

Beyond Boundaries II

Pakistan - Afghanistan Track 1.5 and II



**Connecting People
Building Peace
Promoting Cooperation**

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Building Peace
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**Center for
Research &
Security
Studies**

Rule of Law - Security - Governance



Women & PEACE
Studies Organization

Beyond Boundaries II

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1. ACRONYMS

AAF	Afghan Air Force
ACCI	Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry
ACTA	Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement
Af	Pak – Afghanistan – Pakistan
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
APTTA	Afghan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement
APTTCA	Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Coordinating Authority
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
BTA	Bilateral Transport Agreement
CARs	Central Asian Republics
CENTCOM	Central Command
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIPS	Centre for International Peace & Stability
CM	Chief Minister
COAS	Chief of Army Staff
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CRSS	Center for Research and Security Studies
DG	Director General
DOD	Department of Defense
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
ECO-CCI	Economic Cooperation Organization Chamber of Commerce & Industry
ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement (China)
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FBR	Federal Bureau of Revenue
FCCU	Forman Christian College University
FPCCI	Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism

H.E.	His/Her Excellency
IBA	Institute of Business Administration
IEDs	Improvised Explosive Devices
IG	Inspector General
IGP	Inspector General of Police
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IBM	Institute of Business Management
IS	Islamic State
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
IT	Information Technology
JEC	Joint Economic Commission
JuA	Jamat-ul-Ahrar
KAC	Karachi Arts Council
KCCI	Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
Lt. Gen.	Lieutenant General
LUMS	Lahore University of Management Sciences
M & R	Management and Resources
Maj. Gen.	Major General
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
NAPA	National Academy of Performing Arts
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	National College of Arts
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIPCONS	NUST Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies
NSA	National Security Advisor
NSC	National Security Council
NUG	National Unity Government

NUST	National University of Science and the Technology
OBOR	One Road One Belt
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
Op-ed	Opinion Editorial
PAJC	Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee
PAJCCI	Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry
PCB	Pakistan Cricket Board
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
PIMS	Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences
PIPS	Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services
PM	Prime Minister
PNCA	Pakistan National Council of Arts
POC	Pakistan Origin Card
PTA	Preferential Trade Agreement
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf
Q & A	Question and Answer
QAU	Quaid-i-Azam University
QCCM	Quadrilateral Counter Terrorism Coordination Mechanism
QCG	Quadrilateral Coordination Group
RAW	Research and Analyses Wing
Retd.	Retired
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAFRON	States and Frontier Regions
SATP	South Asia Terrorism Portal
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SIM	Subscriber Identification Module
SSA	Security Sector Assistance
T20	Twenty-Twenty
TAPI	Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline
TTA	Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan

TTP	Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan
TV	Television
UN	United Nations
UN&EC	United Nations and European Commission
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
USA	United States of America
VOA	Voice of America
WPSO	Women & Peace Studies Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) – as part of its efforts to improve bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan – continued its Track 1.5/II initiative - Beyond Boundaries - in partnership with Afghan counterpart organization Women & Peace Studies Organization (WPSO) from August 2016 to March 2017. The phase I of the initiative ran through October 2015 to March 2016 in partnership with Afghan counterpart organization Duran Research and Analysis (DRA); these rounds brought together Afghan and Pakistani security and civil society experts for an unprecedented series of about a dozen meetings to discuss bilateral acrimony, help deescalate the heightened tensions, soothe the bitter context and explore ways of cooperation between the two neighbors.

The phase II of Beyond Boundaries built on the successful outcome of its prequel and convened six more meetings through the formation of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) comprising up to seven influential members such as parliamentarians, security experts, retired civil and military bureaucrats, senior media persons, and civil society activists from both countries.

The PAJC was developed as a bilateral Track II mechanism to mitigate overcome the deeply-rooted acrimony, minimize distrust and remove misperceptions through reciprocal visits, meetings with high level government officials, and through focused and meaningful dialogues among the PAJC group members. Border management, security, easement of formal bilateral and transit trade, refugees in Pakistan, education, health, arts and culture, media, and intellectual exchanges were some of the major issues that the PAJC focused on during the two rounds.

The PAJC members through their visits to Pakistan and Afghanistan for interactions and high level strategic sideline meetings with senior government and non-government stakeholders on issues of bilateral concern (listed above) to hear them out and frame policy recommendations.

Besides, the PAJC members also had several important media appearances, including participation prime time TV talk shows on leading TV channels in both

the countries. This was designed to highlight existing areas of disagreement, take the conversation to broader audiences with a view to improve mutual perceptions, and sensitize viewers on socio-political conditions inside Afghanistan and Pakistan.

PAJC members also visited several universities, including those in Karachi, Lahore, Mazaar-e-Sharif and Kabul in Afghanistan, for lectures on the state of bilateral relations and with a view to help detox the respective narratives in a complex socio-political environment.

The aim was to gradually improve perceptions on both sides and help them become force-multipliers. The CRSS and WPSO also administered perception surveys during university visits to gauge as to whether such interactions entailed any positive results.

The project also involved international experts as neutral observers. They helped in moderating at times heated discussions.

3. CONTEXTUALIZING BEYOND BOUNDARIES

FOREWORD¹

New geopolitical realities, far more complex and fluid than in the past, continue to weigh heavily on the strategic landscape of Afghanistan and its neighbors. Despite being the cesspool of geopolitics, Afghanistan is not a lost cause. The international community realizes the conflict-battered country's strategic importance for global peace and security, and hence most of the players, including the United States, remain committed to the restoration of peace. So do the major neighbors of Afghanistan i.e. Iran, Pakistan, and Central Asian Republics. They have all - one way or the other - continued to suffer from the recent decades of instability and violence in the country. In fact, more than in the 19th century, its location has assumed critical primacy in the strategic landscape of the region and beyond.

The interplay of major powers' conflicting strategic interests and the continued drive for a negotiated settlement of the Afghan conflict, particularly the China-backed Moscow process, has only further complicated the situation on ground. This came on the heels of the stalled four-nation Quadrilateral Contact Group (QCG) established in December 2015 at Islamabad. The Pakistan-China strategic embrace under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has been publicly rebuked by India and, recently US, has also accentuated tensions among the major stake holders of the region, practically splitting them into two blocks, namely India-Afghanistan-USA and China-Russia-Iran-Turkey and Pakistan.

Narrow-ended block politics and responses by the local feeble stakeholders, by implication, have a direct bearing on peace and security as well as the conduct and management of various proxies. Dawood Azmi finds the "competition for influence intensifying, and complicating an already precarious security situation."²

Afghanistan, indeed, serves as a pointer as to how sheer adventurism or half-baked strategies – or the absence of real strategies - can go awry. No country involved in Afghanistan – directly or otherwise - seems to realize the limits of optics in geopolitics. Or perhaps they willfully pretend not to know what lies behind the façade of relentless violence in that country. Most of the lead nations also appear to ignore the fact that nearly four decades of entrenched

² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38582323>

hostility, rivalry, multi-lateral mistrust, socio-economic deterioration and interplay of drug mafia in power politics – make it nearly impossible for one or two countries to set things right there. Afghanistan's precarious internal wars – political, social and economic – require a regionally coordinated effort to put the country back on the way to political reconciliation. The way regional powers, including China, Russia, Iran and Turkey, have nuanced their "contacts and cooperation" with Taliban and how negatively these were recently perceived by the US and its western and Asian allies have revived the specter of a "New Great Game."

Despite several gains on the security and economic front, an explosive mix of strategic interests, mistrust and competition for strategic space is the new bedrock of shifting alliances and positions on Afghanistan, where, according to US official estimates, at least 40 percent of districts are either controlled or contested by the Taliban insurgents.³

A February 2017 report by SIGAR, too, verified the Taliban's territorial claims. SIGAR estimated that the insurgency "controls, contests or influences" at least 171 districts and the Kabul government had authority over no more than 52 percent of the country.

PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS: REELING FROM BAGGAGE

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations are a mixed bag of mistrust, acrimony, controversy, punctuated occasionally by exchange of pleasantries and vows of cooperation. In recent decades, particularly after the US-led military action – Operation Enduring Freedom launched after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States - these relations have swung back and forth like a pendulum like never before; from enforced cooperation to unavoidable trade to political brinkmanship rooted in an endless blame-game and mutual grievances. This also often reflects the propensity to scapegoat domestic issues. Pakistan did this for long, when it used to hold outsiders entirely responsible for its socio-political ailments. With a ceaseless security crisis and a multitude of social, political and economic problems, the Afghan ruling elites, too, now often blame all these issues and the root-causes on Pakistan. The latter has its own share of grievances, claims to have been doing whatever necessary as a friend, neighbor and a generous host. But acrimony and mistrust refuse to make way for a positive engagement.

³ <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/05/taliban-controls-or-contests-40-percent-of-afghan-districts-sigar.php>

It is indeed rooted in history; Afghanistan was the only country that opposed Pakistan's admission to the United Nations in 1947.

Secondly, the 2,560 km long border – the Durand Line, represents another unpleasant dimension of the complex relations; though legitimized by the United Nations, Afghans in general, and Pashtun Afghan nationalists in particular, refuse to accept the Durand Line as a border. They argue that this demarcation has politically divided the Pashtuns on both sides of the Durand Line, and is hence unacceptable.

Generations of Pashtun nationalists across the border including the Taliban, who ruled Afghanistan from the fall of 1996 until their ouster in December 2001, and former President Hamid Karzai, have refused to accept this as a formal border with Pakistan. Most have devoted time and energy to keep this issue alive. This preoccupation of the Afghan political elites with the Durand Line and the rejection of it as a border was one reason why the Pakistani security establishment devised its own pre-emptive strategy – popularly known as strategic depth in Afghanistan.

The notion of strategic depth may have been true for decades but it eventually lost its relevance to a great extent in 2007, when some of the militant groups the security establishment had viewed with favour began biting back either in reaction to Pakistan's crackdown on I-Qaeda-linked Pakistani and foreign groups, or because some of them ostensibly became instruments of terror and instability to serve external vested interest.

And the bloody violence that Pakistan experienced particularly between July 2007 and 2011 at the hands of terrorist groups nestled in the Pakistan-Afghan border regions known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), too, deflated the logic of strategic depth.

At the same time, the idea of strategic depth has become almost redundant for at least two major reasons; most of Afghanistan's political elites and the security Establishment hardly look at Pakistan with favour. For them – as the relations stand now - Pakistan is the immediate enemy responsible for all the ills of Afghanistan and, hence, according any space to it is out of question.

Disapproval of Pakistan became abundantly clear in a public opinion poll that Voice of America's (VO) parent organization, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, conducted jointly with the Gallup news agency in early 2016; it showed that citizens of Afghanistan have a very low opinion of Pakistan. Survey respondents gave Pakistan a favourability rating of only 3.7 percent — the bottom of the list — faring even worse than the Islamic State, which received a 5.8 favourability rating. This survey got considerable coverage in the Pakistani media too.

Another indication of the extremely hostile political milieu in Afghanistan was a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on intelligence sharing that Pakistan offered to Kabul as part of their counter-terror cooperation in summer 2015. It seemed like a thunderbolt for many in Afghanistan. In a bizarre though expected display of their opposition to Pakistan, a large number of Afghans took umbrage to the MoU on counter-terror and security cooperation between the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS). The then head of the NDS, Rahmatullah Nabil (who refused to sign the MoU), his predecessor Amrullah Saleh, sitting parliamentarians and former President Hamid Karzai joined the chorus against what they likened to a treasonous act. Their reaction exposed their deep-rooted dislike, if not contempt, of Pakistan. Even the Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval jumped into the fray to oppose the proposed ISI-NDS cooperation. These reactions seemed to defy logic.

The denouncement of the MoU and the calls to cancel it literally stopped short of questioning President Ashraf Ghani's integrity and commitment to the country by running down his attempts to smooth off the fractious relationship with Pakistan. Most critics vilified their government's "policy of appeasement towards Islamabad" as a one-sided concession to Pakistan's military establishment. Nabil eventually resigned in December as Ghani sat down with leaders from Pakistan, China, India and the USA at Islamabad in December 2015 at the Heart of Asia moot to pursue peace. Both Islamabad — the seat of the government, and Rawalpindi — where the might military establishment is headquartered, seem to be fully conscious of the new realities in Afghanistan and its shrinking sphere of influence.

Secondly, the idea of strategic depth was predicated on the possibility of a neutral and somewhat friendly Afghanistan in case of a war with India. But the

last decade or so has seen a remarkable transformation of the former's political and economic relations with India.

The notion strategic depth became more a political liability than being helpful because of the adverse consequences that this policy of mid 1970s has entailed for the country, yet most Afghans naively insist the doctrine of strategic depth still drives and determines Pakistan's Afghan policy. While doing so they seem to willfully overlook the general anti-Pakistan sentiment that meanwhile runs deep across all sections of the Afghan society.

That is why, all through his presidency, former President Hamid Karzai had increasingly grown bitter vis-a-vis Pakistan, particularly during the second stint ending in September 2014, often accusing the former of double-gaming. His relations with former president General Pervez Musharraf (Oct 1999 – Aug 2008) in particular were extremely acrimonious because Karzai saw Musharraf as the symbol of Pakistan's security establishment, which he believed was still pushing and promoting the Taliban insurgency.

Karzai, popularly referred to as the Rahbar (leader, teacher or guide) of the post - 2001 Afghanistan, looms large on the political horizon even today. But more than being helpful, many see him as one of the many problems that shraf Ghani's National Unity Government faced all along.

"Mr. Karzai's critics, especially those close to President shraf Ghani, accuse him of working from the wings to destabilize the government and exploit a moment of national crisis to try to return to power — or at least to force some concessions. They say Mr. Karzai is actively undermining a vulnerable president, maintaining an alternate pole of political influence and patronage, and stoking protest movements that some fear could turn violent," commented the New York Times.⁴

"So what was Mr. Karzai's answer? Flat denial that he is trying to harm the government. But then there's the hint of a wry smile: "If there are some people running faster, those who are falling behind should not complain, the NY Times wrote to the backdrop of complaints by the Ghani camp as well as supporters of Dr. bdullah bdullah, the CEO."

⁴ <http://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/648572/campbell-afghan-forces-progress-u-neven-but-improving>

For most of the time since Ghani assumed presidency in September 2014, the dominant official and private narratives out of Kabul made it evident that the bilateral relationship as well as the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) process born on the sidelines of the Heart of Asia Conference in December 2015 at Islamabad, have largely been built on the Afghan government's expectations of a direct Pakistani action against the Haqqani network, the literal lynchpin of the Al-Qaeda-inspired Taliban insurgency.

A string of events and toxic statements (first half of 2016) clearly reinforced this viewpoint. A public statement by Sediq Seddiqi, spokesman for the Interior Ministry in Kabul on May 10, for instance, offered the glimpse of this mood.

"Insurgents from the Haqqani and Taliban networks are known to be planning attacks on the Afghan people in the northeast provinces of Parwan, Kabul, Logar, Khost, Paktia, Paktika (greater Paktia region). The Taliban are currently being commanded by [the] Haqqani [network]. We believe Haqqani and al-Qaida are two different names for the same terrorist organization."

He said Afghan security forces' military strategists are aware of the terrorist threat and dealing with all of them as a common enemy of Afghanistan.

Only a week ago, officials in Kabul had blamed the Haqqani network for plotting a Taliban bomb-and-gun attack on a facility linked to the Afghan intelligence agency NDS that killed nearly 70 people and wounded 347 more. They said militant group is operating from Pakistan and has links to that country's intelligence agency.

Almost simultaneously, officials at NTO's Resolute Support Mission in Kabul, too, warned of the threats coming from the Haqqani network, and dubbed it as "the most lethal" and "most competent" terrorist organization in the area. "Siraj Haqqani, has been named the number two for the Taliban. And we think that he is increasing really, his day-to-day role in terms of conducting Taliban military operations," U.S. army Brigadier General Charles Cleveland, Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications for NTO's Resolute Support Mission, said.

"And we think that he is trying to exert more influence really, on the leadership with some of these shadow governors in some of these other places [in Afghanistan]," Cleveland noted. But he underscored concerns about the

Haqqanis branching out from their traditional area and then focusing on high profile attacks like the one that killed nearly 70 people in Kabul in April.

PAKISTAN: THE LYNCHPIN?

Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, too, endorsed what Karzai and NATO officials had been saying; one of the biggest problems facing Afghanistan is its poor relations with Pakistan.

In an interview with the Voice of America (April 23, 2016), Khalilzad recalled that shortly after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 to drive out the Taliban he began to realize that Pakistan was playing a "double game."

"This is going on so many years later. And I think this is the mother, in my view, of the problems of Afghanistan," Khalilzad said. "I was the first administration official at that level to say a 'sanctuary' was being developed — to use that word. Now, if you say that no one would challenge that."⁵

Khalilzad, however, also admitted that he did not succeed in bringing Afghanistan and Pakistan together after 9/11 and "we have not succeeded still."

The two countries need each other and they should cooperate, he underlined. Officials such as Khalilzad and several Afghans often point out that Karzai's nearly two dozen visits to Pakistan remained fruitless also because of the double-game they believe the former is playing.

But, unlike Karzai, Khalilzad or members of the National Unity Government, Pakistan drew some support from within Washington too; the influential Senator John McCain and other members of a bipartisan congressional delegation to Pakistan and Afghanistan after their Islamabad visit in July 2016.

"They (the army) have cleared out that part of Pakistan~ they are looking at securing the Pakistan border in a more substantial way~ I would acknowledge it a step in the right direction," Senator Lindsey Graham said in Kabul, according to a Voice of America report. Graham also spoke of "a new attitude [under General Sharif] that is beginning to show some progress."⁶

"The COS says I hope you leave your troops here — he told us that — because if you withdraw too quickly the place is going to fall apart and it will hurt us," Graham recalled during a press talk.

⁵ <http://www.voanews.com/a/former-us-ambassador-to-kabul-reflects-on-missed-opportunities/3299559.html>

⁶ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1145063/pakistan-not-isolated/>

Senator McCain, too, acknowledged the progress made in Waziristan and underscored the importance of good relations among US, Pakistan and Afghanistan, but spoke of the Haqqani network as the “major impediment” in relations that required serious action.

In an obvious reference to the operation Zarb-e-Azb, launched in June 2014 to clear Al-Qaeda and Haqqani Network sanctuaries in North Waziristan, the Senators as well as the spokespersons acknowledged “the progress in shutting down terrorist safe havens”, and restoration of government control in many parts of FATA and elsewhere Pakistan.

Earlier on in January the same year, Gen. John W. Nicholson had told the Senate Armed Services Committee that militants linked to the TTP had taken shelter in the Afghan border areas of Ningarhar province, including Achin and Sangin districts, where they apparently had aligned themselves with Daesh. Pakistan, too, has been complaining of TTP and other Pakistani terrorist groups using eastern Afghanistan as a shelter and training ground for terrorism on its soil.

A tweet by Afghan President Ghani to Indian Prime Minister Modi in December 2015 explained this all; “My dear friend! Welcome to your second home,” Ghani tweeted ahead of Modi’s arrival in Kabul, where he formally inaugurated the new Parliament building gifted by New Delhi.

Contrast this with how rulers in both countries looked at each other in September 1965, when both India and Pakistan fought their second war. “Tell your president not to worry about the western border,” former diplomat Fida Yunus quoted the King as conveying through him to the then President Ayub Khan.⁷

It was the same border where, in early June 2016, objections by Afghans over the construction of a new gate at Torkham, and ensuing clashes between the two border security forces took the life of a Pakistan army major and two others. Major Changezi was the son of the first Afghan Refugees’ Commissioner, an office Islamabad had created in the early 1980s to take care of the refugees fleeing the conflict in Afghanistan.

While Afghans draw on issues such as emotional attachment to the border – the Durand Line or the line being an ethnic divider to justify their opposition to modern day border management - official documents point to another dimension of how one of the former Kings settled the issue with the British.

⁷ Fida Yunus interview as quoted in “The Unholy Nexus”: Pak Afghan Relations under the Taliban

A former King (Emir), King Habibullah Khan in 1905, through Dane Treaty signed with the British, honoured all treaties agreed upon by his late father King Abdur Rahman Khan - the Durand Line agreement signed in 1893. He continued to accept the annual subsidy of 1.8 million rupees as goodwill money from them for keeping this border harmless for them, and weapons as part of the agreement. Not only this, but the Durand Line agreement was reconfirmed many times by subsequent Afghan governments.⁸

Those Afghan rulers had no role whatsoever in the independence of Pashtuns who are now part of Pakistan because it was the Pashtuns on the Pakistani side of the border who fought for their independence from the British Raj back in 1947.

The common ethnicity ploy that most Afghans and Pashtun nationalists deploy to oppose, say, document or bio-metric-based mechanisms, also holds no water because divided ethnic communities are literally universal; it is not peculiar to Pashtuns divided between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Arabs are divided in 22 nations with the same language and religion; Germans live in Austria and Switzerland apart from Germany. This has been the travesty of the history that the leaders at the time of independence or subjugation of or those in the lead of an independence movement bear the credit or the blame for the eventual outcome.

Ironically, Afghan leaders, whether yesterday's monarchs, warlords or present day key stakeholders such as Presidents Ashraf Ghani or his predecessor Hamid Karzai including warlords - could hardly be a role model for the Pakistani Pashtuns, who are largely represented in the national and provincial parliaments and enjoy the second largest share in the Pakistani armed forces too. Their stakes is probably more linked to a largely functional state than in Afghanistan, which remains socio-politically volatile and economically extremely fragile.

The hostility stems from the common Indo-Afghan view on Pakistan; both accuse it of harbouring, promoting and relying on non-state actors against the two. Their narrative resonates with the United States, which too accuses the same.

All three look at the Haqqani Network, the Afghan Taliban as well as the India-focused Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (Jamaatud Dawa) and Jaish-e-Mohammad as the instruments of terror operating out of or using Pakistani territory against neighbours.

⁸ <http://www.voiceofjournalists.com/the-durand-line-issue-from-a-historical-perspective/>

This issue clearly drives the trilateral political rancor that has stalled debate on the rest of issues such as trade, economic and socio-cultural cooperation.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has been at pains to convince the world that the intermittent violence it experiences every now and then is a product by groups which can be called instruments of terrorism and instability; groups such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Jamaatul Ahrar (JuA), Islamic State (IS) or DAESH, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and Baloch Republican Army (led by Brahamdagh Bugti) stand out as some of those instruments. It also accuses outsiders including India of using these non-state actors to destabilize the country. It projected the arrest in March 2016 of an alleged Indian Navy officer, Kulbushan Jhadav, from the volatile southwestern Balochistan province as a proof of the Indian involvement in the province. This assertion gained more currency when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced to hear out Baloch nationalists who are “wary of Pakistan army’s oppression in Balochistan.”

AFGHANISTAN – PROGRESS SINCE 2001

Through the year 2017 the situation in Afghanistan further deteriorated for the Afghan government. The two-head National Unity Government remained more disunited than ever before. The capital remained abuzz with imminent limitations of President Ashraf Ghani's government. "The Afghan government is divided, ineffective in fighting corruption and in unifying and governing the country. The Afghan military commanders have not been truthful about the readiness of their troops. They have been almost entirely on the defensive while the Taliban gain more territory".⁹

Richard Ghiasy goes a little further and feels that the conflict of 1979 started interplay between foreign meddling and inter-elite competition over resources, power, identity, and ideology. The same is "continuing unsparingly into 2017".¹⁰ While foreign meddling is hard to reduce in Afghanistan at this stage, internal power rivalry is not. Similar faults are repeated over and over, even at the country’s highest political echelons. This harms stability in the country, and even the region.

Erik Goepner, a former US military commander, who worked with a provincial reconstruction team in 2010, paints a similar dismal scenario when commenting on corruption within government structures.

⁹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/after-years-of-war-us-policy-in-afghanistan-is-a_us_59039389e4b03b105b44b83d

¹⁰ 26 pril 2017, fghanistan s political elite continues to jeopardize stability

“Far from fair and judicious, the Afghan government enables its officials to get away with nearly anything. Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index assesses the Afghan government as more corrupt than 96 percent of all governments in the international system. Understandably, Secretary Tillerson shared U.S. concerns about corruption during his recent meeting with the Afghan president, concerns that previous administrations frequently raised in the past and had ignored.”¹¹

“Sadly, Afghans continue to endure a government at or near the world’s worst, and a decade and a half of herculean efforts on the part of the U.S. and others have not moved the needle. Instead of offering praise, America’s leaders should stop spending America’s treasure, particularly the lives of its citizens, on such a misadventure”, Goepner wrote.

“A government that cannot provide reasonable security against insurgents, terrorists, and criminals is a government unlikely to enjoy popular support—or to be able to deliver the basic services, economic development, and political stability that might build support and a perception of legitimacy,” observed John Sopko, the US Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in a Congressional testimony early November 2017.

Also, in the latest quarterly review of the US funding initiatives (Nov 2017) Sopko bemoaned the fact that the \$70 billion U.S. security-sector assistance in Afghanistan has suffered from serious problems, such as unreliable and inconsistent assessments of the Afghan Army and Police forces’ capabilities, ineffective management, inadequate literacy-training programs, thousands of “ghost” soldiers on the rolls, allowing corrupt commanders to pocket the salaries paid from U.S. taxpayers’ funds. Sopko also lists massive corruption within governance structures as a big debilitating factor and insists the US government “has no real strategy” for Afghanistan.

REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Since the demise of the Afghan Taliban regime in December 2001, Afghanistan has made big strides as part of its socio-economic rehabilitation such as student enrolment, women empowerment, expansion of educational and health facilities.

¹¹ http://www.ocregister.com/2017/11/01/afghanistans-biggest-obstacle-is-its-government/?utm_content=buffer87da0&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

“The most obvious impact of the U.S. intervention and reconstruction effort in Afghanistan is that the Taliban are no longer in power, and al-Qaeda no longer has a stable safe haven in Afghanistan, and, while tenuous, democracy has thus far been lasting, with one of the first peaceful transfers of power in Afghan history when President Karzai handed over power to President Ghani two years ago (Sep 2015). Health and education outcomes have generally been better in the past decade, although we recently released an audit questioning how much U.S. assistance actually contributed to some of those successes.¹² While we know

We built a lot of schools and hospitals, it’s less clear whether and how they’re currently being used.”¹³

Afghanistan’s Gross Domestic Product per capita in 2016 was recorded at 596.30 US dollars, up from the 364.10 USD in 2004. The average GDP since 2002 until 2016 has been 498.89 USD.¹⁴ Similarly, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) averaged 8.78 percent from 2003 until 2016; manifold higher than it was in 2002-2003.

Adult literacy rate of Afghanistan increased from 18.2 % in 1979 to 31.7 in 2011, eventually hitting the figure of 38.2 % in 2015, growing at an average annual rate of 47.53 %. However, the educational share in GDP witnessed a slight drop; from 3.465% of GDP in 2010 to 3.32% of GDP in 2015.¹⁵

General health indicators and service delivery have also improved since the fall of the Taliban regime in December 2001. Life expectancy in Afghanistan has at an average annual rate of 1.13 %. Life expectancy at birth increased from 58.6 years in 2004 to 60.7 years in 2015. Afghanistan health expenditure as a share of GDP fluctuated substantially in recent years. It experienced a slight drop from 8.8% in 2003 to 8.2% in 2014.¹⁶

SECURITY

Security, however, represents the most formidable continuing challenge for both the Afghan government and the US-led coalition forces during much of the 2017; political squabbling, polarization, absent/ghost soldiers, corruption within the Afghan National Defense Security Forces (ANDSF), warlordism, organized crime and its links with warlords and influential officials within bureaucracy are some of

¹² Testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security Committee on Oversight and Government Reform U.S. House of Representatives, November 1, 2017

¹³ https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/speeches/SIGAR_Duke_Speech.pdf

¹⁴ <https://tradingeconomics.com/>

¹⁵ <https://knoema.com/atlas>

¹⁶ <https://knoema.com/atlas>

the most visible factors impacting governance and security. They all constitute a huge complicating factor that directly undermines the counter-terror war. The daily bickering and largely dysfunctional relations between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah with mounting un-employment, an extremely fragile formal economy, and a resistant illicit economy have streamed into security apparatus. As a result, there is "growing popular discontent with the National Unity Government (NUG), erosion of its perceived legitimacy, and increasing ethnic tensions over the perceived lack of Hazara and Uzbek minorities in senior government posts".¹⁷

The role of former President Karzai, who interacts with different opposition groups, encouraging extra nationalist policies, reflects poorly on the authority of President Ghani. The security establishment and legislative branches of power do not feel obliged to support him either.

Afghan and US security officials attribute violence also to the Haqqani Network and the Tehreeke Taliban Afghanistan (TTA), which they allege use safe havens in the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The latter makes similar claims saying most of terrorist incidents in Pakistan are planned in and guided from safe havens in eastern Afghanistan by anti-state elements.

The first six months of 2017, for instance, saw a record number of civilian deaths — 1,662 with an additional 3,581 civilians wounded. "The human cost of this ugly war in Afghanistan — loss of life, destruction and immense suffering — is far too high," said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan. "The continued use of indiscriminate, disproportionate and illegal improvised explosive devices (I.E.D) by anti-government elements is particularly appalling and must immediately stop," he said.¹⁸

Ghost or absentee soldiers of ANDSF is another bitter painful fact directly impacting the security landscape.

"No one knows the exact numbers of the Afghan National Defense Forces," an Afghan official told the Associated Press (AP) news agency. The best internal estimates put the number at around 120,000, less than a third of what's needed to secure the country.¹⁹

¹⁷ <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2017/afghanistans-political-elite>

¹⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/17/world/asia/afghanistan-civilian-deaths-united-nations-report.html>

¹⁹ AP story reported by <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2016-01-10/afghan-forces-struggle-as-ranks-thinned-byghost-soldiers>

An April 2017 audit report by the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR) pointed out that “to mitigate the threat of ghost soldiers, in January 2017 the United States withheld financial support for 30,000 ANDSF salaries and stipulated it would pay salaries only to soldiers who were biometrically enrolled in the Afghan personnel system.”²⁰

The ANDSF has been the recipient of the bulk (over \$70 billion) of the nearly \$120 billion in reconstruction funds that the United States has devoted to Afghanistan since the war began about 16 years ago. Echoing SIGAR, the Bureau reports that the “endemic corruption” in Afghanistan, particularly the “ghost soldiers” issue, could prove a stumbling block to U.S. President Donald Trump’s goal of stabilizing the country.²¹

At the annual Munich conference in 2016, President Ashraf Ghani spoke of 20 odd terrorist groups, particularly including Al-Qaeda, Daesh, Taliban, and several Central Asian insurgent outfits, that are operating out of Afghanistan. Masoom Stanekzai, the head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), says the number of these groups is as high as 30 and represents a formidable challenge also to all the countries surrounding Afghanistan.²²

A May 2017 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace report sums up Afghanistan’s current security landscape in the following way; The security environment in Afghanistan is still precarious, evidenced by the uptick in violence in 2016 and the diminishing government control in rural areas. Factions of the Government of National Unity remain divided, and a corrupt patronage system continues to impede reform. Economic growth has shrunk since the drawdown of international forces, while the government remains heavily dependent on foreign aid. Afghan-Pakistani relations have frayed due to widening differences on security at a time when regional competition in and over Afghanistan persists.

The United States’ willingness to indefinitely subsidize Afghanistan with some \$23 billion per year is uncertain, especially when al-Qaeda’s core has been reduced to incoherence. However, the combination of a weakening Afghan regime and an unchecked Taliban resurgence could lead to the catastrophic collapse of the Afghan government and state, resulting in either a return to anarchy or the recrudescence of terrorist groups.²³

²⁰ <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/09/26/afghan-taliban-capitalizing-ghost-troops-plaguing-u-s-fundedsecurity-forces/>

²¹ <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/09/26/afghan-taliban-capitalizing-ghost-troops-plaguing-u-s-fundedsecurity-forces/>

²² NDS chief meeting with a CRSS delegation at Kabul in February 2017

²³ <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/22/u.s.-policy-in-afghanistan-changing-strategies-preserving-gains-pub-70027>

In total, about 43 percent of Afghanistan's districts are either under Taliban control or being contested by the Taliban, three percent more than six months ago, SIGAR said.

With more than 300 casualties in half a dozen high profile attacks on the security establishment, October 2017 turned out to be one of the bloodiest months in over a decade.

In fact private sources spoke of about 1300 casualties within the ANDSF in October alone, followed by a blanket official ban on social media platforms such as Whatsapp and Telegram effective November 1.²⁴

PAKISTAN'S QUANDARY

Pakistan has its own limitations as well as a history of negatives as far as its western neighbor is concerned. The only opposition to Pakistan's admission to the United Nations in 1947 came from Afghanistan. After the 1979 invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by the former Soviet Union, Pakistan became the conduit for the US-led anti-Soviet Jihad and provided shelter and training grounds for the Afghan Mujahideen. Many of them, mostly Pashtoons, morphed into the Taliban under Mulla Omar in the 1990s. Islamabad, driven by its own strategic interests, was quick to recognize the Taliban regime beside Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in 1997. This annoyed the non-Pashtoon Mujahideen leaders including the nationally revered Ahmed Shah Masood, assassinated a day before the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA. Bullied by the Bush Administration, Pakistan once again became the conduit for the US-led Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). All this, coupled with the military establishment's pursuit of an obsolete notion of a so-called "strategic depth" in Afghanistan,²⁵ injected considerable acrimony and mistrust between the two countries.

CUMULATIVE COST

The country has endured a huge price for a) skewed notion of strategic depth, b) involvement in the CIA-led anti-Soviet insurgency, and c) serving yet again as the spring board for the US-led global war on terror in Afghanistan. It entailed its own socio-political dynamics and polarized the society. It not only tainted the

²⁴ <https://www.rferl.org/a/us-no-longer-releasing-data-afghan-casualties-uptick-violence-taliban-increase-control-sigar-sopko/28827564.html>

²⁵ The notion of Strategic Depth was conceived in the mid-1970s under former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and it essentially meant to have a secure backyard in case of a war with the eastern neighbor India. And this required cultivating political influence in Afghanistan.

country's image as a "violence-prone country" but also deprived it of more than a decade and half of development, leading to massive cumulative losses to the since it joined the global war on terror. Economic losses since September 2001 have been estimated by the government at \$123.13bn,²⁶ under the chapter 'Impact of War in Afghanistan and Ensuing Terrorism on Pakistan's Economy' in the annual Economic Survey of Pakistan. Figures on human losses vary but even the India-based South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) agrees that fatalities from the war on terror since 2001 exceed 62,000.²⁷

UNITED STATES FACTOR

Ever since cobbling the 39-nation coalition for the GWOT, the United States has loomed large on the Afghan horizon. President George W. Bush announced the War on Terror on September 20, 2001, in a speech to Congress. "Our war on terror begins with al-Qaida," he said, "but it does not end there, he said.²⁸ "Failure in Afghanistan puts the American homeland at risk. Every soldier over there is an insurance policy against another 9/11." —Senator Lindsey Graham.

The quote from Senator Lindsey Graham from South Carolina, known in the Senate for his advocacy of a strong national defense, his support of the military, and as an advocate of strong United States leadership in world affairs, perhaps explains the mindset behind the emphasis on the military option in the fight against Taliban insurgents. It illustrates the narrative successive administrations have built and propagated to justify continued military engagement in Afghanistan. Can an American soldier in that country be really an insurance policy against terrorism as anti-west non-state actors proliferate across the globe – from Far East to the Middle East through to Europe and the Americas – and pose much greater threats to the civilization than those holed up in Afghanistan?

Still, the Afghan war's \$1.07 trillion cost (as of August 2017) has had three main components. First is the \$773 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations funds specifically dedicated to the Afghanistan War. Second is the increase of \$243 billion to the base budget of the Department of Defense. Third is the increase of \$54.2 billion to the Veterans Administration budget. Some of these costs are also attributable to the War in Iraq.²⁹

(For more details please see Annexure 5 the Costs of war in Afghanistan)

²⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1335394>

²⁷ <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm>

²⁸ <https://www.thebalance.com/war-on-terror-facts-costs-timeline-3306300>

²⁹ <https://www.thebalance.com/cost-of-afghanistan-war-timeline-economic-impact-4122493>

CORRUPTION/MISAPPROPRIATION OF US FUNDING

John F. Sopko, the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR),^{30 31} appointed in 2012 to oversee and audit the US funding for reconstruction, too has delivered some extremely critical assessments on the way US taxpayers' money has been spent there.

- Over \$117 billion dollars have been appropriated by the U.S. Congress for the Afghan reconstruction effort. That amount, adjusted for inflation, is more than the United States spent on the entire Marshall Plan to rebuild Western Europe after World War II, and does not include the costs of war fighting in Afghanistan. Of that \$117 billion, over \$8 billion is in the pipeline ready to be spent, and the U.S. has committed to providing an additional \$5-6 billion a year through 2020.
- To combat the Taliban and other threats, the United States alone has provided more than \$70 billion since 2002, including \$3.45 billion in fiscal year 2016 alone, to support the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police, and the Afghan Air Force. These funds pay for salaries, equipment, weapons, base infrastructure, fuel, food, clothing and pretty much anything else a military force would need.
- The Afghan security force is reportedly 320,000 strong, and is basically playing a deadly game of 'whack-a-mole' following the Taliban around Afghanistan and cleaning up the mess afterwards. The Defense Department reiterates this point by noting that the vast majority of the Afghan National Army has little offensive maneuverability, so the best spin the Afghan security forces can put on their operations is that they are able to re-take strategic areas after they fall.
- s SIGR's 2016 lessons-learned report on U.S. anti-corruption activities in Afghanistan confirmed, the donor community, led by the United States, contributed mightily to the corruption problem by dumping too much money, too fast, into too small an economy, with too little oversight. And we did so with too little understanding of Afghan political and social realities, which led us to make false assumptions about what was possible.

³⁰ https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/speeches/SIGAR_Duke_Speech.pdf

³¹ https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/speeches/SIGAR_Ottawa_Speech.pdf

- U.S. forces in Afghanistan have struck over 30,000 presumed “ghost soldiers” off the rolls, and given the Afghan security forces a deadline by which to prove that those individuals actually exist. Unfortunately, the system is not as foolproof as one might like; for instance, the biometric cards will not be used to measure daily attendance, but rather used every three years to verify identity.
- Afghanistan was no doubt a corrupt country before the U.S. intervention in October 2001, but it now ranks as eighth from the bottom in a list of 169 countries.
- The Defense Department spent over \$400 million to buy and retrofit 20 Italian cargo planes for the Afghan Air Force that turned out to essentially be death traps, barely flew in Afghanistan at all, and were scrapped at an additional cost to the taxpayer of over \$100,000. Even after the retrofit, the Defense Department had to assign test pilots to fly them to Afghanistan because regular pilots refused the task.
- The Defense Department also built a \$34 million command and control facility at Camp Leatherneck in Afghanistan for the Marine Corps. There was a slight problem, however. Even before construction started, the “surge” was over and by the time construction was completed, the Marines were abandoning the base. To their credit, several Marine Generals tried to convince the Defense Department not to build what I consider the best built building I’ve ever seen in Afghanistan, but their entreaties were ignored. It now stands abandoned and empty, a testament to poor planning and accountability in Afghanistan.
- The DOD task force that spent \$43 million to build a Compressed National Gas filling station in Sherberghan, Afghanistan. Unfortunately, there were no cars in Afghanistan that ran on natural gas – and there were no other filling stations. So the U.S. spent additional funds to retrofit the city’s taxis to run on natural gas.

(For greater insights on the US social, and military funding and the deficiencies, please see Annexure 4 Special Quarterly SIGAR Report, JULY 30, 2017)

TRUMP STRATEGY

In the new strategy for Afghanistan announced on August 20, 2017, President Donald Trump came down heavily on Pakistan. He asked the Pakistani leadership to “demonstrate its commitment to civilization, order and to peace” and

identified the country as one "housing agents of chaos, violence and terror". Unlike Trump, his predecessor President Barack Obama never chastised Pakistan publicly for any alleged duplicity in the war against terrorism. Trump's shrapnel attack on Pakistan is always "music to Afghanistan and India's ears".³²

His speech sounded like a reinforced charge sheet against Pakistan.

"The next pillar of our new strategy is to change the approach in how to deal with Pakistan. We can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban and other groups, that pose a threat to the region and beyond. We must stop the resurgence of safe havens that enable terrorists to threaten America. And we must prevent nuclear weapons and materials from coming into the hands of terrorists and being used against us, or anywhere in the world, for that matter. If Pakistan wanted to remain an ally, it would have to help the US achieve that objective. Another critical part of the US strategy is to further develop its strategic partnership with India, the world's largest democracy and a key security and economic partner of the United States."

As if these threats were not enough, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson later the same day stated that the United States could consider punishing Pakistan or revoking its status as a major non-NATO ally if Islamabad did not crack down on terrorist groups. "There's been erosion in trust because we have witnessed terrorist organizations being given safe haven inside of Pakistan to plan and carry out attacks against U.S. servicemen, U.S. officials, disrupting peace efforts inside of Afghanistan".³³

Although this belligerence and zeroing-in on Pakistan came as no surprise, yet two facts merit mention here; the ten-point Roadmap to Peace in Afghanistan that an alliance of about dozen Afghan NGOs presented to the then newly elected President Ghani in September 2014, never mentioned either Pakistan or Iran with reference to their country's troubles.

Similarly, none of the SIGAR reports since 2012 ever made any reference to Pakistan as being the sole source of Afghanistan's troubles. On the contrary, both the Afghan NGO alliance as well as SIGAR listed rampant corruption within government and security structures, warlordism, narcotics, Taliban and other

³² https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/08/24/trump-gets-it-right-on-afghanistan-and-pakistan/?utm_term=.6e04b0579f3

³³ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pakistan-tillerson/pakistan-must-adopt-a-different-approach-to-terrorism-tillerson-idUSKCN1B227G?il=0>

non-state actors and abuse of fundamental rights i.e., as the primary reasons for Afghanistan's continued troubles.

Sopko in fact placed much of the blame on the US and Afghan governments in a stinging report released in September 2017; the United States failed to understand the complexities and scale of the mission required to stand up and mentor security forces in a country suffering from thirty years of war, misrule, corruption, and deep poverty, the report said, released about a month after the Trump strategy was unveiled.³⁴

The report faults the US administration and NATO partners for creating for plans for ANDSF under politically constrained timelines, rather than based upon realistic assessments of Afghan readiness and hence the ANDSF was ill prepared to deal with deteriorating security after the drawdown of U.S. combat forces in December 2014.

SIGAR goes on to point out that

- Early U.S. partnerships with independent militias—intended to advance U.S. counterterrorism objectives—ultimately undermined the creation and role of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP).
- The NATO training mission for the ANDSF was chronically understaffed by more than 50%.
- Insufficient attention to Afghan institutional capacity meant that the personnel, logistical, planning, administrative, and other functions, vital to sustaining the fighting forces remained underdeveloped—as they do to this day.
- The U.S. government is not well organized to conduct large scale security-sector assistance missions in post-conflict nations or in the developing world.
- Developing foreign military and police capabilities is a whole-of--government mission. However, there is a large “hole” in U.S. government reconstruction activity.
- Security sector assistance training and advising is not currently career enhancing for military personnel. Therefore, experienced and capable military professionals often choose other assignments later in their careers, resulting in the continual deployment of new and inexperienced forces for security sector assistance missions.

³⁴ <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/new-report-outlines-what-went-wrong-with-training-afghansecurity-forces>

- The lack of commonly understood interagency terms, concepts, and models for security sector assistance (SSA) undermined communication and coordination, damaged trust, intensified frictions, and contributed to gross under-resourcing of the U.S. effort to develop the ANDSF.
- Critical ANDSF capabilities, including aviation, intelligence, force management, and special forces, were not included in early U.S., Afghan, and NATO force-design plans.
- Individual donor nations' limitations, rationales for joining the coalition, resource constraints and military capabilities, as well as NATO's force generation processes, led to an increasingly complex implementation of programs and the lack of an agreed-upon framework for conducting SSA activities.
- The constant turnover of U.S. and NATO trainers impaired the training mission's institutional memory and hindered the relationship building and effective monitoring and evaluation required in SSA missions.
- Providing advanced Western weapons and management systems to a largely illiterate and uneducated force without appropriate training and infrastructure created long-term dependencies, required increased U.S. fiscal support, and extended sustainability timelines.
- Police development was treated as a secondary mission for the U.S. government, despite the critical role the ANP played in implementing rule of law and providing constant, local-level security nationwide.
- ANDSF monitoring and evaluation tools relied heavily on tangible outputs. This focus masked intangible factors, such as corruption and will to fight, which deeply affected security outcomes and failed to adequately factor in classified U.S. intelligence assessments.³⁵

Ironically, the irrelevance of the US Afghan policy for the common Afghans could not be more graphic than an American official himself i.e. John F. Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.³⁶

"On Friday, January 20, President-Elect Trump will be sworn into office as President of the United States. Another Friday where thousands of our diplomatic personnel and contractors will be supporting the mission in Afghanistan. Another Friday where the Afghan security forces will struggle to supply and equip its troops in the field. Another Friday in Afghanistan where, unfortunately, corruption will be widespread and rampant and where many Afghans will turn to the Taliban for justice and protection from the avarice of corrupt officials. Another Friday

³⁵ <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/new-report-outlines-what-went-wrong-with-training-afghansecurity-forces>

³⁶ <https://www.csis.org/events/afghanistan-reconstruction-enduring-challenges-new-administration-and-congress>

where the U.S. and its allies will pay the salaries of Afghan police, soldiers, teachers and civil servants who do not exist. Another Friday where Afghans and our personnel alike will face threats from terrorists and the Taliban."

AFGHAN EUPHORIA

As anticipated, President Ashraf Ghani hailed the new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan and called on neighboring Pakistan to change its approach towards his country, saying an unstable Afghanistan does not benefit anyone. He sought "lasting peace with the state of Pakistan" but urged Islamabad to "think over its past methods, and this is an opportunity."³⁷ Ghani also urged the resurgent Taliban to join the peace process, calling upon them to forget about winning the war and bringing down the government in Kabul.

On their part, Taliban leaders still insist that US should think of an exit strategy "instead of continuing the war", and have vowed to turn Afghanistan into "a graveyard" for the US.³⁸

Former Afghan President Karzai was also very critical of the Trump strategy. He said that there was not a single word on peace. Trump talked about more violence and more killings. "US must help us find peace. We do not want to be in a war of US and regional interests."

In New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Raveesh Kumar, welcomed President Trump's determination to enhance efforts to overcome the challenges facing Afghanistan and confronting issues of safe havens and other forms of cross-border support enjoyed by terrorists.

India could not have been happier as Trump almost adopted Modi's rhetoric as core of his new strategy, which essentially put the entire onus of peace through talks almost entirely on Pakistan, disregarding the fact that insurgents of all shades including terror proxies – over and above the Haqqani Network and TTA are active in the region. They also know that the new approach is based on assumptions not entirely backed by ground realities. And this also underscores the prospect of continued violence and that the longest and the costlier war the US has ever fought may not end the way Trump wants.

³⁷ Radio Free Afghanistan RFE/RL's Radio Mashaal

³⁸ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/taliban-warns-afghanistan-will-become-graveyard-forus/articleshow/60172804.cms>

PAKISTAN'S RESPONSE

Pakistan avoided a knee-jerk reaction this time. In a statement issued after a special meeting of the Federal Cabinet, it dismissed Trump's singular focus on Pakistan, saying no country in the world had done more against terrorism than Pakistan, which also was its biggest victim". "Instead of relying on the false narrative of safe havens, the US needs to work with Pakistan to eradicate terrorism," the statement added. It also pointed out that threat to peace and security could not be isolated from the complex interplay of geopolitics, continued existence of festering disputes and pursuit of hegemonic policies.

But in general, the Trump strategy triggered a wave of rejection, anger and protest by the people of Pakistan and the government alike. Foreign Minister Khwaja Asif told Geo TV late on August 22 that Pakistan's commitment to war against terrorism was "unshaken" and dismissed the notion that the United States could "win the war against terror by threatening us or cornering us."

At a meeting with Alex Hales, the US Ambassador to Pakistan, on August 23, the Army Chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, emphasized, and reiterated that "peace in Afghanistan is important for Pakistan than any other country" and that it would continue doing its best for peace in Afghanistan. In what was a first matter-of-fact candid talk Bajwa said his country "does not want US money but recognition of its efforts and sacrifices to fight terrorism."

The US ambassador came across even more critical and defiant message when he met with the National Security Advisor (NSA), General (Rtd) Nasir Khan Janjua the same day; Janjua underscored the need for all stakeholders to seek ending the Afghan conflict.

All stakeholders must seek closure of the Afghan conflict. The Taliban card ought to be handled cautiously. Pakistan has lost most of its leverage over Afghan Taliban. Most of the field commanders are on their own, and are based inside Afghanistan, and don't single out Pakistan for all the ills of Afghanistan, was what Janjua conveyed to Ambassador Hale.³⁹

Even the national Parliament, resonating the general sentiment, passed a strongly worded resolution rejecting the remarks by President Trump and US Commander in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson that the leadership councils of the Taliban and Haqqani network were operating out of Pakistan.

³⁹ Based on the official press release issued on Aug 23 by NS's officeS

The Pakistani authorities also postponed high level bilateral official visits, and called for the elimination of the alleged terror safe havens in Afghanistan, setting up of a timetable for the return of Afghan refugees, and taking steps to stop the influence of India in Afghanistan as they allege that India was using the Afghan soil to carry out attacks and destabilize Pakistan.

Army Chief Gen. Bajwa at a meeting of the Quadrilateral Counter Terrorism Coordination Mechanism (QCCM) in Dushanbe (August 27-29, 2017) underlined that terrorism being a transnational threat could only be defeated through intelligence sharing and coordinated effective border management. On the sidelines of the event, Gen Bajwa met the Afghan Chief of General Staff, Gen Sharif Yaftali and told him that Pakistan couldn't bring the Afghan war into Pakistan after clearing its erstwhile no-go areas in northwestern Pakistan and FATA regions. To consolidate these gains, Pakistan has also started unilateral border security measures including fencing. Besides border security management, the other key factor for enduring peace was dignified repatriation of the Afghan refugees,⁴⁰ the army chief underscored.

China came out strongly in support of Pakistan. Foreign Minister Wang Yi praised Pakistan's "great sacrifices" and urged the international community to recognize the same. Earlier, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said, "Pakistan is at the frontline of fighting terrorism, has made sacrifices in fighting terrorism, making an important contribution to upholding peace and stability."⁴¹

This strong expression of solidarity with Pakistan was rooted not only in their long-standing friendship but also in the multi-year China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) worth tens of billions of dollars infrastructure development cooperation that began in 2015.

And as if validating Sino-Pakistan suspicions on the motives of the Indo-US opposition to CPEC, the Trump administration informed Congress that it too believed the CPEC passes through a disputed territory — originally an India claim aimed at thwarting the development plan.

"The One Belt, One Road also goes through disputed territory, and I think that in itself shows the vulnerability of trying to establish that sort of a dictate," US Defence Secretary James Mattis told the Senate Armed Services Committee (October 6).⁴²

⁴⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1354441>

⁴¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1353272>

⁴² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1362283>

Secretary Mattis said the US opposed China's "One Belt, One Road" policy in principle because in a globalized world, there were many belts and many roads, and no one nation should put itself into a position of dictating One Belt, One Road. And it opposed the one going through Pakistan also because it passed through a disputed territory." This is the first time that the US broke the uneasy silence over its opposition to CPEC and used the Indian rationale to bring the economic project into dispute.

