



## DELHI POLICY GROUP

*Peace and Conflict Program*

### AFGHANISTAN-INDIA-PAKISTAN TRIALOGUE

June 6-8, 2009, Delhi

#### Report

A first of its kind, the Trialogue brought together around 50 policymakers, analysts and Track II representatives from Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, to see what the three countries could do together, or bilaterally, to spur stalled and/or obstacle-strewn peace processes.

A number of concrete suggestions emerged from the discussion, for action at both the government and civil society level, some of which could be taken immediately and others in the medium or long term. By and large there were more suggestions for bilateral action, and less for trilateral – yet it was agreed that the trialogue format was an important means of trust-building, and it would be helpful if developments on bilateral tracks could be regularly shared in a trilateral forum.

What follows below is a brief summary of suggestions made for cooperation on common issues at the meeting. Please note that it is not based on a consensus amongst participants, rather it is a list of individual suggestions.

#### SECURITY COOPERATION

Security is the most burning concern for all three countries, and they share common interests as well as obstacles in tackling it. But trilateral cooperation on security between Afghanistan, India and Pakistan is still some time away, given the high levels of misperception that exist. In the immediate term, the following steps could be taken:

- An ***India-Pakistan security dialogue***, in which follow-up on the arrests and prosecution of the Mumbai perpetrators can be planned and monitored; this could be under the Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism or not, but it should comprise a team of investigators and prosecutors working on the case.

An India-Pakistan security dialogue could also discuss the issue of “capabilities and intentions” to ease Pakistan’s moving of more troops to the north-west, keeping in mind that it is nobody’s interest to have the eastern border become a softer or more porous route for armed groups to operate and/or escape across. This would require a strong military to military component in the dialogue.

- A parallel ***India-Pakistan dialogue on Afghanistan***, in which the two countries can address mutual fears of the other’s presence in Afghanistan, such as India’s fears of Pakistan’s strategic depth policy and Pakistan’s fears of encirclement. The dialogue should include issues like land access, a regional approach to



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resolution of Afghanistan's problems, particularly in the context of early US/ISAF withdrawal, and Afghanistan's bilateral security cooperation programs with India and Pakistan, such as military and police training.

In this context it was heartening to hear that the Pakistani government clarified in the National Assembly that it no longer "suspected" Indian consulates in Afghanistan, following the Indian government's provision of details of the personnel at each consulate. This CBM has not, however, been publicized, leaving many free to beat the drum on Indian intentions.

The Indian government has been seeking an official dialogue with Pakistan on Afghanistan. Irrespective of whether the official dialogue takes place, a Track II dialogue – alongside a parallel India-Afghanistan dialogue – is needed. The trialogue could set up a working group for this.

- As far as Afghanistan-Pakistan security cooperation is concerned, the trilateral US-Afghanistan-Pakistan forum is more likely to yield substantive results than a bilateral arrangement, provided it is pushed with intent. At present it is not working at an optimal level. At the same time, an *Afghanistan-Pakistan security dialogue* will provide an important complement to the trilateral forum, and will help build trust in relation to India. While there is deep engagement between the governments and people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, there are relatively few Track II dialogues on contentious issues, such as there are between India and Pakistan, and Afghanistan and India. This is an initiative for Afghan and Pakistani organizations to take.
- **Trilateral coordination** to prevent the cross-border flow of arms and explosives is a felt need in the three countries, and could expand to a cooperative security mechanism. One area of the composite dialogue between India and Pakistan in which steady progress has been made is counter-narcotics; similar progress has also been made on an Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan track. A separate trialogue on the drugs trade and small arm proliferation could be conceived on the lines of the Chinese five-nation dialogue with golden crescent countries.
- All three countries have a common interest in safeguarding borders through joint border management.

### PEACEMAKING

Currently the most important peacemaking issue for all three countries is whether or not the Taliban can, or should, be brought on board a reconciliation process. A related and subsidiary issue is whether resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan will impact favorably on Afghanistan.

- **Talks with the Taliban.** Many (but by no means all) in Afghanistan make a distinction between the "good Taliban" who do not attack government forces or NGOs, and the "bad Taliban" who are, many Afghans believe, responsible for 80 % of the insurgency. While talks with the "good Taliban" might be welcomed, ties to the "bad Taliban" need to be decisively snapped and Pakistan needs to deny them safe havens by extending the writ of the state.

