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Margalla Dialogue:

Peace and Development in South Asia, Middle East, Central Asia (SAMECA)



The Dialogue is a pioneer initiative, intended to be Track 1.5, held annually in Islamabad, the capital city located astride the pristine Margalla Hills. It will focus on the ways and means to Promote Peace in SAMECA and Synergy in Economic Development.

Background

A number of think-tanks/research institutes worldwide regularly hold events in the form 'Dialogues' or 'Forums'. The main objective of such undertakings is to invite policy-makers, scholars and practitioners etc. to discuss important political, military, development and social issues in order to seek workable solutions. Over the last few years, the agenda of these dialogues has witnessed a gradual increase in diversity, especially related to non-traditional security such as climate change, food and water scarcity, cyber

and hybrid threats etc.

The range of attendees and broadening of agendas has allowed these forums to act much like Track 1 and Track 2 proceedings.

The first such event, to be organised in 1963, was the Munich Security Conference (MSC), which, since then, is being held on an annual basis. Similarly, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) has been holding the International Security Forum (ISF) as a biennial event since 1994.

However, the current 'Dialogue' format received popularity when the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) started to hold the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore from 2002 onwards. In 2004, it initiated the Manama Dialogue held on an annual basis in Bahrain. Since 2012, the Moscow Conference on International Security (MCIS) is also being organised annually to discuss global security issues.

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Peace and Development in South Asia, Middle East, Central Asia (SAMECA)

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Why Margalla Dialogue in Pakistan? Why Focus on Peace and Development?

With so many Dialogues currently taking place, why is there a need for one in Pakistan?

Pakistan is strategically located on the confluence of three important regions of the world – South Asia, Middle East, Central Asia (SAMECA). SAMECA as a whole possesses great geostrategic and geopolitical significance. It forms and includes the Eurasian heartland within which Pakistan is a natural bridge and at the core of this triad. However, a number of states therein remain embroiled in simmering conflicts, resulting in a highly volatile environment. The presence of extra-regional powers, particularly in Afghanistan, has also added to the insecurity of these areas, with a huge impact on Pakistan. The SAMECA region also faces problems, such as border and territorial disputes, social unrest caused by reassertion of ethno-linguistic and religious identities, refugees and internally displaced populations, cross-border networks of militants, drug and small arms proliferation, energy and water

crisis, and conventional arms buildup, etc. The fall out of these challenges often transcend states' boundaries impacting the region as a whole. At the same time, SAMECA offers immeasurable avenues of economic cooperation and sustained growth through mega economic projects like Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI), Central Asia-South Asia power project (CASA-1000), rail and road corridors, to name a few. The future, of nearly 2.4 billion people that inhabit these territories, is linked to peace and development. The region arguably holds the key to a prosperous and peaceful world.

There is, thus, a pressing need to institutionalise a Comprehensive Regional Response to the Peace and Development challenges facing the SAMECA region by working out Plausible Solutions. Identification of frameworks, strategies, plans etc., through discussion with regional countries and other relevant stakeholders, is vital. The Margalla Dialogue will, hopefully, provide a platform in a

nonpartisan environment for candid and professional exchange of views.



Objectives of the Margalla Dialogue

1. Provide a platform to enable and stimulate academic/policy discussions on issues related to peace and development in the SAMECA region.
2. Explore avenues of economic collaboration, intra-regional connectivity, and the role Pakistan can play.
3. Identify and deliberate on emerging technological transformations and their social and security implications for the region.
4. Understand different perspectives about the drivers and dynamics of conflict and work towards conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building for inclusive security of the SAMECA region.
5. Offer networking opportunities to decision-makers in government institutions, scholars, representatives of multilateral forums and the business sector of various countries in order to create better understanding about questions affecting the world in general, and Pakistan in particular.

Format of the Margalla Dialogue

This year's Dialogue will comprise of four Plenary Sessions, one Simultaneous Session, apart from Inaugural and Concluding sessions.

