

# Conference Report

## Afghanistan-Pakistan Bilateral Dialogue-VII

6-7 March 2017- Islamabad



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# **Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS)**

## **Afghanistan-Pakistan Dialogue-VII**

(March 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Islamabad)

### **Conference Report**



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## **Table of Contents**

<b>About AISS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A short introduction to the Afghanistan-Pakistan Dialogue Series .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Working Session One .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Conclusion of Working Session 1:.....	13
<b>Working Session Two .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Conclusion of Working Session 2:.....	17
<b>Working Session Three .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Conclusion of working session 3:.....	20
<b>Working Session Four.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Conclusion of Working Session 4:.....	28
<b>Q&amp;A session with media: .....</b>	<b>29</b>

## **About AISS**

The Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) was established in October 2012. It aims to create an intellectual space for addressing strategic issues pertaining to Afghanistan in the wider regional and international context. Promoting dialogue between and among different stakeholders will be an end as well as an integral means in attaining AISS objectives.

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## **A short introduction to the Afghanistan-Pakistan Dialogue Series**

The first round of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Bilateral Dialogue was held in Islamabad on June 7-8, 2015 under the umbrella theme of “Consolidating the Gains: Exploring Avenues and Methodologies to Pursue Joint Objectives.” The second round of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Bilateral Dialogue was held in Herat on October 4, 2015, with the theme of “Afghanistan-Pakistan Dialogue: Mapping Challenges and Opportunities.” The third round of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Bilateral Dialogue was held in Islamabad on December 6-7, 2015 under the umbrella theme of “A Vision of Peace: Exploring Avenues and Methodologies to bridge the Trust Deficit.” The fourth round of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Bilateral Dialogue was held in Kabul on January 22-23, 2016. The fifth round of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Bilateral Dialogue was held in Islamabad on May 20-21, 2016 under the umbrella theme of “Finding a Sustainable Solution to a Human Crisis: Unraveling the Pak-Afghan Paradigm”. The Sixth round of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Bilateral Dialogue was held in Herat on October 15, 2016.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Pakistan-Afghanistan Dialogue was held in Islamabad on 4 and 5 March 2017. It was hosted by Pakistan-based Regional Peace Institute and Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies with the support of Hanns Seidel Foundation, Germany. A group of eight civil society activists, researchers, scholars and officials from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan represented Afghanistan’s side. Pakistan was represented by a group of parliamentarians, diplomats, former generals, media and civil society activists. The ongoing crisis of Afghan refugees, the escalation of religious radicalization and the perspective of ISIS rising in the region were the main topics of discussion in the meeting. This meeting was overshadowed by Pakistan’s unilateral closure of border with Afghanistan in February 2017.<sup>1</sup>

Four key aspects of discussion during four working sessions included:

***Working Session One:*** Shifting dynamics in the region; impediments and opportunities for mobility and change.

***Working Session Two:*** A gigantic humanitarian crises perpetuating in the backdrop of growing uncertainty. Refugees, uncertain situation at the border and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)

***Working Session Three:*** Spread of radicalization and the rise of Daesh-historical, ideological, political and regional perspectives.

***Working Session Four:*** Security situation; deteriorating rapidly; the need for a joint counter-narrative and mechanism to combat the threat of breakdown.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/chaos-pakistan-afghanistan-border-closure-170219080601681.html>

Representatives of the Regional Peace Institute, Hanns Seidel Foundation and the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies began the conference with their opening remarks.

**Challenges more profound than ever before:** In his welcoming remarks, the representative from the Regional Peace Institute said: “Afghanistan and Pakistan at this given moment are facing challenges more profound than ever before. The line between low intensity conflict and utter chaos is becoming increasingly tense. A divorce from the past, building on the numerous commonalities and initiations and a joint and consultative approach could help the two counties to address various threats imposed on the region by multiple sources. In such a situation, when there is mistrust between the two governments, Track II contacts become more relevant and effective.”

**Discussions must occur in a friendly environment:** The Representative of Hanns Seidel Foundation, Pakistan emphasized the fact that Track II forums did not hold much value when relations were without complications. Also, Track II forums should not be conveyed when relations are already on a way to betterment. “Track II forums are futuristic in their approach. We discuss matters to which no solutions have been found yet. What distinguishes them from other forums is that they are out-of-box approach, going beyond blaming and shaming. Of course this does not mean the discussions should at no cost become emotional, rather I think they should become emotional. After all we are talking about our future and the future of our children. But discussions must occur in a friendly environment.”

**Peace as moral imperative:** In his opening remarks, the representative of Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies said: “This dialogue is based upon the principle of transparency and honesty. We have been under pressure from different sources questioning us why we are going to Pakistan, when there is shelling on Afghan territory and when border is closed and there is a state of breakdown in diplomatic relationship between the two countries? At the time when Afghan and Pakistani media are in the state of hostility, they ask why you have decided to go to Pakistan? The second question we were asked is that ‘What has been the benefit and result of six round of interaction between Afghanistan and Pakistan? What you have achieved?’ The third question we were asked is that ‘while President Ghani failed at the diplomatic level, how are you so confident about your ability to bring about a difference?’” To explain the above-mentioned questions he differentiated between existing approaches toward peace in Afghanistan and the region. “According to my experience, there are three approaches toward peace. The first approach towards peace sees peace as a kind of surrender; elimination of adversary and victory of one side against the other. The second approach to peace says peace is better than war because it is less expensive, and therefore we have to peruse peace. That is a very utilitarian approach toward peace. But, there is a third approach which is about the moral imperative of peace.” According to him, the first two approaches toward peace are not suitable for Afghanistan and the region. “Both Afghanistan and Pakistan belong to a civilization that

celebrate peace as moral imperative.” He named ‘Lal Shahbaz Qalandar’ (whose shrine in Pakistan recently was attacked by the Taliban) as an inter-cultural celebrity in the region who is being celebrated as a peaceful religious icon.<sup>2</sup> “With regard to peace between Pakistan and Afghanistan there are two fundamental issues that must be addressed. One is the mindset. The mindset of both countries must change. The mindset in Afghanistan considers Pakistan as a hostile neighbor. The mindset in Pakistan, especially of its policy-makers, has two sides: One point of view that is very elitist considers Afghanistan as extension of tribal areas, an unruly nation that needs to be trained. The other point of view considers Afghanistan as an extension of India and therefore a hostile neighbor. But these mindsets are born in some reality. We hope that we have a better understanding of that reality.” The Afghan delegate said the second important issue in bilateral relations of the two countries “is the big elephant — the Taliban. Although the Taliban seems to be a reality in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, our interpretation, our approach and our understanding of it is different. We hope through this interaction we have better understating of this elephant which is a big reality in Afghanistan and a growing reality in Pakistan. I believe both countries have huge constituencies for peace. Peace between Pakistan and Afghanistan.”

**Closure of border is unacceptable:** A politician from Pakistan said that it is the responsibility of the civil society in both the countries to step up against the madness and insanity in state policies that have created a humanitarian crises and hostile environment between the two countries. “Civil societies, parliaments, democrats and peace-loving people in both countries need to raise their voices against the present policies that have led to the type of confrontation which reminds us of the cold war days.” He mentioned the closure of border as an urgent issue which is unacceptable and illegal. “We talk about Islam and brotherhood, but thousands of people, patients and dead bodies are waiting on the borders and we are just indifferent to that.”

**Pakistan failed to fulfill its commitments:** An Afghan diplomat said that neither Pakistan nor Afghanistan have any other option but to get along and to coexist peacefully. Relations between the two countries are so broad that cannot be narrowed down by one element. “Today, the dimension of security has overshadowed every other elements of Pak-Afghan relation.” According to him, the challenge ahead is how to convince policy-makers in both countries to correct the mishandling of policies. He continued his speech by highlighting some facts as elementary realities that an honest discussion must be built upon.

