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Background Paper

Joint Strategy to  
Control Militancy & Pak-Afghan  
Conflict Resolution post-2014

The header features a collage of four vertical panels. From left to right: a close-up of a flag's folds, the Pakistani flag (green field with a white crescent and star), a dark textured background, and the official seal of the Government of Punjab, Pakistan, which includes a mosque and a sun.

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# BACKGROUND PAPER

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### FOREWORD

**J**oint Strategy to Control Militancy & Pak-Afghan Conflict Resolution post-2014 is a paper that has been commissioned by PILDAT to serve as a background paper for the Pakistan-Afghanistan Parliamentarians' Dialogue-XI scheduled to be held on December 17-18, 2013 at Kabul, Afghanistan.

Authored by Professor Ijaz Khan, this paper covers the genesis of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, focusing on the current issues and perspectives on growing militancy, prospects for conflict-resolution in post-2014 period and the possible steps needed by both countries to strengthen the strategic relationship.

#### Disclaimer

The view, opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of PILDAT.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Mr. Ijaz Khan is also a member of National and International Professional and related bodies and is quite active with the Civil Society organisations and causes. He also works as Consultant in the areas of his interest.





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### INTRODUCTION

History, Geography, Sociology, Politics and Economics have made the security and peace of Afghanistan and Pakistan interdependent. This interdependence and linkage is increasing with every new day and new crisis.

Without going into history, both countries currently face the challenge of extremism, insurgency and terrorism. Their bilateral relations are fundamental to their ability to successfully meet these challenges. However, despite the fact that both countries realize and understand the need for mutual cooperation and coordination, their bilateral relations are fraught with suspicion, mistrust, accusations and counter-accusations.

This paper looks at the challenge of insurgency and the role of the other side in the perceptions of each country. It then looks briefly at how the two neighbours can change their perceptions of each other, replace mistrust with trust, cooperate in meeting the challenge of insurgency and develop friendly and mutually beneficial neighbourly relations.

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#### Afghanistan's viewpoint on Militancy and Perceptions of Pakistan

Afghanistan's main security concern is from the threat posed by internal armed insurgency that has mainly non-state international backing. Its threat perceptions also take note of the different regional states, vying with each other for a resolution of the Afghan insurgency that suits their interests. The problem is compounded as these interests are mutually contradictory and are calculated in zero-sum terms; gain of one is directly translated into loss of another. The main contenders are Pakistan and India, with Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Central Asian states all vying for influence in Afghanistan. Amongst all these Afghans perceive Pakistan to be the most intrusive.

Afghanistan views Pakistan as a State that is undermining its sovereignty by interfering in its on-going insurgency. Afghans perceive Pakistan to have a hegemonic policy towards it. It considers Pakistan had made it clear through actions, statements and various diplomatic and non-diplomatic, both covert and overt means, that it wants to dictate Afghanistan's relations with other States, especially India. For that end, Pakistan wants to influence the makeup of Afghan government. It is for this reason that Pakistan is supporting or tolerating Taliban or other groups trying to change the government in Afghanistan.

In short, the above-presented Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan is considered as against Afghanistan's sovereignty and independence.

Afghan memory is filled with a mistrust of Pakistan against which it had territorial claims. Afghanistan's border with Pakistan was marked by the British in 1894, known as Durand Line. The Afghans raised the issue of Durand Line<sup>1</sup> on the eve of British departure from the Sub Continent. It became the only country that objected to Pakistan's UN membership in 1947, demanding that unless the issue of Durand Line is resolved, Pakistan cannot be recognized as a State with the territory that it had inherited from Britain. Afghanistan has retained that claim to date. No government, even Taliban, the closest any Afghan government had ever been to Pakistan, accepted the

legality of the Durand Line.

Pakistan, with US agreement and support, considered religious opponents of Soviet intervention as its best bet in Afghanistan. Pakistan's support for Mujahideen in the 1980s and much more, its current perceptions of and policies towards Afghan Taliban has added to the perception in Afghanistan of Pakistan's hegemonic designs towards it.

