



PERSPECTIVES FROM PAKISTAN ON AFGHAN PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANP	Awami National Party
ISPR	Inter-Services Public Relations
COAS	Chief of Army Staff
US	United States
AQIS	Al-Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent
TTP	Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan
NSC	National Security Council
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
APC	All Parties Conference
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
IBO	Intelligence-Based Urban Operations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN	United States
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
UK	United Kingdom
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria,
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement
G7	Group of Seven
IEA	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
TAPI	Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Gas Pipeline
ACCI	Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CPEC	China–Pakistan Economic Corridor

ISKP	Islamic State – Khorasan Province
IOM	International Organization for Migration
AIOU	Allama Iqbal Open University
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UAE	United Arab Emirates
WFP	World Food Programme
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PAJCCI	Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
ICAI	Independent Commission for Aid Impact

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM PAKISTAN ON EMERGING AFGHAN SITUATION AND DEVELOPMENTS

Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) has undertaken an in-house monitoring and research exercise with the aim of comprehensively mapping, documenting, and analyzing the diverse opinions of various segments of Pakistani society and state institutions on Afghanistan's political, social, and security situations, and their perceived impact on Pakistan. This exercise is a critical endeavor in fostering a deeper understanding of the complex and dynamic regional geopolitical machinations that have significant implications for Pakistan's security and stability. Through this initiative, PIPS seeks to provide valuable insights into the perceptions of diverse stakeholders on issues pertaining to Afghanistan and to inform evidence-based policymaking.

The following pages provide a summary of such responses from Pakistan recorded during the period of April to May 2023.

The government

- The Foreign Minister of the Afghan Taliban interim government, Amir Khan Muttaqi, paid a visit to Islamabad to attend the 5th China-Pakistan-Afghanistan Trilateral Dialogue, which marked his second visit to Pakistan since the fall of Kabul. During his visit, he held meetings with various high-level officials to discuss bilateral relations and regional security issues.
- Pakistan's envoy to Kabul, who had survived an assassination attempt by the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-K) in December last year, has resumed his office after a gap of four months.
- In the face of the Afghan Taliban's reluctance to take action against militants involved in cross-border terrorism, Pakistan has taken a firm stance. The country's Defense Minister, Khawaja Asif, issued a warning to the Afghan Taliban stating that if the de facto rulers in Kabul are unable to rein in anti-Pakistan militants, Islamabad will take matters into its own hands and strike terrorist hideouts inside Afghanistan.
- Amidst the Afghan Taliban's call to resolve Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) issue through negotiations, Pakistan has made it unequivocally clear that it will not engage in talks with any terrorist organization. Islamabad has asserted that it will

not entertain any negotiations with outfits that do not adhere to the country's laws and Constitution.

- During the quarter under review, officials from various ministries of the interim Afghan government visited Pakistan and held meetings with their Pakistani counterparts. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss and explore opportunities for enhancing bilateral relations and to address issues of mutual concern. These visits are indicative of the willingness of both countries to engage in a dialogue and work towards strengthening their ties. The exchange of such visits between officials from Afghanistan and Pakistan is expected to lead to constructive outcomes that benefit both countries.

Political parties

- During his visit to Pakistan, Acting Foreign Minister of the Afghan Taliban's interim government, Amir Khan Muttaqi, held meetings with representatives from various Pakistani political parties, including the head of Jamiat-i-Ulema Islam, Fazlur Rahman, chief of Jamat-i-Islami, Sirajul Haq, PkMAP's Mahmood Khan Achakzai, Aimal Wali Khan of ANP, and others. The political parties welcomed the delegation and expressed their support for a prosperous and stable Afghanistan.
- The Pashtun nationalist party ANP echoed the same criticism against the terrorism resurgence in Pakistan that Taliban interim Foreign Minister Ameer Khan Mutaqi had expressed after a suicide bomber blew himself up in a mosque in Peshawar Police headquarters in January. Sardar Hussein Babak raised a similar question, "Why a suicide bomber from Afghanistan doesn't explode in India, China, Russia, or Punjab (in Pakistan) and only carry out attacks in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan?"

