

U.S. Embassy - Pakistan



1st Round of the
US-Pakistan Bilateral (Track-II) Dialogue:


***“Convergence amid Divergence:
Identifying Pathways to Cooperation in a Challenging Environment”***

The Wilson Center, Washington, DC, January 3-4, 2017.



Regional Peace Institute





1st Round of the
US-Pakistan Bilateral (Track-II) Dialogue:

***“Convergence amid Divergence:
Identifying Pathways to Cooperation in a Challenging Environment”***

The Wilson Center, Washington, DC, January 3-4, 2017.





Contents

Why the dialogue?	1
Overview of the dialogue	3
Session I:	
“Shifting regional dynamics – Can US-Pakistan relations adjust to new geopolitical realities?”	5
Session II:	
“Managing militancy – Opportunities and limits of US-Pakistan counter-terrorism cooperation”	11
Session III:	
“South-Asia’s nuclear architecture: Prospects and challenges”	16
Session IV:	
“Stabilizing Afghanistan – Can there be a mutually agreeable endgame?”	22
Moving on...	27





Why the Dialogue?

Raof Hasan

The need for a US-Pakistan Bilateral (Track-II) dialogue had been felt for a long time. This need has only enhanced with the increasing level of feuding that marked the bilateral relations of the two countries in the recent past. From being partners in the SEATO and CENTO to Pakistan being a non-NATO ally of the United States of America, the road has always been smitten with countless pitfalls and vicissitudes.

It is in such situations that a track-II engagement assume added relevance and importance. Regional Peace Institute (RPI), dedicated to working for bringing peace to the strife-infected region of South-Asia, endeavoured for a considerably long period of time in convincing the stakeholders that now was the time to expand the repertoire of connectivity between the two countries to a different level. Consequently, this dialogue!

It was decided that four rounds of the dialogue would be held in the first phase: two in Washington, DC and two in Islamabad, Pakistan.

“Convergence amid Divergence: Identifying Pathways to Cooperation in a Challenging Environment” was selected as the umbrella theme for the dialogue. This amply illustrates the uncertainty that the relations between the two countries have been subjected to in the recent past.

The timing of this first round of the dialogue was

also critical. This came at the juncture of transition in the United States which has been the subject to more speculation than any other change in the past. It also came at a time of a shift in command of the military hierarchy in Pakistan with General Raheel Sharif giving way to General Qamar Javed Bajwa as Chief of Army Staff (COAS) which has been the subject of no little discussion in the context of continuity and further expansion of the state’s anti-terror policies as also the steps that needed to be taken to improve the country’s regional connectivity.

The sub-themes crafted for the four sessions reflected the areas where work was needed to be undertaken to assuage mutual concerns and trust deficit. These themes included:

Session 1:

Shifting regional dynamics: Can US-Pakistan relations adjust to new geopolitical realities?

Session 2:

Managing militancy: Opportunities and limits of US-Pakistan counterterrorism cooperation

Session 3:

South-Asia’s nuclear architecture: Prospects and challenges

Session 4:

Stabilizing Afghanistan: Can there be a mutually agreeable endgame?

I would like to extend a bouquet of thanks to the Wilson Centre, and to Michael Kugelman, for having agreed to work with RPI on this project as a partner.

RPI and the Wilson Centre worked closely to gather a team of experts who have had an interest in the relations between the two countries and who may actually have contributed in no small measure to the shaping of these in the past.

From the US side, we were able to convince Ambassador Richard Boucher, Ambassador Robin Raphel, Ambassador Marc Grossman, John H. Gill and Michael Kugelman to be the delegates and the Pakistan side was represented by Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan, Ambassador Najmuddin A. Sheikh, General Ahsan Saleem Hyat, Dr. Mansoor Ahmad and Raouf Hasan.

In addition to the five delegates from each side, the format of the dialogue also allowed for the participation of over twenty-five experts as discussants. In this category, we were able to collect a host of people with vast and in-depth experience of having worked in the field of relations between the two countries as also the issues of commonality and divergence that have had an impact in shaping these in the past.

During the course of candid and substantive discussions over four sessions held at the Wilson Centre, Washington, DC, on January 3-4, we gathered a vast and meaningful resource of ideas and mechanisms to go about reshaping the relations between the two countries. We had this input in areas where the two countries have worked and continue to work together as well as in areas marked by a divergence of perceptions where more work needed to be undertaken. This material is laid out in this booklet which will constitute the base for our further interactions at the track-II level.

This will also be shared with the two governments and other stakeholders in the US and Pakistan for purposes of policy formulation in the future.



Overview of the Dialogue

Michael Kugelman

On January 3 and 4, 2017, the Islamabad-based think-tank Regional Peace Institute and the Washington, DC-based Woodrow Wilson Center convened in Washington for the first session of a Track-II dialogue on U.S.-Pakistan relations.

The delegates from the United States were Amb. Richard Boucher, Col. (R) Jack Gill, Amb. Marc Grossman, Amb. Robin Raphel, and Mr. Michael Kugelman. The delegates from Pakistan were Amb. Riaz Mohammad Khan, Amb. Najmuddin A. Sheikh, Gen. (R) Ahsan Salem Hyat, Dr. Mansoor Ahmad and Mr. Raof Hasan. They reflected a healthy mix of diplomatic, military, and academic experience.

Senior Pakistan experts from around Washington DC also sat in on the proceedings and weighed in during the deliberations.

The dialogue's overall objective was to explore and identify pathways for cooperation at a time when the U.S.-Pakistan relationship faces considerable challenges. These can be attributed to long-standing tension points on policy issues, such as Pakistan's ties to the Haqqani network. They can also be attributed to recent geopolitical developments, such as Washington's fast-growing relationship with New Delhi and Islamabad's deepening focus on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Several actions by the United States in recent months - including the decision to kill Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Mansoor with a drone strike in

Baluchistan and the cancelling of an F16 fighter jet deal to Pakistan - have highlighted the strains in bilateral relations.

At the same time, despite these challenges, the two countries continue to cooperate in a variety of ways. Additionally, the arrival of a new U.S. presidential administration provides opportunities for fresh thinking about the relationship that may generate new avenues for cooperation.

The dialogue agenda focused on the areas of shifting dynamics in the broader South Asia region, nuclear issues, counterterrorism, and Afghanistan. These were admittedly ambitious topics, given that they all relate to the security-focused dimensions of the relationship—which tend to generate more tensions and mistrust than do the non-security-focused dimensions. Nonetheless, despite frequent and inevitable disagreements, the tenor of the dialogue was cordial for the duration.

