

PERSPECTIVES FROM PAKISTAN ON AFGHAN PEACE AND RECONCILIATION



PAK INSTITUTE FOR PEACE STUDIES (PIPS)



PERSPECTIVES FROM PAKISTAN ON AFGHAN PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

PIPS QUARTERLY MONITOR-5
(JULY – SEPTEMBER 2022)

By

Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) is grateful to The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Islamabad for its generous support to this project, allowing the organization to conduct policy-driven research highlighting the role Pakistan can play in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Likewise, PIPS is thankful to all the learned resource persons who shared their expert knowledge on the subject with the PIPS research team through interviews and personal communications. PIPS hopes to benefit from their knowledge and insights in the future too.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANDSF	Afghan National Defence and Security Forces
ANP	Awami National Party
APTTA	Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BLA	Baloch Liberation Army
CNN	Cable News Network
COAS	Chief of the Army Staff
DG	Director General
ISPR	Inter-Services Public Relations
DW	Deutsche Welle
EAF	Europe Asia Foundation
ECC	Economic Coordination Committee
EIF	Electronic Import Form
EPO	Export Policy Order
ETIM	East Turkistan Islamic Movement
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FATA	(ex-) Federally Administered Tribal Areas
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEA	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
IG	Inspector General
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPO	Import Policy Order
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
IS-K	Islamic State-Khorasan
KMU	Khyber Medical University
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MNA	Member of the National Assembly
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MPA	Member of the Provincial Assembly
NACTA	National Counter Terrorism Authority
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NRF	National Resistance Front
NSC	National Security Council
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PACF	Pak-Afghan Cooperation Forum
PAF	Pakistan Air Force
PAJCCI	Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry
PAYF	Pak-Afghan Youth Forum
PIPS	Pak Institute for Peace Studies
PM	Prime Minister
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
RSF	Reporters Without Border
TIP	Turkistan Islamic Party
TTP	Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan
UK	The United Kingdom [of Great Britain and Northern Ireland]
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar

Afghan affairs: summary of key responses from Pakistan

Strategic objectives remain the essence of Pakistan's Afghan policy. However, bilateral relations between Islamabad and Kabul witnessed a slump due to border clashes and militant infiltrations during this quarter. A composite outlook in Pakistan based on official statements of the government, political parties, military, clergy, and transnational militant groups reveal the following positions:

- Pakistan is pursuing a wait-and-see policy on recognition of the Taliban government by the international community. Islamabad would extend recognition through regional and consensual approach, rather than taking a solo flight on the matter as it did back in the 1990s.
- Pakistan called upon the world community for enhanced support to Afghanistan to help Kabul avert a looming economic collapse and mitigate extreme poverty and hunger. It took the initiative by sending several emergency relief consignments to Afghanistan.
- Punishing the Taliban regime with sanctions is “not a good idea” as it would isolate the country and deepen the crisis.
- The Parliamentary Committee on National Security (PCNS) green-signalized to state-TTP talks, mediated by the Afghan Taliban.
- Pakistan envoy to Kabul Mansoor Ahmad Khan said, “Our relationship with Afghanistan is very good and we tried to make it good. In the past year, there were many problems for Afghanistan, but Pakistan helped and cooperated with Afghanistan, and these co-operations were in the areas of evacuation, humanitarian aid, and creating facilities at the borders. Also, in the transit and trade sector, our cooperation has increased, exports and imports have also increased, and we are committed to always cooperating with Afghanistan”.

- Islamabad expressed concerns over sanctuaries and free cross-border movements of militants.
- Condemning a recent skirmish on Pak-Afghan border, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto demanded of Kabul to check terrorist attacks from Afghan side.
- The Pakistani military also condemned the “use of Afghan soil by terrorists for activities against Pakistan”, adding that it expected the Afghan government not to “allow the conduct of such activities in the future”.
- Pakistan’s development vision for Afghanistan puts capacity building of local human resource as pivotal for sustainable development. In pursuit of this vision, Pakistan launched a virtual education program for the Afghans and extended trade perks.
- Pakistani political parties are unanimous on two points: peace talks with TTP and no compromise on the constitution.
- The TTP ended the ceasefire after several of its commanders were killed across the border.
- A US drone killed Al-Qaeda’s kingpin Ayman Al Zawahiri in Afghanistan.
- IS-K announced, “emigration to Khorasan is open,” and that the “caliphate in Khorasan” is “expanding and growing by the grace of God.”

CHAPTER 1

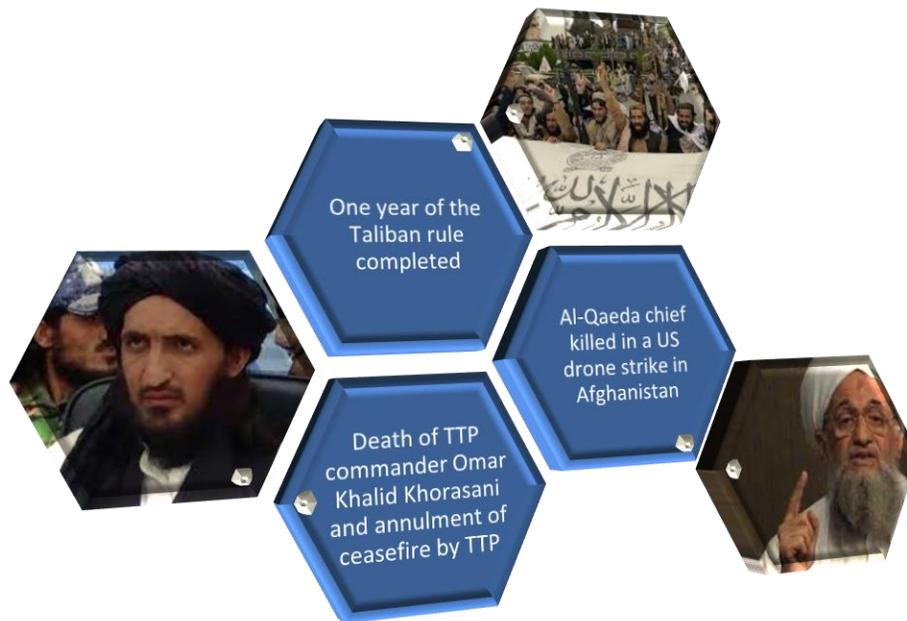
EMERGING AFGHAN SITUATION: RESPONSES FROM PAKISTAN & TRENDS IN BILATERAL AFFAIRS

Afghanistan's financial and humanitarian challenges have been mounting since the US pullout in August 2021. The persisting militant violence, a growing resistance in the north, and an elusive intra-Afghan reconciliation are only compounding these challenges.

Besides being bordering nations, which are intertwined culturally, linguistically, and religiously, etc., Pakistan and Afghanistan also share security and geo-economic interests. Pakistan cannot afford an insecure and unstable Afghanistan. It has been providing humanitarian aid and support to Afghanistan besides facilitating international help and support in that regard. On the other hand, Pakistan has been trying to influence the world community to not leave Afghanistan alone in its time of need. For instance, it has hosted two conferences of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Islamabad in 2021 and 2022. Meanwhile, the Pakistani government also wants Afghanistan's new rulers to accept international demands on human rights and counter-terrorism.

Some significant developments happened in Afghanistan during the quarter under review, ie July to September 2022. For one, on 15th of August, the Taliban celebrated their first anniversary as a “day of victory” with zeal and fervor and declared a national holiday. Some observers believe that few promising developments have happened during first year of the Taliban rule. They refer to "improved security around the country" where people can travel in the streets and on the roads more safely. However, this is not enough

to address increasing economic issues, specially the immediate ones such as lack of food, widespread poverty, and shortage of health and other facilities.¹



Secondly, the killing of Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri by the US in the suburbs of Kabul raised international community's concerns regarding the Afghan Taliban's efforts for international recognition and their claim of not allowing anyone to use their soil against any country. Thirdly, the months-long ceasefire by the banned TTP practically came to an end as the group once again started claiming terrorist attacks inside Pakistan. The annulment of ceasefire has apparently also weakened the "pressure" of the Afghan Taliban on the TTP to adopt reconciliation with Pakistan. Meanwhile, multiple TTP

¹ "Afghanistan under the Taliban | Start Here", Al Jazeera, August 15, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/program/start-here/2022/8/15/afghanistan-under-the-taliban-start-here?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

militants, including famous commander Omar Khalid Khorasani, were killed in Afghanistan during the quarter under review.

1.1 Government responses and bilateral engagements

Pakistan continues supporting peace and stability in Afghanistan, which it believes, will help not only in countering terrorism but also in unlocking the potential for economic and energy links with Central Asian countries and beyond. Pakistan lives in a difficult neighborhood and would be relieved if its western border is secure and has a friendly regime in Afghanistan.

Pakistan itself has been facing politico-economic turmoil which has only worsened after the April regime change in Islamabad. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's administration in Pakistan is struggling to deal with the growing economic difficulties, which have become more complicated in the aftermath of the recent floods. However, on international forums wherever it got a chance, Islamabad has raised its voice for the persisting humanitarian crisis in its neighborhood. Sustainable growth, security, stability, and socio-economic development are of great importance for both countries.

The political events following the Taliban takeover had triggered a complex economic crisis, putting the lives of millions of Afghans at stake. Afghanistan cannot cope with diverse challenges at hand alone. Some experts believe that Pakistan, being a major regional actor, is in better place to play its role in influencing the world in support of Afghan stability and improvement in the foreign aid provision.² Others, however, assert that Pakistan should avoid talking on behalf of the Taliban and let them engage with the world on their own.

The quarter under review witnessed both diplomatic spats as well as friendly gestures between the countries. Diplomatic spats included border skirmishes, the blame game of militants using safe heavens on either side, and unpleasant political statements by some leaders. However, consignments of food and winter materials, cooperation for virtual education facilities, the start of luxury bus service, an increase in operation timings on

² Dr. Saira Asad, Assistant professor at Riphah International University, Islamabad. Interview by Hufsa Farooq, Researcher PIPS, July 27, 2022.

border crossings, reciprocal visas to transporters, health services in adjacent provinces, and educational visits of Afghan academics in Pakistani universities were some indicators of positive bilateral engagement.

Although, border tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan are not new, but they recently flared up after three Pakistani soldiers were killed in an attack from Afghanistan on 13th of September. At the outset, the TTP claimed the attack, but the Afghan Taliban later attributed the cross-border firing to attempts by Pakistani forces to build a post close to the Durand Line, which they said led to an exchange of fire between the two sides. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari condemned the attack and demanded that the Afghan government should stop terrorists from carrying out operations from across the border.³ Pakistan was also annoyed by acting Afghan defense minister Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid's statement accusing Pakistan of providing airspace for US drones to enter his country.⁴ Additionally, the angry responses of Afghan fans to their team's loss to Pakistan in a cricket match acted as eventual damage to the spat. Furthermore, Pakistan had reportedly written a letter to the Afghan authorities regarding the presence of Maulana Masood Azhar in Afghanistan. However, the Taliban government denied it claiming that such terrorist organizations "c[ould] operate" on Pakistan's soil – and even under "official patronage."⁵

Limited bilateral visits and meetings have happened in this quarter. The Tashkent visit and meeting of Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari with acting Afghanistan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi was the only high-level meeting recorded. Apart from that, several trade visits have taken place between various chambers of commerce for enhancing trade.

³ Naveed Siddiqui, "Three soldiers martyred in exchange of fire with terrorists across Pak-Afghan border: ISPR," *Dawn*, September 13, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1709917>

⁴ Muhammad Saleh Zafir, "Afghan minister's allegations conjectural: FO," *The News*, August 29, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/986456-afghan-minister-s-allegations-conjectural-fo>

⁵ Shafqat Ali, "Pakistan, Afghanistan in a diplomatic spat over JeM chief," *The Nation*, September 13, 2022, <https://www.nation.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2022-09-15/page-1/detail-4>

1.1.1 Formal recognition not yet in sight

The whole world can turn its head away from Afghanistan, but Pakistan cannot. Some experts believe that Pakistan is indispensable to Afghanistan likewise Afghanistan is indispensable to Pakistan.⁶ However, Pakistan has been persistent in its wait-and-watch policy on the matter of recognition of the de facto government of the Afghan Taliban. Analysts are of the opinion that it would be advisable to wait until the Taliban government is recognised internationally.⁷ However, Pakistan is also looking towards the United Nations on this matter. As Pakistan wants a peaceful, legitimate government in Afghanistan, it is continuing its efforts on bilateral and multilateral fronts in that regard.

For instance, in a conference on Afghanistan's security and economic development held in Tashkent in late July, Islamabad advised Kabul to pursue girls' education and inclusive politics,⁸ in order to gain global recognition. When the Afghan Taliban retook power in Kabul in August of last year, Pakistan was one of the leading countries pushing the United States to unfreeze about \$7 billion in foreign Afghan assets held in several American banks. Most recently, in August this year, Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson Asim Iftikhar stressed that no strings should be attached to the release of Afghan assets.⁹ The US had also in recent months hinted at renegotiating with the Taliban on the provision of the frozen assets.

But the killing of Al-Qaeda chief Al-Zawahiri only a few miles away from Kabul's presidential palace, alarmed the US and the world. Zawahiri was one of America's most wanted terrorists, and the US engagement in Afghanistan, as also reflected in the Doha agreement, is mainly led by its effort to countering any terrorist threat emanating from the Afghan soil for the United States.

⁶ Major General (Retd) Inam Ul Haque, defense and strategic affairs analyst. Interview by Hufsa Farooq, Researcher PIPS, July 26, 2022.

⁷ Farrukh K. Pitafi, Islamabad-based journalist, anchorperson & columnist. Interview by Hufsa Farooq, Researcher PIPS, August 22, 2022.

⁸ Remarks by Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq on International Conference of Afghanistan Security and Economic Development in Tashkent. Retrieved from <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/977248-islamabad-advises-kabul-to-pursue-girls-education-inclusive-politics>

⁹ "Pakistan urges US to release Afghan assets," *The Express Tribune*, August 20, 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/epaper/news/Islamabad/2022-08-20/OWQ5NzlyMjQ2M2UxMDk3MGEzYzBiNmY2NWZkM2VhZDAuanBlZw%3D%3D>

Experts are of the view that to achieve domestic legitimacy and political inclusion, the new Taliban rulers need to reform their governance and political philosophy. If violence remains the language of power, it will only cause more violence. Similarly, for the Afghan government, it would be prudent to deny safe havens to foreign terrorists of all hues and not allow its soil to be used against any country. That would help end its isolation and forge partnerships with other nations to fight terrorism.¹⁰

1.1.2 Pakistan's continued humanitarian and economic cooperation

The unfolding humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has made a wider and deeper butterfly impact not only on Pakistan's adjacent provinces but on the security of the region too. The dollar shortage in Pakistan devalued the rupee to a significant level. According to multiple accounts, the main reason for the depreciation of the rupee is carrying the burden on Afghanistan's imports. Pakistani foreign exchange reserves are being used for all imports of Afghanistan, and this additional burden of around \$ 2 billion per month is also increasing pressure on the rupee, and the value of the rupee is decreasing.¹¹ According to another account, one of the reasons for Pakistan's currency depreciation at the end of July was due to dollar smuggling to Afghanistan.¹² Experts hold that as Afghanistan is a landlocked country, it is largely reliant on Pakistan for trade. It has Iran on one side to whom they cannot engage because of sanctions. On the other borders, they have the Central Asian states, which are keeping strict border security.¹³

The earthquake and flash floods in Afghanistan at the start of this quarter doubled its miseries in the midst of an ongoing drought and worsening humanitarian crisis. In this time of need, Pakistan accelerated its humanitarian help. Armed personnel and Choppers were sent immediately to recover people. Pakistan itself faced torrential floods in the month of August, badly affecting around 60 percent of the country. Thus, the

¹⁰ Farrukh K. Pitafi, Islamabad-based journalist, anchorperson & columnist. Interview by Hufsa Farooq, Researcher PIPS, August 22, 2022.