Military leadership and ISPR

- In their first meeting, the newly appointed Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir and Afghan acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi discussed the importance of enhancing cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan to tackle the common challenges of terrorism and extremism in the region. The two officials also talked about issues related to regional security, border management, and formalizing bilateral security mechanisms to improve the current security situation.
- In a clear shift from the policy of the previous regime, Chief of Army Staff Gen. Syed Asim Munir acknowledged that a strategy to engage with terrorists had allowed them to regroup in the tribal areas. Therefore, a three-pronged plan — deter, dialogue, and development — to root out terrorism has been designed after

lawmakers expressed serious concerns over the resurgence of terrorist groups after the US withdrawal from Kabul.

Militant groups

- Leaders of both Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), namely Usama Mahmood and Noor Wali Mehsud, respectively, voiced their opposition to Pakistan's announcement of new military operations against militant groups. While Usama Mahmood expressed his support for TTP, the latter denied having any regional aspirations.
- The TTP, as evident from their publication of the 15th issue of the "Taliban" magazine, responded to the NSC's decision of a military operation against them by vehemently criticizing it and presenting the Afghan Taliban as a group with a model government system.
- The TTP has been using advanced US weapons to target security personnel with a significant degree of success. The recent martyrdom of ISI Brigadier Mustafa Kamal Barki, who played a vital role in countering terrorism and militancy in the Pak-Afghan border regions, is one of the most significant incidents. He was also part of the previous government's negotiations with the TTP.
- TTP expressed its disapproval of a political protest led by a senior Deobandi leader, Maulana Fazal Rehman, in Islamabad. Sarbakaf Mohmand argued that the only way to establish an Islamic system in Pakistan is through armed struggle, similar to that of the Afghan Taliban.

Afghan refugees and diaspora

This quarter observed the active involvement of Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan in various aspects of Afghan affairs. The International Association of Pakistan-Afghanistan Journalists' establishment and distribution of press ID cards to exiled Afghan journalists is a positive step towards supporting their profession and providing them with a platform to voice their opinion. Additionally, the protest by Afghan women in Islamabad showed the Afghan refugees' concerns for their rights and the future of their country.

Media commentary and analyses

Against the backdrop of an uptick in terrorism in the country after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, analysts slammed the political parties for politicizing security affairs and finding solutions to their political battles in the realm of the constitution and political adjustments. They criticized that the All-Parties Conference (APC) which is long-awaited and essentially needed, could not be convened so far because of the self-serving politics of the politicians.

- Some media observers have urged the government to counter the terrorist propaganda effectively.

Chapter 1

PAK-AFGHAN TIES: PAKISTAN'S ROLE IN AFGHAN PEACE

At present Pakistan-Afghanistan relations are marred with frustrations around security and economy. While the TTP factor remains unaddressed, there has been little progress on Pakistan's desired access to Central Asian markets through Afghanistan. Many factors obstruct bilateral relations from improving. For instance, international sanctions on the Afghan Taliban limit Kabul's ability to fully cooperate and engage with Pakistan. Several senior Taliban leaders are under travel restrictions which is a reason that there have been only few visits. For instance, the Afghan foreign minister has visited Pakistan only twice to attend Troika Plus Meeting and trilateral dialogue, both hosted by Pakistan.

However, the Taliban government has managed to expand its diplomatic engagement in the region by penning some economic and infrastructure deals with regional countries. China has gained an important status in Afghanistan as it pursues a policy of development without military footprints.¹ Some analysts view the regional countries' increasing engagement with Taliban as their de facto recognition of the regime.² Pakistan, however, has been relatively unsuccessful in strengthening bilateral ties even though the supposedly friendly regime has been in power for nearly two years now. Political instability and a declining economy have further eroded Pakistan's ability to focus on Afghanistan. Moreover, Pakistan has sent several high-level delegations to Kabul to solve the TTP issue, but no concrete outcome has been achieved yet.

Pakistan has also expressed deep concerns over the cross-border militant activities. In an interview, Defense Minister, Khwaja Asif warned that Pakistan would not hesitate to cross the border and eliminate the TTP threat.³ In response, the Taliban sent a delegation to Islamabad to assure of their willingness to work with Pakistan on the question of security,

¹ "The trilateral approach," *The Express Tribune*, May 8, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2415540/the-trilateral-approach>.

