same time, Afghanistan's humanitarian baseline continued to worsen, and this matters directly for security forecasting. UN and humanitarian reporting this week pointed to large-scale displacement, rising hunger, and conflict-related interruptions to aid and health access, while eastern communities were also dealing with school closures and child protection disruptions. The result is a compound crisis: border conflict is aggravating food insecurity, displacement, service disruption, and returnee pressure and is not a separate military equation.

Key Events by Region

Kabul

Kabul remained politically central even though the heaviest kinetic activity stayed in the east. On 6 March, large protests were reported in the capital condemning Pakistani strikes and expressing support for Afghan forces, showing that the authorities are continuing to frame the conflict as a national sovereignty issue rather than a localized frontier fight. That matters because public mobilization in Kabul reinforces the regime's effort to convert external pressure into domestic legitimacy.

The capital also remained vulnerable to the broader militant and governance picture. The January ISKP attack in Kabul has kept tensions high and continues to challenge official claims that urban security is firmly under control, while new UN reporting indicated women in Afghanistan are nearly four times less likely than men to access formal justice mechanisms. Combined with warnings on the surge in public corporal punishment, the picture in Kabul is of a city that remains governable but increasingly securitized, more restrictive, and still exposed to high-impact militant shocks.

South (Kandahar / Helmand belt)

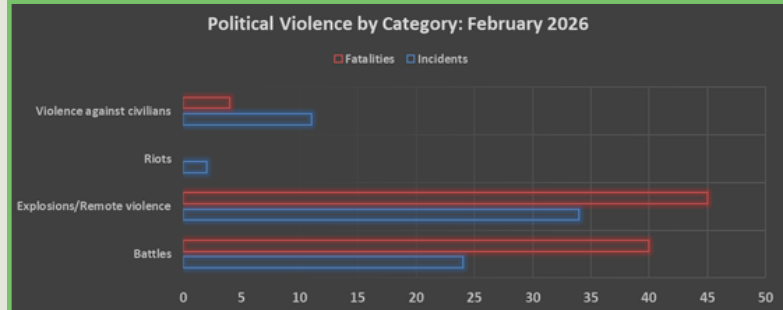
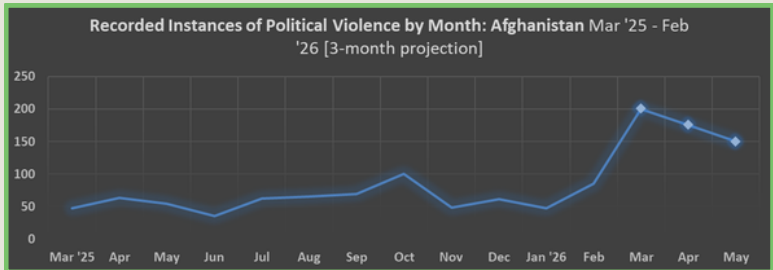
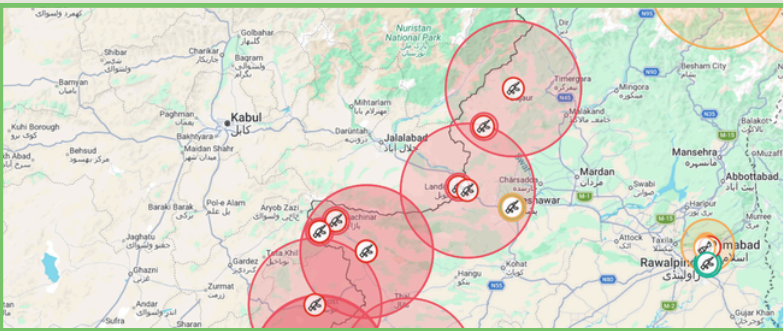
The south remained strategically important because it combines Taliban political weight with worsening humanitarian and health vulnerabilities. The most notable development was in public health rather than front-line fighting: updated WHO-linked reporting said wild poliovirus transmission continues in Afghanistan, with the south reporting the highest caseload and transmission worsened by low vaccination coverage and restrictions on house-to-house campaigns.

This matters for security analysis because the south's risk profile is increasingly layered. Even without the intensity of border warfare seen in the east, the combination of governance restrictions, weak health access, and dependence on service continuity makes Kandahar and the wider southern belt vulnerable to cumulative instability. The south therefore remains less immediately violent than the east, but its resilience is thinning in ways that could become operationally significant over the medium term.

