

CONCEPT NOTE

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 policymakers, 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 prestigious 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.

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.

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.

Aim

To discuss important issues related to peace and development in SAMECA exploring avenues of cooperation for shared prosperity and stability.

Objectives

1. Provide a platform to enable and stimulate academic/policy discussions on issues related peace and development related to the SAMECA region.

2. Explore avenues of economic collaboration and intra-regional connectivity and the role Pakistan can play.
3. Identify and deliberate on emerging technological transformations and their social and security implications on 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.