In Afghan perceptions, Pakistan has become the main source of de-stability. Afghans, for whom today the foremost challenge is end to the Taliban insurgency, perceives Pakistan is backing them or at least is not denying/permitting the use of its territory by Afghan insurgents. It believes by providing/tolerating sanctuaries of Afghan Taliban, as well as being a route for Taliban's international support whether emanating from Pakistan itself or elsewhere, Pakistan is playing a key role in destabilizing Afghanistan.

#### Pakistan's viewpoint on Militancy and Perceptions of Pakistan

Pakistan considers militancy in Pakistan as a flow over of the militancy in Afghanistan and Militancy in Afghanistan is essentially a reaction to foreign intervention there. Pakistan's dominant view is that the insurgency in Pakistan fuelled by foreign interests, especially India. It continues to view India as the focus of its security threat perceptions, which it believes must be balanced everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

Pakistan's Afghan Policy emanates out of its India-centric security policy. Pakistan policy towards Afghanistan since the resistance to the Soviet Intervention started has been dictated by mainly two policy goals of:

- a) Eliminating any Indian influence in Afghanistan
- b) Resolving the Durand Line issue through a policy of propping up religious alternate to the secular Pakhtun nationalist leadership and narrative.

Since the Soviet (and western also) withdrawal from Afghanistan, in order to keep India out of Afghanistan Pakistan policy aims to have a friendly government that guarantees its above-mentioned goals.

1. For details read, Omrani. Bijan., *The Durand Line: History and Problems of the Afghan-Pakistan Border*, Asian Affairs Vol. 40.2, 2009.

2. Khan. Feroz Hasan., "Pakistan's Security Perspectives", *Force Magazine* New Delhi, April 2005, <http://www.sassu.org.uk/pdfs/Article%20for%20Force%20magazine%20India.pdf> accessed 01 Aug 2012. Feroz Hasan Khan's essay is an excellent description of Pakistan's India Centric Security Policy from a realist perspective and a Pakistan sympathetic stand point. Also read Hasan-Askari Rizvi, 'Pakistan's Strategic Culture', in *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, Michael R. Chambers, ed. Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College, November 2002

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Pakistan had never enjoyed good neighbourly relations with Afghanistan. The story of Pak–Afghan relations fills the mind of the average Pakistani decision-maker with mistrust, to say the least. It must be added quickly that this mistrust was mutual. There have been many ups and downs in Pak–Afghan relations. The relations reached an all time low during the prime ministership of Sardar Daud in Afghanistan (1953–1963) in 1961, when Afghanistan broke off diplomatic relations with Pakistan and Pakistan imposed a ban on transit facilities to the land-locked Afghanistan. The breakdown was brought by Afghanistan's heightened activism in support of Pashtunistan during Sardar Daud tenure. Relations were resumed in 1963 after the resignation of Sardar Daud.

However, to correct the historical record and get a balanced perspective, it must be pointed out, that Afghanistan had remained neutral during all the military conflicts Pakistan had with India (1948, 1965, 1971), which should have set aside Pakistani apprehensions of having to worry about northern frontiers in its conflicts on the southern borders.<sup>3</sup> That did not happen and Pakistani attitudes towards Afghanistan did not change nor did Pakistani establishment's relations with Pashtun Nationalists and dealings of the ethnic issues change, with serious implications for Pakistan's Afghan Policy.<sup>4</sup>

The Pakistani decision-makers' mind-set that mistrusted India or anything or anyone having the remotest link with India, could not take the secular, more specifically nationalist Pashtun<sup>5</sup> as an ally. Pakistan's worries in Afghanistan were two-fold: An Afghanistan friendly with India would always be a source of threat during Pakistan's conflict with India and the issue of Afghan claims over Pashtun majority territories of Pakistan.<sup>6</sup> The nationalist Pashtun in Pakistan is the heir to the Pashtun that was part of Indian National Congress in the pre-partition days. The relationship between Afghans, Pakistani Pashtuns and their relations with India fills the Pakistani State mind with

suspicion. This suspicion pushes for looking for policies based on religious identity that will take care of the Durand Line question.