East & Southeast (Paktia / Paktika / Khost / Nangarhar)

The east and southeast remained the main operational theatre of the conflict. Reporting across the week described heavy Pakistani attacks on multiple provinces, including Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Maidan Wardak, and Kunar, with civilian houses, shops, mosques, and local markets damaged and more than 100 families reportedly displaced in parts of Khost alone. On 11 March, further reporting said hundreds of shells had landed across Paktia, Paktika, Khost, and Nuristan in just 24 hours, killing civilians and forcing more families to leave.

The same region bore the clearest humanitarian cost. Humanitarian reporting tied the fighting to 115,000 newly displaced people across 10 provinces, while separate reporting said 68,000 children had been displaced in the east. There were also clear signs of economic damage: a missile strike reportedly caused a major fire in Torkham market, and in Nangarhar one person was killed and two were injured when unexploded ordnance hidden in scrap metal detonated in an industrial park. Together, these incidents show the east is facing not only direct combat risk but also expanding post-strike hazards and commercial disruption.



North & Northeast

The north and northeast remained quieter than the eastern frontier in direct conflict terms, but not detached from the crisis. In Badakhshan, residents in border districts reportedly held gatherings condemning Pakistani attacks and backing Afghan security forces, indicating that the conflict is resonating politically well beyond the immediate battlefield. While this kind of solidarity mobilization does not itself change the military balance, it does show how the confrontation is broadening into a national political issue that could build into greater unrest.

The region also remained tied into the wider militant threat picture. On 8 March, reporting said a senior ISKP operative linked to the 2025 Kabul Bank branch attack in Kunduz had been killed in Peshawar, reinforcing the continued relevance of cross-border militant networks to northern security concerns. The north and northeast are therefore not front-line zones this week, but they remain strategically exposed through militant linkages, political mobilization, and the wider deterioration in trade and national confidence.

West

Western Afghanistan saw less direct spillover from the Pakistan fighting, but localized violence and weak rule-of-law indicators remained present. A homicide case in Farah, where a man was detained for allegedly killing his wife, while not strategically significant in itself, reflects the persistence of interpersonal and criminal violence in areas outside the main conflict belt.

More importantly, the west remains exposed to the national humanitarian downturn. With food insecurity worsening countrywide and aid under severe funding pressure, provinces that are not front-line zones can still deteriorate through rising need, weaker service access, and larger inflows of vulnerable people. Western provinces should therefore still be treated as secondary pressure zones rather than insulated spaces.

Central Highlands

The central highlands remained comparatively quiet in direct security terms, but this should not be read as stability in a broader sense. These provinces remain highly sensitive to national-level shocks in aid delivery, food prices, and access, and they have limited redundancy when supply and assistance channels come under pressure.

This means the highlands are more likely to deteriorate through livelihood stress and service gaps than through interstate or even militant violence as of now. As assistance remains underfunded and the broader security environment worsens, lower-incident areas like the central highlands could still face deeper hardship, outward migration, and localized social tension over the coming weeks.

Focus Regions

Kabul

Kabul's importance this week lay less in front-line combat than in how the authorities managed the politics of insecurity. The protests in the capital, the continued framing of the crisis as an externally imposed war, and the wider effort to show national cohesion all indicate that Kabul is being used as the centre of narrative control. In the near term, that likely supports order in the capital by concentrating political messaging and security attention there.

The deeper problem is that Kabul's apparent stability is still being sustained by coercive governance rather than institutional confidence. In this reporting period though no major security incidents were recorded, the new findings on women's poor access to justice, and the criticism of public corporal punishment all point to a capital where control is visible but underlying legitimacy remains shallow. Operationally, this means Kabul is likely to remain functional but increasingly restrictive, with more scrutiny, more securitization of public life, and a continuing risk of sudden high-impact militant incidents.

Kandahar

Kandahar remains strategically significant even in weeks when the fiercest fighting occurs elsewhere. It is still the most symbolically important urban centre in Taliban power terms, which means any future attempt to increase political pressure on the Taliban is likely to keep the south in view even if daily clashes are concentrated farther east. Kandahar therefore remains a key watchpoint not because of volume of incidents this week, but because of what it represents in any escalation pathway.

At the same time, Kandahar's immediate vulnerability is increasingly humanitarian and governance-related. The continued concentration of polio transmission in the south, linked to weak coverage and limits on house-to-house vaccination, shows how security restrictions and social controls are degrading public health resilience. In practice, that means the southern operating environment may remain outwardly calmer than the east while still becoming steadily harder to manage, particularly for health, community, and humanitarian programming.

Northeastern corridor

The northeastern corridor remains an important indicator of whether Afghanistan's crisis is broadening from a border war into a more systemic national deterioration. The demonstrations in Badakhshan suggest that political reverberations from the Pakistan conflict are already being felt beyond the east, while the continued prominence of cross-border militant narratives keeps the northeast relevant to the wider security landscape.

