

Connecting People Beyond Boundaries

AFGHAN Studies Center

WORKING FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

Cooperation

Future

Gender

Peace

Dialogue

Diplomacy

Compassion

Youth

Leadership

Media

Culture

Diversity

Friendship

AFGHAN STUDIES CENTER

WORKING FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

Afghan Studies Center

© Afghan Studies Center 2019
All Rights Reserved.

Center for Research & Security Studies (CRSS)
14-M, 2nd Floor, Ali Plaza, F-8 Markaz,
Islamabad, Pakistan.
Tel: +92-51-8314801-03
Fax: +92-51-8314804
www.afghanstudiescenter.org

Afghan Studies Center is a sister organization of the Center for Research & Security Studies (CRSS).



Table of Contents

About Afghan Studies Center	01
Message from the Executive Director	02
Board of Advisors	04
Afghan Studies Center - 2018 at a Glance	05
Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogues	06
First Pak-Afghan Youth Alumni Get Together	31
Youth Training Workshops	34
Second Pak-Afghan Youth Alumni Get Together	47
Afghan Ambassador's Farewell Lunch Hosted by ASC & CRSS	49
Fusion of Pakistani and Afghan Cuisine	50
Youth Voices	51
Distinguished Speakers at Afghan Studies Center	53
Our Goodwill Ambassadors	54
Our Interns from Afghanistan	56
Media Coverage	57

About Afghan Studies Center

Afghan Studies Center (ASC) is a sister organization of the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), Islamabad - an independent, non-profit think tank and advocacy center.

Afghan Studies Center sprang from CRSS's major cross-border Pakistan-Afghanistan Track 1.5/II project “Beyond Boundaries” an ongoing initiative since October 2015. One of the most recurring themes in interactions between the influencers’ groups of “Beyond Boundaries” from both countries including politicians, intellectuals, parliamentarians, media, civil society, and business leaders, former military and diplomatic officials, has been the need to facilitate contacts among the youth from both the countries.

Established in April 2017, ASC has been a conscious effort of CRSS to provide a platform for the youth of both countries to interact, exchange ideas, and engage in a constructive discourse.

ASC aspires for sustainable peace and development of the two countries by encouraging their youth to become goodwill ambassadors of positive change, peace and cooperation beyond boundaries. Through its monthly youth dialogues, quarterly training workshops, and its Afghan internship program, the Center imparts critical thinking, enhances their research skills, and encourages youth diplomacy in the emerging young leaders. The Center believes that the youth can place a significant role in improving Pakistan-Afghanistan relations and can contribute to achieving long-term peace and prosperity in the region.

Since April 2017, ASC has conducted 21 Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogues on various political and non-political themes with distinguished experts from different fields as chief guests and keynote speakers. In addition, 11 Pak-Afghan Youth Training Workshops have been conducted on various themes for capacity building and skill development of the youth by notable trainers.

This report covers Afghan Studies Center's activities held from the period of January 2018 to December 2018.

Message from the Executive Director



My journalistic association with Afghanistan dates back to April 1988, when I arrived in the capital of Kabul for the first time as a correspondent for the German public broadcaster Deutsche Welle. President Najibullah had just managed to quash an abortive coup by his Defense Minister Shahnawaz Tanai, then supported by the Hizb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) of Gulbuddin Hekmetyar.

I had flown in via New Delhi, since there were no flights between Islamabad and Kabul – a mere 45 minute flight. But it took me nearly 24 hours to get there because of the long detour via Lahore and an over-night stay at Kabul. In retrospect, it feels like a dream. But that is how my stint with Afghanistan began. Several scud rockets, fired by HIA, greeted us on April 27th, when the President was addressing a Saur Revolution Anniversary in a basement hall of the Arg – the Presidential Palace. The entire night Kabul resonated with the thuds of rockets and gunfire.

That was my first exposure to Kabul. What I have witnessed thereafter is a multitude of good and bad, happy and grievous events in the unfortunate country; as a journalist I kept returning to Afghanistan and saw how the post Najibullah factional fighting reduced much of Kabul to rubble. How the internecine power struggle among people – all devout and practicing Muslims – spelt misery and devastation for the majority of people in the capital and its surroundings. Northern territories including Mazar-e-Sharif remained largely unaffected but the areas closer to border with Pakistan saw considerable destruction between 1992 and September 2001, when the US-led Northern Alliance forces eventually ousted the obscurantist Taliban regime.

A lot has happened since, and as of February 2019, three decades after the last batch of the Soviet troops drove out of Afghanistan, the country still reels from the consequences of the dramatic Soviet invasion of the country; the US-led international reaction to the Soviet aggression, the emergence of the resistance known as Afghan Mujahideen, the birth of the radical Taliban - a movement born out of the Afghan Jihad - and their eventual alliance of convenience with Al-Qaeda turned Afghanistan into the hot-bed of its anti-West Islamist militancy and terrorism. It also became the reason and the justification for the 2nd US-led response – the questionable War on Terror.

Personal tête-à-tête with the rank and file of Afghanistan i.e., leaders such as Burhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbuddin Hekmetyar, Hamid Karzai, several Taliban leaders including Mulla Mansoor Akhtar, and scores of officials involved in governance since 2002, as well as interactions with helpless people during the atrocious civil war, and scores of discussions with members of the civil society have all left indelible

impressions on my association with Afghanistan, and hence my passion about the country and its people. A Track 1.5/II dialogue with Afghanistan – Beyond Boundaries - that we launched in 2015 at the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) further fueled my passion for the country that has profusely bled as a result of geopolitical wars.

The plethora of political as well as socio-economic challenges that Afghanistan currently faces because of geopolitics was also the reason behind the creation of the Afghan Studies Center (ASC) in 2017. The primary motivation was to provide a common platform to the youth from both Afghanistan and Pakistan and help them better understand one another.

Generation and dissemination of original Afghanistan focused content such as analysis and research reports as well as the monthly dialogue and leadership development workshops at the ASC are some of the products that the ASC offers to the youth from both countries.

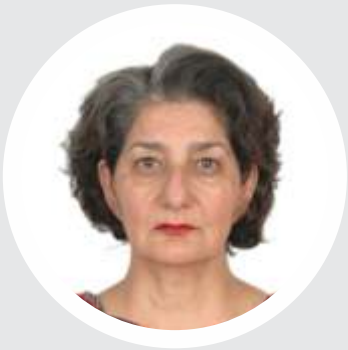
We hope to turn the ASC into a common platform for all those who desire good and friendly relations between the two countries. We also envision to continue this as a stage for an informed and dispassionate discourse on political, cultural and economic relations, and thus serve as the harbinger of change and facilitator for a cordial bilateral dialogue that can help both countries peacefully co-exist and make themselves benefit from the vast economic opportunities that initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative offer.

Imtiaz Gul,
Executive Director,
Center for Research & Security Studies (CRSS)
& Afghan Studies Center (ASC)

Board of Advisors



Muhammad Sadiq
(Former Ambassador)



Seema Elahi Baloch
(Former Ambassador)



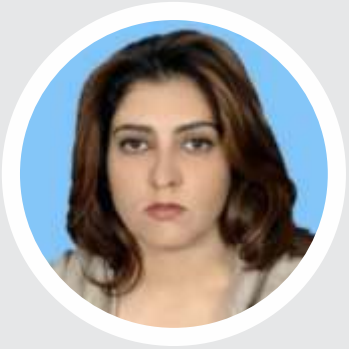
Qazi Humayun
(Former Ambassador)



Dr. Shoaib Suddle
(Former IG, Punjab
Police)



Mian Sanaullah
(Former Ambassador)



Palwasha Khan
(Former MNA)



Tahir Khan
(Senior Journalist)



Jamal Shah
(Executive
Director, PNCA)



Ammara Durrani
(Independent Analyst)

Afghan Studies Center

2018 AT A GLANCE

Afghan Studies Center would like to extend its gratitude towards its young participants from Pakistan and Afghanistan, distinguished chief guests/speakers, trainers, alumni, social media followers, as well as all its well-wishers for their continuous support. 2018 was a great year for us as ASC transformed into a full-fledged Center, expanding the range of its activities; successfully conducting 12 youth dialogues and six training workshops, mentoring five Afghan interns, nominating 12 youth ambassadors, in addition to holding several other miscellaneous events. The year also brought together 300 plus young Pakistanis and Afghans in two mega youth events to celebrate their cultural commonalities.