At the conclusion of the two-day event, the chief takeaway was far from earth-shattering, but nonetheless significant at a time when many observers in both countries paint a less-than-optimistic picture about the relationship's future. Participants contended that there is ample potential for sustained future cooperation—including countering the threat of al-Qaeda and Da'esh, working together on cross-regional connectivity projects, and

collaborating on activities within Pakistan's Center of Excellence for Nuclear Security—even as many major challenges remain.

One participant put it particularly succinctly: There is ample agreement on principles, but less agreement on policies. The dialogue, as successful as it was, left many important questions unanswered, including how much further each government can, should, and will go to attain more cooperation. This question and others will be taken up in the second round of the bilateral dialogue, scheduled to occur in Islamabad in April.

Delegates from both countries as well as other participants expressed strong praise for the Washington session, but many agreed that there is so much more to discuss—enough to fill not just the upcoming session in Islamabad, but hopefully several sessions beyond that as well. The hope of the organizers is that in subsequent sessions, there will be a stronger emphasis on forward-thinking debate that dwells less on history—which all delegates and other attendees already understand well—and more on fresh, out-of-the-box thinking about how the two countries might work together in the coming years, despite the challenges to cooperation that will invariably remain in place.

Session I



**Shifting regional dynamics:
Can US-Pakistan relations
adjust to new geopolitical realities?**



Shifting regional dynamics: Can US-Pakistan relations adjust to new geopolitical realities?

In this session, the participants discussed changes in the region which had the potential to impact US-Pakistan relations.

Rising China

Participants discussed the deepening relations between China and Pakistan and how the US should respond to this.

One subject that was discussed extensively was China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), one of the several corridors of China's "One-Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiative which aims to connect China with its neighbouring regions.

Pakistani participants sounded upbeat about the initiative, stressing on its potential economic dividends. Most of CPEC projects are for energy, while the port of Gwadar, even before it was handed over to China, was meant for accelerating the pace of economic growth, and not for security considerations, as some Americans may tend to assume. The three routes of CPEC will also help integrating the country which may help offset the rampant internal divisions that have plagued it in the past.

As China-Pakistan relations deepen, there are chances that the US might feel left out. Greater Chinese investment, from CPEC-like initiatives, would lessen Pakistan's dependence on the US. With CPEC, as one American speaker said, "China will be able to access the steel and other raw material reservoirs directly".



"The challenge to US-Pakistan relations is coming from "the broader trends in geopolitical arena: the US is getting into a deeper relationship with India, while Pakistan is getting closer to China with the CPEC being a very powerful enabler of deeper cooperation."

Michael Kugleman

Pakistani participants did not touch on the strategic implications of CPEC. Even Gwadar was discussed in the context of its economic utility only, leaving out its possible strategic component. One participant dismissed the concern regarding China building bases in South Asia as highly exaggerated.

"Apparently, Pakistan seems to be trapped in its history, a history of punching above its weight."

Bill Milam

Instead, they asked the Americans to join in

saying that China will have no issue with that. Already, General Electric, an American company, has got one contract.

“In the 1990s, we said we will not talk to India until Kashmir issue was brought forth. But then, after four years, we started negotiations in August 1997. We made a mistake then. India is making the same mistake now.”

Ambassador Najmuddin Sheikh

Several American participants addressed the larger context of CPEC. By building infrastructure and resources, the corridor will boost economic growth in the region with potential to in stability which is an American goal, too.

Likewise, CPEC changes the entire conversation from “assistance/aid” to “investment and entrepreneurship”. That is why several speakers called on the US to contemplate engaging with China on OBOR.

“If things don’t improve inside Pakistan, whatever may happen outside their border will be completely meaningless. This remains an issue that Pakistan needs to resolve.”

Shuja Nawaz

Perhaps that is why, as one speaker said, the US government has publicly and officially welcomed the CPEC. Already, another said, US is, in a de-facto way, involved in CPEC: a road on its

US-Pakistan relations

Participants pointed the low imaging of the US in Pakistan. The last time the US tried to engage Pakistan, it was through the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act which, initially, was a major source of tension.

However, one Pakistani diplomat reminded that, even in the best of times, there has been mutual suspicion. In the 1980s and 1990s, for instance, questions were asked about the nuclear issue and the Taliban.

Pakistani participants complained that the US expects miracles from Pakistan which result in adding to the level of frustration. He called for viewing Pakistan as a normal partner.

American participants also argued that the two countries should not expect miracles from each other.

While several participants decried the transactional nature of the US-Pakistan relations, Ambassador Grossman quipped that what was wrong with that? He suggested that a good transactional relationship could serve as the foundation for building trust among the two countries.

“The growing Indo-US strategic partnership is a major irritant. The US perceives that elements in Afghanistan are supported by the Pakistani establishment because Pakistan perceives that India is out there. Pakistan doesn’t want to be surrounded by hostile neighbours.”

Ambassador Grossman

western route, from Chaman to Kalat, was originally funded by the USAID. He argued that many projects, considered part of the CPEC, were originally financed by the Asian Development Bank.

As to when and how the US could further invest, it was suggested that it should remain open regarding multiple developments in the CPEC

repertoire.

“Economic progress and education change the mindset. It is the harbinger to peace. It should be seen as an opportunity, as opposed to rivalry.”

General Hyat

The CPEC initiative in Pakistan can also attract US cooperation in countering militancy. CPEC will bring China into volatile areas. As America plans to leave the region, the existent militant outfits might turn their guns against the Chinese. Already, Pakistan has commissioned a special security force to protect the CPEC and the Chinese personnel working with various projects. Ultimately, one said, China may also seek cooperation with the US. At the same time, China will get involved further in the evolving security conundrum.

“China is not going to divert its route any time soon. Pakistan’s own trade with China, 96% of it is through Karachi, not through KKH which is a difficult terrain. It will take time before it can become viable.”

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan

Lately, while the US is committed to developing deeper relations with India, Pakistan has been getting closer to China, which, at least to some, might emerge as counter to the US role. Questions were also raised regarding where would Pakistan stand in the context of a possible confrontation between the US and China.

Uncertain Afghanistan

Pakistani and American speakers underscored that a stable Afghanistan was in the interest of Pakistan and the entire region.

Pakistani speakers alluded to the reality of peace in Pakistan as linked with peace in Afghanistan. They also blamed Afghanistan for providing sanctuaries to militants operating in Pakistan who manage to cross over a long and porous border

separating the two neighbours. One participant termed effective and uninterrupted border management as necessary for peace in Pakistan.