¹¹ Malik Bostan, chairman of the Pakistan Currency Dealers Association, disclosed this while talking to daily *Jang*. Retrieved from <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/191837>

¹² "Zawahiri's killing alters Kabul chessboard", *The Express Tribune*, August 22, 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2372472/zawahiris-killing-alters-kabul-chessboard>

¹³ Dr. Moonis Ahmar, former Dean of Faculty of Social Science, University of Karachi. Interview by Hufsa Farooq, Researcher PIPS, August 18, 2022.

humanitarian help was stopped. The UN's World Food Program highlighted that "Pakistan provide[d] a vital supply route into Afghanistan."¹⁴ Large amounts of Afghanistan humanitarian aid from several other countries enter via the port of Karachi, as Afghanistan is a land-locked country. Experts are worried that Afghan people could experience recurring humanitarian crises if the economy remains unable to recover and grow meaningfully and sustainably. This might lead to mass migration and create the ideal environment for radicalisation and a new armed conflict.

Pakistan is worried about the brunt of the domino effect of the crisis and urging the international community to help its war-affected neighbor. As Pakistan's economy is already in shambles, another economic calamity in the neighbourhood would be disastrous for Islamabad.

Although Pakistan is internally focused on its political situation and economic revival, Afghanistan has not been ignored yet. Pakistan is determined to play a constructive role in Afghanistan's development. Some observers assert that all the neighboring countries are participating in building peace in Afghanistan, which suggests they are "keen to improve peace and stability in Afghanistan in order to improve the geo-economic situation of the region."¹⁵

Islamabad signed an agreement with Kabul about the grant of six months reciprocal visas to transporters to facilitate the cross-border movement of goods.¹⁶ However, local traders have termed reciprocal visa relaxation to Pakistani and Afghan transporters for promotion of bilateral trade between the two neighboring countries as 'too little and too late'.¹⁷

Pakistan also announced the formation of a joint committee comprising of representatives from various political parties to resume stalled trade activities with

¹⁴ "Floods in Pakistan pose a threat to Afghanistan food supply, warns UN," *Dawn*, September 3, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1708115>

¹⁵ Former Ambassador Masood Khalid was quoted as having said that in Shafqat Ali, "Pakistan continues efforts for peace in Afghanistan," *The Nation*, August 12, 2022, <https://www.nation.com.pk/12-Aug-2022/pakistan-continues-efforts-for-peace-in-afghanistan>

¹⁶ "Traders say chances for increase in trade with Afghanistan bleak", *Dawn*, August 23, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/amp/1706258>

¹⁷ Ibid.

neighboring Afghanistan at two border crossings, including the Ghulam Khan area of North Waziristan tribal district.¹⁸ Bilateral trade is the most effective confidence-building method since it may help reduce mistrust between countries and position them to face more tough bilateral challenges. Trading between Pakistan and Afghanistan benefits from low transportation costs, the availability of road and rail links, and consumer bases that are socially similar. Pakistani government has adopted several initiatives like barter trade, soft visa policy, etc., in the whole year since the takeover of Kabul by the Afghan Taliban. However, Pakistan's commerce with Afghanistan, which had increased to almost \$3 billion at one point, has subsequently decreased.¹⁹

Pakistan is also active on multilateral front to seek support for Afghanistan. Former Foreign Secretary Najamuddin Shaikh was quoted as saying in a media report that Pakistan had been in contact with China on the Afghanistan issue and urging the international community to remain cautious against the possibility of incitement and the role of spoilers, both inside and outside the country not to derail efforts aimed at ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan.²⁰

Experts strongly hold that the abandonment of Afghanistan will result in civil war, accelerating the growth of transnational terrorist threats from Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (IS-K).²¹

1.1.3 Talks with the TTP: Pakistan's mounting terrorism challenge

A year ago, the return of the Afghan Taliban was much applauded in Pakistan. Pakistani people and policymakers expected that the new Afghan rulers would not allow anti-Pakistani elements operate in Afghanistan. Many thought that in exchange for gaining international legitimacy, the Afghan Taliban would deal strictly with the TTP and other

¹⁸ "Joint committees constituted to resume stalled trade activities with Afghanistan, NA told," Associated Press of Pakistan, August 10, 2022, <https://www.app.com.pk/national/joint-committee-constituted-to-resume-stalled-trade-activities-with-afghanistan-na-told>

¹⁹ "A pathway to peace," *The Nation*, July 30, 2022, <https://nation.com.pk/2022/07/30/a-pathway-to-peace/>

²⁰ He was quoted in: Shafqat Ali, "Pakistan continues efforts for peace in Afghanistan," *The Nation*, August 12, 2022, <https://nation.com.pk/2022/08/12/pakistan-continues-efforts-for-peace-in-afghanistan/>

²¹ Dr Aameena Tanvir, "The Afghan question", *The News International*, July 30, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/978136-the-afghan-question>

terrorist organisations. As it appears now, they were completely wrong. The Afghan Taliban's quick success energised the banned TTP as hundreds of its fighters were released from Afghan prisons.

Pakistan has been in a peace process with the TTP since last year. However, the indefinite ceasefire was called off by TTP at the start of September.²² It should be noted that even at the request of the Afghan government, the talks between the two sides have not yet yielded any political solution because of a deadlock on important issues, including the restoration of ex-FATA's pre-merger status and the release of prisoners.

At the start of the quarter under review, the Parliamentary Committee on National Security (PCNS) had formally endorsed the efforts aimed at seeking a peace deal with the banned TTP.²³ In a closed-door meeting, the military leadership briefed parliamentarians that it was feared that the TTP will join up with Da'ish or IS-K, forcing Pakistan to seek a peace settlement with the group responsible for some of the country's deadliest terrorist attacks.²⁴ The committee was also apprised that the RAW (Research and Analysis Wing of India) was attempting to reestablish itself in Afghanistan and that Pakistan needed to reach out to the reconcilable components of the terrorist organisation. Nonetheless, the military leadership informed parliamentarians that nothing was final, and that the negotiation team would follow the instructions of parliament and the administration. Thus, PCNS formally gave a go-ahead for continuing talks with TTP.

Afterward, delegations ranging from tribal leaders and religious scholars to government officials visited Kabul and held negotiations with the main leadership of the banned outfit. Two main delegations that visited Afghanistan included one comprising Islamic scholars led by renowned religious scholar Mufti Taqi Usmani, and the other comprising tribal elders as well as government officials.²⁵ They were hopeful that the Afghan Taliban will soon allow girls' education in their country. Also, the Pakistani religious leaders were quite

²² Daily *Ummat* (Urdu), September 5, 2022, <http://ummat.net/2022/09/05/news.php?p=news-01.gif>

²³ "Peace talks to pre-empt 'TTP-Da'ish nexus'," *The Express Tribune*, July 6, 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2364901/peace-talks-to-pre-empt-ttp-daish-nexus>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Another delegation in Kabul for peace talks with TTP," *Dawn*, July 31, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1702441/another-delegation-in-kabul-for-peace-talks-with-ttp>

optimistic about their meetings with the Pakistani Taliban and promised them to extend their all-out support for the restoration of peace in Pakistan.²⁶

Meanwhile, the TTP's intransigence over certain preconditions, and killing of various TTP militants including famous commander Omar Khalid Khorasani gave a setback to the peace talks. Some observers believe that the peace talks have been kept on hold and can be reinitiated anytime later.²⁷ Others assert that the Afghan Taliban, particularly the interior minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, have become more sensitive towards the TTP after the killing of its multiple leaders inside Afghanistan.²⁸ Many also argue that the Taliban neither have the capacity nor the will to carry out counter-terrorism operations against the TTP, which fought alongside them for more than a decade against the Afghan government and international forces.²⁹ Hence, the expectations of Pakistani officials about the nudging of TTP by the Afghan Taliban are shattered.

On the other hand, the frequency of terrorist violence in Pakistan is on the rise. The terrorist attacks continued unabated during the months of the TTP ceasefire and have increased since the group has announced an end to the ceasefire. Despite the TTP ceasefire in most of the weeks in the quarter under review (July to September), a total of 71 terrorist attacks took place in Pakistan (most of them being in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan), which represented about 19 percent increase from the quarter before (i.e., April to June; though June was also a month of [indefinite] ceasefire that was announced on May 29).³⁰

At the beginning of this quarter, before the annulment of the ceasefire by TTP, videos of militants roaming in Swat went viral on social media platforms. This raised the eyebrows of authorities as well as the natives. The natives' apprehensions led to a vast protest when a member of the provincial assembly was killed for not paying extortion. Thousands of

²⁶ Mushtaq Yusufzai, "Pak religious scholars return home from Afghanistan," *The News International*, July 30, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/978186-pak-religious-scholars-return-home-from-afghanistan>

²⁷ Ismail Khan, "Ceasefire 'holding' amid evolving TTP threat," *Dawn*, September 5, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1708524>

²⁸ Ihsan Ullah Tipu Mehsood, "Impasse in Talks between Pakistani State and TTP," YouTube Channel: The Khorasan Diary, Episode 12, September 13, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37tDvlo--jA&t=481s>

²⁹ Osama Bin Javaid, "The Taliban's Afghanistan," *Al Jazeera*, September 12, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/podcasts/2022/9/12/the-talibans-afghanistan>

³⁰ All data and statistics are derived from Pak Institute for Peace Studies' digital database on security incidents.

tribesmen staged protests against the presence of militants in their areas and demanded peace. In the backdrop of the militant's reported presence in the Swat area, the ISPR issued a statement in which it stated that a "misperception about the alleged presence of a large number of proscribed organizations TTP's armed members in Swat Valley has been created on social media. After confirmation on the ground, these reports have been found as grossly exaggerated and misleading". It further said that "apparently, these individuals sneaked in from Afghanistan to resettle in their native areas. A close watch is being maintained on their limited presence and movement in mountains."³¹ However, Abdul Sayed, a researcher based in Sweden who follows the group, noted that "the TTP's showcase of strength is gauging public reaction to their demand to return to these places with their weaponry."³² "They wanted to see, how locals would react to their return, he added."³³

In the past, two kinetic operations were undertaken to flush militants out and establish the state's writ in Swat where militants had support bases as well. However, this time around, the Swat residents turned out in various parts of the districts to protest against the resurgent Taliban,³⁴ and opposed any military operation.³⁵ They firmly opposed the return of armed TTP militants and called upon the security agencies to fulfill their responsibilities of restoring peace to the region. Additionally, they strongly cautioned that they won't let militants 'steal their peace'. Around mid-September, Lieutenant General Azhar Hayat, Corps Commander Peshawar, visited Swat and met tribal elders and notables from several nearby areas. He thanked local elders for their unwavering support of security forces during the battle against terrorism, notably during the Swat Operation.

³¹ Fazal Khaliq & Iftikhar A. Khan, "Army keeping eye on 'armed men' in Swat, says ISPR", *Dawn*, August 14, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1704802/army-keeping-eye-on-armed-men-in-swat-says-ispr>

³² Abubakar Siddique, "As Fighters Return, Pakistanis Fear A Repeat Of Taliban Carnage", *Gandhara.rferl*, August 17, 2022, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/pakistan-fighters-return-fear-of-taliban-carnage/31993005.html>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Amir Wasim, "Protests against militants' return echo in National Assembly", *Dawn*, August 11, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1704266>

³⁵ Fazal Khaliq, "Swat residents rally against fresh wave of terror", *Dawn*, September 15, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1710167/swat-residents-rally-against-fresh-wave-of-terror>

He assured that the Army will do everything in its power to guarantee that no one takes the law into their own hands.³⁶

The militants' presence or relocation was not restricted to Swat alone. According to a report in local media, Pakistan Taliban had even extended their outreach to peripheral areas of Peshawar sending a wave of terror among the residents. The CTD has also started operation in Peshawar's suburbs, according to the report. The report described an incident from a mosque in Hassan Khel (in the neighborhood of Peshawar) where a Pakistani Taliban militant reportedly preached the people (offering prayers there) for starting jihad in Pakistan on the pattern of Afghan Taliban to enforce Islamic system.³⁷

Security forces have reportedly also stepped up vigilance and action against the militants. For instance, security checkpoints have been set up at various locations in Matta and Kabal tehsils of Swat. Locals also saw several military vehicles carrying security personnel in both tehsils. As reported in *Dawn*, hundreds of security personnel, including the army and the elite police force accompanied by local cops, launched an operation at dawn to comb Matta's mountainous region.³⁸ Similarly, Security officials in Tirah valley during the previous week had also ordered residents of Sandana, Dray Naghari and Sanda Pal localities to vacate their houses in anticipation of a small-scale military operation against militants following recent attacks on security forces.³⁹

Earlier, security officials in Tirah valley of Khyber had reportedly ordered residents of Sandana, Dray Naghari and Sanda Pal localities to vacate their houses in anticipation of a small-scale military operation against militants following recent attacks on security forces. Local security commanders held a meeting with residents of Sandana area on 7th of September after a late-night attack on the personnel deputed in the area. Sipah tribesmen, who inhabit the area, were given choice to either hand over the suspects

³⁶ "Corps Commander Peshawar visits Swat, meets tribal elders", *Radio Pakistan*, September 17, 2022, <https://www.radio.gov.pk/17-09-2022/corps-commander-peshawar-visits-swat-meets-tribal-elders>

³⁷ Daily *Mashriq* (Urdu), Peshawar, September 18, 2022, <https://mashriqtv.pk/story/?story=202209180114>

³⁸ Fazal Khaliq, "Security posts set up in Swat's Matta, Kabal tehsils", *Dawn*, September 21, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1711202/security-posts-set-up-in-matta-kabal-tehsils>

³⁹ "Tirah residents asked to leave ahead of action against militants", *Dawn*, September 8, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1709018>

involved in the attack or vacate their houses so that a military action could begin to flush out the miscreants.⁴⁰

1.2 Responses and concerns of political parties, security forces and civil society

Afghanistan's threat landscape has evolved since the withdrawal of the US forces. All mainstream *political parties* agree that the looming humanitarian crisis and security challenges in the neighboring country are a threat to Pakistan as well as the whole region's social and economic stability. Addressing the security challenges in the both countries requires a war footing and a whole-of-government approach. Otherwise, the consequences of inaction or improper action could foster turmoil and strife in all provinces of Pakistan.