We are also very proud to mention that the ASC alumni has grown over 500 plus which comprises 150 Afghan and 350 Pakistani students and young professionals belonging to Islamabad, Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, FATA, Hangu, and other tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as Kabul, Nangarhar, Ghor, Kunduz, Baghlan, Badakhshan, and other provinces of Afghanistan. Majority of our young participants are enrolled in National Defence University (NDU), Bahria University (BU), Air University (AU), Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamia College University Peshawar, and University of Peshawar amongst many others. Our interns from Afghanistan in 2018 hailed from Badakhshan, Ghazni, Kunduz, Ghor and Nangarhar, Afghanistan. Our goodwill ambassadors in the year 2018 comprised nine Afghans and three Pakistanis.

Afghan Studies Center believes that a constructive and positive role by the youth is the key to a prosperous future for peace and development, and the Center is playing its part in laying that foundation.

On this note, we hope that 2019 will be even better as we will continue to work hard with more dedication in bridging the gap between the two people, particularly the youth.

Best,
ASC Team



Our Alumni
500+

PAK-AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUES



Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue is a major confidence building initiative of Afghan Studies Center which offers a platform for the youth of Pakistan and Afghanistan to interact, exchange ideas, develop critical and out of box thinking, and become messengers of peace and cooperation beyond boundaries. ASC believes that the vibrant youth of both countries can be a catalyst for long-term peace and development by engaging in an informed discourse on

critical themes in our bilateral relations including peace-building, economic integration, regional connectivity, trade, role of civil society, media and the promotion of academic and cultural cooperation. These dialogues, thus, aim to bring the people of the two countries together by focusing on the common grounds and contribute towards mitigating the trust deficit and misperceptions amongst the people on both sides.

Joint Offensive Against Poverty: Pakistan & Afghanistan's Common Enemy

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Vaqar Ahmed (Deputy Executive Director, SDPI)

January 16, 2018

Afghan Studies Center conducted its 8th Pak-Afghan youth dialogue on January 16, 2018, focusing on the issue of poverty as a common enemy between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Deputy Executive Director, SDPI, who was invited as the Chief Guest, stated that poverty can be greatly reduced by improving the bilateral and transit trade, business, and foreign investments in both countries and thereby creating more employment opportunities for both peoples.

The most popular commodities that find their way to Afghanistan from Pakistan range from rice, wheat flour, cane, beet sugar, sucrose, sugar confectionery, to household articles, and plastics, stated Dr. Vaqar. Among the export of services, Pakistan provides telecommunications, information technology, transport, health, business and government-related services. On the other hand, Pakistan's major imports from Afghanistan are usually coal and cotton. These industries generate ample employment opportunities and lubricate the cycles of many related industries like transportation, store houses, lubricants, tires, food processing units and many more; thus, pulling a big chunk of population out of the vulnerability of poverty in both countries.

Dr. Vaqar also pointed out that while there are eleven notified trade routes between the two countries; so far, trade is allowed only through two routes, namely Torkham and Chamman, and a third one at Ghulam Khan is under construction. He urged both the governments to open more trade routes which are not utilized as yet.

Moreover, inadequate banking facilities and the lack of formal money exchange companies on both sides of the border further hampers the potential of Pak-Afghan trade, and, in the process, also encourage the informal "hawala" system to flourish. Weak infrastructure, including poor roads, and the absence of any rail network are other additional factors that hinder bilateral trade. However, under construction Peshawar-Kabul dual carriage way, once operational, will positively contribute in increasing the bilateral trade.

Towards the conclusion, participants from Afghanistan and Pakistan came up with several recommendations for enhancing Pak-Afghan trade relations which included improving facilities such as transportation and civil aviation, linking Kabul to CPEC, implementing the decisions taken by Joint Economic Commission, automating trade, expanding banking channels, revisiting trade arrangements, improving political relations which overshadow economic activities, and strengthening linkages between think-tanks and civil society organizations of both sides.



Keynote Speaker



8TH PAK AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUE

Uniting Against Social Crimes in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Farzana Bari (Human Rights Activist)

February 16, 2018

Afghan Studies Center's 9th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focused on the deep-seated socio-economic inequalities existing in Pakistan and Afghanistan as the drivers setting fertile grounds for increasing social crimes, societal intolerance, and defiance of the rule of law in both countries. Dr. Farzana Bari, who was invited as the Chief Guest, highlighted the role of the state in this regard, stating that at the core of state's responsibilities lies its duty to regulate and provide security to its citizens. In order to curb crimes, governments establish punishment mechanisms which are implemented as a result of the unspoken social contract between the state and its citizens.

Comparing the contemporary times with the 1960s and 1970s, Dr. Farzana Bari stated that that Afghanistan was considered as one of the most modern and liberal nations of the world. Similarly, the Pakistani society in those decades was also very progressive. A question that arises is what has changed over the course of time that led to so much radicalization? The first factor in this regard, she stated, was the deterioration of peace and stability due to continued conflict in the region which was linked with both internal and external factors.

She told the youth of Afghanistan and Pakistan that to fight against internal frictions, some of which were bred by global politics, the youth need to unite their efforts to work for a peaceful and progressive future; as without peace, very little can be achieved. She urged the youth to come together and utilize the existing avenues and spaces, such as the social media, which is an effective space in this regard, if used positively. Consequently, both nations will be able to have a common voice to bring positive change in their societies against their social crimes.

The youth, at the end, shared their views and recommendations for eradication of social crimes in both countries. They unanimously urged the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan to work on soft areas and set aside their differences. With concerted efforts, both countries can focus on common areas, ensuring socio-economic development, provision of social justice, and enhanced economic connectivity.

“We, the youth, have to think how we can bring change. We can start with setting a minimum agenda for ourselves and play our role within our circles of influence in eradicating social crimes”, they affirmed. The dialogue concluded that the future belongs to the youth as in both countries the youth represents more than 60% of the population.



Keynote Speaker



9TH PAK AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUE

Afghan Refugees: Historical Background & the Way Forward

Keynote Speaker: Mr. Tahir Khan (Senior Journalist)

March 28, 2018

In Afghan Studies Center's 10th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focusing on the issue of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, senior journalist Mr. Tahir Khan, who was invited as the keynote speaker, stated that it has never been Pakistan's policy to expel or force Afghan refugees to go back. Pakistan has hosted the Afghan refugees out of goodwill and a sense of brotherhood for nearly 40 years. Contrary to the false propaganda spread by certain factions in both countries, Mr. Tahir Khan quoted Pakistan's SAFRON Minister, from an unofficial meeting with a visiting Afghan delegation in February 2018, to have explicitly clarified that Afghan refugees had never been involved in any terrorist attacks or organized crime in Pakistan.

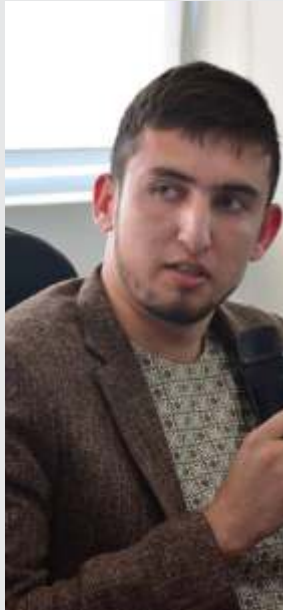
He added that, due to urgency of the issue, Afghan senior officials who were also part of the delegation informed that Afghan CEO Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and President Ashraf Ghani had recently made pledges to bring back Afghan refugees from both Pakistan and Iran in the next two years. At the moment, he stated, Pakistan has 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees, according to UNHCR statistics. Additionally, about 1 million are unregistered and undocumented, out of which around 900,000 have been documented and issued Afghan Citizenship Cards.