² Dr Moonis Ahmar, "Taliban's legitimacy predicament," *The Express Tribune*, May 9, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2415669/talibans-legitimacy-predicament>.

³ Sarah Zaman, "Pakistan will hit terror hideouts inside Afghanistan, Defense Minister warns kabul," *Voice of America*, April 12, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-will-hit-terror-hideouts-inside-afghanistan-defense-minister-warns-kabul/7047693.html>

but no progress has been made so far. For Pakistan, the challenges have spiked. The TTP is challenging the state's writ while the political parties are polarized over other issues. Similarly, the economy is under stress as Pakistan faces massive external debt obligations. In this situation, Pakistan is desperate to boost its economy including through the access to Central Asian markets via Afghanistan. However, the prospects of economic gains depend on security as there can be no gain in an environment of insecurity and violence.

1.1 The question of recognition

The global community has conditioned any prospect of recognizing the Taliban government with the implementation of the Doha agreement by the latter. Key obligations include establishment of an inclusive government, protection of women's rights including girls' right to education, minority rights, and preventing the militants such as the TTP from using of Afghan territory for their terrorist activities in neighboring countries. So far, Pakistan has chosen not to recognize the Taliban government as it seeks to align its action with that of the international community. Nevertheless, despite the Taliban's slow approach to addressing the TTP problem, Pakistan has actively advocated at different levels to alleviate the suffering of the Afghan populace. Analysts argue that a delicate balancing approach is necessary to consider human rights, diplomatic relations, and economic engagements with the Taliban.⁴

Therefore, there is a need for an in-depth study to map the conflict, identify stakeholders' needs, and chart a way forward for sustainable and fruitful engagement with Afghanistan. This could contribute to the regional stability and improve the lives of Afghan citizens, resulting in regional peace and economic growth from which Pakistan would also benefit.

1.2 Blowback in Pakistan

Overall, since the Taliban takeover of Kabul, incidence of terrorist violence has significantly increased inside Pakistan. A Pak Institute for Peace Studies' report in 2022 had noted that during one year after the Taliban takeover, the number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan increased by 51 percent, as compared to previous corresponding year. However, when counted for the 21 months since the Taliban takeover (August 2021 to April 2023), the number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan has posted a phenomenal increase of 73 percent, as compared to corresponding 21 months before the Taliban takeover. The number of people killed in these attacks has increased by 138 percent.⁵ Apparently, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces have witnessed a marked impact of the

⁴ Salman Javed, "Afghanistan: A delicate balancing act," *The Nation*, May 5, 2023, <https://www.nation.com.pk/05-May-2023/afghanistan-a-delicate-balancing-act>

⁵ Safdar Sial, *Pakistan's Afghan perspective and policy options* (Islamabad: PIPS; 2023).

Afghan situation in terms of terrorist violence, where the number of attacks (during these 21 months) surged by 92 percent and 81 percent, respectively. However, the number of terrorist attacks in Punjab/Islamabad and Sindh has posted a relative decline since the Taliban takeover as compared to corresponding 21 months pre-August 2021.⁶

- ***The problem of militancy***

Apart from PIPS data cited earlier, other sources have also noted an upsurge in terrorism in Pakistan in recent years. For instance, the annual Global Terrorism Index (GTI) reported that the country has recorded the second-largest increase in terrorism-related deaths worldwide in 2022, with the toll rising by 120 percent to 643 deaths from 292 deaths in 2021.⁷ Analysts attribute this to the Taliban takeover of Kabul. The TTP is hitting military targets to assert its strength and spread terror. The outfit threatens the security and safety of citizens and undermines the government's efforts to combat terrorism. In the past, Pakistan pushed TTP militants into Afghanistan, but there was no preparedness if the challenge was to resurface.