Several Pakistani participants rejected the blame of being responsible for insecurity in Afghanistan.

Participants repeatedly touched upon the reconciliation efforts between the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban stressing on the need for its success for forging peace in Afghanistan.

American participants asked for assessing how Pakistan could contribute to initiating this reconciliation process. They argued that the presence of leaders of Haqqani network on Pakistani soil rankled.

A Pakistani participant reminded that many Taliban leaders might have moved to Afghanistan, as shared by an Afghan general. This movement of Taliban to Afghanistan could be termed as “one step forward towards the ultimate reconciliation”.

Moreover, other meetings of Taliban with officials from Kabul outside Afghanistan also hint at some progress. A report by Pugwash International also hinted at a set of pre-conditions for moving forward on the front of peace in Afghanistan. These include, among others, the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan.

“We need to avoid the trap of exaggerated expectations.”

Robin Raphael

Participants also touched upon the increasing presence of the Islamic State (IS) in the two countries.

Pakistani participants largely termed it a Middle Eastern phenomenon. Even its finances, as one speaker said, were coming from IS central which is based in Syria.

Another warned that if either Syria or Iraq collapses, the major beneficiary will be the IS. They called for taking steps for warding off such a situation from materializing in the Middle East.

“I don’t think China has any problem coming with anyone including the US. Some Europeans are joining in, but the US is not doing so.”

Ishrat Hussain

In Pakistan, however, the group was likely to have some presence. There could also be some old Pakistani Taliban fighters willing to switch over.

Pakistani participants hinted that, because of the growing fondness between India and the US, Pakistan feels ‘left out’. They expressed concern over the way the worsening situation in the Indian part of Kashmir with gross human rights violations had been handled recently, sans any international outcry. A reference was also made to a fact-finding mission on Kashmir, led by BJP’s former foreign minister. Its report, as per a Pakistani participant, noted that the Kashmiris hated India.

Pakistani participants also wondered at the strange Indian rationale of not negotiating with Pakistan. Former foreign secretary Najamuddin Sheikh recalled that a similar approach was

Terrorism: a global or bilateral subject?

Pakistani participants argued that their country was a victim of terrorism.

They stressed that Pakistan has been battling extremism. One participant said that the recent appointments in the military indicated that internal security will be the top priority. Reference was also made to the report of a Judicial Commission which, in its probe of the dastardly terror attack in Quetta, indicted the government for inaction on most of the National Action Plan guidelines which had been approved at an All-Parties huddle after the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar.

American participants were wary of Pakistan’s commitment in battling all terror groups. One accused Pakistan of supporting groups that kill the Americans. Some suggested that the US had grown tired of Pakistan not taking action against the militants operating in the region.

Some Pakistani participants took strong exception to the allegation of being duplicitous. One reminded that no Pakistani spy agency is involved in the turmoil in the Middle East.

Importance of India

Several participants hinted that growing Indo-US strategic partnership would remain a major irritant in US-Pakistan relations.

“Both sides view each other as the problem: US views Pakistan as linked to the Haqqanis. In Pakistan, the US role in Afghanistan is perceived as negative.”

Moeed Yusuf

adopted by Pakistan in the 1990s when talks with India were conditioned on a discussion on the Kashmir issue.

“US government has publicly and officially welcomed the CPEC.”

Jack Gill

It was hoped that after the state-level elections in India, Prime Minister Modi will gradually move

towards negotiations.

Regional and Global trends affecting the relations

Iran-Saudi rivalry

Some participants asked for exploring the prospect how the growing rivalry between Iran and the Arabs could impact the relations between Pakistan and the United States.

“The US is, in a de facto way, involved in CPEC. Chamman to Kalat Road was funded by the USAID which is part of the CPEC.”

Arif Rafiq

Pakistan’s former foreign secretary Riaz Khan clarified that Pakistan would do its best to avoid taking sides. “We are going to stay away as far as possible”, he said.

Earlier, it was suggested that Pakistan’s relations with Iran and the Gulf region be further tapped. Pakistan, for instance, can serve as an intermediary between the two sides, said Robin Raphael. There was also news circulating that Pakistan’s most recent former army chief might be made the head of an anti-terror coalition force put together by Saudi Arabia.

“Are we seeking new animated relations beyond security? Should they agree where they converge, and diverge where they do?”

Stephen Tankel

Even then, a Pakistani participant reminded that it has been careful in in the past in playing the mediator’s role. For one, the country does not want to be dragged into a palpably sectarian confrontation.

Most of the scenarios discussed related to an indirect conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. But, as one American speaker put it: what if the “competition” between Iran and Saudi Arabia

became “confrontational”? How that will impact the U.S.-Pakistan relations remained to be seen.

Assertive Russia

Some speakers also hinted at the prospect of a Russia asserting beyond its neighbours, all the way to Afghanistan. More specifically, in 2017, Russia, along with Pakistan and China, plan to sit down to discuss the future of Afghanistan in a huddle which excludes the US.

“Much that I would like to see the American firms getting contracts, I think we do have this abiding interest in getting the traffic open, bidding open, so that oranges of Pakistan make it to China.”

Richard Boucher

Populism in the West

Another global issue impacting the US-Pakistan relations was the rise of the populist forces in the West. These forces have been calling for stern action against the refugees. Immigrants travelling to the US, including Pakistanis, have suffered.

“If in the near future, the Iran-Saudi competition, becomes more confrontational, what does it mean for US-Pakistan relations? Will that have an impact? How about impact of the US-China confrontation? If the US, under this new administration, makes a stronger tilt towards India, how does that play out for Pakistan?”

Marvin Weinbaum

Several participants called for addressing the internal issues in Pakistan first and then engaging with other countries like the US. They pointed out how sectarianism, inter-province issues, urban-rural divide, youth bulge and the civil-military disconnect had impacted Pakistan internally.

“We need to explore the possibility of Pakistan serving as an intermediary between the Gulf and Iran as they continue to compete

Robin Raphael

“There ought to be a realization that, on Afghanistan, it is unfair to put all the entire blame on Pakistan. There is a greater mess in the Middle East. There is no Pakistani spy agency involved there.”

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan

Shuja Nawaz, in particular, blamed the country’s civil-military divide for failing on the counter-terror front. He argued that the civil government, without learning much, has outsourced its responsibility to the military so that they could take credit if and when things improve.