And here is where the geo-political complication for Afghanistan begins. The pattern was gradually emerging and became evident with the announcement of the Trump strategy. This looked like the culmination of a process; in May 2017, for instance, the head of the National Intelligence Daniel Coats deposed before Senate that "terrorist groups based on Pakistan territory will create threat for US interests in the region because of its attacks to targets in India and Afghanistan" He also said that it was Islamabad who was guilty of worsening relations with New Delhi.⁴³

But Pakistan - by parading an Indian spy Kulbushan Jadhav and a Pakistani terrorist leader Ehsanullah Ehsan, a former spokesman of the terror outfit Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) - showcased to the world the evidence of its claim that the Indian and Afghan agencies were using Afghanistan as the springboard for terrorism on its territory through the religiously-disguised anti-Pakistan groups. Much before Ehsan, Lateefullah Mehsud, a central TTP activist, too had reportedly revealed his connections with the NDS; a US Marines unit literally snatched Mehsud from the NDS custody in mid-October 2013 and turned him over to Pakistan. NDS had little plausible explanation as to what it was negotiating with a central leader of an anti-Pakistan terrorist outfit.

Ehsan, according to the military claims, surrendered in April 2017 to the Pakistani authorities and revealed in a video statement of the group's nexus with the Indian intelligence outfit RAW and also with the NDS, the intelligence service of Afghanistan. Kabul remained largely quiet on what Ehsan admitted before the Pakistani investigators. Ehsan's confessional episode could have further embittered the Afghan-Pakistan relations. Fortunately, Afghanistan handled the matter adroitly. In contrast, India went into an unusual hostile mode once Jhadav's arrest in March 2016 was made public. Reportedly a serving officer of the Indian Navy, Jadhav was using his business base in the neighboring Iran for forays into Balochistan, where he apparently hooked up with anti-Pakistan

⁴³ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/pak-based-terror-groups-plan-to-attack-india-afghan-us-intel-chief/articleshow/58638411.cms>

Baloch insurgent groups to plan and execute acts of terrorism. Jadhav's case further accentuated the acrimony between Islamabad and New Delhi, also because Pakistan denied consular access to him. India eventually took the issue to the International Court of Justice.

However, the Afghan side continued firing allegations about fencing of the Pak-Afghan border. Pakistan said that border management meant to combat terrorism. Afghanistan demanded Pakistan to stop the fencing process, suggesting that Kabul might resort to military action if diplomacy failed to resolve the issue. The London negotiated mechanism to improve relations and remove mistrust unfortunately petered off without achieving any results. It was a big disappointment as the mechanism held out specific measures and the agreement was reached with the help of British National Security Adviser Mark Lyall Grant between Afghan National Security Adviser Hanif Atmar and Pakistani foreign policy chief Sartaj Aziz.⁴⁴

Viewed against the month-long closure of border points and massive human suffering as well as economic losses worth several million dollars both sides of the border, the meeting once again revived hopes for a constructive engagement on the way forward. In addition to appreciative remarks from Kabul, in a message posted on his Facebook page after these talks, Dr Omar Zakhilwal — the Afghan Ambassador to Islamabad — said the London meeting was held “to discuss and agree on a mechanism for genuine bilateral cooperation on fighting terrorism, agree on steps and measures to improve the current tense bilateral relations and mutual trust”.⁴⁵

In the meanwhile there was no letup in violence in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Interestingly, terrorists and extremists such as the militant Islamic State (IS) group have exploited the widening gulf between Kabul and Islamabad to escalate terrorist operations on both sides of the border. They continued confusing the governments by claiming responsibility for the spell of terrorist attacks in Pakistan and assault on a Kabul military hospital on March 8 that killed around 50 persons and other suicidal attacks.

Therefore, relationship remained troubled as ever. In fact, bilateral relations had touched a new low when President Ashraf Ghani publicly snubbed Pakistan's elderly advisor on foreign affairs, Sartaj Aziz, during the Heart of Asia conference

⁴⁴ <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-afghanistan-officials-london-talks/3766726.html>

⁴⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1320976>

at Amritsar, India in December 2016. Before Ghani's speech Pakistan had committed US \$ 500 million for Afghanistan's rehabilitation and development. When his turn came, Ghani launched a blistering attack on Pakistan; literally rejecting the Pakistani offer he laid into the Pakistani Minister; "Mr Aziz those 500 million will be better spent on combatting terrorism and extremism in Pakistan itself", Ghani said during his speech.

Generally considered an insulting gesture in the Afghan cultural norms, this did not go well even with many foreign dignitaries, including those from China and Russia. Some Afghans derided it as a disrespectful by Ghani, others called it rude and unacceptable. Pakistani observers interpreted Ghani's outburst more as pandering to his Indian friends on the Indian soil than a statement of his own intent,⁴⁶ particularly in view of Prime Minister Modi's remarks at the conference that "we have found a strong ally in the Afghan president."⁴⁷

INDIA FACTOR

In the latter half of 2017, a string of developments pointed to the growing strategic alignment between Washington and New Delhi. By endorsing the Indian position on CPEC before the Senate Armed Services Committee early October, the US Defense Secretary James Mattis basically marked the implementation of President Trump's newly announced partnership with India in Afghanistan.⁴⁸

Only a few days ago, during his September 25-27 New Delhi visit, the Defense Secretary had exchanged vows of cooperation with his Indian counterpart Ms Nirmala Sitharaman. They agreed to assign India a greater role in the training of Afghan soldiers in counter-terrorism and help build its police in the fight against the Taliban. Expanded role of Indian military is also under consideration to provide expertise in supporting the US-led training and advisory mission with Afghan security, media was told. Having returned from his maiden trip to India wherein he met his counterpart Nirmala Sitharaman and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US Defence Secretary Mattis appeared to be a strong opponent of China's ambitious OBOR initiative.⁴⁹

This convergence was not out of blue though; the Trump administration had been gradually ramping up pressure on Pakistan, manifest in statements before

⁴⁶ <http://nation.com.pk/newspaper-picks/07-Dec-2016/ghani-s-leap-from-pro-pakistan-to-pro-india>

⁴⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1300921>

⁴⁸ <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/the-us-sino-great-game-washington-embraces-indian-position-on-cpec/>

⁴⁹ <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/us-backs-indias-stand-in-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/article19795047.ece>

and after the strategy was unveiled; a day before his meeting with Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Khawaja Asif early October, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis upped the ante by telling a House Armed Services Committee hearing that the administration would try "one more time" to work with Pakistan in Afghanistan before President Trump turned to options to address Islamabad's alleged support for militant groups.⁵⁰ In a separate hearing the same day, Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, went a step further by stating before the Senate Armed Services Committee the same day: it is clear to me that the ISI has connections with terrorist groups."⁵¹

Both Mattis and Dunford placed the entire blame of support for Afghan terrorist groups on the ISI, and essentially absolved the Pakistani government and the military of any responsibility for both incubating and supporting regional and global jihadist organizations.⁵²

This sounded like a replay of 2011, when US Navy Admiral Mike Mullen had told Congress that the Haqqani network was a "veritable arm"⁵³ of the ISI directorate, followed by the network's designation as a terrorist organization in 2012. By implication, the US administration still holds Pakistan solely responsible for its own as well as President Ashraf Ghani's woes in Afghanistan. They also believe Pakistan, because of its leverage with the groups, holds the key both to the Taliban's continued resistance and their participation in the peace talks. This illustrates a few fundamental irreconcilables⁵⁴ in the troubled Indo-Pakistan-US relationship.

Firstly, it is meanwhile safe to assume that the US demand for "action against the Haqqani Network and delivering the Taliban for talks" has remained a fundamental irreconcilable constant in Washington's narrative on Pakistan since the Operation Enduring Freedom against Al-Qaeda-linked terrorist groups got underway in December 2001.

A June 2017 Department of Defense (DoD) report, for example, went to the extent of holding Pakistan responsible for the Afghan stalemate, singling out "the exploitation of ungoverned sanctuaries outside of Afghanistan (i.e. Pakistan) by terrorists and Afghan insurgents" as "the greatest external factor that could cause failure of the coalition campaign" was alarming enough.

⁵⁰ <https://crssblog.com/2017/10/06/pakistan-and-usa-together-now-one-last-time-imtiaz-gul/>

⁵¹ <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/10/pakistans-intelligence-service-has-connections-with-terrorist-groups.php>

⁵² <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/10/pakistans-intelligence-service-has-connections-with-terrorist-groups.php>

⁵³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/world/asia/mullen-asserts-pakistani-role-in-attack-on-us-embassy.html>

⁵⁴ <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/all-together-now-one-more-time/>

Similarly, General Joe Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a June 19 statement spoke of the need to make sure that “Haqqani and Taliban don't have sanctuary in South Asia,” an almost direct reference to Pakistan.

General Nicholson, the top US commander in Afghanistan, too, on several occasions reiterated the same narrative, which is visibly more pronounced under President Trump.

Secondly, while continuing its crackdown against all non-state actors, Pakistan will never wage war against the Afghan Taliban on its soil. It needs political space to gradually turn the back on all Afghan factions but the new Indo-US resolve on counter-terrorism cooperation in Afghanistan threatens to restrict this further.

Outsiders often miss the point that peace in Afghanistan has never been in the hands of Pakistan alone; relationships with the Mujahedeen, Hamid Karzai, Professor Rabbani (late), Prof Sayyaf, Mullah Omar and several Taliban/Haqqani leaders notwithstanding, its leverage has shrunk considerably in the face of growing synergy among the organized criminal syndicates and over 20 non-state actors such as the Taliban, Daish, ETIM and the IMU.

This is tied to the second constant. Since no other country has suffered as much as Pakistan – both financially and humanly - its civilian and military elites have little doubt that without cession of violence in Afghanistan, Pakistan too will remain embroiled in the crisis of insecurity.

However, it is quite evident that Islamabad and the mighty General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi south of Islamabad, alone cannot determine the course of peace and conflict any more. It is first of all in the hands of the Kabul ruling elites, who must develop consensus on how to deal with Taliban and determine what to realistically expect of Pakistan in the maze of genuine insurgency, external terror proxies and organized crime — factors that feed insurgency and obfuscate who drives violence there.

The third non-negotiable constant is the Indian factor; the more India expands its space in Afghanistan and is perceived as getting empowered, the more would Pakistan feel vulnerable and, historically, Pakistan has suffered from India-Afghan collaboration. Hostile US joining this duo, fuels security concerns forcing Pakistan to strengthen its security apparatus to encounter perceived threats from so apparent Indo-US-Afghan security cooperation.

Almost all Afghans seem to have complicated this issue further by demanding that India be given land-route access to Afghanistan via Pakistan. Back in September 2016, for instance, President Ghani – apparently unnerved by the relentless violence and continued discord within his Unity Government delivered a blistering warning what officials in Pakistan interpreted as yet another proof of the Indo-Afghan-American alliance’s attempt to lobby for India more than for Afghan business concerns. “If Pakistan does not allow Afghan traders to use the Wagah border for imports and exports of their goods, Afghanistan will also not allow Pakistan to use Afghan transit routes to reach Central Asia and other countries for exports,” the President said in a meeting with UK’s special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan’s Owen Jenkins in Kabul.

“Pakistan has always shut its routes on Afghanistan’s fresh fruit, causing loss of millions of dollars to our traders ~ (but) Afghanistan is no more a landlocked country as it has many transit routes for the import and export of goods,” Ghani added.

Afghan officials said Kabul has long been demanding the use of Pakistan’s land route to trade goods to and from India through the Atari via Wagah border post. However, Pakistan is reluctant to grant such permission in view of the state of its acrimonious relations with New Delhi.

Afghan sources insist that Afghan goods, mostly fresh fruits go up to Wagah but then they are not allowed to go up to Atari. “It is offloaded in Wagah and then carried in carts up to Attari and loaded on again. This adds to the transportation costs as well as to ratio of spoilage,” Afghan officials argue. “We have asked that our goods, mostly fresh fruit, be allowed to go up to Attari, and then transferred to Indian trucks in a back to back arrangement. This alone can reduce cost and spoilage to an extent that will make our export of fruit to India double or triple,” the Express Tribune quoted an official as saying. Pakistan foreign ministry, though, rejected the assertions saying trucks carrying fresh fruits and vegetables from Afghanistan are being allowed to transport them all the way up to the Indian Atari post.

Unsurprisingly, as the President Trump’s Afghan policy triggered hectic multilateral diplomacy centred on peace and mending of Pakistan-Afghan relations, President Ghani refused Pakistani trucks entry into his country in late October, 2017.

"The Afghanistan and Pakistan Trade Agreement (APTA) has expired. Before this Pakistan did not allow Afghan trucks to enter its territory. So we [will] do the same, and after this Pakistani trucks will be unloaded at borders and Afghan trucks will carry the goods to Hairatan and Shir Khan Ports," Transport Ministry Spokesman Hekmatullah Qawanch said, while explaining a presidential decree to that effect.⁵⁵

The latest Indo-US vows of cooperation raise both concern as well as suspicion as to the motives, and the US disinclination to use its leverage with India for a matter-of-fact dialogue with Pakistan on Afghanistan and the Kashmir-focused militant groups.

Outsiders often miss the point that peace in Afghanistan has never been in the hands of Pakistan alone. Its influence with the insurgent groups has gradually waned with the emergence of various Taliban franchises, their proximity either to Al-Qaeda or Daesh, and the deadly nexus between terrorist/militants groups and the organized crime. Pakistan has been erroneously rated as the country most influential for wooing the Taliban into peace negotiations. Mainly because of its own tactical mistakes until the recent past, Pakistan has meanwhile lost considerable clout even among the ethnic Pashtoon Afghan Taliban groups, who like other Afghans, remain fiercely independent when it comes to issues such as border trade management or the Durand Line, the border between the two countries drawn by the British colonial rulers over 150 years ago.

Unflinching relations with Beijing is the fourth irreconcilable constant for Pakistan; given the long history of cooperation and with the obvious Indian opposition to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Islamabad will never step back from Beijing, something that both India and US desire as a quid pro quo for a more favorable treatment of Pakistan.

The fifth irreconcilable constant is Pakistan's nuclear program, which no body, the security establishment in particular, would dare think of decelerating, freezing or abandoning altogether. From a strategic point of view, the security establishment and the civilians look at peace in Afghanistan, relations with China and the nuclear programme as a matter of life and death. Existential lifelines, so to say. Any compromise would be akin to severing these perceived lifelines. Nor will Islamabad be ever comfortable with countries such as the US to look at it through the Afghan or the Indian prism.

⁵⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1365712>

RENEWED CONTACTS

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani branded his October 1, 2017 meeting in Kabul with General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the Pakistan army Chief, as a “new season of relationships between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Foreign Secretary Ms Tehmina Janjua also accompanied the Army Chief to convey an official invitation for Ghani to visit Pakistan. All three, according to official statements, agreed that both countries should get the most out of the current situation. Yet, the bilateral ties – both political and economic – have never been in greater jeopardy – glaringly under the shadows of multi-lateral geo-political games among USA, Russia, China, India, Pakistan and Iran.

Therefore, all contacts in the latter part of 2017 at the highest level notwithstanding, substantial turnaround in relations among Islamabad, Kabul and Washington still hinged on how these countries deal with the fundamental “non-negotiable and irreconcilables constants” that continue to condemn them to a largely acrimonious relationship.

Earlier in August, Ms Janjua had visited Kabul for meetings with Afghan leadership in an attempt to revive the stalled bilateral dialogue but nothing much came off these initiatives, as most of the world waited in awe and suspense for President Trump’s new strategy. Nothing is certain; already the perceived euphoria that “the latest round of bilateral talks seems to have broken the ice and reopened a window of opportunity for Islamabad and Kabul to build an atmosphere of mutual trust and put mutual ties on a more stable footing”⁵⁶ has suffered a setback”. Kabul has once again declined to negotiate Transit Trade Agreement with Pakistan, saying, “It wants India to have a place at the table before proceeding”.⁵⁷ It is rightly argued, “At one level, if the two countries are not gnashing their teeth at each other, it is indeed positive. But at some point the absence of hostile rhetoric must lead to active measures designed to promote contacts and initiate dialogue on important sticking points, and an opportunity in that direction has just been missed”.⁵⁸ So again, the change is subject to one irreconcilable e.g. India factor.

Pakistan eagerly awaited the announcement out of Washington, though the vibes were quite clear even much before Trump unveiled his new policy. Despite knowing the imminent was upon its head, little proactive and preemptive course was visible in Islamabad for three reasons; the perennial civil-military discord

⁵⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1362988/melting-of-ice>

⁵⁷ Afghan transit trade, Dawn, October 13,2017

⁵⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1363299>

over major foreign policy issues, primarily differences of approaches towards the eastern neighbor India, which has gone on to become the lens for the USA to look at Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan have been locked in an endless acrimony, rooted in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir since 1947, and this has gone on to define their respective conduct in Afghanistan too.

Secondly, Kashmir also became the reason for Pakistan's support to militant groups in Indian Kashmir since the early 1990s and particularly two Pakistan-based outfits – Lashkare Taiba (LeT) renamed to Jamaatud Dawa and Jaishe Mohammad – have been at the heart of India's counter-terror campaign, wrapped in allegations that Pakistan supports terrorist outfits against Indian interests in Kashmir. Many LeT leaders are wanted in India for their alleged involvement in the November 2008 Mumbai attacks.

Thirdly, Pakistan also has been dealing with its baggage in Afghanistan; under the military dictator General Ziaul Haq, it had offered the US CIA a helping hand in mounting the anti-Soviet insurgency in the 1990s. It also recognized the Taliban regime, an offshoot of the Mujahedeen factional war after the Soviet pullout in February 1989. All through its cooperation with the US-led coalition in the anti-terror war in Afghanistan since October 2001, it was accused of playing a double game by providing shelter and support to the Afghan Taliban. The foremost allegation was that Afghan Taliban is a strategic asset of Pakistan and because of its support to Taliban, US and allies failed in winning the war in Afghanistan.

Former Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Olson, who also served as Ambassador in Islamabad, said in April 2017 that "Pakistan still allows Afghan Taliban to use its soil as its 'core strategic asset' and is unlikely to abandon the terrorist groups as its Afghan policy is about "geo-strategic maneuvering" against India and following strategic depth in Afghanistan". Olson reiterated Pakistan would not give up its core interests.

In "The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014", the New York Times reporter Carlotta Gall argued that for the United States, Pakistan, not Afghanistan, had been the true enemy.

Much to the chagrin of Pakistan, its past and present association with the Afghan Taliban and the alleged appeasement of and support for the Kashmir-focused militant groups, continue to obscure the destruction that the country has suffered since late 2001. The global narrative, visibly led by India-US and Afghanistan, simply ignores Pakistan's present day challenges and regurgitates its past support for non-state actors. Pakistan's admittance at Foreign Minister Level

that "Taliban's leadership and their families live in Pakistan and they are provided medical facilities" makes the US allegations credible.⁵⁹

"We have some influence over them because their leadership is in Pakistan and they get some medical facilities. Their families are here," he said. "We can use those levers to pressurise them to say, 'Come to the table'. But we can't negotiate on behalf of the Afghan government because we cannot offer what the Afghan government can offer them."

This admission – advertent or otherwise – by Sartaj Aziz, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, claimed at Washington's Council on Foreign Relations on March 1, 2016 gave Afghan, Indian and the American officials a stick they used relentlessly to underscore their claims on relations between the Afghan Taliban and Pakistan.

The Afghan-US and Indian media instantly picked on Aziz's "admission" and played it up as much as they could to highlight what they said the contradictions in Pakistan's claims and denials. The US had always questioned these denials and therefore kept asking it to "do more". General Nicholson, the National Security Advisor Gen. McMaster and Lisa Curtis, senior director for South and Central Asia at the National Security Council, lobbied for stern action against Pakistan. They proposed expanding US drone strikes, drastic reduction in aid, downgrading Pakistan's status as a major non-NATO ally, bolstering US-India strategic partnership and also promoting major Indian role in the eventual solution of the Afghan crisis.

Only a couple of days prior to the release of the new Afghan strategy, US Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Joseph Votel publicly asked Pakistan to ensure its soil is not used to plan or conduct terror activities against neighbours".⁶⁰ He said so despite a rare visit to the embattled North Waziristan region bordering Afghanistan. During his meeting with Votel, Pakistan Army Chief Bajwa delivered a straight message: "More than financial or material assistance, we seek acknowledgement of our decades-long contributions towards regional peace and stability, understanding of our challenges, and most importantly, the sacrifices Pakistani nation and its security forces have rendered in the fight against terrorism and militancy".

This was the first time a top level Pakistani official had spoken about the need to weigh Pakistan more in terms of its sacrifices than the financial assistance.

⁵⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1243093>

⁶⁰ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/pakistan-must-ensure-its-soil-is-not-used-for-terror-activities/articleshow/60142633.cms>

NEW GEOPOLITICAL REALITIES – DAESH/ISIS VS TALIBAN

In April, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai had dropped a bombshell by calling the Islamic State terror group a "tool" of the United States, and dismissed criticism of Russia for its ties with Taliban and efforts to bring the militant group into peace talks.⁶¹

"I consider Daesh their tool, I do not differentiate at all between Daesh and America," Karzai told the Voice of America. Despite strong anti-IS efforts by the United States — especially in recent weeks — Karzai told the US radio that the U.S.-led fight against IS has been "weak" over the past two years. He said there is plenty of evidence to back up his allegation, even though the U.S. has been fighting to wipe out IS and its allies in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere.

Karzai caused much greater consternation again in October 2017 when he once again questioned the forces behind the Islamic State or Daesh; only days after the US Secretary Defense James Mattis had expressed his opposition to CPEC. Asked if the US bases in Afghanistan were being used to aid Daesh, the other name of ISIS, he said, "I have more than suspicions". "Afghan people have told me how they (ISIS) are supplied with helicopters how unmarked, non-military colour helicopters supply these people, not only in one part of the country but in many parts ~ and this is a daily occurrence," he added.⁶²

The former President also claimed that the terror group had been able to spread its tentacles in the country just under the nose of the US forces and the powerful CI. "How come there is more extremism in spite of millions of dollars and loss of lives?" Karzai asked. When the interviewer followed up with a question about "proof," Karzai added: "The proof is what is happening in Afghanistan."

The interviewer, pointing out that Britain had been supporting de facto IS and Al Qaeda-linked rebels in Syria, asked the President about the contrasting role Britain played in Afghanistan by liberating Helmand province.

"At that time, they did help. We are grateful for what Britain has done in Afghanistan; it was a much, much softer version of what the US did," Karzai said.⁶³ His obvious reference was to former NATO-ISAF chief in Afghanistan, General David Richards who largely avoided direct military confrontation by engaging local communities to deal with Taliban.

⁶¹ <https://www.voanews.com/a/former-afghan-president-hamid-karzai-calls-islamic-state-tool-us/3817463.html>

⁶² <http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/09-Oct-17/us-forces-aiding-islamic-state-in-afghanistan-alleges-karzai>

⁶³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/amp/1362481>

Richards also believed fighting the Taliban or Al-Qaeda ideology was in vain. "We need to fight them with improved state service delivery and disallow their territorial gains", he used to say.

In February 2017, Nicholson had told a US Congressional hearing that he needed thousands more troops. The situation in Afghanistan for the past had deteriorated so fast that President Ashraf Ghani called 2015 the year of survival for Afghanistan.⁶⁴ In 2016, the UN reported that Afghan civilian casualties were at a record high.⁶⁵

THE RUSSIAN FACTOR

The prospect of a nominally described "stalemate" degenerating into an outright defeat played into the revival of US-Russian rivalries in the region. This became too evident in provocative accusations from American military and political leaders. The US openly accused Russia of being "hell bent to undermine the Kabul government and the US position in the country" through their reported support to Taliban. US Defence Secretary, James Mattis said in London that "... certainly what they (the Russians) are up to there in light of their other activities gives us concern".⁶⁶

Speaking to members of the House Armed Services Committee, Centcom Commander Gen. Joseph L Votel said: "[Russia~ may be providing some kind of support to them (the Taliban) in terms of weapons or other things".⁶⁷ UK Foreign Secretary Michael Fallon also echoed the same concerns when he termed Russia's new engagements in Afghanistan as an indication of the growing "Moscow belligerence".⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Russia acknowledged maintaining communication lines and contacts with Taliban. But it rejected the US allegations that it had been giving weapons or equipment to Taliban. In March, Russian Foreign Ministry labeled the claims as "fabrications designed to justify the failure of the US military and politicians in the fghan campaign."⁶⁹

⁶⁴ <https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/02/11/2015-was-year-afghanistan%E2%80%99s-survival-president>

⁶⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/afghan-civilian-casualties-2016-170206062807210.html>

⁶⁶ <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/03/31/us-defense-secretary-mattis-russias-actions-in-afghanistan-are-a-concern.html>

⁶⁷ <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/us-general-accuses-russia-assisting-taliban>

⁶⁸ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/197983-The-new-great-game>

⁶⁹ <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2017/04/19/afgh-a19.html>

Zamir Kabulov, Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Second Asian Department, in his own statement on March 24 labeled the accusations as "absolutely false".⁷⁰

Believing that US had almost killed the QCG process and might not be reconciled to initiate the same, Russia decided to expand the tripartite diplomatic Afghan conference by also inviting, Iran, India, Central Asian states and US for the third round of talks in Moscow on April 14. The Trump administration refused to participate, declaring that the conference was an attempt by Russia to "assert influence," and that the motives of other participants were "unclear."

Worried over Russian interest in Taliban, US National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster paid a surprise first visit in April 2017 to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Clearly, the visit set the disquieting signals for Pakistan how the US administration would place Pakistan in its ties with the region; the common thread of his discussions in the three countries was terrorism and security situation in Afghanistan.

In India, McMaster assured Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India's status as a major US defense partner in the global fight against terrorism. Not only had he briefed him on the visit to Pakistan, as per the U.S. Embassy the two sides also discussed ways to increase defense and counter-terrorism cooperation. In Afghanistan, his reported primary purpose was to "assess whether more military personnel are needed to break the stalemate there." Tolo News reported McMaster to have said, Pakistan should secure its interests in Afghanistan through "diplomacy not through the use of proxies that engage in violence". Further he claimed, "s all of us have hoped for many, many years, we have hoped that Pakistani leaders will understand that it is in their interest to go after these groups". It was a tough message delivered gently.⁷¹

The re-emergence of the Russian bear in Afghanistan seemed to be directly linked to the developments in the Middle East i.e. its relations with Iran and direct support for Syria's beleaguered sad regime most probably defined Moscow's renewed interest in the entire region.

A commentary on Oilprice.Com by Cyril Widdershoven, a long-time observer of the global energy market, also explains the new geo-political dynamics of the region.

The geopolitical reality in the Middle East is changing dramatically.

⁷⁰ <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/974709>

⁷¹ <http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKBN17J10F>

The impact of the Arab Spring, the retraction of the U.S. military, and diminishing economic influence on the Arab world—as displayed during the Obama Administration—are facts. The emergence of a Russian-Iranian-Turkish triangle is the new reality. The Western hegemony in the MENA region has ended, and not in a shy way, but with a long list of military conflicts and destabilization.

The first ever visit of a Saudi king to Russia in October 2017 further explained the growing Russian clout in the Middle East. It also showed that – frustrated with the US and its major allies - not only major Arab actors such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, but also Egypt and Libya, were increasingly inclined to consider Moscow as a strategic ally.

King Salman’s visit to Moscow could herald not only several multibillion business deals, but could be the first real step towards a new regional geopolitical and military alliance between OPEC leader Saudi Arabia and Russia. This cooperation will not only have severe consequences for Western interests but also could partly undermine or reshape the position of OPEC at the same time.

Moscow’s open attitude to Saudi Arabia—a lifetime Washington ally and strong opponent of the growing Iran power projections in the Arab world—show that Putin understands the current pivotal changes in the Middle East.

U.S. allies Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and even the UAE, have shown an increased eagerness to develop military and economic relations with Moscow, even if this means dealing with a global power currently supporting their arch enemy Iran. Analysts wonder where the current visit of King Salman will really lead to, but all signs are on green for a straightforward Arab-Saudi support for a bigger Russian role in the region, and more in-depth cooperation in oil and gas markets.⁷²

HEKMETYAR’S RETURN: RECONCILIATION?

Another incident, which did not help the beleaguered Kabul government, was former Mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s return to public life after 20-year exile. His appeals to the Taliban to lay down their weapons and join the "caravan of peace" fell on deaf ears as far as Taliban hardliners are concerned, drew blank. Even his call that “No bullet should be fired, no drop of blood should be shed for transition of power in Afghanistan” went unheeded. He also advocated “a strong central government~ elected leaders,” drawing attention to the difficulties that had arisen out of the Ghani - Abdullah tug of war.

⁷² <http://oilprice.com/Geopolitics/International/Is-This-The-Geopolitical-Shift-Of-The-Century.html>

Hekmatyar also rejected increase in US troops and declared elections as the only way to bring stability to Afghanistan, adding, through “a strong central government led by a powerful president. Without this, it is impossible to bring peace and stability to the country”.⁷³

On the face of it, Hekmatyar’s arrival in Kabul and submission to the constitution as part of reconciliation between the government and the Hezbe Islami, one of the seven jihadi groups that had fought the Soviet-Russians in the 1980s, made little dents to Taliban insurgency. Even many within the government resented the agreement with Hezbe Islami, saying the group had been responsible for the bloodshed and destruction of the capital in the 1990s. Hence, despite a big reception ceremony in Kabul, Hekmatyar's joining the national reconciliation did not kick start the process as anticipated by the Kabul government, meaning the peace agreement could encourage some Taliban leaders to consider joining the government side. Highly symbolic, it is the first deal done by Afghans with no UN or international mediation. The deal was not expected to improve security in the country. So when the so-called "new narrative" failed like many Afghan peace deals before, no eyebrow was raised. The event benefited Hekmatyar more than President Ghani. He became "more significant as a political leader in Kabul than as the leader of a group of fighters up in the mountains who are also competing with the Taliban for influence"⁷⁴ or improved his tarnished image known to young Afghans as ‘butcher of Kabul’.”

The killing of Mulla Akhtar Mansoor, head of Taliban, on May 21, 2016 in a US drone attack – still shrouded in mystery - disrupted the QCG peace talks. Pakistan had persuaded Mulla Mansour to engage with the Kabul government. In July, 2015 Murree talks, the first ever formal contact between the Taliban and the Afghan government, had indicated a shift in Taliban strategy. Until then, the Taliban refused to directly speak with the government, which they insisted lacked real authority.

The killing of Mulla Mansoor was apparently a ploy to undercut the growing Taliban insurgency. Globally the strike was interpreted as "a signal that the Obama administration was growing less patient with Pakistan’s failure to move strongly against the Taliban insurgency"⁷⁵. President Obama hailed Mansoor’s elimination as an 'important milestone'⁷⁶ in efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan. This stood in sharp contrast to Pakistan's position on the issue.

⁷³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1349869>

⁷⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37438674>

⁷⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/23/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-leader-mullah-mansour.html>

⁷⁶ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3604210>

For instance, Federal Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan slammed⁷⁷ the US government for carrying out the air strike inside Pakistani territory saying it was “totally illegal, not acceptable and against the sovereignty and integrity of the country”, he also accused Washington of “sabotaging the peace talks with Afghan Taliban”. In substance, the killing effectively closed out whatever little space the Afghan government had for convincing senior Taliban leaders of the need to join the path to peace.

"By killing Taliban leader Mulla Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor, the US has killed the chances of any peace process in Afghanistan".⁷⁸ Ankit Panda, a New York based editor at the Council on Foreign Relations as well as an editor at the Diplomat rightly pointed out that "if there was reason to be pessimistic about peace talks before the strike, it's been multiplied after the strike against Mansoor."⁷⁹

Consequently, the QCG process became dormant, until its faint revival in September with a multi-lateral, though inconclusive, meeting at Doha, Qatar.

PAK-AFGHAN STANDOFF CONTINUES

In February (2017), a sudden uptick in civilian killings in both countries vitiated the atmosphere further. Pakistan and Afghanistan exchanged lists of terrorists and demanded their custody. No country took any action in this regard but Pakistan closed the border crossings at Torkham and Chaman. The closure drew a lot of flak by the public and civil society, and condemned what they called the ‘cutting off the nose to spite the face’ approach. Between June 2016 and September 2017 the border was closed thrice – for at least 60 days altogether – disrupting huge human and cargo traffic with losses to traders both sides of the border running into tens of millions.

Abrupt border closures entailed their own inevitable consequences; Pakistan’s exports to Afghanistan, for instance, had peaked to \$2.4 billion between 2010 and 2011, managed to stay stable until 2012-13 at over \$2bn annually before witnessing a decline. In the first quarter 2016-2017, the figure for bilateral trade was reported at \$362.5 million, indicating a massive decline. As a result of tense relations and frequent border closures, according to BCC Persian, trade volume between Pakistan and Afghanistan has declined from \$3 billion a couple years

⁷⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1260385>

⁷⁸ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/122017-By-killing-Mansour-US-killed-Afghan-peace-process>

⁷⁹ <https://thediplomat.com/2016/05/4-questions-after-the-drone-strike-that-killed-mullah-mansour/>

ago to just \$500 million in early 2017.⁸⁰ In the meantime, Afghan-Iran trade volume witnessed a jump of nearly 25 percent, from \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion, and now accounts for a quarter of Afghanistan's total annual trade.

This happened also because, following its adoption as a member into the World Trade Organization (WTO) Afghanistan has diversified its trading partners, no longer reliant on any one or two countries for trade, especially for imports of basic food items and petroleum.

Afghanistan's trade with Iran grows, it is also charting new ways for increasing its external trade with India—lifting of some international sanctions on Iran, India's proactive investment in the Chabahar Port in Iran and the Zaranj-Delaram Highway in Afghanistan as well its offer for establishing a commercial air corridor so that both countries would no longer have to rely on Pakistan for overland trade. This has also generated a perception among many Afghans that, Pakistan plans to cripple the Afghan economy while, India is reaching out as a big supporter of the Afghan people and the economy, including a "liberalized" visa policy for Afghan businesspeople."⁸¹

"The entire episode (closure of the border) reflects our inability to respond more responsibly in times of crisis. One wonders what objective we really wanted to achieve by this extreme and thoughtless measure. It certainly cannot bring the Kabul administration to its knees and force it to hand over the 76 militant leaders allegedly responsible for the terrorist attacks inside Pakistan".⁸²

EPILOGUE

Afghanistan remains a hotbed of Taliban/Daesh as well as a battleground for short-term US strategies in Afghanistan, the Indian quest for a foothold to counter Pakistani influence there, the Iranian and Russian desire for a role in the Afghan peace process and the long-term Pakistani political interests as the next-door worried and affected neighbour. All this has so far proven to be a huge unmanageable deadly mix for the embattled Afghan ruling elites.

Secondly, several adverse drivers in the Pak-Afghan and Pak-India relations continue to weigh down the reconciliation process, which has turned into a geopolitical chess-board.

⁸⁰ <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/a-counterproductive-afghan-pak-border-closure/>

⁸¹ <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/a-counterproductive-afghan-pak-border-closure/>

⁸² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1320471>

Thirdly, both Afghanistan and Pakistan “are so close geographically and yet so far apart politically”.⁸³ Historically mired in mutual mistrust and acrimony these relations continue to swing back and forth like a pendulum like never before in recent years; from enforced cooperation to unavoidable trade to political brinkmanship – manifest in an endless blame-game and mutual grievances. This also often reflects the propensity to scapegoat domestic issues.⁸⁴

Fourth, as Afghan leaders and intelligentsia begrudge the fencing of the border, Pakistan has pushed ahead with fencing and trenching of key points of the border. It insists that new mechanisms to check infiltration of terrorists and unregulated border crossing of people and cargo are unavoidable. Afghanistan has responded to the fencing of border with protests and hurled threats of military, saying “Pakistan “cannot fence the border without Afghanistan’s consent” and any unilateral action would be a ‘violation’ of international laws.”⁸⁵

Fifth, Afghan refugees – still at least two million – remain one of the most recurring themes in the bilateral conversation. After several years of bickering among Pakistani, Afghan and UNHCR representatives, all three countries have finally charted a new path with a more humane and less fractious mechanism to deal with the Afghans living in Pakistan, particularly those born here as well as students and the business community.

Sixth, and the most important of all, Taliban insurgents have little incentive to engage with Kabul for reconciliation. The unusual string of high-profile terrorist attacks and the usual number of human cost caused thereof suggests the insurgents are in no mood to halt violence in favour of peace talks.

Despite exhortations by President Ghani and appeals from the Pakistani civilian and military leaders, neither military commanders nor their self-effacing Taliban supreme leader Mulla Hibbatullah Akhund have signaled willingness to resume the stalled talks.

The peace process appears to be hostage to the Taliban’s mistrust of the Kabul regime and their acute skepticism of the US motives (articulated immediately after the announcement of the Trump strategy). Former President Karzai’s allegations that Daesh is an American proxy to fuel terrorism in Afghanistan has further complicated an already complex situation.

⁸³ Beyond Boundaries Pakistan - Afghanistan Track 1.5 and II, 2016, available on crss.pk)

⁸⁴ Building Peace- Beyond boundaries, Pakistan-Afghanistan Track 1.5 and II, 2016

⁸⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1376825/kabul-takes-border-fencing-un/>

Another complicating factor is the “empowerment” of India by the United States, which has raised alarm in Pakistan. Is their partnership meant for effective counter-terrorism or does it aim to encircle China and its friendly periphery?

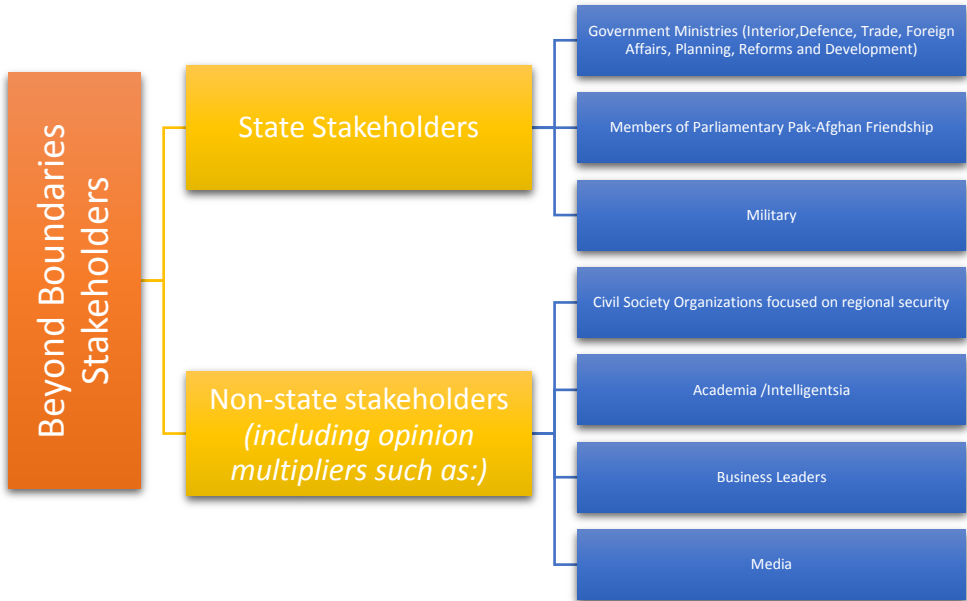
Lastly, a big arising out of this all is what next for Afghanistan-Pakistan relations? Is a workable mechanism possible through a substantial candid dialogue. Can they both work out peaceful cohabitation independent of external geo-political influences? Can they shake-off decades of mistrust to be able to engage each other as equal and sovereign states?

All these questions remain the most debated subject matter for any bilateral, trilateral or multi-lateral. Beyond Boundaries is a similar bilateral forum that endeavours to bring influencers and stakeholders from both sides face to face for a threadbare discussion on these questions. It is mechanism that also takes up issues that visitors and traders on both sides occasionally face. Beyond Boundaries offers a platform for ventilate their frustrations, debate to both Afghans and Pakistanis and convey synergies – joint recommendations for mitigation of social, political and economic hiccups – to the policy level.

In this context the story of the Phase I and II of Beyond Boundaries - which ran through October 2015 to March 2016 - was encouraging. It laid foundations for result-oriented conversations and a structured dialogue to generate more actionable policy recommendations around issues such as border management, security, easement of formal bilateral and transit trade, refugees, education, health, arts and culture, media, and intellectual exchanges.

A bilateral Track II mechanism was developed, namely the Pak-Afghan Joint Committee (PAJC) to try and help overcome the deeply rooted acrimony, distrust, misperceptions and suspicions through a focused and meaningful dialogue.

PAJC groups participated in media interactions including prime time TV talk shows on leading TV channels in both countries, to expand and disseminate the Pak-Afghan bilateral discussions. Lectures by Afghan and Pakistan at respective university campuses on the sidelines of the formal dialogue by visits also aimed to increase the level of awareness among students and help detox respective narratives.



A total of six workshops/ visits of PAJC took place during the second phase of Beyond Boundaries; two in Islamabad, one each in Karachi and Lahore in Pakistan and one each in Mazaar-e-Sharif and Kabul in Afghanistan. The project also involved neutral experts – as chairs/ moderators - for keeping the bilateral discussion balanced, neutral and objective.

As strategic oversight, the group kept lobbying with their respective governments on the progress of the previous and newly generated recommendations of "Beyond Boundaries". Therefore, as explained above, the PJC not only acted as bridge between two governments to ensure continuation of bilateral conversation among people from both sides, but also successfully served as a forum for creating awareness among people at large through: a) direct dialogue, b) seminars at public forums such as universities, c) media intervention (TV, and op-ed articles), d) engagement with important stakeholders including civil society, academia, parliamentarians, youth and women leaders, and tribal leaders.

Through successful implementation of the Beyond Boundaries phases I & II, CRSS and its counterpart Afghan partners were able to achieve the following milestones:

1. Number of Pak-Afghan Joint Group Dialogues: 12 in Pakistan and Afghanistan including meetings in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Kabul, and Mazar-e-Sharif.
2. Number of Influencers as Participants in Pakistani and Afghan groups: 85 in 12 dialogues Percentage of Female Participation in Pak and Afghan Groups: 39% according to participation in each of the 12 dialogues- most of them participated in more than one dialogue/meeting
3. Number of Policy Recommendations Formulated: 12 from 12 meetings
4. Number of Strategic Sideline Meetings with Government and Non-Government Stakeholders: 45
5. Number of TV Shows on Pak-Afghan Relations with participation of Selected Delegates from Both Groups: 47
6. Number of Print Media Op-ed Articles: 69
7. Number of Print Media Coverage: 92
8. Number of CRSS Web-post Stories: 38
9. Number of University Visits/ Lectures: 10 in leading universities of Pakistan and Afghanistan (Note: University visits with selected Pak-Afghan members were part of the second phase only)
10. Number of University Surveys conducted on pre and post lecture perception improvement by CRSS and WPSO: 10 in 10 universities
11. Number of Male/Female Students and Academics participating at University Visits: 369

4. FIRST MEETING OF THE PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT COMMITTEE



The first meeting of the Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC), which kick started the second phase of Beyond Boundaries, was held at Lahore and Islamabad from 18 to 22 October, 2016.

The Pakistani PAJC members comprised Dr. Shoab Suddle (former IG and Federal Tax Ombudsman), Maj. Gen. (retd) Ejaz Awan (former High Commissioner), Lt. Gen. (retd) Asif Yasin Malik (former Defense Secretary), Mr. Mian Sanaullah (former Ambassador), Muhammad Tahir (Senior Journalist), and Ms. Shazia Marri (Member of National Assembly). While the Afghan PAJC delegation comprised Mr. Sayed Ishaq Gailani (former Parliamentarian and Presidential Candidate), Mr. Mozammil Shinwari (former Deputy Trade & Commerce Minister), Ms. Wazhma Frogh (Civil Society Activist), Ms. Palwasha Hassan (Civil Society Activist), Mr. Ketabullah Khpolwak Sapai (Senior Journalist), Mr. Abdul Hakeem Mujahid

(former Ambassador and Advisor High Peace Council), and Ms. Elay Ershad (Member of Parliament). The workshop was chaired by Dr. Rasul Baksh Rais, professor of political science at Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and a renowned political and defense analyst.

During the one day workshop of PAJC, an expanded commitment to peace and security in the region, the role of media in fostering this goal, border management, and Afghan refugees were the top items on the agenda.



Speaking at the session, Elay Ershad said that every Pakistani and Afghan citizen is part of a puzzle, which will be complete only if all of us work together. She said that members of media and the civil society should not resonate their respective government's positions. We should come out of that mindset and propose our own independent thinking.

Dr. Rasul Baksh Rais, said that initiatives such as Beyond Boundaries are extremely important in a difficult geo-political environment and in view of the complicated bilateral relations. Governments usually lack vision, courage, and

readiness for change, therefore it is the job of independent thinkers and think tanks to redirect the bilateral relationship.

Sayed Ishaq Gailani, bemoaned the latest visa restrictions by Pakistan such as no permission for entry into Cantonment areas as well as the treatment being meted out to the Afghan refugees.

While discussing various themes of bilateral importance, the group deliberated on a list of policy recommendation for both governments, which were shared with the government Ministers.

The meeting included two day activities in Lahore; one day PAJC dialogue on 19 October, university lectures for members of both PAJC groups at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), and Forman Christian College University (FCCU), meeting with the Provincial Commission on the Status of Women, and exhibition for peace organized jointly by CRSS and Artlords, on 20 October. The groups travelled back to Islamabad, where important high level government sideline meetings with Advisor to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sartaj Aziz and Federal Minister for SAFRON, Lt. Gen (retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch, media interactions for selected participating members from both groups – talk shows at Mashriq TV, AAJ TV, Khyber TV, and interviews with VoA and FM Radio, were held on 21 October.

STRATEGIC SIDELINE MEETINGS

Meeting With Advisor to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sartaj Aziz

The *Beyond Boundaries II* delegates of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee



(PAJC) held a meeting with Prime Minister's Advisor on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sartaj Aziz on Friday October 21, 2016, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accompanied by the CRSS and WPSO representatives. Mr. Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director, CRSS, briefed Aziz on the *Beyond Boundaries* project and the first meeting of PAJC held in Lahore on October 19, 2016, giving him a rundown of the issues that were discussed between the groups; security and peace, media, visas, education, culture and sports, trade and refugees. He further added that the groups will be sharing the policy recommendations that were formulated from the discussions on these important bilateral issues. Ms. Wazhma Frogh introduced the Afghan delegates and thanked Aziz for meeting with the groups.

Sartaj Aziz welcomed the PAJC delegates and said that Pakistan government had no favorites in Afghanistan and will follow the priorities that elected government in Kabul determines for pursuing peace and reconciliation.

Welcoming the deal between the National Unity Government (NUG) and the Hezbe Islami, Aziz said this agreement seems to have motivated and encouraged other groups to come to talks. He also welcomed unanimity of approach on the peace process within Kabul and hoped it would encourage all parties to join the process, adding: "These groups should realize that it is a different Afghanistan that wants peace and where the dominant majority would like to go back to the past. Our message to all the combatants is also loud and clear; nobody can capture Afghanistan on its own anymore and the key to peace lies in talks. We desire that both the NUG and the Taliban sort our issues among themselves and we will stand by them for any support we can lend to the process. Pakistan is doing whatever it can to persuade all Taliban factions to become part of the peace process and indications are that many of them are now interested in joining the process".

He emphasized the need for establishing the rail link on a priority basis for exporting the Afghan minerals. Aziz said he had good discussions with President Ghani at Brussels and both agreed to work for developing projects and improving road connectivity. While speaking on the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he assured the Afghan delegates that Pakistan will integrate Afghanistan too as part of the vision for regional connectivity.

Sartaj Aziz informed the Afghan delegates of Beyond Boundaries that the government was reviewing its visa policy to facilitate the cross-border movement



of people and was considering long-term visas for those Afghans who own properties or have established businesses in Pakistan.

Afghan delegate Sayed Ishaq Gailani informed Aziz that this time they were surprised with a new restriction on the visas for Afghan citizens; Passports are being stamped “Not allowed in Cantonment and restricted areas”; thus they faced difficulties in their visit to Lahore. Aziz said he was not aware of any such restrictions but promised to look into any restrictions barring Afghans from visiting cantonment areas. Talking about the Afghan refugees, he also reassured



the Afghan delegation that the issue of voluntary repatriation is being pursued with compassion by Pakistan government, in view of various difficulties faced by the returning Afghan refugees in Afghanistan. “Pakistan has also offered to

provide food rations for three years to all those returnees who don't find a job and would be staying at resettlement camps", he added.

Imtiaz Gul presented the policy recommendations from the first meeting to Sartaj Aziz on behalf of the two groups.



Note:

The key achievement of the meeting was that the restriction on the visas for Afghan citizens, where they were not allowed in cantonment and restricted areas of Pakistan, was removed. This was achieved through intervention by CRSS; in the follow up meeting of the Executive Director, Mr. Imtiaz Gul, with the foreign secretary. The foreign secretary immediately directed the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul to waive off the aforementioned restriction for PAJC members, government officials and parliamentarians.

Meeting With Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (Safron), Lt. Gen. (Retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch

The PAJC members from Afghanistan and Pakistan held a meeting with federal minister for SAFRON, Lt. Gen. (retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch, on Friday October 21, 2016, at the SAFRON Ministry, accompanied by the CRSS and WPSO representatives. The Chief Commissioner Afghan Refugees, Mr. Imran Zeb Khan also attended the meeting. Mr. Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director CRSS briefed Baloch on the project and PAJC meeting held in Lahore on October 19, 2016, giving a rundown of the issues that were discussed between the groups, highlighting that Afghan refugees was a key issue discussed, also informing that

the groups have formulated policy recommendations from the discussions on important bilateral issues, which will be shared with the Minister.



Minister Baloch welcomed the delegations stating that in his opinion this is a most desired initiative because the two countries have to coexist. He termed the Afghan members as extremely important delegation that he has met in recent days, saying that he was happy to listen to them and share his and the government's viewpoint with them. He said unfortunately at state level there has been a deadlock in the bilateral talks between the two countries, but initiatives like *Beyond Boundaries* with the presence of high level delegates is a timely intervention, as in the absence of formal dialogue through this platform the individuals were able to tackle problems that require concerted efforts.



Ms. Elay Ershad, member of Afghan parliament, introduced the Afghan delegation and informed the minister that recently there are unfortunate and bitter stories circulating in Afghanistan on the harsh treatment being met out to

the refugees, which include police harassment and arrests, as well as repatriation of those Afghans who have established links and businesses in Pakistan.



Ms. Wazhma Frogh, another Afghan delegate added that bitter stories will empower only those who want to fuel conflict, whereas Afghans had excellent support and sweet memories of their stay here.

Baloch said that we are committed to safeguarding the refugees, they are our ambassadors; we would not like them to go back in bad taste. He said that there might be bitter stories but in reality they are isolated cases, and even Prime Minister Sharif was upset with the news of harassment of refugees, and has asked his ministry to give recommendations in the next cabinet meeting on all



the problems being faced by the refugees. “We cannot afford to let the act of one or some individuals make hostage the cause of refugees”, he pointed out.