A recent study<sup>7</sup> documenting the views of Pakistan's Foreign Policy Elite is a very instructive guide to the mind-set that formulates Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan. Pakistan Foreign Policy elite, in a rather supposedly quite subtle manner, first argue that the USA must not abandon Afghanistan. They are repeating continuously what was said after 9/11, to separate Taliban (good Taliban/Pashtuns understood as Taliban) and Al-Qaeda. Pakistan continues to push for a solution that will have a space for people and groups it can rely on for protection of its interests in Afghanistan, hence the policy of wanting a friendly government in Afghanistan rather than a friendly State of Afghanistan. Pakistan continues to pursue the goal of a major say/control whether the term Strategic Depth is used or not) in Afghanistan through its demands for a friendly government/ broader government/ representative of all ethnic groups/ representing good Taliban, etc., and from the ideal of total ouster of India from Afghanistan to limiting it to economic development only.

3. Rasanayagam. Angelo., *Afghanistan A Modern History*, London I. B. Taurin London, 2003, pp. 27-37. For a detailed description of the Pakistani state position on Pashtunistan issue and Pak-Afghan relations read Burke, S. M., and Ziring. Lawrence, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1973, pp. 68-90. For an alternative view read Tendulkar. D. G., Abdul Ghaffar Khan; *Faith is a Battle*, PopularPrakashan Press, Bombay, 1967. pp. 451–53.
4. Greer, Frederic., 'Pakistan Afghanistan Relations in the Post 9/11 Era', *Carnegie Papers*, No. 72, 2006.
5. Secular Pashtuns till the emergence of PPP in NWFP during the 1970s, meant Nationalist followers of Abdul Wali Khan, son and political heir of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Currently they are in the fold of Awami National Party (ANP) led by Asfanyar Wali Khan. ANP has formed government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with support of PPP. There are some other minor groups or individuals outside the fold of ANP as well as Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP), which is mainly based among the Pakhtuns of Balochistan.
6. Rubin. Barnett R., *Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995. pp 63-84
7. 'Pakistan, the United States and the End Game in Afghanistan: Perceptions of Pakistan's Foreign Policy Elite', 'Strategic Security Brief' Jinnah Institute, Islamabad. <http://www.jinnah-institute.org/images/jiusipbrief.pdf> July 2011, Accessed on 20 July 2012

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#### Pakistan-Afghanistan; Current Issues

Both countries realize the significance the other holds for it. Despite tensions and mistrust both need and want the cooperation of the other to address challenges to their national aspirations and economic and political, as well as security interests. There are a number of issues that need to be addressed immediately for both to make any progress in their bilateral relations.

Afghan Peace Process, Release of Afghan Taliban Prisoners by Pakistan and Afghanistan's Official reaction

Afghanistan is trying to get Taliban to the negotiating table. It expects support from Pakistan in these efforts. In these efforts it claims to have made contacts with some influential Taliban, who had shown some willingness in a negotiated settlement. Most of these, including the most important among them, were arrested by Pakistan, as they were in Pakistan, when some progress in negotiations was made, Mulla Abdul Ghani Baradar, the second most important leader of Taliban after Mulla Omar, was one such person. Afghanistan considered these arrests at such a time as disruption of the Afghan Peace Process.

Pakistan has released most of them including Mulla Baradar during 2013 to show its intentions of supporting the Afghan Peace Process. However, it has kept them in its 'protection'. Afghanistan wants access to them to its satisfaction. Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, in his visit to Afghanistan (November 2013) promised to address Afghan concerns on negotiations with the freed Taliban leaders in Pakistan's protection.

Use of Territory of one against the other

Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of tolerating insurgent safe havens in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. It expects Pakistan to take action against them. It is also claimed that Pakistan is used as a route for support, both human and material, coming from rest of Pakistan and outside. They point out the presence of Quetta Shura, Haqqani Network and other extremist religious organizations around Pakistan, which provides material and human support to insurgents in Afghanistan.

