

A POLICY DIALOGUE

on

Navigating Crisis and Cooperation: Reimagining Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations in Terms of Transit Trade, Inescapable Sociocultural Relations, Terrorism and the Challenges of Refugees' Repatriation

November 20-21, 2025



Area Study Centre (Russia, China & Central Asia)

University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan

INVITATION

We cordially invite scholars, Academicians, practitioners, diplomats, business community, media, and civil society to a policy dialogue on “*Navigating Crisis and Cooperation: Reimagining Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations in Terms of Transit Trade, Inescapable Sociocultural Relations, Terrorism and the Challenges of Refugees’ Repatriation*” to be held at Area Study Centre (Russia, China & Central Asia) University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan at 10:30 am on 20th and 21st November 2025.

Regards



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CONCEPT NOTE

This policy dialogue interrogates the intensifying geopolitical, security, and economic precipices defining contemporary Pakistan–Afghanistan relations amid renewed cross-border skirmishes, escalating militant violence, and volatile diplomatic ruptures. The immediate catalyst for this strategic crisis is the deepening threat posed by cross-border terrorism-particularly the operational usage of Afghan territory by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and affiliated transnational militant networks to orchestrate attacks against Pakistan. Hitherto, this security emergency is neither isolated nor episodic; it is structurally embedded within a complex matrix of historical frontier politics, evolving statehood contests, and the legacies of war, exile, and militarisation across both sides of the Durand Line.

The post-2021 political configuration in Kabul-characterized by non-recognition by the international community, critically weakened institutions, and limited bureaucratic and coercive capacity-has produced a governance vacuum that accommodates militant sanctuaries and illicit networks. This vacuum simultaneously exacerbates a severe humanitarian predicament: mass displacement, livelihood collapse, and food insecurity. Pakistan, already one of the world's largest long-term refugee-hosting states, faces the looming prospect of yet another new challenging risks not only socio-economic destabilisation but also heightened political contestation, resource stress, and domestic security vulnerabilities.

However, any attempt to understand or respond to the present crisis solely through the prism of securitisation would be analytically insufficient and strategically counterproductive. The Pakistan-Afghanistan dyad is anchored in historical and civilisational entanglements, overlapping ethnic and familial bonds, shared trade corridors, and inescapable socio-economic interdependence. Despite hardened borders, the frontier remains a deeply permeable social and economic continuum. The paradox of fixed territorial sovereignty against fluid human mobility and intertwined economic structures demands a sophisticated policy response that transcends traditional security frameworks.

Accordingly, this forum seeks to critically examine and deconstruct the interlocking crises of:

- **Economy, Transit & Interdependence**
- **Inescapable Sociocultural Relations**
- **Terrorism**
- **Refugees and Mobility**
- **Regional Geopolitics and Great-Power Competition**

The overarching objective is to craft pragmatic, policy-relevant, and implementable pathways to secure bilateral stability through:

- Institutionalised counterterrorism coordination mechanisms
- Rules-based trade and transit frameworks
- Predictable and humane refugee and migration management
- Confidence-building measures and diplomatic channels
- Structured regional peace and economic cooperation platforms

This academic gathering advances the normative proposition that despite fractured political landscapes and episodic conflict, Pakistan and Afghanistan remain structurally bound by geography, demography, and economic necessity. A future predicated on confrontation is untenable. A stable and prosperous regional order requires reframing this relationship from a theatre of perpetual insecurity to one of negotiated interdependence-anchored in mutual recognition, calibrated engagement, and long-term peace-building commitments.

In synthesising scholarship, statecraft, and strategic foresight, this forum endeavors to chart a forward-looking, inclusive, and actionable roadmap toward a secure, cooperative, and prosperous Pakistan–Afghanistan future.