Baloch told the groups that they have already drafted these recommendations including citizenry rights, investments and established business protection, taking care of students, and those who have family ties here with local Pakistanis. He noted: “if a foreigner from any other country can invest and then live in Pakistan, why not Afghans?” He informed the Afghan group: “we have also recommended that because of the harsh winter conditions the repatriation of refugees should be suspended between December 31, 2016 and March 01, 2017”. The PAJC members thanked the minister and his team for meeting with the groups for a candid and open discussion, and in the end Dr. Shoab Suddle, head of the Pakistan delegation, presented him with the policy recommendations of their first meeting.



EXHIBITION FOR PEACE: PEACE MURALS OF ARTLORDS EXHIBITION HELD AT NCA

On Thursday 20th October, 2016, the Zahoor ul Akhlaq Gallery at National College of Arts (NCA), Lahore, held a unique exhibition of works titled “Peace Murals of Artlords, Afghanistan.” The exhibition was a peace initiative between civil society organizations – Artlords and Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) in joint partnership.

The exhibition of Artlords artworks, which displayed small size oil on canvas paintings of some of the seventy peace murals that they have done in Afghanistan was a Pakistan- Afghanistan civil society initiative, undertaken by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), an independent think-tank based in Islamabad. It was aimed at building and promoting civil society and people-to-people contact between the two brotherly countries.

This civil society partnership between the CRSS and Artlords emerged as a result of the CRSS Pak-Afghan track 1.5/2 project Beyond Boundaries, as part of its efforts to improve bilateral relations between the two countries.

Mr. Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Minister of Education, Government of Punjab inaugurated the exhibition and was the chief guest. The Minister applauded the

efforts of both the civil society organizations to have taken such a unique initiative to promote people-to-people contact. He said Lahore is the cultural hub of Pakistan, and has always taken a lead in promoting art and culture. Mashhood thanked CRSS, and Artlords, as well as the National College of Arts, for partnering together to give the students and faculty of NCA and other art lovers of Lahore the opportunity to promote culture, liberal arts and peace building measures between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

He was all praise for the work of the Afghan artists and noted that such artworks depict the message of peace, love, and harmony and also is a strong portrayal of unique and meaningful message against terrorism, war, arms, drugs and warlords, through their artworks. He emphasized the importance of using art and culture to foster peace and brotherhood.

Mr. Sharifi, the founder of Artlords, briefed the Minister that Artlords was established in 2014 and consists of artists and volunteers motivated by the desire to bring about a positive social change through the soft power of art and culture as a non-intrusive approach. He invited and led the Minister to show reproductive artworks displayed at the gallery, explaining the message of peace and against terrorism behind each artwork.



Reproductions of murals executed by artists and volunteers belonging to Artlords lined the walls of the gallery.

A video documentary was also played on projector media screen documenting and highlighting their efforts as they worked on these murals at various sites. He briefed the Minister about CRSS track II project Beyond Boundaries Phase I and Phase II, where the founder of

Artlords, Mr. Omaid Sharifi participated as a distinguished member of the civil society group in three meetings, which contributed to the exhibition of the works of Artlords. The exhibition was planned to coincide with this track II dialogue to promote civil society partnership between the two countries. Mr. Sharifi informed Minister Mashhood that so far they have painted seventy large peace murals in the streets of Afghanistan in provinces of Kabul, Herat, and Kandahar. He further said that these wall murals had been executed over a period of two years in and around important sites in Afghanistan in order to emphasize the need to establish peace in the region.

Bold, graphic and inspired by other activist/artists such as Banksy, the optimistic spirit behind this public art initiative was evident as students and viewers thronged the exhibition and responded positively to the works on display. More than 200 students and some faculty members of NCA attended the exhibition, besides other guests invited from Lahore.

Mr. Aized Ali, Project Director Beyond Boundaries represented the CRSS, and said such continued endeavors help promoting and fostering people to people contacts and will enhance and increase cultural exchanges between Pakistan and



Afghanistan. He briefed the Minister about CRSS track II project Beyond Boundaries Phase I and Phase II, where the founder of Artlords, Mr. Omaid Sharifi participated as a distinguished member of the civil society group in three meetings, which contributed to the exhibition of the works of Artlords. The exhibition was planned to coincide with this track II dialogue to promote civil society partnership between the two countries.

UNIVERSITY VISITS

Visits to Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and Forman Christian College University (FCCU)

During the visit to Lahore as part of outreach and university interaction planned for the track 1.5/II project *Beyond Boundaries II*, selected members of the Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee visited LUMS and FCCU on Tuesday 20 October, 2016. The interactions at both universities focused on Pak-Afghan bilateral relations on the topic of: “Rationalizing discourse on Pak-Afghan Relations: Is a Reset from Acrimony to Amity possible?”

At LUMS the Pakistani group was represented by Mian Sanauallah, former ambassador, while the Afghan side was represented by Abdul Hakim Mujahid, head of executive council of the High Peace Council, and Wazhma Frogh, civil society activist, while CRSS and WPSO representatives also participated. The faculty members and about 25-30 students attended the presentations by the two sides at the Department of Humanity and Social Sciences.

Abdul Hakim Mujahid while giving his presentation pointed out that the harsh attitude towards Afghan refugees has created a lot of problems and acrimony in Afghanistan. We hope the Pakistanis don’t want to destroy the 35 years of



hospitality, and the goodwill it generated, by pursuing policies that have created more problems than solving them. While, Wazhma Frogh said that the Afghan

delegation was here to initiate and promote a rational discourse on the two countries.

She informed the students that in the post 9/11 Afghanistan, as many as 9 million children are going to schools and that nearly 27 percent members of the parliament are women. It is a huge step forward for a male-dominated country.

Mian Sanallah expressed that any acrimony or distrust only affects people and traders of both countries, we should address these by developing better civil society engagement through academia and youth level mutual exchanges as well



as dialogues like these. He said that the benefit of this acrimony was only to a small pool of people with vested interests.

At FCCU the Pakistani group was represented by Shazia Marri, Member of



Parliament, and the Afghan side was represented by Sayed Ishaq Gailani, former Member of Parliament and Presidential candidate, while representatives of CRSS and WPSO also participated. The faculty members and about 35-40 students attended the presentations at the Center for Public Policy & Governance.

Ishaq Gailani in his presentation said that Afghanistan government's decision of exiting the recent SAARC conference was unfortunate, it also coincidentally followed India's decision to withdraw, which did not bode well. He said this move was ill-advised, and against the interests of Afghan people; it only helped create more bitterness. Speaking of recent peace negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban, he said the Taliban in Qatar did not represent the Taliban in Afghanistan in the least, therefore the violence and bloodshed continues. He said, unfortunately it seems "The blood of Afghans is very cheap". Shazia Marri commented on the need for continued engagement. Disengagement serves no one, and while you might not solve something every time, coming to the table and having a discussion is necessary to moving forward. She also said that the two countries needed to move past the



official/military rhetoric and improve exchanges of academia, media personnel, and lawmakers and promote expanded cultural ties.

At both the universities the presentations were followed by an interactive, candid, and passionate discussion between the students and speakers through question and answer sessions. These sessions were aimed to foster better dialogue, understanding, and cooperation between civil society members particularly the young male and female students of the two universities.

University surveys were administered with the participating students and faculty members – post the lectures by PAJC members – to gauge the improvement in their perceptions on the other side, understanding of the challenges of Pak-Afghan bilateral relations, and awareness about the socio-political conditions in both countries.

MEDIA DISSEMINATION

As part of the media dissemination campaign of the project, the first workshop was well received by the TV and print media with several TV shows, op-eds and extensive press coverage. This was further complemented by the social media based dissemination where live-blogging of the discussion sessions was an important dissemination tool.

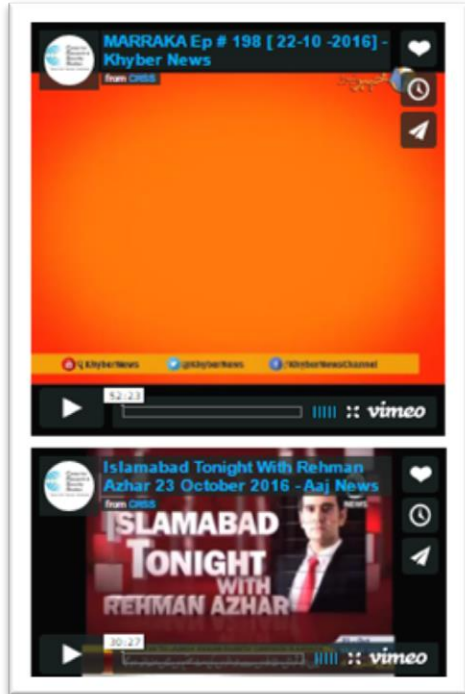
TV SHOWS

All the TV shows with the PAJC delegates are available on the CRSS website through the link below:
<http://crss.pk/beyond-boundaries/beyond-boundaries-ii/the-first-meeting-of-the-pakistan-afghanistan-joint-committee/tv-shows/>

CRSS Web Preview:

All the TV shows with the PAJC delegates are available on the CRSS website through the link below:

<http://crss.pk/beyond-boundaries/beyond-boundaries-ii/the-first-meeting-of-the-pakistan-afghanistan-joint-committee/tv-shows/>



Articles/ Op-eds

The Friday Times	11 November, 2016 (Imtiaz Gul)
The Express Tribune	25 October, 2016 (Imtiaz Gul)
The Express Tribune	24 October, 2016 (Tahir Khan)
The Express Tribune	22 October, 2016 (Tahir Khan)
The Express Tribune	21 October, 2016 (Tahir Khan)
The Express Tribune	21 October, 2016 (Tahir Khan)

Print Media Coverage

<http://nation.com>. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1204491/delegates-call-normalising-pak-afghan-bilateral-ties/>
[pk/international/20-Oct-2016/afghan-repatriation-creating-acrimony-saarc-exit-a-bad-move-afghan-delegates](http://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-says-many-afghan-taliban-factions-seem-interested-in-peace-talks/3560865.html)
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http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/index.php?page=newsdetail&news_id=5432
<http://dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/22-Oct-16/key-to-peace-lies-in-dialogue-says-sartaj-aziz>

Business Recorder	24 October, 2016
VOA News	21 October, 2016
VOA News	21 October, 2016

5. SECOND MEETING OF PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT COMMITTEE

The second meeting of the Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) was held at Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul, from 13 to 17 November, 2016.

A five member Pakistani delegation arrived in Kabul on 13 November, where the delegation visited the ongoing Pakistan funded projects for Afghan government in Kabul, namely Jinnah Hospital and Rehman Baba School and Hostel. The group met with the administration of both the projects, took stock of the progress and hurdles or delays in the implementation of these projects.



Both the groups travelled to Mazar-e-Sharif for a one day workshop/ dialogue on 14 November, and visits to Balkh University (a project funded by Pakistan and handed over to Afghanistan in 2011) and Mawlana University on 15 November for interaction and lectures/ presentations by selected members from both the delegations.

During the one day workshop/ dialogue a the PAJC held detailed deliberations on the core issues affecting Pak-Afghan bilateral relations and devised ways and means to work together as civil society groups delinking themselves from the official positions of the two governments and the political deadlock between the two neighboring countries, but at the same time acting as a track II mechanism to lobby and influence the two governments for improvement in the bilateral relations.

The Pakistani delegation comprised Dr. Shoaib Suddle, former IG Police and Federal Tax Ombudsman; Ms. Shazia Marri, Member of Parliament; Mr. Qazi Humayun, former Ambassador; Mr. Mian Sanaullah, former Ambassador; and Mr. Tahir Khan, senior journalist. The Afghanistan side included Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, Member of Parliament; Ms. Elay Ershad, Member of Parliament; Mr. Sami Mahdi, TOLO TV; Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Minister for Trade & Commerce; Mr. Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, Head of Executive Council of the High Peace Council; Ms. Palwasha Hassan, Civil Society Leader; and Mr. Bilal Sarwary, senior journalist.



The core issues discussed in the meeting included peace and security, refugees, trade, education and scholarship programmes, Pakistan funded projects in Afghanistan, media, arts and culture cooperation, movement of goods and people across the two countries, and liberalizing visa regimes.

The delegates renewed calls for both governments to take steps against cross-border movement of terrorists and stressed the need for rooting out terrorism in the interest of regional peace and stability. Recognizing the deterioration in relations between the two countries, they underscored the need for enhancing interactions in education, culture and sports. Discussing the refugees issue, focusing on the recent episode of Sharbat Gula's deportation, both sides agreed upon the need for evolving a legal mechanism for the benefit of vulnerable Afghan refugees. Both sides agreed to urge their respective governments to ensure repatriation of Afghan refugees with dignity and honor. On trade, both sides urged their respective governments to quickly review the Afghan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA).



In the last session of the workshop, the PAJC reviewed the policy recommendations from the first meeting in Pakistan last month, and formulated policy recommendations from this meeting, which will be shared with the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as other different official and civil society forums.

The PAJC groups travelled back to Kabul, where they held important stakeholder sideline meetings on 16 Novemebr, at the highest level of the Afghanistan government, which included meetings with the Chief Executive, H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah; Minister of Refugee and Repatriation, S. Hossain Alemi Balkhi; and Deputy Foreign Minister, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Andisha. The programme of the PAJC also included media interactions of selected delegates from both the groups at Mitra TV, Shamshad TV, and Tolo TV. While before departing for Kabul a TV talk show was held at Mashriq TV as a curtain raiser for the visit.

STRATEGIC SIDELINE MEETINGS

Meeting With the Chief Executive of Afghanistan, H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah

The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) members from both countries met with the Chief Executive of Afghanistan, H.E Dr. Abdullah Abdullah on 16 November, 2016, at his office.

The meeting proved to be very positive and productive as Dr. Abdullah welcomed both the civil society groups, thanked the organizations and delegates of both the countries and appreciated them for continuing to engage in the civil society dialogue series aimed to help improve Afghanistan Pakistan relations. He said:

“efforts like your track II Beyond Boundaries are much needed and appreciated, even though the ground realities can be different, but engagement is very important, and you as civil society representatives from both the countries are moving in the right direction”.



Khalid Pashtoon, Afghan member of parliament, gave a brief of the second meeting of PAJC held at Mazar-e- Sharif on 14 November, 2016 including the core issues discussed in the meeting; peace and security, refugees, trade, education and scholarship programmes, Pakistan funded projects in Afghanistan, and media, arts and culture. He apprised Abdullah of the policy recommendations formulated in the meeting on these important issues.

Shoib Suddle, head of Pakistan delegation, briefed him on the previous meetings of Beyond Boundaries phase I, six meetings held between November, 2015 to March, 2016, and also on the first meeting of Beyond Boundaries phase II PAJC groups held in Pakistan from 18 to 22 October, 2016. Dr. Suddle said: “even if we take baby steps, it will be a huge success; we should try that things should not get out of hands. The process is going to be difficult, but there is no other option, talks must continue, as both countries have suffered a lot. We are grateful that you have spared time to meet us”. He also informed the Chief Executive that the Pakistan group had visited the ongoing Pakistan funded



projects in Kabul, namely Jinnah Hospital, and Rehman Baba School and Hostel, and apprised of some of the problems faced at these projects, most notably the issue of custom tariff and other duties exemption for the medical equipment to be imported by Pakistan for the use at Jinnah Hospital.



Abdullah said that his government wants good ties with Pakistan, and he is looking forward to his visit to Pakistan. He assured the two sides of full cooperation towards this initiative and promised to look at the difficulties of projects funded by Pakistan, assuring to resolve the problems and hurdles: “All these projects are for us, for the people of Afghanistan, we are grateful to Pakistan for taking up these projects here. We will try to resolve any problems at our end. It will be done for the benefit of our people”. He assigned the members of Afghan group to follow up and present him a report of the problems faced at these projects.

Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director, CRSS gave a rundown of the PAJC meetings with Pakistan’s Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Gen. Abdul Qadir Baloch, and the Advisor on Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister, Sartaj Aziz, during the meeting held last month in Islamabad. Gul informed the Chief Executive that yesterday an All Parties Conference was held in Islamabad to deal with all the issues relating to Afghan Refugees, and the consensus was that the process should be done with dignity and honor to help the refugees being repatriated.

Mozammil Shinwari, Afghan delegate shared same views: “we had very good meetings with Sartaj Aziz and Abdul Qadir Baloch, and also very useful interactions with young students of Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and Forman Christian College University (FCCU) The general perception

in Pakistan of Afghanistan is good”, he remarked. Shazia Marri, Pakistani Member of Parliament also thanked Dr. Abdullah for meeting with the groups, she said: “this is my third visit to Afghanistan as part of Beyond Boundaries. Such interactions help us understand the situation on ground. We need to look forward together, and work together for next generations of our two countries”. She noted that we can use such endeavors to improve relations and people-to-people contact. “We urge you to further the cause that the two groups have taken on”, she said.



Bilal Sarwary, Afghan senior Journalist stated that they had good talks but at the same time they also discussed Pakistan’s (alleged) support to Haqqani network and Taliban and other controversial allegations and accusations. Dr. Abdullah cut him short while he was going on: “why do you want to talk about problems and of the past, when you have made such remarkable achievement through this dialogue, let’s concentrate on the positives that you discussed”, he remarked.

Qazi Humayun, former Ambassador of Pakistan, expressed: “we have to live together; we have to handle relations in a manner that we can co-exist. Both sides need to improve perceptions on either side”. While speaking on the Afghan refugees issue he remarked: “we have welcomed the refugees for about four decades now; we do not want to wash away all hospitality and good work because of some harsh treatment by a few elements”.

Dr. Abdullah appreciated Pakistan’s hospitality towards the Afghan refugees: “they have been hosted there for decades, though they have faced some hardships, but generally they have been looked after well. We do not want this to be damaged towards the end when they are returning to Afghanistan”.

Mian Sanaullah, former Ambassador of Pakistan, told Abdullah that he would like to convey the same feelings for improvement of Pak-Afghan bilateral relations, but we need positive statements coming out of the Afghan leadership. Dr. Abdullah responded by saying: “we will make sure that issues are solved when we have our state level interactions”.

Abdullah informed the Pakistani group that his government desires good relations with Pakistan, and that he is looking forward to his visit to Pakistan noting: “my visit to Pakistan was delayed because of certain pressing issues here. But, I look forward to visiting Pakistan sometime in the near future”.

Towards the end, Abdullah said that terrorism and extremism remain a hard challenge for both countries, but, we have to protect our future generations and to provide them with better peaceful situation.

The Afghan-Pakistan groups and the implementing organizations CRSS and WPSO thanked the Chief Executive for meeting with the group, and appreciated the fact that the discussions were held in a very cordial, open, and friendly manner and that they felt reassured with the positives coming out from this meeting through assurances given by him.



Meeting with the Minister of Refugee and Repatriation, S. Hossain Alemi Balkhi

The PAJC members from both the countries met with the Minister of Refugee and Repatriation, S. Hossain Alemi Balkhi on 16 November, 2016, at his office.



The meeting was held in a very positive, cordial atmosphere with frank and candid exchange of views. The Minister thanked and welcomed the two delegations and organizers of the track II initiative. He greatly appreciated Pakistan for the kind of hospitality they have provided to Afghan refugees for almost forty years.

WPSO representative Asila Wardak introduced the two delegations of PAJC as well as the representatives of CRSS. Afghan member of PAJC, Palwasha Hassan, gave a rundown of the project and the two meetings of PAJC held so far, where core issues of peace and security, refugees, trade, education and scholarship



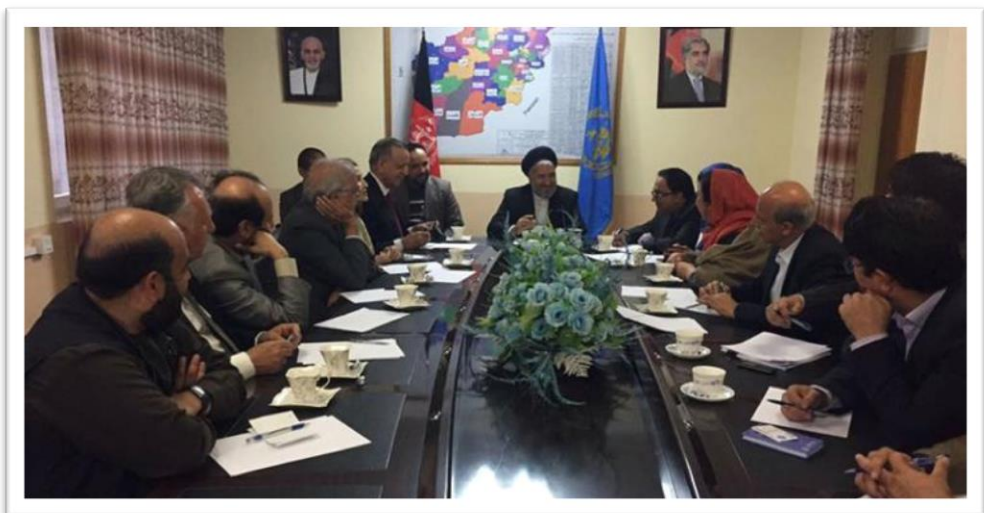
programmes, Pakistan funded projects in Afghanistan, and media, arts and culture were discussed. She also briefed the Minister on the PAJC meeting with the Federal Minister of Pakistan for SAFRON, Gen. Abdul Qadir Baloch, and the positive response and feedback that came from the meeting. Mr. Balkhi said: "I welcome the delegations and thank you all; the issues that you have been

discussing peace, education, refugees and others are really important for us to work together”.

Qazi Humayun from the Pakistan side gave the point of view of the Pakistan delegation and most Pakistani people on the Afghan refugee issue, particularly describing as unfortunate the recent episode of Sharbat Gula.

Minister Balkhi noted that the initiative of CRSS-WPSO and groups is very important and imperative to keep the dialogue for peaceful bilateral relations through such high level civil society engagement. He gave a detailed account of his government’s views and policies:

“Afghanistan and Pakistan have a long relationship; they need each other for peaceful relations. Whenever I traveled to Pakistan, and met with Prime Minister Sharif, Sartaj Aziz, Abdul Qadir Baloch and other Ministers, I conveyed to them our friendship is very important to us, but, we should not forget we have enemies. I am grateful to Pakistan for the great hospitality they have extended over the last four decades to the Afghan refugees, which should not be destroyed when we are coming to an end. We have 2.5 million refugees in Pakistan, this year six hundred thousand of those have returned. I feel they should come back with good memories of hospitality and Pakistani generosity, they should not be returning with heavy hearts and bad feelings. We have been in contact with SAFRON for the last two years, several meetings were held here and in Pakistan, and we requested them to extend the repatriation deadline to 2017. In my view refugees are a common asset and a bond between us – it



should not be used as a breaking point – let’s not make refugees the scapegoat for instability and political problems between the two countries.”

Balkhi pointed out that the agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan was extended to two years at the start of this year, but, unfortunately within six months the refugees were forced to leave. He noted that political tensions between the two countries were perhaps applied by Pakistan to deal with refugees; we requested to Pakistan authorities that refugees issue should be dealt on humanitarian grounds, and should not be coupled or grouped with security and terrorism. He further added that for the unregistered refugees there existed a Pak-Afghan agreement, whereby they also set up a budget for registration process; unfortunately this was not implemented.

Minister Balkhi said he was happy to note that in the Brussels conference, Pakistan has again dedicated US \$ 500 million, which is a courtesy of their continued support to development of Afghanistan. “I want to again emphasize that our foreign policy is to have brotherly and friendly relations with Pakistan, more so than any other country. Therefore, it is important that we identify spoiler factors, we also have to remain sensitive about refugees so it does not harm that relationship”, he added.

Balkhi said that the role of media has not been positive on both sides, and that we should not go by what the media always reports as sometimes it reflects vested interests; even though there is freedom of media in both countries. “We should not be held hostage to media reporting and should continue positive and peaceful relations”, he expressed. He called the repatriation of unregistered refugees as short sighted and felt that it was influenced by media, noting that these issues should not be dictated by media. Minister Balkhi said: “I am thankful to SAFRON Ministry, their approach had been very good, they had reached agreement with us for 2017, but, may be other ministries like Ministry of Interior played a role not to honor the agreement based on media reports. Let’s be very frank about Pakistan-Afghanistan-India relations. In my view we will never give preference to India over Pakistan. But, nevertheless, as we need support for reconstruction, and India has helped with many large scale projects. But, it does not mean that we do not appreciate the Pakistan projects”.

Shoib Suddle from Pakistan side spoke on behalf of the delegation, stating: “we are impressed by what you have said and we take back a very positive feeling. We are entirely in agreement with you that refugees are our assets and we should not spoil at the end; refugees are indeed the best bond that we have with

each other. We have no issues with your relationship with India, as long as Afghanistan soil is not used for interfering in Pakistan. What you have stated is very reassuring and we as Pakistani group greatly appreciate it”.

At the end of the meeting, Shoaib Suddle shared and presented the policy recommendations of both PAJC groups from the meeting held at Mazar-e-Sharif.

Meeting with the Deputy Foreign Minister (M&R), Dr. Nasir Ahmad Andisha

The Joint Committee members from both the countries met with the Deputy Foreign Minister (M&R), Dr. Nasir Ahmad Andisha on 16 November, 2016, at Intercontinental Hotel, Kabul. Former Governor of Bamiyan province, and Deputy Chairperson of the High Peace Council, Ms. Habiba Sarabi also participated in the meeting.



Dr. Naseer Andisha said: “I welcome the Pakistani and Afghan PAJC members, and appreciate the fact that despite all ups and downs the *Beyond Boundaries* track II dialogue has survived. I have with keen interest followed the previous six meetings of the first phase of *Beyond Boundaries* and have had the chance to read through some of the recommendations coming out of those. Such dialogues and engagement is very encouraging at people-to-people and civil society levels and it must continue”.

Elay Ershad from Afghan side introduced the two delegations and the organizers, she gave a brief rundown of the previous six meetings under the first phase of the project, and the two meetings of PAJC held so far, where core issues of peace and security, refugees, trade, education and scholarship programmes, Pakistan funded projects in Afghanistan, and media, arts and culture were discussed.

Dr. Andisha speaking to the two delegations said: “The process is slow but is commendable. It does create a bridge when officials stop talking. Hit me with talk instead of helping me or taking pity on me. I cannot agree more on areas of cooperation. This people to people series of dialogues is excellent but why can’t this be the case at other levels”. He agreed that there existed very severe differences, adding that antagonism is so evident on social media too. He also acknowledged that issuance of visas have become difficult, as a case in point he said If engineers working on road project don’t get visas they obviously would



raise questions why? Afghanistan’s peace and prosperity is not possible without Pakistan and vice versa, the only way out is diplomacy. We need a bilateral consensus. Let me notionally say that sometimes even for bilateral issues we might need a third party inter-mediation, like World Bank or UN or OIC to help solve some of our problems. For example we had the Af-Pak envoy Richard Holbrook for signing APTTA with Pakistan. World Bank can be helpful in water issues like Kabul basin- water treaty with Iran. Sometimes in bilateral disputes smaller countries feel like underdog. But, I firmly believe that sooner or later the peace process will resume.

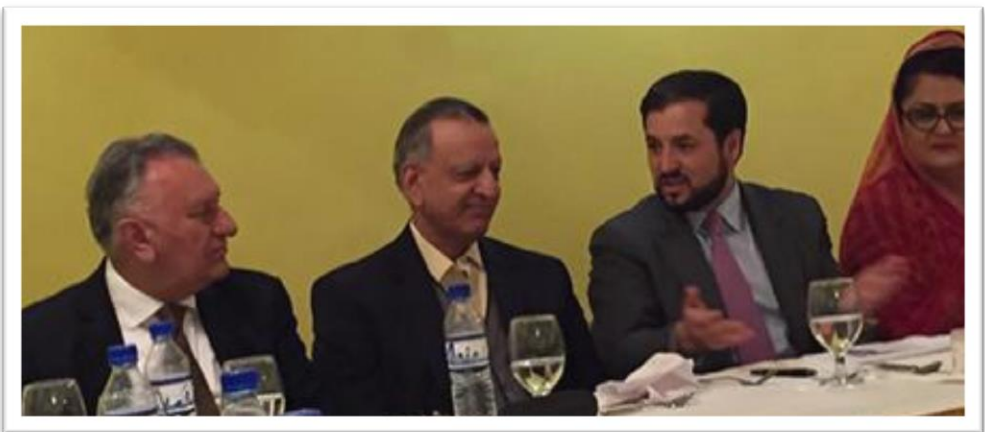
Andisha noted that media, arts, sports and culture are ideal opportunities to create more people-to-people contact and that this kind of group can pave the way for that. Sports and culture can be an overlapping interest; it can become a common ground for bringing youth together. Let me also tell you that the recent case of Sharbat Gula did not bode well for the long durable hospitality that Pakistan has offered to Afghan refugees: “it created a strong and negative impact here; Investment of 40 years should not be lost to a short sighted policy”.

Abdul Hakeem Mujahid from the Afghan side was of the opinion that Pakistan can launch cricket diplomacy with Afghanistan. He said, I find great inclination



for improving relations with Pakistan. When we were in Lahore and Islamabad last month for the first meeting of our group, we found Pakistani people and Ministers very cordial. He added: "I am convinced that we should say what we have in our hearts for improving relations. There are three simple steps that we need to take: listen to each other; learn from each other; and respect each other". He regretted the role of media saying that media creates lots of negative noises.

Shoib Suddle speaking on behalf of the Pakistani delegation, said: "First of all let me thank you for taking time out and accommodating your schedule to meet



with us for this working dinner. I agree with the Minister. We should stop the blame game. We have had very useful and productive meetings here today with

the Chief Executive, the Minister of Refugee and Repatriation, I must appreciate and acknowledge that the general tone has been conciliatory”.



At the end of the meeting, on behalf of both the PAJC groups, Dr. Suddle shared and presented the policy recommendations formulated during the meeting held at Mazar-e-Sharif.

UNIVERSITY VISITS

Visit to Mawlana University at Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan

During the visit to Mazar-e-Sharif as part of outreach and university interaction planned for the group, selected members from the PAJC visited the Mawlana University on 15 November, 2016. The Pakistani speakers were former Ambassador Mian Sanullah and senior Journalist Imtiaz Gul, while the Afghan



speaker was Bilal Sarwary, senior Journalist. WPSO was represented by Naveed Zulfiqar.



About 60 to 70 male and female students and faculty members of the Mawlana University participated at the event, which started with WPSO Zulfiqar briefing the students on the *Beyond Boundaries* project and introducing the guest delegates. This was followed by presentations by speakers and an interactive, open and passionate question & answer session.

While greeting Pakistani guests Mian Sanaullah and Imtiaz Gul, the young men and women were curious why Pakistan was forcibly sending Afghan refugees



back; how would this benefit Pakistan? Was Pakistan not aware of the young people born there, who don't know Afghanistan at all? Are the Pakistani authorities cognizant of the goodwill the country is losing by enforcing repatriation in a manner that is giving rise to more bad blood, and destroying the goodwill among Afghans? What vision does Pakistan have for political peace and economic stabilization or development of Afghanistan?

And the most important question came from an economics student who asked whether the expulsion of Afghans made economic sense. Student Suraya asked what might happen if she chose to study in Pakistan? What was the guarantee that she would not be brainwashed there, she asked with a cheeky smile, referring to the narrative on Pakistani madrassas. Overall, the tone and tenor of the questions was fairly friendly. Most students were worried about the future and kept asking about the implications of Islamabad's policies on the Taliban and refugees. Some of their questions did, of course, reflect what the authorities in Kabul told them through the media.

The Pakistani delegates tried to explain to the students what Pakistan has done as part of the reconstruction of Afghanistan. This includes a university at Mazar-e-Sharif, a hospital in Kabul, a kidney center in Jalalabad, nearly 3,000



scholarships for the best Afghan students and a recent commitment for another 3,000 scholarships and another \$500 million for reconstruction.

The students were provided with a post lecture – university survey, to evaluate the pre and post lecture perception to gauge the improvement in their perceptions on the other side, understanding of the challenges of Pak-Afghan relations, and awareness about the socio-political conditions in both countries.

Visit to Balkh University at Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan

As part of the outreach with youth and academia, two members each from the Afghan and Pakistan PAJC visited the Balkh University on Tuesday, November 15, 2016 (Balkh University is a Pakistan funded project and was handed over to the Afghan government in 2011). The Pakistani speakers were former Ambassador Qazi Humayun and senior Journalist Tahir Khan, while the Afghan speakers



included former Deputy Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Sayed Qutbuddin Roydar and Civil Society Leader Palwasha Hassan. The organizers CRSS and WPSO were represented by Aized Ali and Asila Wardak.

The PAJC group was greeted and welcomed by the Vice Chancellor of Balkh University, Professor Adul Haq Haqiq. He thanked the organizers to have arranged this important interaction for the students of university to talk about Pak-Afghan relations and understand better with an open mind and neutral perspective. Other faculty members and about 70-80 male and female students participated in the dialogue which comprised presentations by members from both sides, followed by an interactive Question and Answer (Q & A) session. Among the students, majority were female students – about 60 percent.



Speaking from the Afghan side, Palwasha Hassan introduced the guests, briefed the students about the CRSS-WPSO track II project Beyond Boundaries and the two meetings that the PAJC group had held so far. She said the series of dialogue are part of the efforts to create a non-governmental dialogue process to promote people-to-people contact at civil society levels in both the countries. She said “the governments may have problems but we, as people of the two countries, love and respect each other as we have religious, cultural and other common values and we should continue doing so with mutual cooperation as important civil society representatives”.

Other Afghan speaker Sayed Qutbuddin Roydar said that this is a great civil society initiative which has given them the chance to reach out to universities and students to discuss about Afghanistan-Pakistan relations from a non-political point of view to foster and develop mutual linkages and partnerships.

Speaking first from the Pakistani side, Qazi Humayun thanked the Vice Chancellor and faculty members to provide the opportunity to interact with the large number of young male and female students. He said, “I have very happy memories of the people of Afghanistan and our bilateral relations from the time when I served as an Ambassador here. It was during the post Jihad period, the sovereignty and independence of Afghanistan were restored, which was very positive for both Afghanistan and Pakistan for their bilateral relations. We are all Muslims with historical and cultural ties. It is, therefore, very unfortunate now to see the Pak-Afghan relations deteriorate. We are here for a non-governmental dialogue initiated by CRSS & WPSO to put the dialogue back to more people-to-people and civil society levels. Another factor is that we cannot wish geography away; we are neighbors, we share the largest boundary of 2600 kilometers, and

we have to find ways and the means to promote the cultural, historical and religious values that we share.”

Speaking on the occasion, Tahir Khan, the other Pakistani group member said, “I am very happy to be here among you. I feel like I am in my own country. I am with my own male and female students and teachers. Unfortunately, many people in Afghanistan have misperceptions about Pakistan. We, as civil society representatives, are here to counter these misperceptions and answer all your questions and grievances.”

These presentations were followed by an interactive, candid, and passionate dialogue between the students and speakers in the form of Q & A session on Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral. Issues discussed included the Afghan refugees repatriation (particularly the recent case of Sharbat Gula), negative perceptions, civil society linkages, further improvement of the campus in Information Technology (IT) and other modern sciences departments, Pak-Afghan trade and linking it to Balkh province, visa and travel difficulties, more opportunities for Afghan students and refugees to study in Pakistan, and problems in Pak-Afghan relations.

Farzana, a female student from engineering department inquired: “We appreciate what Pakistan has done for the Afghan refugees for almost 40 years but we are surprised at the recent treatment of Sharbat Gula in Pakistan. Can you explain why this is being done?”

In response, Qazi Humayun said: “this is very unfortunate. I must admit that the case of Sharbat Gula was very badly handled by the judge and our government. Whatever happened is not rational and should have been handled better; it should have not happened.” He also pointed out that the PAJC groups have discussed in the recent meetings the issues of refugees and visas. It is the priority of our groups to address these and other problems and we will share our recommendations from these meetings with both the governments, which will also reflect your sentiments and feelings.

Nagina Akhtar, a female student of political science department welcomed the delegation. She hoped and believed that Afghans will be hospitable to our friends from Pakistan. She said that she firmly believes in improving the people-to-people contact but



asked how female students, like herself, can help and improve upon this for the civil society in general?

Qazi Humayun replied to her stating that unfortunately there are negative perceptions prevailing on both sides due to the accusations and allegations of the two governments against each other. But, we have to delink ourselves as civil society facilitators for the people-to-people change and work towards friendship and cooperation in a mutual way to differentiate between right and wrong. People from both the countries can lobby and emphasize on the governments not to make allegations against respective governments which will in turn create pressure for the governments.



Mohammed Humayoon, a male student from Uzbek language and arts department said, “I, and my fellow students are grateful to Pakistan for the academic help to build this university in Balkh province. But, unfortunately this is not sufficient; we need help to improve IT and other departments here. Also, people from our province have great difficulties in getting Pakistan visas and

traveling to Pakistan.” He also remarked that the two governments should work to improve transit through transportation of goods from Pakistan linking it to Balkh province.

Another female student, Azita, from the political science department asked, “Have you prepared any opportunity in Pakistan for the education of Afghan refugees as well as any scholarships and opportunities for Afghan students going from here for studying in Pakistan, especially in IT and modern sciences?”

Mr. Humayun informed the students that Pakistan has recently pledged another \$500 million to Afghanistan and has also announced further 3000 scholarships for Afghan students to study in Pakistan.

Samir Nek Zamir, a male student from political science and international relations department, asked the delegates about the Beyond Boundaries track II initiative and how it will help the students and the public at large.

Zakir Adeeb, a male student from engineering department said, “the problem lies with the governments on both sides. We, as people, want to improve our

communication, language and education in general. We are grateful to Pakistan for help in providing this university. What are Pakistan's future plans for peace building and the future of Afghanistan?"



Another male student, Zikarullah, from the political science department asked: "we are optimistic about the relations and negotiations between the two brotherly Islamic countries. But, I would like to ask you what is Pakistan government doing in limiting and countering radical madrassas that are involved



in terrorism?" Female student Neela from the English literature department asked about the opportunities available in Pakistan especially for female students going from Balkh University and other universities of Mazar-e-Sharif.

Some other students repeated the Afghan government allegation that Pakistan is supporting the Haqqani network and other Taliban Shuras in its country. Qazi Humayun, replying to these set of questions said, “you have talked about the perception that Pakistan is supporting Taliban. Let me ask you; in the last 15 years the US and other 39 countries could not control, fight and eliminate the Taliban or terrorism. After the foreign troops withdrawal it will be a fantasy to expect only Pakistan to deal, negotiate and eliminate Taliban.” He further noted that historically speaking we have made mistakes on both sides; unfortunately this historic baggage is taking these misperceptions to a tangent.

Mr. Humayun informed the students that in his personal capacity as the Secretary of the Youth Hostels in Pakistan, he can extend invitation for 50 to 100 students from Balkh University to visit Pakistan and facilitate them for a 3 day trip. He said he will be happy to coordinate this with the Vice Chancellor present there.

A university survey was also administered with the participating students and faculty members – post the lectures by PAJC members – to gauge the improvement in their perceptions on the other side; understanding of the challenges of Pak-Afghan relations, and awareness about the socio-political conditions in both countries.

MEDIA DISSEMINATION

As part of the media dissemination campaign of the project, the second workshop was well received by the TV and print media with several TV shows, op-eds and extensive press coverage. This was further complemented by the social media based dissemination where live-blogging of the discussions sessions was an important dissemination tool.

TV Shows

All the TV shows with the PAJC delegates are available on the CRSS website through the link below:



<http://crss.pk/beyond-boundaries/beyond-boundaries-ii/the-second-meeting-of-the-pakistan-afghanistan-joint-committee/tv-shows/>

CRSS Web Preview: Articles/Op-eds



The Express Tribune	15 November, 2016 (Imtiaz Gul)
The Express Tribune	17 November, 2016 (Tahir Khan)
The Friday Times	18 November, 2016 (Imtiaz Gul)
The Express Tribune	19 November, 2016 (Tahir Khan)
Pakistan Observer	21 November, 2016 (Tahir Khan)
The Express Tribune	21 November, 2016 (Tahir Khan)
CRSS Website	21 November, 2016 (Mian Sanauallah)
The Express Tribune	28 November, 2016 (Tahir Khan)
Daily Mashriq	30 November, 2016 (Tahir Khan)
The Express Tribune	30 November, 2016 (Imtiaz Gul)
The Express Tribune	19 December, 2016 (Tahir Khan)
CRSS Website	19 December, 2016 (Mian Sanauallah)
The Express Tribune	28 December, 2016 (Imtiaz Gul)

Print Media Coverage

Bakhtarn News	19 November, 2016
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6. THIRD MEETING OF PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT COMMITTEE

The third meeting of the Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) groups was held in Karachi, from 07 to 12 January, 2017.

The Pakistan Delegation included Ms. Shazia Marri, Member of National Assembly; Dr. Shoaib Suddle, former Inspector General of Police and federal Tax Ombudsman; Lt. Gen. (retd) Asif Yasin Malik, former Defence Secretary; Mr. Mian Sanaullah, former Ambassador; Mr. Muhammad Tahir, Senior Journalist; and Mr. Qazi Humayun, former Ambassador.

While, the Afghan Delegation comprised Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Minister for Trade and Commerce; Ms. Wazhma Frogh, Civil Society Activist; Ms. Elay Ershad, Member of Parliament; Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, Member of Parliament; and Ms. Asila Wardak, former Diplomat with Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The PAJC groups had a full day discussion on 08 January, 2017. The four sessions included discussions on review of 2nd policy recommendations from Mazar-e-Sharif; Pak-Afghan Bilateral/Transit Trade Relations- Bottlenecks, Solutions and the Way Forward; Security and Peace; Opportunities for Cooperation in Media, Sports, Education, and Arts and Culture; and formulation of Joint Declaration of Policy recommendations. Ms. Anne Wilkens, former Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan and Afghanistan, chaired all the sessions as neutral international regional expert.



The Afghan delegates welcomed Pakistan government's decision to extend the period of stay for Afghan refugees. They said tackling trust deficit and to improve security situation between Pakistan and Afghanistan is crucial, noting that the momentum to make terrorist outfits weaker in Pakistan is increasing. Both the delegations felt that Pakistan and Afghanistan should focus on improving the bilateral trade. Other major deliberations included that media can play a critical role in improving public perceptions on both sides; the blame-game is the core issue between the two countries and it must be solved; border management is extremely important to ensure to and fro movement of goods and people between the two countries; and also to monitor terrorists' movement across the two countries through porous border. The two groups agreed that the bilateral issues should be solved in a more holistic manner. There should not be standstill on bilateral relations. The two countries should cooperate in the fields of security, sports, media, education, arts, and culture for peaceful future. Both countries need to build on the commonalities such as religion, cultural values, food, music, language etc.

Ms. Ann Wilkens, while chairing the meeting – as regional expert – between working group members from both sides, said that she was very glad to see the initiatives like Beyond Boundaries aimed at normalizing the bilateral relations. “Afghanistan and Pakistan had a great potential”, she added. Having served in



both countries as ambassador, I love Afghanistan and Pakistan equally and want to see them as friendly neighbours always.

“We must appreciate the efforts of Afghan military which is though still in the process of training but still able to recoil the Taliban attacks. We fear a possible spring offensive and Daesh attacks in 2017. We must also appreciate the

increasing momentum in Pakistan to make terrorist outfits weaker”, said Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, Member of Afghan Parliament. He further added that there were no issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan at people to people level. Both countries need to build on the commonalities such as religion, cultural values, food, music, language etc. The main concerns on both sides should be considered to reach an acceptable conclusion.

Mr. Muzammil Shinwari, former Afghan Deputy Minister for Trade and Commerce welcomed government of Pakistan’s decision to extend the period of stay for Afghan refugees. “There is a dire need to tackle the longstanding trust deficit and improve security situation between both countries. Both the countries should focus on improving the bilateral trade. The transit trade had also dropped down which can affect the bilateral trade. He thanked Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) initiative for inviting Afghan players to Pakistan. He said that the scholarships are very important for improving perceptions at youth level. There should be fair and merit based distribution of these scholarships.”

Ms. Wazhma Frogh, Civil Society Activist said that media can play a key role; nevertheless, it needs right piece of information to properly serve its purpose of public information and improving their perceptions. In this regard, the knowledge should be created on and about both sides to fill the gap and give more food for thought to media. She further noted that the experts as part of track 2 dialogues should discuss the issues they can better influence with both governments.

“You cannot defeat terrorism by terrorism”, Ms. Elay Ershad, member of Afghan Parliament said while underpinning the importance of dialogue for peace. Afghanistan is not willing to support any initiative which is against its national security.

Dr. Shoaib Suddle, former IG of Police, said that the blame-game was the core issue between Afghanistan and Pakistan and it must be solved as the other regional actors try to take advantage of it. There is positive progress being made on the issue of border management. Border management becomes extremely important given the movement of goods and people between the two countries. This is also critical from the point of view of terrorists’ movement across the two countries through porous border. The main concern on the Pakistan side is Afghanistan’s relations with Pakistan and other regional countries should be independent. The bilateral issues should be solved in a more holistic manner. The

new Pakistani COAS's conversation with both Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah is a positive development.

Qazi Humayun, former Pakistani Ambassador said that there should not be standstill on bilateral relations. He informed the meeting that the Prime Minister of Pakistan urged to explore new avenues of cooperation with Afghanistan, during a national security meeting recently. "The dialogue about future of Afghanistan shouldn't be to its exclusion. Afghanistan's participation in such dialogues is in its best interest", he referred to the Russia-China-Pakistan trilateral meeting in Moscow. He also quoted Sartaj Aziz that Pakistan wishes to facilitate the transit trade in a focused manner.



"If Pakistan is to be blamed for negatives, it must also be appreciated for the positives", said Ms. Shazia Marri, Member National Assembly of Pakistan while adding that it was time to undo the damages to bilateral relations and move forward. Both sides should understand the genuine need for cooperation in security, sports, media, education, arts, and culture for peaceful future.

Mian Sana, former Pakistani Ambassador said that mistrust was the core issue between both countries and demands serious discussions sitting together. The

two governments must also immediately resume their relations. The Moscow meeting was part of the international readjustments/ realignments in the wake of new world order.

Mr. Tahir Khan, senior Pakistani Journalist noted that the media needs an enabling environment to play its role for peace and perception building which also includes support from the governments.

The points of convergences that resonated with the members from both sides included cooperation in the fields of sports, health, education, media, visa and arts and culture.



They recommended cooperation opportunities for exchange program on sports especially for girls. They urged the Pakistani government to simplify and facilitate the visa process for enhanced people to people contact and cooperation in the field of health, especially the issuance of visas for patients in emergency cases at Torkham and Spin Boldak. They also recommended academic scholarships for Afghan students for educational and vocational programs. Governments and civil society of both countries may encourage hosting the students for exchange programs. Provincial governments in Pakistan may consider offering academic scholarships for Afghan students. For cooperation in arts and culture, they

recommended scholarships for artists and exhibitions/ expos of famous trade brands on both sides. They also suggested cultural and social programs to promote respective cultures.

Besides their captive interactions during the workshop, The PAJC groups also met with the Provincial Minister of Education, Mr. Jam Mehtab Dahar and the Managing Director of Geo News, Mr. Azhar Abbas on 09 January, 2017.

The members of PAJC had other important meetings on January 10, 2017, with Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), and Mr. Ahmed Shah, President, Karachi Arts Council (KAC).

The PAJC Afghan and Pakistan members were hosted for a working lunch by Speaker Sindh Assembly, Agha Siraj Durrani, on 11 January, 2017. While, welcoming the two delegations, Mr. Durrani said: “The exchange of parliamentarians would be an excellent initiative to improve the bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. I would love to visit the Afghan parliament along with the other Pakistani MPs. I would also like to extend all possible cooperation for the betterment of ties between the two countries”, while noting that both countries have a rich past history of cultural and people to people contacts.

Later that day, the members of PAJC met with the Provincial Secretary for Culture, Ghulam Akbar Laghari, and Provincial Secretary for Sports, Mr. Saleem Raza and Special Secretary to Chief Minister Sindh, Mr. A. Rahim Shaikh. The two groups’ discussed possible cooperation between Sindh government and Afghanistan in the fields of education, sports, and arts and culture. Earlier during the day, the PAJC members visited the universities in Karachi including Institute of Business Management (IoBM) and Institute of Business Administration (IBA) for interaction with the students and faculty members on “Pak-Afghan Relations: Countering Misperceptions and Negative Narratives”.

STRATEGIC SIDELINE MEETINGS

Meeting With Mr. Jam Mehtab Dahar, Minister for Education, Government of Sindh

As part of the strategic sideline meetings with government stakeholders, the PAJC members from both the countries met with the Minister for Education,

Government of Sindh, Mr. Jam Mehtab Dahar, at the Sindh Secretariat, on January 09, 2017. Ms. Anne Wilkens, former Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan and Afghanistan, international regional expert, also accompanied the two groups and CRSS.

Ms. Shazia Marri, from the Pakistan side, introduced the two groups and gave a brief rundown of the project Beyond Boundaries and the project activities since the first phase which had started in November, 2015, and now is in the second phase, with third meeting of the PAJC groups held in Karachi. She explained that the two PAJC groups are exploring possibilities of cooperation in the fields of education, sports, trade, and arts and culture. She noted that PAJC may be small in number but aims to achieve big. She further said: “we as neighbors have to co-exist and hence need better bilateral relations. The idea of all of us being here in Karachi is to get everybody together and explore people to people contact to work together for positive measures”.



Minister Dahar welcomed the two delegations and while appreciating that such track II initiatives are very important to improve the relations at people to people level, said: “I am thankful to the two civil society organizations for taking such initiative to improve bilateral relations between the two countries”.

He noted that the two countries should explore the areas of cooperation to improve their bilateral relations, since working together is need of the hour for both the countries. He shared with the Afghan delegates the initiatives taken by his Ministry to improve the Provincial Education system, especially the monitoring and biometric system to track the attendance of students, teachers and other affairs of the schools. This endeavor has been quite instrumental in

improving the attendance of students and teachers. The monitoring measures have complemented the teachers training program and increased the capacity of teachers which was direly needed. This also compels the teachers to get results. Through the capacity building measures, we aim to equip the teachers with the modern techniques of imparting knowledge into the future leaders. The department also needs the support of civil society in curbing the evils in the system of education. In response to the PAJC policy recommendations for education shared with the minister, he promised to take up these demands/ proposals with the concerned provincial authorities and provide maximum possible support.

The Afghan members said that these initiatives shared with them were inspiring examples for them to replicate in Afghanistan.



Mr. Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director, CRSS, said the idea behind the strategic meetings with the stakeholders, on the sidelines of PAJC workshops is to move from talk to walk. He seconded the Minister on the effectiveness of biometric system; sharing that the system has also helped the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province to improve the schools performance and increase the attendance of teachers and students.

Mr. Mozzammil Shinwari, while speaking from the Afghan delegation said: “the Beyond Boundaries has been quite efficacious to discuss the issues of bilateral concerns. The issue of refugees should also be solved, and cooperation in the field of education should improve through more scholarships for Afghan students by the Sindh Government”. He informed the Minister that the two groups will be

meeting with business community here and different Chambers of Commerce and Industries to explore possibilities of improving bilateral and transit trade. Mr. Qazi from the Pakistan delegation remarked that Karachi has a great significance for the flow of goods and route to Afghanistan, because of Afghan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), Afghanistan has stakes in Karachi because of the huge transit trade flow through Karachi.

Ms. Marri said that although security is one of the core issues that the PAJC wants to discuss, the group is also discussing several other issues with likelihood of success, thus the recommendations for cooperation in the field of education



have also been put together. She handed over the policy recommendations from the PAJC meeting held in Karachi to the Minister.