Against the backdrop of negotiation with the banned outfit TTP, after the Afghan takeover of Kabul, mainstream political parties were opposing the peace talks with the banned outfit TTP,⁴¹ but at the beginning of this quarter, during an in-camera briefing by military leadership, the representatives from all parties formally agreed for negotiations with the TTP.

Nationalist parties in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) appear more concerned about the Afghan situation as the livelihoods of people of these provinces, especially those living along the border, are associated with the border trade. For instance, the Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) of KP has reiterated to solve border issues. QWP's Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao stated that there are serious complaints from the Afghan nationals of rude behavior, inordinate delays, and mismanagement while crossing over to and from Torkham and Chaman borders. The government's assurance of having streamlined and facilitated the process needs to be assessed again. "People-to-people relationship between the two countries is important as this has already given rise to

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Mian Abrar, "PPP forms committee to galvanize support against bypassing Parliament in talks with TTP", *Pakistan Today*, June 12, 2022, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/06/12/ppp-forms-committee-to-reach-out-other-parties-over-talks-with-ttp/>

misgivings in Kabul. It would be important for the Pakistani government to look into this issue and jointly take measures for the smooth functioning of the crossings," he held.⁴²

However, experts are of the view that all parties in Pakistan must agree on a cautious strategy to revitalise the country's Afghan policy. This policy should focus largely on dealing with threats emanating from Afghanistan that threaten Pakistan's national security.⁴³

Pakistan's military or security forces also assert that a peaceful Afghanistan means a peaceful region in general and a peaceful Pakistan in particular. At the beginning of this quarter, the military leadership held an in-camera briefing in which they informed the lawmakers about the simmering threat posed by TTP to Pakistan's national security and the ways to deal with it.⁴⁴

The US drone strike that killed Zawahiri sparked speculation about whether Pakistani airspace was violated and whether the government or military was involved. However, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) spokesperson Major General Babar Iftikhar ruled out any chance that Pakistan's soil was used in the killing of the Al-Qaeda chief in Afghanistan.⁴⁵ In a high-level shuffle at the beginning of August, Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, the Corps Commander in Peshawar, was transferred to head the Corps in Bahawalpur. This posting within less than a week of Zawahiri's killing again sparked speculation among defense and security watchers. His appointment had come at a very crucial time when both external and internal security challenges seemed to be growing.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, in the backdrop of border clashes, the military's media wing strongly condemned the "use of Afghan soil by terrorists for activities against Pakistan", adding

⁴² Daily Aaj (Urdu), August 1, 2022,

<https://epaper.dailyaaj.com.pk/epaper/pages/fa8640062137f96b0f6f81f1e1b41092.jpg>

⁴³ Dr. Moonis Ahmar, Former Dean of Faculty of Social Science, Assistant Professor at Department of International Relations, University of Karachi. Interview by Hufsa Farooq, Researcher PIPS, August 18, 2022.

⁴⁴ Kamran Yousaf, "Peace talks to pre-empt 'TTP-Da'ish nexus", *The Express Tribune*, July 6, 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2364901/peace-talks-to-pre-empt-ttp-daish-nexus>

⁴⁵ "Pakistan's soil not used in Zawahiri's killing, says DG ISPR", *Duniya News*, August 5, 2022, <https://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/662578-Pakistan-soil-not-used-in-Zawahiri-killing-says-DG-ISPR>

⁴⁶ "Lt Gen Faiz Hameed appointed Bahawalpur corps commander: ISPR", *Dawn*, August 8, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1703923>

that it expected the Afghan government not to “allow the conduct of such activities in the future”.⁴⁷

Civil society actors continued asserting that Afghanistan needed peace and reconciliation. Many held, during the quarter under review, that under the Taliban rule, conditions conducive to armed conflict, such as political marginalisation and social persecution, were worsening on a daily basis. As a result, Afghanistan requires a new political process aimed not just at preventing another civil war but also at achieving long-term peace. Afghan leaders must have the ability to rally the population and unite all Afghan sides of the war around a shared vision for the country's future.

Over the past one year, since the Taliban takeover of Kabul, all chambers of commerce in the adjacent provinces i.e., Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, have become more active and persuasive for bilateral trade between the two countries. They have started placing demands, suggestions, and complaints to the government of Pakistan in order to boost bilateral trade as most believed there was now a friendly regime in the neighborhood. For instance, in this quarter, in response to the grant of reciprocal visas to traders by the government of Pakistan, Zahidullah Shinwari, the former president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that it was "wishful thinking on part of the government that the relaxation could either expedite bilateral trade or could bring about positive changes in the existing trading relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan."⁴⁸

Furthermore, civil society actively raised the voice of Afghan migrants in the country. They demanded from the government to come up with a clear policy on Afghan immigrants, including their status, and make sure that all Afghans were repatriated respectfully and that their stay in Pakistan was governed under UN regulations.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Naveed Siddiqui, “Three soldiers martyred in exchange of fire with terrorists across Pak-Afghan border: ISPR”, *Dawn*, September 13, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1709917>

⁴⁸ “Traders say chances for increase in trade with Afghanistan bleak”, *Dawn*, August 23, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/amp/1706258>

⁴⁹ “Rights bodies demand ‘respectful’ repatriation of Afghan immigrants”, *Dawn*, July 19, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1700368/rights-bodies-demand-respectful-repatriation-of-afghan-immigrants>

1.3 Taliban's ideological interface with Pakistan's religious discourse

Pakistan's religious parties had celebrated the takeover of the Afghan Taliban. Experts believe that those who celebrated failed to anticipate the evolving situation in a rational and realist way. For instance, as things stand now, the Taliban are not helping in anyway in Pakistan's efforts to secure its border with Afghanistan and counter the terrorism threat, mainly posed by the banned TTP.

Although the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan has been influencing Pakistan's religious and religiously driven militant discourse in support of a Taliban-styled "Islamic order", but ground realities in the two countries are different. For one, Pakistan has a comprehensive social contract that allows its people to live their lives according to their faiths and provides for provisions and mechanisms of conflict resolution. Similarly, Pakistan has strong military and civilian institutions and an economy of its own, which is though under duress but is still enough to keep its people's livelihoods running. Thirdly, as noted by one observer, the majority of Pakistan's population belongs to the Barelvi sect,⁵⁰ while most militant and jihadist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan subscribe to Deobandi school.

Yet, religious-ideological inferences of the Taliban (who subscribe to Deobandi denomination of Islam) have been widespread in Pakistan, mainly in form of religious extremism and militant violence. Pakistan's own jihadist landscape of the past and violent sectarian manifestations were only compounded by the Taliban's ideological influences. In ex-FATA, many Pakistani Taliban groups in the past tried to replicate the Afghan Taliban's so-called "Islamic Emirate" order.

After the Taliban took power in Kabul last year, similar fears of the Taliban replica were expressed in parts of Pakistan. While the Pakistani Taliban are much weaker now compared to post-9/11 times and have failed so far to regroup in bordering regions, religious groups and clergy in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have recently tried to express support and solidarity with the Afghan Taliban. In some manifestations, efforts were also made to pursue Taliban-like ideological propagation, as narrated in the following paragraphs.

⁵⁰ Abu Bakar Siddique, a journalist for RFE/RL's Radio Azadi. Interview by Hufsa Farooq, Researcher PIPS, September 2, 2022.

1.3.1 Islamist demonstrations in Bannu: cascading effect of the Taliban's curbs on women?

Reflecting a sign of creeping Afghan Taliban influence, hundreds of local clerics and their supporters observed Islamist demonstrations in Bannu district of KP. As a result, authorities closed Bannu's lone park for women in the month of August.

The protest organisers claimed that the family park had increased "obscenity and vulgarity" in the area. They termed the women's roaming in the park as unacceptable and requested that the park be closed. Some observers termed the campaign to close the women's park as part of a concerted effort by Islamists to emulate the Taliban's harsh policies in Afghanistan.⁵¹

On the contrary, most religious scholars of Pakistan criticised the Taliban's policy on girls' education terming it against Islamic values.



Figure 1: People march through a bazaar in Bannu. — Dawn

⁵¹ Abubakar Siddique & Umar Daraz Wazir, "Pakistani City's Decision To Close Women's Park Following Islamist Protests Sparks Uproar", *gandhara.rferl*, August 26, 2022, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/pakistan-bannu-womens-park-islamist-protests/32005868.html>

Some expert underscore that the Taliban 2.0 were seen as changed and moderate by the optimists. But time proved that they are the same "hardliners" who cannot allow women to enjoy their rights. According to one account, at least one dozen countries, including Pakistan, were on the verge of recognising the Afghan Taliban government in March but withheld their decision following the failure of Kabul's de facto rulers to fulfill the promises made with the international community.⁵² They decided not to go ahead with the recognition after the Taliban backtracked on some of the promises, particularly on girls' education.

1.3.2 Need to activate religious channels between Pakistan and Afghanistan

Religious parties and scholars have a role to play for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. They can try to convince the Taliban to opt for a holistic approach to Islam. Religious scholars from Pakistan may collaborate with their counterparts across the border to develop some moderate narratives on religion, politics, and society, which shall condemn terrorism and extremism, and challenge established stereotypical attitudes and structures that resist change. That could be useful because the real strength of the Afghan Taliban rests with the religious narratives.

As cited earlier, an eight-member religious delegation under the leadership of renowned scholar Mufti Taqi Usmani visited Kabul towards the end of July, where they had talks with both the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. Although the delegation could not convince the TTP for a peace deal, their meetings with the Afghan Taliban leadership were reported as useful in strengthening relationships, restoration of peace, and achievement of common goals between the two countries.⁵³ A media report quoted a member of the delegation, Maulana Tayyab, as saying that in their meeting with the Afghan Taliban they stressed upon opening open girls' schools and colleges.⁵⁴ Maulana Tayyab is an influential religious leader and is widely respected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the tribal districts.

⁵² Kamran Yousaf, "Afghan Taliban 'missed opportunity for recognition", *The Express Tribune*, July 4, 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2364567/afghan-taliban-missed-opportunity-for-recognition>

⁵³ "Another delegation in Kabul for peace talks with TTP", *Dawn*, July 31, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1702441/another-delegation-in-kabul-for-peace-talks-with-ttp>

⁵⁴ Mushtaq Yusufzai, "Pak religious scholars return home from Afghanistan", *The News International*, July 30, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/978186-pak-religious-scholars-return-home-from-afghanistan>

The Pakistani Taliban also respect him as a majority of them studied either in his madrassa in Panjpir, Swabi, or in other madrassas affiliated with Deobandi school of thought.

1.4 Afghan fallout: militant groups gaining strength in Pakistan

August witnessed reported relocation of few small groups of Pakistani Taliban militants into parts of KP from Afghanistan. Local tribesmen spotted the movements of such groups in multiple areas. There was a fear that these militants might have come back under some deal with the Pakistani authorities. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif also admitted on the floor of the National Assembly in August that anti-Taliban feelings were growing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as people were holding protest demonstrations in various parts of the province against the Taliban presence in their areas. As noted earlier in the report, most experts agree that the people of KP will resist such settlements of the Taliban unless they are taken into confidence and provided guarantees that the Taliban will not resort to violence against them.

The UN reports have been assessing that Pakistani militants in Afghanistan are the biggest in number compared to the militants from any other country or origin. That is the main area of concern for Pakistan which is not only directly linked to its border security but domestic terrorism landscape as well.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's influence among the Taliban government is seemingly not as great as to convince them to take action against the groups like TTP and others. The only thing the Afghan Taliban did was a reluctant mediation in talks between Pakistani authorities and the TTP delegates. Even in that instance, they had made it clear that they could not pressurize the TTP.

The growing presence and strength of militant groups in Pakistan is validated by increasing frequency and intensity of terrorist violence in the country. It has been one year since the Taliban took power in Kabul on August 15, 2021, and there have reportedly happened 250 terrorist attacks in Pakistan during this period (between August 15, 2021, and August 14, 2022), which claimed 433 lives and injured 719 others. If compared with the corresponding period of the previous year (i.e., August 15, 2020, to August 14, 2021), the post-Taliban-takeover period of one year represented an increase of about over 51

percent in the number of attacks and an increase of over 47 percent in the number of people killed in these attacks in Pakistan.⁵⁵

Table 1: Terrorist attacks in Pakistan in one year since the Taliban takeover

Region	August 15, 2021, to August 14, 2022		August 15, 2020, to August 14, 2021		% Change ⁵⁶	
	No. of Attacks	Killed	No. of Attacks	Killed	No. of Attacks	Killed
KP	156	286	87	151	79%↑	89%↑
Balochistan	79	127	60	113	32%↑	12%↑
Punjab & Islamabad	6	12	7	15	14%↓	20%↓
Sindh	9 ⁵⁷	8	11 ⁵⁸	15	18%↓	47%↓
GB & AJK	0	0	0	0	-	-
Total	250	433	165	294	51%↑	47%↑

The data and statistics provided in the table above clearly indicate that since the Taliban takeover of Kabul last year there has been significant increase in the number of terrorist attacks and consequent killings in the two key conflict and militancy-prone areas of Pakistan, i.e., Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The incidence of such attacks in Punjab, Islamabad and Sindh has declined, though only slightly. Overall, an increase of over 47 percent in fatalities (or number of people killed in terrorist attacks in Pakistan in one year since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan) also reflects that militant perpetrated some high-impact or major attacks.

⁵⁵ Data and statistics have been derived from Pak Institute for Peace Studies' digital database on security incidents.

⁵⁶ ↑ and ↓ represent increase and decrease, respectively, from the corresponding period of previous year, as given at the table.

⁵⁷ Including 5 in Karachi alone.

⁵⁸ 10 in Karachi alone.

• **Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)**

In September, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) resumed its attacks inside Pakistan, mainly targeting police. Some other local Taliban groups such as Hafiz Gul Bahadur group and Tariq Gidar group as well as IS-K are already active in the province.

During the quarter under review, the TTP also issued statements posing confidence in a meaningful peace process. For instance, in August the group issued a statement saying the outfit is not against Pakistan. The tone and diction of the statement was surprisingly mild and appeared an attempt to pacify the local political and social resistance to the TTP's renewed efforts to relocate in parts of KP through its ongoing peace talks with the government. Released by the group's spokesman Muhammad Khorasani, the statement said:

"...ever since the peace talks have begun and the country has started to move towards peace, some people with secular credentials and funded by the West have been feeling bad about them. They are unable to digest this success [and peace] because then their anti-Islam campaign and funds would come to an end. For this reason, such people want to spread the impression in various programs, statements, and conferences that under the guise of negotiations, an attempt is being made to bring the Taliban back to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and tribal areas and to disrupt peace. We have said it time and again that the TTP members, like other people, are citizens of Pakistan and aspire for



real peace in the country. The TTP is neither an anti-national movement nor is it under the influence of anti-national forces. It is against our fundamental policy, and we consider it a criminal act to fight against any religious or political party in the country (apart from the security agencies) or endanger their properties and lives. Therefore, stop unfair unfair propaganda against us, and don't go against your part policy of non-violence by resorting to resistance.⁵⁹ In the past, too, losses suffered by some parties was due to their own policies. So those who want to see a peaceful and prosperous Pakistan should play their positive role in making the negotiations successful. Do not be part of the propaganda and do not listen to the propaganda of others."⁶⁰



It appears that while the TTP wanted to continue the peace talks, it also wanted to send a message to its dissatisfied members that it is again resorting to violence and is not showing any signs of weakness. But experts assert that such a strategy is doomed to fail like the TTP's overambitious demands did not work. But the risk of terrorist violence could increase. At the end, the Pakistani government will have to sit together with the Afghan

⁵⁹ This seems an implied reference to Awami National Party that espouses non-violence and has been hit hard by the TTP in past due to its anti-Taliban stance.