- In Afghanistan there is an ongoing war with Taliban and Taliban is supported by Pakistan. “This support is very institutional and deep. This support is not reactionary but pro-actionary and somehow it is a matter of policy.”

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<sup>2</sup> According to Mr. Moradian the father of Lal Shahbaz Abbas Qalandar was born and raised in Sabzwar/ Shindand district of Herat city and then migrated to other places including today’s Pakistan.

- Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) does not have institutional support in Afghanistan. Our security institutions are not only financially supported by coalition forces – particularly the US- but in fact they are on the ground with us; within security institutions. This is not to say there is not some sort of support for TTP in Afghanistan.
- The TTP is the same as Taliban that threatens Afghanistan. It has the same mindset and it is the product of the same policy that supported Taliban.
- The policy that supports extremism and terrorist networks as instruments for influence, the same way it gave birth to TTP and other groups like Al-Qaida and ISIS. If we continue to support extremist elements and there is mistrust and hostility between Pakistan and Afghanistan, this situation may get worse. That is the real potential risk that we need to be aware of.
- Afghanistan is tempted towards India and this upsets Pakistan. The Afghan side must accept the fact that we have not managed the balance of relations between Pakistan and India. Afghanistan is also pushed towards India. Border closure led to a humanitarian crisis with thousands of commuters and trucks stuck on the border. This is being reflected in social media in daily bases. In this situation India announced that it will issue more visas for Afghans, making visa formalities easier and asking airliners to lower their prices to allow Afghans to travel comfortably. This is a different message.
- Despite all technologies and personnel at hand, cross border management is failed.
- We must accept that we provided Taliban a cause to fight. In 2001 and 2002, Taliban were defeated but we continued to hunt them, not only the Taliban but also those who looked like the Taliban. We entered their houses, disrespected them, killed their family members and put them to jail. When they came out, they came out with sense of revenge and a cause to fight. The majority of Taliban are not ideological Taliban. They are Taliban of grievances. They are Taliban of pain. They are Taliban who have been violated and have been given a cause. This Taliban would appreciate Pakistan’s support even if they don’t like Pakistan or ISI.

The Afghan diplomat further examined the policy of President Ghani towards Pakistan. He appreciated Ghani’s policy toward Pakistan as an honest and friendly approach. “President Ghani even distanced himself from India. But despite promises Pakistan made to fulfill Afghanistan’s concerns, it failed to deliver on a single commitment; not a single Taliban commander arrested and not a single member of Haqani network was killed. They still continue operating freely. For example just two days ago, two of the Haqani network commanders were killed by drones. If drones could see them, how Pakistan intelligence service cannot see them? Akhtar Mansur, before and after becoming the leader of Taliban have visited Pindi and the current leader of Taliban visited Karachi with official papers. Consequently, President Ghani lost his trust and also he lost his political capital back home. In fact, in the summer of 2015, it was predicted that Ghani’s government would go down any day. President Ghani now believes that he lost to India.”



According to him there have been many proposals for the future of relationship between the two countries and all of them written by Afghan side. “Not a single paper written by Pakistan to find the path forward.” The Afghan diplomat highlighted the fact that the perception of outside world about Pakistan is not positive. “The Global Terrorism Index 2016 by the Institute of Economic and Peace, puts Iraq first, Afghanistan second, Nigeria third and Pakistan fourth. Not too far apart from us. This has been the consequences. This perception has had an economic impact on Pakistan. If it was not for insecurity in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pakistan’s growth could be at 9% not 4% averagely. Potentially on yearly basis GDP of Pakistan would have been \$70bn higher. Potentially Pakistan is paying \$70bn a year for its policy.”

**Current situation:**

- Deep mistrust
- Lack of dialogue
- Gross mismanagement of relationships on both sides
- Mishandling by international community both with respect to war against terrorism and with respect to our relationship.
- Economic loss of opportunities; Loss in regional economic cooperation (TAPI, Access to Central Asian Market and beyond, CASA1000). Eight years ago Pakistan’s export to Afghanistan was \$2.5bn and Pakistan had about 50% of Afghanistan’s export share. This year it was \$1.2bn which is less than 20% of Afghanistan’s market share. Ten years ago Iran’s exports to Afghanistan were about \$100-150m. Today it is \$2.5bn.

**The way forward: Relationships are better managed by civilian institutions not by military.**

- We need to broaden our interaction and let all stakeholders to be part of it.
- Relationships are better managed by civilian institutions not by military. Under military approach everything is a threat.
- We should have mutual assurances that the national interests of each country may not be to the detriment of the other. We need assurances of respecting sovereignty of each other, recognizing the right of each country to foster relationship with other countries.
- We need to support peace and stability as a matter of our national interest and national policy.
- We need to take charge and lead the war against terrorism.

He concluded that if Afghanistan and Pakistan work together in a constructive manner they will achieve peace and stability in the region.

**Working Session One:** Shifting dynamics in the region; impediments and opportunities for mobility and change

Working Session One was co-chaired by a politician from Pakistan and an official from Afghanistan.

**Confidence-building measures should be taken seriously:** Pakistan's speaker on the panel started his speech by remarking that the dynamics in the region was not very promising. "Daesh has been able to coordinate with local terrorist groups and it is a very important development." He emphasized that terrorist networks were interconnected. "You cannot have good Taliban, bad Taliban. It is one single terrorist body. If you keep some of it and eliminating part of it, this cannot really solve the problem. Daesh footprint is extremely important, because Daesh is getting squeezed in Middle East; it's losing ground in Iraq and Syria and this region can be very attractive to Daesh. The rise of Daesh is similar to the rise of Al-Qaida in the 1990s and it can bring a new stage of conflict into our region." He highlighted the fact that the quadrilateral process collapsed and there was no alternative, while physical violence escalated. He condemned Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan as being "full of adventurism." Taking a critical point of view he outlined some of the shortcomings of Pakistan's policy:

- Border management is misleading. "It's really a great deception." For the last 40 years we have been outsourcing borders to the militants; just to support Taliban offensive inside Afghanistan and to put pressure on Afghanistan.
- We keep talking about connectivity and regional trade and still we have closure of borders with Afghanistan. It's not new. In 1991 when Soviet Union disintegrated and Central Asia emerged, there were debates about going to Central Asia, but we have not yet built even five kilometers of road towards Central Asia. Because our priority was Talibanization of Afghanistan.
- Pakistan holds a misguided policy toward Afghanistan which is not approved by our civilian government. It can create tensions between Pashtun and Panjabi.

He concluded his remarks saying, "We should ask our governments to go for confidence-building measures. We should implement all agreements one by one; Afghanistan and Pakistan do not need other powers to intervene. We have the potential to accomplish these objectives once we have political will."

In his introductory remarks, the Afghan delegate talked of shifting dynamics in the region as following:

- Russia-Pakistan relation is warming up; once they used to be enemies. Pak- China- Afghan relation shifted to Pak- China- Russia relation.
- Pak- Afghan- US relation shifted to India- Afghan- US relation.

- New economic initiatives like China’s New Silk Road initiative are taking place.
- We shifted from the East to the West, namely by forging relations with Iran. Partly closure of borders with Pakistan forced us to change side and find alternative.