The Dialogue is set to host delegates from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Iran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Russia, China, United States of America, and United Kingdom, amongst others.



Aim of Margalla Dialogue

To discuss important issues related to Peace and Development in SAMECA exploring avenues of cooperation for shared prosperity and stability



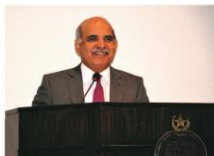
Margalla Dialogue Plenary Sessions

- Seeking Peace through Conflict Resolution
- Geopolitics in South Asia, Middle East, Central Asia (SAMECA): Role of US, China and Russia
- Prospects of Economic Integration in SAMECA: Exploring New Vistas of Cooperation
- Ecological Imbalance, Climate Change and Water Scarcity: Approaches for Regional Cooperation
- Cyberspace in 2025: Cyber Security Challenges in SAMECA and Prospects for Multilateral Cooperation

IPRI Staff Networking and Speaking Engagements

Executive Engagements

President IPRI Ambassador Vice Admiral Khan Hasham bin Saddique:



President IPRI delivering lecture at Pakistan Navy War College

Delivered a lecture on *Fundamentals of National Security Policy and National Security Strategy* to the 49th PN Staff Course at Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore.

Gave a talk on *Pak-KSA Relations* at the National Security & War Course 'Role of Foreign Policy in Safeguarding National Interests' at the National Defence University, Islamabad.

Moderated session on *Navigating Challenges and Prospects in the Indian Ocean: Towards a Shared Understanding* at the National Conference 'Nuclearization of the Indian Ocean: Implications for South Asian Strategic Stability and Environmental Safety' organised by the South Asian Strategic Stability Institute University.

Met Iranian Ambassador H.E. Mehdi Honordost at the Iranian Consulate and also attended events organised by various think tanks during the month.



President IPRI moderating session at SASSI's 'Nuclearization of the Indian Ocean' conference

Research Staff Professional Appearances

Mr Taimur Shamil, Research Fellow, gave a presentation on *Pakistan's Policy towards Iran and Afghanistan*, at the International Seminar on 'Pakistan and Regional Politics: Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects' organised by the National Defence University, Islamabad.

Mr Muhammad Nawaz Khan, Research Officer, presented a paper on *Socio-Cultural Impact of Trans-regional Cooperation: A Case Study of CPEC*, at the 5th Trans-Himalaya Development Forum & the 10th Southwest Forum at Yunnan University, Mangshi.

Guest Lecture:

Pakistan-Afghanistan: Way Forward for Bilateral Relations



For any peace settlement to find traction in Afghanistan, it must emerge from the Afghans themselves. For Pakistan, it is better to interact with Afghanistan on the basis of established state-to-state norms.

Ambassador (R) Riaz Mohammad Khan, Former Foreign Secretary, Government of Pakistan delivered a Guest Lecture on *Pakistan-Afghanistan: Way Forward for Bilateral Relations* organised by IPRI on 24 September 2019.

Ambassador Khan opined that the current Afghan peace deal was tenuous to begin with since it was pushed by President Trump due to his re-election bid and past campaign promises. It had limited support from defence and diplomatic heavyweights in Washington because negotiations without ceasefire or reduction in conflict gave Taliban the upper hand, he said. 'Withdrawal, without a plan of action to ensure that there is no civil war and the gains on the ground are not lost, is unwise,' he pointed out.

The Ambassador was of the view that leadership in Kabul needs to understand the miseries of their own people and think beyond the acrimonious past and work towards a coalition plan for peace in their country. On the role of Pakistan, he remarked that the country should follow a policy of having no favorites in terms of future Afghan

governance even to contain the mischief of India.

'We will not target the Taliban or their families; and be candid and upfront on this approach with Washington and Kabul,' he advised. He held that India has its own nefarious agenda for the region which has nothing to do with establishing lasting peace. He concluded that future of Afghan peace now largely depends on US policy under President Trump and the Afghan elections. 'However, at the same time, Islamabad must ask for an end to Afghan-based subversion against Pakistan,' he urged.