⁶⁰ Twitter handle: @khorasandiary, August 18, 2022, <https://twitter.com/khorasandiary/status/1564335232819441664/photo/1>

Taliban government to chalk out some border control or management mechanism and devise an effective plan to counter the TTP. The latter will also need enhancing the security forces' kinetic action against militants mainly in bordering regions of KP.

Against the backdrop of Al-Qaeda leader Zawahiri's killing, the TTP leader Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud limited its meetings. A letter was issued by TTP in which it was mentioned by the TTP defense minister that due to security reasons, meetings with the chief are not allowed for two months. The group was concerned that he may be targeted by an unmanned predator drone,⁶¹ or in some other targeted attack. That fear was not unfounded as many TTP leaders have been killed in Afghanistan in recent months. At the start of August, an important commander of TTP, Omar Khalid Khorasani was killed during a blast in eastern Afghanistan.

As noted earlier, the TTP ended the ceasefire agreement at the start of September and started aggressive attacks in northern areas of KP.⁶² The group has perpetrated at least nine terrorist attacks in September in eight districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claiming 15 lives. Seven of these attacks targeted security and law enforcement personnel. Experts blame the Afghan Taliban for the TTP's growing presence and activities inside Pakistan.⁶³ However they also assert that the state of Afghanistan is fragile and weak, and the Taliban do not have the capacity and the will to combat militant factions like the TTP.⁶⁴

The TTP is not only ideologically inspired by and affiliated with the Afghan Taliban, but its every new chief has held oath of allegiance to the Taliban chief. The TTP had celebrated the Taliban "victory" more than any other group and had observed rallies apart from issuing congratulating statements. The TTP again congratulated the Afghan nation and the Taliban on the first anniversary of the Taliban rule. The TTP conveyed to the Taliban that as it had contributed [significantly] to their "victory", it will continue making similar sacrifices in future.⁶⁵

⁶² Daily *Ummat* (Urdu), September 5, 2022, <http://ummat.net/2022/09/05/news.php?p=news-01.gif>

⁶³ Dr. Moonis Ahmar, Former Dean of Faculty of Social Science, Assistant Professor at Department of International Relations, University of Karachi. Interview by Hufsa Farooq, Researcher PIPS, August 18, 2022.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Twitter handle: @SAMRIReports, September 1, 2022, <https://twitter.com/SAMRIReports/status/1565219442560221184>

- ***Al-Qaeda***

This quarter observed a big blow to Al-Qaeda as a US drone killed its supreme leader Ayman-al Zawahiri. Experts assert that unlike when the US killed Osama bin Laden, right now, the organisation does not have a successor on whom everyone would agree and who could keep the group united.⁶⁶ Zawahiri was not just a deputy of Osama bin Laden, but somebody who took Al-Qaeda from an organisation that was involved in guerilla warfare to a pan-Muslim, pan-Arab, pan-nation organization. It was him who took the reins after Osama bin Laden was killed.⁶⁷

However, the outfit has not confirmed the death of the leader. Furthermore, AQ's "general command" released in July the 7th issue of its flagship magazine "*One Ummah*". It was the first by the group since the killing of its leader Zawahiri. The previous one came out on 31st of August 2021 to congratulate the Taliban on their capture of Afghanistan. However, the magazine kept the status of Zawahiri's death vague, as no phrase followed his name to indicate he is alive or dead. It neither used the phrase "May Allah protect him" - used for a living - nor "May Allah has mercy on him", which is used for the dead.⁶⁸

Additionally, the magazine covered the extension of Arabs relations with Israel and US mediation and gave predictions about al-Shabab in Somalia that like the Taliban in Afghanistan, al-Shabab will soon capture Mogadishu and rule over the whole of Somalia. According to the magazine's editorial, it's just a matter of time. However, the magazine lacks anything about the Afghan Taliban and Pakistan.

At the end of August, a video message was released by a senior official of the organisation in which he instructed that the organisation did not want any young AQ members to come to Afghanistan. "People here in general and Taliban, in particular, have suffered hardships because of the 'muhajireen' (emigrants) and especially of AQ. The Afghans don't want to repeat the same mistake... This [Afghanistan] is no longer a land of jihad." He made clear

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Osama Bin Javid, "The Taliban's Afghanistan", Al Jazeera, September 12, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/podcasts/2022/9/12/the-talibans-afghanistan>

⁶⁸ Twitter handle: @Minalami, August 27, 2022, <https://twitter.com/Minalami/status/1563253554651222020>

that the Taliban government will not give them permission in any way to come and stay in Afghanistan.⁶⁹

Al-Qaeda may be less threatening to Afghanistan's neighbours due to its currently heightened focus on Africa and Middle East, weakening strength, and also the Taliban's influence, among other things. Others however contest the argument on the basis of Al-Qaeda's continued association and engagement with the Pakistani Taliban as well as Central Asian militants.

- ***Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K)***

The group has increased its attacks inside Pakistan. During the quarter under review, i.e., from July to September 2022, IS-K carried out nine attacks in the country including eight in four districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Bajaur, Orakzai, Peshawar and Tank) and one in Mastung district of Balochistan. Six of these attacks targeted security and law enforcement personnel and one attack each hit tribal elders, political leaders, and Christian community.⁷⁰ The group has also been attacking religious scholars of mainly Deobandi sectarian orientation in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Some observers predict that in the coming months, "we might see more assassinations of religious figures, [which will be claimed] by IS-K or [remain] unclaimed. The group wants to terrorise its enemies and fuel sectarian clashes."⁷¹

IS-K continued calling youths to "Khorasan" (which historically encompasses parts of modern-day Iran, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan) by sending messages like: "Emigration to Khorasan is open," and the "Caliphate in Khorasan is expanding and growing by the grace of God."⁷² It also enhanced its recruitment efforts and promises and said that those who fight and die for the Islamic State-Khorasan would be rewarded in the afterlife.

⁶⁹ Twitter handle: @mnureddin, August 30, 2022, <https://twitter.com/mnureddin/status/1564476364555706368>

⁷⁰ Data and statistics have been derived from Pak Institute for Peace Studies' digital database on security incidents.

⁷¹ Abubakar Siddique, "Gandhara Briefing: The Taliban's War With IS-K; A Pakistani Women-Only Park Closes; Afghans Deported From Tajikistan", *gandhara.rferl*, August 26, 2022, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/gandhara-briefing-is-k-taliban-bannu-tajikistan-afghan-migrants/32006000.html>

⁷² Lucas Webber & Laith Alkhouri, "Perspectives | Islamic State recruiting Uzbeks to fight in Afghanistan", *eurasianet*, August 29, 2022, <https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-islamic-state-recruiting-uzbeks-to-fight-in-afghanistan>

The 30th report of the UN's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, released in July 2022, also noted that the Islamic State group viewed Afghanistan as a "base for expansion in the wider region for the realisation of its "great caliphate" project. The UN report also assessed the IS-K to present a short to medium term threat, compared to long-term threat posed by Al-Qaeda.⁷³

The US withdrawal has allowed the group to recover, regroup and strengthen its membership and position in Afghanistan. For instance, in July 2021, a month before the Taliban takeover of Kabul, a UN report had estimated the number of IS-K fighters in Afghanistan around 500 to 1,500. However, according to multiple accounts, since the Taliban takeover the number of IS-K militants is believed to have doubled in the country. According to one report, many IS-K members were also among the inmates or prisoners released by the Taliban regime from Bagram Air Base and Pul-e-Charki prisons. As per the updated figures provided by the UN early this year, the number of IS-K fighters has now "risen from earlier estimates of 2,200 to approaching 4,000, following the release of several thousand prisoners."⁷⁴

IS-K has no friends, perhaps it does have a soft tone with Baloch factions and Salafist people. It is also very active on the front of ideological propagation. In that context, the death of Zawahiri could also IS-K, which will use its narrative that the Taliban and the US are friends, accusing the Taliban of "selling" Zawahiri. "Local militants may be drawn to the IS-K narrative and may join the organization, revitalizing its ranks."⁷⁵

Some experts argue that IS-K may not become a big threat to Afghanistan because the population of Salafists in Afghanistan is very small. Additionally, the Afghan Taliban have good know-how about them and are tackling them efficiently. Similarly, they assert, IS-K is not a big threat to Pakistan either. Since they have launched themselves as a hardliner

⁷³ The report can be downloaded here: <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2075689/N2239429.pdf>

⁷⁴ United Nations Security Council's twenty-ninth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, February 3, 2022.

⁷⁵ Iftikhar Firdous, "Zawahiri's Death and the Future of Al-Qaeda's Leadership", *Extremist Monitoring Analyst Network*, August 23, 2022, <https://www.eman-network.com/insights-2/zawahiris-death-and-its-impact-on-alqaeda-leadership>

and are very brutal it is less likely they will get public support to enforce their version of Islam.⁷⁶

Still, the group poses considerable threat of terrorist violence mainly against minority communities. Furthermore, the group could trigger sectarian violence in Pakistan, which has such faultiness in almost all of its regions.

1.5 Situation of Afghan refugees

Pakistan has over 40 years long history of hosting Afghan refugees and currently ranks as the fourth largest refugee-hosting country globally.⁷⁷ In recent times, some optimists were of the view that after the US pullout, a stable, inclusive government will be formed in Afghanistan and that will lead to the repatriation of millions of Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. However, according to a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report in July this year, some 250,000 new Afghans had entered Pakistan since August 2021. Furthermore, 1.5 million Afghans chose to stay back in Pakistan.⁷⁸ In addition to those who have registered, 130,000 more Afghan families in Pakistan are requesting registration and are awaiting verification. However, to curtail the influx of new refugees, soon after the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan, Pakistan announced a strict no-refugee policy on the ground. Iran, another neighboring country of Afghanistan, confined Afghan refugees to camps, but Pakistan failed to stop new refugees due to tribal, family, linguistic, and religious ties with the local people, particularly in border districts. Thus, to help the neighboring Afghan brothers Pakistan's envoy to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan cleared that Pakistan had no restrictive visa regime. He also held that "Pakistan d[id] not charge any visa fee for the Afghan visa seekers, except a processing fee of only \$8.18, thus helping Afghans to visit Pakistan for education, health, and business purposes."⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Abu Bakar Siddique, a journalist for RFE/RL's Radio Azadi. Interview by Hufsa Farooq, Researcher PIPS, September 2, 2022.

⁷⁷ According to UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>

⁷⁸ Amin Ahmed, "1.5 million Afghans chose to stay back in Pakistan after US pullout", Dawn, July 26, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1701631>

⁷⁹ Pakistan's envoy to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan was quoted in a news report: "Talks with TTP under Constitutional framework: Pak envoy", *The News*, July 19, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/974740-talks-with-ttp-under-constitutional-framework-pak-envoy>

Pakistan granted more visas to Afghan citizens as compared with any other country in the region and in the past, it had been issuing around 2,000 visas to Afghans on daily basis. In the wake of August 15, 2021, when there was uncertainty and the foreign embassies were moving out of Afghanistan, the Pakistan embassy facilitated in the evacuation of the foreigners and locals and even during that period, issued 1,800 to 2,000 visas daily. After the complete withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan in August 2021, 400 Afghan families entered Pakistan without any legal documentation or permission.⁸⁰

The protest of Afghan nationals in Islamabad continued during the quarter review. However, this time a petition had been filed with the Islamabad High Court (IHC), seeking the shifting of Afghan immigrants from the greenbelts of F-6 to refugee camps,⁸¹ after many observers and rights activists urged that the recent protests by Afghan migrants in Islamabad must be taken notice of, and a clear policy be enacted. In the petition, it was argued that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior should answer to the court about which law these Afghan refugees were seeking asylum and visas from the United States, and whether this could be enforced against the American Embassy in Pakistan and under what agreement. The Islamabad High Court asked the Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior and Capital Development Authority to get the green belt of Sector F-6, Islamabad cleared by removing Afghan nationals protesting against the USA for a claim which cannot be granted under the Constitution of Pakistan.⁸² However, in an interview with *Dawn*, a leading English newspaper, one of the refugees stressed that “if developed countries were not ready to accept them, Pakistan should give them asylum.”⁸³ These Afghans had been staging their protest living in deplorable conditions, lacking basic sanitation, health care, and daily necessities at the site, as well as diseases, unemployment, and discrimination for the last six months.

⁸⁰ "Afghan refugees stage protest in the capital," *The Express Tribune*, August 14, 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2371096/afghan-refugees-stage-protest-in-capital>

⁸¹ Malik Asad, "Petition seeks shifting of Afghans living on F-6 greenbelt," *Dawn*, August 7, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1703615>

⁸² Terence J Sigamony, "Green belt of Sector F-6: IHC directs ministries, CDA to remove Afghan protesters", *Business Recorder*, August 9, 2022, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40190764/green-belt-of-sector-f-6-ihc-directs-ministries-cda-to-remove-afghan-protesters>

⁸³ He was quoted in: Kashif Abbasi, "Afghan refugees turn F-6 children's park into 'tent village'", *Dawn*, July 18, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1700246>

An important development reported during the quarter under review related to biometric registration of thousands of Afghan refugees.⁸⁴ Similarly, a cell has been established by the local Shia organization in Islamabad to accommodate the Afghan Shia Hazaras. This cell has already accommodated over 30 Afghan families in various sites throughout the twin cities, including Jhangi Syedaan and Barakahu in Islamabad, and Khayaban-e-Sir Syed in Rawalpindi.⁸⁵

Meanwhile, the government has played an important role in encouraging contact between global actors and the Taliban regime in order to foster mutual understanding on refugees and other issues. This example must be followed, and greater efforts must be taken by others to support peace, in awareness of the fact that native people suffer the most. It is impossible to overestimate the physical, mental, and emotional toll that such a displacement has on a family.

1.6 Media commentary & reactions on Afghanistan

During the quarter under review, Pakistani media was mostly critical of both Pakistan and Afghanistan but for different reasons. Criticising Pakistan, several print media commentaries and analyses underscored that the Pakistani government had better and more pro-active options to deal with Afghanistan and Afghan refugees which it rarely adopted. Criticism of the Taliban was mainly due to their "indifference" to act against the TTP and political rhetoric on the border conflict.