**Pakistan is suffering more than Afghanistan.** The Afghan speaker of the panel emphasized that Waga port access has been denied to Afghanistan. “On the other hand, at the 6<sup>th</sup> year of implementation of the Afghanistan–Pakistan Transit and Trade Agreement (APTA),<sup>3</sup> still Afghans cannot access Waga. While, Pakistan has access to every part of Afghanistan.” According to him all these challenges and limitations pushed Afghanistan to look for alternatives to reduce dependency on uncertain channels. Afghans also try to produce things inside Afghanistan to be self-sufficient. “We were dependent on Pakistan for 70% of transit trade and right now it is 25- 27%. They are all ordinary people who are affected by that.” He said Afghanistan does not have any formal bilateral trade agreement with Pakistan. According to him, there were negative effects of this policy on both sides however, in comparison Pakistan was suffering more, as Afghanistan was now connected to various networks.

**The way forward: First of all we should separate economics from politics.** Irrespective of what happens on political side we should let economic side flow. Trade and overall export should be normal because that is linked to the ordinary people. Neither are they politicians, nor are they military people. Trade automatically helps trust building. If we close everything, automatically this nationalistic idea emerges. For example, if Torkham is closed, people in Afghanistan would say let’s boycott Pakistani products. We have great potential in economic sector; we have raw material, you have production skills. If we mix it together we can increase our bilateral trade and have joint ventures.

The discussion was followed by Q&A session. Observers from both countries participated in this session.

**Pakistan is not in favor of Talibanization of Afghanistan:** A Professor from Pakistan said: Of course there is space here and there but we cannot talk of a vacuum like the vacuum Afghanistan suffered from in the 1990s. This is of overgeneralization. He also rejected the idea that “Pakistan is in favor of Talibanization of Afghanistan.” He said “if today Taliban takes over Afghanistan, Pakistan will be ruined. But there are certain elements on both sides who are supporting certain elements of Taliban. Approving previous remarks

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<sup>3</sup> The Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (also known as APTTA) is a bilateral trade agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan and it has been renegotiated several times. The treaty, signed in 1950, gave Afghanistan the right to import duty-free goods through Karachi.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transit\\_Trade\\_Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transit_Trade_Agreement)

made by other commentators he said we lack mutual coordination at governmental level. The Taliban organizations are very supportive of each other across the border but the governments are not.”

**Existing capacity and barriers impeding bilateral trade should be examined.** A former diplomat from Pakistan commenting about trade problems between Pakistan and Afghanistan suggested that both sides need to examine the existing capacity and barriers impeding bilateral trade. Transit is being misused by smugglers.

**Mass repatriation of Afghan refugees used as a tool to pressurize Afghan government.** Another Afghan delegate said: As Afghans we always are thankful to our Pakistani brothers for allowing Afghans to live in this country and get education during difficult times. But we know that it came with a lot of financial incentives from western countries for Pakistan. With regard to Afghanistan’s relations with India, our closeness is because we need to have supportive countries by our side. As mentioned before we have been trying to improve our relations with Pakistan too. Unfortunately mass repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan was used as a strategic tool to pressurize the Afghan government. Consequently, India announced that it will build cheap houses for refugees inside Afghanistan.”

**There should be no unilateral decisions.** A Pakistani politician said: “We have made many mistakes. The closure of border each time there is an attack inside Pakistan, shows that Pakistan is an insecure state that is punishing people rather than Taliban. War should be against the terrorists not against the people of two countries. It’s an insecure and childish reaction which does not have political support. We find that sometimes certain decisions are taken without taking the parliament into confident, without having the debate politically inside the country and it has actually affected Pakistani side rather than the other side. We are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its very concerning that we are talking about wires, trenches and walls. This mindset has to change. We want the people to be meeting while isolating the terrorist groups. We know who the terrorist groups are and who supports those various terrorist groups. On the other hand, Pakistanis should not repeatedly remind Afghans that Pakistan helped them out as refugees.” She emphasized that Pakistan needs to treat Afghanistan as a sovereign state and there should be dialogue between the states. There should be no unilateral decisions. Governments of the two countries should sit together if there is a need to close borders.

**The threat of self- radicalization is prevailing.** An Afghan delegate said: “The performance of our governments is extremely worrying in tackling poverty, in managing underdevelopment, delivering public service and providing security to our people. The situation is even worse across the Durand line; the young self-radicalized masses with no prospects of employment, education and prosperity can turn the region

upside down in coming decades. We should address the problems responsibly. Unfortunately, today few Afghans and few Pakistanis are benefiting from trade relations between the two countries.”

**Let’s understand each other’s sensitivities and red lines:** A former Pakistani diplomat emphasized, “While we consider Afghanistan as being in state of war, there is a need to understand what is happening in Pakistan. In Pakistan there is the same struggle. I think we forget that there is a struggle between mindsets and it is not just typical of Afghanistan and Pakistan; look at the Islamic world. Middle East is in greater mess, but is there ISI involved? This is a challenge for people who understand the secular values and its importance in this age to come together and think about solving their problems. With regard to relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, while we condemn the closure of border, there is a need for better management of the border on both sides. There are two important points to be considered: 1) let’s understand each other’s sensitivities and red lines. For example Afghanistan wants to have close relations with India and Iran. These relationships are acceptable but it should not be at the cost of our bilateral relationship. 2) Relationships must to be established on the basis of well-known state-to-state relationships. With regard to the question of reconciliation, the opposing party should be brought into the fold of reconciliation; that party must be given some respect. In helping out Afghanistan, Pakistan played its role and did not target them. There should be recognition that there is a problem on the side of Afghanistan which should not be externalized for blaming Pakistan. Likewise Pakistan should not blame outsiders for every mess inside the country.”

**Afghans and Pakistanis fought together.** An Afghan delegate, responding to the comments made by the observers, said “when we talk about fighting era of the 80s, we must understand that it was not only Afghans who were fighting but we were together. Mujahedeen were being raised and equipped in Pakistan. That was a joint program. It is because of mishandling of the overall process at the time especially by General Zia ul Haq’s government, that we are still suffering. We could have fought under one group, but we were divided into several groups. On the matter of refugees, he said that bad treatment of refugees by Pakistan turned them against Pakistan. Afghanistan appreciates the return of Afghan refugees as they will bring with them security and economic activities. According to him, violation of APTA since 2009 and 2010, led to Talibanization of FATA region; as the people were jobless they got involved in illegal trade and attracted to radicalization. According to a survey, Pakistan has been losing around \$270m from smuggling and we were losing around \$5m from custom duties. Most of the diversions were taking place inside Pakistan. Of course it is not to say that only Pakistan is to blame, Afghanistan needs to accept its fault as well. That is why we sit together here.”

**Border management is a long-term process.** A Pakistani politician said: “Border management can always be done bilaterally. Both countries must sit together for better border management. Border management is

a long-term process but unfortunately people are being ill-informed. On the other hand, while Pakistan is asking Afghanistan for the recognition of Durand Line, it is violating the Durand Line more than Afghanistan. The Treaty of Durand Line has been violated by the two countries. For Afghanistan since it is not recognizing Durand Line, the treaty is not mentionable, but closure of the border by Pakistan means that Pakistan is violating the border treaty which provides ease of movement for the people residing on the border line.

### **Conclusion of Working Session 1:**

- 1- There should be no unilateral closure of the borders; a bilateral approach should be adopted to manage the border without causing any difficulty to the people of two countries.
- 2- Politics should be separated from engagement in the economic sector.
- 3- Transit trade agreement between the two countries should be implemented.

**Working Session Two:** A gigantic humanitarian crises perpetuating in the backdrop of growing uncertainty.

This working session was co-chaired by a diplomat from Pakistan and a delegate from Afghanistan.