Pakistan, on its part, blames Afghanistan for tolerating on Afghan soil and even supporting Pakistani insurgents. The most well known is Mulla Fazlullah the current leader of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), who was leader of the insurgency in Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,

Pakistan. Pakistan also blames Afghanistan for supporting Baloch secessionist insurgency. It further accuses Afghanistan for facilitating or permitting India to use its territory for various types of destabilizing activities inside Pakistan, more specifically in Balochistan.

These accusations and counter accusations have led to a number of border clashes between the security forces of both the countries and oft-repeated shelling across the border. Such situation leads to accentuating the existing mistrust and distance between the two neighbours.

Afghan Refugees

Afghanistan also wants that Pakistan must not force Afghan refugees back. A large number of Afghan refugees continue to remain in Pakistan. Pakistan wants these to return soon. Afghanistan considers that if they are forced back, it will create serious issues of governance and economy and therefore refugees should be permitted to stay on for some more time.

Access and Routes

Afghanistan is a land-locked country. It utilizes Pakistani territory as a route for land connections with rest of the world for trade, for receiving Aid, and also for travel. It expects un-interrupted continuation of that.

Durand Line

The lingering issue of Afghan claims over Durand Line and its relations with India continues to be at the centre of most of the mistrust and failure to make any progress on other issues.

### Conflict Resolution Post 2014

This paper consciously avoids using the term resolution of disputes between the two (or three). It suggests growing out of the disputes. By lowering the sovereign territorial divisions the claims on territory will lose its sting. With time these claims will just be part of very formal routine public statements or may be cricket matches.

But the million-dollar question is will the decision makers change their perceptions as result of reading some academic arguments or demands from some peace activists? Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by them, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.<sup>8</sup> Environment may or may not permit and provide conditions for some action to achieve something.

To act according to an opportunity will, however, depend on the potential actor's capabilities, motivation and priorities or perceptions of what needs to be achieved at what cost. That in turn will depend on the personality of the entity in question.<sup>9</sup> So, to change perceptions, the personality of Pakistan and Afghanistan has to change.

Ayub argues that "the problem for most Third World states has been compounded by two further factors. The first is the weakness of civil society and of political institutions, which precludes the emergence of strong checks on the security apparatus' proclivity to usurp state power and resources. Second, the telescoping of the phases of the state building into one phase, and the curtailment of the time available to complete the process, enhance the political importance of the coercive functions and of the agencies that perform these functions."<sup>10</sup>

Decision-making systems in both Pakistan and Afghanistan have to undergo a fundamental change for their understandings of security and the state system to change, leading to change in their security policies. Decision-makers undergo change only when they see the

full destruction of the policies they pursue. They keep clinging till the last straw is available or revert whenever they perceive a chance exists or has arisen. Mind-sets and strategic cultures are not changed through academic papers or arguments. The alternative to changing strategic culture through total collapse with un-predictable results is through a fundamental change in the decision-making system which means the sources of inputs in decisions must undergo a fundamental change through strengthening of the democratic system of governance. The crumbling of various Middle East regimes, having secular trappings with undemocratic rules, is one outcome of situations where regimes are resistant to change and evolution.

Without going into the 'Democratic Peace' debate, the case for democratic governance for peaceful security relations and an RCS defined by cooperation rather than enmity is made due to it being the only system which guarantees and provides for a plurality of inputs in decision-making and a continuous system of assessment and re-assessment of policy. Democracy provides for evolutionary change and adaptation rather than fixation and abrupt changes. This change has to start in Pakistan as Afghanistan is undergoing a State (re)construction and a changed Pakistan can dilute and help gradually change the Afghan State memory of an adversary Pakistan. A democratic Pakistan, whose structure reflects its ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity and where people control policy making can be the harbinger of such change in the region.