An editorial in a leading Urdu newspaper welcomed the coal import agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan stating it will also benefit the war-affected Afghanistan economically. However, the matter of increase in the coal tax by the Afghan interim government annoyed many media writers. On this pretext, some even labelled the Taliban as the new nationalists of Afghanistan.

Similarly, most analyses and commentaries written in relation to the first anniversary of the Afghan Taliban highlighted that despite some serious concerns of the international

⁸⁴ Shakeel Anjum, "15,835 illegal Afghans registered to control crimes", *The News International*, September 8, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/989373-15-835-illegal-afghans-registered-to-control-crimes>

⁸⁵ Tahir Niaz, "Afghan Shia Hazaras settling in Pakistan illegally", *The Nation*, September 3, 2022, <https://www.nation.com.pk/03-Sep-2022/afghan-shia-hazaras-settling-in-pakistan-illegally>

community, the Taliban are a reality now and the world will have to deal with it. Most asserted that the Western nations will have to collaborate with the Taliban for the foreseeable future to preserve Afghan stability and regional security.

Concerning the peace talks with the banned outfit, the apprehensions of peaceniks came true when the TTP called off the ceasefire at the start of September. This bunch had asserted repetitively since the beginning of the peace process that the talks with a "defeated outfit" have no future. First, they noted that now the situation in the former FATA region has changed, residents are strongly opposed to rehabilitating TTP fighters and making any concessions as a result of the discussions. Second, the Army may be unable to reconcile with the majority of the TTP core because they cannot forget the troops and ordinary people who have been killed by the TTP. Third, the state of Pakistan cannot undo FATA changes under the 25th Amendment, which is one of the TTP's key demands. Thus, the critics, highlighting the paradoxical behavior of the Afghan Taliban, shared that the Afghan Taliban are tolerating the TTP safe havens on its soil on one side, and on the other they are trying to broker peace talks between the TTP and Pakistan, remaining within their comfort.

Some Op-ed writers were of the view that Pakistan should excel in its relations with Afghanistan as with China and Saudi Arabia, irrespective of their internal systems and policies. They stressed that any negative attitude towards a war-ravaged neighbor on the basis of its internal matters will fritter away all opportunities for Pakistan to trade with and through Afghanistan. They emphasised that internal problems should be left to the Afghans as they are unable to alter their worldview despite USSR and US interventions.

Pertaining to the US declaration of freezing the remaining 3.5 billion dollars of Afghan assets, almost every media group criticised this action by stating that although the US has a point in stopping funds from reaching militant organisations, the fact is that the money in question belongs to the people of Afghanistan, not America or the Taliban. And the humanitarian situation for the average Afghan is severe right now. According to the UNHCR, 25 million Afghans have been forced into poverty, half of the population is dependent on aid for subsistence, and a million children are suffering from "severe malnutrition." Hence, this has turned the situation into a nightmare and more chaotic.

On alleged utilisation of Pakistani soil in the killing of Al-Qaeda chief Zawahiri in a US drone strike, experts stated that it would be too naïve to scapegoat Pakistan. "Let's hold our horses till the truth is established in Al-Zawahiri's case," one observer noted.⁸⁶

Analysts also opined that defeating and eliminating TTP from Afghan soil will enhance the Afghan Taliban's standing, regionally and internationally, paving the way for their ultimate recognition and economic salvation.⁸⁷ Against the backdrop of violence committed by Afghan fans during a Pak-Afghan match, most analysts inferred that the majority of Afghans are bitter about Pakistan,⁸⁸ and that Pakistan needed to work towards improving its image by winning hearts and minds of Afghan people.

⁸⁶ Sajjad Shaukat, "Al-Zawahiri's whereabouts", *The Nation*, August 17, 2022, <https://www.nation.com.pk/17-Aug-2022/al-zawahiri-s-whereabouts>

⁸⁷ Inam Ul Haque, "Dialogue with TTP: lopsided rationale," *The Express Tribune*, August 11, 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2370404/dialogue-with-ttp-lopsided-rationale>

⁸⁸ Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, "Brotherly Afghanistan?", *Dawn*, September 14, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1710043/brotherly-afghanistan>

Chapter 2

Bilateral & multilateral dynamics and developments

2.1 Diplomatic engagements without legitimacy

In the 1990s, when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan, only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates had extended a formal recognition to them. This time around, while they have not been recognised by any country as yet, the group has far stronger diplomatic profile and aspirations, having engaged with not just the regional governments but also western governments of Europe and the United States. According to Washington Institute for Near East Policy, since their taking power on August 15, 2021, the Taliban have publicly announced, using the website and Twitter account of the previous government, 378 diplomatic meetings with 35 countries, majority of which were with Gulf states.¹ It seems that the global response to the Taliban regime is more pragmatic and non-confrontational this time. The world is engaging with the Taliban government without recognising them and using recognition as a bargaining chip to convince the regime for adopting an “inclusive government” with respect of human rights.

The international organisations such as the UN and some regional powers including Russia, China, Qatar, and Pakistan are also advocating against the isolationism the world followed in the 1990s. In September, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Markus Potzel, outlined the rationale behind engaging with the Taliban, despite their utter disregard to democracy, women rights, minority rights and

¹ Aaron Y. Zelin, “Looking for legitimacy: Taliban diplomacy since the fall of Kabul,” Washington Institute, August 15, 2022. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/looking-legitimacy-taliban-diplomacy-fall-kabul>

even the counter-terrorism commitment they made earlier.² Highlighting the misery of Afghans and the looming security threats, he remarked, “That’s why we have to engage.”³

2.1.1 Economic deals

The engagements with the Taliban regime, despite non-recognition, are not just for humanitarian aid or political diplomacy on regional security issues. Many regional countries oppose the economic sanctions on the country and have voiced a possibility of investment and trade with the Taliban government, on ground that the economic collapse of the country would be determinantal for the region. This quarter, the Kabul rulers have also been able to secure one important economic bilateral deal with Russia and there are indications of other deals to follow in the coming months.

In September, the Taliban signed a deal with Russia for trade of petroleum products and wheat.⁴ While economic trade with neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan, continued, this is the first such international deal signed by the Taliban regime. Although the details of the deal are not yet clear, the Taliban leadership is claiming that it involves supply of one million tons of gasoline, one million tons of diesel, 500,000 tons of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and two million tons of wheat annually.

Due to economic embargoes on Russia after Ukrainian war, this deal signifies building of a trade bloc in Asia. The other countries buying petroleum products from Russia mainly include China and India – both regional powers having economic interests in Afghanistan.⁵ In the UNSC meeting, the representative of the Russian Federation has rejected the

² United Nations, “Afghanistan’s Future Depends on Taliban’s Engagement with World, But Restrictions on Women Signal Lack of International Commitments, Briefer Warns Security Council,” 9137th UNSC meeting, SC/15038

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mohammad Yunus Yawar and Charlotte Greenfield, “Afghan Taliban sign deal for Russian oil products, gas and wheat,” Reuters, 28 September 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/exclusive-afghan-taliban-sign-deal-russian-oil-products-gas-wheat-2022-09-27/>

⁵ Shruti Menon, “Ukraine crisis: Russian oil and gas turn to Asia,” BBC News, 30 September 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-60783874>

rationale for engaging with the Taliban only to convince them to abide by international norms and rules, calling world to engage “without using blackmail.”⁶

China is the most likely regional country to follow Russian suit in signing trade and investment deals with Afghanistan, particularly in the minerals mining sector.⁷ In July, it lifted tariff from ninety eight percent of imported goods from Afghanistan to boost bilateral trade.⁸ While at present, the volume of bilateral trade between Afghanistan and China is really low, Chinese government has openly rejected the economic sanctions on Afghanistan as “unreasonable” and is likely to start investment without recognition, where it is standing alongside western countries demanding formation of an inclusive government.

2.1.2 Multilateral engagements

In the quarter under review, the Taliban also got much wider opportunity to engage with the international community through multilateral events, the most prominent ones being Tashkent International Conference on Afghanistan on July 26 and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting of Foreign Ministers on July 29.

The International Conference on Afghanistan in the Tashkent on July 26 was hosted by Uzbekistan’s President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. It provided an opportunity to the Taliban regime to engage with its neighbouring countries and regional organisations, despite its de-facto status. More than 100 delegations from nearly 30 countries attended the event, and hence, it was the largest multilateral engagement of the Taliban since establishment for their rule in Kabul August last year.⁹ Interestingly, the main pre-condition for the recognition, i.e., establishment of an inclusive government, was not emphasised much

⁶ 9137th UNSC meeting, SC/15038

⁷ Lilly Blumenthal, Caitlin Purdy and Victoria Bassetti, “Chinese investment in Afghanistan’s lithium sector: A long shot in the short term,” Brookings Institute, August 3, 2022. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2022/08/03/chinese-investment-in-afghanistans-lithium-sector-a-long-shot-in-the-short-term/>

⁸ Ayaz Gul, “China Gives New Trade Concessions to Afghanistan,” VOA News, 29 July 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-gives-new-trade-concessions-to-afghanistan-/6679703.html>

⁹ Navbahor Imamova, “Nearly 30 Nations Engage With Taliban at Tashkent Conference,” VOA News, July 27, 2022. <https://www.voanews.com/a/almost-30-nations-engage-with-taliban-at-tashkent-conference-/6676107.html>

during this engagement. Instead, the prime focus of the conference was the reconstruction and economic development of Afghanistan. Some participants also shared concerns about the use of Afghan territory for terrorist activities.

The SCO meeting was held in Tashkent after the International Conference and was attended by foreign delegations of member states of SCO – Afghanistan contact group, a delegation from the foreign ministry of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under Amir Khan Muttaqi, and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. In the meeting Chinese FM Wang Yi held that the situation in Afghanistan is much stable now despite multiple challenges,¹⁰ a notable departure from his statement last year when he shared concern on situation in Afghanistan that can impact the “overall security and development of the region.”¹¹

2.2 How the world views the killing of Ayman al-Zawahiri?

On August 2, American President Joe Biden announced in a televised address that the main leader of the Al-Qaeda, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, had been killed in a US drone strike in the Afghan capital Kabul. This unmanned attack on Afghan soil was the first known US strike inside Afghanistan since the withdrawal of US troops and diplomats in August 2021.¹² Previously, there had been some unconfirmed reports of Zawahiri's death and poor health condition, but this time the death was confirmed both by the US president and the Taliban regime.

The news of Zawahiri's death was welcomed by most in the US. Amy Cheng wrote that for the US policy makers the killing was a political win, much needed to cancel out the

¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, “Wang Yi Expounds on China's View on the Afghan Issue,” July 29, 2022,

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wshd_665389/202207/t20220730_10730745.html

¹¹ “SCO foreign ministers hold meeting on Afghan issue,” Xinhuanet Asia & Pacific, July 14, 2021

¹² “Al-Qaeda leader Zawahiri killed in US drone strike in Afghanistan: Biden,” *Dawn*, August 2, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1702723>

bad optics created during the hasty withdrawal of NATO troops last year.¹³ Public in the US was also mostly rejoiced with the news.¹⁴

Most other countries, particularly US allies in its war against terrorism also welcomed the death of a terrorist involved in the engineering of 9/11 attacks. The Saudi Arabian government released a statement immediately after the announcement of the the death of Zawahiri, claiming that it welcomes the death of a terrorist involved in heinous crimes including death of Saudi citizens.¹⁵ Similar statements, with the hope that the killing will provide solace to the family of 9/11 victims, were passed by the Canadian and Australian prime ministers.¹⁶ However, Chinese government raised concerns about the US “double standards” with regard to its respect for sovereignty of states.

The Afghan Taliban were not happy with the development and passed strong statements. Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid condemned the strike calling it a violation of “international principles.” Independent observers noted that the Ayman al-Zawahiri’s killing had raised questions about the links between Al-Qaeda and the current Taliban regime, with clear evidence of the continued presence of Al-Qaeda leaders on Afghan soil, against the pledges made by the Taliban earlier. Neha Ansari, a non-resident fellow at the Center for Strategic Studies, the Fletcher School, however, believes that the Taliban statements “should not be taken at the face value” as there is a divide among the ranks of the Taliban on whether or not to provide sanctuary to the Al-Qaeda leaders.¹⁷

2.3 International humanitarian relief efforts

The most serious issue that demands global engagement in Afghanistan is related to growing food crisis and depleting economic resources. As the country has been relying mostly on foreign aid, freezing of foreign assets and enactment of economic sanctions has only worsened the situation for Afghans masses. As per recent estimates, ninety seven

¹³ Amy Cheng, “Killing of Zawahiri draws praise from bipartisan lawmakers, Saudi Arabia,” *The Washington Post*, August 2, 2022.

¹⁴ Anwar Iqbal, “Zawahiri discussed on Blackbeard's islands,” *Dawn*, August 8, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1703838>

¹⁵ A. Cheng, “Killing of Zawahiri.”

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Telephonic conversation with Dr. Fizza Batool on September 12, 2022.

percent of total Afghan population lives under poverty line and almost forty three percent are surviving on just one meal a day.¹⁸ The main hurdle in the humanitarian aid to Afghanistan has been the banking crisis. Moreover, the lack of trust on the Taliban regime is restricting humanitarian aid agencies and governments to directly deal with the humanitarian organisations working on ground without engaging with the Taliban regime.

2.4 Afghanistan factor in warming of US-Pak ties

The Pak-US bilateral relationship has largely remained oriented around Afghanistan for over past twenty years. Even after the drawdown of the US troops from Afghanistan last year, counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation, humanitarian assistance for the Afghans, and unfreezing of the Afghan financial assets by Washington have been the major areas of engagement between Islamabad and Washington.

For a long time, the two countries blamed each other for failures in Afghanistan. Pakistan thought that the US was missing the point in not engaging with the Taliban for a negotiated power-sharing arrangement in Kabul, while the US considered Pakistan's support of the Taliban as the leading cause of their failed mission in Afghanistan. This blame game continued until after the US soldiers left Afghanistan and the Taliban eventually took over Kabul as the Afghan National Security Forces surrendered to the Taliban and the Ghani administration officials fled the country.

Since the US does not have much on-ground intelligence in Afghanistan relative to when they were physically present here, their reliance on Pakistan for human intelligence and over-the-horizon operational capability for counterterrorism purposes has increased. Lately on July 31, 2022, as cited earlier, an American drone strike killed one of the top leaders of Al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in his compound in Kabul.¹⁹ Many analysts did not discount the possibility of Pakistan's intelligence cooperation and support of the US operation through its territory. Pakistan has not officially lent credence to such assumptions though.

¹⁸ "One year later: What are Afghans facing now?" International Rescue Committee, August 15, 2022, <https://www.rescue.org/article/one-year-later-what-are-afghans-facing-now>

¹⁹ Robert Plummer & Matt Murphy, "Ayman al-Zawahiri: Al-Qaeda leader killed in US drone strike," BBC News, August 02, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-62387167>

Still, it has been seen that the US has been warming up to Pakistan as a recent flurry of meetings among top diplomats and government and military officials from the two sides has demonstrated in last few months. While these meetings have revolved around economic and environmental assistance and cooperation, they also involved defense and counterterrorism, and intelligence cooperation in Afghanistan. On September 8, 2022, the US approved the sale of spare parts and upgraded equipment for the F-16 fighter jets worth \$450 million to Pakistan, notwithstanding reservations on India's part. The US Secretary of State defended the sale as necessary military support of allies and partners.²⁰ The US and Pakistan have also expressed an intent to cooperate in humanitarian assistance of the Afghans and reasoning with the Taliban to allow secondary school education for Afghan girls, among other things.