Tahir Khan also mentioned that Pakistan had extended the deadline for the repatriation of refugees to June 30th, 2018. However, during the recent meeting of the Pak-Afghan delegations, the Afghan officials as well as the SAFRON Minister had informed that Afghanistan was working on a proposal to set a realistic and feasible timeframe of about two years for their complete repatriation.

In the Q & A session, the young Afghan participants thanked the Pakistani people for offering them their homes and allowing them freedom of movement in Pakistan for 40 years. They also thanked the Government of Pakistan for allowing them educational and economic opportunities, stating that, unlike Iran where Afghan refugees were restricted to their camps, Pakistan did otherwise. Participants were also of the view that those Afghans who have lived in Pakistan for more than twenty years should be considered for Pakistani citizenship.



Keynote Speaker



10TH PAK AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUE

Resumption of Pak-Afghan State Level Dialogue & Future Bilateral Prospects

Keynote Speakers: Ambassador Ayaz Wazir and Hassan Khan (Senior Journalist)

April 25, 2018

Afghan Studies Center's 11th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focused on the resumption of Pak-Afghan state-to-state level dialogue and the future bilateral prospects. Ambassador Ayaz Wazir, who was invited as a keynote speaker besides senior journalist Hassan Khan, stated that while the expressions 'brothers' and 'conjoined twins' used for Pakistan and Afghanistan by former President Hamid Karzai can be applied to the people of both countries, the state-to-state relationship between the two has always remained a challenge. This is particularly because whenever any positive development between the two has been pursued in the past, it has unfortunately been followed by an immediate negative event that re-erects the wall of trust deficit on both sides.

Ambassador Wazir proposed that the right direction to set in the bilateral relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan is to start with free-flowing bilateral trade; as the modern mantra for development is to delink trade from politics. Trade would make space for cooperation in other arenas, and eventually impact politics positively as well.

Mr. Hassan Khan stated that the latest engagements between the top leadership of Pakistan and Afghanistan, initiated by Pakistan's Army Chief General Bajwa, for the first time in a long while have gone beyond just rhetoric to shed light on the required actions on areas of mutual concern. The most prominent resolution from the state level dialogue in 2018 has been a mutual consensus from both sides to refrain from public accusations towards each other and to instead take matters of concern to the relevant working groups jointly formulated by the two countries. This development has positively helped in bringing down the political temperature so far and set a slightly conducive environment for future cooperation in several wide-ranging areas.

In the Q&A session, the participants posed questions such as why Pakistan and Afghanistan, despite being two inseparable neighbors with so many commonalities, have failed to resolve their issues in a swift manner as well as how the prevailing negativity towards each other in some quarters on both sides of the border can be tackled. Responding to these queries, the chief guests stated that the complex issues between both countries should not be expected to get fixed swiftly. Rather the pragmatic way for both sides to build trust is to begin with the common grounds.



Keynote Speakers



11TH PAK AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUE

Electoral System and Upcoming Elections in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Keynote Speakers: Mr. Zardasht Shams, Afghan Deputy Head of Mission and Mr. Kanwar Dilshad, Former Federal Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)

May 09, 2018

Afghan Studies Center's 12th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focused on the 2018 elections in both Pakistan and Afghanistan as being critical in the history of both neighbors. The dialogue was held ahead of the elections which were expected to be held in Pakistan on 25-26 of July 2018 while in Afghanistan on October 20, 2018, after undergoing a delay of almost two years.

Former Federal Secretary of Election Commission of Pakistan, who was invited as a keynote speaker besides Afghan Deputy Head of Mission Zardasht Shams, began by apprising the participants that both Election Commissions of Pakistan and Afghanistan over the years had enjoyed cordial relations irrespective of the tensions that had remained at the state level. The ECP official stated that, in fact, during the forming of the Afghan Election Commission in 2002, the Election Commission of Pakistan had provided all the possible technical support it could.

Afghan Deputy Head of Mission Zardasht Shams stated that Afghanistan has been new to democracy. Historically, the country was ruled by dynasties, monarchies, later the Soviets invaded and afterwards, the Mujahideen took over. The first democratic Afghan presidential election was held in 2004 which was followed by elections in 2009.

In 2014 elections, despite the immense security threats by the Taliban and the hurdles in logistics, the high turn-out of voters, at 60%, depicted the resilience and zeal of the Afghan people, affirming their desire for democracy. Regarding the then upcoming 2018 elections in Afghanistan, he said, while there may be many challenges, including the heavy expenses of elections for the 12 million registered voters of Afghanistan, as the saying goes 'where there is a will, there is a way,' the leadership was committed, the people were hopeful and Afghanistan was looking to embark on a new future.

In the Q&A session, while answering the queries of the participants, Zardasht Shams seemed optimistic in the backdrop of then Pakistan's PM Abbasi's visit to Kabul in April 2018 followed by the resumption of state-to-state level dialogue between the two countries. He concluded on the note that "in the coming weeks or months, you will hear more positive news coming out."



Keynote Speaker



Keynote Speaker



12TH PAK AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUE

Role of China in Afghan Peace Process

Keynote Speaker: Mr. Salman Ali Bhattani (IR Expert)

June 27, 2018

Afghan Studies Center's 13th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focused on the role of China in the Afghan peace process. Mr. Salman Ali Bhattani, who was invited as the keynote speaker, stated that the Afghan conflict by far was the most frustrating one the world had seen, where fighting or harnessing peace both were equally challenging. Since long the Afghan quagmire has been a game play in the hands of several regional and international players where China's recent role appears to be quite distinct, as the country has reportedly not nurtured any proxy war nor any covert operations inside Afghanistan.

Referring to China's geographical location, Mr. Bhattani stated that China is at the edge of South Asia and, hence, connected to the region politically and keenly interested in the unfolding regional crescendos. The rise of China would be staging from this region, he said. However, Chinese concerns in Afghanistan are only to acquire peace and stability in Afghanistan by whatever means possible. On the other hand, the US' complex Afghan peace plan includes not only countering insurgency to acquire peace and stability but also installing the Western inspired institutional and legal structure, which is democracy. This is why China's approach of achieving peace through economic development and soft power seems more appealing to Afghanistan and the regional stakeholders at large and that of US increasingly a remote possibility.

In the discussion session, the participants inquired the keynote speaker about the Chinese view on the Afghan government and the Taliban; Beijing's response to the Taliban's demand for US' withdrawal; and how China creates a balance between its relations with Pakistan, Afghanistan and the US. Mr. Bhattani was of the view that China and Pakistan face no disagreements regarding the Afghan issue due to their strategic partnership. Beijing has alongside initiated mediation efforts through different channels between the two Muslim neighbors, which have been fruitful so far. Further, he said that while China considers the Taliban as a relevant stakeholder in the Afghan conflict, at the same time it recognizes the Afghan government as a legitimate representative and supports it. This implies that China is adopting a strategy of taking all stakeholders on board which may be a self-enforcing solution for resolving the Afghan conflict.



Keynote Speaker



13TH PAK AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUE

Pak-Afghan Bilateral Developments Under the New Framework of APAPPS

Keynote Speaker: Ambassador Seema Ilahi Baloch

July 19, 2018

Afghan Studies Center's 14th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focused on Pak-Afghan bilateral developments under the new framework of APAPPS. Former Ambassador Seema Ilahi Baloch, who was invited as the keynote speaker, stated that APAPPS depicted the willingness from both sides to work together and seek solutions for critical issues mutually. She stated that as a result of the agreement, relations between the two countries seemed to be on the mend – at least for now.