In Pakistan, the debate was on whether peace agreements should have been attempted in Swat and Waziristan, noting that they reassured the Pakistani public



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that all avenues were exhausted before the military option was chosen. Though the attempt to distinguish between Afghan and Pakistani Taliban has not worked in Pakistan, and the country still hosts over 2 million Afghan refugees, new reports that the insurgency within Pakistan is being fuelled by cross-Durand Line support underline that Afghanistan and Pakistan have joint interest in a successful military-civil strategy, including DIAD programs.

- ***Jammu and Kashmir***. Many of the Afghan and Pakistani participants felt that a Jammu and Kashmir settlement would favorably impact the situation in Afghanistan; many of the Indian participants were not so sure – indeed adding a complicated set of issues to an already volatile and complicated situation might exacerbate rather than mitigate.

That said, it would be in the overall interest of an India-Pakistan peace process, especially in Jammu and Kashmir's interest, if the back channel discussions could pick up where they left off (they had reached broad agreement on a framework, but were put on a back burner in 2007 at General Musharraf's request). It is also clear that this would be a major CBM for the Pakistani army, as the Jammu and Kashmir issue drives their security doctrine.

It is not clear, however, if the present Pakistani government wishes to pick up where they left off.

### HUMANITARIAN & CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

Pakistan would appreciate *humanitarian aid* from South Asia for IDPs displaced by the recent fighting in Swat. India could give aid through international agencies working in the area, such as UNHCR or the World Food Program.

- ***Trilateral projects*** on issues of shared concern – research or capacity-building – between Afghan, Indian and Pakistani groups (think tanks, civil society), for example on *South Asian/local best practices for rehabilitation and (re)integration* of conflict torn areas, including the revival of the peace jirgas. The issue is already being discussed in reference to FATA/PATA in Pakistan, where the emerging opinion is that its integration into the NWFP will help stabilize the area. Whether Afghans would support such a policy remains to be discussed.

### TRADE

While most observers agree that intra-regional trade is a critical paving stone for peace, attempts to boost trade have been held hostage by ambiguity in Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan and India. Most importantly:

- ***Transit trade facilities*** to India have been agreed between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and transit facilities for Indian aid to Afghanistan are in principle agreed, but their operationalization is very slow, with a 5-10 year schedule being contemplated. The main problem is with facilities at the Wagah-Attari border, but this is an issue on which progress should be made rapidly, given the Afghan farmers' need for the Indian market this summer.



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- **SAFTA** needs to be fast-tracked, especially with Afghanistan as a new SAARC member whose stabilization would benefit greatly from the opening up of regional markets.
- **LDZs**. SAARC provides zero tariff provisions for its least developed member countries. Could this provision be expanded to include least developed zones of countries, such as conflict affected areas? This could help reduce aid dependency in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka.
- **Pakistani investment in Afghanistan**. At present the Afghan market is dependent on Pakistani goods, which is causing resentment; Pakistani investment in Afghan products would ease the problem.

### DEMOCRATIC CULTURE AND INSTITUTIONS

All three countries are democracies, yet there is little cooperation between Afghan and Pakistani democratic institutions or Indian and Pakistani democratic institutions, and none at all at the trilateral level.

- A **trilateral Afghanistan-India-Pakistan parliamentarians' forum** is a natural mechanism for clarification and policy formulation between the three; it would also strengthen each institution. Ideally, given that SAARC has ensured visa-free travel for South Asian parliamentarians, such a trilateral should be embedded in a SAARC parliamentarians' forum.
- **Trilateral programs** on common figures such as Badshah Khan (Frontier Gandhi). The three countries have already cooperated in building Badshah Khan's mausoleum in Jalalabad, and civil society institutions in each have started to work with counterparts in the other to promote Gandhi and Badshah Khan's political philosophies of peace.

### ENERGY

Energy security and resources in general, are a critical need for all three countries. While cooperative resource development is an obvious answer, issues such as water sharing are too contentious to yield quick results.

- There are proposed pipelines on the anvil which could be major trilateral projects – the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline and the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline. Negotiations on both have been bedeviled by uncertainties on costs, availability, transit tariffs and security, but energy requirements suggest that relatively rapid progress can be made on this issue.

Radha Kumar, July 20, 2009

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