**Pakistan failed to lay proper policies for handling of refugees.** The Pakistani speaker of the panel said that the interaction between Pakistan and Afghanistan had been so intense and deep because of mass migration of Afghans to Pakistan. The refugees were not only Pashtuns but also from different ethnic groups of Afghanistan. Provided with generous aid from western countries, Pakistan welcomed Afghan refugees. “At least in tribal areas we had no problems with refugees. The problem came about later as we failed to lay proper policies for handling of refugees. Giving citizenship to the refugees who lived in Pakistan for longer periods could have been the right decision to make. Pakistan could have made friends. Pakistan also failed in its policies toward tribal areas. The main problem has been the militancy approach in FATA region. No consensus has been made with regard to the administration of the region; we have to wait and see how FATA will be merged into KP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). After five years the area is going to be merged. Since it has been said that KP is financially not in a position to look after FATA, the federal government will provide funds and look after developmental aspect of FATA for ten years. The question is what is the guarantee? I have been in favor of making FATA a separate province to have its own administration. If the people of the region are not empowered, the same problem emerges. We need to pay more attention to the border region in order to make the region safe and secure.”

**Migration should not be used as a political tool by hosting countries.** The Afghan speaker of the panel said: “There is a difference between the refugee and migration phenomenon. Migration is a bigger phenomenon. We currently have an estimated 6 million Afghan migrants worldwide of which a large number is residing in our neighboring Iran and Pakistan. Although migration of Afghans continues, but the perception of Afghan people and Afghan institutions with respect to migration has changed. In the past, migration was viewed as moving forcibly in challenging situation, but now it seems as an opportunity and it is looked upon more from a human right based approach. What is really important here is that migration phenomenon is affiliated with political, security and economic interests. Today migrants are being mistreated in some host countries with limited access to justice and services. In view of these challenges the Afghan government and its international partners have jointly worked out a mid to long term strategy.” Giving some information about the status of Afghan migrants today, he emphasized that we should not forget that migrants play an important role in economic and development growth of the host countries. The return of Afghan refugees to Afghanistan must take place on voluntary basis. Migration should not be used as a political tool by hosting countries. The challenge is to use these migrants as good-will ambassadors advocating for the hospitality of the host nations. Reviewing some of the recommendations of the last round of dialogue, he said that although most of them did not happen, small steps were taken. He hoped that a long-term approach could bring about changes. He suggested that instead of focusing on border management -which is costly, it is better to deal with migration in a proper way.

The discussion continued with Q&A session. Some of the important questions and comments included:

**We must address our problems one by one.** A former Pakistani diplomat said, “We need to move forward; maybe we can focus on one small area and work on it. For example border closure is an important issue that needs to be scrutinized in detail. General population is suffering in both sides. Nobody is responding to this. Because we don’t know who is responsible for this. We need a more focused approach in our relationship. We need to learn from our past mistakes. Easiest place for Pakistani diplomats or businessmen to invest and work in is Afghanistan, and Pakistan is the same place for Afghans. Our relationship has so much potential but we are mishandling it. We must address our problems one by one.

**Intelligent agencies must be supervised.** A former Pakistani general said, “In discussing our problems we need to look at the bigger picture. There are four elements that should be considered: 1) people, who are the victims 2) governments, which are extremely weak and incompetent 3) militaries, who are confused and have no objectives 4) and intelligent agencies, who are competing with one another to continue war by other means. He suggested that there is a need for a joint mechanism to supervise this group of intelligent agencies and their functioning.

**The emerging generation in both countries has different mindset.** An Afghan delegate said, “In Afghanistan 60% of population is under thirteen who are not interested in cold war type of ideologies. More than 50% of the population in Pakistan has changed as well. The new generation in Pakistan does not think that instability in Afghanistan serves Pakistan’s national interest. In fact, Afghanistan and Pakistan are bound together and instability in each country could endanger both countries.

**We have historical and emotional relations.** A Pakistani politician said, “With regard to Afghan refugees we must know that we have historical and emotional relations with them. So, they must not be reduced to numbers. Another problem is that at the time, many Pakistanis were registered as Afghan refugees to enjoy aids. We must pay attention to a large number of people.”

**Facts and perceptions are two different things:** A former Pakistani general said, “One perception is that in Pakistan military and intelligent agency is the same thing which is not correct. Because it is the wrong perception we are dealing with it the wrong way. It is the democratic government of Pakistan who closed the border.”

**Democracy is not an event, it is a process:** A former Pakistani politician said, “We have problems in Pakistan but we have democracy. We are able to criticize and we have the right to dissent. We have our constitution. We intend to defend democracy in Pakistan. Of course the balance now is not in favor of civilian government. But the promising thing is that political parties raise their voices. Almost all political parties in Pakistan unanimously condemned the closure of borders. We are evolving in Pakistan and similarly Afghans do evolve. We should discuss with open mind and move forward.”

**Pakistani media failed to cover the situation:** A Pakistani journalist said, “I’m from the media and I wonder why the media has not covered this story. The story of who ordered the closure of borders is something that should be debated. The media in Pakistan seems to be powerful and everywhere, but it failed to cover this story and exploring the complexity of this situation. We are having a bilateral dialogue when the two countries are not willing to talk to each other. I agree with Kristofer that we need to be emotional. To be emotional is to be human and to understand human stories. In this border closure issue, thousands of great human stories are to be narrated. But we don’t have the capacity to be emotional in the right sense. In order to be emotional, you have to understand human nature. We need to improve our understanding of our culture and history.”

**Talking in general terms is not helpful.** An Afghan delegate said, “We must focus on certain problems and follow up until we get certain results out of our joint efforts.”



**Focusing on criticism is not helpful.** The Pakistani Professor said, “There is a difference between criticism and critique; criticism is to condemn and critique is to make analysis, so that we may plan for future. We got involved more in criticism. In our meeting, there are no representatives of official bodies like foreign office or defense ministry to answer our questions. (In reaction to his words, some of the participants raised their voices and suggested that government officials are not supposed to be in Track II meetings). We have common issues that need our focus; like how to increase trade and how to empower the spirit of regionalism. It needs a mechanism.”

**Both sides need to accept their mistakes.** A former Pakistani diplomat said, “The argument made against Pakistan in the 50s when there was no ISI, when there was no Taliban, no refugees, and no Mujahedeen and Soviet forces in Afghanistan is the same thing today. Karzai’s language ten years ago is not different today. As an Ambassador I have been in touch with everyone in Afghanistan. There is a lot of criticism against Pakistan, but no one in the Afghan Government would say that the Afghan policy was wrong. In an interview with TOLO TV I have been asked about Taliban and I said that supporting Taliban was a wrong decision. Elements in Pakistan didn’t like my comments. In Track II meetings, discussions start with criticism and end up with criticism. Let’s get rid of this approach and move forward. In Track II meetings we get stuck in criticizing the ISI and Pakistan army. If the Pakistani side accepts a problem, let’s move forward and not repeat the same criticism. With regard to the treatment of Pakistanis in Afghanistan, if you go to Pul-e Charkhi,<sup>4</sup> there are lots of innocent Pakistani workers put in jail. In case of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, there is the same mistreatment. Both sides must acknowledge that. If we want to move forward let’s focus on one issue and think what can do about it.”

**Closure of borders must be addressed in Pakistan’s Parliament:** A Pakistani delegate said representatives of Pakistan’s Parliament and political parties must raise the issue of closure of borders in order to push for immediate solution.

**Civil society can challenge the existing policy.** A Pakistani politician said, “If we want to change something, we must never stop questioning. As civil society representatives we are not bound to existing policies. We can challenge them and look for solutions. Let’s try to find a way that at least we can openly discuss our matters.”

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<sup>4</sup> Pul-e-Charkhi, also known as Pul-i-Charkhi or Afghan National Detention Facility, is the largest prison in Afghanistan east of Kabul. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pul-e-Charkhi\\_prison](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pul-e-Charkhi_prison)

## Conclusion of Working Session 2:

**Trust deficit must be addressed:** The delegate from Pakistan said, “Trust deficit must be addressed. But, do not revisit old issues. We must plead our cases on behalf of each other in our respected countries.”