Under the new framework, both sides have agreed on a broad-based, structured engagement on issues of mutual interest and decided to operationalise five working groups which include political/diplomatic, military/intelligence, peace and solidarity, refugees and the working group for economic issues. Both sides realize that this will only be helpful once both governments start taking affirmative action within the five working groups under APAPPS.

On the other hand, Ambassador Baloch stated that the clear signs of a growing cooperation between the US-Pakistani militaries also seemed to be influencing the Pak-Afghan relations positively. The blame game has also significantly gone down. However, absence of action, could mean losing a great opportunity created by a mutually agreed document. The best both sides could do under the APAPPS is to keep the vested interests away from the dialogue process, the former ambassador underlined.

Both Afghanistan and Pakistan know that there is no alternative to peace, she said, underscoring that the narrative that “Afghanistan's stability depends on Pakistan” works both ways as Pakistan's stability also depends on Afghanistan. Unless the two countries work together, there will be no peace in this region, she added.

“We can only sustain the convergence of regional interests by putting geo-economics first, which implies that economic enhancement and connectivity is the key for bilateral relations. This was also reaffirmed by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in their April meeting.”

In the discussion session, the young participants were of the view that the recent engagement between the two governments certainly appeared positive and hoped that acts of terrorism and violence will not hold it up.



Keynote Speaker



14TH PAK AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUE

APAPPS Framework & Optimism Under the New Government in Pakistan

Keynote Speaker: Lt. Gen. Asif Yasin Malik (Former Defense Secretary)

October 29, 2018

Afghan Studies Center's 15th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focused on Pak-Afghan relations under the new government in Pakistan. Lt. Gen. Asif Yasin Malik, who was invited as the keynote speaker, quoted Pakistan's newly appointed Prime Minister's victory speech where he stressed that peace in Afghanistan is critical for regional stability. The new government's stance regarding the Afghan conflict is that kinetic or military solution will not bring peace in Afghanistan; it has to be followed with dialogue and negotiations. Furthermore, the new government reaffirmed the view that while the resolution of the Afghan conflict should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned; regional efforts are also best suited for the way forward.

There have been significant developments which bode well for the peace and prosperity in Pakistan and Afghanistan. First, the military operations inside Pakistan have gone down to minimum, signaling a better security situation. Second, once the buffer-zone and poorly governed FATA has now merged with KP, leaving little space for unwanted activities. Third, border management and trade linkages between the two neighbors are seeing signs of improvement. Furthermore, CPEC has the potential to be a game changer if extended to Afghanistan, paving way for sustainable economic development.

He stated that Pakistan is moving forward towards an improved form of democracy and good-governance, while the Afghan people, having tasted the flavor of democracy, institutionalization, education, and women's rights to an extent, do not wish to go back to the Taliban era; they want to move forward.

In the Q & A session, the young participants raised questions regarding the sustainability of APAPPS, developments on Pak-Afghan trade and connectivity, the role of social media and blame game between the two countries. Responding to questions, Lt. Gen. (retd.) Malik said among many positive developments, one worthy of mention is the improvement in trade and transit cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Leaders from both sides have pledged to resolve issues in this regard. Former PM Abbasi's visit to Kabul earlier in 2018 was significant in creating an enabling environment for mutual cooperation, following which Afghan President Ashraf Ghani sent a high-powered delegation which held wide-ranging talks with Pakistani officials in Islamabad.



Keynote Speaker



Afghan Refugees in Pakistan: Vulnerabilities and Naturalization

Keynote Speakers: Dr. Farhan Yousaf (IR Expert) and Mr. Makki Kakar (PhD Scholar)

September 26, 2018

Afghan Studies Center's 16th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focused on the vulnerabilities of Afghan refugees and the prospect of their naturalization as citizens of Pakistan. Dr. Farhan Yousaf, who was invited as the keynote speaker, stated that Prime Minister Imran Khan's announcement in Karachi on September 16, 2018, regarding the government's intention to offer Pakistani citizenship to Afghans born and raised in Pakistan certainly gave hope to thousands of Afghan 'refugees' who have been stuck in the limbo of their identity crises in Pakistan.

Due to lack of their official documentation, PM Khan had stated that a majority of Afghan refugees had been pushed towards black-market labor or petty crimes, affirming that their naturalization could address many of such issues. Certainly, PM Khan's decision to naturalize Afghan refugees appears to be a pragmatic solution for many of the security issues. It was also long due, but above all, it was a strong gesture of goodwill from Pakistan. However, at the time of the dialogue, the subject was open for a debate in the parliament.

Refugee crisis is one of the most critical challenges of our times. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) statistical data shows that 71.4 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide during 2017. Similarly, every minute 20 people were forced to flee their homes in 2016. Migration and refugees are also considered as one of the biggest global risks, but Pakistan continues to host one of the largest numbers of refugees for the last forty years. Dr. Farhan Yousaf stated that Pakistan does not have any concrete policy for Afghan refugees. However, what PM Khan's announcement has done is that it has initiated a discussion nation-wide which will hopefully lead to a concrete policy for Afghan refugees, at least.

Certainly, several generations of refugees have now been born in Pakistan and yet, despite having become an intrinsic part of the country's social fabric, they have long been deprived of many of the rights enjoyed by average Pakistanis. In this regard, naturalization could provide a human-rights based approach to address vulnerabilities of the refugees, stated Mr. Makki Kakar, a PhD scholar conducting research on the issue, who was also invited as a guest speaker.



Keynote Speaker



16TH PAK AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUE

Economic Growth in Afghanistan Using Cheap Energy as an Engine for Regional Peace

Keynote Speaker: Engineer Arshad H. Abbasi (Water & Energy Expert)

October 24, 2018

Afghan Studies Center's 17th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focused on devising ways to generate economic growth in Afghanistan using cheap energy as an engine for regional peace. Engineer Arshad H. Abbasi, who was invited as the keynote speaker, stated that only 41% of Afghanistan's population has access to electricity, including both on-grid and off-grid, with the average consumption of the country standing at approximately 25kWh/capita per annum or lower in comparison to the world average of 3060 kWh/capita per annum. Even this low per-capita level of electricity access masks significant urban-rural disparities, as even less than 10% of the supplied electricity reaches rural areas.

To meet the remaining electricity demand, alongside imports, the untapped domestic energy resources of Afghanistan could significantly aid in catering to the energy needs of the Afghan people, if utilized optimally. Thus, Afghanistan should now move towards employing natural resources as a primary source of energy instead of conventional non-renewable resources.

According to World Bank's statistics, the potential of power generation through hydropower resources in Afghanistan is about 23,310 MW. In the same manner, Afghanistan has even greater potential of power generation through its wind and solar resources. However, while donors have overstretched their funds to other issues, energy needs have been greatly overlooked. To progress in this direction, there is a need to undertake proper strategies and planning. Energy projects with regards to the massive potential of coal, oil and gas can also bring a lot of investors by creating a win-win situation not only for the foreign investors, but also for Afghans by overcoming the prevailing energy crisis to some extent. This could additionally also provide employment opportunities to Afghans, aiding in strengthening the overall economy of the country.

Keeping in view Afghanistan's population ratio of rural to urban areas, which stands at 75:25, and its diverse tribal groups, Mr. Abbasi proposed that the ideal solution for the Afghan people would be empowering the local communities to develop their own power generating micro-grids. This would address the issue of disparity between different ethnic groups, as well as giving them the leverage to maintain their control over the area, while regulating the scattered energy resources within their territory; hence, encouraging inclusive development and ultimately, better governance of the country.