“Even in the best of times, there has been mutual suspicion. In the 1980s and 1990s, questions were asked over the nuclear issue. Post-9/11, the question of the Taliban emerged.”

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan

“If the security situation didn’t improve within Pakistan, whatever happened outside would be completely meaningless,” he said, adding that what the US may plan to do would be in reaction to how Pakistan wanted to move.

Session II



Managing militancy: Opportunities and limits of US-Pakistan counter-terrorism cooperation



Managing militancy: Opportunities and limits of US-Pakistan counter-terrorism cooperation

United States and Pakistan are non-NATO allies in the battle against terrorism and militancy. The two countries have also cooperated against shared threats including the one emanating from al-Qaeda.

“Militancy is an existential threat to Pakistan. And there is a need to act against it with rigour.”

General Hyat

Although the threat from militancy continues, the two countries are often seen as sitting at the opposite ends of this fight. Largely, the US has been demanding of Pakistan to do more on multiple fronts in this war against terrorism.

In the session on managing militancy, the US delegates often accused Pakistan of supporting groups engaged in attacking the Americans or their interests. Specific references were made to the Haqqani Network which was accused of carrying out attacks inside Afghanistan, and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) which was held responsible for attacks in India.

“Some of the areas in which the two countries successfully cooperated included CT. The more discreetly they cooperated, the more successful they were, as was the case with counter-IED activities.”

Dan Feldman



Pakistani participants dispelled the impression that Pakistan was still pursuing a policy of condoning certain brands of militants. They said that such a policy may have been followed in the past, but this was no longer being pursued.

“We seem to be agreeing that ill-governance was also an issue which resulted in the rise of militancy, the rise of militants in Swat being an example. We need to work on the governance front.”

Ambasador Najmuddin Sheikh

Militancy: a global curse

Several Pakistani participants tried to discuss the militant threat beyond the realm of Pakistan alone. They linked the presence of militants in Pakistan to the larger phenomenon of prevalence of militancy throughout the Muslim world.

“One mistake was to lump the Taliban with al-Qaeda as terrorists in the post-9/11 scenario. Nothing has been done to reverse that.”

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan

Some focused on the individual characters of the militancy syndrome, while others stressed on its ideological roots. It was, for instance, said that “the extremist voice and militancy are an induced phenomenon whose primary focus is in the Middle East”.

Pakistani delegates nostalgically recalled how things had deteriorated for Pakistan since the

and after that war, the governance model of the tribal areas was destroyed by funding the clerics. The source of extremism lay in the “ungoverned space” of the tribal areas, he said.

“On the Haqqanis, I have it from the White House and commanders that, at the best or the worst, no more than 10% of the attacks were from them. Of course, they were behind the high-profile attacks, even claiming responsibility. And the truth is that Pakistan didn’t do much to stop this.”

Shuja Nawaz

Because of this history and context, Pakistani

Pakistan’s internal fight against militancy

In support of their stance that it was fighting militancy with vigour, the Pakistani delegates quoted several examples. One said that militancy had become an existential threat to Pakistan and that the civilian and military hierarchies were extremely sensitive to this malaise. The military even launched an operation in North Waziristan Agency which was, for long, considered the hub of a variety of militants.

Simultaneously, a comprehensive counter-terrorism policy was adopted known as the National Action Plan. Although there were serious questions regarding some of its clauses as having remained unimplemented, it reflected Pakistan’s commitment to fight militancy.

Recently, a judicial commission also grilled the government over inaction on some issues contained in the NAP.

It was stressed that the society was undergoing a change and a large segment had turned against the militants. To further illustrate the total commitment of the military to erase terror from the face of Pakistan, the former Deputy Army Chief said that “right up to the rank of Brigadier, virtually everyone had served in the FATA”.

Not all were upbeat, though. Some Pakistani participants were skeptical, more so from the civilian echelons on the prospect of delivering on the counter-militancy front. Shuja Nawaz said that the civilian administration didn’t allocate proper resources to fight militancy, while Ishrat Hussain blamed the political parties for politicizing the police force.

beginning of the Afghan war in the 1980s. Pakistan, one delegate stated, “had never been the same since then”.

An American delegate seemed to agree. During

participants stressed that people, at the societal level, have assimilated the militant characteristics, which, they argued, would take time to be shed off.

Key irritants:

Haqqanis

Americans were concerned over what they called inaction against the Haqqani Network comprising a strong element of the Pashtun Taliban challenging the Afghan government.

“At least 5 or more years from now, my understanding is that Pakistan would like to dismantle the Let and other such groups. But, my response would be: what are the details of the plan? How will the groups be de-mobilized?”

Stephen Tankel

“There is a disconnect in narrative. Americans say Pakistan is an exporter of terrorism. We say Pakistan is a victim of terrorism. We feel there is lack of appreciation. We may both be right.”

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan

One American participant said that the US military commanders had claimed that more than half of the attacks, or threats of attacks in Kabul, came from the Haqqanis. But, Shuja Nawaz partly contested it, saying that even at the worst, no more than 10% of the attacks were by the Haqqanis. But, most of these were high-profile attacks.

Making Pakistan stable? A question of “can” and “should”

Participants agreed that the US could support Pakistan in economic growth, which in turn could dilute the appeal of the militants.

Alongside other factors, bad governance was cited as a major reason for producing instability wherein militants thrive.

It was further suggested that the US should work for creating investment opportunities in the tribal areas.

The participants also wondered whether the US could and should help Pakistan achieve economic stability.

The question of “could” arose because there was skepticism whether the US could even deliver on that front. Richard Boucher said that America’s recent experience with state-building in Iraq and Afghanistan had not produced any exemplary results.

The question of “should” arose with the Trump administration which did not appear enthusiastic about nation- or state-building enterprises abroad, and was likely to focus internally.

Nonetheless, Pakistan, on its own, could work on provision of services to the people, particularly the militants-infested tribal areas, thus reducing the extremists’ appeal.

“As long as Pakistan needs certain hedges, India as existential enemy, can Pakistan decide it doesn’t need to keep these groups?”

Bob Hathaway

It was even claimed that some Taliban had moved back to Afghanistan. So, Pakistan could not be blamed for what they did. A Pakistani participant argued that it was wrong to have lumped the Afghan Taliban with al-Qaeda as

terrorists. This resulted in creating a major disconnect between the Pakistani and American approach.

Anti-India groups

Participants also discussed why Pakistan didn't take action against the anti-India or Kashmir-focused groups including Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT).