**We are the ambassadors of a new generation.** The Afghan delegate said, “Afghanistan is changing and we are the ambassadors of a new generation. In contrast to the members of the delegation from Pakistan, the members of Afghan delegation are younger. However, the importance of issues they are highlighting should not be ignored. They are professionals in their field of work and must be listened to carefully.”

**Working Session Three:** Spread of radicalization and the raise of Daesh - historical, ideological, political and regional perspectives.

This working session was co-chaired by an Afghan delegate and a political analyst from Pakistan.

**Four stages of radicalization in the region:** The Afghan speaker of the panel presented a historical review about radicalization in the region. According to his studies, radicalization in the region could be categorized into four stages:

1) *Formulization of religious studies* that happened in 19<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of Duband Madrasa in 1867. Later political movements like Muslim Brotherhood were influenced by what happened in Duband. Formulization of religious studies and bringing it under a certain curriculum could be recognized as some sort of revival for Islamic Education. In this stage the question was how to regulate Islamic Education.

2) *Politicization of Islam* since the 1940s initiated by certain groups like Muslim Brotherhood based on Egypt and Jamaat-e Islami based on Pakistan. This stage was the pre-process of radicalizing religious education and moving it to an entirely different phase. It started mainly with Muslim Brotherhood followed by Jamaat-e Islami and the establishment of Darul-Olum Haqania in 1947. It gave birth to several Madrasas and Islamic movements that made Islam a political tool. Then, we invited the Dubandi scholars to establish Madrasas for us; this was the time of convergence of our political elite with regional religious movements.

3) *Radicalization*, started in 1979 was linked to the events that took place in Afghanistan (leftist coup which brought communists to power) and Pakistan (the coup which led to the establishment of Zia-ul-haq regime). This was a time of confrontation between the two world powers; During this time radicalization came into existence as a tool for political interest of many players in the region. Jihadist front spread out across the region through the Madrasa boom which was partly linked to the new developments in Pakistan. When

Pakistan became an independent state, figures show that there were around 137 Madrasas in Pakistan. But in the 1970s, there were 472 Madrasas in Pakistan. During the first two years of Zia-ul-haq regime we see a dramatic increase in Madrasas. With the influx of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, there was a strategy for training Afghans for Jihadi movements. Then after 1988 we see a decline in the number of Madrasas, because Soviet forces left Afghanistan and the Mujahedeen took over.

4) *Ultra-radicalization*, started with the emergence of Taliban in 1994. After Taliban took over in 1996, the demand for training centers increased. Between 1995 and 2003, the number of Madrasas nearly doubled (From 4,000 to 7,000). After the collapse of Taliban, ultra-radicalization took place with the rise of Al-Qaeda and then the ISIS. By 2009, around 10,000 Madrasas were established in Pakistan and today we are talking about 36,000 Madrasas operating in Pakistan.

The establishment of Daesh in Iraq, Syria and other places indicated that radicalization was not a phenomenon that you could set a limit for it. Furthermore, there was no good Taliban and bad Taliban or good Al-Qaeda and bad Al-Qaeda. There were certain terrorist groups who misused Islam.

**States cannot use terrorist groups as proxies.** The Pakistani speaker of the panel said, “The historical perspective helps us to see things in a chronological order but the problem with historical perspective is that we miss the details and essence of the problem which we tend to explore. There are different historical perspectives about the process of radicalization depending on what angle we are looking through. We need to broaden our perspective about the radicalization process. There is a purification agenda behind the radical movements. One important movement happened in Iraq and Syria by Daesh and the second movement which we usually ignore is the Jamaat-ul Ahrar. Their debates are based on the Salafi School of thought. We saw that various radical movements including Taliban factions and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan joined together to announce the Caliphate in the region. We also see the links between them and some non-violent religious groups. On one side, the purification process is going on and on the other side our intellectual and religious scholars are not being able to understand and deconstruct their messages. We always talk of narratives, discourse and counter-narrative, but all these are weak terms which cannot deconstruct the terrorist narratives. We observe that violence in the Islamic world is growing more and more sectarian. Sectarian violence overshadowed political resistance movements. Afghan Taliban who tried to detach themselves from sectarian tendencies and introduced themselves as religious-nationalist movement in this region, were more and more involved in sectarian violence. In this situation, there is small space left for state actors to manipulate them. States always think that they could use these groups as proxies. But, they are losing their control over these groups because of religious institutionalization. Many religious parties and radical groups have been developing infrastructure; they are involved in the business

of education, health, charity, mosques, transportation and etc. as states start losing control, these groups become independent. Understanding the intensity of the danger is a step forward.”

The discussion was followed by Q&A session. Some of the important questions and remarks made by observers are as following:

**Taliban was a project launched to fill the vacuum in Afghanistan.** A politician from Pakistan said, “Originally Duband was a nationalist movement not a Salafi school of thought. The nationalists of Duband had no problem supporting Amanullah Khan (modernist king of Afghanistan in early 20<sup>th</sup> century). Also there is a difference between the Madrasas before the 1980s and the Madrasas after 1980s. Madrasas were not a place for brainwashing. The ideologies of Wahhabism, Salafism and Takfirism came from Middle East and they were not indigenous. In Arab world there were secular nationalists led by Jamal Abdulnasir, who were defeated by Israel in 1967 and 1973. It went to the background and replaced by Muslim Brotherhood. It then reached our area during the war in Afghanistan. That is a major thing that brought a shift in religious landscape in our region. Taliban was a project launched to fill the vacuum in Afghanistan and also Taliban is an instrument of Strategic Depth Policy for Pakistan. During Taliban period everything that would represent Afghaniat (Afghan Identity) was banned and attacked. There is the same trend going on against Pakistani identity. That’s why Sufi shrines are attacked. I don’t blame the Madrasas. They are poor people attending those Madrasas. The problem is the state policy. If states support extremism, people would follow.”

**Intellectual crises in the Muslim World:** A Pakistani commentator suggested that the focus on intellectual crises in the Muslim World was very important. If we want to address the threat of radicalization, we need to put it in the context of Muslim World and ask these questions: Is Pakistan different from other Muslim countries? And how has the creation of Pakistan contributed to this situation? The ruling idea of Pakistan is based on animosity with India. Had that not happen would then be possible for us to be a more secular society?

**Trying to Islamize modernity is the essence of Islamic movements.** An Afghan delegate said, “It is a multi-dimensional issue involving different aspects. There are two important misunderstandings of radicalization; intellectual and political. One misunderstanding is looking into radicalization as a religious concept, but it is not a religious concept. It is essentially a political and modern phenomenon. The second misunderstanding is labeling of radicalization as a non-state phenomenon. The essence of Islamic intellectual crises is that we try to Islamize the modernity and Islamize modern institutions. Modernity has very different nature and very different dynamic. Trying to Islamize modernity is the essence of Islamic movements in the Islamic World and all have failed. The manifestation of that is the notion of Islamic state

which is essentially paradoxical. State by definition is about geography. State by definition is about authority of people by the rule of law. But, how could you quantify a believe system? An example of a non-Islamic country which is based on a religion is Israel. A consistent feature in all Islamic movements is that they all have links with western colonial powers, starting with Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia which was a product of British in order to weaken the Ottoman Empire. In Afghanistan, the Amanullah Khan Movement was brought down by a bandit who was supported by the British. With regard to Muslim Brotherhood, declassified information shows that western agencies have been supporters of Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas is another example; the principle architect of Hamas was Mossad of Israel. The purpose was to weaken a secular nationalist movement of Palestinians. Mujahedeen is another example in our contemporary Afghanistan which has been sponsored by the Americans. Even Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran and Islamic revolution of Iran were supported by the CIA. The West facilitated the Islamic revolution of Iran. Again in cases of Taliban and Daesh, we see the same pattern. If we remove the support of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, Daesh has nothing. Daesh is the new movement of Mujahedeen. There is a state behind every so-called terrorist group. As mentioned before we must look at all intelligent agencies and the links between them and radical Islamic groups around the world. The purpose behind all these is to weaken secular nationalist parties.”