17TH PAK AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUE

Pak-Afghan Cooperation: Ensuring Sustainability in Water Resources

Keynote Speaker: Mr. Ali Tauqeer Sheikh (CEO, LEAD Pakistan)

November 26, 2018

Afghan Studies Center's 18th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focused on Pakistan-Afghanistan cooperation in ensuring sustainability of their water resources. Mr. Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, CEO, LEAD Pakistan, who was invited as the keynote speaker, stated that over the next 40 years, Pakistan and Afghanistan are expected to have 10% more water due to the changing climate and the melting of glaciers. However, once these glaciers are exhausted, perhaps in the next 30 to 40 years, both countries will be faced with a graver challenge which urges for the immediate attention of policy makers in both countries.

Afghanistan is a landlocked country that many rivers flow through. However, torn due to prolonged conflict, the poverty-stricken country does not maintain any control over its rivers. The country's lack of infrastructure to store water is at the core amongst many other factors perpetuating its socio-economic challenges. Many rivers in Afghanistan are seasonal and as a result, the water just flows to other countries, not allowing Afghanistan to utilize from its benefits.

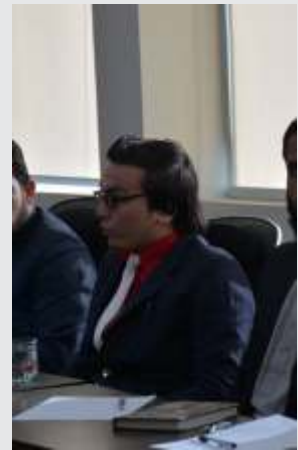
The Kabul River Basin, which is shared between Pakistan and Afghanistan, is a vital resource for both countries, particularly in terms of economic growth, energy security, food security and supply of water to its populations. It is also one of the most important transboundary rivers in the Asia region. However, diplomacy and dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan is constrained by ongoing political challenges, making it difficult to share the benefits of the Kabul Rivers water.

Mr. Sheikh contended that in order to maximize growth in both countries, there is a need for integrated development with an approach towards the sharing of costs and benefits of the Kabul River Basin, as compared to the division of water and unilateral development. However, various factors such as political mistrust and a lack of knowledge/data on both sides are damaging the chances for this to happen. Further, Mr. Sheikh stated that there is a need to construct infrastructure to not only bring the water table up, but also to provide for safe drinking water in both countries.

Responding to queries in the Q & A session, Mr. Sheikh affirmed that policy makers on both sides need to find ways where both neighbors can benefit from a sustainable water sharing mechanism. As an example to move forward, he stated that some medium-sized dams can be constructed.



Keynote Speaker



18TH PAK AFGHAN YOUTH DIALOGUE

Afghan Peace Process

Keynote Speaker: Ms. Nasim Zehra (Author & Senior Journalist)

December 28, 2018

Afghan Studies Center's 19th Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogue focused on the Afghan peace process. Senior journalist and renowned author Ms. Nasim Zehra, who was invited as the keynote speaker, stated that Afghanistan, for the first time in its almost 40 years' long conflict, is perhaps seeing a silver lining in the cloud in terms of harnessing peace. There is now a direct engagement between Kabul government and the Taliban – implying that the intra-Afghan dialogue is now becoming a reality. This development raises hopes for Afghans who have been longing for peace and prosperity for too long.

Ms. Nasim Zehra stated that dialogue through backdoor channels on the Afghan peace process has been very much there for the past almost 10 years, though not acknowledged publicly. The current breakthrough appears to be the outcome of these engagements for all those years between the Afghan government, Taliban, US, Pakistan, China, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE at different times.

On the contrary, despite all engagements, the Taliban played a zero-sum game, insisting on the complete exit of the US and NATO troops before any constructive peace talks could be held which would involve them on the table. In this backdrop, US President Trump's recent announcement signaling the draw-down of American troops may give an indication to the Taliban that the US is finally serious about a negotiated peace settlement in Afghanistan. It may also likely lead to a reduction in confrontational tactics used by both sides so far, and perhaps a better chance for a workable exit strategy for the US. Albeit, Trump's decision carries different dimensions for different stakeholders involved in the conflict.

Regarding the US' responsibility, Nasim Zehra stated that it would be naive on the part of any American President or officials to infer that their disengagement from Afghanistan would be a “smooth affair”. Let us hope that Washington does not repeat the mistakes of the early 90s when it abandoned Afghanistan soon after the Soviet withdrawal from the country, where the resultant bedlam in the country perpetuated the conflict.

Responding to queries in the Q&A session, Ms. Zehra stated that Pakistan is desperate for peace now and is facilitating all it can in the Afghan peace process by engaging all regional stakeholders. The recent development in this regard precipitated through Pakistan's diplomatic efforts. She concluded on the note that “the future of Pakistan and Afghanistan is so co-dependent that the two do not have any option but to cooperate and the youth has to play a critical role there”.



Keynote Speaker



Let's embrace a brighter future; the one that belongs to the youth

First Pak-Afghan Youth Alumni Get Together, Musical Evening & Dinner

Afghan Studies Center hosted its first Pak-Afghan Youth Cultural Get Together and Dinner for its alumni on February 28, 2018, at Dynasty Events in Islamabad, with CRSS' Pak-Afghan Track 1.5/II project *Beyond Boundaries*' visiting Afghan delegation that comprised members of Afghan Parliament, former Ministers, Deputy Ministers, former Governor, Advisors to President and Afghanistan's CEO, and senior media persons.

Pakistan's then National Security Advisor Lt. Gen (retd) Nasser Khan Janjua and Afghan Ambassador Dr. Omar Zakhilwal were invited as the chief guests for the event. The cultural event was attended by over 200 young Afghans and Pakistanis.

Speaking to the youth, Afghan Ambassador Dr. Omar Zakhilwal said that the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is multidimensional. It is not just the relationship of two neighbors, but of a common history, culture, language, interests, threats, and many other commonalities. "I do believe sooner or later, we will find a path forward, because we have no other option. Having said that, there is a sense of urgency; we have to find the path sooner. For this, we need to get bolder, smarter and rely on our own bilateral initiatives," he said.

Former NSA Nasser Janjua told the youth, "We have fought for each other. We have fed each other. We can share the bread. We can share anything and everything like brothers and sisters can do." He further stated that universities, colleges and schools are all available for the Afghan youth, urging them to optimally utilize these educational facilities in Pakistan. "Let's embrace the brighter future and you, the youth, this belongs to you. Let's join hands," he ended on a positive note, adding that he was not prepared to bleed anymore or to see his Afghan brethren bleeding anymore as well.

From *Beyond Boundaries*' Afghan delegation, Member of Afghan Parliament "Wolesi Jirga" Ms. Elay Ershad, speaking to the youth, paid her gratitude to Pakistan for giving young Afghans the opportunity to acquire education in Pakistani institutes and stated that many of those who had studied in the country returned to acquire high positions in Afghanistan. Giving an example, she said, "Three of my friends in the Afghan delegation here today have lived and studied in Pakistan. Upon return now, they are serving the government as Ministers and Deputy Ministers." The evening then continued with several mesmerizing performances by young Afghan and Pakistani artists and students, carrying the message of peace and harmony.





**“We have fought for each other.
We have fed each other. We
can share the bread. We can
share anything and everything
like brothers and sisters can do.
I am not prepared to bleed
anymore or to see my Afghan
brethren bleeding anymore as well.”**

**-Former NSA Lt. Gen. (retd)
Nasser Khan Janjua**



**“Love increases with visits and
counter-visits, so sometimes you
visit and sometimes I will visit
you, my beloved.”**

**“I do believe sooner or later, we
will find a path forward, because
we have no other option.”**

**-Ambassador Dr. Omar
Zakhilwal**

Youth Training Workshops

As part of its objectives for capacity building and skill development of young Afghans and Pakistanis, Afghan Studies Center also started Pak-Afghan Youth Training Workshops, as another core activity besides the monthly Youth Dialogues. These training workshops are designed to bring together the youth of both countries on one platform and conduct joint exercises between them to inculcate critical thinking and polish their skills through diverse learning tools and themes.