Mr. Khalid Pashtoon told the Minister that we have had successful meetings; we want to expand it to people to people contact, especially education. Beyond



Boundaries has been very successful; we feel we have achieved a lot in this short time. Lt. Gen. (retd) Asif Yasin suggested that for the teachers training program, there should be Training of Trainers.

The discussions were followed by a presentation on Biometric and Monitoring System. It was shared with the delegation that the Sindh Education Department is using an advanced tracking system to track the attendance of teachers and other staff and also monitors the condition of schools' infrastructure. There is a leave management system, certain regulations for and categories of absconders and thousands of teachers have been punished based on the data generated by this system.

Meeting With Managing Director Geo News, Mr. Azhar Abbas

The PAJC delegations met with Managing Director GEO News, Mr. Azhar Abbas, at Geo Head office in Karachi, on 09 January, 2017. The meeting was arranged as part of the agenda to explore joint media cooperation between leading Afghan and Pakistani private TV channels.

Mr. Aized Ali, Project Director Beyond Boundaries, CRSS, gave a brief on the project including previous eight track II dialogues between Pakistan and Afghanistan groups, and the current one in Karachi, aimed at possible partnerships between the civil societies of the two countries in the fields of media, education, sports, trade and commerce, and arts and culture, in a bid to address the misperceptions, negative narrative, bitterness and mistrust by creating and enhancing people to people contacts.



Mr. Azhar Abbas welcomed the PAJC delegations and assured full support and cooperation of his organization to reduce the bitterness, misperceptions and distrust between Afghanistan and Pakistan and also suggested to involve other media groups for the cause. He remarked that besides the social issues, the real issues of concern may also be discussed. He suggested that there can be a small segment in the Geo morning show, which could be a cooking segment or could be a complete show on cooking with chefs from both countries preparing their respective specialties. He also highlighted the importance of digital media as means for mainstreaming the content of mutual interest. Mr. Abbas said that there can be debates and cultural programming on the digital media. He said that the Geo would record the sound bites of the visiting PAJC members for that meeting and then they can see their impact; uploading on the digital media. He was joined by Director Input Geo, Mr. Zahid Hussain, and Senior Producer Digital Media, Mr. Mohsin Abbas.

From the Pakistan side, Dr. Suddle suggested possible collaboration between Geo and Tolo TV channels to play a positive role in addressing the trust deficit and bitterness.

Mr. Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director, CRSS said that cooperation is critical for mitigating grievances and reducing animosity. “We are here to see if Geo can really do something to disseminate the commonalities. We should keep politics out of discourse and explore the avenues of cooperation in the areas of health, trade, media and education. Therefore, we should do something self-sustainable”.



Ms. Elay Ershad, Member of Afghan Parliament, said that through collaboration between the media organizations in both countries there should be joint ventures for dramas and films and also where singers can collaborate. Bilingual and Trilingual songs (Dari, Pashto, Urdu) may be recorded in collaboration to promote culture and reduce bitterness.

Ms. Wazhma Frogh, from the Afghan side said that the Pakistani TV channels, mainly Geo and Hum are widely watched in Afghanistan. She suggested working together to create a roster of Afghan Analysts who can be contacted through Skype or other means of communication. The youth debates may also be considered as a potential idea for collaboration. She also suggested that a Geo reporter may also be deputed to cover the Beyond Boundaries next meeting in Afghanistan. Geo may also consider the possibility of broadcasting live sports matches either on Geo Super or Facebook.

Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, Afghan former Deputy Minister of Commerce & Trade suggested that the Roster/ Joint list of experts can be shared with Geo as Beyond Boundaries Roster/ Joint List of Experts.

Following the discussions, the two PAJC delegations visited Geo News Room, and three delegates from both sides were interviewed by Geo reporter, Mr. Qaseem Saeed. The sound bites were aired on Geo News and the write up on the



meeting was shared through the Geo digital media and facebook page: <https://www.geo.tv/latest/126730-The-Durand-Debate-Beyond-Boundaries-afghanistan-pakistan>

Meeting with Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The PAJC delegations held a meeting with the Board of the Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) on 10 January, 2017, at Avari Hotel, hosted by the PAJCCI. The discussions centered on the Phase II of the “Beyond Boundaries” project and to boost and improve Pak-Afghan transit and bilateral trade.



The PAJCCI vowed to boost ties between the two countries and the region by throwing its weight behind the CRSS-WPSO track 1.5/II “Beyond Boundaries – Phase II.”

The PAJCCI had initiated several activities to help re-establish the confidence building measures between the business communities, general public and Governments of the two countries. The Afghan delegation was led by Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, Member of Afghan Parliament, while Pakistani side was led by Dr. Shoaib Suddle, former IGP and Federal Tax Ombudsman.

Junaid Makda, Director of PAJCCI, briefed the delegations by highlighting the achievements of PAJCCI in a short span of time for strengthening the business across the border. He enlisted several initiatives taken that have formally aided policy making and arbitration amongst the private sector of both the countries and nourish regional integration for mutual benefits.

The Director highlighted tariff rationalization and development of export house as dire need of time. Khalid Pashtoon encouraged the PAJCCI to voice the mutual concerns for amicable resolution. He added that Afghan businesses were compelled to conduct business with Iran as facilitation from Pakistan was

compromised. Being from Kandahar, he highlighted the problems faced at Chaman-Kandahar border for transit trade highlighting Karachi port duty, clearance delays, cross border certification to release insurance guarantees, and tracking devices as some of the reasons, and since mostly this transit trade consists cherishable items, because of time constrain they get destroyed because of such delays.

Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Minister of Ministry of Trade and Commerce, Afghanistan, pointed major irritants to the transit trade. He said due to official bottlenecks, transit trade between the two countries had declined drastically from 65 to 27 percent. He informed “I had negotiated the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) and it took one and half year to come into being. We also decided then to join hands with the private sector. In 2009-10,



70% of transit trade was coming through Pakistan, which has now dropped to 27%”, why this decline? He remarked. He said transit trade from \$2.5 million has dropped down to \$1.5 million; the reason being because of certain bottlenecks, now the Afghan traders are inclined to do transit trade through Iran; which has increased for \$800-900 million to \$1.5 billion. He was of the opinion that if the



problems are resolved, Karachi remains the best option for Afghan traders for transit trade. He noted that we want to continue transit trade through Pakistan because this route has been used for hundreds of years. He added that Karachi was the most economical route for transit trade for Afghanistan; however, Iran’s facilitation to Afghan businessmen is pulling the business away.

Acknowledging PAJCCI’s role in strengthening bilateral trade, Shoab Suddle reiterated that further improvements may be brought and the mutual trade must



flourish, noting: “trade is not connected to security, so trade should not suffer on account of security factors”. He said Pakistan and Afghanistan both should come up with solutions to make process simpler by introducing system check and balance, proper documentation, and by removing irritants for unnecessary



delays. He agreed that there were many problems between both the countries but both the governments should take steps to improve trade relationship for the greater good.

Lastly, Shazia Marri, Member of National Assembly, appreciated the PAJCCI's contribution and commended the role of this forum in the betterment of Pakistan- Afghanistan transit and bilateral trade.

The points that emerged from the PAJCCI and PAJC delegation meeting are: The governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan should expedite convening the meetings of Joint Economic Commission (JEC) and Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Coordinating Authority (APTTCA). As agreed between the two governments at the fifth APTTCA meeting, the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) may also be revised soon and both the governments may help in creating an enabling environment for traders from both sides to promote bilateral trade.

Meeting With Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industries

As part of exploring possibilities of improving trade and commerce between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the PAJC delegations met with the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FPCCI), at FPCCI house on 10 January, 2017.



Mr. Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director, CRSS, introduced Beyond Boundaries and its objectives at the start of the discussion. He said that PAJC comprising influential Afghan and Pakistani experts is having several important meetings with the business community on the sidelines of their workshop in Karachi. The idea is to

learn from the business community in Karachi about their ongoing business activities in Afghanistan and the possibility of cooperation in the field of trade between the two countries.



Mirza Ishtiaq Baig, Vice President, FPCCI welcomed the two delegations and appreciated the CRSS-WPSO Beyond Boundaries project to improve bilateral relations: “I am glad to appreciate the Beyond Boundaries project for its efforts to bring the two countries closer, improving social, economic prosperity and improving the cooperation in media, sports, arts and culture”.

While appreciating the efforts of the two PAJC groups, he said: “We business community of Pakistan, attach utmost importance to our relationship with Afghanistan. Even Pakistani government has underlined repeatedly and consistently that they consider Afghanistan a vital partner in security, economic development, political cooperation and people to people relations. Both the countries have unique and close ties of common history, trade, culture, tradition, language and more.

The destinies of the two countries are linked to each other. The past decade has proved beyond any doubt that the peace, security and stability in one country cannot be ensured with the peace and security in other country. Similarly, the two countries are vital to each other for economic growth and development. Pakistan and Afghanistan can easily become the center point of Asian economy linking Centre Asia with South Asia and China with West Asia and beyond”.

Mr. Baig briefed the PAJC members about the working of FPCCI. The FPCCI serves as a bridge between the private sector and the government. It has 50 Chambers of Commerce under its umbrella. To strengthen and broaden the economic



partnership between Afghanistan and Pakistan, we would like to explore the possibility of finding ways and means that would enable us to go from words into actions and agreements into concrete outcomes and results for our people. We have not pursued energy projects in the enthusiasm that we could. Current export of Pakistan has decreased from 1.8 billion to 1.7 billion dollars from 2014 to 2015. Pakistan exports mainly constitute sugar and sugar confectionery, cement, textile products etc. while Pakistani imports are mineral, fuel, oil, fruits, nuts etc.

He further said, that the area where we believe we can make a significant progress in the immediate and medium term include transit trade, connectivity in the area of road, railway, energy projects, regional economic integration and economic cooperation. CPEC has become a vital project for economic prosperity of the region as well as beyond the region. Various countries have shown their



interest to join this mega project. Afghanistan is the main country linking Central Asian Republics (CARs) with South Asia and Pakistan and it can get competitive advantage by joining this project. At present, security, agriculture, community based programming, return of refugees and creation of jobs should be the major and urgent priorities for Afghanistan. Pakistan may extend its full cooperation in the areas like engineering, construction of building, highways, telecommunications, IT, education and service sectors. Dr. Shoaib Suddle, from the Pakistani group said: “peace is a slow process and we should not expect miracles to begin with. In our meetings with the government leaders as part of this track II initiative, we found out that the government is equally concerned but there are a lot of challenges to the bilateral relations of both countries”.

Muzammil Shinwari, Afghan former Deputy Minister for Trade & Commerce said that good economic relation can be built on good political relations. Karachi is very important to Afghanistan as most of its transit trade – which though is going down – comes through this city. Our job is to bring people closer and bringing goods from Afghanistan is one way of doing that. Afghanistan has raw material, cheap labor and access to international market. These links should be utilized and can be beneficial for both the countries. We need to bring businessmen closer. Holding joint expos on both sides should be considered. We must encourage the legal trade, aim to improve the bilateral trade and address the issue of transit trade. Afghanistan can facilitate transit to Central Asia. The collaboration in this regard can be extremely beneficial.

The FPCCI underlined that the interaction between the chambers of both countries needs to be increased and Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) may hold the ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industries (ECO-CCI) meeting in Kabul this year, as already agreed.



Wazhma Frogh, member of Afghan PAJC said that one way of improving perceptions on Pakistan in Afghanistan could be sending better quality products to Afghanistan. Negative perceptions can leave a massive impact on the political relations.

Dr. Baig, responded that the responsibility of improving perceptions lies with the citizens of both the countries. We should also understand the motives behind creating misperceptions. Private sector is extremely interested for investment in Afghanistan and working together to foster bilateral relations. Using products of each other's countries creates natural synergy.

Shazia Marri, Member of National Assembly, said: "influential people like us should make the right voices and play roles in fostering cooperation and addressing the misperceptions. We can also take the issues of mutual concern to the Parliament for discussion. We have no room for third parties to malign our relations".

Elay Ershad, Member of Afghan Parliament remarked: "We cannot solve the issues unless we are fair to each other". Mr. Shinwari, further added that compulsory standards should be implemented for human, animal health and environmental safety. The known suppliers should be identified and shared for the trade of quality products.

In the end, on behalf the FPCCI, Mr. Baig thanked the two delegations for visiting and meeting with FPCCI, he said that the report of issues discussed in the meeting today will be prepared and shared with the concerned ministries. The FPCCI hosted a working lunch for the two delegations, where informal contacts and discussions continued.



Meeting with Sindh Government Provincial Secretaries

The PAJC delegations met with the Provincial Secretary for Culture, Ghulam Akbar Laghari, Provincial Secretary for Sports, Mr. Saleem Raza and Special Secretary to Chief Minister (CM) Sindh, Mr. A. Rahim Shaikh on January 11, 2017.

The Secretary Sports said that if there were no advancements on the political front, the people to people relations should continue. He was willing to take all possible steps to increase the cooperation on sports and youth affairs and was also open to the idea of Pakistani sports delegation visiting Kabul for sports exchange on reciprocal agreement. He said that the Ministry could provide all the facilities available in Karachi for such visits. He further assured to provide boarding and lodging facility to the visiting afghan youth delegations.

“We are open to the idea of organizing cultural events in Afghanistan through a MoU with relevant Afghan Department. The delegations from Afghanistan can also be hosted for similar events in Pakistan”. The Secretary Culture noted that there should also be writers’ exchange, which can travel simultaneously with the cultural troupes to share and disseminate their experiences through travel logs.

The Special Secretary to CM Sindh vowed to take up the matter with the CM for further necessary actions including expression of interest based on the recommendations presented to him by the PAJC members. The Afghan members promised to take up the possibility of potential collaboration with Afghan government. They also suggested covering all these proposals through one broader MoU between Sindh and Afghan governments.

The outcome of the meeting was CM Sindh’s directive – in response to the recommendations of Beyond Boundaries Karachi meeting – for entering into agreements/ MOUs on the proposed areas.

Meeting with Speaker Sindh Assembly, H.E Agha Siraj Durrani

The PAJC groups met with the speaker of Sindh Assembly, Agha Siraj Durrani, on January 11, 2017 on the sidelines of third PAJC workshop in Karachi.



“Exchange of parliamentarians between Afghanistan and Pakistan is critical to improve ties”, Agha Siraj Durrani said while adding the exchange of parliamentarians would be an excellent initiative to improve the bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan.



“I would love to visit the Afghan Parliament along with the other Pakistani MPs. I would also like to extend all possible cooperation for the betterment of ties between the two countries”, said the Speaker while noting that both countries have a rich past history of cultural and people to people contacts. He also condoled with the Afghan members for the loss of precious human lives in the unfortunate terrorist incidents. We should together



bring end to this menace of terrorism as many of our leaders and future leaders (youths) have been martyred so far. He said that both countries are extremely vital to each other given the economic activity, trade and transit trade relations.

Dr. Shoaid Suddle briefed the speaker about the efforts of Beyond Boundaries in bridging the gaps and making favorable changes in the current bitter context.

Being the head of the delegation he presented and shared with the Speaker the Policy recommendations of the 3rd PAJC meeting.



Meeting at Karachi Arts Council

The PAJC delegations visited Karachi Arts Council (KAC) on January 10, 2017 and held a meeting with President Karachi Arts Council (KAC), Mr. Ahmed Shah.



The President said that the primary goal of KAC is to promote arts and culture, but arts and culture are both linked with the politics and foreign relations. Fostering people to people contacts is the best method to bring countries together. We are not here to discuss what Pakistan or Afghanistan did wrong, let's discuss what we can do together to bring peace. Art is a very strong form of binding. Mr. Ahmed Shah also offered to host 3-4 Afghan artists to perform and receive 2-week training at the KAC academy.



UNIVERSITY VISITS

Visit to Institute of Business Management (IoBM), Karachi

As part of outreach and university interaction planned for the PAJC groups, one member each from the PAJC visited the IoBM on January 11, 2017. The Pakistani speaker was Member of National Assembly of Pakistan, Ms. Shazia Marri, while the Afghan speaker was former Deputy Minister for Commerce and Trade of Afghanistan, Mr. Mozammil Shinwari. Both spoke on "Pak-Afghan relations: Countering Misperceptions and Negative Narratives". Project Director for Beyond Boundaries, Mr. Aized Ali represented CRSS.

The group members were welcomed by Dr. Talat Wizarat, Head of Social Sciences Department, and Mr. Talib Karim, Rector and Executive Director. Dr. Wizarat introduced the two distinguished members from Pakistan and Afghanistan. Mr. Ali gave a brief presentation on the project Beyond Boundaries, including phase one and the current phase two, and the project activities held so



far through track II dialogues and other important sideline strategic meetings, to improve bilateral relations through such people to people contacts at civil society levels. There were about 35-40 students and faculty members of IoBM.

Shazia Marri thanked the IoBM for arranging this interaction, in her presentation she said: “first of all let me condemn and condole with Mr. Shinwari for the terrorist attacks that took place yesterday in Kabul and Kandahar. This makes it more important for us to sit down, discuss, challenge and fight this menace of terrorism. During this series of dialogues I have met Afghans; unfortunately, there were pre-conceived misperceptions, acrimony, bitterness, and hatred that I



was hammered with. I wondered with our previous help to the Afghan refugees; why this bitterness? We have language, religion, culture and so much more in common, we need to move away from historical baggage and need to improve our relations. History, we cannot change, there are sparks and mistakes made, but, we should learn from history and not live in history. I tell my children often that you should be able to go to Afghanistan as your grandfather used to. My resolve is strong; I believe if we do not do it right now, nobody else will do it, we cannot stall our relationship. Stability in Afghanistan is important for Pakistan. Therefore, countering historical misperceptions and negative narratives on both sides becomes even more important. We need to reach out to the people on both sides, including governments, civil society, educational institutions and media”.

Mozammil Shinwari, in his presentation said: “The problem we are facing is that the perception in Afghanistan of Pakistan is becoming worse. That is why we are expanding our interaction as groups representing the two countries to universities to try to change these misperceptions through youth and academia. We are here in Karachi to explore the possibilities of cooperation with the business community and also cooperation education and civil society initiatives. Pakistan and Afghanistan have had similar problems, we have faced terrorist attacks, we need to come together and join hands to fight this terrorism and bring peace to the two countries and the region; that is why Beyond Boundaries becomes important, we can lobby, convey and influence the two governments to move forward for peaceful relations. Unfortunately, the bilateral and transit trade have dropped down – we need to improve that – we need to build on economic relations. If we build trade, we will bring prosperity to the two peoples”.

After the two presentations, Dr Wizarat acting as Chair opened the floor for Q & A session. Hasan Habib, senior fellow of the center for policy and area studies, asked the reason for decline in trade? Dr. Raghbir Marri remarked that 35 to 40 years are sufficient to understand each other, why we still do not understand each other as two neighboring countries? That is why we as academia are here meeting you to improve misunderstandings and develop peaceful relations. “When will peace come?” he asked.

Syeda Tayyaba, a student of M.Phil, said: “we love your culture, we accepted you as refugees, as we felt closer to you for our shared values. Presently, there are still about 2 million refugees here, there are some security concerns, we do not want to send them back, but, we need to register them if they live here. Why

can't we have programs like "Aman Ki Asha", referring to the Pak-India media partnership, through media or some university programs to improve relations at a people to people level"?

Other questions also focused on peace, security, refugee repatriation, and more people to people contacts through cooperation in the fields of education, media, sports, and arts and culture.

Mozammil Shinwarri replying to the questions said: "one of the reasons for the drop in trade is that trade went to Iran, Afghanistan chose to do transit trade through Iran, which has in recent times increased from \$ 1 million to \$ 8 million. People to people contacts are very important, like I mentioned earlier that they have unfortunately gone worse. That is why we are here to interact with the youth; students generally do not carry the historical baggage, as they do not go back 3-4 decades, they are the youth, and they can work on misperceptions and narratives".

This was followed by an interactive, candid, and passionate dialogue between the faculty members, students and speakers on the possible areas of cooperation between the universities of the two countries, to improve Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral relations. The Rector IoBM, Talib Karim, offered to host 2-3 Afghan students for a fully paid scholarship for short term courses per semester. He requested the distinguished Afghan guest speaker to encourage and arrange for Afghan girls teams to visit IoBM Karachi and play series of matches with their girl teams; promising to facilitate their visits and also by providing accommodation. A university survey was also administered with the participating students and faculty members – post the lectures by PAJC members – to gauge the improvement in their perceptions on the other side; understanding of



the challenges of Pak-Afghan relations, and awareness about the socio-political conditions in both countries.

Visit to Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi

For the second university interaction with youth and academia, one member each from the PAJC visited the IBA on January 11, 2017. The Pakistani speaker was former Ambassador Mian Sanaullah, while the Afghan speaker was Member of Afghan Parliament Khalid Pashtoon. Both spoke on “Pak-Afghan relations: Countering Misperceptions and Negative Narratives”. Executive Director of CRSS, Imtiaz Gul, represented CRSS while another member of PAJC, Mr. Qazi Humayun, former Pakistan Ambassador to Pakistan, was also present.



Dr. Bilal Munshi, Assistant Professor in the Social Sciences and Liberal Arts Department, IBA, welcomed the PAJC group members and introduced the two distinguished speakers from Pakistan and Afghanistan. CRSS Executive Director, Mr. Imtiaz Gul gave a brief presentation on the project Beyond Boundaries, including phase one and the current phase two, and the project activities held so far through track II dialogues and other important sideline strategic meetings, to improve bilateral relations through such people to people contacts at civil society levels.

The session commenced with short introductions given by the students, followed by presentations by the guest speakers. Mian Sanaullah, having considerable experience at various diplomatic missions during his illustrious career, discussed how Pakistan and Afghanistan do not have strong political relations. The Afghan leadership believes that Pakistan is not a sincere friend. However, what is the truth? Nobody knows the answer to that question. Moreover, the future is uncertain with US President-elect Donald Trump. According to him, the idea of peace returning to the region is not quite possible; this essentially brings us to

the point that each of us has a responsibility to remove mistrust so that we can understand each other's aspirations.

Following this, Mr. Pashtoon started on a positive note by discussing the similarities between Afghans and Pakistanis. He talked about how he had spent a year in Karachi in 1981, since Pakistan had become a safe haven for Afghans fleeing the Soviet invasion. Relations between the two countries were somewhat better. However, with the creation of the Taliban, the Afghan government turned cold towards Pakistan, blaming it for destabilizing the region. This was essentially where the blame game started. Mr.



Pashtoon was of the opinion that Afghanistan expects more from Pakistan, and one only expects help from a friend. The role of India in Pak-Afghan relations was also discussed. India, being one of the largest economies in the region, has considerably helped Afghanistan economically, socially and militarily. According to Mr. Pashtoon, this was perhaps the main reason why ties between Afghanistan and India have become stronger over the years.

Mr. Qazi Humayun continued on this note by talking about the international situation – how the world is no longer unipolar but rather multipolar. Moreover, India's part in this region has been enhanced due to the hegemonic aspirations of the present government. He also clarified Pakistan's ethos towards the Taliban – that we are actively opposing them.

The floor was then opened for discussion whereby questions were raised by students and faculty members. CRSS Executive Director, Mr. Imtiaz Gul again clarified that Pakistan's ambivalent stance towards the Taliban ended in March 2007. A



significant reason for this was the killing of Pakistani Military Generals and Soldiers in North and South Waziristan by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). He said, India is also involved in the dirty politics of the region. Quoting a personal example as journalist, he said that when former Ambassador, Tariq Aziz, was held in captivity by the Taliban, Baitullah Mehsud revealed to him how India had offered him help.

A meeting of the top 12 security advisers was also held in India in 2009, which led to a report titled 'How to deal with an obstinate Pakistan?' A recommendation was given to conduct covert and overt operations in Baluchistan. The Indians felt that Baluchistan could be separated from Pakistan just like Bangladesh. Questions



regarding the Durand Line, which was created by the British and the status of Afghan refugees, were also raised. To the latter, Mr. Khalid Pashtoon replied that he tries to ignore this problem and advises his colleagues to do the same. He also said that a decision regarding the refugees is also being made but nothing has been revealed to the media yet.

Mr. Sanaullah stated that the blame game between the two countries always results in negativity and misunderstanding. Furthermore, he also said that inter-state relations should not be based on religion only. If this were so then Bhutan and India, and Nepal and India would have strong ties. In the end, Mr. Pashtoon expressed hope that ties between the two countries would improve and there should be more projects like TAPI (Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline) which will benefit this region.

The students then awarded shields to Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, Mr. Qazi Humayun and Mr. Sanaullah for sharing their views on Pak-Afghan bilateral relations with the IBA Faculty and students. A university survey was also administered with the participating students and faculty members – post the lectures by PAJC members – to gauge the improvement in their perceptions on the other side; understanding of the challenges of Pak-Afghan relations, and awareness about the socio-political conditions in both countries.

Media Dissemination

As part of the media dissemination campaign of the project, the third workshop was well received by the TV and print media with several TV shows, op-eds and extensive press coverage. This was further complemented by the social media based dissemination where live-blogging of the discussions sessions was an important dissemination tool.

Articles/Op-eds

The Express Tribune	12 January, 2017
The News	12 January, 2017
Dawn	12 January, 2017
Dawn	12 January, 2017
The Express Tribune	12 January, 2017
The News	11 January, 2017
The News	11 January, 2017
The News	10 January, 2017
Dawn	11 January, 2017 (Imtiaz Gul)
Geo TV	10 January, 2017
Pajhwok Afghan News	10 January, 2017
The Express Tribune	10 January, 2017 (Tahir Khan)
DW News	08 January, 2017

TV Shows

The TV show on Geo News, with the PAJC delegates is available on the CRSS website through the link below:

<http://crss.pk/beyond-boundaries/beyond-boundaries-ii/the-third-meeting-of-the-pakistan-afghanistan-joint-committee/tv-shows/>

CRSS Web Preview



7. FOURTH MEETING OF PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT COMMITTEE

The fourth meeting of the PAJC groups was held in Kabul, from February 16 to 20, 2017.

The Pakistani delegation members were Dr. Shoaib Suddle, former IG Police and Federal Tax Ombudsman; Mr. Qazi Humayun, former Ambassador; Mr. Mian Sanaulah, former Ambassador; and Mr. Tahir Khan, Senior Journalist. They were also accompanied by Mr. Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director CRSS, and Mr. Malik Mustafa, Team Leader, CRSS.

The Afghanistan side included Ms. Elay Ershad, Member of Parliament; Mr. Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, Head of Executive Council of the High Peace Council; Ms. Palwasha Hassan, Civil Society Activist; Ms. Fowzia Koofi, Member of Parliament;



Ms. Wazmah Frogh, Civil Society Activist; and Mr. Sami Mahdi, Director TOLO TV. During their dialogue on February 18, 2017, the Afghan and Pakistani PAJC members called on both Pakistan and Afghanistan to exercise restraint in the current situation in the larger interest of the people of the two countries. They need to focus on the real issues that are obstructing peace and reconciliation. The group also called on both governments to instantly provide counsellor access to prisoners detained in both countries on various charges. This could help in providing mutual legal assistance and fair trial.

Mr. Imtiaz Gul, during his opening remarks, said that it was extremely devastating how the recent attacks in Pakistan (Lahore and Sehwan) claimed over 100 lives. He said that the unofficial communication channels were extremely useful for talks between the two countries when the relationship was not good at the official level. The agenda of common people should get preference over politics. Speaking on educational cooperation between the two countries, he said that Afghan students have as much right to the quality education as Pakistani students. The scholarships on-offer for Afghan students in Pakistan by National University of Science and the Technology (NUST) still stand, while Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) is likely to announce scholarships soon. He said that several Commerce and Trade related meetings were pending on Afghan side; especially the Pak-Afghan Joint Ministerial Meeting for the finalization of Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA). The media and civil society should pressurize their respective governments to prioritize these meetings besides security issues. The finalization of APTTA is crucial for trade cooperation and improving bilateral trade. There is a lot of missing information about the role of Pakistan for peace in Afghanistan. The two countries should not condition their relations with other countries.



“We need to think what is it that we need to change to make a difference and resolve the issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan”, Dr. Shoaib Suddle, noted while underscoring that the two sides should sit together, share intelligence and go after the terrorists. The issue of porous border between the two countries is also very relevant and important to the bilateral relations. We need to reinvent the narrative that has existed for too long and has been damaging our relations. The civil society in order to play its role needs to be enlightened with the correct narrative. It should also come up with achievable recommendations. Frequent

exchange of information about the terrorists between the two sides is critical to ensure peace.

Palwasha Hassan said that the blame-game could create issues for the general public; especially for the refugees in Pakistan. It is also detrimental to trade and forward movement on other areas of cooperation. The two countries have lost many opportunities for cooperation in the past, but should not miss more opportunities to come in the future. The mistrust between the two countries needs critical attention.



Mr. Abdul Hakeem Mujahid said that both the countries were suffering from the menace of terrorism and insurgency. We should have courage to state the facts publically. The in-camera meetings of two sides should discuss the critical issues and matters in greater details. Beyond Boundaries is a good forum and an attempt to ameliorate the trust deficit between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Ms. Fowzia Koofi said that both countries shared the same pain. Respecting human rights of refugees is the responsibility of public. The high level political commitment is critical to address the most important and formidable issues between the two countries, while practical steps and talks around the small issues are also needed. We need to think how we can influence our governments into positive relations. The leaders should be impactful in doing their jobs rather than being involved in blame-game. The issues of concern for both sides should

be discussed as avoiding the issues doesn't really solve the issues and discussing doesn't mean deciding on the issues.

Mr. Sami Mahdi, Director Tolo TV, said that the issue of refugees was very important to Afghanistan. We are thankful to Pakistan for the exceptional hospitality shown over the past decades towards Afghan refugees, but now the harsh behavior of Police and other authorities can really affect the bilateral relations. The peace and prosperity in one country cannot be ensured without peace and prosperity in the other. Peaceful Afghanistan will facilitate smooth access for Pakistan to Central Asia. The two countries cannot live without each other and Pakistan is the most important neighbour to Afghanistan. We should also bring the insurgents to the table of negotiation.

Mr. Imtiaz Gul, responding to the refugees issue raised by Mr. Sami Mahdi, informed the gathering that the Pakistani PM himself took notice of the issue of harsh behaviors with refugees and the Pakistani resolve to address this problem is manifest in the new refugees' policy.

Mr. Qazi Humayun, former Pakistani diplomat said that the statements by the leaders on both sides have an impact on public opinions and attitudes which ultimately translate to the actions and people to people behavior. Living as peaceful neighbours requires precautions and negative statements at head of the state levels should be avoided. He urged both the intelligence agencies to improve exchange of intelligence information and interactions on daily basis.

Ms. Wazma Farogh, said that the bilateral level talks were required to figure out the issues of critical concern. She, agreeing with Mr. Humayun, urged both the governments to restrain from statements that hurt the sentiments. She said that the issue of Pakistani prisoners in Afghan custody should also be discussed for giving access to them on humanitarian basis, legal assistance and fair trial. The positive developments in both countries in the favour of each other should not only be highlighted but there should also be some mechanism to do that.

Ms. Elay Ershad, member of Afghan Parliament said that the blame game between the two countries should stop right away.

The PAJC members had other important meetings as well during their stay in Kabul. The Pakistani delegation and the Afghan delegation were hosted for a working lunch by Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan, H.E. Ibrar Hussain on February 17, 2017. The programme also included visits to Ibn-e-Sina University

on February 18, 2017, and Gowharshad University on February 20, 2017 for lectures by PAJC members.

As part of their strategic meetings on the sidelines, the PAJC members met several high level stakeholders in Afghan government, which included meetings with the Minister of Refugee and Repatriation, S. Hossain Alemi Balkhi; and the Deputy Foreign Minister, Hekmat Karzai. They also met with key Civil Society Organizations & Journalists in Kabul, and had a meeting with the members of business community at Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The visit also included media interactions of three delegates each from both the groups at Tolo TV for an exclusive prime time talk show on Pak-Afghan relations. Executive Director CRSS, Mr. Imtiaz Gul, participated in talk shows on leading Pakistani channels such as GEO, ARY, DAWN, and WAQT, and talked about the track II initiative and the recent deadlock in the bilateral relations after Pakistan shut down the Afghan border crossing points at Torkham and Chamman on Friday – the day when the delegation arrived in Kabul. Before departing for Kabul, a TV talk Show was held at Mashriq TV as a curtain raiser for the visit, where Tahir Khan from Pakistan delegation and Elay Ershad from Afghanistan delegation participated.

STRATEGIC SIDELINE MEETINGS

Meeting with Minister of Refugees and Repatriation

The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) members from Pakistan met with the Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi on February 19, 2017 at his office in Kabul.



Mr. Balkhi thanked the Beyond Boundaries delegation for working for the betterment of the two peoples. He appreciated their hard work and efforts for solving the issues between the two countries. He said that with the continuity of initiatives like Beyond Boundaries, the two countries will have a very bright future. He said that he was willing to extend all possible cooperation and support for the improvement and strengthening of bilateral relations.

“During my visit to Pakistan, I could see the results of Beyond Boundaries’ work and advocacy which had greatly impacted the bilateral relations”, he said. In response to Mr. Imtiaz Gul’s query about his visit to Pakistan, and the modalities for new visa regime for Afghans, Minister Balkhi said it was discussed that there would be no force repatriation. The Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Lt. Gen. (Retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch supported that the financial assistance should also be given to undocumented refugees. It was good to notice that the environment in Pakistan was totally changed comparing to my last visit. The SAFRON Minister also mentioned that positive developments are because of the meetings and discussions between political parties, civil society representatives and other stakeholders: “I must say that Beyond Boundaries has a great role in this too”. We also discussed the registration of undocumented refugees and Afghan government will also help in the identification process. Among many other points of our discussion in Pakistan, one was bringing changes to the visa regime; especially for the businessmen and patients.

I am really sad about the terrorist attacks that took place in Lahore and Quetta during my stay. But the political situation had not impacted my visit and the agenda of refugees because of its humanitarian aspect. I am thankful to Lt. Gen. Qadir Baloch and Beyond Boundaries for supporting the agenda. The announcement of 3000 scholarships for Afghans is a good gesture.



Dr. Shoab Suddle said that the Beyond Boundaries members had been meeting with Minister Qadir Baloch for refugees' issue. We condemn the terrorist attacks in both countries. We have been raising the issue of visa with Sartaj Aziz and other stakeholders in Pakistan and are glad to see the positive outcomes in this regard. Whatever the challenges are, we can make the progress if we do not give up and continue our efforts. The PAJC delegates can also request the SAFRON Minister for his support for the other critical issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The cross border movement and the security issues are important, once they are tackled then we will be in a good position to get over the other issues as well. We have also taken up the issue of electricity for Afghan refugees on commercial rates with SAFRON Minister. Both countries are the victims of terrorism. This menace cannot be controlled alone in isolation and requires joint intelligence sharing.



“I have shared the positive outcome of my visit to Pakistan with the media on both sides including TV, radio, press”, Balkhi said. He further added, many refugees in Pakistan don't want to leave Pakistan and their relatives here want to visit them. While there are many positive developments, there are some issues that still need to be addressed. The frequent travelers of divided families may be facilitated as well. The Afghan refugees living in one province face problems visiting the other provinces. The facility of SIM cards may also be given to registered refugees.

Qazi Humayun, said that the bitter statements from the head of the state levels escalate tensions and also impact Afghan refugees in Pakistan. We as civil society urge both governments for exercising restraint from inflammatory statements.

Meeting with Afghanistan Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Hikmet Karzai

The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee group met with Afghanistan's Deputy Foreign Minister Hikmet Karzai in Kabul on Feb 19, 2017.

Mr. Hikmet Karzai while welcoming the PAJC group talked in detail with them. He said Innocent Afghans are being arrested in Pakistan, so far 200-300 have been arrested. He questioned that there was no justification for shelling on villages in Ningarhar by Pakistan forces. In a reference to attacks in Pakistan in recent past, he said I have buried five family members in recent weeks, following the January 10 mosque attack in Deh Mazang, and those in Kandahar. I think nobody else can feel Pakistan's pain better than Afghans can.

He further said that for us there are three constituencies in Pakistan; people of Pakistan to whom we are deeply indebted, civilian government, there is no problem with that, and the military establishment- That is the real issue.

Speaking on the border closure by Pakistan (the meeting took place after two days of the closure), he said we have decided to exercise strategic restraint. Refrain from blame-game and also put hold on resorting to options such as WTO to challenge unilateral border closure. Moves to deescalate tensions have to come from across the border.

He informed the group that in the last 9 months he visited Pakistan 14 times and the objective and mission was to reduce tensions and find a joint way forward. Every time I explained to my interlocutors that an entire generation including myself knows Pakistan as a refugee having lived there. The refugees from Afghanistan had only have seen war and conflict .They all had good memories, they look at Pakistan differently. But the next generation wouldn't know Pakistan. I kept telling friends in Islamabad that we are running against time. We are ready to work with anybody for peace through a sincere partnership; because at the end of the day, it is actions that matter.

Talking about the QCG failure, he said that by engaging in talks we proved to the world our resolve for dialogue. We thought it could be a good mechanism but it couldn't achieve its objectives. None of the 26 benchmarks set out by QCG were fulfilled. The primary objective of the QCG was to pursue talks and action against irreconcilables. But there has only been back and forth without any progress. Benchmarks included: calling on Afghan government to open doors of talks to Taliban without preconditions. We dropped preconditions. It also called on

members to stop facilitation of Taliban such as treatment and infrastructure. Another was related to IEDs: to stop supplies of elements of IEDs; ammunition and accessories.

Coming to the “Moscow Talks” for peace in Afghanistan, he said the regional processes have unfortunately not been effective. As long as this mechanism can complement our process it is ok. We appreciated the Russian initiative as long as it can complement ours. Moscow meeting was productive and constructive.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs DG Regional Affairs, Mr. Ashraf Haideri said that we participated in Moscow talks because we can't allow others to take initiatives on our behalf. We still believe our peace process is the best. Russians don't want it to turn into another Heart of Asia process. Afghanistan wants all stakeholders to become part of engagement instead of containment of problems in Afghanistan. Russians and others agreed to the involvement of the US in the process. Russians proposed to have some reconcilable Taliban as observers but Afghanistan rejected. We told Russians that in the long-run the engagement with Taliban will be against their interests.

Meeting with Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan

The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) members from Pakistan met with the Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan, Syed Abrar Hussain, on February 16, 2017 at the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul.

Ambassador Hussain said that he was very glad to meet the visiting delegation from Pakistan after he missed the chance of meeting during their last visit. He updated the delegation about various developments on bilateral issues and Pakistan's developmental activities in Afghanistan.

The Ambassador said that the temporary deployment of doctors at Torkham border was an attempt to gauge if it was a useful practice. The issues of health emergency visas for Afghans and police registration for the attendants accompanying the patients are being considered for official policy making. To improve people to people contacts, Pakistan is issuing 6-month multiple entry visas – which can even be extended – to most of the Afghan applicants for travelling across the border, comparing to one-month visas issued by Afghan embassies in Pakistan. In this regard, daily 2000-3000 Afghans are being facilitated by Pakistan's embassy and consulates. Updating the delegation on the issue of outsourcing visa issuance process and drop box facility for visa

application, Ambassador Hussain said that it was near completion. Though, it took time for quality assurance and to ensure transparency in the process. A committee has been formed to thoroughly scan and shortlist the potential bidders. With this new process involving biometric verification, the people from far flung areas will have offices/ drop box facility in their localities. The possibility of opening new consulates was also discussed during the meeting.

On the health cooperation, he said that issue of customs duty on equipment for Pakistani hospital in Afghanistan is also being negotiated. A group of doctors and paramedics has also been sent to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) for training and capacity building.

Ambassador Abrar Hussain said that the issue of mistrust needs to be addressed as it causes gaps. To help improve the trade, the issue of border corruption and fake/ perilous drugs should be tackled establishing quality assurance mechanisms to ensure the trade of quality products. The Afghan importers should also bring quality products for trade and perception improvement.

The import of Pakistani goods especially from Karachi suits the traders in Afghanistan. More stakes need to be built in our business for the other side. The bilateral and transit trade are linked. Addressing the administrative bottlenecks in bilateral and transit trade, and the formalization of informal trade can greatly improve the situation and overall trade. He also added that the politicians in Afghanistan can play a critical role in improving the perceptions. Updating the PAJC members on the education cooperation, he said that the new scholarship programme will also include masters and PhD degrees.

Ambassador Hussain also said that the leaders should not be egocentric if the aim is to improve the bilateral relations.

Mr. Shahbaz Hussian, Deputy Head of Mission, said that the people to people contacts are critical and need to be conserved to improve our relations with Afghanistan. In this regard, the hospitals in Pakistan should also charge reasonable prices from the Afghan patients. He underpinned the need to address the bottlenecks in trade. The rail link from Helmand (Afghanistan) to Gwadar (Pakistan) can greatly improve the regional trade and transit trade between the two countries and the region. He also underscored the need for the fulfillment of political commitments. He said that the access should be given to the innocent Pakistani prisoners in Afghan custody.

The visiting Pakistani members said that an international approach should be adopted to the solution of Afghan problems and not just a regional approach. Mr. Imtiaz Gul said that the US support to Afghan government should not be interpreted as inaction. The physics of Af-Pak relation is such that they cannot live without each other.

Meeting with Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries

The PAJC group met with the Afghan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI) on 19 February, 2017 in Kabul.



The ACCI Chairman, Mr. Jan Alokozay and Vice Chairman, Mr. Muhammad Yunus and other senior officials of the ACCI welcomed the PAJC group at the ACCI office. Mr. Alokozay briefed the PAJC group on the consequences of the border closure (Pakistan had unilaterally shut down its border with Afghanistan on 17 February). He said that the recent border closure will further decrease the transit and bilateral trade between the two countries. He noted that the Afghan transit trade containers were down to 15,000 in 2016 from a peak of 75,000 in 2010. He told the group that Afghanistan will have to look at other alternatives such as access to Iran port Chabahar, though Iran is more expensive but it is more certain and secure. He further said that even prior to the border closure trust on Karachi port was lost due to corruption from the clearing processes in Karachi to the transition through the border at Chamman and Torkham. In many cases massive

demurrage forced the importers to abandon their cargo. Delays in clearance of sugar caused massive losses because it begins rotting in the humid environment of Karachi.



Alokozay said abrupt closures such as the recent one have caused millions of dollars losses to importers and exporters, particularly those of perishable items such as fruits, vegetables or dairy products. Afghan traders have often suffered also because of unusually high taxes on seasonal fruits.

The Pak Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industries (PAJCCI) was created in the hope that it would serve as a bridge even in adverse times but it hasn't been able to prevent losses through abrupt closures.

He asked the group that can we delink business from politics. And can business function normally in abnormal political conditions?

The PAJC group thanked the ACCI senior officials for taking time out to meet with the group and assured them they will consult with PAJCCI, referring to the meeting with them in January during the 3rd meeting of PAJC in Karachi, and also with other relevant Ministries to look at the issues highlighted in this meeting.

Meeting with the Chief of National Directorate of Security (NDS), Mr. Masoom Stanekzai

The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee group met with Afghanistan's NDS chief Masoom Stanekzai in Kabul on Feb 18, 2017.

Mr. Stanekzai while welcoming the PAJC delegation gave them a detailed account of his perspective on Pak-Afghan relations. He noted that we cannot avoid each other. But the critical question is whether the policy in Pakistan has changed at all? We have a very deadly /tough year (2016) behind us. We witnessed at least 40 attacks daily, with 50- to 100 people getting killed. The major question facing us is who is preparing suicide bombers? Huge factories of preparing suicide bombers are providing ever more people. Where and who is the brain behind it.

Our information says that more than 30 groups are operating in the tribal areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan. If TTP has an allegiance to TTA, how come (Pakistan) doesn't go after TTA for providing TTP with ideological support? For us there is no difference between TTP, TTA, Al-Qaeda, Daesh/IS, or Jundullah or IMU or ETIM. If there were no TTA, how can the foreign militants survive here?

Individually, they are threat to Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and China but for us they are all a collective threat because they are operating from Afghanistan because of the support they get from TTA. We are facing them all here. TTA clearly is an umbrella for all of them. Our biggest vulnerability is in areas where Taliban hold sway and host foreign militants.

We keep blaming each other, but I think the issue is much bigger. Whatever groups there have been, they tend to become mercenaries, anybody can use them. Why can't we join hands and fight them together?

Our mistake in the past was that all groups had been allowed to align and fight the Russians. The Dec 2014 US-NATO drawdown had triggered hopes of success against militants but the violence increased on the contrary. He further added that he wished Zarb-e- Azb had happened in 2013 when US-NATO troops were still here. This operation pushed them into our territories.

We really wanted to have a cordial relationship with Pakistan, but for that we need actions on ground. For that, we also need analysis of the agents of instability. The current situation makes the way forward difficult. But, the only way forward is better information. We need an Initiative of a Track I, in addition to a Track II such as yours at lower official level.

Proper official engagement must precede leaders' meetings because just meeting for the sake of meeting won't solve our problems. I must be able to inform my leader before he meets his counterparts. On a question from the Pakistan side that are you still amenable to the intelligence sharing offer by Pakistan? Stanikzai replied: "For that I am ready to talk in depth. My suggestion is

to start a trilateral or quadrilateral dialogue which can then narrow down to bilateral talks. Initially a third party should be there to for the sake of record. I keep asking all of our politicians why it should be a taboo if NDS and ISI talk. I am not afraid to talk to any one for the sake of peace. We are ready for 3rd party verification (be it China, Russia or UN). Our national interest is to talk economy, culture and provide education to our people”.

Speaking about the Moscow talks for peace in Afghanistan, he said: “How come those radicals who fought against it are now ready to talk to Russia. We are very clear as far as the way forward is concerned; the TTA should either step forward for unconditional talks or face a definite crackdown. We know the problem. We have the opportunity to cooperate and if we do, then we can turn things around in one year”.

He further said the problem is that others are trying to impose their solutions on us. They are deciding our fate and don't accept how we want to pursue the peace issue. It cannot and should not replace other peace mechanisms. Ours is the best i.e. the model we pursued with Hezbe Islami. If there is consensus on peace and stability in Afghanistan, if it's the objective of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, why can't we achieve trust between ourselves? Why can't we fight them jointly?



Our concern is how is it possible to promote peace and at the same time shut eyes to a full-fledged war imposed on Afghanistan? There is huge amount of supply of arms and funds coming into Afghanistan.

How can they do so without the knowledge of the government agencies? How can we live with such a two-faced policy – one overt that is speaking of peace and the other one that is supporting forces who are undermining peace?

Meeting with Members of Civil Society in Afghanistan

The PAJC members from Pakistan met with the members of different Civil Society organizations in Kabul on February 17, 2017.

Ms. Wazhma Frogh, Director WPSO, briefed the Afghan Civil Society members about Beyond Boundaries and how it was an attempt to improve the relations between two countries. She said that the role of civil society was crucial given that the involvement of influential people who can help policy making towards betterment of bilateral relations.

Mr. Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director CRSS, said that the common man has suffered a lot from conflict. People take such interventions in a commercial way – and resultantly the human aspect is lost – but we treat Beyond Boundaries as our duty towards the people from both countries, instead of just a project. We are trying to improve the bilateral relations in whatever way we can, and discussing a diverse range of



issues, as only discussing and remaining stuck over security takes you nowhere. The unofficial communication channels between the two countries – including civil society – are of great importance when the relations are not good at the official level.

Qazi Humayun, former Pakistani Ambassador, said that he had great confidence in the Afghan friends and CRSS and other people involved in Beyond Boundaries for improving the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Since the civil

society and media on both sides have strengthened over time, they can play a great role in improving relations between and perceptions on both sides.

Mr. Idrees Umer Zaat, Afghan civil society member said that both sides had already made so many mistakes in the past. He said that both sides should find common grounds and jointly work to resolve the issues of mutual concern to improve people-to-people relations and build positive perceptions on both sides. The people involved in the dialogue should also be impartial while discussing the issues of mutual concern.



Mr. Tahir Khan, Pakistani delegate stressed that the problems between the two countries should be addressed through bilateral channels. The two governments must know that the political problems between them have an ultimate impact on people-to-people relations. It is the responsibility of media and civil society to play their roles to improve the perceptions on both sides.

Mr. Umer Zai, Afghan civil society member said that the root causes of conflicts and problems need to be addressed. The commonalities should be built upon and people-to-people contacts should be fostered. The blame game between Pakistan and Afghanistan should end. The civil society has a great role to play for mainstreaming the problems that matter to the general public.

Syed Abdullah Ahmadi, Afghan civil society member said that the connection and collaboration between the civil societies from both countries is critical for common solutions and reconciliation process. It is extremely important to have a vocal civil society.

Mian Sanaullah former Pakistani Ambassador said that it was important to understand each other's concerns. The two countries have a rich history of commonalities to build upon. The inner strength to speak for what one believes in lends greater credibility. He said that Beyond Boundaries had worked for several issues such as refugees stay extension, issuance of visas for exceptional cases, trade issues and generated focused and result oriented policy recommendations. The policy of Pakistan Government is to continue facilitation for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The development on the refugees issue is the outcome of Beyond Boundaries' work and recommendations.



Mr. Dalili, Afghan civil society member said that the political situation all over the world had changed. The civil society and the people of two countries shouldn't be silent. The media and civil society have to be honest with the people. We should jointly work to improve the people-to-people relations and voice our concerns through media as it is a critical tool in improving perceptions. We should all also start reaching out to those at helm on both sides.

Mr. Aziz Rafiq, Afghan civil society member said that the core issues should be discussed and addressed rather than addressing the symptoms. He said that the economic cooperation modalities should also be discussed and clarified as well. The growing hostility in Afghanistan against Pakistan is not to the benefit of Afghanistan. The two countries should sit together and think what is going to benefit them in the future.

Mr. Sami Mahdi from Tolo TV said that the two countries should focus on solutions and unrealistic policies should be given up. The focus should be on geo-economic and social development. The blame game damages both sides and it helps the governments to skip their responsibilities.

UNIVERSITY VISITS

Visit to Ibn-i-Sina University, Kabul

The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) members from Pakistan visited the Ibn-i-Sina University in Kabul for lectures on February 18, 2017, on the theme of “The need for dialogue among Pakistan and Afghanistan to address the security challenges in both the countries”.



Dr. Shaoib Suddle, former IG of Police, Pakistan, said that the blame game between the two countries was getting stronger but they were there to fix the problems. Historically, Germany and France were not even expected to talk to each other, given the wars they fought and they could still be fighting, but the younger generation realized that there is no future in fighting. But, between

Pakistan and Afghanistan, there is no such history as wars and the two have a lot of commonalities to build upon. It is for the people of Afghanistan to decide what sort of government they want. As far as Pakistan is concerned, we want peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan, but at the same time, we also expect that Afghan side should not be used by proxies to destabilize Pakistan. Likewise, the territory of Pakistan should in no way be used against Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the current narrative in these two countries is not in the favor of promoting peace and friendly relations. If a serious incident happens in Afghanistan, the blame comes to Pakistan and vice versa. We need to once and for all address these issues. There is no issue that can deter the friendly relations. The narrative can only change if the youths of both countries play their roles for change like in France and Germany. So the youths should come up with a new evidence based narrative rather than the one based on foreign interests. The Beyond Boundaries is an attempt to sensitize the youths about the criticalities of Pak-Afghan relations besides influencing the official policy making. There are thousands of scholarships waiting for Afghan students to avail in Pakistan. We are here to assure you that there would be nothing whatsoever from Pakistan side that can negatively affect Afghanistan. You should act as independent monitors to see as to who says what and then creating pressures on the policy makers for not taking the two countries apart but get closer.



