

Panel 36: Taliban, Durand Line and Refugees: The Afghan-Pakistan Border Region under Stress

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Abstract: During the recent years the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan emerged as one of the so-called „ungoverned territories“. It is widely understood as a one of the major threats for global security. Herby it is commonly described as the ‘save haven’ for militant Islamists such as the Taliban and al-Qaida, from where a ‘Talibanization’ of Afghanistan as well as Pakistan emanates. However, this perception eclipses the historical as well as the socioeconomic dimensions of this border region. Already the making of this border, the so-called Durand Line, is highly contested by the Afghan state until today. The high politicization of this border became the starting point for the particular politics of the Afghan and Pakistan government concerning the “tribes” living along the shared border (e.g. FATA regulations). Moreover, the socioeconomic dimension has to be taken into consideration. As a legacy of the Afghan civil wars more than two million Afghan refugees are still living in camps in Pakistan. Additionally, thousands of Afghans are crossing the border every day. These aspects already explain that a concentration on the militant Islamism falls short to understand the complex Afghan-Pakistan nexus. The panel aims to shed light on these different dimensions of the border region.

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