Some US delegates argued that Pakistan's support of, or condoning of the operations of the anti-India groups, was tied to its India-centric policy. Groups like Jaish-e-Mohammad were formed to counter India in Kashmir. Professor Marvin was skeptical of any change in Pakistan's policy to that end as long as Pakistan remained obsessed with Kashmir and India.

Pakistani delegates tried to highlight the real and perceived threats from India.

"Nobody has talked about India's involvement in terrorism. There is this dynamic of Pakistan-India relations that resulted into Pakistan creating them (the non-state actors). The kind of weapons the militants targeted in the Naval Dockyard and the Kamra Airbase were specifically meant for India."

Dr. Mansoor Ahmed

They stressed that one way the US could help resolve this was to tell India regarding how its own posture along the border with Pakistan and its cold-start doctrine threatened Pakistan. A US delegate conceded that America had conveyed this concern to India without any positive response.

Pakistani delegates contended that any support to these groups was a story of the past. One participant asked whether the two countries could share the roadmap or details on how these groups would be demobilized. That, he said, could build mutual trust.

What seemed clear was that these anti-India groups would remain irritants spoiling the US-Pakistan relations. As a strategic move, the US was getting closer to India and would not want it be targeted by any Pakistan-based militant group/s. One US participant clearly said that the Mumbai attack indirectly affected American interests.

"Pakistan has targeted some of those fighting against the state while others are instruments of the state. The seamless quality of the militants to move from group to group shows that these categories don't necessarily work."

Marvin Weinbaum

Discussing the prospect of handing over some militant/s, it was proposed that a dialogue should be held to address the sensitivities in the matter.


A Pakistani participant said such groups often enjoyed the sympathy of the people for supporting the cause of Kashmir. He said that "they could not divorce themselves from what happened in Kashmir", adding further that Pakistan did not want to be seen changing its historical position under an Indian pressure.

"I don't see much seriousness by the provincial or the federal governments to confront terror. Qazi Faiz Isa Report says a lot regarding the failure of the government in formulating a cohesive and sustainable policy to tackle terror."

Raof Hasan

Areas of cooperation

- One area of possible counter-terrorism cooperation could be against the Islamic State (IS) in the region. IS was a threat to both Pakistan and the US. Many anti-Pakistan Taliban groups have also switched sides and have joined the IS. This was further reason why Pakistan would like to confront the threat



aggressively.

Some delegates expressed concern about the rumors that the IS was being backed by the US.

- Broadly stating, Pakistan and the US should come up with a list of counter-insurgency enablers.
- Pakistan and the US could learn from each other on border control. America's experience could be put to use by Pakistan.
- Pakistan and the US could continue working on countering Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The two countries had already been working together on this for some time now.
- It was suggested that if Pakistan had evidence of India's involvement in terrorism in Pakistan, it should be shared with the US.
- A Pakistani participant asked for exploring the prospect of a deal on Shakeel Afridi against the release of Afia Siddique.
- Some participants called for allocating a substantial percentage of the counter-terrorism funds to the civilian side, including the police.



Session III



**South-Asia's nuclear architecture:
Prospects and challenges**



South-Asia's nuclear architecture: Prospects and challenges

In this session, the delegates candidly put forward their concerns about Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Below are some of the key points raised during the discussion.

Clearing misperceptions

American participant tried to dispel the impression that US wanted to undo Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.

According to the US delegates, the view expressed by senior Pakistani officials was wrong not only because of the physical, political, and tactical challenges, but also because of the huge stockpile of over 100 weapons.

Another US view was to assure Pakistan that America had come a long way since the times of the "capping, reducing, rolling back and eliminating" policy initially flagged in 1990.

"The problem is that parallel policies are pursued. Whereas on the one hand, Pakistan would like a cooperative policy with President Ghani, there are doubts expressed whether Afghanistan can sustain or break apart. That is why proxies were kept. The trouble is that this policy is self-contradictory."

Marvin Weinbaum

Pakistani participants underscored that the



long-held fear of denuclearizing Pakistan was a misperception. But, one delegate referred to how in the 1970s, the then US secretary of state was pressurizing the Pakistani Prime Minister for not taking the path of acquiring nuclear arsenal.

"Is US-Pakistan cooperation actually possible on Afghanistan? So long as Taliban insurgents are fighting against the US in Afghanistan with sanctuaries in Pakistan, can we think of convergence?"

Michael Kugelman

American participants were also concerned that Pakistan's nuclear weapon system was growing at a fast rate.

Americans were concerned over the limit of Pakistan's pursuit of nuclear weapons. They wanted to know how much would be sufficient for Pakistan to "feel secure".

A Pakistani speaker dispelled this impression. He argued that making a comparison with India was important, because Pakistan's nuclear expertise was essentially India-centric.

"The whole issue of extremist militancy has deep roots. The primary focus is not Pakistan or Afghanistan, but the Middle East where it is on full display in the shape of Da'esh."

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan

Dr. Mansoor said that the US waiver to India in 2008 resulted in India expanding its fissile material capability outside of the safeguards. Besides many other advances, India was in the process of exceeding the quantum of plutonium required for production of its weapons.

"Pakistanis want a secure and sovereign state. A sovereign state should control its territory and protect its people from outside. This requires taking certain measures like ending the safe havens for militants."

Ambassador Grossman

It was generally conceded that Pakistan could not compete with India which had 20 times more capacity to produce weapons grade material. What Pakistan was seeking was strategic equilibrium, not parity, he said.

More specifically, American participants expressed concern over Pakistan continuously developing tactical nuclear weapons. The fear was expressed for their role in escalating conflict.

Decrying discrimination?

From the onset, the American participants argued that the US was unlikely to provide Pakistan with (a) assistance in getting membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and (b) signing a civilian nuclear deal.

Participants were asked to look at other options for cooperation beyond these two avenues. However, Pakistani participants complained of discrimination and stressed strongly on the need of these two agreements as further insurance for nuclear safety and security.

Pakistani participants questioned the rationale of getting India into the NSG. It was argued that India had the fastest expanding unsafeguarded fissile-material producing capacity outside of other NPT states.

They argued that India did not need to be an NSG member. Already, India had got waivers under the civilian nuclear agreement because of which they were getting uranium from Australia.

Decisions at the NSG were made by consensus. If Pakistan allowed India to get into the NSG, its own avenues would be permanently blocked.

One argued that India was accorded special status because of deepening US-India ties. "At the end of the day, Indo-US nuclear deal happened for reasons beyond the need for energy", said Moeed Yusuf.