There could be a hiccup in the relationship though as far as the China factor is concerned. Pakistan and China are longstanding and close strategic partners, with investing heavily in Pakistan's transport and communication infrastructure and power plants and a whole set of other economic projects worth over two dozen billion dollars under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's global rail and road network mega initiative.²¹ The US considers China as one of its primary strategic rivals. And the US Indo-Pacific Strategy does not list Pakistan as a suitable partner in the US confrontation against China. India, on the other hand, seems a likely partner, along with other Indo-Pacific countries, including Japan and Australia.²²

In September 2022, the visit of the Pakistani prime minister and foreign minister to the US holds significance for bilateral ties. On September 21, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met US President Joe Biden at the UN General Assembly in New York. As the recent developments indicate, US seems to give importance to Pakistan on its merit and wants to support the country's efforts for economic development, climate change resilience,

²⁰ Anwar Iqbal, "\$450m package to maintain Pakistan's F-16s," *Dawn*, September 9, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1709178>

²¹ Pakistan-China Relations, Embassy of People Republic of China in the Pakistan, August 2022, <http://pk.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zbgx/>

²² Ghulam Ali, "China-Pakistan cooperation on Afghanistan: assessing key interests and implementing strategies." <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09512748.2020.1845228>

and through investments in information technology and green energy sectors.²³ Such as on September 19, the US Mission in Pakistan and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Planning and Development Department celebrated the successful completion of Area Development Projects worth \$6.4 million that benefited more than 44,000 families from the Bajaur, Khyber, Mohmand and Torghar districts.²⁴

Pakistan's cooperation with the United States in Afghanistan has indeed laid the foundation for an improved relationship in various other areas, including climate change resilience, health sector, digital services, and military and intelligence cooperation against terrorism. As the recent course of events has showed, the relationship could continue to cut across third-country hyphenations such as India-Pakistan, China-Pakistan, and Afghanistan-Pakistan, and instead shape the contours of the bilateral relationship on the merit of the two countries' mutual areas of cooperation.

²³ "Study eyes US Cooperation with Pakistan aimed China rise," Agence France-Presse, October 04, 2022, <https://news.yahoo.com/amhtml/study-eyes-us-cooperation-pakistan-183206165?guccounter=1>

²⁴ "The United States and the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Partner to Provide Alternative Livelihoods in the Newly Merged Districts" US Embassy and Consulates in Pakistan , September 19, 2022. <https://pk.usembassy.gov/news-events/page/2/>

Chapter 3

Social media perspectives from Pakistan

Negative trends from both sides of the border dominated the social media, as a new blame game began after the assassination of Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. The Taliban Defense Minister, Mohammad Yaqoob, accused Pakistan of providing air space to the United States for the drone strike that killed Al-Zawahiri. The reaction from Pakistan was quite divided, as some were mourning the death, while others were accusing the Taliban of violating the Doha accord by allowing the terrorists to stay in their country.

Similarly, a cricket match of Asia Cup 2022, between Afghanistan and Pakistan, witnessed heated encounter between two players of the respective teams. After the game, supporters of both the teams came to blows with each other in the stadium. The incident initiated an offensive exchange of tweets, where supporters of the two countries blamed one another.

The earthquake in late June 2022 made the already fragile situation of Afghanistan more precarious for the Taliban government. The earthquake was followed by flashfloods in eastern Afghanistan. Pakistan and several other countries tried to provide assistance to the victims of natural disasters in Afghanistan. Additionally, twitter users from Pakistan showed solidarity and urged the government to assist the Afghans.

Separately, the murder of a Sindhi national, Bilal Kaka, by an Afghan national in Hyderabad led to multiple incidents of ethnic violence, uproar and clashes between Sindhis and Pashtuns in Sindh. Several Pakistanis posted tweets accusing the Afghan refugees for ethnic violence and unrest in the country. Contrarily, during the heavy monsoon rains in Pakistan, Pakistanis expressed their concerns on social media about the safety and welfare of the Afghan refugees encamped in Children Park, F-6 Islamabad. Simultaneously, the issues of the deterioration of education system and violation of women rights in Afghanistan have been voiced by several activists of Pakistan through

social media platforms. Similarly, media activists of Pakistan raised their voices against the lack of freedom of speech and censorship of journalism in Afghanistan. Several tweets reported and questioned the abuse of Australian journalist-columnist, Lynne O' Donnell, and the abduction of Anas Mallick and his crew in Afghanistan.

During the quarter under review, a delegation of Pakistani Islamic scholars led by Mufti Taqi Usmani visited Afghanistan and met with the leaders of the Afghan Taliban and the banned TTP. Although many of the social media appreciated the visit of the clerics but few also criticised the visit.

3.1 Refugee crises



hazoor bux laghari @engineer_hb26 · Jul 17

Afghan refugees are performing different illegal activities in Pakistan.

Most of them are violent, they promote terrorism, street crimes & law abuse especially in Sindh.

Now it is time to [#SendBackAfghanRefugees](#)

Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan has remained the largest recipient of Afghan refugees. A huge influx of refugees has impacted socioeconomic structure of Pakistan. Despite the impact of refugee influx on the economy of Pakistan, the nationals of Pakistan have been raising voice for decades about the growing drugs and guns culture making inroads in Pakistan after the Afghan refugees have been given shelter. Following the ethnic clashes in Sindh, as cited earlier, several tweets have been reported blaming and demanding Afghan refugees to be sent back. One of the major trends that made rounds on twitter was #SendBackAfghanRefugees.¹

Similarly, a protest against Afghan refugees was announced by the Sindhi community in Nawabshah, which was perpetuated using the hashtag '#GoAfghaniGo'.²

¹ https://twitter.com/engineer_hb26/status/1548659071032647680?s=20&t=Osi97yFQXHYHUYr7JHrxkA

² <https://twitter.com/SalarRahoojo/status/1548537344709500928?s=20&t=Osi97yFQXHYHUYr7JHrxkA>
<https://twitter.com/SheeraziSalman1/status/1551231856783360002?s=20&t=Osi97yFQXHYHUYr7JHrxkA>

Apart from the Sindhi and Pashtun rift and the campaign against Afghan refugees, many Pakistanis on social media were also concerned about the hardships that the refugees, who are living in camps, will have to face. A tweet reported that more than 1,000 Afghans including children have been living without shelter in Islamabad, who are surviving weather extremes for few months. The tweet pleaded to Pakistan government to take an initiative to facilitate Afghan refugees.



Salar Khan Rahoojo @SalarRahoojo · Jul 17

The influx of **Afghan refugees** into Pakistan since the 1980s has contributed to increased sectarian violence, drug trafficking, terrorism and organised crime.
[#SendBackAfghanRefugees](#)



10

219

215



SHEERAZI
@SheeraziSalman1

[#GoAfghaniGo](#)

Nawabshah

27th July 2022

Jeye Sindh Qoomi Mahaz Stand With Sindhi Nation
Peaceful Protest Against illegal Afghan Refugees



Samana Malaika Raza @MalaikaSRaza · Jul 9

...

There are 1000 plus including the young children living in tents, braving scorching heat and rain-storm. Request to the Govt to please visit them and provide them some shelter please. #AfghanRefugees



Khushal Khan @Khushal_Khattak · Jul 18

...

The sufferings of the Afghan refugees who have been protesting in Islamabad continue to be ignored. There is now more concern about the public park that the refugees have been forced to stay in than their problems. Absolutely shameful.



dawn.com

Afghan refugees turn F-6 children's park into 'tent village'

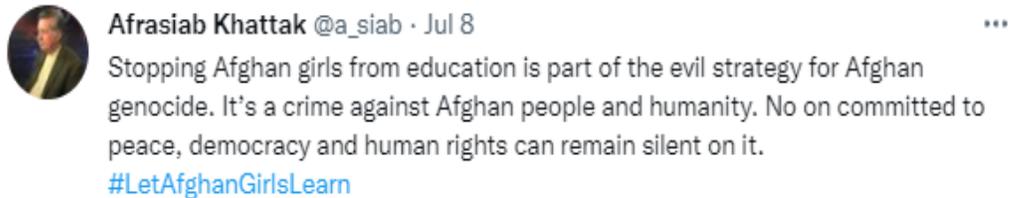
Protesters say they are helpless, cannot return to homeland; CDA to seek local admin, police's help to get area vacated.

The twitter community was concerned about a headline used by daily *Dawn* signifying Afghan refugees as a burden on F-6 children's park by converting it into a 'tent village'. Many twitter users considered *Dawn* to be ignorant of Afghan refugees and prioritizing a park over their sufferings.³

³ https://twitter.com/Khushal_Khattak/status/1548927353744678912?s=20&t=DWJkNytZTLua55Vs_72ABw

3.2 Education and women rights

Since the takeover of Kabul, the Taliban have been unable to take substantial initiatives for ensuring education for Afghan women. Several human rights activists used social media to spread awareness and raise voice against the women rights violation in Afghanistan.



The tweets urged the international community to advocate for the right of education irrespective of gender in Afghanistan. Similarly, in solidarity with Afghan women twitter trends such as 'Let Afghan Girls Learn' and 'Stop Oppressing Afghan women' were seen to be surfaced in Pakistan.⁴



3.3 Press freedom and journalism

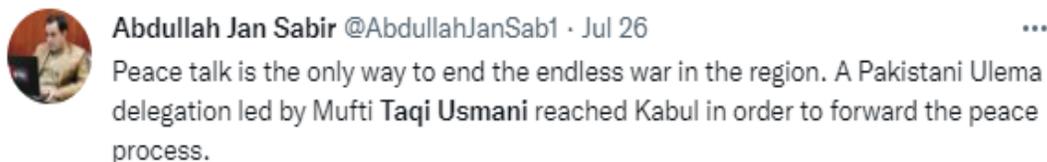


⁴ https://twitter.com/a_siab/status/1545284328300711936?s=20&t=DWJkNytZTLua55Vs_72ABw
<https://twitter.com/mjdawar/status/1543275464717832192?s=20&t=SOIF1e80ZSKdnBRFH7aXpg>

Many on social media noted that the Afghan Taliban were continuously involved in the violation of freedom of expression and speech. The abductions and assassinations of journalists, who were critical of the Taliban policies were reported and criticised by the twitter users. For one, a female Afghan journalist, Salgai Ihsas, was beaten by armed men in Nangarhar province.⁵ Similarly, when an Australian journalist, Lynne O'Donnell, shared her experience with Afghan Taliban and how she was coerced to tweet an apology, the twitter became rife with tweets from Pakistan in her support.



3.4 Clerics' delegation



[#Pakistan](#) [#Afghanistan](#) [#TTP](#)

The visit of an ulema delegation, headed by Mufti Taqi Usmani, to Kabul largely received appreciation from Pakistan's social media users. The twitter users were optimist that the ulema delegation would likely play a significant role in establishing peace in Afghanistan.⁷

⁵ <https://twitter.com/JournalistAnees/status/1550528469947547648?s=20&t=SOIF1e80ZSKdnBRFH7aXpg>

⁶ <https://twitter.com/RifatOrakzai/status/1550072839079731205?s=20&t=SOIF1e80ZSKdnBRFH7aXpg>

⁷ <https://twitter.com/AbdullahJanSab1/status/1551851003946958848?s=20&t=Osi97yFQXHYHUYr7JHrxkA>

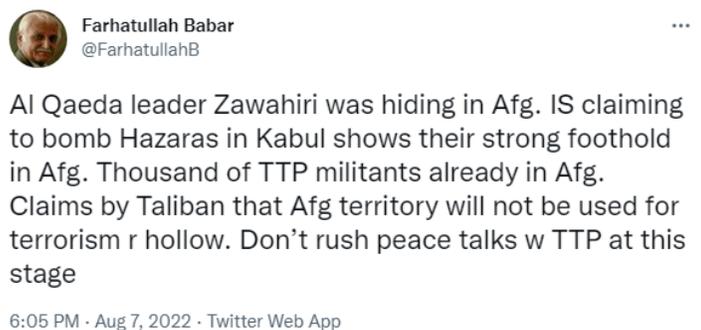
Despite the support from the twitter community, few were skeptical of initiative. They raised their concerns if the meeting will discuss about women education and human rights, altogether.



Moreover, several twitter users appeared dissatisfied with the Afghan Taliban and *ulema* meeting. They considered it as the involvement of Pakistan state in establishing Taliban in Afghanistan.



3.5 The death of Ayman al-Zawahiri



On August 2, 2022, the US President Joe Biden announced that the US had assassinated Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul on July 31. The news started debates on

⁸ https://twitter.com/fariddd_19/status/1551726556971671553?s=20&t=Osi97yFOXHUYr7JHrxkA

⁹ https://twitter.com/Zoubair_S/status/1551646472277561347?s=20&t=Osi97yFOXHUYr7JHrxkA

social media some accusing the Afghan Taliban for violating the Doha Agreement by providing safe heavens to the leader of Al-Qaeda. Similarly, former Senator Farhatullah Babar tweeted that keeping in view the prevalent situation Pakistan needed to revisit its peace talk policy with TTP, as Afghan Taliban's claim that Afghanistan will not be used for terrorism appears to be null and void.¹⁰

3.6 Key trends

#BanTaliban

When the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was celebrating its first anniversary on August 15, some social media activists initiated a twitter trend against the Taliban government. The trend 'BanTaliban' directly questioned the legitimacy and criticised injustices of the Taliban government.

#SanctionPakistan

At the same time when the #BanTaliban twitter trend was making rounds on twitter, another trend, 'Sanction Pakistan' surfaced on twitter. In August, a former Canadian diplomat, Chris Alexander, tweeted that Pakistan needed to be sanctioned for representing and supporting Taliban.



Sanctions against the Taliban embolden Pakistan & punish Afghanistan. Sanctions against Pakistan will end the war.

#SanctionPakistan

His #SanctionPakistan tweet on August 7, attracted a torrent of reactionary comments from Pakistanis, ranging from respectful ones to the opposite.

