

"Pakistan's Geopolitical Pivot: From Supporting the Taliban to Strategic Confrontation?" Concept Note

Introduction

Pakistan's foreign and security policy toward the Taliban has been one of the most complex and contentious issues in South Asian regional dynamics. Once recognized as a key supporter of the Taliban in past decades, Pakistan has recently shown signs of a significant policy shift, moving toward opposition to the group. This strategic pivot, shaped by domestic, regional, and international factors, carries profound implications for regional security, Pakistan's relations with its neighbors—particularly Afghanistan—and its standing in the global order. The seminar titled "Pakistan's Geopolitical Pivot: From Supporting the Taliban to Strategic Confrontation?" provides a platform to explore these transformations, analyze the drivers behind this shift, and assess its impact on the region's future.

Rationale for the Seminar

Pakistan's evolving stance on the Taliban is not merely a political or security matter but a strategic transformation with multifaceted dimensions that demand in-depth and comprehensive analysis. This shift is influenced by international pressures, domestic developments, evolving relations with neighboring countries, and emerging security threats. This seminar aims to convene experts, analysts, and policymakers to discuss this critical issue, offer diverse perspectives, and foster a professional and academic dialogue. The event seeks to shed light on the implications of this policy shift for regional security, counterterrorism efforts, and Pakistan's role in the global arena.

Objectives of the Seminar

- Analyze the Drivers of Pakistan's Policy Shift: Examine the internal (e.g., political and economic pressures), regional (e.g., relations with Afghanistan and India), and international (e.g., pressures from the United States and China) factors that have led to Pakistan's change in approach toward the Taliban.
- Assess the Implications: Evaluate the impact of this policy shift on Pakistan's national security, its relations with Afghanistan, and regional stability.
- Identify Challenges and Opportunities: Explore the obstacles Pakistan faces in implementing this new policy and the opportunities it creates for enhancing its regional and international standing.
- Propose Policy Recommendations: Offer actionable policy suggestions to manage tensions and foster regional cooperation within the context of these developments.

Discussion Themes

- Historical Roots of Pakistan's Support for the Taliban:
 - Examining Pakistan's role in the formation and support of the Taliban during the 1990s and 2000s.
 - The influence of the "strategic depth" doctrine in Pakistan's relations with

Afghanistan.

- Drivers of the Policy Shift:
 - International pressures and the role of global powers (e.g., the United States, China, and international organizations).
 - Domestic threats: The impact of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) on national security.
 - Shifts in regional dynamics, particularly with Afghanistan and India.
- Strategic and Regional Implications:
 - The impact of this shift on Pakistan's relations with the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan.
 - Its role in counterterrorism efforts and regional security.
 - Implications for regional economic projects, such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
- Future Outlook:
 - Challenges Pakistan faces in implementing this new policy.
 - Opportunities for regional cooperation to promote stability and development.
 - The role of the international community in supporting or critiquing this strategic pivot.

Key Message

Pakistan's shift from supporting to confronting the Taliban marks a turning point in its foreign and security policy, with far-reaching consequences for its relations with Afghanistan and the broader South Asian region. This transformation presents an opportunity to rethink regional strategies and strengthen international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and the pursuit of lasting peace. However, the success of this new policy hinges on Pakistan's ability to navigate internal and external challenges while building trust with its neighbors and the global community. This seminar offers a unique opportunity to analyze one of the most significant contemporary regional transformations and provide insights for a more secure and stable future in South Asia.

Target Audience

- Policymakers and diplomats from regional and global countries.
- Researchers, academics, and students in international relations, political science, and regional studies.
- Security analysts and counterterrorism experts.
- Representatives of international and regional organizations.

Expected Outcomes

- Publication of a comprehensive digital report summarizing the seminar's discussions.
- Presentation of policy recommendations for Pakistan and regional stakeholders.



- Establishment of a network of experts for continued dialogue on related issues.

Format

- Duration: 2 hours, comprising a keynote address, a moderated panel discussion, and an interactive Q&A session.
- Platform: Conducted via Zoom, with live streaming on the Bareen Initiative for Development's website and social media channels to ensure global accessibility.
- Moderation: Facilitated by senior experts from the Bareen Initiative for Development to ensure rigorous, inclusive, and constructive dialogue.

Call to Action

The Bareen Initiative for Development (BID) calls on stakeholders to engage in this critical dialogue to reassess past policies and chart a principled path forward for Afghanistan and the region. Through rigorous analysis, collaborative innovation, and a commitment to justice, this seminar aims to contribute to the creation of safer, more equitable, and resilient communities. Join us to shape a future that upholds both strategic imperatives and universal human rights.