Earlier, **President IPRI Ambassador Vice Admiral (R) Khan Hasham bin Saddique**, in his inaugural address, said that the recent US-Taliban negotiations were actively facilitated by Pakistan.

The situation in Afghanistan has become a sordid affair – evolving from infamous strategic depth to the current strategic mess – the pipelines of TAPI remain a pipe dream.

US President Donald Trump's overtures during Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit are reflective of the country's efforts and role in establishing peace in Afghanistan, he stressed.

IPRI Scholars' External Publications

Brig (Retd.) Mehboob Qadir
Director Research
"Benevolence or Belligerence"
Daily Times

Muhammad Nawaz Khan
Research Officer
"Water: A Potential Casus Belli"
Daily Times

Khurram Abbas
Research Officer
"The Culture of Forced Annexation"
Express Tribune

Amna Ejaz Rafi
Assistant Research Officer
"Pakistan-China Ties"
Daily Times

Adeel Mukhtar
Assistant Research Officer
"Myth-busting Pakistan's Resilient Family"
Geopolitica Magazine

Maryam Nazir
Assistant Research Officer
"Peace in Afghanistan: A Shattered Dream"
Daily Times

"Exit for Peace"
South Asia Magazine

Zeeshan Javed
Junior Consultant
"3D Printing: Pakistan's Economic Revival through Technology"
Global Village Space

"India-The Problem Child of South Asia"
Daily Times

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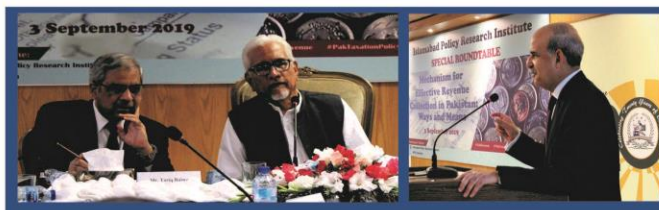
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**Special Roundtable:
Mechanism for Effective Revenue Collection in Pakistan:
Ways and Means**

The Institute organised a Special Roundtable on the above topic on 3 September 2019. The roundtable was an effort to review Pakistan's prevalent tax policy, discuss the faultlines in the taxation procedure and suggest corrective measures. Economic security was seen as an utmost concern for Pakistan. It was argued that the country's slow economic growth was the outcome of flawed policies coupled with governance issues and corrupt practices.

Recommendations

- Burdening the common man with indirect taxes can lead to many falling below the poverty line. Pakistan's revenue generation should instead shift from over-reliance on indirect taxes to a direct tax regime.
- The FBR and government departments need to adopt integrated systems to verify and ascertain the veracity of claims under the Fast Refund program by exporters to avoid false invoicing.
- While moving towards import-substitution, it is important that tariff on items likely to be used in goods for exports should be avoided.
- Pakistan needs to redesign its tax regime by enforcing more competitive yet fewer taxes on foreign investors to attract FDI.
- Corporate tax needs to be revised.
- Pakistan needs to give concessions to Small and Medium Enterprises along with reducing tariffs on imports in order to drive up the exports of finished goods, which often use imported parts. The complicated tariff rates must be revised - raw materials should be given exemptions in order to promote economic growth.
- Government must sign the Information Technology Agreement which exempts taxation of the IT industry since this is disabling growth of the digital economy, tech-driven startups and businesses in Pakistan.
- The central and provincial governments should restructure revenue collection by centralising the system under federal domain to ensure that the base and volume of tax-based revenue from the agriculture sector increases.
- Telecom companies may be used for collecting, registering and directing tax revenue to the government's revenue department.
- There should be zero tolerance of corruption. No official associated with tax collection should be allowed to abuse their power and engage in any corrupt behaviour or use of discretionary powers.
- The government needs to raise awareness among informal sectors of the economy to persuade people to become part of the documented economy.
- For better understanding, tax return forms should be translated into Urdu or other regional languages.