¹⁰ https://twitter.com/FarhatullahB/status/1556265215464980481?s=20&t=OQtB_NydBWQ2J3uQkVz3ew

ANNEX-1

MONITORING OF POSITIONS AND ACTIONS [FROM PAKISTAN]

1. Government and Officials

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
July	1	Daily Jung (URDU)	Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar called for an easing of Western sanctions against Afghanistan under the Taliban government, saying the basic functioning of the Afghan economy must not be endangered.
July	4	The Express Tribune	An anonymous government official shared that, at least one dozen countries, including Pakistan, were on the verge of recognizing the Afghan Taliban government in March but withheld their decision following the failure of Kabul's de facto rulers to fulfil the promises made with the international community.
July	7	The Express Tribune	The Parliamentary Committee on national security unanimously agreed to continue talks with Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). All the politicians attending the meeting agreed on having a dialogue with the banned outfit. All the proceedings will be supervised by the Parliament.
July	19	Daily Express (URDU)	Pakistan's envoy to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan urged the international community to extend its support through enhanced engagement with the Afghan interim government to avert the looming threat of economic collapse, compounded with large-scale hunger and squalor.
July	23	Daily Express (URDU)	The Foreign Minister Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that Pakistan stood in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan currently suffering from natural

Month	Date	Source	Detail
			calamities like floods and earthquakes. He further added that the Government of Pakistan had sent multiple emergency relief consignments to Afghanistan. He also urged the international community to step up relief efforts to help affectees in Afghanistan.
July	23	The Express Tribune	Foreign Office spokesperson Asim Iftikhar told that Pakistan would recognize the Afghan Taliban government through a regional and consensual approach, rather than taking a solo flight on the matter as Islamabad did during the first Taliban government in Kabul in the 1990s.
July	23	The Express Tribune	Afghan Consul General in Peshawar Hafiz Mohibullah Shakir regretted that a well-oiled propaganda machine of previous regimes had indoctrinated the Afghan masses against Pakistan and injected hostility into the minds of the young populace of the country. Nonetheless, he hoped that with meetings being held and efforts on political, trade, and diplomatic levels underway, the negative mindset will soon change.
July	26	The Nation	President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi stated that Pakistan wants peace and development in Afghanistan, and it cannot happen without the development of their own human resource.
July	26	Daily Jung (URDU)	The main reason for the depreciation of Pakistani rupee is that Pakistani foreign exchange reserves are being used for all imports of Afghanistan, and this additional burden of around \$ 2 billion per month is also increasing pressure on the rupee, and the value of the rupee is decreasing. Malik Bostan, chairman of the Pakistan Currency Dealers Association, disclosed this while talking to Jang.
August	10	Dawn	Pakistan's special representative for Afghanistan Mohammad Sadiq said that the Afghan Taliban had proven to be helpful in Pakistan's talks with TTP, which he claimed were at a nascent stage.

Month	Date	Source	Detail
August	14	Ariana News	Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Pakistan's ambassador to Kabul, said Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan is very good. "In the past year, there were many problems for Afghanistan, but Pakistan helped and cooperated with Afghanistan, and these cooperations were in the areas of evacuation, humanitarian aid, and creating facilities at the borders," he held.
August	20	The Express Tribune	Pakistan urged the US to release Afghan assets after reports that Washington suspended talks with the interim Afghan government on the un-freezing of funds in the wake of the recent killing of al Qaeda chief Aymen al Zawahiri.
August	20	The Express Tribune	Foreign Office spokesperson Asim Iftikhar said that no strings should be attached to the release of Afghan assets. He noted that Pakistan welcomed the initial steps taken by the US administration and would continue to encourage such steps in the future.
August	29	The News International	Pakistan called the accusations made by Afghanistan's acting Defence Minister Mulla Mohammad Yaqoob "conjectural allegations" and said the statement was "highly regrettable" and defied the "norms of responsible diplomatic conduct".
August	31	Daily Jung (URDU)	Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Munir Akram told the UN Security Council called for sustained engagement with the Taliban government, not by isolating it, to advance the international community's objectives in Afghanistan with respect to human rights, political inclusivity, and counter-terrorism.
September	5	Dawn	Officials familiar with the ongoing talk with defunct TTP said that negotiations to sue for peace with the TTP to end nearly two decades of conflict in the tribal districts bordering Afghanistan have been on hold since the last delegation, comprising largely of tribal notables, held a round of talks towards the end of July.
September	13	Dawn	In response to the recent exchange of firing on the Pak-Afghan border, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto

Month	Date	Source	Detail
			Zardari condemned the attack and demanded that the Afghan government should stop terrorists from carrying out operations from its border.
September	14	Daily AAJ (URDU)	Afghan Consul General in Peshawar Hafiz Mohibullah Shakir, speaking in a degree distribution ceremony held at the University of Peshawar, stated that Pakistan and Afghanistan are tied in strong linkages of history, religion, culture, and trade. This relationship has been strengthened in the last four decades, he further added.
September	16	Daily Mashriq (URDU)	Special Assistant for Information to Chief Minister KP, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif stated that, so far no decision had been made to end negotiations with TTP.
September	16	Daily Jung (URDU)	Bilal Karimi, deputy spokesman for the Taliban's government said that by understanding, no military installations can be built near the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. But Pakistani forces tried to build a post. Some people approached them to talk and discuss the matter, when suddenly the Pakistani forces opened fire, said Karimi.
September	16	The Nation	"Pakistan, as well as the international community, have sufficient reasons to believe that there are still pockets of ungoverned spaces in Afghanistan that have been used by terrorist groups as safe havens," Foreign Office spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmed said at a weekly news briefing.
September	16	The Nation	Foreign Office spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmed urged the Afghan interim authorities to take concrete and verifiable actions to deliver on the assurances they have given to the international community that they will not allow anyone to use Afghan soil against any country.
September	23	The Express Tribune	Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that along with the rest of the international community, Pakistan has not officially recognized the government in Afghanistan.

Actions Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
June	29	Dawn	The government decided to relax the visa policy for bilateral trade with neighboring Afghanistan and hoped the decision will help improve economies of the two countries.
July	3	Daily Mashriq (Urdu)	The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has exempted customs duty on the import of nine different types of items including coal, and spices from Afghanistan.
July	6	The Nation	Pakistan has allowed import of goods of Afghan origin against Pak Rupee and without the requirement of Electronic Import Form (EIF) forms for a period of one year.
July	18	The Nation	Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to enhance the economic and trade ties and work on increasing economic integration.
July	21	Daily Dunya (URDU)	Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to launch a luxury bus service between the two countries by the end of the next month and increase the operational timings at all crossing points, Torkham, Kharlachi, Ghulam Khan and Chaman-Spin Boldak.
July	23	Daily Express (URDU)	Pakistan dispatches the third consignment of 10.6 tonnes which consisted of winter clothing items, tents, blankets, tarpaulin and food items such as flour, ghee/cooking oil, and sugar to support the people of Afghanistan in calamity-hit areas.
July	26	The Nation	President Dr Arif Alvi has reiterated Pakistan's offer to provide virtual and online education facilities to the students of Afghanistan through Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and the Virtual University of Pakistan (VUP). The offer was made when the Afghan minister of Education had visited the president and said that higher education was in dire straits in Afghanistan
July	29	The Express Tribune	Pakistan and Afghanistan are likely to agree on the development of a multimodal air-to-road corridor for

Month	Date	Source	Detail
			Afghan transit trade in a bid to boost trade between the two countries.
July	31	Daily AAJ (URDU)	The Pak-Afghan authorities reopened the Bab-e-Dosti gate for pedestrians from both sides.
August	12	Ariana News	A team of Pakistani ophthalmologists examined a total of 3,764 Afghan patients at a four-day free eye clinic at Noor Hospital in Kabul. The free clinic was organized by an 11-member team of Pakistani doctors in collaboration with the Pak-Afghan Cooperation Forum, Al Khidmat Foundation, and Afghan Ministry of Public Health.
August	19	The Express Tribune	Deputy Commissioner Chaman Abdul Hameed Zahri handed over 25 tons of wheat to the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan Waheedullah, on behalf of the government of Pakistan.
August	23	Dawn	Pakistan allowed six months of reciprocal visas to transporters to facilitate cross-border movement of goods.
September	9	Dawn	Hundreds of trucks and containers loaded with fresh and dry fruits have begun returning to Kabul from the Torkham border after Pakistan imposed additional regulatory duty on the imported foodstuff.
September	15	Daily AAJ (Urdu)	Pakistan had reportedly written a letter to the Afghan authorities regarding the presence of Maulana Masood Azhar. However, Afghanistan's Taliban government denied reports about the presence of Masood Azhar in the war-torn country, claiming that such terrorist organizations "can operate" on Pakistan's soil – and even under "official patronage."
September	16	The News International	Pakistan raised the issues of attacks from across the Afghan border and violence committed by Afghan fans during the Pakistan-Afghanistan cricket match in the UAE with the Afghan government.

Visits and Meetings

Month	Date	Source	Detail
July	18	Dawn	A Pakistani delegation is paying a 3-day (July 18-20) visit to Kabul for negotiations with the interim Afghan government for resolution of trade, transit and transportation issues facing the two sides, including night-time operations of border facilities for coal imports.
July	26	Dawn	Senior officials from Pakistan and Afghanistan met in Ghulam Khan area of North Waziristan tribal district to discuss steps to facilitate smooth cross-border movement and trade activity between the two countries.
July	28	Daily AAJ (URDU)	A flagship meeting between customs officials of Pakistan and Afghanistan was held at Pak-Afghan border Torkham to boost bilateral trade. Officials of the customs department of both countries committed to facilitating traders and resolving other issues on priority basis.
July	29	The Express Tribune	Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari met Acting Afghanistan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Tashkent in the first high-level contact between the two neighboring countries since the change of government in Islamabad.
July	30	The News International	A delegation of 30 Afghan faculty members and university administrators visited Higher Education Commission (HEC) Secretariat and called on the Acting Chairperson/Executive Director of HEC Dr. Shaista Sohail and top management of HEC.

Political Parties

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
August	1	Daily AAJ (Urdu)	Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao stated that there are serious complaints from

Month	Date	Source	Detail
			the Afghan Nationals of rude behavior, inordinate delays, and mismanagement while crossing over to and fro at both Torkham and Chaman borders. The government's assurance of having streamlined and facilitated the process needs to be assessed again. People-to-people relationship between the two countries is important as this has already given rise to misgivings in Kabul. It would be important for the Pakistan government to look into this issue and jointly take measures for the smooth functioning at the crossings.

Visits and Meetings

Month	Date	Source	Detail
August	1	Daily AAJ (Urdu)	A group of Afghan refugees under the leadership of Maulvi Muhammad Saeed Hashmi met with the Chairman of Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao in Peshawar. They discussed various issues faced by Afghan refugees.

Religious Organizations

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
July	30	The News International	Maulana Tayyab, who was part of the delegation to Kabul under the leadership of Mufti Taqi Usmani, told The News that their visit was quite fruitful, saying they discussed almost all-important issues with the Afghan Taliban as well as the Pakistani Taliban.

Action Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
August	22	Dawn	On the call of local ulema, a large number of people, mostly clerics and seminary students, held a demonstration in Bannu city to press the local administration to close down the city's family park.

Visits and Meetings

Month	Date	Source	Detail
July	28	Daily AAJ (URDU)	A delegation of Pakistani religious scholars led by Mohammad Taqi Usmani, one of the religious leaders of Pakistan, travelled to Kabul for a three-day trip and met the Taliban senior members, including acting prime minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, acting interior minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, the education minister, and other Taliban members that discussed various issues related to the girls' education and engaging the Afghan people in the development of their country.

Militant Organizations

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
June	30	YouTube	TTP leader Noor Wali Mehsud stated that the Afghan Taliban are not just facilitators or a host, they are mediators in the ongoing peace talks.
July	1	The Express Tribune	In an interview uploaded to popular video-sharing website YouTube, the TTP chief Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud sought to dismiss the notion that the Afghan Taliban had persuaded Pakistan to restart negotiations, quoted by an English newspaper.
August	4	Daily Mashriq (URDU)	Leaders of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan have assured a Pakistani delegation of religious scholars that the indefinite ceasefire will remain in force till the two sides reach an agreement to end the nearly two decades of militancy in the tribal region, bordering Afghanistan.
August	29	Eurasia	The August 15 message by ISKP promises those who fight and die for the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), as the terror group's Afghanistan branch calls itself, will be rewarded in the afterlife. "Emigration to Khorasan is open," declared the Telegram post. The

Month	Date	Source	Detail
			"caliphate in Khorasan" is "expanding and growing by the grace of God."
August	21	The News International	The Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan has announced its decision to maintain the ceasefire in Pakistan despite the violent death of its leader, Abdul Wali alias Omar Khalid Khorasani.
August	28	Twitter	Al-Qaeda's "General Command" released the 7th issue, dated as July 2022, of its flagship magazine One Ummah. The magazine kept the status of Zawahiri's death vague, as no phrase follows his name to indicate he's alive or dead. It neither used the phrase "May Allah protect him"-used for a living- nor "May Allah has mercy on him"-is used for the dead.
September	16	Daily Mashriq (URDU)	Banned Tehreek-e-Taliban has announced to carry out more attacks in different areas of Swat.

Action Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
August	21	The News International	After the death of Abdul Wali alias Omar Khalid Khorasani, a founding member of the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and the main TTP leader for the negotiating team from Momand, along with his colleagues in Afghanistan, his group is putting pressure on the central organization to annul the ceasefire agreement.
September	5	Daily Ummat (Urdu)	TTP has announced the end of the "indefinite ceasefire", saying that the Pakistani government had not implemented the decisions that were agreed upon.

Military Leadership and ISPR

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
August	5	Daily Dunya (URDU)	Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) spokesperson Major General Babar Iftikhar ruled out any chance that Pakistan's soil has been used in the killing of Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Afghanistan.
August	14	Dawn	Against the backdrop of the militants' presence in the Swat area, the ISPR stated that a "misperception about the alleged presence of a large number of proscribed organization TTP's armed members in Swat Valley has been created on social media. After confirmation on the ground, these reports have been found as grossly exaggerated and misleading". It further cleared that "apparently, these individuals sneaked in from Afghanistan to resettle in their native areas. A close watch is being maintained on their limited presence and movement in mountains".
September	13	Dawn	In the backdrop of border clashes, the military's media wing said it strongly condemned the "use of Afghan soil by terrorists for activities against Pakistan", adding that it expected the Afghan government not to "allow the conduct of such activities in the future".
September	14	The Nation	In a statement, ISPR said that terrorists from inside Afghanistan, across the international border, opened fire on Pakistani troops, who responded in a befitting manner.

Action Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
August	8	Dawn	Peshawar corps commander Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed has been transferred to Bahawalpur corps commander. His appointment had come at a very crucial time when both external and internal security challenges seemed to be growing.

Month	Date	Source	Detail
September	14	The Nation	Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) told that terrorists from inside Afghanistan, across the international border, opened fire on Pakistani troops, who responded in a befitting manner.

Civil Society & Others

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
August	23	Dawn	In response to the grant of reciprocal visas to traders, Zahidullah Shinwari, the former president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that it was 'wishful thinking on part of the government that the relaxation could either expedite bilateral trade or could bring about positive changes in the existing trading relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
September	9	Dawn	Resenting the 'unilateral' imposition of 49 percent regulatory duty on dry and fresh fruits, Zahidullah Shinwari, a former president of Sarhad Chambers of Commerce and Industry, feared that if the regulatory duty was not withdrawn forthwith, Afghanistan, too, would impose additional and inflated duties on a number of Pakistani export items, especially fresh fruits, in the coming winter.
September	9	Dawn	Haji Jabir, an office-bearer of the Khyber Chamber of Commerce, contended that the imposition of regulatory duty was in contravention of the repeated official pledges about an increase in the country's trade with Afghanistan. The chamber leader said such 'ill-conceived' trade policies would only benefit Afghanistan's neighbours, which didn't waste any opportunity to capture the Afghan market.