On the other hand, Pakistan was denied the same for reasons beyond the proliferation network of AQ Khan. Even if Pakistan became part of the NSG, prejudice against Pakistan would not wither away.

Pakistani participants asked if the US would be ready to accept Pakistan in the mainstream and treat it like a partner, and not a target. One delegate argued that the US might cooperate with Pakistan on similar grounds as it had done with India, such as on the ballistic missile issue.

Dr. Ahmad responded that, basically, India's Cold Start Doctrine triggered the need for Pakistan to develop the tactical weapons.

"Pakistani mistake was to look at the issue from the Pashtun lens."

Shuja Nawaz

At the same time, he reminded that the issue was more about emerging force posture on both sides. India had also developed shorter-range ballistic missiles.

India was debating revisiting their nuclear doctrine, as per reports. Some argued that this might actually happen. Dr. Ahmad further asserted that India was modernizing its weaponry and conventional forces which created a clear impression of its resolve to "escalate dominance" during a crisis.

Pakistani participants blamed India's defense posture for endangering it, thereby the need for retaining the nuclear option.

Pakistani participants argued that a significant percentage of the Indian Armed Forces personnel were stationed along the Pakistani border. By comparison, there was hardly any presence along

AQ Khan Saga – a stumbling block?

Participants hinted that a reason why Pakistan was not treated on a par with India was because of the involvement of the Pakistani scientist, Abdul Qadeer Khan, in nuclear proliferation.

Pakistani participants asked the Americans that they should not base their nuclear relations with Pakistan on a single episode which was a fifteen-year old story. AQ Khan, venerated in Pakistan as the bomb's founder, was questioned extensively for proliferating weapons.

For the Americans, however, the chapter was not closed yet. One reasoned that at least fifty years should lapse before moving towards reshaping US-Pakistan relations in the nuclear arena. If direct US access was given to AQ Khan, which was demanded but refused, the two countries could earn each other's trust.

Not all thought of the AQ Khan Saga as the only stumbling block. Pakistan's long-range missiles, which could target as far as Israel, also raised concerns. Pakistani participants assured that the development of its nuclear weapons was India-centric and Israel was not a potential target.

Pakistani speakers dispelled the impression that short-range system reflected war-posturing. They argued that Pakistan hardly had sufficient material to develop and deploy a disproportionate range of such weapons.

"The other weakness has been FATA. It is not treated as part of Pakistan."

Shuja Nawaz

In the light of Pakistan's battlefield weapons,

their border with China.

"90% of the GDP of the Afghans derive either directly from foreign aid or induced expenditure. And that will go down. This economic instability is contrary to the concept of a stable and prosperous Afghanistan."

Ishrat Hussain

However, an American participant argued that the

extent of India's modernization was "exaggerated." Also, India had recently allocated forces to be stationed in the North-East, and not along the Pakistani border.

"For Afghanistan, it will be difficult to accept the Durand Line. But can we come up with another term which allows us to control the border?"

General Hyat

Pakistani speakers argued that the gap between Pakistan and India, with vastly different economic growths, was likely to further widen, thereby disturbing the equilibrium in the region.

US participants countered the impression that America's civil nuclear agreement with India had resulted in India getting sensitive American technology for free.

It was argued that although the agreement opened the doors for India to pursue nuclear power technology, this could only come from commercial contracts.

Pakistani participants argued that India had resources to buy commercial products. Another delegate said that Pakistan desired a similar commercial agreement with the US.

"The way forward is not reconciliation but reintegration. Reintegration is a process and reconciliation is a grand bargain, power sharing. Whether or not it lasts is another matter."

Marvin Weinbaum

American participants wanted to know about the range of nuclear debate taking place in Pakistan.

The US delegates wanted to know if Pakistan had any narrative beyond the one coming from the nuclear circles, and whether that narrative had any impact on its policy. "Are there any

alternative voices", one participant asked.

A Pakistani expert replied that Pakistan's nuclear programme was part of the "Pakistani belief system".

American participants wondered over the impact of Pakistan's long-range missiles, fearing that these could hit countries as far away as Israel.

The US speakers argued that Pakistan's nuclear technology was much too advanced. It was aiming for ranges longer than 2,700 km to around 3,500 km, even beyond. The idea, one said, was to cover Andaman Islands. All this seemed unnecessary for a country which did not have reconnaissance facility. As a consequence, other countries felt insecure.

"You cannot solve the border problem by renaming it. People from both sides visit each other. I would welcome ideas about collaboration on both sides of the border."

Jack Gill

Pakistani participants dispelled these fears saying that Pakistan's nuclear weapons system was India-specific. Even Shaheen-III's tested range was India-specific. No other country should suspect Pakistan's intentions in this regard

Pakistani participants tackled the question of legitimacy of their country's nuclear weapons.

Although it was not explicitly stated, Pakistani speakers assumed that their technology was questioned for being stolen.

Dr. Ahmad argued that this was not the case. He advised the West to break out of the "technology superiority syndrome".

Another speaker contended that Pakistan developed a third route to weaponization beyond reprocessing and diffusions. That route entailed

the use of centrifuges. “We did a lot of innovation and hard work”, he said, complaining that calling Pakistan’s weapons programme illegitimate was unfair.

“Our influence over the Taliban is limited.”

Ambassador Najmuddin Sheikh

Questions were also raised about Pakistan’s conduct as a nuclear weapons state, and that Pakistan might share it with another country from its broader fraternity.

Delegates were reassured that Pakistan was a responsible state which looked upon its nuclear weapons as an integral component of its security.

Pakistani participants dispelled the rumours that it would share its nuclear technology with Saudi Arabia. Having good relations with Saudi Arabia didn’t imply that all its security demands, if and when made, would be met.

A participant said that Pakistan was mindful of the 15 to 20% Shia population its which was further reason why Pakistan refused to send troops in support of Saudi Arabia in Yemen. Throwing it back at the US delegates, a Pakistani participant said that the Saudis have mostly looked at the US for security in the region.

“We should not even take responsibility for reconciliation, for being the spokespersons of the Pashtuns, or the Taliban. We were supporting the Taliban and the other side moved to India.”

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan

The session was informed that no country needed to be apprehensive about Pakistan’s bomb. “This was not an Islamic bomb. This was a Pakistani bomb meant to safeguard Pakistan’s interests, not the interests of any other country or region”, one delegate said.

Participants talked about the safety of Pakistani nuclear weapons, wondering whether there was a prospect of these falling in the militants’ hands.