Qazi Humayun, former Pakistani Ambassador, said that there were geographical and historical realities in the relationship of Afghanistan and Pakistan. We as members of civil society can create pressures on our respective governments for friendly policy making. Youths have active minds and they should analyze and develop critical thinking, as it is vital to draw conclusion on any issue.

The lectures/ presentations were followed by an interactive discussion with the university students. The students were of the view that there were several problems in the relations between the two countries and these issues should be discussed from the general public's perspective. We should be given real facts and the two sides must consider and discuss the real problems deterring the bilateral relations. The students also underpinned the need for ameliorating the trust deficit between the two countries and fostering the people to people contacts. They also highlighted the issue of unequal distribution of wealth in both countries and the need to take actions against terrorists indiscriminately.

A university survey was also administered with the participating students and faculty members – post the lectures by PAJC members – to gauge the improvement in their perceptions on the other side; understanding of the challenges of Pak-Afghan relations, and awareness about the socio-political conditions in both countries.

Visit to Gowharshad University, Kabul

The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) members from Pakistan visited the Gowharshad University in Kabul for lectures on February 20, 2017, on the theme of “The need for dialogue among Pakistan and Afghanistan to address the security challenges in both the countries”.



Qazi Humayun, former Pakistani Ambassador, said that it was quite unfortunate how the terrorism incidents in both countries claim the lives of innocent citizens. Pak-Afghan relations will be determined by the younger generation. The people of both countries have a great and deep emotional connection with each other.

We are neighbours with many commonalities, and we cannot wish away each other. There is a very strong perception in both countries that unrest in both countries is because of each other. I am quite sure that the younger generation of Afghanistan would not back the terrorists who want to hurt Pakistan. The presence of terrorist organization in our countries is very unfortunate.

Mian Sanaullah, former Pakistani Ambassador, said that the two countries will sink together or swim together. There have been some positive developments during our stay here. We need to jointly defeat these terrorists. The media in both countries should be responsible and should not do negative journalism.

Mr. Tahir Khan, Pakistani Journalist, said that he fully supports freedom of expression in both countries. He added that the Pakistani Minister SAFRON had several times stated that the Afghan refugees had never been involved in crimes. Pakistan has also announced a new policy for Afghan refugees, now the ones with even expired POC cards would not be expelled.

The students asked how that negative perceptions had been created as the two countries never had such a relation where people had such negative perceptions. Qazi Humayun, said that one of the reasons for these negative perceptions is the incident of Army Public School whose terrorists and facilitators were from



Afghanistan. There is also a perception that India is working against Pakistan in Afghanistan. The blame-game is bad for both countries. We just don't want Afghanistan's territory to be used against Pakistan.

Mr. Tahir Khan said that the students should not believe in the negative propaganda, rather they should themselves read, analyze and think critically. Qazi Humayun, said that the anti-Pakistan statements by Afghan leaders leave extremely negative impact not only on the bilateral relations but also on the thinking of Pakistani population. The leaders should be considerate of these negative impacts on people-to-people relations.



While replying a students' question if Pakistan will/ is considering revenge from Afghanistan for something they consider it to be responsible for, Qazi Humayun said that Pakistan's revenge was welcoming refugees in Pakistan in millions when the whole world thought we were crazy to welcome refugees in such large numbers. A university survey was also administered with the participating students and faculty members – post the lectures by PAJC members – to gauge the improvement in their perceptions on the other side; understanding of the challenges of Pak-Afghan relations, and awareness about the socio-political conditions in both countries.

MEDIA DISSEMINATION

As part of the media dissemination campaign of the project, the fourth workshop was well received by the TV and print media with several TV shows, op-eds and extensive press coverage. This was further complemented by the social media based dissemination where live-blogging of the discussions sessions was an important dissemination tool.

Articles/Op-eds

The Friday Times	10 Feb, 2017 (Imtiaz Gul)
CRSS Website	10 Feb, 2017 (Mian Sanauallah)
CRSS Website	06 Feb, 2017 (Mian Sanauallah)
The Express Tribune	21 Jan, 2017 (Tahir Khan)
The Express Tribune	22 Jan, 2017 (Tahir Khan)
CRSS Websites	16 Feb, 2017 (Mian Sanauallah)
The Express Tribune	23 Feb, 2017 (Tahir Khan)
The Friday Times	24 Feb, 2017(Imtiaz Gul)
The Express Tribune	01 March, 2017 (Tahir Khan)
BBC News	02 March, 2017 (Tahir Khan)
CRSS Blog	07 March, 2017 (Tahir Khan)

All the TV shows with the PAJC delegates are available on the CRSS website through the link below:
<http://crss.pk/beyond-boundaries/beyond-boundaries-ii/the-fourth-meeting-of-the-pakistan-afghanistan-joint-committee/tv-shows/>



CRSS Web Preview



8. FIFTH MEETING OF PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS/TRADE

As part of the CRSS ongoing Pakistan- Afghanistan track 1.5/II project Beyond Boundaries in partnership with WPSO, a meeting of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee on Business/Trade was convened in Islamabad from March 12 to 15, 2017, inviting top business leaders from Afghanistan Chambers and Pakistan Chambers in a timely intervention to start a dialogue on the early restoration of bilateral and transit trade between the two countries which had been halted by the border closure. The Pak- Afghan border was abruptly closed on February 17, 2017, by the Government of Pakistan following a series of deadly attacks in the country that killed over 100 people and injured several hundreds.

The initiative was planned to foster better understanding and cooperation between the two neighbors, soothe bitter context, and address the trust deficit between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and engagement through detailed discussion and dialogue on the impact and repercussions on transit and bilateral trade due to the recent border closure. The visit also included high level sideline meetings and media interviews of selected delegates from Afghan and Pakistan side.

A six-member Afghan delegation arrived from Kabul on March 12 comprising five representatives from the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI) while one, Mr. Ahmad Shah Yarzada, from Afghan chapter of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI). Members from ACCI included Mr. Mukhlis Ahmad Younas, Mr. Gulab Khan, Mr. Khalid Skanikzai, and Mr. Mohammad Mustafa Baba Karkhel. The other two delegates were PAJCCI Director Afghan Chapter, Mr. Ahmad Shah Yarzada, and Ms. Humira Saqib from WPSO. A six member delegation from Pakistan comprising representatives from Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PAJCCI) and the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) was invited to Islamabad to have a dialogue with the Afghan delegation to discuss the difficulties arising out of the abrupt closure of the border and reach a possible resolution. These included Mr. Muhammad Zubair Motiwala, President & Chairman PAJCCI as head of the delegation, Mr. Junaid Esmail Makda, Director PAJCCI, Ms. Faiza, Executive Director PAJCCI, Mr. Aamer Ata Bajwa, Senior Vice President FPCCI, Mr. Mirza Ishtiaq Baig, Vice President FPCCI, and Mr. Ahmed Chinoy, Member FPCCI.

On Monday 13 March, 2017, the two business delegations held a one-day dialogue where they discussed the heavy losses incurred by the business communities of both countries since the recent closure of the Pak-Afghan border, particularly at Torkham and Chaman, and the way forward. The delegation noted that, currently, 3000 containers in Peshawar and 2000 containers near Chaman border are standing filled with cargo and unable to cross over due to border closure. The group took note with grave concern that the border had been closed for 5 times during the short span of approximately 8 months since June 2016.



Representatives from both countries unanimously agreed to call on the Government of Pakistan to immediately open the border for the clearance of stranded cargo from port to borders. Both sides reiterated the significance of national sanctity and security and supported all measures that respective Governments may take to ensure the same. However, they insisted that the



same should not be continued at the beset of hurting the economic and social ties across the border through measures such as abrupt closure of the border for an indefinite period. Doing so, they emphasized, has resulted in not only massive monetary losses but also a fair trust deficit between the Business Chambers on each side. They also urged both Governments to honor their commitments on bilateral and transit agreements.

Mr. Muhammad Zubair Motiwala, President and Chairman of PAJCCI, was of the view that there should be a total segregation between business and politics of the two countries, adding that there were no differences between the business communities of Pakistan and Afghanistan as both wished to do business with each other. Mr. Ishtiaq Baig, Vice President of FPCCI, stated that there were many misperceptions due to which the closing of the border was being linked with reduction in terrorism. Mixing the two has merely been creating more problems than resolving anything.

Mr. Ahmad Shah Yarzada, Director Afghan Chapter PAJCCI, affirmed on the behalf of the Afghan business community, that Afghan business men are entirely in favor of doing business with Pakistan since the two countries share the same religion, language and culture. However, the abrupt closing of the Pak-Afghan border by Pakistan leaves Afghanistan to look towards other countries for trade. The two delegations also discussed the possible formation of a Joint Committee comprising private sector and think tanks from both countries which should act as an advisory mechanism that both Governments should consult before taking drastic measures such as closure of border or revision of economic policies. This



Committee could act as an economic and confidence building catalyst to ensure further enhancement of bilateral trade, rejuvenate regional linkages and promote joint investments.

Members also further resolved to urge the Ministry of Commerce for a possible waiver of any applicable port charges, whether detention or demurrage, applied to Afghan consignments and containers which accrued from the closure of the border in a bid to limit the monetary losses of the business communities of both countries.



The dialogue ended with a unanimous joint declaration drafted by the two sides. The group's visit also included high profile meetings on 13 and 14 March, 2017, with Ambassador of Afghanistan. H.E. Omar Zakhilwal at Afghan Embassy; Director General Afghanistan Mansour Khan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. Nasser Khan Janjua at the PM Secretariat; the Standing Committee on Commerce and Trade with Chairman Siraj Muhammad Khan and other Members of Committee at Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS); Mr. Aftab Sherpao, Chairman, Pak-Afghan Parliamentary Friendship Group, and Member of National Assembly from FATA Mr. Shahji Ali Afridi, and with the Minister of Commerce and Trade, Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan at Ministry of Commerce, Pakistan Secretariat.

Business leaders from both delegations also participated in media interactions through TV talk shows at Khyber TV and Dawn TV to highlight and discuss the repercussions of border closure and to call for better cooperation and understanding between the two neighbors. Mr. Zubair Motiwala, Ms. Faiza, Mr. Ahmed Shah Yarzada, and Mr. Mustafa Babakerkhel participated at Mashriq TV

show “Marraka”. While Zubair Motiwala and Ahmad Shah Yarzada again participated at Dawn TV show “Newslines”. Both TV shows were aired on 14 March, 2017.

STRATEGIC SIDELINE MEETINGS

Meeting with Ambassador of Afghanistan H.E Omar Zakhilwal

Early morning March 13, 2017, The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee on Business/ Trade including members from ACCI, PAJCCI and FPCCI, met with Afghan Ambassador, Mr. Omar Zakhilwal, and briefed him about the repercussions in the Pak-Afghan relations and the trade losses resulting on both sides of the border in the wake of the border closure, particularly at Torkham



and Chaman border points, on February 17, 2017. The Ambassador warmly welcomed the two delegations and appreciated the initiative by CRSS as a timely intervention to bring together the business communities and Chambers of the two countries at a time when the transit and bilateral trade had been shut down. He extended his full support to the business communities represented at the meeting and stated that the business and trade communities of both the countries can influence and push their respective Governments for an early opening of the border points which will open trade again.

The Ambassador stated that Afghanistan’s trade with Pakistan some years ago had stood at \$2 billion while with Iran; it was at \$200 million. Now Afghanistan’s trade with Pakistan has dropped down to a half \$1 billion while with Iran,

Afghanistan's trade has increased to \$2.5 billion. The Ambassador stated that, even without the permission of the Afghan Government, he was ready to sign any agreement with the business community and Chambers which would improve the trade between the two countries.

Emphasizing on regional connectivity, which was also the theme of the recent Pakistan-hosted ECO Summit where he represented Afghanistan, the Ambassador stated that bilateral trade between the two countries was an essential component if regional connectivity was to be achieved. Closing the Pak-Afghan



border has given India an edge to show and do more for Afghanistan, the Ambassador stated. For instance, after the closure, India recently announced the issuance of fast and free visas for Afghan citizens and to provide special discounted medical services for Afghans who visit India for medical conditions. The Ambassador stated that it was due to his intervention that the Pak-Afghan border was opened for two days as a result of which 55,000 Afghan citizens were able to return via Torkham and Chaman border points.

The Ambassador insisted that there are many dimensions that bind the two brotherly countries together. Their relationship should not be focused on politics and security alone. Rather it should be managed by people-to-people, civil society, business community, media, youth and university exchanges. While appreciating Pakistan Government's measures to ensure stringent security control on the border, the Ambassador implored that the border should not be closed as it results in closing the people-to-people exchanges.

He went on to uphold that, being an economist, businessman, and a former Finance Minister in Afghanistan, he recognized that at the end of the day if Pakistan and Afghanistan normalized their bilateral relations, the biggest benefits the two would accrue would be in economics, trade, and business.

While insisting on the opening of the Pak-Afghan border, the Ambassador stated that, "On behalf of the Afghan government let me clearly say that we have no replacement for Pakistan, it cannot be replaced by any other country. When the

relations are eventually improved we will have the best and largest transit and bilateral trade with Pakistan.”

Responding to a question regarding the decline in terrorism after the closure of border, the Ambassador stated that these were mostly false claims. He ended by saying that peace in Afghanistan is vital and important for Pakistan for not only Pakistan’s trade with Afghanistan but also Pakistan’s trade with the Central Asian republics, which will increase by 9-10% in GDP instead of the present 4%.



Meeting with Director General Afghanistan, Mansour Khan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

As part of the strategic sideline meetings with government stakeholders, the CRSS-WPSO track II Beyond Boundaries project’s Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint



Committee on Business/ Trade including Chamber leaders from both countries met with Director General (DG) Afghanistan Mansour Khan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 14, 2017. Other senior officials of Afghan Desk were also present. The Director General welcomed the delegation and appreciated CRSS for its efforts to engage in this timely initiative at a time when bilateral tensions between the two brotherly countries had risen following Pakistan's closure of the border. The DG commended the CRSS initiative of Beyond Boundaries for making significant contribution towards bringing the two countries together in the last two years.

The DG Afghanistan stated that the main issue of concern between Pakistan and Afghanistan was that the two do not have an effective engagement and a direct bilateral dialogue process. Both countries, unfortunately, have been making allegations and accusations against each other. Even though Afghanistan is Pakistan's largest trading partner, there is some form of reluctance in Afghanistan to have direct engagement with Pakistan. Following the terrorist incidents in Pakistan last month, the DG explained, he approached the Afghan Government to have directed bilateral and security engagement with Pakistan which is still in process.



The main problem, according to DG Afghanistan, is that of border management. When Pakistan highlights the need to focus on border management as a measure to counter-terrorism, the Afghan side, unfortunately, thinks that Pakistan is adopting a controversial stance. The DG explained that the Afghans need to see the border as a border and not take the position of the "Durand Line".

He added that Pakistan was disappointed when Afghanistan joined India to boycott the SAARC Summit scheduled for November 2016 in Pakistan. He stated that Pakistan expected India to boycott but was actually hurt when Afghanistan sided with India to boycott as well. The DG, hence, concluded that the way forward for Pakistan and Afghanistan is only through direct dialogue and effective engagement.

In response, the Pakistan-Afghanistan business leaders explained to the DG Afghanistan that both Pakistani and Afghan businessmen wish to improve the transit bilateral trade with one another as the two have suffered equally as a result of the closure.

Afghan delegate Mr. Ahmad Shah Yarzada, Director Afghan Chapter PAJCCI, stated that trade should not be combined with terrorism and security and that closing the borders was not the solution where all traders have been suffering. He added that the Afghan business community condemned the terrorist outfits in both Afghanistan and Pakistan that were carrying out terrorist activities.



Mr. Muhammad Zubair Motiwala, President and Chairman of PAJCCI, stated that he understood the position of Government of Pakistan on security but closing the border has resulted in 80% loss to Pakistani exporters. He appealed to DG Afghanistan to open the borders as early as possible; adding that he also strongly condemned terrorism and urged the security agencies on both sides of the border to take stringent measures to control the crossing over of terrorists. Mr. Motiwala, head of the delegation, thanked DG Afghanistan for meeting with the Pak-Afghan delegations, and handed over the “Joint Declaration” to him.

Meeting with National Security Advisor, Lt. Gen. Nasser Khan Janjua

After their meeting with DG Afghanistan, the 12 member Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) of business leaders from both countries met with

Pakistan's National Security Advisor (NSA), Lt. Gen. Nasser Khan Janjua, at the Prime Minister's Secretariat. The meeting lasted for two hours with a very candid, open and frank discussion between the NSA and the group members which proved very beneficial for the visiting Afghan businessmen as well as their Pakistani counterparts.



The NSA warmly welcomed the business leaders from Afghanistan and Pakistan, saying that ever since the CRSS had approached him regarding the upcoming visit of the Afghanistan/Pakistan business leaders, he was very pleased and was looking forward to host “his brothers and sisters from Afghanistan and Pakistan.” Addressing the business leaders present from both countries, the NSA stated that they held the key and were the force that, if used, can bind the two countries together and help security and other bilateral issues.



Speaking on the issue of terrorism, the NSA stated that, “Our heart goes out for all the victims of terrorism as much, as such acts hurt us here. We have to fight this enemy jointly and for that dialogue has to resume. For that the ball is in Afghanistan’s court.”

As Pakistan's NSA, he stated, if anyone asked him to choose one country in the whole world, he would choose Afghanistan as his "darling country to have best relations with." He went on to say that he was greatly grieved by what was happening between the two countries in the region and wishes that business would flourish between the two. Afghanistan is an important market for Pakistan and Pakistan has everything that the Afghans need. "Trust me, it is all yours and it awaits you," the NSA stated, adding that "the only thing is the unfortunate conditions of security and the deteriorating situation" between the two countries. Hence, he stated, there is a need for the will to work together and resolve issues of bilateral concerns.

In response, Afghan delegate Mr. Ahmad Shah Yarzada reciprocated saying that the business community of Afghanistan also takes Pakistan as the best and most friendly country for business and trade. "We are neighbors. We have a future together. We should not lose hope," he stated, insisting that Pakistan should open the border as soon as possible.

Mr. Zubair Motiwala, the head of the delegation, briefed the NSA on the heavy losses being suffered on both sides of the border following the abrupt border closure. Affirming that security comes first for the Joint Chambers, he condemned all terrorist activities. He reiterated the need for the security agencies on both sides to take stringent measures to monitor the border and requested that the borders should not be shut down like this. With the closure of borders, Pakistan is giving Afghanistan a chance to explore other markets, such as Iran, India and China, he added. If Pakistan will not open the border immediately, it will be replaced in trade by these competing countries.

Mr. Gulab Khan, an Afghan delegate, explained that Afghan businessmen have even now started importing from Iran, following the border closure, and feel forced to send more samples to Iran for their production, which is ultimately replacing Pakistan as Afghanistan's trading partner.

Mr. Ahmed Chinoy, a Pakistani businessman and a member of FPCCI, stated that while the security concerns of the state are legitimate and should be taken into account, the government should not let the economic ties, particularly the business & trade, become a victim of security issues.

The NSA agreed with the joint delegation and stated that Afghanistan is the "Heart of Asia", as said by Allama Iqbal. Afghanistan, being a landlocked country with its borders connected to the Central Asian Republics (CARs) in the north,

and Pakistan to the south, with its access to the Ocean, could have a great future together in becoming a massive economic corridor, like CPEC. The NSA stated that Afghanistan and Pakistan could have a CARs-Af-Pak corridor of their own where Afghanistan and Pakistan would become the gateway to connect CARs & Russia to the Ocean. Unfortunately, due to the instability in Afghanistan, the will of the government is decreasing, which is a grave concern, the NSA stated.

The meeting ended on a positive note with the NSA resolving to put in his full efforts to reopen the Pak-Afghan border as soon as possible. He said, “I stand with all of you and do hope that the two countries should sit together and I will make my strong recommendations to open the border.”

Mr. Gulab Khan presented the “Joint Declaration” of their joint groups to the National Security Advisor.



Meeting with Chairman Siraj Muhammad Khan and Standing Committee on Commerce and Trade

Following their meeting with the National Security Advisor on March 14, 2017, the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) of business leaders from both countries met with Parliamentary Standing Committee Chairman Siraj Muhammad Khan, and other Members of the Standing Committee on Commerce and Trade, at the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS). CRSS

Executive Director Mr. Imtiaz Gul briefed the Standing Committee on the Beyond Boundaries Pak-Afghan track 2 initiative undertaken by CRSS and the special dialogue convened between Afghan and Pakistani business/trade delegations to discuss the recent issues and repercussions arising out of the border closure and to push for resuming transit and bilateral trade.



Mr. Ahmed Shah Yarzada stated that the purpose of forming the PAJCCI was to jointly resolve any problems that may arise in the bilateral trade of Pakistan and Afghanistan by Pakistani and Afghan Chambers of Commerce and Industries. The joint delegation shared the problems faced by the business communities on both sides of the border with the Standing Committee following the closure of borders where the two are losing millions on a daily basis.



Chairman Siraj Khan began by saying that emergency situations like security and terrorism give the right to any country to take decisions like these and, in this case, the closing of the border was Pakistan's natural instinct. He stated that he had discussed the issues being faced by businessmen in the transit trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan and recommended that the containers that

are stuck on both sides should be given access across borders by at least opening the border points for a temporarily period till they cross over. Both the governments, he stated can then sit together to formulate a permanent strategy on security and trade as well.



The Chairman also asked the PAJCCI members present to write to the Standing Committee on Commerce and Trade and list all the problems being faced, including non-implementation of ACTA meetings, the increase in taxes, as well as any other, as an effort to inform the Committee on the latest situation and the particular problems being faced on both sides. The Chairman stated that his Committee will then recommend to the Commerce Minister to try and resolve all the issues of PAJCCI. He stated that he will also talk to the Chairman FBR and



other relevant Ministries, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior, and any other concerned departments to resolve the problem of the containers that are presently stuck.

A member of the Standing Committee informed the PAJC delegation that the Committee had also recently taken a decision to issue 2 to 5 years multiple visas for businessmen, visas for students and a permanent resident status to anyone who had married in Pakistan and lived for more than 10 years. He stated that these and many other important initiatives were sent to the Prime Minister and within 1-2 weeks their notification will be issued.

The meeting concluded with Chairman Siraj Khan assuring the PAJC delegation of the Standing Committee's best efforts to recommend the early opening of the border for at least the passage of the stuck containers.

CRSS Executive Director, Imtiaz Gul, shared the "Joint Declaration" of the two groups with Chairman Siraj Khan.

Meeting with Pak-Afghan Parliamentary Friendship Group Chairman, Mr. Aftab Sherpao

The PAJC on Business/Trade delegations from Pakistan and Afghanistan met with the Chairman Pak-Afghan Parliamentary Friendship Group, Mr. Aftab Sherpao on 14 March, 2017, at his residence. Mr. Sherpao was joined by another member of the group, Member of National Assembly from FATA, Mr. Shahji Afridi.



The delegation of PAJCCI, ACCI, and FPCCI briefed Sherpao on the current situation and heavy losses incurred by businessmen and traders due to the recent closure of borders. They gave the facts and figures of the real losses suffered so far, which run to approximately \$ 4 million per day. They requested

him to put their group's weight behind the business community of both the countries to help convince the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan to reopen the borders sooner than later.

Mr. Sherpao informed that the traders from Peshawar and FATA had also approached him and apprised him that they were suffering losses to the tune of Pak Rs. 50 Crores per day. Besides these monetary losses, thousands of daily wage workers are also directly hurt due to the closure of transit and bilateral trade.



He said that we keep telling the Government that border closure will not deter terrorists. Shifting blame of terrorism across the border by both sides is unacceptable. We want peace and it will require honest and sincere collaboration from both Pakistan and Afghanistan. He further said, let's try to connect both the countries through economics.



Ahmad Shah Yarzada, Afghan Director PAJCCI said, let us join hands for joint investments for increasing the bilateral trade. He also noted that he has repeatedly heard about the harassment of businessmen at the hands of security agencies.



Mr. Afridi said that poverty is the real source of exploitation. He informed the two groups about the new visa policy for Afghanistan being introduced, which he had already explained in detail as member of the Standing Committee on Commerce at the earlier meeting.



The two groups shared the “Joint declaration” from their meeting with Mr. Aftab Sherpao.

Meeting with Federal Minister for Commerce, Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan

The business leaders of the PAJC on Business/Trade comprising ACCI, PAJCCI, and FPCCI senior officials, met with the Federal Minister for Commerce, Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan, at the Pakistan Secretariat, on 14 March, 2017.



Minister Dastgir welcomed the two delegations and said this is a very timely initiative given the context of the border closure. He expressed that brotherly relations with Afghanistan are very important to us and are also on priority of PM Nawaz Sharif, who has reiterated to him personally to be prepared to ‘give more than we receive’. We have tremendous past, commonality of religion, traditions and culture bind us together. Afghanistan’s peace and prosperity is important to us, as it is linked with Pakistan’s peace.



He said referring to the border closure, we will extend invitation to our Afghan counterparts again to sit together, discuss and resolve these issues. He added: “A unilateral opening of the border without reciprocity by our Afghan friends is unlikely. Some sense of understanding on border management has to be realized. We are ready to facilitate as much as we can but please allow us to regulate the border. We know the closure alone is not the answer to terrorism but we expect reciprocity and respect for our concerns that we have continuously conveyed to the Kabul government”. We urge Afghans to become our advocates. Mr. Zubair Motiwala, President PAJCI and Mr. Ahmed Shah Yarzada, Director PAJCCI (Afghanistan) told the Minister that they have been conveying a consistent message in all the meetings – Please segregate business from politics, do not let business become the victim of politics – reiterating again that businessmen and traders are suffering millions of dollars loses on a daily basis and that a large numbers of containers with perishable items such as poultry, eggs, vegetables and fruits are stuck since 17 February and today is the 25th day of the closure, both the Governments need to come to resolution on stringent security measures, but the borders should be opened immediately, at least for the passage of these held up containers. They both provided Minister Dastgir with facts and figures of the real loses so far.

The Minister said that he will convey the “real loses” to all those who matter. He said the Afghan government and security agencies must answer our concerns on security: “our security agencies are awaiting reciprocity from Afghan agencies, please as business leaders approach your Government and tell them to show some willingness to discuss this issue of opening of border, as it is unlikely to happen unilaterally”.



Dastgir explained that, while all Pakistanis feel the pain from violence in Afghanistan, it is not life as usual any more. We will have to move away from historical notions on border in favor of a pragmatic approach as much as elsewhere. That is why Pakistan continues to beef up major crossing points on the 2560 km long border regardless whether Afghanistan engages in the dialogue or not.

He told the visiting Afghan delegation to please stop looking at Pakistan through the Indian or US prism. Unless we conduct the relationship bilaterally, and until Kabul stops advocating for India, it will be hard to move out of the current stand-off. Diplomacy rests on rational needs and not emotions or historical notions, he further added. A rational discourse, he said, will certainly help suffering Afghan and Pakistani people and traders at large.

Pakistan remains committed to bilateral dialogue on security and economics. And we are still waiting for the Kabul call on many meetings on issues such as the revised draft on Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) or Joint Economic Commission (JEC). The ball is in Kabul's court, Minister Dastgir said. Mr. Zubair Motiwala, head of the delegation and President PAJCCI presented the Minister with the "Joint Declaration" of the Pak-Afghan Joint Committee on business/Trade.

MEDIA DISSEMINATION

As part of the media dissemination campaign of the project, the fifth PAJC meeting was well received by the TV and print media with several TV shows, op-eds and extensive press coverage. This was further complemented by the social media based dissemination where live-blogging of the discussions sessions was an important dissemination tool.

Articles/Op-eds

DNA News	13 March, 2017
VOA News	13 March, 2017
The News	14 March, 2017
The News	14 March, 2017
The Daily Times	14 March, 2017
The Express Tribune	15 March, 2017
The News	15 March, 2017

The Friday Times	17 March, 2017 (Imtiaz Gul)
The Express Tribune	20 March, 2017 (Tahir Khan)
CRSS Blog	20 March, 2017

TV Shows

All the TV shows with the PAJC delegates are available on the CRSS website through the link below:

<http://crss.pk/beyond-boundaries/beyond-boundaries-ii/the-fifth-meeting-of-pakistan-afghanistan-joint-committee-on-business-trade-meeting-in-islamabad/tv-shows/>



CRSS Web Preview:



9. SIXTH MEETING OF PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT COMMITTEE

A seven member Afghan delegation arrived from Kabul on March 27, 2017 for the sixth and final meeting of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) as part of CRSS-WPSO Pak-Afghan track 1.5/II project Beyond Boundaries Phase II. The meeting was held from March 27 – 31, 2017, in Islamabad.

The Afghan delegation members included Mr. Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, Head of Executive Council of the High Peace Council; Ms. Elay Ershad, Member of Parliament; Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Commerce & Trade Minister; Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, Member of Parliament; Mr. Rahim Danish, Senior Journalist; Mr. Mirwais Yasini, Member of Afghan Parliament and First Deputy Speaker, Lower House of Afghan Parliament; and Ms. Humira Saqib, from WPSO. The Pakistani side included Dr. Shoaib Suddle, former IG Police and Federal Tax



Ombudsman; Mr. Qazi Humayun, former Ambassador; Mr. Mian Sanaullah, former Ambassador; Mr. Tahir Khan, Senior Journalist; Ms. Ayesha Gulalai Wazir, Member of National Assembly- PTI, and Lt. Gen. (Retd) Asif Yasin Malik, former Defense Secretary. Apart from the two delegations, International Regional expert, Ms. Anne Wilkens, former Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan and Afghanistan also participated and acted as the Chair for the PAJC dialogue.

During the first two days of the workshop, the members of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee held three dialogue sessions during which they discussed important bilateral issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan such as transit trade, security, refugees, health, media, and opportunities for cooperation in

education, sports, arts and culture. In the third session they reviewed policy recommendations of the previous meetings of Beyond Boundaries II and unanimously drafted a joint declaration.

Chairing the opening session, Ms. Ann Wilkens welcomed both delegations and opened the floor by putting forth two ways of looking at a track 1.5/2 group; 1) Focus on the main problems between the two countries; 2) Have an impact on smaller matters such as the exchange of artists, students, sports and so on.

Afghan delegate Abdul Hakeem Mujahid was of the view that given the shared culture and religion, Pakistan and Afghanistan should have a very strong relationship. He was also optimistic about the meeting in London between Hanif Atmar and Sartaj Aziz convened by the British Government to break the ice between Pakistan and Afghanistan. He stated that the border issue is beyond the capacity of the track 1.5/2 PAJC group and hence this group should not debate on it. However, he also stated that the international stakeholders can play a key role for regional peace.



Dr. Shoaib Suddle from Pakistan side stated that the two neighbors have faced insurmountable difficulties in their bilateral history and have no option but to deal with each other to move forward towards peace. The Beyond Boundaries' meetings over the last two years have extensively discussed the issue of the Durand Line which was not the mandate of this forum and not something the two delegations could decide the fate of. What this group could do, he said, was contribute, urge the both Governments and improve bilateral understanding.

On the issue of regulating the Pak-Afghan border, Lt. Gen. Yasin Malik explained that there were two aspects of border between the two countries; regulated border and unregulated border. The regulated border has been functioning since



1947 facilitating smooth bilateral trade at Torkham and Chaman border sites. The issue lies with the unregulated part of the Pak-Afghan border which is used by tribes living on both sides to meet with their families. He stated that a regulatory mechanism is being made at the moment which will greatly reduce the problems of the tribesmen living there.

Afghan delegate Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Trade & Commerce Minister, raised the issue of two pending documents that require re-negotiations; the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and an amendment in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA). He also reminded the group that there was another agreement called the “Bilateral Transport Agreement” between Pakistan and Afghanistan which was never signed. Whatever transport that is taking place between Pakistan and Afghanistan at the moment, he stated, was ad hoc.



Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, an Afghan Parliamentarian, urged the group to use the Beyond Boundaries forum to raise the issues of the stranded people on both sides.

Another Afghan delegate, Mr. Mirwais Yasini, First Deputy Speaker, appreciated Pakistan's cooperation in terms of education. He compared Pakistan's scholarships for Afghan students with those of Indian scholarships and stated Pakistan's were the best for two reasons; 1) Pakistan offers scholarships in good universities to Afghan students and 2) the standard of teaching in Pakistan is better than India. He stressed that there should be more cultural music exchanges. He noted that sports was a great dimension the two countries could come closer through, adding that Afghanistan learned cricket from Pakistan and that the Afghan cricket team was doing very well now. Hence, he stated, the two countries need to increase activities in education, sports and music.

At the end of third sessions on day two, the group discussed at length various recommendations from the previous five meetings of the PAJC as well as some new recommendations. They appointed one member each on both sides to draft the final recommendations which were then shared with the Chair, she read out to both the groups, and after consultations both the groups unanimously adopted the joint declaration of policy recommendations.

The visit also included strategic high level government meetings. On March 28, the PAJC members met with Chairman Senate, Mr. Raza Rabbani along with seven other Senators at the Parliament House. They met with the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Mr. Sartaj Aziz at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 30. Later that day the group met with the National Security Advisor Lt. Gen (retd) Nasser Khan Janjua at Prime Minister's Secretariat. During the meetings the Joint Declaration was presented and shared with these senior Government officials.

In addition, the programme also included visits to the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) on March 29, 2017, and Quaid-e-Azam University on March 30, 2017 for lectures by PAJC members on "Pak –Afghan Relations: Explaining Perspectives". These university visits were aimed to reach out to youth and academia, to counter misperceptions about each other and improve their understanding on the Pak-Afghan bilateral relations.

The visit also included media interactions of PAJC members with exclusive talk shows on Khyber TV, Capital TV, Dawn TV, and AAJ TV (covering the debate at

Qaud-i-Azam University) discussing Pak-Afghan bilateral relations. The sixth meeting and the visit of PAJC concluded with CRSS hosting a Pak-Afghan musical evening “Celebrating Culture Beyond Boundaries”, at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) on 30 March.

STRATEGIC SIDELINE MEETINGS

Meeting with Chairman Senate, Mr. Raza Rabbani

On March 28, the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Committee members met with Chairman Senate, Mr. Raza Rabbani along with seven other senators; Mr. Mushahid Hussain, Ms. Sehar Kamran, Mr. Daud Khan Achakzai, Mr. Usman Khan Kakar, Mr. Shahi Syed, Mr. Azam Khan Musakhail and Mr. Baaz Muhammad Khan, at the Parliament House. CRSS Executive Director Mr. Imtiaz Gul briefed the participants on the Center’s Pak- Afghan track II project Beyond Boundaires, progress made during the six meetings held so far, objective of the Beyond Boundaries project- to improve Pak-Afghan bilateral relations- and the purpose of the visit of the PAJC members.

The Chairman welcomed the joint delegation and appreciated the efforts of CRSS for organizing the track II dialogue to ease tensions between the two countries and enhance people-to-people contacts. He stated that both countries have joint historical and cultural linkages, shared objectives of national and regional





security and trade which will hopefully help the two overcome their bilateral issues. Referring to the recent dialogue between representatives of the two countries in London, he said, “Some progress on a positive note has been made.” The Chairman stated that the recent decision by the government to open the border was a welcome step and that peace in the region was of mutual benefit for both countries. He stressed that Pakistan strongly supported Afghan-owned and Afghan-led efforts to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan, whether at a bilateral, international or national level. In addition, the differences between Pakistan and Afghanistan can be dealt across the table and addressed. Stating that “we can feel your pain and concern when there are acts of terrorism in your country,” he said Pakistan was an equal victim of terrorism and that joint efforts were required to root out this menace.



He also called to attention that there was a great need to give parliamentary diplomacy a chance to bring the two sides closer to each other and work together for peace and prosperity of the two peoples. He advised the Afghan parliamentary delegates to put together a Friendship Group when they go back to their Parliament. Such a Friendship Group, he said, already exists in the Pakistani Senate and National Assembly. "Parliamentary diplomacy is a very useful tool to open a logjam. Such was seen two weeks ago when ECO summit was hosted in Pakistan. After the Pakistan-hosted SAARC conference was cancelled following the refusal of certain countries to attend it, the Pakistan-hosted ECO summit in Islamabad had representatives from 23 countries including Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, which had refused to come in the SAARC," he said.

In response to the welcome address by Chairman Senate, both Afghan and Pakistani delegations shared their views. From the Afghan side, Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, Member of Parliament, stated that over the last two years, the PAJC members using the Beyond Boundaries forum had reached many consensuses incorporating demands from both countries and now they were looking forward to their implementation and strengthening the relations between the two Muslim countries. Mr. Mirwais Yasini, Member of Parliament and former Deputy Speaker stated that while the challenges were greater and complicated, "the current and the future generations will not forgive us if we are not able to correct and reform things." In this regard, Mr. Yasini urged his brothers and sisters to step up their efforts.

Another Afghan Member of Parliament and delegate, Ms. Elay Ershad stated that when Afghans cook food, they put Pakistani *masala* (spices) in it. "We don't want



that masala to be taken away from us. The closure of the border took us far away from each other,” she said. Mr. Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, Head of Executive Council of the High Peace Council in Afghanistan, stated “We do believe that there’s a need to listen to each other, help each other and respect each other.” From the Pakistani side, Dr. Shoaib Suddle, former Federal Tax Ombudsman told Chairman Senate, “We have been in this exercise with Beyond Boundaries since the last two years trying to build bridges. We have been going to Afghanistan and they’ve been coming here. This is the last meeting and we hope that the governments do something now in terms of trade, education, scholarships and cultural exchanges. There is a need of required will.” Adding to Mr. Shoaib Suddle’s statement, Mr. Mian Sanaullah, former Ambassador stated, “This is the second phase. We hope the government will at least accept, help promote or perhaps implement some of the recommendations. We think our recommendations are good enough for implementation. They are largely small steps and very practical.”

Mr. Qazi Humayun, former Ambassador stated, “When governments talk, they keep their fixed positions. When informal groups such as ours talk, they can reach a middle consensus.” He also commended the efforts of CRSS and Mr. Imtiaz Gul for creating such a platform for dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mr. Aized Ali, Project Director of Beyond Boundaries added that the dialogue had been expanded to the youth and academia through visits to leading universities in both the countries, and media for dissemination to the general public and for more civil society contact in both countries. Former Ambassador of



Sweden to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Ms. Ann Wilkens stated that her role on the forum was as an international facilitator and that she was aware of the extent of affection that lay between the two countries.

In response to the views shared by the Afghan and Pakistani delegations, Senator Sehar Kamran extended a warm welcome. She said her recent visit to Kabul had been very fruitful, especially when she saw Afghan women in the Afghan Parliament, adding that “We look forward to strengthening relations between the two countries.”

Senator Mushahid Hussain stated that the two countries had been getting exploited for the past ten years and there was a need for a new opening. “Now as sovereign states, we should ensure that we work on our brotherly bond and not allow our soils to be used for terrorism and work towards peace, security and stability.” He also added, “We look forward to seeing you in Kabul soon *InshaAllah* (God willing).”

Senator Shahi Syed stated that when 3.5-4 million Afghan refugees came to Pakistan, Pakistan provided for their health, education and refuge. Today, unfortunately, they are not thankful to Pakistan and do not recognize that India is Pakistan’s enemy, he said. It is to create a rift between Pakistan and Afghanistan that India has on purpose lowered the price of air tickets to India for Afghans to Indian Rs. 4000. He also said that he believed that a happy and stable Afghanistan meant a happy and stable Pakistan and that there was a need for both governments to sit together and discuss their bilateral issues. Senator Baaz Muhammad Khan was of the view that the solution lay in negotiations and discussions between both sides.

The chairman concluded by saying that he looked forward to building on this contact and was optimistic about Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, adding that the current tensions were only a bad phase between the two countries. Congratulating Mr. Imtiaz Gul and CRSS on the Beyond Boundaries initiative, he stated that he was perturbed that this was the last meeting and hoped that the organization would continue this excellent initiative.

Meeting with Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Advisor to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs

The members of Pak-Afghan PAJC met with the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz on March 30, 2017, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). Other senior officials of MoFA also attended the meeting.

Mr. Sartaj Aziz underlined Pakistan's counter terrorism efforts and its resolve to not let its soil be used against any other country. "I am convinced that peace in Afghanistan is critical to peace in Pakistan", he said while adding that peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is in Pakistan's interest.



Pakistan is facing a very serious situation and has suffered a lot at the hands of terrorism. "Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to and finalized a coordination mechanism to combat terrorism and fight the common enemy", Aziz said while adding that the two sides should focus on implementation of the agreed mechanism for engagement to address the issues of security, counter-terrorism and border management.

The trust cannot be restored unless there is a bilateral interaction between two countries. He said that the multilateral forums are a great opportunity to break



the ice and reduce tensions between the two countries. Pakistan has achieved success in counter-terrorism than any other country and its efforts must be acknowledged. Pakistan is making all out efforts against terrorism and to make sure that its land is not used against any other country. Aziz appreciated the Track II project by CRSS, saying: “The track 2 initiatives such as Beyond Boundaries have proven usefulness in difficult situations; especially when the relations at the official level are not good”.

Reaffirming Pakistan’s commitment to continued efforts and support for lasting peace in Afghanistan, Aziz underlined the importance of politically negotiated settlement under an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process for resolution of Afghan conflict.



The visiting Afghan delegates said that they wanted peaceful Afghanistan as it had impact on both sides. The border closure hurts both Pakistan and Afghanistan. It negatively affects both countries and can escalate tensions. The discussions about the fate of Afghanistan should be inclusive. They also said that Pakistan can play a vital role for solution to the Afghan problem. They also thanked Pakistan for showing exceptional hospitality in hosting the Afghan refugees. “Both countries should start from common grounds and take small but meaningful steps forward”, they stressed. The Afghan delegation requested Aziz that it would be an important goodwill gesture if the he can invite his counterpart or the Commerce Minister to hold the overdue APTTCA and JEC meetings in Islamabad instead of Kabul. Aziz agreed that the meetings are very important to start the government level dialogue again, but questioned them

that if the Afghanistan Government is ready to reciprocate the gesture, adding: “It will look very embarrassing for us if we extend the invitation and they decline and do not come”.



The PAJC delegation stressed on the need for continuous people to people contacts for strengthening Pak-Afghan bilateral ties.

Dr. Shoaib Suddle, the head of the Pakistan delegation presented and shared the joint declaration of final policy recommendations of “Beyond Boundaries”.

Meeting with National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. (retd) Nasser Khan Janjua

On March 30, 2017, the PAJC members met with National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. (retd) Nasser Khan Janjua at the Prime Minister’s Secretariat. He warmly welcomed the Afghan delegates and said it was his “privilege to meet his sisters and brothers from Afghanistan.” He urged the delegation to feel free to discuss anything with him and said it was his second interaction with the group through the CRSS’ Beyond Boundaries project.

The NSA stated that the two countries are passing through difficult times but they have “a common future and belong to and with each other”. Hence, he said, “Pakistan and Afghanistan – the two of us – can really redefine and recast our future.” The primary aspect through which the two countries can shape their future is through creating a trade corridor via Afghanistan and ultimately reach other parts of the world, such as the Central Asian States. For this dream to become a great success, he emphasized on a stable Afghanistan, adding that “If Afghanistan is not peaceful, Pakistan is not peaceful and vice versa.”



He also stressed on the need to sit together to find a collective solution to Pakistan and Afghanistan’s bilateral problems. He commended the Afghan delegates for travelling to Pakistan to engage in constructive discussions and stated that the Pakistanis extended the same warm wishes for the Afghans. He reiterated that the two governments’ need to sit together and engage in a direct dialogue which is face to face rather and urged that they should not talk through the media.

Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, Afghan former Deputy Minister for Trade, thanked the NSA for arranging the time to meet with the PAJC members and said he was pleased to hear his heartwarming, candid and welcoming remarks. Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, Afghan Parliamentarian, talked about the 32 day border closure which, he said, had ignited an extremely adverse reaction in Afghans even if it was for Pakistan’s security reasons. Closing the border for 3 to 4 days, Mr. Khalid Pashtoon said, would have been understandable; however, closing it for such a long period has only resulted in more negativity among the Afghans.

In response to the NSA’s welcome speech, Mr. Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, Advisor of Afghanistan’s High Peace Council, stated that the NSA’s words were very prudent, kind and warm; however, he said, the Afghans would appreciate if he

can put them into action. He added that the Afghans were very grateful to Pakistan for hosting the Afghan refugees for 35 years and have always honored it. However, now the Afghans have begun to even forget this great hospitality shown by Pakistan. "Something went wrong somewhere," he pointed out.



Ms. Elay Ershad, Afghan Parliamentarian, stated that she felt honored and was grateful to the NSA for calling her his sister and hoped that this Track 2 initiative by CRSS would be taken forward by the media and for more people to people contact.

Ms. Anne Wilkens, former Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan and Afghanistan, thanked CRSS for inviting her for the two meetings of the Beyond Boundaries initiative. Having served in both the countries, she said she found both countries dear to her. Sitting away from the two countries in Sweden now, she said she found it worrisome to see the present relationship between the two neighbors, especially as they are both capable of gaining so much by just working together. She added that she felt very encouraged after chairing the Beyond Boundaries sessions and interacting with the PAJC members, and commended the efforts of the group in trying to promote partnerships and more people to people contacts. She said that by working with the PAJC members for the two dialogues, she was hopeful that such initiatives could result in improving the bilateral relations between the two countries.

After hearing the delegates' positions, the NSA stated that war was not the solution and it would not give anyone any victory. What is required rather is an investment in peace through reconciliation. He added that the Taliban was the Afghans' issue as they were their cousins and brothers and urged that the

Afghans reconcile with them and also free Pakistan of the blame of supporting them. He further clarified that Pakistan has nothing to do with the Taliban and the Afghans should ask them regarding it. “They don’t belong with us. We only played our role by bringing Taliban on the table to honor President Ghani when he visited to meet the Government of Pakistan and requested us to play a reconciliation role,” he said.

He went on to say that this perpetual war has to come to an end. Seeing that no reconciliation is taking place between the Taliban and the Government of Afghanistan, it seems that it doesn’t suit some powers. “My biggest request to you and your government is to please reconcile with Taliban. We are worried for you. They have control over your rural and border areas. They will upsurge their violence this year starting with your spring offensive and unfortunately, we will be blamed again?” he asked.

Regarding Afghan refugees, the NSA stated that Pakistan has always remained warm hearted with its arms open. Both Pakistanis and Afghan refugees have grown up together, eaten together and studied together. However, now the issue of terrorism has become mixed up with the refugees and this provides for space to terrorists to regroup and attack the Afghans as well as the Pakistanis. “We have to rise beyond this bitterness, conflict and the blame-game to save the future of our children. The people of Afghanistan should rise and play a political role to oppose the war and to call for reconciliation,” he concluded while adding, “Blood is thicker than water and our forefathers were the same.”

As a final note, Mr. Khalid Pashtoon from Afghanistan stated that the Afghan delegation will pass on his message to the Afghan Government and the Afghan people as coming from a top Pakistani government official.



The PAJC members presented and shared with NSA Janjua the final joint declaration of policy recommendations of “Beyond Boundaries” 6th PAJC meeting.

UNIVERSITY VISITS

Visit to National University of Science & Technology (NUST), Islamabad

As part of outreach and university interaction planned for the group, two members each from the PAJC visited the National University of Science & Technology (NUST) on March 29, 2017. The Pakistani speakers were Mr. Qazi Humayun, former Ambassador; and Ms. Ayesha Gulalai, Member of National Assembly, while the Afghan speakers were Mr. Khalid Pashtoon and Ms. Elay Ershad, both Members of Parliament. The four speakers spoke on the theme: “Pak-Afghan Bilateral Relations: Explaining Perspectives.” The program was



arranged in collaboration with the Centre for International Peace & Stability (CIPS) at the NUST Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies (NIPCONS) Department. CRSS Executive Director Mr. Imtiaz Gul represented CRSS.

Dr. Tughral Yamin, the Associate Dean of the CIPS, welcomed the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Committee speakers. Mr. Imtiaz Gul thanked Mr. Tughral Yamin for arranging the forum and provided a brief overview of the project Beyond Boundaries which, he stated, was focused on increasing people to people contacts between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He told the audience that this was the 12th and the last meeting after two years of continued dialogue on the forum

of Beyond Boundaries between the two countries. The purpose of these university lectures, he explained, was to reach out to young future leaders and faculty members in both Pakistan and Afghanistan as they are the future multipliers and explain the respective narratives of Afghans and Pakistanis to them.

There were about of 35-40 students and faculty members present in the audience.



The session commenced with short introductions of the distinguished speakers from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, Member of Afghan Parliament, stated that he was pleased to be in one of the advanced universities of Pakistan and that the higher number of girls in attendance in the auditorium as compared to boys showed the culture of education in Pakistan. He told the audience that he was here to improve and understand the two brotherly nations.

Ms. Ayesha Gulalai, Member of National Assembly, spoke from Pakistan side. She warmly welcomed the Afghan guest speakers for visiting Pakistan at a time of such tense situation and stated that she had a great meeting when she visited Kabul. She said that the fact that the two governments have failed to have a structured dialogue shows the lack of will in both governments to improve relations with each other. Yet, she said, she was a Member of the Parliament from Pakistan and Mr. Khalid Pashtoon and Ms. Elay Ershad, Members of Parliament from Afghanistan, had come together in these meetings to try to do what they can in their capacity for improving the relations between the two neighbors.



She thanked the British Government for arranging the meeting between the two countries' government representatives on March 15 but expressed her grief over the two countries' governments' inability to sit together to resolve issues themselves despite being two Muslim neighboring countries. She emphasized that there is a need to build trust between the two countries and that while Afghanistan could always use other routes for trade; Pakistan would always remain Afghanistan's shortest route to the ocean.

Speaking on the issue of terrorism, she stated that Daesh was a common threat to Afghanistan and Pakistan, which was even spreading to India now.

She concluded by saying, "You have a good friend like India but you also have a brother like Pakistan. We have made mistakes in the past. We don't believe in



‘strategic depth’ anymore.” She also said that the “Durand Line should also be accepted now.” She urged the two governments to immediately engage at the President and Prime Minister level, have their security establishment on their sides, and resolve their differences directly.

Ms. Elay Ershad, a Member of Afghan Parliament, spoke next from the Afghan side. Speaking of the Durand Line, she stated that when the two countries have the same culture, religion and language, there is no need to discuss the Durand Line but rather talk about the common threats, such as Daesh, and about building a common strategy. She also shared that she learned Urdu from Indian movies and Urdu *Ghazals* (songs) and ended her speech by reading out an Urdu poem by Allama Iqbal, a Pakistani poet.

Mr. Qazi Humayun, a former Ambassador, spoke last from the Pakistani side. He thanked the NUST Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies for arranging this interaction with students and faculty members. He stated that while Pakistan and Afghanistan never had a dull moment, they always handle their issues. Both countries are located in a strategic area as a result of which there are continued interests of great powers. He urged the two governments to sit together and resolve their bilateral problems.



The floor was then opened for discussion whereby several questions were raised by students and faculty members. Dr. Tughral Yamin, who was moderating the Questions & Answers session, recalled the days when he was an Army man and said that he never considered the Afghans as an enemy. He proposed that the best solution for the border issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan was to

establish a school every 10 kilometers along the 2,640 miles long border. He also revealed that there was an offer from his university, NUST, of 5 fully funded scholarships for Afghan students which was made in 2016 but the Afghans at the time did not take it up. He said these five vacancies are available still now.