Action Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
August	3	Daily Mashriq (Urdu)	A protest sit-in was held by traders and activists of various political parties against the closure of trade through the Pak-Afghan border at Angoor Adda. The protesters staged a rally at the gate of Angoor Adda border.
August	28	Dawn	Speakers at a seminar, organized by the World Peace Jirga Programme (WPJP), highlighted the sufferings of Afghan refugees living in inhospitable conditions in the country for the last four months.
September	7	The Express Tribune	A Pak-Afghan youth dialogue was held at the University of Peshawar where representatives from both the neighbouring countries made detailed recommendations for broader Pak-Afghan cooperation.
September	10	The Express Tribune	At a one-day conference titled "Future Prospects for Afghanistan and the Region", organised by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) in Islamabad, speakers say "Taliban must counter the terrorism otherwise, the frustration in the region including within Afghanistan and its immediate neighbours would accentuate further, as the region has already expressed its uneasiness about militant activities there."

Visits and Meetings

Month	Date	Source	Detail
July	19	Dawn	A meeting of the independent human rights commissions and civil society demanded that the government come up with a clear policy on Afghan immigrants, including their status and make sure that all Afghans were repatriated respectfully and their stay in Pakistan be governed under the UN regulations.

Month	Date	Source	Detail
August	25	The Express Tribune	A meeting of the stakeholders of the Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) demanded regional business connectivity.

Afghan Refugees Diaspora

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
July	19	The News International	Pakistan's envoy to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan said Pakistan had no restrictive visa regime. "Pakistan does not charge any visa fee for the Afghan visa seekers, except a processing fee of only \$8.18, thus helping Afghans to visit Pakistan for education, health, and business purposes," he added.
July	26	Dawn	According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report, some 250,000 Afghans had entered Pakistan since Aug 2021.
July	26	Dawn	According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report, 1.5 million Afghans chose to stay back in Pakistan after US pull-out

Action Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
July	6	Dawn	Afghan refugees shelter themselves in tents set up in a park in F.6. Around 450 Afghan families have been residing here for the last few months and have staged protests demanding legal status and passage to Europe.
July	9	The Nation	As many as 188 Afghan families have willingly returned to their country since March 2022, when the repatriation began via Torkham border, UNHCR and Afghan Commissionerate officials informed.
July	18	Dawn	Nearly 700 Afghan refugees, most of them women and children, mostly belonging to the Hazara community, who fled their country following the takeover of Kabul

Month	Date	Source	Detail
			by the Taliban have taken over a children's park in the F-6's newly renovated children's park of Islamabad and are living there after pitching tents.
August	2	Daily Mashriq (Urdu)	UNHCR increased the amount to 375 USD for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan Refugees from Pakistan.
August	7	Dawn	A petition has been filed with the Islamabad High Court (IHC), seeking the shifting of Afghan immigrants from the greenbelts of F-6 to refugee camps.
August	9	Business Recorder	The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has asked the Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior and Capital Development Authority to get the green belt of Sector F-6, Islamabad cleared by removing Afghan national protesting against the USA for a claim which cannot be granted under the Constitution of Pakistan.
August	14	The Express Tribune	A large number of homeless Afghans staged a protest outside the National Press club where they have been living in tents since the Taliban captured Afghanistan's capital Kabul on August 15 last year.
September	3	The Nation	A cell has been established by the local Shia organization in Islamabad to accommodate the Afghan Shia Hazaras and, according to the sources, around 30 Afghan families have already been accommodated by this cell in various locations of the twin cities including Jhangi Syedaan and Barakahu in Islamabad, and Khayaban-e-Sir Syed in Rawalpindi.
September	8	The News International	Federal Police have registered 15,835 Afghan citizens in Islamabad through biometric, who do not have any legal documents. The purpose of registering these Afghans through modern scientific data is part of the campaign to control crime and reduce the crime rate in the federal capital.

Media Commentary

Month	Date	Source	Author/Editor	Detail
July	2	The Express Tribune	Mohsin Saleem Ullah	The sitting government of Pakistan needs to rethink the ongoing interdict on the issuance of refugee visas instead of transit visas or short-term visit visas for Afghans. Desks should be set up at the border for on-arrival visas to our neighbors to support them in their time of need and to also be aware of all those who always cross our borders.
July	3	The News International	Dr. Saira Kazmi	There is a need for urgent interference from the international community to come together and become a strong voice for Afghanistan in taking it out of the deteriorating situation.
July	3	The Express Tribune	Opinion	Failure to extend economic support at this critical juncture in Afghanistan will further weaken the governance structure and erode the people's trust in state institutions. If this happens, there is a very real danger that the country will turn into a breeding ground for terrorist organizations.
July	3	The News International	Opinion	The international community is required to resolve the deteriorating situation of Afghanistan as internal issues should be left to Afghans as even after USSR and US interventions, they also weren't able to change their ideology.
July	5	Dawn	Editorial	The only way out of the depressing situation in Taliban-led Afghanistan is maybe for Muslim countries to continue to engage with the Taliban and impress upon them the long-term damage they are inflicting on their nation by trampling on the rights of half its population i.e. Afghan women.

Month	Date	Source	Author/Editor	Detail
July	22	Dawn	Iftikhar A. Khan	According to the report titled "Afghanistan as Seen from Pakistan IV" released by Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), Pakistan should look upon Afghanistan as a sovereign country that has the freedom to develop ties with other countries. It must also stop relying on the Taliban regime in power and should engage with other political and ethnic groups of Afghanistan, in line with its policy to build trust and strengthen relations with Afghans, it added.
July	23	Dawn	Pervez Hoodbhoy	An article published in an English newspaper stated that Pakistan's wise men worked hard to achieve a strategic depth and install an Afghan government of their choosing. They succeeded but one year later that depth belongs to TTP.
July	24	The News International	Syed Fakhar Kakakhel	There is an impression of a deadlock between the government of Pakistan and the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) on the issue of the integration of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) but insiders believe that an atmosphere of understanding is being established by the Afghan government on this issue as well. The Ministry of Interior in Kabul is in constant contact with the central leadership of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan.
July	25	Daily Jang (URDU)	Editorial	Leading Urdu newspaper's editorial welcome, the Coal import agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan and appreciated that Pakistan has signed it with the brotherly Muslim country and nearest neighbor Afghanistan, which will also benefit the war-ravaged neighbor economically.

Month	Date	Source	Author/Editor	Detail
July	25	The Express Tribune	Editorial	An English newspaper asserted that efforts like Dosti Bus Service will indeed go a long way in helping people in need and strengthening the alliance between the two countries Pakistan and Afghanistan, which in turn can also help them thwart internal and external threats.
July	27	The Nation	Editorial	The government of Pakistan has been playing an integral role by facilitating engagement between global actors and the Taliban regime so that a mutual understanding can be created. This example must be followed, and greater efforts must be made to encourage peace by others as well in recognition of the fact that it is civilians who suffer the most.
July	27	The Express Tribune	Editorial	An English daily quoted that the recent delegation of ulema who visited Kabul are appealing to the Afghan Taliban to assist in talks. Moreover, recent reports suggest that the rulers of Afghanistan have not really gone beyond offering their good offices.
July	28	Daily Dunya (URDU)	Muhammad Izhaar ul Haq	An Urdu analysis questioned what the priorities of the Afghan government are. Do they revolve around the development and prosperity of Afghan people or something else? Furthermore, it highlights that this is the responsibility of the Afghan government to solve the issues of the Afghan people. Pakistan's government's responsibility is to resolve issues of the Pakistani people. But the Afghan government is focusing on the Afghan people, and Pakistan's government is also focusing on the

Month	Date	Source	Author/Editor	Detail
				Afghan people then where do the Pakistani people should go?
July	29	Dawn	Safiya Aftab	The recent protests by Afghan migrants in Islamabad must be taken notice of, and a clear policy enacted.
July	30	The News International	Dr Ameena Tanvir	A South Asian Research Analyst stated that the abandonment of Afghanistan will result in civil war, accelerating the growth of transnational terrorist threats from Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP).
July	30	The News International	Abu Hurairah	Despite Afghanistan's substantial reliance on trade with and via Pakistan, our commerce with Afghanistan had increased to almost \$3 billion but has subsequently decreased.
July	30	The Express Tribune	Farrukh Khan Pitafi	Quoting previous countless failed agreements with banned outfit TTP i.e., Shakai, Sararogha, Swat, an Islamabad-based TV journalist stressed that every time you cut a deal, TTP regrouped and returned with a vengeance. Thus, there should be no new agreement with the TTP.
August	4	The Express Tribune	Inam ul Haque	Taliban ascent to power owing to Pakistan's overt/covert backing, and our continuing support to IEA constitutes Pakistan's 'positive leverage'. This leverage should continue to be used in steering IEA towards mutually beneficial policies and outcomes.
August	7	Dawn	Editorial	In response to Al Qaeda leader Zawahiri's killing in Kabul, a leading English newspaper stated in an editorial that the Taliban craves international recognition; legitimacy; foreign trade, and investment. Whereas it will be impossible

Month	Date	Source	Author/Editor	Detail
				to achieve if they continue to harbor terrorists.
August	8	The Express Tribune	Kamran Yousaf	The killing of Zawahiri will have ramifications for the region, particularly for Pakistan. Since the Taliban returned to power, Islamabad has been one of the strongest advocates of the Taliban regime getting international legitimacy.
August	11	The News International	Zunaira Inam Khan	The Taliban themselves seem to be stuck in a difficult position. If they continue with this policy of absolutist consolidation, they will face protests and backlash internationally. However, if they allow leniency, the extremist factions from within them might abandon their support and would be tempted to join hardliners such as ISIS-K.
August	11	The Express Tribune	Inam ul Haque	ISIS plus or minus the TTP hardliners will have to be dealt with by both countries Afghanistan and Pakistan irrespective, whether now or in near future.
August	11	Dawn	Opinion	Leading English newspaper asserted that talking to the militants — especially going the extra mile to accommodate them — is a bad idea. The desire for peace from the other side is lukewarm at best, and the state must have a strategy ready to counter the terrorists if they decide to ditch talks and again take up the gun.
August	12	The Nation	Shafqat Ali	Pakistan wants to work with all countries working for peace in Afghanistan for its own sake.
August	13	The Express Tribune	Editorial	On the increased sanctions by the international community leading English newspaper's editorial is of the view that while the international powers may have legitimate concerns regarding the

Month	Date	Source	Author/Editor	Detail
				treatment of women, minorities, and regime opponents under the Taliban rule, including deprivation of their human rights, we believe that they are not doing anything to empower these oppressed groups by letting them starve and suffer disease in the face of these pseudo-sanctions.
August	15	The Express Tribune	Kamran Yousaf	A senior foreign affairs correspondent, on the anniversary of the Taliban takeover, stated in an English newspaper that except for the ceasefire, no developments on the matter of TTP clearly show that the return of the Afghan Taliban has yet to benefit Pakistan.
August	15	Dawn	Editorial	On the anniversary of the Taliban takeover leading English newspaper asserts that to prevent Afghanistan's collapse into renewed anarchy, the world needs to engage with the Taliban, with engagement one day leading to recognition if Afghanistan's rulers and the international community can agree on a middle path.
August	17	The Nation	Sajjad Shaukat	On the matter of the killing of Zawahiri-Al-Qaeda Chief- in response to speculations about using Pakistan's soil experts stated that it would be too naïve to scapegoat the Pakistan border-sharing state with Afghanistan and save one's skin. Let's hold our horses till the truth is established in Al-Zawahiri's case.
August	18	The Nation	Editorial	The Taliban have not followed up in the least on their promise of a better record on women's rights than their previous stint neither from the security angle too i.e., they have not proved a counter to

Month	Date	Source	Author/Editor	Detail
				TTP; moreover sheltering of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri was a spectacularly bad diplomatic debacle.
August	18	Dawn	Editorial	On the matter of the US freezing the remaining 3.5 billion dollars of Afghan assets, a leading English newspaper asserted that by no means should America block these desperately needed funds.
August	21	Daily AAJ (URDU)	Zia ul Haq Saehadi	Despite several initiatives by the Pakistan government like barter trade, soft visa policies, etc., with the neighboring war-ravaged country, there is no improvement in bilateral trade.
August	24	The Nation	Opinion	According to an opinion piece published in English daily, Pakistan and the US must, stay engaged, and persuade the Taliban to honor their commitments to an inclusive government, women's rights, and counterterrorism.
September	4	The Express Tribune	Naveed Hussain	Against the backdrop of the interim Afghan's defence minister allegation on Pakistan of enabling US drone strike, analyst cautioned that it would be unwise for Mullah Yaqoob to choose political expediency over pragmatic judgment and undermine relations with Pakistan at a time when their globally isolated and cash-strapped regime badly needs more friends to stave off economic instability and win international recognition.
September	5	The News International	Jan Achakzai	The Taliban are, nevertheless, indirectly putting pressure on Pakistan using two levers i.e., they are warming to India and still hosting TTP fighters.
September	5	Dawn	Iftikhar A. Khan	Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan have been facing new challenges over the

Month	Date	Source	Author/Editor	Detail
				last year since the Taliban took over Kabul and Islamabad needs to adopt a regional approach while framing any policy towards the landlocked country.
September	14	Dawn	Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry	In the backdrop of violence committed by Afghan fans during a Pak-Afghan match, analysts are of the view that the majority of Afghans are bitter about Pakistan.

PIPS Monitors on Pakistan's Afghan Perspective

Given the fast-evolving situation in Afghanistan and its multifaceted impact on Pakistan, Pak Institute for Peace Studies has taken an initiative of monitoring, documenting, and analysing the opinions of different segments of Pakistani society and state institutions on the emerging Afghan situation. Under the Initiative, the institute has planned to prepare and publish quarterly reports, and the present one is the fifth of the series, covering the period from July to September 2022. This series of 'monitoring and analysis reports' constitutes one of the key components of a PIPS programme that aims at strengthening Pakistan's support for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. The reports are expected to improved knowledge-base and awareness of key stakeholders on Pakistan's Afghan perspective by demonstrating an overall understanding and critical review of a variety of viewpoints and positions, mainly around emerging events and developments in Afghanistan and their implications for Pakistan and the region.

About PIPS

Established in 2005, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) is an Islamabad-based research and advocacy organisation. It offers a range of services through a combination of independent research and analysis, innovative academic programmes, and hands-on training and support that serve the following basic themes: Conflict analysis and peacebuilding; dialogue; prevent/counter violent extremism (P/CVE); internal and regional security; and media for peace and democracy. It also conducts frequent structured dialogues, focus group discussions, and national and international seminars to understand the issues listed earlier and strengthen partnerships. The outcomes of PIPS research and planned events have frequently and extensively been reported on media that adds to its credibility as an active, effective and well networked civil society organizations. Many of PIPS policy reports and recommendations have been credited and included in the state policy documents and discourses mainly those on security and CVE.



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