### **Conclusion of working session 3:**

**Unlearning is more difficult than learning.** The Afghan speaker of the panel said, “Once you set up an institution, it would be very difficult to remove it. That’s a fact about radicalizations and religious institutions. With regard to the Daesh phenomena, in Afghanistan there is no sympathy for Daesh. Of course there are certain entities in Afghanistan echoing with the Taliban. The growth of Daesh in Afghanistan from the beginning till today has been very slow. One reason for their success in Iraq and Syria was that they could generate revenue there. Now they are trying to do the same in Afghanistan.”

**Religious institutionalization is dangerous.** The Pakistani speaker of the panels said, “Radical movements try to establish their order. They have their political instruments, military instruments, educational instruments and all other instruments of domination. In this context we believe in simplistic version of the problem. This is undermining the social-political process of the societies. We believe that we are such naïve societies that anyone can come and trigger, manipulate, transform and give us the direction. This is not how a society evolves. Daesh is the manifestation of this challenge. Muslim states deny the sectarian aspects of these movements. Maybe they assume that they can use these movements however, they may fall prey to them. Daesh is going to spread out across the world using founding and ideological networks. We have to

coordinate our efforts to get rid of this threat in our region. When Pakistan founded Taliban, it had no realization how counterproductive this could become.”

**Working Session Four:** Security situation; deteriorating rapidly; the need for a joint counter-narrative and mechanism to combat the threat of breakdown.

The fourth working session was co-chaired by a Pakistani diplomat and a journalist from Afghanistan.

**Pakistan should not take responsibility on behalf of anybody in Afghanistan.** The Pakistani speaker of the panel said, “Whether the security situation is going to deteriorate or gradually improve, we have to wait and see. I am basically an optimist. Because somehow this phenomenon has reached a high point in Pakistan and there is a public sentiment against it. Similarly, the process began with Bon Agreement in Afghanistan is irreversible. In term of narratives, we have seen either platitudes or hostility toward each other. We have to move away from that and look at what can be done to inject some positivity in how we look at each other. Perceptions are very important. Even in the United States the spokesperson of Mr. Trump says that ‘in Information Age, it is not facts, it is opinions that count’. So, opinions are important and we must be careful as responsible citizens of our countries to try to promote positive views about each other. There are certain important things to be considered: a) our narratives in relation with Afghanistan, our narratives regarding reconciliation, our narratives regarding trade, our narratives regarding our neighborhood etc. In Pakistan, we must try to bring our relationship in conformity with the generally recognized norms of state-to-state relationships. We made many mistakes in the past; there have been some irresponsible kind of narratives like ‘Strategic Depth’, without understanding what the concept means. We should talk about friendship. On reconciliation we had great mistakes, because we tried to assume responsibility for bringing X, Y or Z to the table. Pakistan should not take responsibility on behalf of anybody in Afghanistan. Afghans are capable of dealing with their own affairs. The other responsibility of ours as a state is that we should not let our territory to be used for militancy inside Afghanistan; linked to this responsibility is the questions of administration of FATA, management and consolidation of the border. I’m not talking about recognition of Durand line which is a de facto border, the world recognizes it. We should try to cooperate. For example if there is a need for two dozen entry-exit points, we should have two dozen entry-exit points to facilitate easement of movements. It means also controlling the border to implement order. There are negativities in our bilateral relationship. One of the negativity relates to your concerns about our intelligent agencies and our concerns about your intelligent agencies. Why can’t we have regular interaction between the two agencies? There has to be some interaction between the two intelligent agencies. It is abnormal that there

is no interaction between the two sides. If official relations are improved, facilities will be further improved. But, there is one thing that Afghans have to understand that overland transit in Pakistan is subject to bilateral agreement. Regarding the refugees, you should know that there will be pressure from Pakistan's government if there are tragic incidents with links to some Afghans. Hosting of refugees is seen sometimes as an international obligation, but in a strict sense it's not an international obligation. If there was a general agreement, US, Australian, Japan and others could have come under question for restricting their borders. There are regular deportations of those so-called illegal migrants from Europe. Pakistan comparatively has been far more relaxed on accommodating the Afghan refugees; it is partly because of shared culture and demographics, as we are also very sensitive to the sentiment of our people. We must know that to solve our problems we need to trust the established institutions.”

**People follow the faith of their leaders.** The Afghan speaker of the panel started his presentation by giving some figures about fatalities and casualties in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the last 14-15 years. According to the recent UN report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan, unfortunately from 2001 to 2014, 26,000 Afghan civilians were killed. In 2017, 3500 civilians were killed in Afghanistan. Tragically, Pakistan also lost about 61,000 people over the course of 15 years. “It is a common problem and we should address it together. One thing that comes to the mind of Afghans constantly is the dilemma of legitimizing war on the one side of the border and delegitimizing war on the other side of the border. Since the collapse of Taliban, there is a war for revenge or a war against the Kafirs/ infidels going on in Afghanistan. This war is staged against those who occupied the country. Those fighting against the Kabul government and the occupiers are considered to be the descendants of Mujahidin, continuing their Jihad for freedom of the country. There is a similar narrative about the war in Pakistan too which is based on the notion that Pashtuns and Baluchs are fighting against the Punjabi government in Pakistan. The same narrative counts for growing influence of Madrasas in the region. About 10,000 Madrasas are registered in Afghanistan and they are propagating Jihadi ideology. The government is ineffective in changing the curriculum of those Madrasas. The other alarming narrative is the provocative statements of current and former leaders in both countries. There is a saying in Arabic that “people follow the faith of their leaders.” Many times provocative speeches made by the heads of states in both countries, led to rising of tensions and violence. The rejection of Pakistan's \$500 million aid by the Afghan President exemplifies that. Similarly, Pakistani leaders have made provocative speeches as well. Another factor is dehumanization of Afghans and Pakistanis through the media in both countries which is partly a result of provocative statements of officials. I have four suggestions: 1) territory of neither country should be used for militancy against either of countries by proxy groups or through any other means. 2) Improving state to state relationships instead of state to non-state actors. 3) Reevaluating the curriculum of Madrasas and changing the existing Jihadi narratives by regulating

them. 4) Media has a crucial role for avoiding provocative statements. For example TOLO TV in Afghanistan conducted a program to familiarize people of Afghanistan with Pakistani culture emphasizing that not everybody in Pakistan is an insurgent or supporter of insurgency. We also have a TV show in which we encourage such dialogue between the two countries. Pakistan's media can do the same.”

The discussion continued with a Q&A session. Some of the important questions and comments included:

**Drugs trade is an important issue.** Commenting on remarks made by the Afghan speaker, one Pakistani commentator said that in Pakistan's army there is no distinction between Pashtuns and Punjabis, as it is a cohesion inside the army. “With regard to the deteriorating situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Madrasas are not the only matter of concern. An important issue is drugs trade which is huge. The other issue is people wanting to leave Afghanistan; it is reflected in the SIGAR report. It has to be taken seriously. How do we see Afghanistan? There are different ways to look at Afghanistan; one is that Afghanistan overcomes its problems with or without external help. I hope it does, but what happens if it doesn't? 35% of areas is not controlled by the Afghan army and there are catastrophic figures of casualties. Afghanistan may not fall at the hands of Taliban but it might become a narco-state which is much worse. To address these problems we must know that what happens in Afghanistan will affect Pakistan too. Let's not forget diplomacy.”

