

XCEPT Conference 2025

Beyond borders: conflict responses in a changing world

24–25 JUNE 2025

London

In 2025, geopolitical competition, climate change, and economic instability, along with shifts in foreign and aid policy, pose major risks to international peace and stability. These global developments have serious consequences for conflict-affected regions, especially where fragmented state borders intersect with persistent state fragility, regional political interests, and entrenched communal tensions. Progress towards greater aid localisation and inclusion are threatened by global reductions in development funding, posing an array of complex challenges for policymakers and practitioners to navigate.

The Cross-Border Conflict Evidence, Policy and Trends ([XCEPT](#)) programme conference will explore evolving regional and subnational conflicts across borderlands in Middle East, Africa, and Asia, and avenues for more effective responses. Panellists will include researchers affiliated with XCEPT programme partners— including the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, the Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House), King's College London, Rift Valley Institute, and The Asia Foundation—alongside XCEPT Research Fund awardees, international policy actors, and representatives of multilateral and regional organisations.

Key themes and questions:

- **Coping with complex, interconnected crises.** How do multiple global crises – political, humanitarian, economic, climatic – intersect to drive conflict? How will declining aid budgets and an increased focus on national security impact conflict management and regional stability?
- **Navigating rising geopolitical competition.** What are the knock-on effects of increased geopolitical competition on political violence and state fragmentation? How do these dynamics reshape political, economic, and security landscapes?
- **Reimagining trade and regional economies.** How do licit and illicit activities intersect and what are the local, national and transnational impacts? How can border trade, local economies, and governance be reimagined to create sustainable solutions for communities and advance broader economic interests?
- **Climate security and cross-border competition.** How is climate change-driven resource competition reshaping conflict and cooperation within and across borders? How can national and regional policies better respond to the challenges of transboundary resource management?
- **Trauma, memory, values, and conflict resolution.** How does conflict exposure shape behaviour and the tendency toward violence or peace? What social and psychological factors are key to moving conflict actors toward agreement and supporting recovery?

Visit the [XCEPT website](#) for the latest updates.

DRAFT AGENDA

Day 1 – Tuesday 24 June

08:30-09:00	Arrival and registration
09:00-09:30	Welcome by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
09:30-10:45	Regional perspectives on coping with a changing global context
10:45-11:00	Break
11:00-12:15	Building trust in the shadow of conflict: healing trauma, seeking peace
12:15-13:15	Lunch
13:15-14:30	Breakout sessions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cross-border conflict economies: beyond the licit/illicit divide• Borders in motion: migration and resilience in conflict-affected regions
14:30-15:00	Break
15:00-16:15	Breakout sessions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cross-border conflict response: a new toolkit required?• Hybrid authority and governance in contested borderlands• Refugees, militancy and trade in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands
16:15-16:45	Break
16:45-17:45	Keynote session
18:00-20:00	Drinks reception

Day 2 – Wednesday 25 June

08:30-09:30	Arrival and coffee
09:30-10:45	Geopolitical competition and the strategic contest for borderlands
10:45-11:00	Break
11:00-12:15	Climate security in borderlands: conflict risks and reinforcing resilience
12:15-13:15	Lunch
13:15-14:15	Keynote session
14:15-14:30	Break
14:30-15:45	Breakout sessions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local and regional dynamics in a shifting Levant• Fragmented states and regional influence across the Horn of Africa and Red Sea• Navigating resource competition in unstable environments
15:45-16:00	Break
16:00-17:00	Looking forward: emerging issues and the evidence-to-policy challenge
17:00-17:30	Concluding remarks

About XCEPT

The Cross-Border Conflict Evidence, Policy and Trends (XCEPT) research programme, funded by UK International Development, brings together world-leading experts and local researchers to examine conflict-affected borderlands, how conflicts connect across borders, and the drivers of violent and peaceful behaviour. XCEPT informs policies and programmes that support peace.