The workshops are conducted on various themes relevant to the prevailing socio-political and socio-economic spheres in Pakistan and Afghanistan by trainers who are experts in their respective fields. In the process, through presentations by these experts, the workshops help increase constructive academic and social engagement between the youth of both countries and enhance the capacity of young Afghans and Pakistanis. In the year 2018, Afghan Studies Center conducted six such workshops.



Understanding the Basic Principles of Human Rights

Mr. Amjad Nazeer is a social and public policy researcher and a Analyst, heading the Institute of Development Research and Corresponding Capabilities (IDRAC), Islamabad.



**Mr. Amjad Nazeer
(Trainer)**

The term 'human rights' has only become popular since the previous century following the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, according to Mr. Nazeer. The idea of human rights precipitates from the notion that all human beings are born free and equal irrespective of their place of birth, nationality, sex, ethnicity, color, religion, creed, caste, language, or financial status. Hence, every human being, man and woman, is equally entitled to the fulfillment of basic human rights without discrimination. Basic rights include freedom of speech, privacy, health, life, liberty and security, as well as an adequate standard of living and the right to education. States are obliged to legislate, implement, promote and spread awareness about human rights equally for the poor, rich, men or women, children or the elderly, through whatever means available, including electronic and print media.

Speaking in the context of Pakistan and Afghanistan, Mr. Nazeer stated, unfortunately many in the region continue to remain ignorant of their basic human rights as human beings. Knowing one's rights allows one to safeguard him/herself against all types of abuse as well as attempt to ensure the protection of other people's rights. Human rights are universal and every person around the world deserves to be treated with dignity and equality.

He remarked that there can be little doubt that human rights have become the major ethico-political idea of our age. It has transformed into an ideology and a culture in itself. Yet in spite of such enthusiasm for human rights, and notwithstanding their growing popularity and widespread acceptance today, the idea of human rights also prompts major challenges.

Commenting on the human rights status in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Mr. Nazeer said that both the countries have incorporated the principles of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights Act 1948 into their constitutions. However, there are implementation issues, where both the countries have to work robustly. Pakistan is overall better in the implementation of human rights in general, as it has a mature state machinery and has established various institutions in this regard. Whereas, Afghanistan has incorporated the principles of basic human rights in its constitution in 2004, which can be seen as a silver lining in the cloud. Freedom of expression and hate speech are the biggest hurdles to move forward on the subject of human rights in both the countries. Pakistan and Afghanistan both have shown poor performance in this regard, but things are improving and there is some optimism.



Constitutional Democracy: Significance for Pakistan and Afghanistan

Mr. Jami Chandio is a writer, scholar, literary critic, political expert and activist and the Executive Director of Center for Peace and Civil Society, Hyderabad.



**Mr. Jami Chandio
(Trainer)**

The model of democracy being followed in Pakistan and Afghanistan is confined only to the quantitative representation of the people which neglects its qualitative aspects. This is contrary to the true application of democracy in its real sense. Mr. Chandio believes this deprives the vast populations of their civil, economic and political rights.

The spirit of democracy is not one confined to any single geographical entity or civilization. Rather, it is a universal human concept which existed in one form or the other in civilizations all over the world in history, and evolved overtime to take the form it is in today. He stated that the human civilization broadly witnessed three major periods of transition, progressing from hunter-gatherers to tribal communities, monarchies and, consequently, empires where humans became subjects to sovereigns and the concept of free people ceased to exist. The oppression under such a political order culminated in the age of reason which pushed the thought process towards a system that should represent the wishes of the people, such as the modern democratic system.

Of the existing models of democracy in the world, such as liberal democracy, social democracy, and people's democracy, Afghanistan and Pakistan fall under the category of transitional democracies. Both countries currently can be described as oligarchies controlled by elites. Additionally, both face common challenges, such as economic disparity, poverty, intolerance, gender inequality, sectarian violence, ethnic divisions, radicalization and terrorism, which can only be addressed through consolidation of true constitutional democracy. As conflict is another major mutual challenge between the two, Mr. Chandio stated that, in this regard, democracy provides a peaceful means to the resolution of disputes and conflicts as it is an auto-dynamic system which can evolve and amend itself.

In conclusion, Mr. Chandio stated that democracy is not only a political system; it is also the process of social education, training and evolution. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan have to understand the needs of contemporary times and realize that democracy is the only viable way forward for an egalitarian society. The key to true democracy, however, is continuity and evolution with the passage of time.



7th Youth Training Workshop

Appreciating Lingual Diversity in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Dr. Uzma Anjum is a prominent linguistic expert.

Linguistic experts predict that by the end of this century, the world might lose almost half of the languages that are spoken today. In this regard, Dr. Anjum expressed serious concerns about the threats related to the survival of local languages in Pakistan.

Pakistan, being a linguistically and culturally rich country, hosts 74 languages; however, many of these are dying and being replaced by the dominant languages due to the underprivileged socioeconomic status of their speakers. The vitality or endangerment of languages, according to Dr. Anjum, depends on the asymmetrical distribution of their resources and power. With resources and power come the provisions of standardizing languages through writing dictionaries, defining grammar and publishing literature through institutions that promote those languages. This is a privilege that minority languages spoken by poor and underprivileged people do not have, resulting in their gradual death.

Dr. Anjum was of the view that the vanishing of certain languages is thus a political issue where the political connotation can be based on the interests of certain political groups. If we go back into the history of Pakistan, the Urdu language once remained a symbol of Muslim integration in the Indian Subcontinent. Further, language politics is sometimes also linked to dialect or pronunciation where speakers of a particular dialect are perceived as speaking a more culturally advanced form of the language. She cited the example of England in this case where she said proper pronunciation was linked with having a better social status. Politicians may, therefore, try to use the desired dialect when in the public eye to gain support. Linguistic attitudes, thus, play a central role in promoting or undermining languages.

Dr. Anjum stated that the women in every society also play a very pivotal role in keeping languages alive by passing on their mother tongues. However, the global trend of abandoning native tongues in favor of English has severely impacted the fate of languages in many countries. The promotion of national and regional languages is increasingly being undermined by the inclination towards encouraging the English language in schools where, in the case of Pakistan as participants also pointed out, students are encouraged to speak 'polite' languages, such as Urdu and English, and refrain from speaking in their mother tongues, especially, Punjabi or Pothwari. This is further reinforced in the job market where people belonging to minority groups, as a result, fail to avail good jobs as they are not fluent in the dominant languages.

In conclusion, Dr. Anjum stated that there is a need to allow breathing space to everyone in the society, irrespective of their popularity, majority or status. Furthermore, there is a need to plan a language policy in all provinces of Pakistan to prevent our local languages from dying.



**Dr. Uzma Anjum
(Trainer)**



8th Youth Training Workshop

Political Islam in Contemporary Times

Mr. Farman Kakar is an academician and a writer.

In the contemporary era, the Muslim World is faced with many challenges where one of the pressing questions raised is whether Islam is essentially a political or an apolitical religion. According to Mr. Farman Kakar, while Islam is a divinely revealed religion dealing with the religious aspects of human life, scholars also refer to it as a 'Deen' – where the religion lays out a complete way of life entailing all personal, social, economic and political spheres. In the contemporary world, Islam is both partially a political and apolitical system of beliefs and practices; however, it does not allow non-state actors to have monopoly over the use of force.

Categorizing the typologies of Islam, Mr. Kakar stated that political Islam claims to power by proposing the implementation of the religion as a system of government. This is done by Islamists who can be democratic; in case of non-violent and legal methods to establish an Islamic system, or militant; those who use violent means to achieve their objectives. He cited several examples of these groups from both Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as the Middle East; including the ISIL, Taliban and JUI, etc. He also stated that Islam also has an apolitical aspect where the religion is considered as one's private affair. The precedence of these two categories, he stated, are found in the Islamic history during the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in the form of manifestations such as the State of Medina which was a system of governance based on Islamic principles.