**Radicalization as the state policy has been institutionalized in Pakistan.** An Afghan commentator said he hoped for consistency and presence of more young people in future meetings from Pakistan's side. He appreciated that Pakistan's side moved away from the old narrative of denial. “That helps to address the concerning issues. Our perception in Afghanistan is that perhaps we understand Pakistan, because we lived here as migrants. But this is a myth. We do not understand Pakistan, even in the Government we don't have a good understanding of Pakistan. The basic idea for creation of Pakistan was to separate Muslims from Hindus. Radicalization as the state policy has been institutionalized from the early stages. This is not the same as pointing a finger, this is a reality and we are trying to educate ourselves. Then the Afghan Jihad further exacerbated Islamization in Pakistan funded by Saudi Arabia and the Americans. Regarding Pakistan we need to distinguish a number of stakeholders; the civil society (the confused people), the military, the intelligence, the military–intelligence partnership and the civilian government. Some of the finger-pointing and blaming is not targeted towards the people of Pakistan but towards the institutions (establishment) which are designed for certain purposes. At the beginning Pakistan was required to design a military and intelligence service that can respond to the threats of India. The fear of India was over-exaggerated so that the military-intelligence could continue ruling Pakistan. The Pakistan establishment is an industry that produces fear, exaggerates fear and exports fear. The people in Pakistan from the very earlier days were made to believe that Indians are evil and enemy. But today the government in Pakistan is



trying to convince its people that Afghanistan is the new enemy. This industry of procuring fear, exaggerating fear and exporting fear is dominant. This industry and its policies are winning, although this meeting thought that it is failing.”

Recommendations for both countries: There is no easy solution; both Afghanistan and Pakistan are failed states.

**Recommendations for Pakistan:** a) civil society must continue its struggle to liberate Pakistan. The countries in the region must work with the people of Pakistan; with the civil society and with the think tanks. b) You must stop terrorists from crossing the border and kill people inside Afghanistan. Pakistan can cooperate with Afghanistan in order to stop terrorists.

**Recommendations for Afghanistan:** Afghanistan must accept the reality of Pakistan, the same way as Indians have accepted the reality of Pakistan. In Afghanistan we failed to produce a proper narrative for progress in the future. Ghani came to Pakistan with a remarkable economic-centric diplomacy, but it failed drastically. Firstly, there is not much room for diplomacy. Secondly, while Afghans and Indians traded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Kabuliwala and the Grand Trunk Road), it’s disheartening that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Pakistan stopped trilateral trade. Thirdly, Afghanistan must accept the reality of Pakistan. Fourthly, Afghanistan must improve its defense and intelligence capacity. And fifthly, the reconciliation process in Afghanistan is extremely unpopular. We should not fool ourselves with this reconciliation agenda anymore. The main narrative for Afghanistan is that there is a war on terror and this is pretty much in line with President Trump’s agenda. We need to continue the war on terror before we succeed in the “nation building” agenda. The younger generation of Afghanistan won’t let the country go back the age of Taliban. The new generation has the courage to defend Afghanistan and the wisdom to make peace.

**Afghan leaders and Taliban use the same language against Pakistan.** A diplomat from Pakistan commenting on previous remarks said, “During the 2013 elections in Pakistan not a single political party made anti-Indian statements. On the other hand in the Indian elections, Pakistan was an important issue. It is India who follows an anti-Pakistan policy. Secondly, it is not correct that Pakistan’s government is trying to raise fear against Afghanistan. When I was the Ambassador in Kabul, I would call Islamabad and media houses regularly, consulting them not to speak against Afghanistan. Nobody ever spoke against Afghanistan in Pakistan’s Parliament, although Afghan Parliament does this all the time. If you look at Pakistan’s media historically, you hardly find anti- Afghan statements. They are very rare. But, you cannot show me an Afghan newspaper from 1947 till today which do not carry anything against Pakistan. In fact, Afghan nationalism seems to be based on anti-Pakistan sentiment. Regarding the reconciliation process, if it is unpopular, then Afghan side has been lying to us. For the first time, I have been involved in three

initiatives on reconciliation. Whether you talk about Afghan Nationalism or Pakistan's Nationalism, the views of Afghan Taliban leaders and President Ghani or Karzai are exactly the same. We must stop the blame game.”

**What are the areas that are harmless to our relationship?** An Afghan delegate said, “With regard to the lack of trust between the two states, we need to exchange views and learn from each other. We need to discuss our misperceptions and correct them. This platform is the right place to explore it. Regarding Pakistan and Afghanistan relationship, there are some international norms, but what are exactly the areas that are harmless to our relationship? Secondly, when comparing Pakistan's policy to European countries policy toward refugees, we need to understand that in European countries there is a procedure to apply for asylum. In that procedure if your application is rejected you are deported.”

**Pakistan should get rid of Jihad as a state institution.** A politician from Pakistan said, “It is time for Pakistan to get rid of Jihad as a state institution. Jihad should be criminalized. The narrative of Jihad in Afghanistan should be reconsidered. We know that Jihad was declared by ‘Brzezinski’<sup>5</sup>. Let's stop with Brzezinski's Jihad. TTP and Afghan Taliban are part of the same source. It's just a division of labor. Our number one priority is the immediate opening of the border. Exchange of political delegation is another task to defuse the current tension. Engagement on institutional level in both the countries is needed. For example, foreign office of one country should engage with the foreign office of the other, the military should engage with the other's military. This is not acceptable that diplomats go to the military headquarters. It started in Pakistan and recently we saw our diplomats in the defense ministry of Afghanistan. It's important to agree upon a verifiable mechanism that our territory should not be used against another state.”

**Pakistan has to stop seeing Afghanistan through its relationship with India.** Another politician from Pakistan said, “We repeat the same themes over and over. We should come up with new ideas. Blaming

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<sup>5</sup> Brzezinski, born 28 March, 1928 was a Polish-American diplomat and political scientist. He served as a counselor to President Lyndon B. Johnson from 1966 to 1968 and was President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor from 1977 to 1981. Brzezinski belongs to the realist school of international relations, standing in the geopolitical tradition of Halford Mackinder and Nicholas J. Spykman. Major foreign policy events during his term of office included the normalization of relations with the People's Republic of China (and the severing of ties with the Republic of China on Taiwan); the signing of the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II); the brokering of the Camp David Accords; the transition of Iran from an important U.S. ally to an anti-Western Islamic Republic; encouraging dissidents in Eastern Europe and emphasizing human rights in order to undermine the influence of the Soviet Union; the arming of the mujahedeen in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; and the signing of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties relinquishing U.S. control of the Panama Canal after 1999. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zbigniew\\_Brzezinski](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zbigniew_Brzezinski)

each other as the source of problem won't help us to solve our problem; we are not looking at the problem as the problem. Why should we defend terrorists? Why the Afghan Taliban be a policy leverage for us? Similarly, why Pakistan doesn't allow Afghans to trade with India? We are trading with India. With our relationship not being healthy, we allow other countries like the US, Russia or China to use us as they wish. Why can't we have bilateral discussions with our neighbors? Quoting an article published in *The Telegraph* titled 'Pakistan warns Trump's generals: Sort out 'total mess' in Afghanistan, or Russia will intervene', she said that Pakistan's foreign policy needs to be revised.<sup>6</sup> We have to stop seeing Afghanistan based on our relationship with India." She also emphasized that there must be more women in Track II sessions.