#### A Regional Approach

The situation is quite complex as regional States, when agree in one area, disagree and suspect each other in other areas. China India and Iran may find each other closer on Afghanistan, but Pakistan's granting of Gwadar Port management to China, which can be used as a Naval Base by Chinese Navy creates suspicions in both Indian and Iranian policy circles. Gwadar is just 70 Miles from Chahbahar Port in Iran.

A regional approach to resolution of the conflict in Afghanistan is becoming more significant.<sup>11</sup> Most of the regional States consider this to be a better choice. The

8. Marx, Karl., 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1991, p. 92.  
 9. Wendt, Alexander., 'Anarchy is What States Make of it', *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring, 1992 p.398  
 10. Ayoob. Mohammed., *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995, p 192  
 11. Ashley J. Tellis, Aroop Mukharji, (editors), *Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan?*, Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 2010.

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challenge to finding a regional consensus in support of a stable Afghanistan with no space for terrorists is an uphill task due to Pakistan India rivalry. Pakistan's security threat perceptions from India leads her to policies aimed at denying India becoming too close to Afghanistan as it considers that may result in threat from its Western borders (Afghanistan) in the event of any armed conflict on its Eastern Borders (India). This fear leads Pakistan policy of trying for a 'friendly' government in Afghanistan. Resolution of Pakistan India disputes are vital to get nearer peace in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has to be convinced that it need not fear being sandwiched between Afghanistan and India. To accommodate Pakistan's interests via Taliban (under whatever name) in post-2014 Afghanistan will not be acceptable to almost all the regional states, not just India. To convince Pakistan, it need not fear India in Afghanistan will require a very pro-active diplomacy at bilateral, regional as well as International levels.

Iran argues for a regional approach to finding solution to Afghan conflict. This may not necessarily be against US interests, even if it aims at keeping USA out. Much progress has been made in the US-Iran bilateral relations after the moderate Rouhani's election as President of Iran. Even at the height of tensions in their bilateral relations, US was not averse to Iran's influence being in favour of stability in an Afghanistan sans Al-Qaida. Any improvement in US-Iran relations will have an impact on Afghanistan, making the return of Taliban even more difficult, if there was ever any chance of that. With probability of Iran being on board with rest of the regional consensus supported by US, pressure on Pakistan to get along will increase.

The regional approach must be in context of the international and not as an alternate to it. Realizing the difficulty in finding a regional consensual approach, one must understand that even if it is achieved, you still have to deal with the non-State challenges, both, the traditional security, governance and developmental part and the ideological part. Resolving this complex and multi-level conflict will require a coordinated multi-level approach.

2014 will define different roles for different actors and at different levels. The decreased US / NATO presence will mean more space for regional states. The conflict will not end by December 2014; however, a process of gradual peace and stability can be initiated amid fears of increased violence.

The regional approach needs to be underwritten by regional economic linkages. Increased regional economic interaction whether in shape of different proposed and planned gas and energy projects, or regional investments in Afghanistan and increased regional trade, mostly through Afghanistan will gradually create a vested interest in a stable and peaceful Afghanistan.

An alternative to waiting for resolution of Pak-India relations is an opinion that if Pakistan and Afghanistan can make progress in their bilateral relations, it can also help in improving Pak-India relations.

A regional consensus in the context of and with support of the global and respect for the internal can ensure a continued process of peace building, state building and conflict resolution in Afghanistan leading to filling of the governance vacuum that was filled by terrorists, both internal and external.

Regional Consensus is hard to achieve by 2014. The most realistic hope for post-December 2014 is containment of this regional competition to a level that does not push Afghanistan into refreshed and a more severe battleground.

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#### Pak-Afghan Relations after December 2014

Pak-Afghan Relations after December 2014 will depend on both the actual situation at the time and what each does before that. It will also be impacted by policies and actions of other regional States and US and other international engagement with Afghanistan.

If Pakistan and Afghanistan are able to eliminate or at least minimize their mutual mistrust through real, on-grounds actions and policies, both will lay down the foundation for very strong post December 2014 bilateral relations. The time between now and December 2014 is a window of opportunity for both the States to re-write their bilateral relations for a long-term friendly relations in the interest of both.