A question raised in the audience by a faculty member and posed to the Afghan members was; “Being an ex-Army man, I feel that the only problem between Pakistan and Afghanistan is India. It is not Durand Line or terrorism. What are your views?” Mr. Khalid Pashtoon responded by saying that there were few reasons behind the increased activity of India in Afghanistan, adding that “the Afghans are not very happy about that”. Referring to Ms. Ayesha Gulalai’s comment regarding ‘strategic depth’, he said “the strategic depth created the whole problem even though it is gone now.”

Nevertheless, he went on to say, Pakistan gave the Afghan refugees a shelter, home, food and education and the Afghans will always remember this. The problem, in his view, came from the rise of Taliban who destroyed Kabul which used to be “the capital of civilization”. He also added that “if India is using our land to do terrorism in Pakistan or have a proxy war there, we are not accepting them. Adding to that, Ms. Elay Ershad stated, “We will never let any country, be it India or any other, to misuse our land.”



In response to a question regarding the issue of the illegal trade of drugs in Afghanistan, Ms. Elay Ershad stated that drugs is such a huge problem in Afghanistan that even the Taliban freely use drugs and the *Mullahs* (religious teachers) do not term it as illegal. “They think it’s kind of an income, so let’s do it,” she said. Replying to other questions from the audience, Ms. Ayesha Gulalai stated that she was a strong advocate of good ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Apart from sheltering the Afghan brothers and sisters in Pakistan for

many years and still continuing to host many, she said Pakistan should still reach out to the people of Afghanistan like India is doing. The issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan, she said, should not be resolved through a military solution but through dialogue. While bureaucracy continues to be a hindrance, she proposed that sports were a constructive medium and one of the best solutions to the end of Talibanization.

Replying to a question about CPEC, Mr. Khalid Pashtoon said that when Afghans heard about the 48 bn project between China and Pakistan, they were excited that they would also be able to benefit from it now. He said same is the case with TAPI; when it will materialize, everyone will benefit from it. However, what is first required for such development to materialize is friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

Dr. Tughral Yamin, in his concluding remarks, thanked the distinguished PAJC members and stressed on the need for building more bridges between Pakistan and Afghanistan through more people to people contact. As an advice to his Pakistani fellowmen and women, he added “Please treat Afghanistan as a younger brother.”

A university survey was also administered with the participating students and faculty members – post the lectures by PAJC members – to gauge the improvement in their perceptions on the other side; understanding of the challenges of Pak-Afghan relations, and awareness about the socio-political conditions in both countries.

Visit to Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad

As part of outreach and university interaction planned for the group, two members each from the PAJC also visited the Quaid-i-Azam University on March



30, 2017. The Pakistani speakers were Mr. Qazi Humayun, former Ambassador; and Ayesha Gulalai, Member of National Assembly, while the Afghan speakers were Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Minister of Commerce and Trade, and Ms. Elay Ershad, Member of Parliament. Mr. Aized Ali, Project Director Beyond Boundaries represented the CRSS.

The four speakers spoke on the theme, “Pak-Afghan Bilateral Relations: Explaining Perspectives” which was followed by an interactive session between the youth including male and female students and academia at the School of Political Science and International Relations auditorium at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad. The programme was hosted and moderated by Rehman Azhar, a renowned TV anchor who hosts the Islamabad Tonight with Rehman Azhar show on Aaj News. The show was aired on Aaj News TV on April 2, 2017. There were more than 90 students and faculty members in attendance, many of whom were Afghan nationals while 60% of those in attendance were female.

Rehman Azhar opened the show by discussing the unprecedentedly escalating tensions between the two Muslim neighbors. He referred to the recent wave of terrorism in Pakistan in February and the allegations that ensued as a result between the two countries culminating in the closure of the Pak-Afghan border. This was an unusual development between the two countries where the trade



stopped with trucks filled with goods stranded on both sides. While both the governments instantly realized closing the border was not a good approach and the border was opened recently, the relations between the two countries are still tense.

Following this backgrounder, the host of the show put forward four questions before audience and the PAJC speakers; 1) How should we move forward in the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan to improve them? 2) Apart from security, what other fields can the two countries cooperate in with each other? 3) How can we mitigate the atmosphere of increasing trust deficit between the two countries? 4) How can the negative perceptions of each other between the Pakistani and Afghan people be ended? He introduced the distinguished PAJC members.

In response to a question by the host, Ms. Elay Ershad stated that she was very happy to see her Afghan brothers and sisters studying alongside Pakistani students in Pakistan. She went on to say that building friendship between the nations of the two countries would not be very difficult. The foremost important thing, she stated, is that both governments and politicians acknowledge the existence of terrorism and if they will both whole-heartedly make efforts to eliminate terrorists, this will prove to be in favor of both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Ms. Ayesha Gulalai welcomed the Afghan brothers and sisters in the programme and applauded the efforts of the Afghan members of the PAJC for visiting Pakistan during such a tense time to discuss the issues affecting the relations between the two countries. She went on to say that had these discussions been



happening at the high level between the two governments, the situation would perhaps not have remained as tense as it is.

Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, stressed that unless trust is restored between the two countries, they cannot build a relationship based on friendship and cooperation. To generate trust, it is required that both countries are honest with each other and extend sincerity towards each other. He said security was certainly an important aspect as the threat of terrorism exists both for Afghanistan and Pakistan. He said "I always believe that if there would be fire in Afghanistan, its heat will reach Pakistan. There is no doubt in that and we have been observing this since not only the last 4 years but rather the last 15 years." He further emphasized that intelligence cooperation is also very important to defeat terrorism. Trade is another very important field, he said. "In 2009, Pakistan's export to Afghanistan was at US\$2.5bn which dropped to US\$1.5bn last year, and I dread that it will fall below even US\$1bn this year," he said. As a result of diminishing trade, he said, there is also a loss of at least 1 to 2 lacs of jobs.

Since the last three to four years, there has been a growing negative mentality in the Afghan people. To prove that their mentality is wrong, it is important to go towards positive things, he said. That is why when speaking to the media or young students in Pakistan, he speaks Urdu so he is able to get his message heard by majority of the people. He ended by saying that "I wish to tell both the nations that we cannot live without each other. Hence, we must cooperate."

Mr. Qazi Humayun, stated that the issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan have become, unfortunately, more complicated now. The distrust has increased a lot. However, the two countries are so strongly connected that when the trade had stopped for a month, the prices of tomatoes and chickens were low because of an ample supply. While as soon as the border reopened, the prices peaked in Pakistan again, he said. He went on to say that Afghanistan is a landlocked country and while Afghanistan has many supply routes such as through the Chahbahar port in Iran, or via Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, the route via Karachi is the shortest for Afghanistan.

"Pakistan and Afghanistan's relations were so friendly at one time that 5 million refugees stayed in Pakistan and no one raised any voice or said that they were bothered by their presence. Everyone welcomed them. They still continue to live now and we think that if some Afghan refugees were sent back in an inhumane way than the entire civil society protests against their treatment," he said. However, he went on to say that certain harsh announcements made by the Afghan Government, too, have contributed to negatively affecting the mindsets of the people at the local level in both countries, adding that the media has also played a significant role in that. He also stated that there have been no hostile

statements made by the Government of Pakistan at any level. What Pakistan has been wishing to do is engage in talks with Afghanistan, he said.



The floor was then opened for questions whereby the audience raised several questions on the issues of security, terrorism, the Durand Line, Pashtunistan, Afghan refugees, their rehabilitation, the role of India in Afghanistan and the like. In response to a question, Ms. Ayesha Gulailai stated that Pakistan also needs to engage in development projects in Afghanistan like India. While Pakistan has developed two hospitals, the Government of Pakistan needs to engage in more development projects there, she said. Ms. Elay Ershad stated that the Afghan ministry responsible for reconstruction has been ordered by the Afghan Government to arrange for buildings for the refugees to settle in when they return to Afghanistan which has started now. However, she said the issues are those of the refugees' education and the language barrier. In response to another question, Mr. Mozammil Shinwari stated that the issue of the Durand Line can only be solved by the Pashtuns on both sides, not the governments or politicians.



During the visit, it was also revealed that more than 50% students from Afghanistan in Quaid-i-Azam University have been studying on scholarships provided by the Government of Pakistan.

The host of the show, Mr. Rehman Azhar, concluded the interactive session by saying that if the two countries sit together to talk, many of their issues will get solved. On the issue of terrorism, he stated, that if the relations between the two countries will continue to be tense, it will only benefit the terrorist groups on both sides.



A university survey was also administered with the participating students and faculty members – post the lectures by PAJC members – to gauge the improvement in their perceptions on the other side; understanding of the challenges of Pak-Afghan relations, and awareness about the socio-political conditions in both countries.

“CELEBRATING CULTURE BEYOND BOUNDARIES”: PAK- AFGHAN MUSICAL EVENING

The sixth meeting and the visit of PAJC concluded with CRSS hosting a Pak-Afghan musical evening “Celebrating Culture Beyond Boundaries”, at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) on 30 March. Federal Minister for Information, Ms. Mariam Aurangzeb was the Chief Guest. The musical evening had Afghan and Pakistan singers performing live along with traditional local musicians. The singers included Hamid Shidai from Afghanistan, Wisal Khayyal and Malalay Khan from Pakistan, who all sang in Dari, Pashto and Urdu. The singers enthralled an



audience of about 200 which included many Afghan citizens living here, Pakistanis from all walks of life and many diplomats, besides these both PAJC delegates attended the event which was also covered by many leading TV channels.

The Chief Guest, Minister Aurangzeb in her opening remarks said: “I think we all need to speak the language of music and love. I think to prosper and to be more progressive, peace is the only solution for the people of both the courtiers”.



Mirwais Yasini, Afghan Member of Parliament and former Deputy Speaker, as head of the Afghan delegation spoke after the Minister and said: “Our destiny is together. Politics might divide us, personal interests or regional interests of some countries might divide us. But, we will be together and we will remain together and we will die together”.

Afghan Parliamentarian, Ms. Elay Ershad in her concluding remarks said: “It is the 21st century when borders dividing the nations are being removed, but we plan to erect them further. But, these frontiers cannot separate us because no-one can divide brothers and sisters, and families”. Tea/ Coffee and refreshments were served before the performances. The crowd that attended the event greatly appreciated the performances and efforts by CRSS to organize a Pak-Afghan cultural musical initiative; a fusion of both cultures.





VOA Coverage of Cultural Event: <https://vimeo.com/211627565>

Media Dissemination

As part of the media dissemination campaign of the project, the sixth PAJC meeting was well received by the TV and print media with several TV shows, op-eds and extensive press coverage. This was further complemented by the social media based dissemination where live-blogging of the discussions sessions was an important dissemination tool.

Articles/ Op-eds

The Daily Times	08, April, 2017 (Imtiaz Gul)
Jang	05, April, 2017
Pakistan Observer	31 March, 2017
The Nation	31 March, 2017
APP News	30 March, 2017
Pakistan Today	31 March, 2017
The Daily Times	31 March, 2017
Radio Pakistan News	30 March, 2017
The Indian Express	30 March, 2017
Business Recorder	30 March, 2017
Radio Pakistan News	28 March, 2017
The Express Tribune	28 March, 2017
The Express Tribune	30 March, 2017

The Express Tribune	30 March, 2017 (Tahir Khan)
The Daily Times	30 March, 2017
The Frontier Post	30 March, 2017
Business Recorder	27 March, 2017
Asia & Pacific	26 March, 2017

TV Shows

All the TV shows with the PAJC delegates are available on the CRSS website through the link below:

<http://crss.pk/beyond-boundaries/beyond-boundaries-ii/the-sixth-meeting-of-the-pakistan-afghanistan-joint-committee/tv-shows/>

Radio Interviews by VOA:

<https://av.voanews.com/clips/VDE/2017/03/29/20170329-130000-VDE049-program.mp3>



10. UNIVERSITY SURVEYS – EVALUATION FOR IMPROVEMENT IN PERCEPTIONS

University surveys were also carried out during the university visits of PAJC members in 10 universities in major cities of Afghanistan and Pakistan - with the participating students and faculty members – to gauge the improvement in their perceptions on the other side; understanding of the challenges of Pak-Afghan relations, and awareness about the socio-political conditions in both countries. The university visits were part of the outreach for youth and academia and were part of all the visits except for the 5th PAJC dialogue on Business/Trade.

The metrics in the infographics below speak of the percentage improvement in the understanding, awareness and perceptions of youths from Pakistani and Afghan universities after sensitizing them on Pak-Afghan relations and their complexities, through series of lectures by both Afghan and Pakistan members of PAJC.

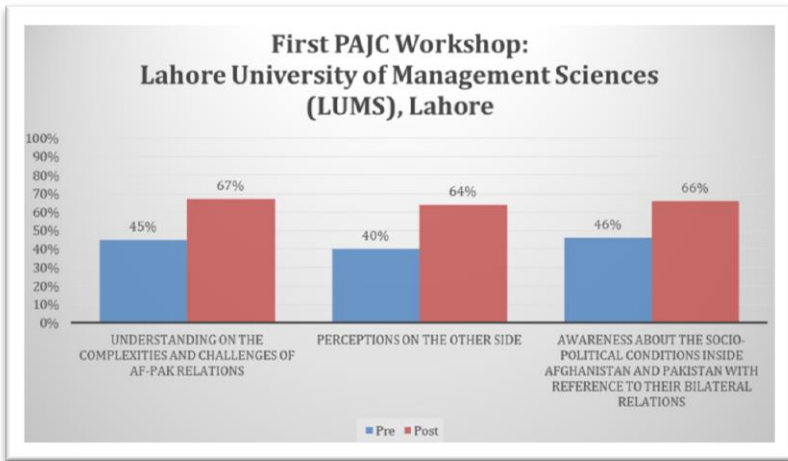
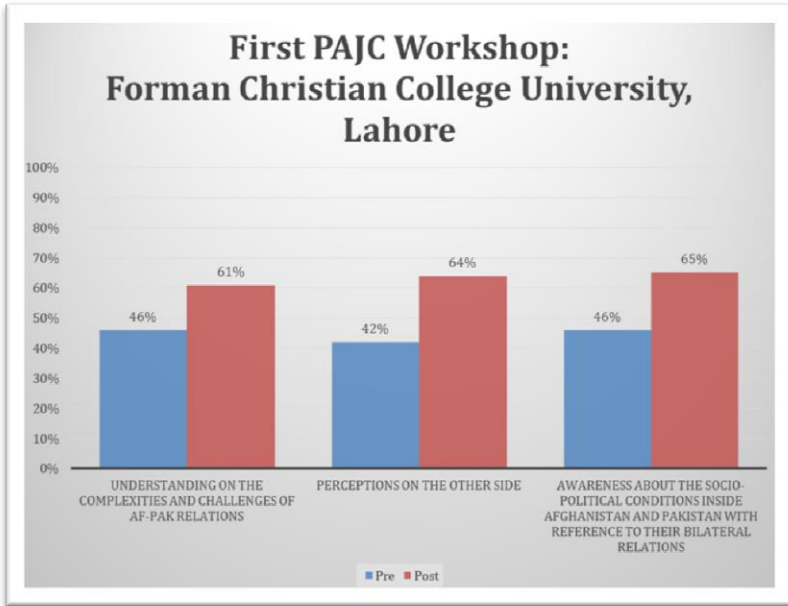
Survey Questions:

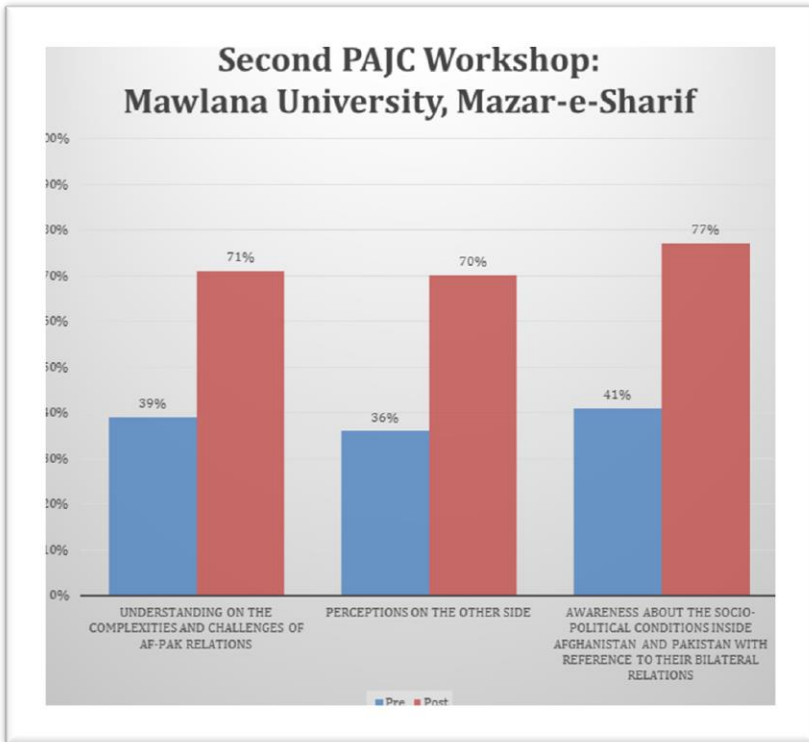
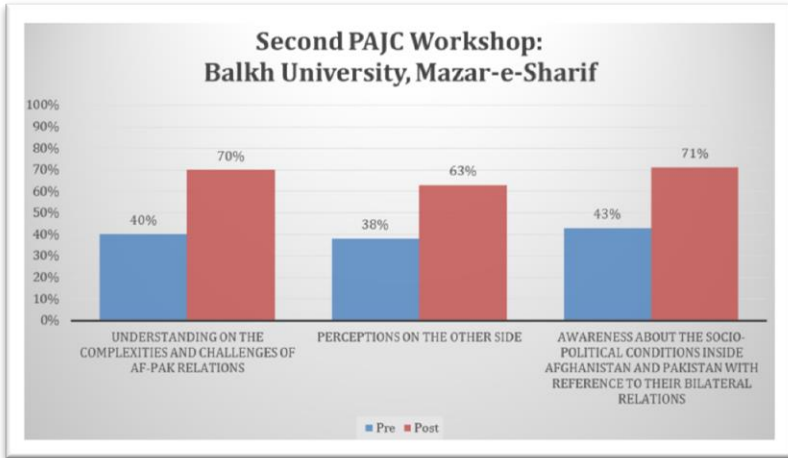
Question 01: On a scale of 1 – 100%, evaluate your understanding on the complexities and challenges of Af-Pak relations:

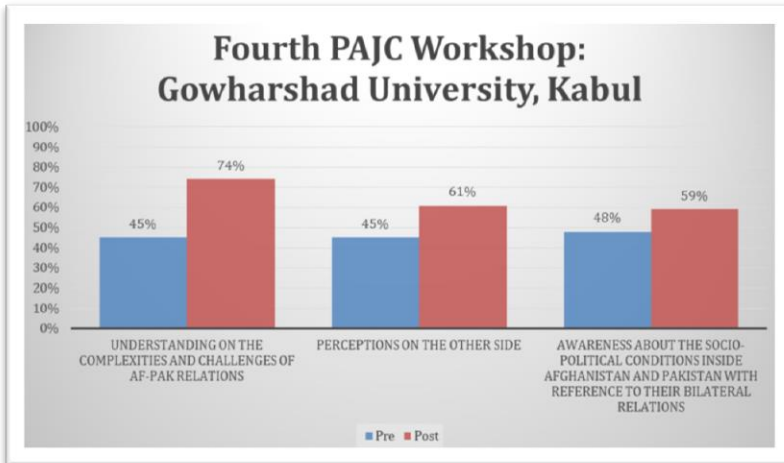
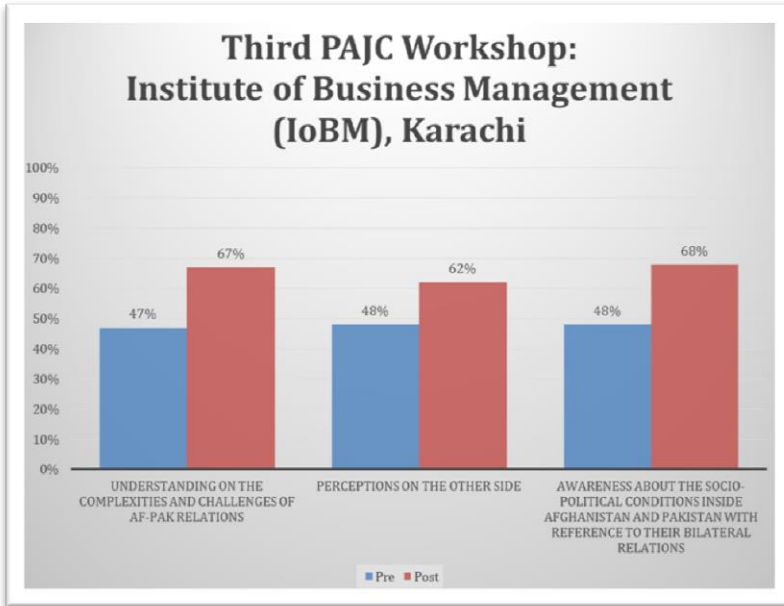
Question 02: On a scale of 1 – 100%, evaluate your perceptions on the other side:

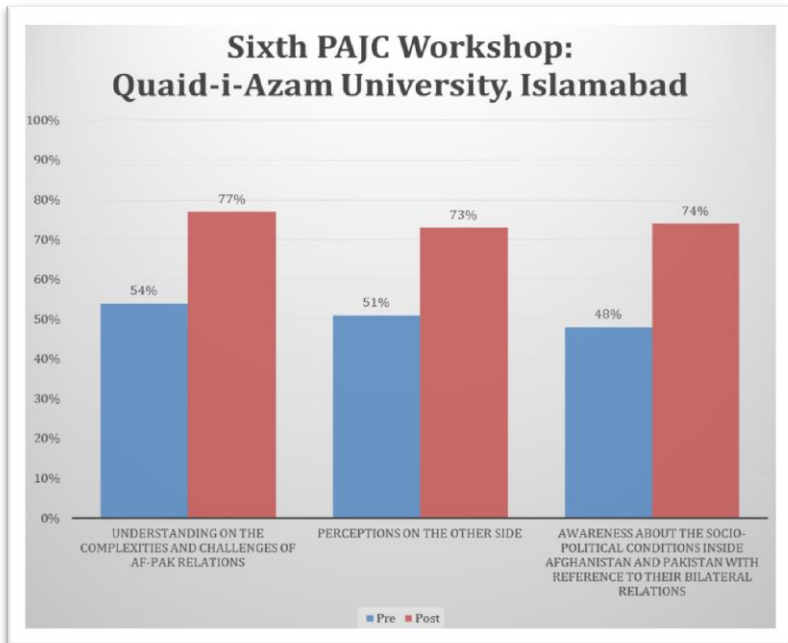
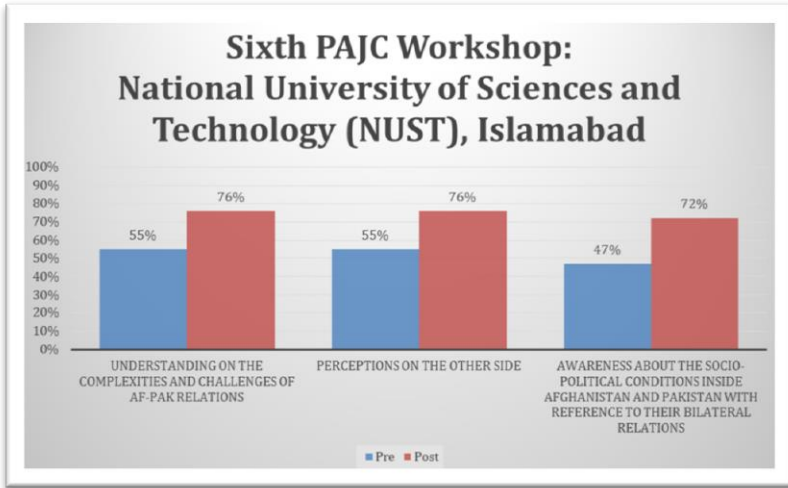
Question 03: On a scale of 1 – 100%, evaluate your awareness about the socio-political conditions inside Afghanistan and Pakistan with reference to their bilateral relations:

Infographics:









11. OVERALL PERCEPTION IMPROVEMENT IN UNIVERSITIES

- Survey question 1: Understanding on the Complexities and Challenges of Pak-Afghan Relations - Post lecture perception change of 71% against pre lecture perception of 45% - an overall improvement of 26%
- Survey Question 2: Perceptions on the Other Side: Post lecture perception change of 68% against pre lecture perception of 44% - an overall improvement of 24%
- Survey Question 3: Awareness about the Socio-Political Conditions inside Afghanistan and Pakistan with reference to their Bilateral Relations - Post lecture perception change of 70% against pre lecture perception of 49% - an overall improvement of 21%

12. JOINT DECLARATIONS/ POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF BEYOND BOUNDARIES II

Joint Declaration of Policy Recommendations – First Meeting of PAJC

Security and Peace

Peace and stability is the priority of the two nations. Disengagement, therefore, between the two governments is not desirable. The high-level exchanges should be resumed in order to promote dialogue at all levels to generate conducive environment for removing mistrust.

The Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) should be revived, and it should continue to encourage the Taliban to come to the negotiation table, to adhere to well-defined, measurable goals and steps indicating progress.

Terrorism is a common concern, which continues to affect families on both sides. Effective regulatory framework is needed to check movement of goods and people on both sides, beginning with the regulation of existing crossing points, and gradually extending it to other entry and exit points.

Media

Media plays a major role in shaping relations and public perceptions with far reaching implications. In this context, both sides supported facilitating exchanges of media people, and formulation of shared code of conduct to regulate media communication. Furthermore, ban/block on print/electronic media should be lifted. In response to official request by TV channels, PEMRA should give concessional landing rights to facilitate viewing of Afghan channels in Pakistan. Media should foster younger, more neutral, more progressive voices on-air to mitigate the mutual vitriol generated by brinkmanship and jingoism. Efforts should be made to encourage joint media productions by state and private TV channels to promote a culture of peace and understanding.

Visas

Both the governments should further simplify visa procedures and regulations for bona fide business people, students, and parliamentarians. Special counters

offering speedy processing should be set up in respective embassies to facilitate visas to medical tourists and disabled persons.

Education

In view of interest for education in Pakistan, it is strongly recommended that the government of Pakistan should increase the number of existing scholarship to Afghan students. Further, the grant of scholarships should be routed through ministry of higher education and concerned Pakistani authorities.

Culture and Sports

Both countries enjoy shared culture and enjoy similar sports. Keeping in view the positive contribution of sports and culture in promoting peace and stability, it was recommended that both the countries should organize cricket matches between national and regional teams. Also, the state TV channels, on reciprocity basis may telecast regularly cultural events.

Trade

The existing Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) renegotiation should not be delayed any further. In the meanwhile, in order to reduce cost of transit trading, custom processing should be expedited to promote connectivity among Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and central Asian republics. Trading in food items including perishable commodities should be treated as a priority.

Refugees

The repatriation of refugees should not entail unnecessary hardship and harassment. As announced by the government of Pakistan, refugees must be allowed to return with dignity and honor, with their belongings and assets. The government should consider the hard climate conditions in Kabul and therefore, should extend the deadline for repatriation to warmer months.

Joint Declaration of Policy Recommendations – Second Meeting of PAJC

The second meeting of the CRSS-WPSO project *Beyond Boundaries Phase II*, Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) was held at Mazar-e- Sharif on Monday 14 November, 2016.

The PAJC, reviewing the policy recommendations from the first meeting, deliberated in detail on the important issues of peace and security, refugees, media cooperation, movement of goods and people across the two countries, facilitation of trade, visa restrictions and educational scholarships, in particular.

The two groups of the PAJC agreed and approved the following policy recommendations:

Peace and Security

Both recognized that the relations between the two neighboring countries have deteriorated to the detriment of their respective interests. Both sides reiterated the desire for both governments to take concrete measures against movement of terrorists across the two countries, including the need to address the root causes of terrorism in the interest of peace and stability not only in the two countries but also in the region.

Refugees

Both sides took note of the recent episode of Sharbat Gula which necessitates the need to evolve a legal mechanism for the benefit of vulnerable Afghan refugees especially a) females/ spouses, b) children born in Pakistan, c) protection of their properties and movable assets as per law.

Both sides agreed to urge their respective governments to ensure repatriation of Afghan refugees with dignity and honor; particularly for Afghan investors, students, medical and other deserving categories.

Trade

The Afghan Pakistan Trade Transit Agreement (APTTA) is under negotiation between the respective ministries of the two countries. Both sides urged their respective governments for early finalization of the APTTA review.

Education/ Scholarship Programmes

Given the inadequate opportunities for girl students to seek higher education in Afghanistan, it was emphasized that at least 10% of the 3000 scholarships announced by the government of Pakistan at Brussels NATO summit for Afghan students may be earmarked for girl students. The Pakistan side agreed to explore

possibilities with private Pakistani universities of scholarships for Afghan students, particularly LUMS and Beacon House University for grant of 25 to 30 post graduate scholarships.

Pakistan funded projects in Afghanistan

The Pakistan group visited two under construction projects in Kabul, namely Jinnah Hospital, and Rehman Baba School and Hostel. The group agreed to take up issues related to timely completion of the projects with the Planning Commission of Pakistan. Furthermore, both sides agreed to lobby with the Afghan authorities that the medical equipment being imported for installation at Jinnah Hospital should be exempted from customs and other duties by the Afghan government.

Media, Art & Culture

The two sides welcomed and appreciated the conferment of Presidential Award “Mir Bacha Khan Milli Medal” to the Pakistani singer Mr. Khayal Mohammed for his services to promote the Pashtun music. They recommended that Pakistan government may consider honoring the legendary Afghan singer Nashinaz with an appropriate Award. Both sides agreed that efforts should be made to pursue with private channels of the two countries for opening of bureau offices, namely GEO/ARY and TOLO in the major cities of the two countries.

In order to improve bilateral relations it was recommended that:

- i) Youth exchange programmes – encouraging youth from both countries to be guests with Pakistani and Afghan families, as the case may be
- ii) Journalists’ short exchange programmes be organized for better understanding of each other’s perspective
- iii) Cultural programmes may be organised to facilitate participation of prominent singers like Rahim Shah, Zeb Bangash, Hadiqa Kayani, Farishta, Samaa, Wali Fateh Ali Khan, Ariana Saeed etc. Live Concert coverage in partnership with PTV and Tolo may also be arranged
- iv) Holding of bilateral series for the T20 –Matches between the two national teams

Joint Declaration of Policy Recommendations – Third Meeting of PAJC

The third meeting of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) was held at Karachi from January 07-12, 2017. The meeting was part of Beyond Boundaries II, a track I.5/II dialogue series undertaken by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) in partnership with the Afghan counterpart Women Peace and Security Organization (WPSO), to foster better understanding and cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Following points of convergence emerged during the meeting:

Peace and Security

It was recognized that the security situation between the two countries had continued to pose quite a challenge to the two countries. It was agreed that both sides needed to take steps in the interest of peace and stability.

Sports:

1. There should be exchange visits of national cricket teams, under 19 cricket teams, football teams, and taekwondo.
2. Pakistan and Afghanistan should explore cooperation opportunities for sports exchange programs, especially for girls. Universities on both sides may be approached in this regard.

Health:

3. Urge the Pakistani government to simplify and facilitate the visa process for health emergency cases, especially at Torkham and Spin Boldak. The Pakistan Embassy/ consulates in Afghanistan may consider offering special counters for health visas.
4. Police registration and the condition of a guarantor on emergency health visa may be waived or extended to 14 days.

Visa:

5. Both governments may facilitate visa for enhanced people to people interaction.

Education:

6. Academic scholarships for Afghan students for educational and vocational programs are recommended.
7. Governments and civil society of both countries may encourage hosting the students for exchange programs and home stays, particularly for the 15-19 age group. Pakistan Youth Hostels accommodation can be used to host for such programs.
8. Provincial governments in Pakistan may consider offering academic scholarships for Afghan students, including a 30% quota for female applicants.

Arts and Culture:

9. Scholarships for artists may be considered.
10. Urge both governments/ civil society to facilitate exhibitions/ expos of famous trade brands.
11. Encourage cultural and social programs on both sides. Pakistani institutes like National College of Arts (NCA) and National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) may be involved to explore the possibility of exchange programs.
12. Karachi Arts Council (KAC) offered to host 3-4 Afghan artists to perform and receive 2-week training at the KAC academy. The focal person for the purpose will be Mr. Asjad Bokhari for KAC and Ms. Asila Wardak for Women Peace and Security Organization (WPSO), Afghanistan.

Trade and Transit:

13. Called upon both governments to expedite convening of meetings of Joint Economic Commission (JEC) and Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Coordinating Authority (APTTCA).
14. As agreed between the two governments at the fifth APTTCA meeting, the Afghan government may forward the revised draft Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) to the government of Pakistan for finalization.
15. Both governments may help in creating an enabling environment for traders from both sides to promote bilateral trade.
16. We appreciate the work of Pakistan Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) in the promotion of bilateral trade between the two countries.

17. The Interaction between the chambers of both countries needs to be increased and Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) may hold the ECO Chamber of Commerce & Industries (ECO-CCI) meeting in Kabul this year, as already agreed.

Joint Declaration of Policy Recommendations – Fourth Meeting of PAJC

Beyond Boundaries Program is an attempt to create a dialogue opportunity for Afghan and Pakistani civil society actors & journalists to raise their voices on important emerging challenges that impact the people of both countries. The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee is comprised of 15 Afghan and Pakistani analysts & politicians and activists that have held meetings in Mazar e Sharif, Kabul, Lahore, Karachi, Hirat and Islamabad.

The group met in Kabul from 16-22 February 2017 in Kabul with policy makers and Afghan public & agreed on the following recommendations:

Afghan Refugees:

- The group members welcome the extension of the refugees stay until end of the 2017
- The group members lobbied for the supportive visa regime for Afghans living in Pakistan like businesses & those who have Pakistani or Afghan spouses and appreciate that the package has been approved
- The group urges the Pakistani civil society & journalists to promote humanitarian treatment of Afghan refugees by Pakistani nation & authorities as per the human rights principles & values.

Security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan:

- The Group members condemn the recent wave of attacks that have taken the lives of so many civilians in Pakistan Afghanistan.
- The group express concerns that the border closure will not eradicate the roots of terrorism and extremism and therefore, recommends that border should be made independent of the political happenings as it causes human misery
- The group urges both governments to channels their relations through diplomatic means and not military means
- Insurgency & terrorism is a challenge to both countries. We urge both governments officials to restrain from making public statements that mislead the sentiments of the public in both countries

- The group urges both the governments to address the issue of safe havens of militants hiding in either side of the border through credible evidence & not mere allegation

Bilateral Trade Relations:

- Access to sea is an international right of Afghanistan as a landlocked country and therefore, the group urges both governments to negotiate the terms and conditions of such access for Afghans to access sea
- Both groups urge their governments to renew talks & negotiations on the bilateral trade relations and hold the Ministerial Trade Committee meetings which has been held up for months at the earliest possible
- The group urges Afghanistan and Pakistani governments to speed up the negotiations and work on the Kunar electricity bridge project
- The group calls on the Pakistani government to address the challenges of the Afghan businesses in Pakistan

Pakistani and Afghan Prisoner's issue:

- The group urges both governments to provide fair trial and consular access to prisoners of both countries as per the international human rights standards

Joint Declaration of Policy Recommendations – Fifth Meeting of PAJC

A joint delegation from Pakistan and Afghanistan private sector met under the aegis of Beyond Boundaries - a CRSS-led project to discuss difficulties arising out of the abrupt closure of Pakistan-Afghanistan border on February 17, 2017. The meeting took note with grave concern that the border has been closed for 5 times during the short span of approximately 8 months since June 2016.

The group members comprise of representatives from the Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (both chapters), private sector of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI), members from Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI).

Members unanimously reiterated the significance of national sanctity and security and supported all measures that respective Governments may take to ensure the same.

At the outset, it was decided to constitute a 6 member committee, comprising 3 members each from the private sector and think tanks of both countries, to deal with the respective Governments on pertinent matters as in the instant case matter of closure of borders.

However, the same may not be continued at the beset of hurting the economic and social ties across the border through measures such as abrupt closure of the border for an indefinite period resulting in massive monetary losses and trust deficit.

Keeping in view this situation, the forum urged both Governments:

1. To immediately open the border for the clearance of stranded cargo at Torkham and Spin Boldak to clear the cargo from Karachi port.
2. To consult the joint committee, that should act as an advisory mechanism, for advice before taking extreme measures such as closure of borders or revision of economic policies in general. The committee should also be taken into confidence before taking such measures that may hamper the overall business ties.
3. To urge both Governments to honor their commitments on bilateral and transit agreement.
4. To urge the Ministry of Commerce for a waiver of any applicable port charges (detention / demurrage) applied to Afghan consignments / containers accruing from the closure of the border to limit the monetary losses of the business community.

This committee would act as economic and confidence building catalyst to ensure further enhancement of bilateral trade, rejuvenate regional linkages, and promote joint investments.

The following businessmen participated in this meeting:

ACCI:

1. Mukhlis Ahmad Younas, President Tawsif Company Ltd
2. Gulab Khan, President Gulab Tahir Ltd.
3. Khalid Stanikzai, CEO, Royal Standard Company
4. Mohammad Mustafa Babarkarkhil, Vice President Imran Subhan Osmani Ltd

PAJCCI:

1. Muhammad Zubair Motiwala, President and Chairman
2. Ahmad Shah Yarzada, Director Afghan Chapter
3. Faiza, Executive Director/Secretary General
4. Junaid Esmail Makda, Director Finance

FPCCI:

1. Aamer Ata Bajwa, Senior Vice President
2. Mirza Ishtiaq Baig, Vice President
3. Ahmed Chinoy, Member

Joint Declaration of Policy Recommendations – Sixth Meeting of PAJC

The sixth meeting of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) was held at Islamabad from March 28-29, 2017. The meeting was part of Beyond Boundaries II, a track I.5/II dialogue series undertaken by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) in partnership with the Afghan counterpart Women Peace and Security Organization (WPSO), to foster better understanding and cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The emphasis was placed on people to people contacts and removing hardships of common people visiting the two countries. The meeting also recognized the need to develop a joint narrative, emphasizing shared common challenges and solutions.

The following points of convergence emerged during the meeting:

Afghan Refugees

1. The group welcomed the extension of the refugees stay in Pakistan until December 31, 2017.

Visa

2. The group expressed appreciation on the recent amendments in the Pakistani visa regime for Afghan nationals. The group called upon the government of Afghanistan to introduce similar changes in the existing visa regime for Pakistani nationals.

Security Situation

3. The group condemned the repeated terrorist attacks in both countries resulting in massive human and material losses.
4. The group welcomed the re-opening of the Pak-Afghan border and expressed the hope that in the future no such actions would be taken in view of the human hardship and difficulties for trade on both sides.
5. The group underscored that insurgency and terrorism are a common challenge and have to be dealt with jointly by both governments.

Bilateral Trade Relations

6. The group emphasized the desirability to ensure smooth and friction-free trade and transit between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The group also urged both governments to create an enabling environment.
7. The group called upon both governments to expedite meetings of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) and the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Coordination Authority (APTTCA).
8. As agreed between the two governments at the sixth APTTCA meeting, the group emphasized the need to move forward on the revised draft of the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) for finalization.
9. The group urged both countries to start talks on the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) which had been under discussion for some time.
10. The group called upon the two governments to finalize the Bilateral Transport Agreement (BTA), allowing Pakistani vehicles to carry merchandise to destinations in Afghanistan and vice versa, specifically for bilateral trade.
11. The group recommended both governments to hold ministerial meetings on bilateral and transit trade matters.

Pakistani and Afghan Prisoners

12. The group urged both governments to provide consular access and ensure fair and humane treatment to prisoners and detainees of both countries as per the international human rights standards.

Education

13. The group appreciated that the Afghan side had been able to make use of the scholarships offered by Pakistan in 2016.
14. The group expressed the hope that the educational scholarships Pakistan announced in 2017 would be availed expeditiously and recommended to expand the scholarships to vocational trainings as well.
15. The group urged the governments and civil society of both countries to encourage hosting male and female students for exchange programs and home stays, particularly between the age groups of 15 to 19.
16. The group urged additional scholarships for Afghan students, reserving a quota of 30% for female applicants.

Sports

17. The group suggested exchange visits of national cricket teams, under 19 cricket teams, football teams, taekwondo and other sports teams.
18. The group urged Pakistan and Afghanistan to explore cooperation opportunities for sports exchange programs, especially for girls. In this context, the educational institutions on both sides may be approached.

Culture

19. The group appreciated the rich cultural heritage and shared affinities between the two countries and called upon the media, civil society and government to promote cultural and social exchanges between the two peoples.
20. The group expressed the resolve to persuade media houses to promote joint media and cultural programs.

13. ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE 1

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL EVENTS DURING THE PROJECT PERIOD:

The media coverage of important international and national events in reference to Pakistan- Afghanistan bilateral relations that took place between August 2016 and March, 2017, are listed below.

Notes under some media reports highlight the impact and achievements of CRSS led Pak-Afghan track 1.5 & II Beyond Boundaries II, and the importance of roping in the high level members associated with Pakistan and Afghanistan PAJC groups.

Visa Restrictions for Afghan Truckers Relaxed - October 4, 2016

The Pakistan authorities on Saturday relaxed visa restriction for Afghan truckers transporting goods to Pakistan via Torkham border. The federal government had restricted the entry of Afghans to the country without valid passports and visas after Sept 30. The restrictions were first imposed in June when all Afghan nationals without visas were barred from entering Pakistan via Torkham and Chaman borders.

Source:<http://www.dawn.com/news/1287457/visa-restrictions-for-afghan-truckers-relaxed>

Karzai Reluctant to Endorse Pakistan as ‘State Sponsor of Terrorism’ - October 6, 2016

The former Afghan President Hamid Karzai appeared reluctant to endorse the move to label Pakistan as ‘State Sponsor of Terrorism’ as he considered the goodwill of Pakistani people towards the Afghan people. In an exclusive with Times Now TV, Karzai emphasized on the role of the Pakistani people for hosting millions of Afghan refugees as he was asked if he would support to label Pakistan as ‘State Sponsors of Pakistan’. The former Afghan President said ‘Well, see Pakistan is not only the Pakistani government or the Pakistan military establishment. Pakistan is also the people of Pakistan and nearly 200 million

people of Pakistan who are victims of terrorism as much as Afghanistan is. So, I wish the people of Pakistan will and I would never want to use a word or an action that would in any manner that would reduce the peace prosperity and the dignity of people of Pakistan.”

Karzai further added “But in regard to the establishment of Pakistan and as regard to the military we should do all we can and to bring them to recognizing that there is a different way in behaving with neighbors and that way is a civilized and peaceful relation.”

Source: <http://www.khaama.com/karzai-reluctant-to-endorse-pakistan-as-state-sponsor-of-terrorism-02015>

Pakistan Wants Peace in Afghanistan to Bring Stability in Region: Envoy - October 6, 2016

Pakistan’s Ambassador to Afghanistan, Syed Abrar Hussain said on Sunday that Pakistan wants lasting peace in Afghanistan to bring stability in the region. In an interview, the envoy said that Pakistan wants to strengthen the cooperative and good neighborly relations with Afghanistan based on the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. Hussain, while responding to the statement of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, said Pakistan and Afghanistan are two brotherly countries. He said Pakistan is spending millions of dollars on welfare projects in Afghanistan in education, health and infrastructure.

“Pakistan is establishing an engineering university in Balkh, a school in Kabul, a 200-bed hospital in Helmand, kidney center in Jalalabad and a hospital in Lugar,” Hussain said adding that 3,000 Afghan students have been granted scholarships and around 7,000 Afghan students are studying in Pakistan besides 0.5 million children of Afghan refugees.

Source: <http://www.newspakistan.tv/pakistan-wants-peace-afghanistan-bring-stability-region-envoy/#more-37848>

Pakistan an Exemplary Host to Afghan Refugees, Says UNHCR Rep - October 6, 2016

UNHCR Representative in Pakistan Indrika Ratwatte said that Pakistan and Iran have been exemplary host of Afghan refugees for the last 37 years. More than 200,000 Afghan refugees have been repatriated from Pakistan this year, the UN High Commissioner said on Tuesday. Nearly half of those Afghan men, women

and children left in the month of September alone, the highest number since the US toppled the Taliban in 2002. The outflow of refugees returning to the war-torn country comes after the government tightened its border controls in June and began cracking down on undocumented Afghans. The vast majority — more than 185,000 — returned after July, with nearly 98,000 crossing the border in September alone, UNHCR spokesman Qaisar Khan Afridi told AFP. “From January until today, the number of refugees voluntarily repatriating to Afghanistan has crossed the figure of 200,000,” Afridi said.

Source: <http://crss.pk/story/pakistan-an-exemplary-host-to-afghan-refugees-says-unhcr-rep/>

Pakistan Urges Afghan Refugees Repatriation by 31st March 2017 - October 10, 2016

Pakistan has urged Afghan refugees to ensure their repatriation by 31st March of next year. In a statement, the Ministry of States And Frontier Regions has advised them to adopt the way of voluntary and dignified return to their country in extended time, Radio Pakistan reported on Sunday. The Ministry said the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is providing 400 dollars each refugee for their repatriation and they should get advantage of this financing and get Afghan National Identity for their children.

Source: <http://www.jasarat.org/2016/10/09/pakistan-urges-afghan-refugees-repatriation-by-31st-march-2017/>

Trade Resumes with Kabul after Successful Talks - October 11, 2016

Trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan across the Torkham border resumed on Sunday after border administrations of the two countries held a successful round of talks over new tax measures introduced by Afghan authorities.

Cargo traffic remained suspended for three days because of a strike by transporters of both countries against the imposition of ‘land tax’ by the Afghan customs authorities. Pakistani transporters said every vehicle from here was required to pay 5,000 afghanis, while Afghan transporters were charged half the amount upon their entry into Afghanistan.

“We have been informed by Afghanistan borders affairs in-charge Qasim Shinwari that the Afghan authority will not charge 5,000 afghanis from Pakistani transporters and have assured that this practice will not take place in the coming

months,” Khyber Agency political agent Capt (ret'd) Khalid Mehmood told The Express Tribune by telephone.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1196338/land-tax-trade-resumes-kabul-successful-talks/>

Taliban and Afghanistan Restart Secret Talks In Qatar - October 18, 2016

The Taliban and representatives of the Afghan government have restarted secret talks in the Gulf state of Qatar, senior sources within the insurgency and the Kabul government have told the Guardian. Among those present at the meetings held in September and October was Mullah Abdul Manan Akhund, brother of Mullah Omar, the former Taliban chief who led the movement from its earliest days until his death in 2013. The two rounds of talks are the first known negotiations to have taken place since a Pakistan-brokered process entirely broke down following the death in a US drone strike of Omar’s successor, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor.

Source: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/18/taliban-afghanistan-secret-talks-qatar?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Gmail

Pak-Afghan trade halves ‘due to transit trade glitches’ - October 24, 2016

Former deputy trade minister of Afghanistan Muzamil Shinwari has said that bilateral trade with Pakistan has gone down substantially due to ‘problems’ in transit trade. “If these problems are not addressed, bilateral trade could witness further decline,” warned Shinwari, who was the chief negotiator for the 2010 Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA). “The Pak-Afghan trade volume was \$2.5 billion in 2010 which has now come down to \$1.8 billion,” Shinwari told The Express Tribune in an interview.

Note: Mozammil Shinwari is a distinguished member of the Afghan PAJC (Beyond Boundaries II) and participated in five meetings.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1207814/strain-ties-pak-afghan-trade-halves-due-transit-trade-glitches/>

Pakistan will attend Heart of Asia conference in India, says Sartaj Aziz - October 25, 2016

Adviser to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz on Monday confirmed that Pakistan will be attending the upcoming Heart of Asia conference scheduled to be held in India. Aziz confirmed Pakistan's participation while talking to journalists in the federal capital. The Heart of Asia conference will be held during the first week of December in Amritsar, India.

Source:<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291995/pakistan-will-attend-heart-of-asia-conference-in-india-says-sartaj-aziz>

Return of refugees: Government puts Afghan repatriation plan on hold – November 03, 2016

On November 3, 2016, the federal government put off a decision on crafting a comprehensive strategy for the repatriation of millions of Afghans sheltering in Pakistan for over three decades. "The cabinet meeting postponed the decision in order to allow all political parties and stakeholders to be consulted so that a consensus can be reached," Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) Lt-Gen (retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch told The Express Tribune.

The summary that was finalized on the basis of consultations with a select group of politicians carried several suggestions. One of them is allowing Afghan refugees to stay in the country until 2021. In order to defuse tensions between the two neighbors, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had extended their stay till March 2017. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Pakistan currently hosts around three million Afghan refugees. Of these, 1.6 million are registered.

Note: Refugees remained a key theme for PAJC meetings/ policy recommendations and during the 2nd PAJC meeting in October, the SAFRON Minister had told the visiting Afghan delegation about the plans of developing political consensus with all parties' conference for the repatriation of Afghan refugees.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1219108/return-refugees-government-puts-afghan-repatriation-plan-hold/>

Pakistan to deport Afghan who was once refugee icon – November 05, 2016

Sharbat Gula – the green-eyed “Afghan girl” whose portrait featured on the cover of a National Geographic magazine in 1985 and who became a symbol of the refugee crisis caused by decades-long conflict in her country – will be deported from Pakistan to Afghanistan after a court found her guilty of obtaining a fake Pakistani identity card.

Source: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/11/pakistan-deport-afghan-refugee-icon-161104143031523.html>

Nat Geo’s ‘Afghan girl’ Sharbat Gula will not be deported, says government official Shaukat Yousafzai on November 5

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan also requested KP Chief Minister Pervez Khattak to not deport Sharbat Gula. KP’s home department, following the decision, has also stopped implementation of the decision to deport her.

Note: CRSS Executive Director, Imtiaz Gul, met with PTI chief Imran Khan on Sharbat Gula issue which resulted in a successful intervention, as Khan directed the KP government not to deport her. However, later, she decided to return at her own will despite the KP government timely move to let her stay.

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1294457/nat-geos-afghan-girl-sharbat-gula-will-not-be-deported-says-kps-provincial-minister>

Pakistan to open visa facilities in Afghan provinces – November 15, 2016

Pakistan will open new facilities for issuing visas to Afghans in other provinces in order to address the existing problems, the Pakistani consul general in eastern Nangarhar province said on Monday.

Source: http://www.pajhwok.com/en/subscription-required?redirect_from=468992

We want good ties with Pakistan, says Abdullah - November 16, 2016

Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah on Wednesday said Afghanistan wanted good and positive ties with Pakistan keeping in view the good neighborhood principle. A statement from the CEO office said Abdullah made the remarks during a meeting with Afghanistan and Pakistan’s parliament and civil

society members. Abdullah expressed gratitude to the joint group's efforts and said Afghanistan and Pakistan were neighboring countries and Kabul wanted good and positive ties with Islamabad. He stressed good relations with all neighboring countries and declared his support to the bilateral joint group. Terrorists were not only a threat to Afghanistan and Pakistan but to the entire region, said Abdullah, stressing a joint and sincere effort by the two countries and the region against terrorism.