Viewed through the lens of academic discourse, he stated that the phenomenon of political Islam has been studied by several western philosophers resulting in two schools of thought on the matter; one being the confrontationists and the other, the accommodationists. 'Confrontationists', he stated, see the clash between the West and Islam as inevitable due to the immense differences that exist in the opposing cultures, values, and institutions of the two. 'Accommodationists', on the other hand, perceive that the rise of political Islam in the contemporary times is due to the West's ill-suited policies towards Muslim countries, such as seen in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan. They believe that Muslims and the West can certainly peacefully co-exist if such policies are not practiced. Precedence of this can be found in Islamic history where the Muslims and the Jews co-existed.

The participants raised several questions regarding the motives for the rise of political Islam in Muslim countries and why the West views the political dimension of Islam as a threat, as well as also who is the real authority to speak for Islam in the contemporary era. Responding to the questions raised by the participants, the trainer opined that no non-state actor can speak for Islam today. He gave the examples of the ISIL, Taliban, and other insurgent groups that wrongly used religion to acquire support and political power for their interests. He stated that it can only be when a state is completely Islamic, which does not include the Muslim majority states today, which can speak for Islam. As such, there is no country that can claim to be completely Islamic in practice today. Furthermore, Islam does not permit non-state actors to speak for Islam which would only result in chaos. The workshop concluded on the note that the question as to who speaks for Islam may not have a definite answer due to the diverse schools of thoughts in Islam.



Mr. Farman Kakar
(Trainer)



9th Youth Training Workshop

Strengthening Institutions: Road to Economic Development in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Mr. Saddam Hussein is a development economist, policy analyst, and a columnist.



**Mr. Saddam Hussein
(Trainer)**

Why are some countries rich and others poor? Why are Pakistan and Afghanistan, having all the ingredients required for development, but still struggling economically with the majority population living below the poverty line? According to Mr. Hussein, for decades the focus of philosophers remained on three main theories – the geographical, cultural and natural endowment theory as primary explanations for differences in the economic performance among countries. These theories, in Mr. Hussein's view, lack strong evidence. He proposed a more contemporary and significant theory in this regard which postulates that some countries are rich and others are poor because of structural differences of their institutions. Mr. Hussein described institutions as rules of the game, processes and mechanisms that shape social, economic and political interaction of individuals and groups within the framework of an incentive structure.

Categorizing the different types of institutions, Mr. Hussein stated that generally there are two kinds, i.e., formal institutions and informal institutions. Formal institutions may include the constitution, an economic framework, or rules and regulations of any or all regulatory authorities etc., while informal institutions comprise family, religion and education etc. Mr. Hussein apprised the participants that rules of the game should be revisited and refined for more efficiency, productivity and a sustainable future.

Elaborating further in the Pak-Afghan context, he said that unfortunately, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, like most of the third world and developing countries, the secondary institutions have not been developed and strengthened due to nepotism, corruption, bad governance, and dominant elitist culture. Whereas, in the developed countries, which we call the 'West', the institutions have been developed and strengthened due to effective legislation and well-defined rules of the game and also due to the incentive structure having checks and balances. He stressed that it is high time for Pakistan and Afghanistan to adhere to constitutionalism, good governance, rule of law, transparency and accountability. If these universal principles are followed, only then the institutions will be developed and strengthened which in turn will lead to economic development in both countries.



10th Youth Training Workshop

Conflict Resolution and Confidence Building

Ms. Aisha Saeed is an independent analyst.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are placed in a geo-strategic lock that needs to be unlocked to move past their previous grievances. Both countries have had a troubled past and the process of conflict resolution has remained slow. While a lack of confidence between the two has remained a setback, to move past this, Pakistan and Afghanistan must continue the process of dialogue.

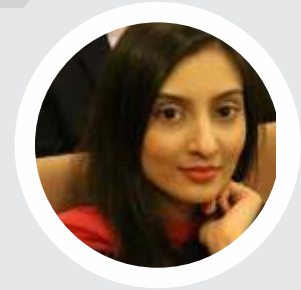
Thus, Ms. Aisha Saeed stressed on the importance of conflict resolution and confidence building in Pak-Afghan relations. Conflict resolution is an art of diplomacy and confidence building starts at the grass-root level between people, she said.

Platforms such as youth dialogues and workshops provided by Afghan Studies Center are vital, where direct people to people contact can play an effective role in mitigating perceptions and misconceptions.

Ms. Aisha Saeed emphasized that relentless and continued engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan is the only way forward for both civil society and government stakeholders in the two countries to build a constructive dialogue in an informal and comfortable environment. Doing so would increase the chances of the people of both countries to agree on solutions that can build confidence and mutual trust, paving the way to move forward towards conflict resolution on the ground.

There are always elements of cooperation that can be sought, Ms. Saeed stated. Hence, commonalities are what the two neighbors need to build on. The key element in confidence building is understanding that we are humans, whereas politics and economics in Pak-Afghan relations need to be de-linked as well.

The training workshop also conducted a simulation exercise where each member from both sides was given a government position and asked to engage in negotiation on a contentious issue in Pak-Afghan relations. Youth from both sides highlighted four key areas where both countries ought to work: Afghan peace process, facilitating Afghan traders, operationalization of APAPPS and the dignified return of Afghan refugees. Some participants also stressed that CPEC should be extended to Afghanistan while others reiterated that instability of Afghanistan was not in the interest of Pakistan.



**Ms. Aisha Saeed
(Trainer)**



11th Youth Training Workshop

Celebrating Commonalities

Second Pak-Afghan Youth Alumni Get Together, Musical Evening & Dinner

On September 05, 2018, Afghan Studies Center hosted its second Pak-Afghan Youth Alumni Get Together, Musical Evening & Dinner, for its alumni at Hillview Hotel, Islamabad. The event was attended by over a hundred young Afghans and Pakistanis from the tribal districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Kohat, Hangu, Jalalabad, Kunduz, Kabul, Badakhshan, and other regions. The Alumni Get Together provided an opportunity to the youth to interact, on the sidelines, with CRSS' Pak-Afghan Track 1.5/II project *Beyond Boundaries*' visiting Afghan delegation, which comprised members of Afghan Parliament, Advisors, former Ministers, and senior media and business leaders.

Member of Afghan Parliament “Wolesi Jirga” and head of the Afghan delegation, Mr. Khalid Pashtoon, while addressing the youth, urged them to take a proactive and constructive role in their capacities. He stated that Pakistan and Afghanistan are very lucky in this regard, as the youth in both countries constitutes a significant portion of the population. He thanked Pakistan for showing unabated hospitality towards Afghans and for continuously providing them with educational opportunities. He encouraged the young Afghans living in Pakistan to educate themselves and return to their homeland to help rebuild it.

Addressing the youth, Political Councilor of the Embassy of Afghanistan, Mr. Rahimullah Qatra appreciated the event, stating that such people to people contact was very critical in improving bilateral relations. He commended the efforts of the civil society on both sides which was playing a positive and critical role in bringing the two nations together.

The evening continued with young Afghan and Pakistani alumni of ASC sharing their messages with the audience and distinguished guests. They highlighted the positive role that the youth can play to build peace and social cohesion in the region. They foregrounded their importance as a large and dynamic segment of the population in both countries, claiming their stakes in stability and prosperity. Young speakers also stressed on the crucial need for providing them with platforms, such as Afghan Studies Center, for voicing their grievances and participating in the decision-making process to ensure that future development policies do not exclude the potentially positive role that young people can play in contributing towards the peace and security.

The event continued with enthralling musical performances in Pashto, Urdu, and Dari by *Helaa-the Band* (Helaa meaning hope) from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. The event carried on the message of peace and harmony between the youth from both countries, who towards the closing in high spirits performed *Attan* (the Pashtoon cultural dance), inspired by the hope for a positive future.