Theft of the nuclear weapons was a gruesome scenario enacted during the session. A participant said that when disproportionate quantity of fissile materials is produced and transported in the country, there was a clear prospect that something might go wrong. Similar concern was expressed about the weapons once made and assembled.

A terrorism expert linked nuclear security to broader security in the country. He reminded that a number of key military installations in Pakistan, like its military headquarters, had come under attack.

Pakistani participants clarified that it had been taking steps aimed at managing nuclear technology in a safe and secure manner.

It was said that Pakistan had offered confidence-building measures to India. It was India which had refused the cruise missile testing agreement.

Way forward

- Some Pakistani delegates argued that abstaining from conferences on disarmament was counterproductive. Dr. Ahmad said that Pakistan should get into the conference and work with other like-minded countries. By not participating, he argued, Pakistan was letting India evade response on its own expansion.
- Shuja Nawaz called for including China and Iran in the South-Asian nuclear architecture. He asked to explore as to what proportion of India’s nuclear arsenal was targeted towards China?
- One major area of concern that offered scope of collaboration was the safety of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal.

- Another area of US-Pakistan cooperation could be the security of personnel working in the nuclear technology arena.
- A suggestion was floated that Pakistan and India needed to have another round of testing, only for technical reasons, for ensuring safety of their respective devices and, thereafter, they should sign and ratify the CTBT. But many were skeptical whether Pakistan and India would actually sign the CTBT after conducting the tests.
- Participants argued that the only way the two countries could cooperate on nuclear affairs was through the Pakistan Centre for Nuclear Excellence.

Session IV



Stabilizing Afghanistan: Can there be a mutually agreeable endgame?



Stabilizing Afghanistan: Can there be a mutually agreeable endgame?

Both Pakistan and the United States say that they want a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan. A restive and destabilized Afghanistan suits neither of the two countries.

In spite of the clarity of the objective, the burning question for years has been: how to help Afghanistan become stable and prosperous and what are the incentives and limitations for the two countries to work jointly towards the attainment of this goal?

"I am surprised to hear very senior Pakistanis assert that the greatest threat to Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is the United States of America. Americans question the scale and scope of the Pakistani arsenal. But the fact of its existence is not in question, and no one expects to change that reality."

Jack Gill

The endgame in Afghanistan is one of the many questions that reverberate together with many other aspects of the US-Pakistan relations. Take the counter-terrorism front, for example.

"One of the earlier concerns was somehow Pakistan's efforts to develop nuclear weapons. Clearly, that's now less of a concern."

Robin Raphael



Cooperation in this field is mostly routed through Afghanistan, as one participant said, which is reflected in the status accorded to the Taliban.

"The Cold Start doctrine essentially triggered Pakistan's response in the form of the development of short-range battlefield nuclear weapons and the short-range system."

Dr. Mansoor Ahmed

The Taliban puzzle

The US speakers wondered whether US-Pakistan cooperation was at all possible when the Taliban insurgents fighting the US in Afghanistan were perceived to have safe sanctuaries inside Pakistan.

To a Pakistani participant, lumping of the Taliban with al-Qaeda was a grave mistake which virtually slammed the door shut on the prospect of reconciliation. Assuming that the Taliban

represented the Pashtun segment of the Afghan population, a participant said, the post-Taliban government in Kabul transferred power to the non-Pashtuns in an inequitable manner. As per this dispensation, the Taliban had been rendered irrelevant in spite of their overwhelming presence in the country. The presence of the Taliban was also perceived as another reflection of extremism in the Muslim world.

Forcing the Taliban to do things that they did not want to do was not an easy task for Pakistan. This, a Pakistani participant said, should have been candidly conveyed to the Americans.

“Why don’t you help us get some safety for our civilian nuclear reactors which are under the IAEA safeguards? The IAEA inspectors come. You have the best safety mechanisms for these things. Why don’t you allow us to buy that? These cannot be used for any military purpose. That could be a positive gesture.”

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan

One American participant agreed, saying “We went from Al-Qaeda to its friends, to their friends, and so on.” Somehow the fight got diluted in the

Same results, different means

Participants called for looking at options beyond direct engagement of the US in Afghanistan.

Alternatives may include engaging the regional countries resulting in initiatives aimed at stabilizing Afghanistan.

One such set of initiatives included negotiating with the Taliban. Reference was made to the QCG process which also included China. It was hoped that China could contribute towards bringing about the desired change in the Taliban approach to the talks.

Russia was also playing a more active role in the region and was getting directly involved with the Taliban. It could also be taken on board to play a constructive role towards a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan.

Regional connectivity projects like CASA and TAPI could also be used to bring the countries closer together.

Pakistan could also intensify its work internally to fight militancy. Delegates suggested that it needed to mainstream the tribal areas, adjacent to Afghanistan, from where the militants were perceived to be operating. Mainstreaming FATA involved establishing the writ of the state in these areas as also bringing in the rule of law.

“When Saddam invaded Kuwait, Saudi Arabia didn’t look towards Pakistan for sending troops. They asked you, and you sent half a million troops.”

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan

process, and the focus shifted from Afghanistan as the US got engaged in the Iraq war.

Even now, another delegate said, if the purpose was to stop the Taliban from attacking the US, one way forward could be their ultimate reintegration.

The American delegates questioned Pakistan over its influence over the Taliban. Academic Marvin claimed Pakistan's influence over the Taliban was negative: "It is the ability to prevent things from happening that was not seen to be in Pakistan's interest."

"Pakistan is aiming for weapon capability beyond 2700 km, around 3500 km. The idea is to cover Andaman Islands. This notion is provocative, dangerous and unnecessary."

David Smith

Because of this influence, Pakistan had been asked to bring the Taliban to the negotiations table. Pakistan's wider role in Afghanistan was acknowledged by the participants. Already, Pakistan, along with the US, China and Afghanistan, was a member of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) tasked with the responsibility of convincing the Afghan Taliban to sit together with the Afghan government.

Several Pakistani participants seemed to suggest that Pakistan's influence on the Taliban was exaggerated. Former ambassador Riaz Khan found convincing hardliners difficult, arguing that if Pakistan couldn't persuade the Mujahideen in the 1990s, how could it do so with the Taliban?

"At the end of the day, Indo-US nuclear deal happens for reasons more than energy. The issue at Pakistan's end is not the AQ Khan incident. The AQ Khan episode made it difficult, but people would still have found ways at that end."