Note: This media coverage is from the Beyond Boundaries II PAJC groups meeting with Dr. Abdullah during the 2nd meeting of PAJC in Kabul. It highlights the importance of the project policy recommendations being shared with outreach at the highest level of Afghan government.

Another positive from the PAJC members meeting with the Dr. Abdullah Abdullah was they informed him that the Pakistan group had visited the ongoing Pakistan funded projects in Kabul, and apprised of some of the problems faced at these projects, most notably the issue of custom tariff and other duties exemption for the medical equipment to be imported by Pakistan for the use at Jinnah Hospital. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah promised to look at the difficulties of projects funded by Pakistan, assuring to resolve the problems and hurdles as the projects were for the people of Afghanistan. He assigned Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, PAJC member and former deputy trade and commerce minister, to follow up and present him a report of the problems faced at these projects. Later the custom duties and other tariffs were waived off for the import of medical equipment within a week. Source: www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/11/16/we-want-good-ties-pakistan-says-abdullah

Afghan leader looks forward to 'substantive talks' - November 17, 2016 – Tahir Khan

Afghanistan's Chief Executive Dr Abdullah Abdullah has said that he looks forward to his upcoming visit to Pakistan where he expects to have substantive discussions on bilateral relations, including on the common threat of terrorism. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had extended an invitation to Dr Abdullah to visit Pakistan and the invitation was given again recently.

Note: Tahir Khan is part of the Pakistan PAJC group, and this was stated by Dr. Abdullah during the meeting with the PAJC groups in Kabul.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1233883/afghan-leader-looks-forward-substantive-talks/>

President Ghani meets Nawaz Sharif on sidelines of Turkmenistan summit – November 26, 2016

The Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani met with the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Turkmenistan today. According to reports, the meeting took place on the sidelines of an international summit organized in Turkmenistan. The two leaders reportedly discussed issues of bilateral interest including the situation of the two countries and other regional issues. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has reiterated Islamabad’s support to a lasting peace in Afghanistan, insisting that a peaceful Afghanistan will be in the best interest of Pakistan. Sharif also added that the two countries are facing the menace of terrorism and emphasized on a joint effort to root out the terrorists.

Source: <http://www.khaama.com/president-ghani-meets-nawaz-sharif-on-sidelines-of-turkmenistan-summit-02370>

85,000 Registered Refugee Families Returned to Afghanistan This Year - November 28, 2016

A total of 85,000 families totaling 380,045 registered Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan this year as part of the volunteer repatriation process of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an official said on Sunday. “This has been the highest number of volunteer returnees from Pakistan since 2006 due to various factors,” UNHCR spokesman Qaisar Khan Afridi told The News. He added that the repatriation process would be suspended for three months from December 1 to February 28, 2017 due to the winter season.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/168235-85000-registered-refugee-families-returned-to-Afghanistan-this-year>

President Ghani remarks during the 6th Heart of Asia conference – December 03, 2016

President Ghani said during his speech at the 6th Heart of Asia conference on Sunday that “Despite our intense engagement with Pakistan on bilateral and multilateral basis, the undeclared war – the name that I gave to the phenomenon

in the winter 2014 – not only has not abated but also intensified during 2016, with special intensity right after the Brussels Conference.”

Citing a Taliban commander’s remarks about Pakistan, President Ghani said “As Mr. Kakazada, one of the key figures in the Taliban movement recently said, if they did not have sanctuary in Pakistan, they would not last a month.”

President Ghani insisted on the need for intense dialogue and engagement to resolve the issue, including fight against criminal economics, and an Asian and international regime, whatever acceptable, particularly, to Pakistan to verify cross-frontier activities and terrorist operations.

He also added “Thirdly, there is need for a fund to combat extremism. Pakistan has generously pledged 500 million dollars for reconstruction of Afghanistan. This fund, Mr. Aziz, could very well be used for containing extremism because without peace any amount of assistance will not meet the needs of our people. We have been balancing the opportunities and the threats. I am confident that focused, deliberate and systematic efforts can enable us to win a world and to make Afghanistan and Asia secure. Once again, thank you for your attention.”

Source: <http://www.khaama.com/want-dignified-relations-not-charity-ghani-says-after-rejecting-pakistans-500m-02435>

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Opening remarks at the Heart of Asia Conference – December 03, 2016

In his opening remarks at the Heart of Asia conference, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed terrorism "the biggest threat to the peace in Afghanistan and the region," according to Indian media.

"We must counter terrorists and their masters. We must demonstrate strong collective will to defeat terror networks that cause bloodshed and spread fear," Modi told the conference participants in a veiled reference to Pakistan. "Silence and inaction on terror in Afghanistan and the region will only embolden terrorists and masters and those fund them," he added.

Source: <http://www.dw.com/en/heart-of-asia-participants-slam-pakistan-over-terrorism/a-36633835>

India can't divide Pakistan, Afghanistan, says Sartaj - December 05, 2016

Adviser to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said on Sunday Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan stood firm due to 'our shared and historical bonds and India cannot divide us.' Addressing a hurriedly-called news conference here after his whirlwind trip to the Indian Punjab's city of Amritsar where he attended the Heart of Asia Istanbul Process Conference, Sartaj maintained that his participation in the conference was aimed at showing the world that bilateral tensions should not overshadow multilateral forums.

"We are now sharing our experiences of counter-terrorism with the rest of the world. This is a process that we are doing in our own national interest to protect our own security." He lamented the statement of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, which he ascribed to frustration due to the rising insurgency in that country. Pakistan also regretted the incidents as it has been the victim of the same. He said during his meeting with the Afghan president, he unequivocally reiterated Pakistan's position that it would never allow its soil to be used against any country. "A balanced and holistic approach is needed to resolve the Afghan problems."

Sartaj said he had fruitful meetings with the Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov and assistant foreign minister of China. He said the Turkmen foreign minister had appreciated Pakistan becoming a part of Lapis Lazuli Corridor. He also updated Sartaj Aziz on the status of TAPI pipeline project.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/169901-India-cant-divide-Pakistan-Afghanistan-says-Sartaj>

Russia rejects Indian, Afghan criticism on Pakistan - December 05, 2016

Russia on Sunday lauded Pakistan's stance at the Heart of Asia conference and said the agenda of the conference has not been hijacked. Addressing the Heart of Asia Conference in Amritsar on Sunday, Russian envoy Zamir Kabulov rejected the Indian and Afghan criticism on Pakistan and said that Sartaj Aziz's speech at the conference was friendly and constructive. He said it is wrong to criticise Pakistan. "The HoA should not be used by India and Pakistan for scoring points," he told reporters. He said bilateral issues should not cloud forums like the Heart of Asia.

“India has close cooperation with the US, does Moscow complain? Then why complain about much lower level of cooperation with Pakistan,” he asked when referred to the Russia-Pakistan military exercise.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/169900-Russia-rejects-Indian-Afghan-criticism-on-Pakistan>

Aziz stresses need to hold dialogue, December 13, 2016.

Pakistan’s top foreign policy chief Sartaj Aziz has said Islamabad was striving to hold peace dialogue with Afghanistan.

“It was disappointing that some elements in Afghanistan were not willing to have the dialogue process with Pakistan and these elements are creating suspicion over Pakistan’s role,” the Nation quoted Aziz as saying in an interview on Sunday. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s Advisor on Foreign Affairs blamed the Afghan Intelligence Agency for hindering the dialogue between Taliban and the Afghan government.

Source: <http://www.freepressjournal.in/world/pak-seeks-peace-with-afghanistan/986233>

Pakistan rejects Afghanistan's allegation – December 20, 2016

Pakistan's acting permanent representative to UN, Nabeel Munir reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to eliminate all terrorist networks. Pakistan has rejected Afghanistan's unsubstantiated allegation that Taliban reorganize in Pakistan during winter. Speaking in a debate on situation in Afghanistan in the UN Security Council, Pakistan's acting permanent representative to the UN, Nabeel Munir reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to eliminate all terrorist networks. He said sanctuaries of terrorists have shifted to Afghanistan due to successful operation Zarb-i-Azb, the results of which are widely acknowledged by the international community."

Source: <http://www.radio.gov.pk/20-Dec-2016/pakistan-rejects-afghanistan-s-allegation>

Afghanistan should prevent use of its soil for terrorism inside Pakistan, says Tariq Fatemi – December 21, 2016

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Tariq Fatemi has said that Afghanistan should not allow its land to be used for terrorism inside Pakistan. In an interview, he claimed that hundreds of safe havens of terrorists had been destroyed, which will help establish peace in Pakistan and the whole region.

Fatemi said border management with Afghanistan will also be improved to check illegal cross-border movement that was the core reason for terrorism. In the purview of current situation in Indian-occupied Kashmir, Tariq Fatemi said New Delhi has unleashed oppression and persecution against people of Kashmir to suppress their indigenous freedom movement. 'Pakistan will continue to extend political and moral support to Kashmiri people in their just struggle for right to self-determination in the light of UN resolutions' he said. Tariq Fatemi also took aim at the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi adding that the premier was pursuing fascist agenda of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Source: <https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/headline/afghanistan-should-prevent-use-of-its-soil-for-terrorism-inside-pakistan-says-tariq-fatemi/>

Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on the Afghan leadership's anti-Pakistan diatribe - December 22, 2016

Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan said on Wednesday that the Afghan leadership's anti-Pakistan diatribe in an 'enemy country' could jeopardize the friendly relationship between the two neighboring countries. He said this during his first visit to the Pak-Afghan border at Torkham where he shook hands with Afghan border guards as a friendly gesture.

"The Afghan leadership should refrain from leveling baseless allegations of abetting terrorism and harbouring militant organisations while speaking at our enemy's soil," he said, referring to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's recent remarks against Pakistan in India. Chaudhry Nisar said Pakistan had provided shelter and every possible help to millions of Afghans for more than 30 years and would continue to support the Afghan government for rebuilding the war-ravaged country.

"Pakistan has always considered enemies of Afghanistan as its own enemies and would continue to further strengthen the brotherly relationship with the latter despite suspected terrorists taking shelter in Afghanistan and carrying out terrorist attacks inside Pakistan," he said. The minister said the federal government had allocated Rs70 billion to raise a new border force for effectively monitoring the 2,000km border with Afghanistan, implementing the border management policy and preventing suspected elements from entering Pakistan from Afghanistan.

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1303804/kabuls-anti-pakistan-diatribes-can-affect-ties-warns-nisar>

Peace in Pakistan Closely Linked To Afghanistan: Chaudhry Nisar - December 22, 2016

Peace in Pakistan is closely linked to peace in Afghanistan, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar said. According to GEO News he told journalists in Landi Kotal on Wednesday that Pakistan wants peace on both sides of the border.

He said Afghanistan blames Pakistan even for crimes it has not committed. The minister said he wants to establish a National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) at the border to assist the injured and sick. He said that terrorism had destroyed peace in the tribal areas. Praising the tribes of Landi Kotal, he said their tribesmen had fought at the Kashmir border. "These tribes are always ready to defend the country," he said.

According to him, terrorism incidents were on the rise around the world, but dropping in Pakistan. "There is no terrorist network in this area," he said. "After Operation Zarb-e-Azb either terrorists were killed or they ran away. Terrorists come discreetly and then cross the border," he said. Landi Kotal is a small town of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan and is on the western edge of the Khyber Pass that traditionally marks the entrance to Afghanistan.

Source: <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/peace-pakistan-closely-linked-afghanistan-minister>

Pakistan to Grant Visas to Afghan Patients at Torkham Gate - December 26, 2016

Pakistan's Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan in a meeting with Afghan border forces has vowed to issue 'urgent visas' to Afghan patients at Torkham entry point, VOA reported on Thursday.

According to the report, the Pakistani minister has said the issue of visas for Afghan patients will be resolved in the near future. "We welcome them [Afghans] to visit us and we want to visit their country. When more than 3.5 million Afghans were in difficulty and needed our help [as refugees], Pakistanis generously welcomed them and will do so if, God forbid, they [Afghans] faced such problems in future. But the freedom of movement they were enjoying until now was being misused by terrorists," Khan said as quoted by VOA. According to the report, Nisar Ali Khan said Pakistan will construct six automated border crossings with Afghanistan equipped with latest immigration facilities by 2020 in order to enable the control of traffic between the two countries.

Note: The issuance of urgent visas on basis of health was among the policy recommendations of the first and second meeting of the PAJC groups in October and November. This again highlights the significance of policy recommendations being shared at the highest level of Pakistan Government.

Source: <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/pakistan-grant-%E2%80%98urgent-visas%E2%80%99-afghan-patients-torkham>

Pakistan Military Chief Tells Afghan Leaders He'll Work for Peace - December 31, 2016

General Qamar Javed Bajwa telephoned Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and Bajwa's Afghan counterpart, General Qadam Shah Raheem on December 31, according to the Pakistan army's media wing. Pakistan's new military chief, while speaking to Afghan leaders, promised to work for regional peace as mutual mistrust and suspicion continued to plague bilateral ties in the outgoing year. According to the media wing's press release, Bajwa "conveyed best wishes for 2017 and pledged to work for peace in the region," adding that peace in both countries was in the "greater interest of the region."

Source: <http://www.aopnews.com/pakistan-afghanistan-relations/pakistan-military-chief-tells-afghan-leaders-hell-work-for-peace/>

Afghanistan leadership invites Pakistan Army chief on visit - January 01, 2017

Afghanistan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah invited new Pakistani Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa to visit the country, the media wing of the Pakistani military said. The invitation was extended by the Afghan leadership during a telephone conversation with General Bajwa, according to a statement by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Major General Asif Ghafoor, Dunya News reported on December 31, 2016.

Source: <https://www.mangalorean.com/afghanistan-leadership-invites-pakistan-army-chief-visit/>

Passport mandatory for Pakistanis to cross over into Afghanistan now - January 02, 2017

Starting from January 1, possession of Pakistani passport has been made mandatory for cross-border movement by Pakistan nationals at Torkham border following the arrest of some suspected Afghans with fake Pakistani Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs).

Source: <http://www.afghanistansun.com/news/250608143/passport-mandatory-for-pakistanis-to-cross-over-into-afghanistan-now>

Pakistan condemns terrorist attacks in Kabul & Kandahar - January 10, 2017

Pakistan strongly condemns the terrorist attacks near Parliament building in Kabul and Kandahar on January 10 that resulted in loss of precious lives. The government and people of Pakistan extend their deepest sympathies and condolences to the bereaved families and pray for the speedy recovery of the injured. Pakistan reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all forms and manifestations and reaffirms its commitment for continued efforts and cooperation for eliminating this menace.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan.
<http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NDY1Ng>

Pakistan army chief calls President Ghani, suggests intelligence cooperation - January 15, 2017

The Pakistani army chief of staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa called President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani following a series of deadly bombings in capital Kabul and other key provinces to condole the terrorist attacks that left scores of people dead or wounded. According to an official statement released by media wing of the Pakistani military “Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa made a telephone call to President Ashraf Ghani to condole the loss of life in recent terror attacks in Afghanistan.” The statement further added “He expressed sympathy with families of the victims and empathized on the tragic series of events that have befallen people of both the brotherly countries over the last many years.”

“COAS reiterated Pakistan’s cooperation with Afghan Government and people to eliminate the scourge of terrorism which is affecting peace and stability of the whole region,” the statement said, adding that “He emphasized that Pakistan has come a long way in its fight against terrorism of all hue and colour and has eliminated all safe havens in the process.”

Source: <https://www.khaama.com/pakistan-army-chief-calls-president-ghani-suggests-intelligence-cooperation-02680>

Pakistan expresses condolences at the sad demise of Pir Syed Ahmed Gailani, Chairman of the High Peace Council of Afghanistan - January 22, 2017

We are deeply saddened to learn about the demise of Pir Syed Ahmed Gailani, Chairman of the High Peace Council of Afghanistan. Pir Saheb was an influential religious leader who was widely respected in Afghanistan, and throughout the region for his contributions towards Islam and the Afghan nation. He will always be remembered for his tremendous efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan and promote reconciliation.

The Government and people of Pakistan express their heartfelt condolences to the family and the people and Government of Afghanistan. May Allah Almighty rest the departed soul in eternal peace in Jannah (Ameen).

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan.
<http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NDY5NQ>

Pakistan reiterates support for peace in Afghanistan - January 31, 2017

Pakistan on January 31 reiterated its support for peace in neighboring Afghanistan saying this was also in Islamabad's interest. "We fully support the Afghan-led reconciliation process aimed at bringing peace and tranquility to Afghanistan, which equally suits and benefits Pakistan," Major General Asif Ghafoor, the newly appointed spokesman for the Pakistani army told a press conference in Rawalpindi city on January 31.

Rejecting claims from some Afghan officials accusing Islamabad of exporting terrorism to Afghanistan, General Ghafoor talked about "a handful of elements who do not want good relations between the two countries." "That's why they have been engaged in a blame-game," he said. "I once again assure that Pakistan will never allow anyone to use its soil against any country," he said, adding his country wished peace and stability in Afghanistan so that over 1.3 million Afghan refugees could return to their homeland.

Source: <http://aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/pakistan-reiterates-support-for-peace-in-afghanistan/738623>

Pakistan grieves over loss of precious Afghan lives caused by the avalanches - February 06, 2017

The Government and people of Pakistan convey deepest condolences to the Government and people of Afghanistan at the loss of more than hundred precious lives and massive damage to property due to recent avalanches that have hit various provinces of Afghanistan. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to the families of the victims of these incidents and pray for the early recovery of the injured.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan

<http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NDczOA>

Pakistan Condemns suicide attack outside Afghan Supreme Court - February 08, 2017

Pakistan strongly condemns the suicide attack outside Supreme Court of Afghanistan on 7 February 2017 that has led to loss of twenty precious human lives and left more than 40 injured. The people and the Government of Pakistan extend their heartfelt sympathies and deepest condolences to the Government

and people of Afghanistan and to the bereaved families. We pray for early recovery of injured. We firmly stand with our Afghan brothers in this hour of grief and anguish.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan,
<http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NDc00A>

Pakistan's Repatriation and Management Policy for Afghan Refugees Revised - February 09, 2017

The cabinet meeting, presided over by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, on February 07 approved a new policy on the repatriation and management of Afghan refugees. The policy:

- Permits an extension in the stay of registered refugees in Pakistan from March 31 to December 31, 2017. Beyond this date, they would be required to obtain visas to enter Pakistan again.
- All registered Afghan refugees would need to surrender their Proof of Registration (POR) cards before going to their country.

The United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR, has welcomed:

- The revised policy calling it a step change for Afghan refugees and those Afghans living in Pakistan without documentation with potentially transformative impact on people's daily lives.
- Vowed to continue to seek robust international support for voluntary repatriation and more equitable responsibility-sharing to fully support Afghan refugees and host communities in Pakistan.

Source: <http://crss.pk/story/pakistans-repatriation-and-management-policy-for-afghan-refugees-revised/>

Note: The Beyond Boundaries played behind the scene diplomacy during important meetings with the SAFRON Minister in Pakistan, and twice with the Refugees Minister in Afghanistan. It is worth mentioning that Afghanistan's Refugees Minister, Mr. Balkhi, who acknowledged the efforts of Beyond Boundaries track II project and thanked the PAJC for lobbying and consulting with the governments to achieve these much awaited concessions. Beyond Boundaries' active advocacy on Afghan refugees brought about a lot of pressure on Pakistani government to stop harassment of Afghans in Pakistan and craft new policy measures, most of which are very favourable to all Afghans living in Pakistan.

Pakistan refutes allegations in HRW report on Afghan Refugees - February 14, 2017

Questions have been raised about a recent report by the Human Rights Watch concerning Afghan refugees that has also been reported in the media. The report lacks objectivity. The assertions made therein are misplaced and removed from facts and realities on ground. Exaggerated contentions and baseless allegations of coercion are particularly disappointing and irresponsible, being counter-productive to the objective of harmony and goodwill between the refugees and the host communities as well as the shared goal of dignified voluntary returns.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan <http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NDC2NQ>

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar launching terrorist attacks from sanctuaries in Afghanistan: MoFA - February 15, 2017

An official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) met Afghan Deputy Head of Mission Syed Abdul Nasir Yousafi in Islamabad on 14th February to address militant attacks in Pakistan by factions operating in Afghanistan, said a press release from MoFA. United Nations and European Commission (UN&EC) Additional Secretary Tasnim Aslam raised the "grave concern [Pakistan has] about the continuing terrorist attacks on Pakistani soil by the terrorist outfit Jumaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) [operating] from its sanctuaries inside Afghanistan," the release read.

Aslam also informed Yousafi that Afghan authorities had been informed "earlier" about "actionable intelligence" where Pakistan pressed Afghanistan "to take urgent measures to eliminate the terrorists and their sanctuaries, financiers and [facilitators] operating from its territory," the statement read. The additional secretary also shared an 'aide-memoire' with the Afghan deputy head of mission, which contained "details of the terrorist attacks and supporting information".

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1314951/jamaat-ul-ahrar-launching-terrorist-attacks-from-sanctuaries-in-afghanistan-mofa>

Afghan envoy summoned by Pakistan, protest lodged – February 16, 2017

Pakistan summoned Afghan Deputy Head of Mission (DHM) Syed Abdul Nasir Yousafi on February 15 to register a protest on the attack in Lahore by

Afghanistan-based Jamaatul Ahrar (JuA) and demanded an action against the militant group.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/186685-Afghan-envoy-summoned-protest-lodged>

Pak-Afghan border closed for indefinite period: ISPR - February 16, 2017

Pakistan has closed Pak-Afghan border with immediate effects till further orders over security reasons after recent wave of terror in which more than 100 people were martyred. DG ISPR Major General Asif Ghafoor in a tweet on February 16 said, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Border is closed with immediate effects till further orders due to security reasons."

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/186754-Pak-Afghan-border-closed-for-indefinite-period-ISPR>

Moscow six-party consultations focus on intra-Afghan reconciliation - February 16, 2017

Participants of the six-party consultations on Afghanistan in Moscow agreed to work towards intra-Afghan reconciliation, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Feb. 15. Representatives from Russia, Afghanistan, India, China, Iran and Pakistan took part in the consultations led by Russian President Vladimir Putin's special envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov. "The participants agreed to increase efforts to promote intra-Afghan reconciliation while preserving the leading role of Kabul and compliance with previously agreed principles of integration of the armed opposition to a peaceful life," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "In the context of possible extensions of this format of negotiations, an understanding was reached about the need to develop regional efforts to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan due to connection of potential other countries, primarily from Central Asia, on the next stage," the ministry added.

Source: http://in.rbth.com/politics/2017/02/16/moscow-six-party-consultations-focus-on-intra-afghan-reconciliation_703258

Ghani condoles loss of lives in Lahore bombing – February 17, 2017

President Ashraf Ghani has extended condolences to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif over the loss of life in terrorist attack in Lahore.

Source: http://www.pajhwok.com/en/subscription-required?redirect_from=476461

Kabul Rejects Pakistan Accusations over Shrine Attack - February 17, 2017

The presidential palace on February 17 rejected Pakistan's accusations that the recent suicide attack on the Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine in Pakistan was masterminded from Afghanistan soil. The Palace said in a statement Afghanistan has proven its honesty in fighting terrorism and now it is Pakistan's turn to destroy terrorist safe havens on its own soil. "Afghanistan has never allowed anyone to use its soil for terrorist activities against regional countries or its neighbors. We also expect other countries not to let insurgent groups harbor safe havens on their soil," said Shah Hussain Murtazawi, deputy spokesman of president.

Source: <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/kabul-rejects-pakistan-accusations-over-shrine-attack>

Adviser Sartaj Aziz calls Afghan National Security Adviser Hanif Atmar - February 17, 2017

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz on February 17 talked on phone with Afghan National Security Adviser Mr. Hanif Atmar. In this telephone conversation, Mr. Sartaj Aziz underlined that the Government and the people of Pakistan were in a state of deep anguish and pain at the recent terrorist incidents in various parts of Pakistan resulting into loss of precious human lives.

Adviser conveyed to the Afghan National Security Adviser that terrorist group Jamat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) was behind these barbaric acts of terrorism. He expressed serious concern that JuA continued to operate from its sanctuaries and safe haven in Afghanistan for undertaking terrorism in Pakistan and the Government of Afghanistan had not paid a heed to Pakistan's repeated calls on the Afghan government to take action against the group and its activities based in Afghanistan. In this regard, Pakistan shared a list of suspected JuA terrorists with the Government of Afghanistan for action against them.

Source: <http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NDc3Ng>

Unfair To Accuse Afghanistan of Supporting Terrorism: Abdullah - February 20, 2017

The Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah at the Council of Ministers' meeting on February 20 said "Afghanistan is a victim of terrorism and it is unfair to accuse the state of supporting terror and violence". "The only solution in fight against terrorism is to cooperate [with the anti-terror campaign] and to stop supporting terrorism," Abdullah said. He added: "We are a victim of terror and it is unfair to accuse Afghanistan of supporting terror and violence."

Source: <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/unfair-accuse-afghanistan-supporting-terrorism-abdullah>

Afghanistan assures action against "terrorist sanctuaries" on its soil - February 20, 2017

Afghanistan has agreed to address Pakistan's concerns over the presence of 'terrorist sanctuaries' across the border, a development that may pave the way for de-escalation of tensions between the two neighbours, officials said on February 20. The assurance was given by Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Omar Zakhilwal during a meeting with Prime Minister's Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and senior military officials in Islamabad.

Zakhilwal flew to Kabul on the weekend for consultations following the recent terrorist attacks across Pakistan, including the suicide attack in Sehwan, which had links with Afghanistan. Dr. Omar Zakhilwal tweeted "I passed on documents both to Pak MOFA as well as to GHQ as mentioned in a press release by our Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 20. In addition, I had a very positive meeting with Mr Sartaj Aziz, Advisor to the PM on Foreign Affairs and a constructive talk with the GHQ right after my return from Kabul on February 20. As a result I expect quick deescalation of the current tension and the creation of a more positive environment for responding to each other's concerns and grievances in a cooperative manner. We have agreed tentatively on a path forward."

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1333482/afghanistan-assures-action-terrorists-sanctuaries-soil/>

Pakistan shells border with Afghanistan as tensions rise over terrorist attacks - February 21, 2017

After a blitz of terrorist bombings across Pakistan left more than 125 people dead, Pakistani forces began shelling both sides of the border on February 17, aiming at camps used by a group tied to the Islamic State that claimed most of the attacks. Pakistan also closed all border crossings.

Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/pakistan-shells-border-with-afghanistan-as-tensions-rise-over-terrorist-attacks/2017/02/20/2d0157e2-f0aa-11e6-a100-fdaaf400369a_story.html?utm_term=.110ca49e6a35

Army wants joint anti-terror fight with Afghanistan – February 22, 2017

The change in mood at the military headquarters coincided with the receipt of a demarche from the Afghan foreign ministry demanding arrest and handover of 85 leaders of Taliban, Haqqani Network and other terrorist groups and action against 32 alleged terrorist training centres, besides a warning that continued violence would push Kabul to seek international sanctions against “terrorist groups and their supporters”. The Afghan demands came after Pakistan handed over a similar list of 76 Pakistani terrorists based in Afghanistan.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1316035/army-wants-joint-anti-terror-fight-with-afghanistan>

Pakistan wants peace in Afghanistan, says Mamnoon - February 23, 2017

President Mamnoon Hussain on February 22 said that Pakistan regards Afghanistan as its sincere friend and is keen to work with it for peace, progress and prosperity in the country, adding that Afghanistan should reject elements trying to create misgivings and misunderstandings. He further said that peace in the region is linked with peace in Afghanistan. Addressing the students of the Cadet College Hasanabdal who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr here, the president said Pakistan is desirous of having friendly relations with India but India should also extend cooperation in this regard.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/188215-Pakistan-wants-peace-in-Afghanistan-says-Mamnoon>

Terrorism is the common enemy of Pakistan, Afghanistan: FO - February 24, 2017

Spokesperson for the Foreign Office, Nafees Zakaria, has said that terrorism is the common enemy of both Pakistan and Afghanistan and effective border management is vital for preventing the cross-border movement of terrorists. He expressed these views while responding to a question in a weekly media briefing in Islamabad on February 24. Zakaria stated that the enemies of Pakistan and Afghanistan are taking advantage of the turmoil in Afghanistan and using its soil to orchestrate terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Pakistan is ready to work with Afghanistan on those issues in the spirit of mutual respect, trust, and cooperation. He underlined the need for working together by the two countries in order to combat terrorism. Responding a question, he said that Pakistan is committed to peace and stability in Afghanistan and supports the Quadrilateral Zakaria affirmed that Pakistan is providing all possible support to the refugees here. He assured the gathering that the Pak-Afghan border will be opened in due course. Regarding suspected Indian involvement in the recent wave of terrorism, he said that law enforcement agencies were investigating the matter. Pakistan does not want to give a knee-jerk reaction, "We do not believe in rhetoric, though Indian involvement in terrorism and terror financing in Pakistan to destabilise the country is a well-proven fact," he added.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/24-Feb-17/terrorism-is-the-common-enemy-of-pakistan-afghanistan-fo>

Afghanistan being used for proxy war against Pakistan: PM - February 24, 2017

Hours after Lahore suffered its second terror attack in 11 days, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif lashed out at external elements for using Afghan soil to mount attacks on Pakistan. Speaking to news media in Ankara, where the premier is on a three-day state visit, Nawaz claimed that elements upset by Pakistan's progress were behind the current spate of violence in the country. He said Pakistan views stability in Afghanistan as part of its own interest and Islamabad favoured all moves to boost stability in the neighbouring country. "With our firm resolve, we will defeat those who are unable to see Pakistan prosper on different fronts," the prime minister said. He further said that involvement of foreign hands behind terrorist activities in Pakistan could not be denied.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1337284/afghanistan-used-proxy-war-pakistan-pm/>

Afghan envoy calls upon Pakistan to reopen border - February 24, 2017

Afghanistan's Ambassador Omar Zakhilwal on February 23 called upon Pakistan to reopen the border with his country, saying the week-long closure has stifled trade and caused hardships for people in both countries. "As part of the quick de-escalation of the prevailing tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan, as agreed in our talks with the relevant Pakistani authorities a couple of days ago, Torkham, Spin Boldak and other crossing points should have been reopened by now but unfortunately they still remain shut," the Afghan envoy said.

Pakistan closed the border with Afghanistan over 'security concerns' following a string of terror attacks that left over 100 people dead last week. The border remained shut for a seventh day on February 23. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Jamaatul Ahrar and Da'ish claimed responsibility for deadly attacks in Sindh, Lahore and Peshawar. Officials say that all groups behind terrorism in the country operate from the Afghan side of the border.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1337253/afghan-envoy-calls-upon-pakistan-reopen-border/>

Pakistan assures Afghanistan of full assistance - February 27, 2017

Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry on February 26 said that Pakistan had faced the brunt of terrorism and was greatly affected by Afghanistan's instability. Terming Afghanistan as its twin brother and extending full support for the country's peace process, the foreign secretary welcomed the upcoming Economic Cooperation Organisation's special meeting on Afghanistan in Kabul.

"Let me assure our Afghan brothers that we would continue to contribute to the ECO efforts to provide assistance to Afghanistan," he said at the Senior Official Meetings (SOM) scheduled February 26-27 ahead of the 13th ECO summit in Islamabad on March 1. "We are happy to host the 13th ECO summit and look forward to advancing our mutual goals in the coming days leading up to the summit," a press statement quoted him as saying. "Pakistan has always attached immense importance to the organisation and its objective as demonstrated by our active role in the ECO," he said.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1340099/eco-special-meeting-pakistan-assures-afghanistan-full-assistance/>

Afghan foreign minister skips out on ECO meeting - February 28, 2017

The Afghan foreign minister has opted out of the meeting of the council of ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) in the wake of rising tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the absence of the foreign minister, the Afghan ambassador to Pakistan, Omar Zakhilwal, represented Kabul in the meeting.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/02/28/afghan-foreign-minister-skips-out-on-eco-meeting/>

Pakistan lodges strong protest with Afghanistan over firing from Afghan territory - March 06, 2017

Government of Pakistan has launched a strong protest with the Afghan Government over the shahadat of five Pakistani soldiers at Pakistan military post in Mohmand Agency and one soldier in Khyber agency as a result of firing by terrorists from Afghan territory. In this regard, Afghan Deputy Head of Mission was called to the Foreign Office on March 06 for conveying Pakistan's grave concern over the incident. The Afghan Government was urged to thoroughly investigate the incidents and take firm action against the terrorists operating from its soil to prevent recurrence of such incidents. It was further emphasized that cooperation from Afghan side for effective border management was important for preventing cross-border movement of terrorists and militants.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan

<http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NDgxNg>

Pakistan condemns the terrorist attack at a hospital in Kabul - March 08, 2017

Pakistan strongly condemned the terrorist attack on a hospital in Kabul on 8th March, resulting in the loss of many precious lives and injuring several others. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in this heinous terrorist attack and convey our prayers for early recovery of the injured. Pakistan reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to cooperation with the Afghan government and the international community for the elimination of the scourge of terrorism.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan

<http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NDgyMQ>

Over 55,000 Afghans, Pakistanis return home in two days - March 09, 2017

Over 32,000 Afghans and 2,700 Pakistanis crossed into their respective countries via the Torkham and Chaman crossing points on March 8 — the last day of reopening of the border with Afghanistan. According to officials, 11,500 Afghans crossed the border on March 08 and 12,539 on March 07. About 700 Pakistanis returned home in two days. At Torkham, the Frontier Corps in collaboration with the political administration made elaborate security and immigration arrangements in order to facilitate swift and speedy return of Afghans and also to avoid the situation such as the one on March 07 when the frustrated people broke security barriers and crushed to death an Afghan woman in their desperation to cross the border.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1319352>

Afghan president invites Peshawar Zalmi to visit Kabul - March 09, 2017

Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Karzai spoke to Javed Afridi, congratulated him on the victory and on behalf of the president, invited the team to visit Afghanistan. Karzai called Zalmi 'Khpal' (own) team. "We have accepted the invitation and the visit is expected in May," Afridi told The Express Tribune. Javed Afridi said foreign players of the team will also travel to Afghanistan. Zalmi's win was also celebrated on the Afghan side of the border and many Afghans posted congratulations on social media. Afghan ambassador to Pakistan Omar Zakhilwal also congratulated the team.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1350175/applauding-victory-peshawar-zalmi-invited-visit-kabul/>

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs receives Afghan media delegation - March 14, 2017

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sartaj Aziz received an Afghan media delegation comprising representatives from leading print and electronic media. The Adviser briefed the delegation about Pakistan's continuous efforts towards peace and stability in Afghanistan stressing that a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan was in Pakistan's interest. He emphasized the need of comprehensive bilateral engagement between the two countries to strengthen trust and confidence and for deepening mutually beneficial

cooperation in the areas of security, counter-terrorism, border management, trade, transit and voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees.

The Adviser also highlighted the role of media in formulating positive perceptions which was imperative for strengthening bilateral ties, restoring trust and effectively dealing with common threats. Afghan media delegation while sharing Afghanistan's perspective on the current situation, agreed on the need for frequent exchange of visits to help bring the governments and peoples of the two countries closer.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan

<http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NDgzMw>

Aziz discusses terror issue with Afghan NSA in London - March 16, 2017

The Prime Minister's Adviser on Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz, has met Afghanistan's National Security Adviser, Hanif Atmar, in London to discuss complaints that Afghan-based militants are mounting attacks on Pakistani soil. It was the highest level face-to-face discussion between representatives of the two countries since Islamabad closed down border crossings with Afghanistan. The two men were hosted by the UK's National Security Adviser, Sir Mark Lyall Grant.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1320758/aziz-discusses-terror-issue-with-afghan-nsa-in-london>

Russia offers to enhance Afghan forces' capabilities - March 17, 2017

Russian foreign minister offered to enhance Afghan forces' capabilities during a meeting with the visiting Afghan National Security Adviser Hanif Atmar on Friday. Sergey Lavrov also said that Russia was ready to increase cooperation with Afghanistan in the field of trade and economy. "We remain fully in favour of developing further cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in the trade, economic and humanitarian spheres and in helping strengthen the combat capability of the Afghan security forces and the Afghan army with a view to ensuring in your country," Lavrov told the senior Afghan official, according to a statement from Russian foreign ministry.

Source: <http://1tvnews.af/en/news/afghanistan/28432>

Afghanistan, Pakistan Agree On Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism - March 17, 2017

Afghan and Pakistani officials at a meeting in London on March 16 agreed to form a joint mechanism to fight the common threat of terrorism, media reports say. The National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar, Britain's National Security Adviser Sir Mark Lyall Grant and Advisor to Pakistan's Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz attended the meeting which took place on March 16. Their first meeting was held on March 15, the reports said. Aziz said at the meeting that his country wants to see a stable and peaceful Afghanistan and remains keen to resolve all the outstanding issues in the interest of regional peace and stability.

Source: <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/afghanistan-pakistan-agree-joint-anti-terror-mechanism>

Pakistan reopens border with Afghanistan - March 20, 2017

Pakistan has announced reopening of its border with landlocked Afghanistan for travellers and trade convoys, a month after closing them on grounds terrorists were using Afghan soil for plotting deadly attacks against the country. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif took the decision on March 20 'as a goodwill gesture' and hoped the Afghan government would take steps required to address 'the reasons' that triggered the border closure.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1360336/pm-nawaz-orders-pak-afghan-border-reopened-immediately/>

Note: The border opening came to the context of a CRSS-led meeting of top businessmen from both countries from March 12-15 in Pakistan. They raised their concerns and requested the opening of the border. The group comprising prominent members of the Pak-Afghan Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industries met with the Minister of Commerce & Trade, Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan, the National Security Advisor, Gen Nasir Janjua, officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and members of the Parliament's Standing Committee on Commerce to apprise them of the difficulties arising out of the border closure. In fact, Gen. Janjua, acknowledging the presence of top Pak-Afghan businessmen, hinted at the opening of the border during the meeting. It is therefore pertinent to note that the CRSS' Beyond Boundaries initiative played its part in the re-

opening of the border behind the scenes, through such high-level government-private sector meetings – which were also highlighted through the media.

Pak-Afghan border reopens – CRSS’ Beyond Boundaries initiative plays its part - March 20, 2017

Only a day before the tense London meeting, CRSS and its partner organization WPSO convened a meeting of top businessmen from both countries between March 12-15 to discuss the fallout of the closure as well as demand opening of the border. In its five point declaration, the group comprising prominent members of the Pak-Afghan Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industries had urged the Pakistan government to reopen the border. Keeping in view this situation, the forum urged to immediately open the border for the clearance of stranded cargo at Torkham and Spin Boldak to clear the cargo from Karachi port.

Source: <https://crssblog.com/2017/03/20/pak-afghan-border-reopens-crss-beyond-boundaries-initiative-plays-its-part/>

Pakistan to Grant Visas to Afghan Patients at Torkham Gate - December 26, 2016

Pakistan’s Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan in a meeting with Afghan border forces has vowed to issue ‘urgent visas’ to Afghan patients at Torkham entry point, VOA reported on Thursday.

According to the report, the Pakistani minister has said the issue of visas for Afghan patients will be resolved in the near future. “We welcome them [Afghans] to visit us and we want to visit their country.

Source:<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/pakistan-grant-%E2%80%98urgent-visas%E2%80%99-afghan-patients-torkham>

Note: Facilitation of visas for critically ill Afghans as well as visas to such patients on arrival at the border was among the policy recommendations of the first and second meeting of the PAJC groups in October and November 2016. This was adopted by the government of Pakistan introducing comprehensive visa regime for Afghans living in Pakistan (spouses, students, businessmen, patients etc). This again highlights the importance of policy recommendations being shared at the highest level of Pakistan government.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs receives Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Committee delegation - March 30, 2017

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sartaj Aziz received on March 30, Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Committee delegation under a Track 1.5/II initiative "Beyond Boundaries" facilitated by CRSS, Pakistan and WPSO, Afghanistan. The delegation comprised leading representatives from Afghan government and media.

The Adviser briefed the delegation about Pakistan's continuous efforts towards peace and stability in Afghanistan stressing that a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan was in Pakistan's interest. He emphasized that the two sides should focus on implementation of the agreed mechanism for engagement to address the issues of security, counter-terrorism and border management. Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to continued efforts for lasting peace in Afghanistan, Adviser Sartaj Aziz underlined the importance of politically negotiated settlement under an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process for resolution of Afghan conflict. The Joint Committee delegation acknowledged Pakistan's facilitation to the Afghan refugees and stressed the need for continuous people to people contacts for strengthening the ties between the two countries.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan

<http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NDg3OA>

Peace in Afghanistan a shared interest: COAS - April 03, 2017

Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa while visiting UK Ministry of Defence said that peace in Afghanistan is a shared interest; Pakistan will continue its positive role and is ready to work closely with Afghanistan. According to an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement, COAS was received by UK CGS General Sir Nick Carter and given the guard of honour at Horse Guards Square.

Source: <https://www.geo.tv/latest/136645-Peace-in-Afghanistan-a-shared-interest-COAS>

ANNEXURE 2

BEYOND BOUNDARIES PHASE II – PROFILES OF PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Pakistani Members



Shazia Marri

Ms. Shazia Marri has been elected to the National Assembly on a general seat from Sindh province, making her one of 7 women directly elected to the Parliament in Pakistan. She is presently a member of the Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms, as well as the Standing Committees on Commerce and Information Technology. Ms. Marri heads the Pakistan - Austria Parliamentary friendship group, and is a member of the Pakistan - Afghanistan Parliamentary friendship group.

Shazia Marri has previously served as a Provincial Minister for Information, Tourism and Electric Power of Sindh, as well as Advisor to the Sindh Government on Oil and Gas, during which she contributed significantly to the development of these sectors in Sindh. In addition to other responsibilities, she has also led Pakistan's delegation to the 53rd session of CSW at the United Nations. Shazia Marri remained a member of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh in 2002 and in 2008. From 2003 to 2007, she hosted a TV programme on social issues.

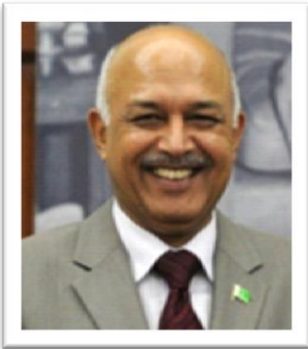


Ayesha Gulalai Wazir

Ayesha Gulalai Wazir is a Pakistani human rights activist and politician. She is the Member of National Assembly representing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on a reserved seat for women. Ayesha was born and raised in Bannu city. Prior to joining PTI, Ayesha has served as the Chief Coordinator of the Pakistan People's Party for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and was also briefly part of All Pakistan Muslim League. She holds a degree

of Bachelors in International Relations, BS in Computer Science, and Masters in Comparative Religions.

A fourth generation soldier, Lt General (Retd) Asif Yasin Malik joined the Pakistan Army in 1973 as an infantry officer. He has undergone one year training in Germany and served in Saudi Arabia for two years. He was the Brigade Major(S-3) of an infantry brigade, Chief of Staff of a Strike Corps apart from being on the faculty of Command and Staff College. He has also acted in a joint capacity by serving as the Director General Joint Intelligence and Information Operations in The Joint Staff Headquarters and a Director General in Inter-Services Intelligence. He completed his service and retired from active duty in Dec 11. He was appointed as Secretary of Defense in July 2012 and completed his tenure in July 2014.



Asif Yasin Malik

Lt. Gen (retd.) Yasin is a graduate of Pakistan Army Command and Staff College, has done his Masters from National Defense University Islamabad and also has a Master's degree in Strategic Resource Management from National Defense University, Washington, DC. While at the NDU Washington DC he was the Class President of the International Fellows. He was bestowed the Privilege of gracing the NDU Washington Alumni Hall of Fame in 2013, the first Pakistani to have this honour.

Lt. Gen (retd.) Yasin has a diploma in German language, has travelled widely both home and abroad and spends his leisure time in photography. He is a regular invitee at strategic seminars and intellectual gatherings both at home and across the globe.



Shoaib Suddle

Dr. Shoaib Suddle is regarded as a leading police and justice sector reform specialist in South Asia. He is a visiting criminal justice expert at the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute on Crime Prevention and Treatment of Offenders, Tokyo, advisor Turkish National Police, and a resource person with several national and international organizations, including United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna. He is also International Director of Asia Crime Prevention Foundation,

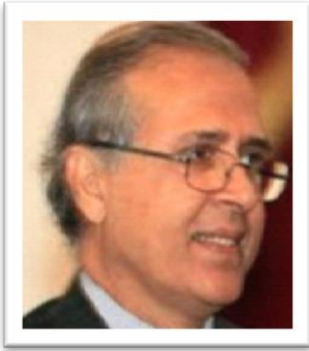
Tokyo. Dr. Suddle has an MSc (Econ.) in criminology and a PhD in white-collar crime from Cardiff University (Wales, UK), MSc (Physics) from Government College Lahore, and an LLB from the University of the Punjab. His doctoral thesis was on tax evasion. He is author of several publications on justice sector issues published both in Pakistan and abroad. He is regularly invited to speak at various international conferences around the world.

Before serving as Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan, he headed the Intelligence Bureau (Pakistan's premiere civilian intelligence agency), following his stint as Inspector General Police, Sindh. He began his police career in 1973 and has held several key positions both at operational and strategic levels, including as Police Chief of Balochistan, Director General, National Police Bureau, Consultant in the National Reconstruction Bureau, Director General, Bureau of Police Research & Development, Police Chief of Karachi, Deputy Commandant, National Police Academy, and Director (Economic Crime), Federal Investigation Agency. His role in controlling urban terrorism in Karachi in mid 1990s and difficult law and order situation in Balochistan (2001-04) earned him wide acclaim, both nationally and internationally. In recognition of his exceptional contribution, he was decorated with the top gallantry award of Hilal-e-Shujaat in 1996 and top civil award of Hilal-e-Imtiaz in 2008.



Qazi Humayun

Mr. Qazi Humayun has served as a career diplomat with the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Among the distinguished positions held during his illustrious career, he initially went to Afghanistan in the year 1972, and later served as Pakistani ambassador to Afghanistan between the years 1995-1996. He was the director-general of the Pakistani Foreign Ministry for Afghanistan between the years 1992-1995.



Mian Sanallah

Mian Sanallah is a career diplomat. Having served at various diplomatic missions during his illustrious career; he is an expert on policy analysis and its application to sensitive political issues with bilateral, regional ramifications, management and development of policy options and strategies, coordination of workshops, training facilities, and media projection.

As Deputy Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) based in Tehran (Republic of Iran) closely worked with Cabinet Ministers and higher officials of 10 member countries including Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

He served as Director and Director General Levels at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pakistan. Foreign appointments included:

Served as Ambassador to ASEAN, Republic of Indonesia, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Timor-Leste from November 2009 till September 2013; served as Ambassador to Romania, Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova; worked as Acting Secretary General of ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization)-2003.(four months); Deputy Secretary General of ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) from 2000- 2003; worked as a Consultant to UNCTAD on “Trade Facilitation Measures – Access of Landlocked countries” (2003); served in different diplomatic capacities in India (twice), Belgium, China and Iran.



Muhammad Tahir

Mr. Muhammad Tahir started his career in Journalism in 1990 as a reporter at the private news agency Pakistan Press International (PPI) in Islamabad. Over the years he has covered Foreign Affairs, Defence, Tribal Areas, the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban. He has also worked with Radio Pakistan and BBC Pashto radio. Currently he is associated with the Pakistani news agency News Network International (NNI) as Editor in Islamabad. Mr. Tahir holds a graduate degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from Gomal University (Dera Ismail Khan).



Ijaz Awan

Maj Gen Ijaz Hussain Awan is a retired general of the Pakistan Army with varied and extensive Command, Combat, Staff and instructional experience. He commanded an infantry Division in the war on Terror in 2011 and led a United Nation Peace keeping Mission in Sierra Leon in 2003. He also led the anti-terror operation in Swat in 2009. He served as Pakistan's High Commissioner to Brunei Darussalam from 2012 to 2014.

Ijaz Hussain Awan was commissioned in the Corps of Infantry in Oct 1977 in the 56th Long Course. He is a graduate of Command and Staff College Quetta, Turkish War College, Istanbul, Turkey and National Defence University Islamabad. He holds a Master's Degree in War and Strategic studies from the Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad and a diploma in Turkish language from the National University of Modern Languages. Gen. Awan was also decorated with several military awards in recognition of his services.



Ahmed Chinoy

Mr. Ahmed Chinoy is the Nominee Director of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) at PMEX. He is the Managing Partner of Arch Group of Companies and is engaged with overseeing various businesses in different sectors such as security investments, textiles, real estates and poultry. He is a member of board of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI).

Mr. Chinoy is a well-known personality and has been privileged to serve the society in different capacities in various fields such as crime issues, business, education, health and social services.

He also served as the Chief of Citizen Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) from the years 2010 to 2015.

Mr. Chinoy is the Director of AKD REIT Management Company Limited since 2011 and of Creek Developers (Private) Limited since 2007. For his meritorious services towards the service sector for the betterment of the nation, he was awarded prestigious national awards; Hilal-e-Imtiaz (H.I.) and Sitara-e-Imtiaz (S.I.). Mr.

Chinoy is also a PSX nominee Director on the Boards of National Clearing Company of Pakistan Limited and JCR-VIS Credit Rating Company Limited.

He is qualified from Institute of Cost & Management Accountants of Pakistan (I.C.M.A.P) and holds a Bachelor's Degree in commerce from University of Karachi.



M. Zubair Motiwala

Zubair Motiwala is an eminent industrialist, businessman and social worker. He is a Founder Chairman of Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PAJCCI), Managing Director of Diamond Textile (Pvt.) Ltd. and Director Motiwala Industries. He is a Vice Chairman BMG Group & director on the boards of Private Power & Infrastructure Board (PPIB), Karachi Electric (KE), Port Qasim Authority, Interstate Gas Company (ISGC), Sindh Education City, Pak Oman Investment Company Ltd., Sindh Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (SPPRA), Chief Minister Relief Fund. He also holds 'Certificate of Director Education' from

Pakistan Institute of Corporate Governance.

Mr. Motiwala was Former Chairman Sindh Board Investment, from July 2011 to October 2013. He was Advisor to Chief Minister Sindh on Investment from January 2009 to July 2011. He was appointed as Special Assistant to Chief Minister Sindh (Minister Status) for affairs relating to the business community from 28th September 2012 till 19th March 2013. He was also the Advisor to Chief Minister Sindh on Investment since January 2009 & Chairman Sindh Entrepreneur development fund that supported value addition industry for Agro produce of Sindh.

He was the 1st President of Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PAJCCI) in March 2012. He was the focal person from Pakistan during rounds of Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Talks specifically focused on finalization of APTTA 2010. At the same forum an understanding was developed to form Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry to address and resolve the issues of informal trade.

Mr. Motiwala was elected as the President Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry for the period 2000-2001. He also served the industrial sector as the Chairman of the Council of Karachi Industrial Associations during 1997-98. In

1996-97, he was also elected as the Chairman of SITE Association, which is the largest industrial area of Pakistan. Having special skills and interests in textile sector, he carries the honor to be elected as the Chairman of All Pakistan Textile Processing Mills Association and was also nominated as the member of the Prime Minister's Committee on Textile and Exports in 1996.

He has been the Director on the board of various public and private organization which includes Workers Welfare Funds, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, Sindh Industrial Trading Estate (SITE), Pakistan Textile City, Export Processing Zone Authority, IBA Karachi, Ziauddin Medical University, National Bank of Pakistan, College of Business Management, Hamdard University, Sir Syed University of Engineering, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed - Youths' Development Programme & Technology and Baqai Medical College Hospital. Mr. Motiwala was on the advisory board of IT and Telecom Division, Ministry of Science & Technology - Government of Pakistan and Federal Tax Ombudsman.