These relations will also be impacted by the improvement of relations between Iran and United States. This can be interpreted by Pakistan as undermining it thus furthering the distance between Afghanistan and itself. It can also be used as an opportunity to better coordinate regionally and seen as removal of one hurdle to developing a regional approach and consensus.

#### Bilateral Security Agreement between USA and Afghanistan

The United States and Afghanistan agreed on the bilateral security agreement on November 20, 2013, which has been approved by the Loya Jirga in Afghanistan. However, it still needs approval by the Afghan Parliament and signing by President Karzai before it goes into force. Though a number of apprehensions still exist, it is believed both sides will be able to overcome the differences and the BSA will be the legal framework for US stay in Afghanistan beyond 2014.

The BSA says that "unless mutually agreed, United States forces shall not conduct combat operations in Afghanistan." The agreement commits continued US governments funding for Afghan security forces, funnelling such contributions through the Kabul-based government.

The document commits the United States to consult with the Afghan government in the event of external threats, but not the sort of NATO-style mutual defence pact the Afghans originally wanted. It makes no promise of US military support in the event of an attack or other security threat to Afghanistan. If there is such a threat, it says, the

United States will regard it with "grave concern," consult and "shall urgently determine support it is prepared to provide."

An annex to the draft lists locations where Afghanistan agrees to provide facilities for the US forces. It gives the US the right to deploy American forces on nine bases, including the two biggest, the airfields in Bagram and Kandahar. It also allows US military planes to fly in and out of Afghanistan from seven air bases, including Kabul International Airport.



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#### Conclusions: The Way Forward

This paper considers that the transformation of Pak-Afghan bilateral relations from enmity to cooperation will be a long process. The ability of terrorists from outside the region to find space in the Af-Pak region and the involvement of elements from within, in local, regional and global terrorism, is intertwined with the security relations for the region.

Traditional diplomatic processes along with new methods and use of force will continue for a while as these are required for containing the violence but cannot eliminate it. Continued engagement of global powers with the regions' search for peace is vital for the protection of weak and vulnerable democratic State systems as currently they are in danger of collapsing into violent mayhem, creating a security nightmare for the global security. It is from within these States that the road to regional peace, stability and denial of its use by external non-State actors starts. It must be emphasized that mostly the internal weaknesses and incomplete process of State building that finds its way in interstate conflict.<sup>12</sup>

Both States can initiate a process which will gradually lead to friendly relations. It must be accepted that suspicions and mistrust developed over a long period cannot be wished away in days. Both need to identify areas of immediate concern, where immediate action is required and has minimum disagreement and thus requires minimum cost and policy adjustment, work towards more difficult issues and agree to disagree on some. At least in one area, which is of immediate concern and is quite difficult, is the coordination on counter insurgency. They can at least aim to narrow the gap. Following can be the way forward:

1. Pakistan should fully assist Afghanistan's reconciliation and peace efforts by using all means at its disposal including negotiations with the Afghans in its control/protective custody.
2. Both should cooperate to achieve a regional solution that accommodates legitimate interests of others.
3. Both must ensure the denial of their territories to insurgents against each other.
4. Both must not permit the use of their territory by any other State for interference in each other internal issues.
5. Impose stricter border controls and facilitate ease of legal movement of goods and people between Afghanistan and Pakistan.
6. Cooperate construction of North-South and West-East energy corridors.
7. Promote bilateral trade - Convert informal economy to formal one, thus enabling Afghanistan and Pakistan to strengthen State capacities through higher revenues.
8. Pakistan should assist in Afghanistan's reconstruction and development especially in education and health sectors.
9. Improve people to people contacts through an easy visa regime and increased civil society contacts.
10. Cooperate in curbing the abuse of Afghan Transit Trade against the interests of Pakistani economy.
11. Both should agree to disagree on the Durand Line issue, and continue the search for diplomatic resolution of the dispute.

12. Ibid p.47



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