Moeed Yusuf

Divisions within the Taliban also add to the confusion. The US delegates also brought into focus the reality of the Afghan Taliban drawing support from the Pakistani Taliban who were engaged in battling Pakistan.

In any case, some participants indicated that the Afghan Taliban leaders might have already shifted to Afghanistan. Pakistan, a delegate proposed, should not take responsibility of convincing the Taliban for reconciliation.

"We have had one nasty incident about nuclear proliferation. I do not underestimate its gravity, but it is a past incident. We need to get beyond it."

Ambassador Najmuddin Sheikh

Even if nothing came out of the peace process, there was a likelihood of some communication channels staying open. Participants suggested that, at least, two years should be spared for the reconciliation process to yield any tangible results.

"It seems that Pakistan continues to shield Khan from those who might like to ask about the details of his operations. I would humbly suggest that were Pakistan to remove this shield and allow the Americans and others to question him in detail about the nature and extent of his operation, this might go a long way towards getting rid of some impediments from the past."

Bob Hathaway

Nonetheless, some American speakers expressed concern over the Taliban gaining ground in Afghanistan. At least, the Taliban should be asked to abide by certain constitutional standards, they suggested. Alternatively, a reintegration process could be initiated which required more time and patience.

Will US withdrawal imperil Afghanistan?

Participants also grappled with the issue of whether Afghanistan would plunge into chaos or the Taliban would take over if the US troops withdrew. A parallel was made with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops and the

consequent Taliban takeover in Afghanistan.

By and large, the delegates rejected the prospect of a doomsday scenario in Afghanistan if and when the US troops withdrew. A Pakistani participant said Afghanistan of 2017 was positively different from the past. In pre-2001 years, international presence was minimal: “No embassy operated there. Afghanistan was, indeed, an ungoverned space”.

“South-Asian nuclear architecture shouldn’t be confined to Pakistan and India alone. Chinese and the Iranians need to come in, too.”

Shuja Nawaz

US delegates seemed to agree. Regardless of the US presence or otherwise, China would not want the presence of any extremist elements linked to anti-China groups in its surroundings.

Questions will also be raised over what had been achieved in Afghanistan in the last so many years. Some delegates sounded positive. For all the skepticism over America’s goals in Afghanistan, it is the people in the country who had undergone a healthy change: “They wanted the government to deliver services at the grassroots level”.

“Nuclear security is linked to the broader security issue. The belief is that nuclear assets are as safe as the GHQ or the ISI office, or some other core offices. All of these have been attacked.”

Hassan Abbas

The alternative – Afghanistan’s collapse – will be deadlier, one warned. This time, he said, “in addition to fighting the state of Afghanistan, the elements of insurgency will be fighting amongst themselves also: IS against the Taliban against the Haqqanis,” and so much else which is likely to crop up with time.

Arguably, if Pakistan wanted strengthening of the Afghan government, it was advised to change its policy appropriately. Marvin said that Pakistan seemed to be running parallel policies: on the one hand, it wanted to cooperate with President Ghani, but, simultaneously, it was also doubtful whether the Afghan government would survive.

As much as Pakistan did not like the Taliban to return to power in Afghanistan, a delegate suggested, they should be given some space to work towards their ultimate accommodation.

“We need to come up with some other way before moving ahead. AQ Khan incident is the hindrance to the US-Pakistan civil nuclear weapons agreement, from NSG.”

Richard Boucher


Another delegate called for the residual US presence to have some semblance of order. But a question was asked regarding how long the US intended to stay on in Afghanistan and could order be ensured after the next deadline was over?

Beyond the military question, there was an economic question, too. As the Trump administration looked inward, there would be less spending outside. This could affect Afghanistan which derives 90% of its GDP from foreign aid or induced expenditure. This economic instability is contrary to the prospect of a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, warned Ishrat Hussain.

Past as prologue

Pakistani participants admitted that there had been mistakes in the past. They suggested to move forward by tapping the extensive goodwill and harmony that existed between the people of the two countries.

Ambassador Riaz Khan, sharing his own diplomatic experience in Afghanistan, said that Pakistan eventually slipped into the Afghan ethnic divide resulting in negatives for his country. “We



even lost the confidence of the people who were once supportive”, another delegate said: “They became the opponents of Pakistan”.

One Pakistani delegate said that there was concern over the “collusion” between India and Afghanistan. To address that, Pakistan should work with Kabul, asking it not to allow its intelligence or territory to be used against Pakistan.

Another Pakistani delegate said that Afghanistan might find it difficult to accept the Durand Line. He suggested that a new term or mechanism could be adopted to resolve the issue.





Moving on...

The round in Washington, DC being the first of a sequence of rounds, the delegates and the discussants were able to put on table a host of sub-issues that needed to be debated reflecting areas of both convergence and divergence. It was understood that it would be only through a prolonged, candid and dispassionate engagement of all such issues and sub-issues that the contours of a way forward could be tailored.

On the foregoing pages, we have tried to formulate a picture for the stakeholders reflecting the gist of what was said by various participants in the four sessions of the first round. In a way, this was a tentative round where the participants were trying to get a measure of the issues being debated and their possible impact on our bid to move on.

As we get into the second round in Islamabad on April 5-6, we have some of the same issues on the table which were debated in the first round. This provides the participants an opportunity to concretize their approach and recommendations. Simultaneously, we have also added a couple of fresh issues to be debated in this round, thus further broadening the repertoire of engagement for a more comprehensive appraisal and outcome.

While we have expanded the regional dynamic session to induct the components of emerging alliances and widening economic connectivity, we

have also introduced an exclusive session on the US economic assistance to Pakistan and how it can work best for both countries.

We are also continuing with our discussion on the key subjects of managing militancy and the prospect of peace in Afghanistan and how United States and Pakistan can collaborate to work towards the attainment of desired goals.

A shared vision of peace is in the interest of both countries as also of the countries of the larger South-Asian region. It is only through a collaborative and inclusive approach that the dream of peace can be secured. In an environment when the governments are unable to move forward, engagement at track-II level becomes more important and relevant for throwing up credible and sustainable policy options for the review of the governments and other stakeholders.

We may have come a fair distance in the first round, but we all understand that it is going to be a long haul. We are looking forward to another intense and engaging round when some old and some new issues will come up for discussion and test each side's resolve in arriving at an understanding that would be conducive to the interests of both countries as also for the attainment of objectives pre-conditioning the advent of peace in the region.





Regional Peace Institute

www.regionalpeaceinstitute.com