He led Pakistan trade delegations to China, UAE, Russia, Turkey, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and various other countries. He is also Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Burundi.

Faiza

Faiza is an Executive Director / Secretary General of Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) since its inception in February 2012. She is a spokesperson of the Chamber and is responsible for its complete operations, reporting to donors and the Board. She has been the participant to all bilateral country policy discussion forums like APTTA and Joint Economic Commission Meetings and has been to Afghanistan, Dubai, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan for facilitating Pakistani delegation to strengthen business ties. Additionally, she is an active representative at intra ministerial meetings held in Pakistan from time to time in Afghan Transit and Bilateral issues. She liaises with the US Embassy, British High Commission, Delegation of European Union, USAID, Ministries across the border, etc. for policy and advocacy matters.

Being an MS from SZABIST and an MBA from Institute of Business Administration (IBA), she has amalgamated experience of Human Resource Management and Corporate Marketing spheres. Additionally, she has also worked with donor-funded projects and is competent in running the operations of Not for Profit organizations. She has also served in academia as Head of Department – MBA Program and is also visiting faculty at various universities since 2001. She also runs her own concern “The Catalyst” which is a consultancy business engaged in

system and policy development, organizational development, training and development, etc.

Ms. Faiza is also a corporate trainer in soft skills and has been awarded the status of an accredited World Bank Trainer on Corporate Governance upon completion of TOT on Corporate Governance Leadership Program in 2010 in Egypt. She has also attended Chambers Governance and Operations training organized by the Center for International Private Enterprises (CIPE) – USA in Dubai in January 2014 and has been to the USA to attend “International Visiting Leadership Program” conducted by the US State Department during May – June 2014.

She is called as a speaker on regional integration, Pakistan, Afghanistan trade matters and competency / capacity development within and outside the country. She is currently pursuing her PhD and is also mentoring youth (women specifically) in the field of business and entrepreneurship.



Junaid Makda

Mr. Junaid Esmail Makda is the Chief Executive of Makda Group of Companies. His area of interest includes exports, representations/distributor and joint ventures. He is involved in running knitwear and woven industry since 1980. With that Mr. Makda also has the skills of management, administration and procurement of all type of textile requirements from yarn to exports. He held different key positions during his long and promising career which include: President, SITE Association of Industry; Life Member SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry; Chairman, International Affairs – Liaison with International Chambers formation of joint Chambers and MOUs implementation; Director, Sindh Board of Investment (SBOI) and Chairman to represent on USAID Pakistan Firms Project.

Ishtiaq Baig is the Vice Chairman of Baig Group, a multinational conglomerate operating in Pakistan, UAE & Morocco. He has done double graduation (Bachelor of Arts & Bachelor of Education) from University of Karachi and has more than 30 years of practical experience in the field of textile manufacturing and business management at the senior positions in Pakistan and abroad. He is the Vice President, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry, an apex body representing Country’s Trade, Industry & Services sectors. FPCCI also keep a liaison between the Government & business community of Pakistan in resolving



Ishtiaq Baig

their issues and formulating budget proposals and recommendations for the Government policies on trade & investment.

Ishtiaq Baig has been appointed Hon. Consul General of Morocco by the Government of Morocco in Pakistan, as a Hon. Consul General he is instrumental in enhancing the bilateral trade between Morocco & Pakistan. In recognition of his service His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Kingdom of Morocco has conferred him with prestigious Moroccan National Award “Wissam Alawi”. Ishtiaq Baig is actively engaged in social

welfare work in Pakistan. He is the Founding President of Make-A-Wish Foundation Pakistan, affiliate member of Make-A-Wish Foundation Int’l, the largest wish granting organization in the world granting last wishes of the terminally ill children. He is also a renowned columnist and writes regularly for the largest circulated newspaper of Pakistan, Daily Jang and Author of the book “Aaj Ki Duniya”. He also appears regularly in various TV shows as Analyst on current affairs of national and international issues. He was also conferred with prestigious Civil award “Tamgha-e-Imtiaz” by the President of Pakistan in recognition of his social services.



Aamer Ata Bajwa

Aamer Ata Bajwa holds B.A L.L.B degree and is currently working as Advocate High Court Lahore. By profession he is an industrialist, agriculturist importer/exporter. Mr. Bajwa has 20 years promising experience in business as Chief Executive Textile spinning, flour and rice industry, import/export, LPG logistics and agriculture. He held many key positions in his area of expertise, some of which include: Group Chairman: Sargodha Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Founder Group); Former President: Sargodha Chamber of Commerce & Industry (1998-99 and 2007-2008); Former Regional Chairman/ Vice President: The

Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (Also Acting as Regional Chairman & Acting President & enhance the activities of FPCCI and develop good liaison with Chambers & associations and business community); Founder Chairman: Pak-Czech Republic Business council FPCCI 2011 onwards.

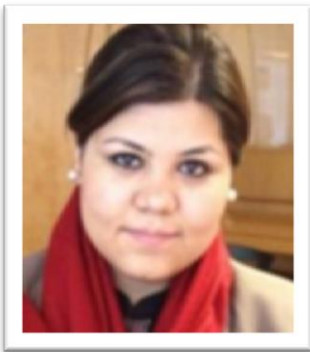
Afghan Members



Elay Ershad

Elay Ershad is currently serving as the Chairperson of the Committee on Education, Higher Education, Cultural Affairs and Religious Affairs. Prior to becoming a parliamentarian, Elay Ershad worked as the Gender Advisor and Executive Assistant to the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Education in Afghanistan. She has also worked in the legal arena, as a Translator and Afghan Representative for Moscovitch Advocate Holland, and as an Assistant Lecturer in the Faculty of Law and Political Science of Kabul University.

Elay Ershad holds a Bachelor's Degree from the Faculty of Law and Political Science in the Department of Diplomacy from the Kabul University. She is fluent in Pashto, Dari, English, and Dutch. She is Chairperson of the Committee on Education, Higher Education, Cultural Affairs and Religious Affairs, and Member of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Afghanistan.



Wazhma Frogh

Mrs. Wazhma Frogh is the Founder of Women & PEACE Studies Organization and a women's rights activist who has led rights campaigns throughout the country. Mrs. Frogh brings over 17 years of struggle and dedication to empowerment & inclusion of Afghan women in Afghanistan.

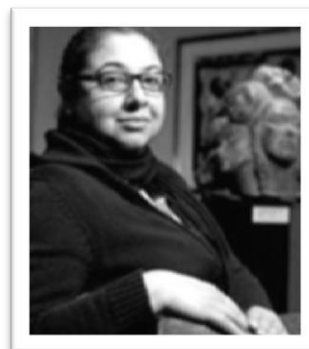
Currently, she is working in capacity of Minister's Advisor on Human Rights and Women's Affairs in the Ministry of Defense and Director of Human Rights & Gender in Ministry of Defense. She is a graduate of Warwick, University UK, with an LLM in International Development Law & Human Rights. Frogh is also trained at Harvard University and George Washington University in human rights, legislative advocacy and campaigning, and gender and peace building in Afghanistan. She is a frequent representative spokesperson

at national, regional and international platforms on Afghanistan. She represented Afghan civil society and women groups at the Traditional Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) and Peace Loya Jirga.



Khalid Pashtoon

Khalid Pashtoon, was born 1959 in Kandahar Province and hails from Barakzai Tribe. High school graduate, Pashtoon completed his primary education at the Tajrubawi School and his secondary education at Zahir Shahi High School in Kandahar. In 1981 he immigrated to the United States and enrolled in Watterson College in California, where he earned his bachelor's degree in Business and Management. Pashtoon taught at the Tajrubawi School from 1979-1980. From 1980-1981, he worked in a government office as an accountant. After graduating from college in the United States, he worked as the manager of a computer company and then in the American banking industry. In 2001, he began his own business in the United States. After returning to Afghanistan, he was appointed head of the Department for Foreign Affairs in Kandahar, and the political representative of Southern Kandahar. He was also a spokesperson and political advisor to the Governor of Kandahar.



Palwasha Hassan

Palwasha Hassan holds a master's degree in Post-war Recovery Studies from York University, UK and has been former fellow in United States Institute of Peace. She is a dedicated Women's Rights activist pioneering many critical work for promotion of Women's rights and civil society in Afghanistan that includes first women legal support organization Roazana, Women and street Children Center, Madadagar Women and Children Safe Home Network, Irfan Cultural Center among others. She is a strong advocate on women peace building and women participation in social and political development.

Ms. Hassan is born and raised in Afghanistan in her early teens she migrated with her family to Pakistan where she completed her school and acquired under graduation degree in Science. Palwasha remain director of Afghan Women

Educational Center (1995---2002).In her work with AWEC she laid the with collaboration of other women in exile the foundation of Afghan Women Network, a visionary movement of women which is playing pivotal role in Women’s right lobby in the country from last twenty years.



Mozammil Shinwari

Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, Former Deputy Minister of Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MoCI) (Dec 2011 - Aug 2016). He also served as Acting Minister for the period of 5 months in the start of the National Unity Government in 2015. Mr. Shinwari has a Bachelor degree in Business Administration and Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from the American University of Afghanistan. Mr. Shinwari brings more than nine years of highly specialized experience in the fields of international trade, bilateral and multi-lateral negotiations of trade agreements, public finance management and budget formulation.

Mr. Shinwari is distinguished by his passion for business, his focus on collaborative team-building, and his commitment to meeting public clients and managing government reforms in the area of trade. His contagious enthusiasm instills him and his team members with extraordinary energy and dedication in an environment where creativity and innovation are encouraged. Mr. Shinwari does not just set out ambitious goals, he motivates people to deliver.



Sayed Ishaq Gailani

Sayed Ishaq Gailani, son of Sayed Ali Gailani, was born in 1973 in the second district of Kabul province to a well-known religious family. He is the leader of Hezb-e- Nuhzat Hambastagi Milli and is a Sufi religious leader (or “pir”). Gailani graduated from Nadiryia High School in Kabul in 1978, and later earned his bachelor’s degree in Law and Political Science from Tehran University.

Sayed Ishaq Gailani is a nephew of Pir Ahmad Gailani, who is the leader of the Qadiriyya Sufist order and also the head of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA). Soon after the defeat of the USSR forces, Mr. Gailani began his efforts for peace-building, national

solidarity, and unity. Gailani participated in the Bonn conference in 2001 as well as the Cyprus meetings. Sayed Ishaq Gailani is chairman of the National Solidarity Movement of Afghanistan an announced presidential candidate for the Afghan general election which was held June 2004.



**Ketabullah Khpolwak
Sapai**

Born in July 1958 in Kunar, Afghanistan, Mr. Ketabullah Khpolwak Sapai graduated from Kabul University in Journalism in 1980. Between 1981 and 2002, he worked with different public media outlets (print and electronic) of the country, mostly in chief editing position.

From January 2002 to February 2012, Mr. Ketabullah worked with BBC in Kabul bureau and London as well. From February 2012 to June 2015, he worked with Shamshad TV as Broadcasting Director of the channel. From June 2015 till now working, he has been working with TOLONews as the Deputy Director of the channel.

From 2005 to 2012, he also worked as Deputy Head of the AIJA (Afghanistan Independent Journalists Association). For a term of 3 years (from 2012 -2015), he was leading AIJA (Afghanistan Independent Journalists Association). Since November 2015 to date, he is leading the Mass Media Commission of the country.



Mirwais Yasini

Mirwais Yasini son of Maulvi Abdul Sattar, born in 1963 in Tahir village of Kama district of Nangarhar province. He migrated to Pakistan after the invasion of Russian troops and got admission in the Islamabad International University. He got his master degree in Sharia and Political Science from the same university. He joined the Afghan Red Crescent Society as head in Nangarhar in 2002 and worked as director of foreign relations and economic affairs with the Ministry of Finance. He was member of the Emergency Loya Jirga convened in 2002 and then served as deputy of the Loya Jirga, director of counter narcotics and deputy minister counter

narcotics. He made his way to the Wolesi Jirga as a result of the 2005 parliamentary elections and appointed as first deputy speaker of the Wolesi Jirga.



**Abdul Hakeem
Muiahid**

Born in Paktitka province, Abdul Hakim Mujahid was the former Permanent Representative of the Taliban government to the United Nations. He has a dual master degree in political master and Islamic studies from Peshawer University. His bachelor was completed at the National University of Modern Languages in English literature. His first political engagement was in the Islamic movement of Afghanistan (Hizb-e-Harakat Islami) party and then he moved to Pakistan to become a member of the Afghan mujahidin movement based in Pakistan. In 1993, he was appointed as an Afghan diplomat in Afghan embassy, Islamabad. During the Taliban regime in 1997,

Mr Mujahid was appointed as the permanent representative of the Taliban government to the United Nations in New York, USA. In 1998, he served as the Afghanistan ambassador to Pakistan on behalf of the Taliban government. Following 9/11 events, Mr Mujahid was dis-affiliated from the Taliban movement and government and based on an agreement with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, joined the government and came to Kabul in 2005. He was working with the Ministry of Education on the Islamic curriculum development. Since 2010, he has served as the first deputy, and head of the executive committee of the High Peace Council.



Humira Saqeb

Humira Saqeb has been the Chairperson of Afghan Civil Society Joint Working Group, since 2014. Similarly, Mrs.Saqib has been active as a Chairperson of Afghan Civil Society Organization Network for peace since, 2015, Chief Executive Officer of Afghan Women News Agency, since 2009, and Executive Manager of Negha Zan Magazine since 2008.

Mrs. Saqeb also worked as a Manager for Afghan Child Care Org (2002) and as a Director of

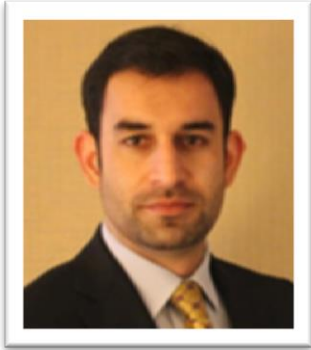
Women Section in Afghan Pen magazine 1999 Mrs. Humira Saqeb has a Bachelor degree in Psychology from Kabul University and a certificate in Finance and Business from Northwood University, United States.



Rahim Danish

Rahim Danish has more than 36 years' experience as a journalist with Radio and television. Danish was born in 1961. Following his graduation from Ghazi High School in 1980 he went to study law at the Kabul University. To advance his knowledge in other fields, Mr. Danish has also been to Firdausi Farsi Language University (1981 to 1984) and Firdausi finance institute (2002 to 2003).

Furthermore for one year he has studied making documentary films at the Young Cinema institute. Rahim Danish is currently working as a Producer, director, writer and public outreach advisor with the Ariana International television in Afghanistan.



Samiullah Mahdi

Mr. Samiullah Mahdi is the Director of the PAYK Investigative Journalism Center in Afghanistan and Associate Director of TOLONews. He previously worked as CEO of Khurshid TV from 2013 to 2014 and as Director of News and Current Affairs at 1TV from 2009 to 2012. At 1TV, Mr. Mahdi produced and hosted internationally acclaimed programs such as "Kabul Debate Live," "The Mask," He was also an op-ed contributor to major Afghan newspapers and magazines. In 2012, Mr. Mahdi was awarded the prestigious Knight International Journalism Award from the International Center for

Journalists (ICFJ) for his excellent and courageous reporting. Prior to joining 1TV, Mr. Mahdi began his career as a journalist in 2007 with Tolo TV, where he hosted a weekly show, "Hardtalk." Mr. Mahdi holds a BA from the School of Law and Political Science of Kabul University (2009) and a MA in International Relations from the University of Massachusetts Boston as a Fulbright Scholar (2016).



Safora Ilkhani

Safora Ilkhani was born 1966 in Yakawlang District, Bamyan Province. Yalkhani has a bachelor's degree in Agriculture from the Agriculture and Animal Husbandry faculty of Kabul University, which she earned in 2006. She has got higher education and was working as a teacher.

Between 2001 and 2004, she worked as an assistant on immigrant rights at the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Following this she worked as a human, gender and political rights assistant at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in Bamyan

Province for nine months before running for parliament. She has also worked for NDI in helping to build the women's caucus in parliament. Ilkhani won a seat for Bamyan province in 2005 with 2,864 votes. She was the highest scoring female candidate in the province. During this term, she was a member of the Oversight of the Implementation of the Law and Central Audit commission.

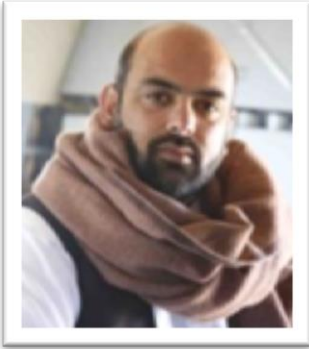


Fawzia Koofi

Fawzia Koofi has made her leadership journey in a country of harsh topography, internal conflict, intermittent wars and a militant government. She completed high school during the war ravaged years and entered a competitive medical school. But soon after the Taliban took over in September 1995, and barred women from access to all education! Finding the doors of a university education closed to her, Fawzia focused her energy towards women's right organizations, and worked closely with one of the most vulnerable group such as Internally Displaced People (IDP), and marginalized women and children.

After the fall of the Taliban, she continued law faculty night shift while still working with UNICEF. But because of faculty duration which is seven years and that medical faculty had no night shift, she shifted to law and acquired a law degree and later pursued a Master's in Business and Management from Preston University. She is the author of letters to my daughters and the favorite daughter book which is her auto biography and best seller in many countries around the

world. Recently she has been elected as president of IPU's Human rights Committee, IPU works to promote democracy and peace around the world.

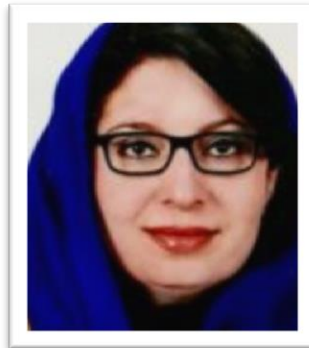


Bilal Sarwary

Bilal Sarwary is a freelance journalist in Afghanistan who graduated from Middlebury College, Vermont in 2010 as an Independent Scholar majoring in the central linkages between warfare, drugs and terrorism.

After over thirteen years of work, he left BBC for professional development reasons. He is a huge fan and a regular user of social media where he contributed a lot to promoting Afghanistan on Twitter and Facebook. As an effort to play a part in showcasing Afghanistan's raw and natural beauty of rural life and landscape, he runs the

"Afghanistan You Never See Before" pages on Twitter and Facebook. In 2011, he was named in the Foreign Policy's 100 Twitterati list.



Asila Wardak

Asila Wardak Jamal, a prominent women's rights and civil society activist, is the first Afghan woman elected as a member on the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation's Independent Human Rights Commission.

Previously Ms. Wardak served as Minister Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations. She was also appointed as Director General of Human Rights and Women's International Affairs at the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

From 2009-2011 she was a gender and social development specialist at the Asian Development Bank. She has previously worked as a safety and social development specialist for the World Bank, during which she had short-term consultancies with the UN Development Programme, UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, CARE and the Canada Fund.

She is a frequent representative spokesperson at national, regional, and international convenings on Afghanistan. As a member of the Afghan Women's Network, she joined the organization's civil society delegation at the 2011 Bonn

Conference in Germany. She also participated in the 2010 Loya Peace Jirga as one of the only women representatives. Ms. Wardak holds a bachelor's degree in agricultural economy from Kabul University and a master's degree in international relations and diplomacy from New Jersey University.



**Ahmad Shah
Yarzada**

Mr. Ahmad Shah Yarzada is the Managing Director of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) and owner of Masood Najeeb Ltd which imports high quality tea; black, green and others, in addition to other related tea items with a wide background.



Ahmad Shafiq

Mr. Ahmad Shafiq Ahmadi is the Vice President of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) and owner of Royal Standard Ltd which has a very good market in Afghanistan and all royal company items in Afghanistan deal by this company.



Gulab Khan

Mr. Gulab Khan is the President of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) and owner of Gulab Tahir Ltd which is one of the major trading companies that imports a variety of sweet items into Afghanistan from Turkey, Central Asian countries and others.



**Mukhlis Ahmad
Younas**

Mr. Mukhlis Ahmad Younas is the President of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) and owner of Tawseef Company Ltd which is involved in the sector of foods and construction, in the eastern region of Afghanistan. The company is also linked with the Nangarhard Chamber of Commerce and Industry.



**M. Mustafa
Babakarkhil**

Mr. Mohammad Mustafa Babakarkhil is the Vice President of Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) and owner of Imran Subhan Osmani Ltd which is the sole distributor of dairy products of ENGRO Pakistan while also an importer of dairy products from other countries.

ANNEXURE 3

TESTIMONIALS

“Initiatives such as Beyond Boundaries are extremely important in a difficult geo-political environment and in view of the complicated bilateral relations. Governments usually lack vision, courage, and readiness for change, therefore it is the job of independent thinkers and think tanks to redirect the bilateral relationship”, [Dr. Rasul Baksh Rais, professor of political science at Lahore University of Management Sciences \(LUMS\) and a renowned political and defense analyst.](#)

“Unfortunately at state level there has been a deadlock in the bilateral talks between the two countries, but initiatives like *Beyond Boundaries* with the presence of high level delegates is a timely intervention, as in the absence of formal dialogue through this platform the individuals were able to tackle problems that require concerted efforts”. [Lt. Gen. \(retd\) Abdul Qadir Baloch, Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions \(SAFRON\)](#)

“Efforts like your track II Beyond Boundaries are much needed and appreciated, even though the ground realities can be different, but engagement is very important, and you as civil society representatives from both the countries are moving in the right direction”, [H.E Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer Afghan National Unity Government](#)

“This is my third visit to Afghanistan as part of Beyond Boundaries. Such interactions help us understand the situation on ground. We need to look forward together, and work together for next generations of our two countries. We can use such endeavors to improve relations and people-to-people contact”, [Ms. Shazia Marri, Member National Assembly \(PPP\)](#)

“I welcome the Beyond Boundaries delegations and thank you all; the issues that you have been discussing peace, education, refugees and others are really important for us to work together. The initiative of CRSS-WPSO and groups is very important and imperative to keep the dialogue for peaceful bilateral relations through such high level civil society engagement”, [S. Hossain Alemi Balkhi, Minister of Refugee and Repatriation](#)

“I welcome the Pakistani and Afghan PAJC members, and appreciate the fact that despite all ups and downs the Beyond Boundaries track II dialogue has survived. I

have with keen interest followed the previous six meetings of the first phase of Beyond Boundaries and have had the chance to read through some of the recommendations coming out of those. Such dialogues and engagement is very encouraging at people-to-people and civil society levels and it must continue”, [Dr. Nasir Ahmad Andisha, Deputy Foreign Minister \(Management & Resources\) of Afghanistan](#)

“I am very glad to see initiatives like Beyond Boundaries aimed at normalizing the bilateral relations. Afghanistan and Pakistan had a great potential, having served in both countries as Ambassador, I love Afghanistan and Pakistan equally and want to see them as friendly neighbours always”, [Ms. Anne Wilkens, former Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan and Afghanistan](#)

“I appreciate that such track II initiatives are very important to improve the relations at people to people level. I am thankful to the two civil society organizations for taking such initiative to improve bilateral relations between the two countries, since working together is need of the hour for both countries”, [Mr. Jam Mehtab Dahar, Minister for Education, Government of Sindh](#)

“We have had successful meetings; we want to expand it to people to people contact, especially education. Beyond Boundaries has been very successful; we feel we have achieved a lot in this short time”, [Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, Member of Afghan Parliament](#)

“I am glad to appreciate the Beyond Boundaries project for its efforts to bring the two countries closer, improving social, economic prosperity and improving the cooperation in media, sports, arts and culture”, [Mirza Ishtiaq Baig, Vice President, Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industries \(FPCCI\)](#)

“I welcome the Beyond Boundaries groups including Parliamentarians to the Sindh Assembly. Exchange of parliamentarians between Afghanistan and Pakistan is critical to improve ties. I would love to visit the Afghan Parliament along with the other Pakistani MPs. Exchange of parliamentarians would be an excellent initiative to improve the bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. I would also like to extend all possible cooperation for the betterment of ties between the two countries”, [H.E Agha Siraj Durrani, Speaker Sindh Assembly](#)

“Pakistan and Afghanistan have had similar problems, we have faced terrorist attacks, we need to come together and join hands to fight this terrorism and bring peace to the two countries and the region; that is why Beyond Boundaries

becomes important, we can lobby, convey and influence the two governments to move forward for peaceful relations”, [Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Minister of Trade & Commerce for Afghanistan](#)

”Beyond Boundaries is a good forum and an attempt to ameliorate the trust deficit between Afghanistan and Pakistan”, [Mr. Abdul Hakim Mujahid, Head of Executive Council of High Peace Council Afghanistan.](#)

”I thank the Beyond Boundaries delegation for working for the betterment of the two peoples. I appreciate your hard work and efforts for solving the issues between the two countries. During my recent visit to Islamabad and meetings with my counterpart Ministry, I could see the results of Beyond Boundaries’ work and advocacy which had greatly impacted the bilateral relations. The concessions on visa regime and refugees as well as extension of the date for their repatriation, I must say that Beyond Boundaries has a great role in this too. I am willing to extend all possible cooperation and support for the improvement and strengthening of bilateral relations. The continuity of initiatives like Beyond Boundaries, the two countries will have a very bright future”, [Mr. S. Hussain Alemi Balkhi, Minister of Refugees and Repatriation of Afghanistan](#)

”Beyond Boundaries had worked for several issues such as refugees stay extension, issuance of visas for exceptional cases, trade issues and generated focused and result oriented policy recommendations. The policy of Pakistan Government is to continue facilitation for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The development on the refugees issue is the outcome of Beyond Boundaries’ work and recommendations”, [Mr. Qazi Humayun, former Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan](#)

”I warmly welcome the two delegations of Beyond Boundaries consisting of business & trade leaders, and appreciate the initiative by CRSS as a timely intervention to bring together the business communities and Chambers of the two countries at a time when the transit and bilateral trade had been shut down. I extend my full support to the business communities represented here. The business and trade communities of both the countries can influence and push their respective Governments for an early opening of the border points which will open trade again”, [H. E. Omar Zakhilwal, Ambassador of Afghanistan to Pakistan](#)

”I commend the CRSS initiative of Beyond Boundaries for making significant contribution towards bringing the two countries together in the last two years”,

Mr. Mansour Khan, Director General Afghanistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan

“I warmly welcome the business leaders from Afghanistan and Pakistan, ever since the CRSS had approached me regarding the upcoming visit of the Afghanistan/Pakistan business leaders, I was very pleased and was looking forward to host my brothers and sisters from Afghanistan and Pakistan. You hold the key and are the force that, if used, can bind the two countries together and help security and other bilateral issues”, [Lt. Gen. Nasser Khan Janjua, Pakistan’s National Security Advisor](#)

“I welcome the two delegations of business/trade leaders from the CRSS Beyond Boundaries, this is a very timely initiative given the context of the border closure. The brotherly relations with Afghanistan are very important to us and are also on priority of PM Nawaz Sharif. We have tremendous past, commonality of religion, traditions and culture bind us together. Afghanistan’s peace and prosperity is important to us, as it is linked with Pakistan’s peace”, [Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce](#)

“I welcome the joint delegation and appreciate the efforts of CRSS for organizing the track II dialogue to ease tensions between the two countries and enhance people-to-people contacts. I congratulate Mr. Imtiaz Gul and CRSS on the Beyond Boundaries initiative, and hope that the organization would continue this excellent initiative”, [Mr. Mian Raza Rabbani, Chairman Senate of Pakistan](#)

“The track 2 initiatives such as Beyond Boundaries have proven usefulness in difficult situations; especially when the relations at the official level are not good”, [H.E Sartaj Aziz, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs](#)

ANNEXURE 4

SIGAR - Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Report published on JULY 30, 2017

For the complete SIGAR report, visit the below website:

<https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2017-07-30qr.pdf>

The Executive Summary from the SIGAR report is listed below:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes SIGAR's oversight work and updates developments in the four major sectors of Afghanistan's reconstruction effort from April 1 to June 30, 2017.* It also includes an essay on the challenge of conducting effective reconstruction oversight under seemingly unduly restrictive restraints on movement. During this reporting period, SIGAR published 16 audits, inspections, reviews, and other products assessing the U.S. efforts to build the Afghan security forces, improve governance, facilitate economic and social development, and combat the sale and production of narcotics. During the reporting period, SIGAR criminal investigations resulted in three criminal indictments, one criminal information charge, three arrests, three convictions, one sentencing, over \$200,000 in restitutions, and more than \$5.5 million in savings for the U.S. government. SIGAR initiated 11 new cases and closed eight, bringing the total number of ongoing investigations to 267. Additionally, SIGAR's suspension and debarment program referred 13 individuals and 16 companies for suspension or debarment based on evidence developed as part of investigations conducted by SIGAR in Afghanistan and the United States.

SIGAR OVERVIEW

AUDITS

This quarter, SIGAR published two performance audits, four financial audits, one classified report, and one inspection report.

The **performance audits** found:

State and USAID need to address SIGAR's prior recommendations for safeguarding payments for Afghan government employees and embedded technical advisors.

DOD spent \$457.7 million on intelligencecapacity-building programs, but the impact cannot be fully assessed because of a lack of performance metrics. The financial audits identified \$27,229,340 in questioned costs as a result of internalcontrol deficiencies and noncompliance issues. These deficiencies and noncompliance issues included, among other things, incorrect employee payments and miscalculations of travel costs, exceeding maximum budgets without prior approval, and insufficient documentation to support project expenses.

The **classified report**:

At the request of a bipartisan, bicameral group of 93 members of Congress, SIGAR this quarter issued a report to Congress on DOD and State's implementation of the Leahy Laws in Afghanistan. The report concerned allegations of sexual abuse of children by members of the Afghan security forces. Because DOD has classified much of the information on which the SIGAR report is based, the report is classified. SIGAR has requested that DOD declassify the report so that it can be released to the public.

The **inspection report** found:

State awarded Al-Watan Construction Company (AWCC) a \$16.1 million contract to renovate Pol-i-Charkhi prison, Afghanistan's largest correctional facility, which had suffered 35 years of neglect. This contract was funded by Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Despite the costs inflating to \$20.2 million, only about 50% of the renovation work was completed, and the AWCC contract was cancelled in 2010. In 2016, SIGAR found that INL had not completed the renovation work or corrected earlier deficiencies. SIGAR provided recommendations to INL on how to complete the work and protect the U.S. investment.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

This quarter SIGAR's Office of Special Projects wrote eight products, reviews, and inquiry letters expressing concern on a range of issues including:

DOD possibly spending \$28 million more than needed to procure ANA uniforms that are inappropriate for the Afghan environment schools in Kunar Province constructed or rehabilitated through funds provided by DOD's Commander's Emergency Response Program conditions at USAID supported health facilities in Takhar Province inquiries to the Asian Development Bank seeking documentation on the ongoing Qaisar-Laman Ring Road project.

INVESTIGATIONS

During the reporting period, SIGAR investigations resulted in three criminal indictments, one criminal information, three arrests, three convictions, one sentencing, over \$200,000 in restitutions and more than \$5.5 million in savings for the U.S. government. SIGAR initiated 11 new cases and closed eight, bringing the total number of ongoing investigations to 267. SIGAR's suspension and debarment program referred 13 individuals and 16 companies for suspension or debarment based on evidence developed as part of investigations conducted by SIGAR in Afghanistan and the United States.

Investigations highlights include:

The indictment of former mining company owner for defrauding the U.S. government and defaulting on a \$15.8 million loan

The investigation of a USAID implementing partner resulting in a \$5.5 million cost savings to the U.S. government

A U.S. contractor indicted for theft and sale of U.S. government property

A U.S. contractor indicted for a bribery scheme involving \$75,000 in kickback payments in exchange for delivering contracts

The arrest of an Afghan national using a SIGAR identification card to justify carrying an illegal firearm

** SIGAR may also report on products and events occurring after June 30, 2017, up to the publication date.*

ANNEXURE 5

Article published in The Balance:

<https://www.thebalance.com/cost-of-afghanistan-war-timeline-economic-impact-4122493>

Cost of Afghanistan War: Timeline, Economic Impact

The Ongoing Costs of the Afghanistan War

The Afghanistan War is a military conflict that began in 2001 and has cost \$1.07 trillion. The Bush administration launched it in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks by al-Qaida. The United States attacked the Taliban in Afghanistan for hiding al-Qaida's leader, Osama bin Laden. It was the kick-off to the War on Terror.

The war's \$1.07 trillion cost has three main components. First is the \$773 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations funds specifically dedicated to the Afghanistan War.

Second is the increase of \$243 billion to the base budget of the Department of Defense. Third is the increase of \$54.2 billion to the Veterans Administration budget.

Some of these costs are also attributable to the War in Iraq. But the true cost of the Afghanistan War should include the addition to these departments, even if some of the funds went toward both wars. For more on how to determine the actual cost of defense, see the U.S. Military Budget.

Timeline of Afghanistan War Costs

Here's a timeline of what happened each year. A table that summarizes these costs is below.

FY 2001 - \$37.3 billion: Osama bin Laden authorized 9/11 attacks. President Bush demanded that the Afghanistan Taliban deliver bin Laden or risk U.S. attack. Congress appropriated \$22.9 billion in emergency funding. On October 7, U.S. jets bombed Taliban forces. On December 7, the Taliban abandon Kabul, the capital. Hamid Karzai became interim administration head.

That same month, ground troops pursued bin Laden into the Afghan foothills. He escaped to Pakistan on December 16, 2001.

FY 2002 - \$65.1 billion: In March, the U.S. military launched Operation Anaconda against Taliban fighters. Bush promised to reconstruct Afghanistan, but only provided \$38 billion between 2001 and 2009.

Bush turned attention to Iraq War.

FY 2003 - \$56.7 billion: In May, the Bush Administration announced that major combat ended in Afghanistan. NATO took over control of the peacekeeping mission. NATO added 65,000 troops from 42 countries.

FY 2004 - \$29.6 billion: On January 9, Afghanistan created a new Constitution. On October 9, the U.S. military protected Afghans from Taliban attacks for their first free election. On October 29, bin Laden threatened another terrorist attack.

FY 2005 - \$47.4 billion: On May 23, Bush and Karzai signed an agreement allowing U.S. military access to Afghan military facilities in return for training and equipment. Six million Afghans voted for national and local councils. Three million voters were women.

FY 2006 - \$29.9 billion: The new Afghanistan government struggled to provide basic services, including police protection. Violence increases. The United States criticized NATO for not providing more soldiers.

FY 2007 - \$57.3 billion: Allies assassinated a Taliban commander, Mullah Dadullah.

FY 2008 - \$87.7 billion: Violence escalated in Afghanistan after U.S. troops accidentally killed civilians.

FY 2009 - \$100 billion: President Obama took office. He sent 17,000 more troops to Afghanistan in April.

He promised to send another 30,000 in December. He named Lt. General McChrystal as the new commander. Obama's strategy focused on attacking resurgent Taliban and al-Qaida forces on the Pakistan border. That added \$59.5 billion to Bush's FY 2009 budget. He promised to withdraw all troops by 2011. Voters reelected Karzai amidst accusations of fraud.

FY 2010 - \$112.7 billion: NATO sent surge forces to fight the Taliban in southern Afghanistan. NATO agreed to turn over all defense to Afghan forces by 2014. Obama replaced McChrystal with General Petraeus. Afghanistan held parliamentary elections amidst charges of fraud.

FY 2011 - \$110.4 billion: Special Forces took out Osama bin Laden on May 1, 2011. Obama announced he would withdraw 10,000 troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year and 23,000 by the end of 2012.

The United States held preliminary peace talks with Taliban leaders. (Source: Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror

Operations Since 9/11," Table A1. Congressional Research Service, March 29, 2014.)

FY 2012 - \$105.1 billion: Obama announced the withdrawal of another 23,000 troops from Afghanistan in the summer, leaving 70,000 troops remaining. Both sides agreed to hasten U.S. troop withdrawal to 2013. Their presence had become unwelcome. The Taliban canceled U.S. peace talks.

FY 2013 - \$53.3 billion: U.S. forces shifted to a training and support role. The Taliban reignited peace negotiations with the United States, causing Karzai to suspend his U.S. negotiations.

FY 2014 - \$80.2 billion: Obama announced final U.S. troop withdrawal, with only 9,800 advisors remaining at the end of the year. (Source: "Afghanistan War," Council on Foreign Relations. "Major Events in the Afghanistan War," The New York Times.)

FY 2015 - \$60.9 billion: Troops trained Afghan forces. (Source: DoD 2015 OCO Amendment)

FY 2016 - \$30.8 billion: The DoD requested funds for training efforts in Afghanistan as well as training and equipment for Syrian opposition forces. It also included support for NATO and responses to terrorist threats. (Source: DoD 2016 OCO Amendment)

FY 2017 - \$5.7 billion: The DoD requested \$58.8 billion for Operation Freedom Sentinel in Afghanistan, Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and the Levant, increased European support and counterterrorism. (Source: DoD 2017 OCO Amendment.)

In June 2017, President Donald Trump has authorized sending 3,000 to 5,000 more troops into Afghanistan to strengthen training efforts there. In a speech on August 21, 2017, he committed to a higher but unspecified number of troops. His focus is on attacking terrorists and not nation-building.

Trump promised to pressure Pakistan to crack down on terrorist cells along its border with Afghanistan. He called on the Afghan government to rein in corruption. But his ability to do so is uncertain. He has not yet placed an ambassador in Kabul. He closed the office of the special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Trump's strategy is not very different from his predecessors. He campaigned on withdrawing completely. But that would allow the Taliban and terrorists to fill the

void. (Source: "Trump Sets U.S. Strategy for Afghan War," The New York Times, August 21, 2017.)

Afghan troops are fighting a resurgence of the Taliban and the Islamic State group. There are 9,800 Americans there as part of of 13,000 troop international force. (Sources: "Trump Gives Mattis Authority to Send More Troops to Afghanistan," The New York Times, June 13, 2017. "Trump Weighs the Rhetoric and Reality in Afghanistan Troop Decision," CNN, May 10, 2017.

FY	Cost of Afghanistan War	DoD Budget Increase	VA Budget Increase	Total	Boots on Ground *	Comments
2001	\$29.3	\$6.5	\$1.5	\$37.3	9,700	9/11. Taliban falls.
2002	\$22.8	\$40.8	\$1.5	\$65.1	9,700	
2003	\$68.4	\$36.7	\$2.6	\$56.7	13,100	NATO enters.
2004	\$92.1	\$11.6	\$2.6	\$29.6	18,300	1st vote.
2005	\$99.8	\$23.6	\$3.1	\$47.4	17,821	Karzai agreement.
2006	\$114.7	\$10.5	\$0.7	\$29.9	20,502	Violence rises.
2007	\$161.9	\$20.9	\$5.3	\$57.3	24,780	
2008	\$182.9	\$47.5	\$1.2	\$87.7	32,500	
2009	\$149.1	\$34.2	\$9.8	\$100.0	69,000	Obama surge.
2010	\$158.9	\$14.7	\$3.9	\$112.7	96,900	NATO surge.
2011	\$153.3	\$0.3	\$3.3	\$110.4	94,100	Bin Laden killed.
2012	\$120.9	\$2.2	\$2.3	\$105.1	65,800	Troop drawdown.

2013	\$93.3	-\$34.9	\$2.6	\$53.3	43,300	
2014	\$82.2	\$0.8	\$2.0	\$80.2	32,500	Troops leave.
2015	\$63.1	\$1.0	\$1.8	\$60.9	9,100	U.S. trains
2016	N/A	\$24.3	\$6.5	\$30.8	9,800	Afghan
2017	N/A	\$2.2	\$3.5	\$5.7	N.A.	troops.
TOTAL	\$773.0	\$243.0	\$54.2	\$1,070.2		

*Boots on Ground is the number of troops in Iraq. From 2001 through 2013, it's as of December of that year. 2014 - 2017 is as of May. (Source: "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," Table A-1. Amy Belasco, Congressional Research Service, March 29, 2014.) Boots on Ground for 2015 and 2016 is as of the fourth quarter. (Source: Heidi M. Peters, "Department of Defense Contractor and Troop Levels in Iraq and Afghanistan: 2007-2017," Table 3. Congressional Research Service, August 15, 2016. "Historical Tables," OMB.)

Cost of the Afghanistan War to Veterans

The real cost of the Afghanistan War is more than the \$1.06 trillion added to the debt. First, and most important, is the cost borne by the 2,350 U.S. troops who died, the 20,092 who suffered injuries and their families. (Source: "Total Deaths KIA," Department of Defense, January 13, 2017.) For details on these casualties, see iCasualties.org.

Improvements in battlefield medicine meant that more than 90 percent of soldiers wounded in Afghanistan survived. That's better than the Vietnam War's 86.5 percent track record. Unfortunately, that also means these veterans and their families now must live with the effects of permanent and grave damage. More than 320,000 of soldiers from Afghanistan and Iraq have Traumatic Brain Injury that causes disorientation and confusion. Of those, 8,237 suffered severe or invasive brain injury. In addition, 1,645 soldiers lost all or part of a limb. More than 138,000 have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. They experience flashbacks, hypervigilance and difficulty sleeping.

On average, 20 veterans commit suicide each day according to a 2016 VA study. The Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America found that 47 percent of its members knew of someone who had attempted suicide after returning from

active duty. The group considers veteran suicide to be its number one issue. (Source: "A Guide to U.S. Military Casualty Statistics: Operation New Dawn, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom," Congressional Research Service, Hannah Fischer, February 19, 2014. "Veterans Group to Launch Suicide Prevention Campaign," Washington Post, March 24, 2014.)

The cost of veterans' medical and disability payments over the next 40 years will be more than \$1 trillion. That's according to Linda Bilmes, a senior lecturer in public finance at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. "The cost of caring for war veterans typically peaks 30 to 40 years or more after a conflict," Bilmes said. (Source: "Costs of War," Watson Institute at Brown University, September 2016. "Iraq War Lives on as Second-Costliest U.S. Conflict Fuels U.S. Debt," BusinessWeek, January 3, 2012. "Final U.S. Troops Leave Iraq," Bloomberg, March 19, 2013).

Cost to Economy

The Afghanistan War cost more than the \$738 billion inflation-adjusted dollars spent on the Vietnam War. It's second only to the \$4.1 trillion inflation-adjusted dollars spent during World War II.

Unlike earlier wars, most American families did not feel impacted by the Afghanistan War. Unlike the Vietnam War and World War II, there was no draft. There was no tax imposed to pay for the war.

As a result, those who served and their families bore the brunt. It will cost them at least \$300 billion over the next several decades to pay for their injured family members. That doesn't include lost income from jobs they quit to care for their relative.

Future generations will also pay for the addition to the debt. Researcher Ryan Edwards estimated that the United States incurred an extra \$453 billion in interest on the debt to pay for the wars in the Middle East. Over the next 40 years, these costs will add \$7.9 trillion to the debt. (Source: "Costs of War," Watson Institute, September 2016.)

Companies, particularly small businesses, were disrupted by National Guard and Reserve call-ups. The economy has also been deprived of the productive contributions of the service members killed, wounded or psychologically traumatized.

There's also the opportunity cost in terms of job creation. Every \$1 billion spent on defense creates 8,555 jobs and adds \$565 million to the economy. That same \$1 billion in tax cuts stimulate enough demand to create 10,779 jobs and puts \$505 million into the economy as retail sales. The same \$1 billion in spent on education adds \$1.3 billion to the economy and creates 17,687 jobs.

Causes

Why did the United States start a war in Afghanistan? The Bush administration wanted to eliminate the terrorist threat of al-Qaida's leader, Osama bin Laden. It also wanted to remove the Taliban from power since they provided refuge for bin Laden.

Al-Qaida had been in Afghanistan since the Taliban came to power in 1996. Before that, al-Qaida had operated in Pakistan's mountainous western border. It returned to Pakistan when the United States ousted the Taliban in 2001. (Source: "Al-Qaida Backgrounder," Council on Foreign Relations, June 6, 2012.)

The Taliban grew out of Muslim opposition to the 1979-1989 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. They came from the thousands of mujahedeen (holy warriors) that arrived from all over the world to fight the Soviets. Ironically, the United States supplied anti-aircraft missiles to the mujahedeen to stop the spread of communism in the Middle East. (Source: "The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan," PBS Newshour, October 10, 2006.)

When the war ended, these mujahedeen battled each other for control of the country. An Afghan contingent joined with Pashtun tribesmen to create the Taliban. They practiced a fundamentalist version of Islam called Wahhabism. The Taliban (which means student) had attended schools funded by Saudi Arabia. The Taliban promised peace and stability. They controlled 90 percent of the country by 2001. They also imposed strict sharia law, such as requiring women to wear *burqas*. The United Nations Security Council issued resolutions urging the Taliban to end oppressive treatment of women. (Source: "The Taliban in Afghanistan," Council on Foreign Relations, July 4, 2014.)

Al-Qaida shared a similar fundamentalist Sunni Muslim ideology. The Sunnis believe that Shiites want to revive Persian rule over the Middle East. This Sunni-Shiite split is the driving force of tensions in the area. It is also an economic battle. Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran both want to control the Straits of Hormuz, through which 20 percent of the world's oil passes.

The Taliban's support of al-Qaida came at a cost. It caused the UN Security Council to issue sanctions against Afghanistan. These sanctions, along with the Afghanistan War, led to the Taliban's downfall from power.

ANNEXURE 6

Ghost schools and goats: 16 years of U.S. taxpayer waste in Afghanistan

Andrew Degrandpre and Alex Horton Washington Post

President Donald Trump was expected to announce an increase of a few thousand troops in Afghanistan Monday night, taking the reins of a conflict where today 8,500 personnel are mostly focused on buttressing their Afghan counterparts in the face of Taliban and Islamic State gains.

The Defense Department, the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development and other agencies have spent \$714 billion of war and reconstruction funding since the invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001 to bolster education programs, improve infrastructure and increase the competency of Afghan security forces.

Insurgents have deliberately targeted U.S.-led projects, including schools and roads, with hopes of dividing the population. That has come at considerable expense to American taxpayers.

Yet America's longest war has become a symbol for wartime graft and corruption in one of the world's least governable countries rocked by conflict for decades.

John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, has led the effort in recent years to uncover wasteful spending and boondoggled projects. Here are some of most notable examples of waste that he and others have found:

\$6 million: Cashmere goats

The aim was to jump start Afghanistan's cashmere industry and grow its profile on the international market. A Pentagon task force funded the purchase and transport of nine rare Italian goats to breed with those native to Afghanistan,

hopeful this would improve the animals' undercoats and the quality of the cashmere they yield.

As part of the project, a farm was built along with a lab facility where staff would certify the cashmere's quality. All of this was funded by U.S. taxpayers.

Speaking at Duke University in March, Sopko lamented the program's failure. "Many of the goats got sick and died, and the project director quit in frustration," Sopko said. "And I'm not sure flying Italian goats into Afghanistan was exactly what the Founders had in mind when they created a standing army for the United States."

\$36 million: Unused command center

Soon after President Barack Obama ordered a surge of American combat troops into Afghanistan, plans were laid in the southern province of Helmand to erect a 64,000-square-foot command center for the Marines who oversaw military operations in the region.

The general in charge there at the time told his superiors the building wasn't necessary, that existing facilities were adequate. He was overruled by another general who, according to the inspector general's findings, felt it would be improper to tank a project for which Congress had already agreed to pay.

Obama's surge had ended before construction on the complex began, and the Marines were pulling out of Afghanistan entirely by the time it was finished being built.

"To their credit," Sopko said during his talk at Duke, "several Marine generals tried to convince the Defense Department not to build what I consider the best built building I've ever seen in Afghanistan, but their entreaties were ignored. It now stands abandoned and empty, a testament to poor planning and accountability."

\$28 million: Afghan army uniforms

Last month, it was disclosed the Pentagon supported a decade-long effort, led by Afghanistan's defense ministerial, to field a new combat uniform for the Afghan army. In its scathing report highlighting a lack of American oversight, the inspector general's audit noted that the Afghan minister chose the uniform based on his preference for the appearance, not its tactical utility.

The U.S. military could have provided the Afghans with significantly less-expensive gear that it already owns, Sopko's team concluded, and stands to save taxpayers as much as \$72 million over the next 10 years by switching.

The report drew a strong response from Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who issued a memo to the Pentagon comptroller and acquisition chief admonishing the "cavalier" spending.

"Buying uniforms . . . that may have wasted tens of millions of taxpayers dollars over a ten-year period must not be seen as inconsequential," he wrote. "To the contrary, these actions connect directly to our mission and budget situation."

\$1 billion: Schools with no teachers or students

A BuzzFeed report from 2015 found \$1 billion earmarked to build schools, staff classrooms and flood key provinces with textbooks bled into the accounts of warlords and corrupt officials, leaving entire schools empty and dilapidated.

The findings came as the U.S. government for years touted education reform in the country as a successful campaign to topple Taliban ideology and empower young girls to seek education for the first time in their lives, a vital part of the plan to carve out economic opportunities for women.

Investigative reporter Azmat Khan reported 1,100 schools listed as active in 2011 by education ministry officials were not operating at all by 2015, though salaries for teachers continued to flow to teachers with no students.

She also found girls were overcounted on student rolls by 40 percent and a count of schools built or refurbished by the U.S. dropped by 680 cited in 2010 to 563 by 2015, despite assurances from the USAID education reform was on the right track.

"While regrettable," USAID told BuzzFeed, "it is hardly surprising to find the occasional shuttered schools in war zones."

SIGAR doubted in April 2016 USAID and the Pentagon had a coherent strategy to improve their education programs. It also found 40 percent of primary-aged children do not attend school.

\$8.5 billion: Poppy eradication

The U.S. government has spent \$8.5 billion since 2002 to eradicate Afghanistan's poppy trade, according to SIGAR.

The plants bound for worldwide drug markets not only fuel corruption but funds insurgent operations. U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan John Nicholson said in 2016 that poppy harvests fund 60 percent of the Taliban's war chest for salaries, weapons and ammunition.

But despite the intense focus on stripping a cash crop from the Taliban, the numbers have recently gotten worse.

In 2013, cultivation reached an all-time high. In 2015, the country saw a 10 percent jump in harvested land as eradication efforts plunged. While some provinces like the center of production Helmand saw harvest reductions, northwest Badghis province saw an 184 percent increase, SIGAR said.

\$486 million: Scrapped cargo planes

In 2008, a Pentagon decision to buy and retrofit 20 Italian medium-lift cargo planes for the Afghan Air Force at a cost of \$486 million was meant to surge the fledging service's ability to move troops and supplies around the country - a

central focus of the U.S. military's strategy to transition logistical missions to their Afghan counterparts.

The program was immediately paralyzed by poor management, a lack of spare parts and a misread on the Afghan military's ability to maintain and fly the aircraft, SIGAR said, which raised the possibility corruption rattled the program. The program was canceled in 2013.

In a speech at Duke University in March, Sopko said the planes were "death traps" staffed only by test pilots after other Afghan pilots refused to fly them.

It cost an additional \$100,000 to turn 16 planes into scrap metal, with four sent to an air base in Germany, Sopko said. An Afghan company paid 6 cents a pound for the planes, netting only \$32,000 back for U.S. taxpayers.

In 2017, the Afghan Air Force relies on small, vulnerable Cessnas to resupply ground troops. It has become too dangerous to replenish food and ammunition by truck.



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