Recently, Pakistan has decided to act forcefully against terrorists. However, what is different and more supporting this time is the mounting resistance from the local population against militancy. Local people have staged protest demonstrations against the new wave of militancy in multiple districts.⁸ Therefore, winning the trust of local people is essential for the security forces to conduct successful counterterrorism operations. Analysts also warn against the knee-jerk kinetic actions and underline the importance of addressing the root causes of the problem.⁹

- ***No more peace talks with TTP***

Security analysts had warned of the potential repercussions of the Taliban takeover in Kabul for Pakistan, but the Pakistani policymakers were optimistic about the Taliban in terms of security and border control. Therefore, Islamabad accepted the Taliban's offer to mediate between Pakistan and TTP. However, the talks failed as usual. They only brought a temporary pause in hostilities before the ceasefire was finally ended by the TTP in November 2022. The resumption of militancy by TTP has claimed the lives of many security personnel. In a high-profile attack, the terrorist outfit assassinated a senior military officer Brigadier Mustafa Kamal which dashed the possibility of any further peace

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2023: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, March 2023, <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources>.

⁸ Mahboob Ali Yousafzai & Essa Khankhel, "Protest staged in Swat against killings of Pashtuns," *The News International*, May 6, 2023, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1067554-protest-staged-in-swat-against-killings-of-pashtuns>

⁹ Arifa Noor, "Insecurity of violence," *Dawn*, May 9, 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1751744>

talks. Kamal was instrumental in facilitating the peace deal between the Pakistani government and TTP.¹⁰ However, the future may bring different possibilities as the Afghan Taliban have reiterated calls for negotiations and pledged to work towards peace and stability in the region. During his recent visit to Pakistan, Acting Afghan Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, emphasized Afghanistan's commitment to peace, stating that it was the official policy of the Taliban to not support bloodshed in Pakistan.¹¹

- ***Militants joining forces against Pakistan***

Pakistan's security challenges are increasing as reports indicate several separatist insurgents, sectarian outfits, and other militant groups are joining hands with the TTP against the state. The Baloch Liberation Army has reportedly entered into a verbal agreement with these outfits. There are fears that some other militant groups in Sindh, Balochistan, and KP may also seek an alliance with outfits like the TTP. Observers argue that terrorist groups are no longer specifically focused on the physical aspects of terrorism such as hit-and-run tactics. Outfits like the TTP now also engage in softer approaches to achieve their goals, which include building alliances with other groups, creating strategic partnerships, and running intense propaganda and disinformation campaigns to sway public opinion and disparage the state. Experts believe that in the context of anti-TTP resentment among local populations, it would be nearly impossible for the outfit to acquire political legitimacy. Besides, the group is more fractious internally than the Afghan Taliban.¹²

- ***The need for holistic counterterrorism approach***

The re-emergence of militant threats in Pakistan has led many to question the effectiveness of the previous kinetic measures. Experts question whether another round of military operation is necessary. However, a key challenge in counterterrorism efforts is an ill-equipped and underfunded KP police. This makes space for the military to move in and act against militants.

Nevertheless, the local resistance against military operations has grown in recent years. People have been staging demonstrations against the possibility of a fresh round of war in their districts. Such protests reflect the citizens' dissatisfaction with the government's failure to address the root causes of the problem. The locals have grown wary of the military operations' impact on their social and economic lives. Experts also warn that

¹⁰ Zameen Zehra, "Funeral prayers of Brigadier Mustafa Kamal Barki offered," *The News International*, March 22, 2023, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/1052853-funeral-prayers-of-brigadier-mustafa-kamal-barki-offered>

¹¹ Tahir Khan, "Afghan FM Muttaqi urges Pakistan, TTP to hold talks," *Dawn*, May 8, 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1751609/afghan-fm-muttaqi-urges-pakistan-ttp-to-hold-talks>

¹² "The Taliban," Council on foreign relations, <https://www.cfr.org/taliban/#/>

kinetic measures alone cannot bring sustainable peace. On the other hand, the military has been vocal about the terrorist threat, calling for a proactive approach to combat it. There is also an indication of a shift in the military's perspective on the situation (adding to kinetic actions) because the incumbent army chief has acknowledged that the peace talks allowed TTP to regroup.¹³

However, the use of advanced US weaponry by TTP poses a formidable challenge to the military's deterrence efforts. Despite this, the military has been conducting intelligence-based operations (IBOs) regularly. Data from various security departments indicate that the security forces have so far conducted over 8000 IBOs in 2023, nabbing 1,378 terrorists and killing 157.¹⁴

A major downside of the military operations is the mass displacement of the local population. The internal displacements in the past made the locals feel alienated and discriminated against by the state. Experts have been stressing the need for Islamabad to change its perspective and policy about the tribal areas and their people. There is a high chance of another major military operation (whose prospects are though slim) deepening the suffering and resentment of the locals. Therefore, a more comprehensive approach to counterterrorism is needed. The government needs to invest more in the KP police to enhance their professional and material capacity to tackle the threat. Likewise, winning back the locals' trust and confidence in the government is crucial for the success of any counterterrorism measures.