**APTTA provision is not utilized.** An Afghan observer said, "Pakistan is importing around 400 items from India through Waga port. If Pakistan does not give Afghanistan a full access to India, it could give us a fair treatment; whatever you import from India, allow us to import the same item from India. APTTA provision is not utilized allowing export to Waga and import from Atari. Narcotic problem is alarming. It is a threat for both countries; we need to address it."

**To move forward, there is a need to reach political consensus.** A diplomat from Pakistan rejected the figure cited to with regard to the rate of Pakistan's import from India. He said the trade between Pakistan and India is very limited. Pakistan and India should have a free trade agreement. "If our economy is not harmed by free trade agreement with China, it can't be harmed by free trade agreement with India. This is a political problem. The problem will not be solved if India behaves in a certain way towards Pakistan. We should allow free trade, but we need to reach political consensus. With regard to narcotics, we need to look at the chain of profit; while the drug trafficking is criminalized, the processing phase is being done under official provision in different countries. In order to convert narcotic into Heroin, you need '*acetic anhydride*' a special substance which is produced only in a few developed countries. In our region it is produced by China and Ukraine. This is a substance which is exported under license. How is it possible that tons of '*acetic anhydride*' is being imported into Afghanistan? Taliban don't have access to those companies who work under license. In the past, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan had a very good, close and effective coordination on controlling narcotics."

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/05/pakistan-warns-trumps-generals-sort-total-mess-afghanistan-russia/>

**Afghanistan can be a legal exporter of opium.** A former Pakistani diplomat said, “Why can’t Afghanistan be a legal exporter of opium to the world? Today, there are legal exporters of opium like Australia and others. This could help the Afghan economy as well.”

**Intelligent sharing on counter-terrorism is needed:** An Afghan commentator said, “Long-term cooperation between our countries requires a level of intelligent sharing on counter-terrorism operations. To end blame game, we need to establish a joint counter-terrorism task force along the border that would help controlling narcotics and insurgency.”

**We need an inclusive and a holistic approach.** A Pakistani Professor said, “We must stop blaming India and move forward. We need an inclusive and a holistic approach to make our counter narrative. Such an approach could include institutions, teachers, policy makers, parliamentarians and even students. Joint working groups help us achieve our goals in different fields. Educating diplomacy to students is an important thing which is being practiced in European countries.

**To bridge the trust deficit, building joint commissions is needed.** A former Pakistani diplomat criticized Ashrar Ghani’s decision not to take part in the “Heart of Asia Conference” in Islamabad as an indication that Afghanistan is not fully prepared to bridge the trust deficit. According to him, it was only after meeting Pakistan’s Pashtun leadership that President Ghani decided to take part in the conference. To bridge the trust deficit, building joint commissions with access to the leadership and intelligence could be a step forward.

**Misperceptions must be corrected.** An Afghan delegate said, “Both people of Afghanistan and Pakistan should revise the misperception of knowing each other based on commonalities. It is the same with Iranians – despite having the same language, they do not know us. Based on false knowledge of each other we make improper decisions. During 2006, Pakistan was considered by some senior members of the Afghan Government as a strategic partner. But, this view is now changed. Now in Kabul people talk about a post-Pakistan Afghanistan. Regarding the future of Afghanistan, I’m optimistic about Afghanistan based on a number of variables that could be quantified; first, we have gone through every kind of tragic events, from the Soviet invasion to the civil war, the Taliban and drugs and so on. We are going to be a post-Islamist society alongside with Iran. Second, we have access to a long-term NATO support for our security forces. Third, our political process is maturing; it is an inclusive political process. Unlike neighboring countries, we do not have any separatist movements. We have a lot of grievances including ethnic and regional grievances, but no separatist movements. The other advantage is the human resource. We do not have an

over- populated society and nearly 50,000 Afghans are studying in foreign universities. We are witnessing the emergence of a new population, exposed to the world and very energized. Another variable to consider is our national resources; our water can sustain our economy for decades to come, if we can use our water resources strategically. All neighboring countries must invest and calculate on the success of Afghanistan not on the failure of Afghanistan. Right now there is confusion in the region about having a plan B based on assumptions about failure of Afghanistan. The importance of state-to-state relationship must not be overlooked. Afghanistan should be seen as Pakistan's partner.”

#### **Conclusion of Working Session 4:**

**International norms must be respected.** The Pakistani speaker of the panel acknowledging the existing misconceptions in bilateral relationship, said even he does not know Pakistan. “What is important with regard to states are the norms and the way they conduct business with each other. This is more important than trying to understand each other fully. We should understand each other's point of view on specific context. Bilateral agreements must be respected. Making joint task forces is a good idea which could be considered.” Regarding the Taliban, he rejected the above mentioned remarks that Pakistan developed the Taliban. He suggested that Taliban was a phenomenon waiting to happen. It was after the emergence of Taliban that Pakistan acted as an opportunist. The resurfacing of Taliban must be addressed. With regard to Jihad, it is not a simple phenomenon. Such concepts that are being corrupted, need to be clarified. Looking into Pakistan and Afghanistan relationship we must ask what is the nature of threat. Afghanistan does not impose threats against Pakistan because of different factors including demography and geography. We can have friendly relationship if we address our mutual concerns that are damaging the two countries. There should be an appreciation of the fact that Pakistan has done more than it was supposed to do as far as refugees are concerned.”

**Cooperation in different levels is needed.** The Afghan speaker of the panel said, “Everybody agrees that we need cooperation in different level. There are many reasonable voices in Pakistan which understand our pain and ready to support us. We have to state this fact over and over again in our media.”

#### **Concluding Session and Adoption of Joint Statement:**

**Afghanistan and Pakistan must stop accusing each other and collaborate.** Commenting on Session 4, a Pakistani politician emphasized that Pakistan has suffered a similar pain as Afghanistan and this gives them more reason to stop accusing each other and collaborate. Everybody agreed that peace in one country

was not possible without peace in the other country. “We need to bring about practical and effective changes. All terrorist groups must be defeated by military force. Sitting around the table and talking to them is not the solution.”

### **Q&A session with media:**

**State-to-state relationship is important.** An Afghan delegate said that having a border dispute does not justify hostility toward each other. Afghanistan and Pakistan are not the only countries who have border disputes. “With regard to trust deficit, we must focus on state-to-state relationship. Unfortunately, next to the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad, Afghan General Consulate in Karachi, Koeta and Peshawar, we have anti-state elements of Taliban and Haqqani network who have their offices and branches. Therefore we have trust deficit, because Pakistan on one hand engages with the central government of Afghanistan and on the other hand, provides space, legitimacy and sanctuary for anti-state elements. As long as this duplication continues, you will find hardly anyone in Afghanistan who can trust Pakistan. Afghanistan on its part must make sure that no one uses Afghan soil against the state of Pakistan. When we talk about counter- terrorism, we have to separate between foot soldier level and the commanders; the commanders are well-educated people. Therefore, they are not ignorant. Those who are running the show are not poor. They have businesses. In every society we have poor and illiterate people. Some of the poorest nations are located in Africa. But they do not have terrorists. Look at India. India has millions of poor and illiterate people. Why they are not producing terrorism? We should separate between poor soldiers who are illiterate and manipulated by the rich and educated people. We have to target two groups including those commanders who have educated in the west and run businesses and those in Madrasas who brainwash poor, illiterate foot soldiers.”

**Media can build people-to-people relationship.** Another Afghan commentator said, “The government of Afghanistan does not control the media. We have a free media environment. It’s unfortunate that Afghan media especially TOLO TV is not accessible in Pakistan, while in Afghanistan we have access to Geo News. Media should work towards removal of trust deficit between the two countries, because governments in both the sides would come and go, but the people would always remain there. Media can build people-to-people relationship.”