The corridor is also vulnerable to the indirect effects of instability: weaker investment confidence, more informal movement, and greater reliance on illicit or unregulated channels as national uncertainty rises. That does not yet amount to sharp deterioration, but it does mean the northeast should be watched less for immediate shelling and more for signs of gradual fragmentation in trade, governance reach, and militant or criminal facilitation networks.

Assessment

The Pakistan-Taliban confrontation remained the defining security issue this week, but the most important analytical point is that it is becoming harder to compartmentalize. What began as a coercive border confrontation is now driving displacement, school disruption, market losses, post-strike explosive hazards, and wider political mobilization across multiple Afghan regions. That makes the conflict more durable and more destabilizing than a simple count of artillery exchanges would suggest.

A second important point is that Afghanistan's humanitarian deterioration is now directly shaping the security landscape rather than merely accompanying it. The combination of civilian casualties and newly displaced people in the east, and a heavily underfunded aid response means local coping capacity is being eroded at the same time as insecurity is spreading. This raises the likelihood of more movement, more pressure on urban centres, deeper reliance on informal economies, and greater vulnerability to recruitment, exploitation, and localized unrest.

Third, the internal governance environment continues to undermine resilience. The capital remains exposed to ISKP shocks, international security reporting continues to warn about Afghanistan-linked militant threats, and the Taliban's coercive domestic posture is becoming more visible rather than less. That does not mean state collapse is imminent; it does mean the current model can still impose order while simultaneously storing up medium-term instability. The realistic risk is therefore not immediate breakdown, but a more brittle form of control under growing external and humanitarian pressure.

Projections

Security landscape

Near term (2-4 weeks): Continued shelling, localized strikes, and clashes along the eastern and southeastern frontier are highly likely, especially around Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Nangarhar, and adjacent corridors. Additional civilian-area damage remains a realistic possibility, and secondary risks such as unexploded ordnance, market disruption, and politically managed protests are also likely to persist.

Medium term (1-3 months): A negotiated pause remains a realistic possibility, but durable de-escalation is unlikely without a mechanism addressing the underlying dispute over cross-border militancy and border management. In the absence of that, the more likely path is episodic military pressure combined with tighter internal securitization in major cities and a continued external narrative focused on militant sanctuary and terrorist risk.

Humanitarian landscape

Near term (2-4 weeks): Conditions are likely to worsen further in the eastern conflict belt, where displacement, interrupted aid access, school closures, and child protection gaps are already visible. Households in affected districts are likely to face more severe pressure on food access, movement, and access to health and education services.