Islamabad-Kabul ties are indispensable, says Zakhilwal at Farewell Lunch hosted by ASC & CRSS

Afghan Studies Center (ASC) and the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) hosted a farewell lunch in honor of the outgoing Afghan Ambassador, Dr. Omar Zakhilwal, on November 19, 2018. Addressing the friends of ASC and CRSS, the outgoing Ambassador stated, “I came to Pakistan with a very ambitious agenda – the agenda of taking forward the bilateral relations. We are certainly way far from where we would like to be, but during my tenure I had a chance to study this relationship rather deeply and now I can say I have a deep understanding of Afghanistan, Pakistan dynamics.”

“Pak-Afghan relationship cannot remain the way it is and no matter how many times we make attempts and those attempts fail, we need to continue till the time our attempts bear some fruit,” he said that “Islamabad-Kabul ties are indispensable”. He further stated that during his diplomatic stint he at least thrice packed up his wherewithal to leave Pakistan and, at one point in time, he directly spoke with his President that he wanted to come back, but then he had a second thought and decided to brave the challenges and work for the strengthening of bilateral relations.

“I am returning to Kabul but peace in Afghanistan and our bilateral relations shall still be my top priority. Even though I will not be working with the government anymore, even then I will try my best to contribute to improvement of relations between the two countries”, he added.

The ambassador thanked all his friends, especially those who came to bid him farewell and invited them to Kabul to be his guests. He also thanked Afghan Studies Center and the Center for Research and Security Studies for providing him with a chance to say goodbye to his friends.



Fusion of Pakistani and Afghan Cuisine

On March 13, 2018, a group of young Afghans met with the Mexico-based international educator and cuisine expert, Ms. Maryam Jillani, at Afghan Studies Center to discuss how Pakistani and Afghan cuisines have fused together in the region over the last few decades following the influx of Afghan refugees since the 1980's and the cross-border movements of the peoples from both sides. Ms. Jillani, who is a food blogger at the digital food magazine 'Taste', discussed the various Afghan cuisines that are available in Pakistan, particularly in Islamabad and Peshawar, while the Afghan youngsters living in Pakistan shared their experiences of dining out at Afghan restaurants in the country.

The youngsters belonged to different provinces of Afghanistan, namely, Baghlan, Logar and Kabul, and also diverse ethnic groups; Hazara, Tajik, Uzbek and Pashtun. They shared their insights on their local Afghan foods in Afghanistan as well as how Afghan businessmen over time have set up food businesses in Pakistan following the waves of Afghan refugees. They also discussed how Afghan cuisine has blended with Pakistani cuisine in various forms in Pak-Afghan households, as can be seen in some famous dishes, such as Kabuli Pulao, Tikka Kebab and Afghan burger. The interview also appeared in the Taste Magazine.



Youth Voices



Abdul Sattar
(Afghanistan)

"It was a delightful experience joining Afghan Studies Center's activities. Their work on youth is irrefutably a significant contribution in building the capacity of Pak-Afghan youth. I believe such dialogues will result in more mutual respect, highlighting common ground and better understanding. Keep shining Pak-Afghan relations, more power to Afghan Studies Center!"



Hidayatullah
(Afghanistan)

"Afghanistan and Pakistan are two brotherly Islamic countries that have a number of exemplary commonalities where people on both sides share the same unique culture. In my capacity as a member of Pak-Afghan Youth Dialogues, I believe in the motto, "If it's not broken, don't fix it". The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan to me is not broken and that's why it does not need to be fixed but rather only strengthened, and that is where I see the Afghan Studies Center with its sister organization - Center for Research and Security Studies - serving for that particular cause."



Sahar Hamidi
(Afghanistan)

"I would like to appreciate Afghan Studies Center which provides a platform for the youth of Afghanistan and Pakistan to exchange positive ideas and become messengers of peace and cooperation between two brotherly nations. I feel proud to be a part it. Pak-Afghan Friendship ZINDABAD!"



Ayaz Khan
(Afghanistan)

The dedication of Afghan Studies Center towards bringing the youth of Pakistan and Afghanistan together for a peaceful and constructive future is worth praising. It is working as a binding force for creating respectful relationships between the two countries.



Ali Aqa Arifi
(Afghanistan)

My internship at Afghan Studies Center has taught me more than I could have imagined. Working with the ASC team was a proud moment for me where we were working for bringing the youth of both countries together for building a positive environment for healthy exchange of ideas, thoughts and opinions, in order to improve the bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

“Excellent initiative which deserves great appreciation. Youth can play a vital role in bridging the gap of mistrust created by misconceptions in both the countries.”
– Irfanuddin, Pakistan.

“The Pak-Afghan Youth initiative brings together the youth of both countries to discuss their respective points of view and highlights the message that we get stronger only by working together and listening to each other.”
– Faisal Rahmani, Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

“ASC's Pak-Afghan Youth initiative is a platform of interaction between the youth of Pakistan and Afghanistan which would eventually influence their social circles.”
– Daniyal Saeed, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

“We appreciate Afghan Studies Center for arranging such conferences, workshops, and cultural events, and request them to arrange more, so that the youth of both countries can connect for peace.”
– Aimal Jalalzai, Pakistan.

“Pak-Afghan youth dialogues can play a good role in bringing positive change. Youth mobilization is the need of the time.”
– Saba Noureen, Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan.

“Activities like these can create a positive environment between Pakistan and Afghanistan for their friendly co-existence.”
– Ehsan Ullah, Kabul, Afghanistan.

“I have been in Pakistan for the last six years. I have observed that the education systems of both Pakistan and Afghanistan do not provide any effective platform for youth to engage in positive endeavors. Hence, such initiatives can play a significant role in improving Pak-Afghan relation by engaging the youth of the two nations on one platform”.
– Asad Khan, Kabul, Afghanistan.

Distinguished Speakers at Afghan Studies Center



Nasim Zehra
(Senior Journalist)



Zahid Hussain
(Senior Journalist)



Dr. Vaqar Ahmed
(Joint Executive Director SDPI)



Hassan Khan
(Senior Journalist)



Zardasht Shams
(Afghan Deputy Head of Mission)



Lt. Gen. (R) Asif Yasin
(Former Defense Secretary)



Seema Ilahi Baloch
(Former Ambassador)



Waseem Hashmi Syed
(HEC Advisor)



Rehmaz Azhar
(Senior Journalist)



Ayaz Wazir
(Former Ambassador)



Dr. Farhana Bari
(Academician & Activist)



Jami Chandio
(Scholar, Political Expert, Activist)

Our Goodwill Ambassadors



Ayesha Gul, Pakistan



Hidayatullah Sherzad, Afghanistan



Abdul Ghani, Afghanistan



Ali Jafari, Afghanistan



Hamid Ibrahim, Afghanistan



Abdul Sattar, Afghanistan

Our Goodwill Ambassadors



Rafiullah, Afghanistan



Hamidullah Sohrabi, Afghanistan



Muhammad Usman, Afghanistan



Momna Khan, Pakistan



Sahar Hamidi, Afghanistan



Osama Bin Haroon, Pakistan



EjazulHaq Ateed
Badakhshan, Afghanistan
(January - February 2018)



Muhammad Aqa Arifi
Ghazni, Afghanistan
(March - June 2018)

**Our Interns
from
Afghanistan**



Zabih Ullah
Kunduz, Afghanistan
(July - September 2018)



Ali Jafari
Ghor, Afghanistan
(December 2018 - February 2019)



Ezatullah Zakhilwal
Nangarhar, Afghanistan
(October - December 2018)

Find Us On Social Media!



/ASCenterPak



@ASCenterPak



@ASCenterPak

Afghan Studies Center

Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS)
14-M, 2nd Floor, Ali Plaza, Sector F-8 Markaz, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Tel: +92-51-8314801-03

Fax: +92-51-8314804

www.afghanstudiescenter.org

Email: info@afghanstudiescenter.org, asc@crss.pk