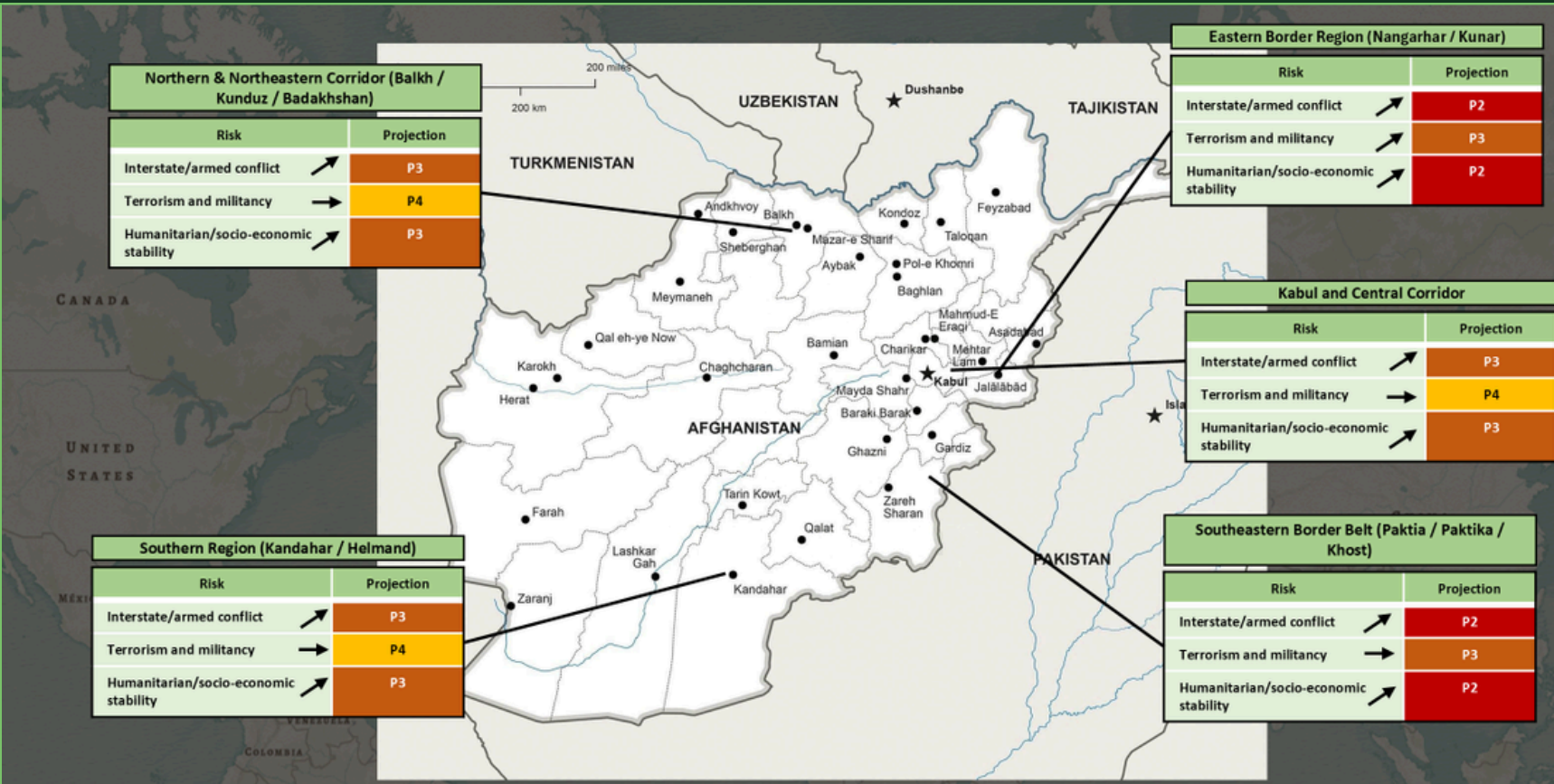
Medium term (1-3 months): If current funding and access constraints persist, Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis is likely to deepen beyond the front-line provinces and spread more evenly into secondary urban centres and poorer rural regions. The most likely effects are broader need, heavier pressure on receiving communities, worsening hunger, and a more fragile public-health environment, especially in the south and east.

Graphic Risk Intelligence Summary [GRINTSUM]

AFGHANISTAN



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Region/ Risk Category	14 days	7 days	ICOD
Kabul / Central Corridor Interstate/armed conflict	↗	↗	↗
Terrorism and militancy	→	→	→
Humanitarian/socio-economic stability	→	↗	↗
Eastern Border Region (Nangarhar / Kunar) Interstate/armed conflict	↗	↗	↗
Terrorism and militancy	→	↗	↗
Humanitarian/socio-economic stability	→	↗	↗
Southeastern Border Belt (Paktia / Paktika / Khost) Interstate/armed conflict	↗	↗	↗
Terrorism and militancy	→	→	→
Humanitarian/socio-economic stability	→	↗	↗
Southern Region (Kandahar / Helmand) Interstate/armed conflict	→	↗	↗
Terrorism and militancy	→	→	→
Humanitarian/socio-economic stability	→	↗	↗
Northern & Northeastern Corridor Interstate/armed conflict	→	↗	↗
Terrorism and militancy	→	→	→
Humanitarian/socio-economic stability	→	↗	↗

Projection	Indicator	Impact					Priority	Decision
		Likelihood	Very low	Low	Moderate	High		
Improving	↘	Very low					Priority 1	Immediate term action: (24hrs - 1 month) These issues must be addressed now. P1 risks offer little to no room for decision-making space. P1 risks are an existential or grave threat to client's safety and mission. A high degree of pragmatism is required to mitigate.
Steady	→	Low					Priority 2	Short term action: (1-4 months) P2 risks offer some decision-making space. P2 risks pose a severe threat to client's safety and mission. P2 risks require priority action and often pose a significant or heightened threat to client's safety or success of mission. Pragmatic mitigations may be required.
Worsening	↗	Moderate					Priority 3	Medium term action: (4-12 months) P3 risks offer adequate decision-making space. P3 risks pose a substantial threat to client's safety and mission. P3 risks require adequate planning in a timely manner to address. P3 risks are the highest of routine risks. Internationally recognized mitigation procedures used.
New development	↖	High					Priority 4	Long term action: (>12 months) P4 risks offer ample decision-making space. P4 risks can be best understood as horizon or routine threats. They can be addressed under best practice or internationally recognized risk mitigation procedures.
		Very high						