The police have always been the first line of defense against terrorism in Pakistan, and they are more acceptable to the locals. Well-trained and equipped police would be able to neutralize the emerging TTP threat partly because they have a better understanding of the local terrain, culture, and social dynamics which can be invaluable in combating terrorists. In addition, community policing can help foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among the local citizens, encouraging them to take charge of their own security. These strategies may help improve the overall security situation in the terrorism-affected areas.

The TTP question is unlikely to be settled through bilateral talks between Islamabad and Kabul because the Afghan Taliban have had close relations with the TTP, particularly in the past. Many Taliban commanders were given refuge in Pakistani tribal regions by TTP.

¹³ Iftikhar Shirazi, "Army reviews security challenges, stresses need to adopt holistic approach to eradicate terrorism," *Dawn*, April 15, 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1747781>

¹⁴ "No leaning towards any political ideology: Real Power Is People," *Daily Times*, April 26, 2023, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1086920/no-leaning-towards-any-political-ideology-real-power-is-people/>

¹⁵ It is crucial to understand that Pakistan's terrorism challenge is complex which requires coordinated efforts and cooperation on regional level, though currently, Pakistan must rely on itself to put the threat down. It must put its house in order first by reforming the process of policymaking to make it more inclusive and civilian-led. The military bureaucracy lacks vision as it often relies on tactical measures while missing long-term strategic interests. What Pakistan needs is civilian-led policymaking that is inclusive in nature. Only such a change can bring about sustainable peace and stability in the country.

1.3 Pakistan's policy on Afghan refugees

The recent shift in Pakistan's approach towards Afghan refugees, as evidenced by the repatriation of hundreds of refugees from various prisons across the country, is an important development in bilateral relations. This could be linked to a telephonic conversation on April 15 between the foreign ministers of Pakistan and Afghanistan in which they discussed bilateral matters including the issue of Afghan refugees. The Afghan minister reportedly urged Pakistan to employ a more compassionate approach towards the refugees. As Pakistan has witnessed a spike in terrorism originating from Afghanistan in recent times, the government has taken a harder approach toward Afghan refugees, drawing some controversy and criticism from rights activists and organizations.

Therefore, the shift in Pakistan's approach toward Afghan refugees may signal a positive development in bilateral relations. However, it remains to be seen how the situation unfolds in the coming months. Besides, Pakistan has taken steps to improve educational and vocational opportunities for Afghan refugees. For instance, with Japanese assistance, the Allama Iqbal Open University has developed a framework for providing education and training to the children of Afghan refugees¹⁶. Likewise, the government has launched an advanced technical training course in partnership with the UNHCR to equip Afghan youth with the skills necessary for becoming a productive and skilled workforce¹⁷.

Though these initiatives may not be sufficient to address the needs of a huge refugee population, still they are indicative of Pakistan's commitment to engaging in joint ventures. It also shows that while Pakistan continues to take a firm stance against those

¹⁵ "Despite camaraderie, Afghan Taliban seek distance from TTP," *Dawn*, April 12, 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1747201/despite-camaraderie-afghan-taliban-seek-distance-from-ttp>

¹⁶ "AIU to develop framework for education of Afghan refugees," *Daily Times*, April 08, 2023, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1081966/aiou-to-develop-framework-for-education-of-afghan-refugees/>

¹⁷ Twitter handle: @NAVTTCC Pakistan, May 11, 2023, <https://twitter.com/NavttcP/status/1656618653427683330>

refugees who engage in terrorism or crime, it also engages in promoting the welfare and prosperity of refugees who are committed to rebuilding their lives.

1.4 Hope of enhanced bilateral trade

The Pak-Afghan trade relations date back to centuries. The ancient Grand Trunk Road connected Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent, benefiting traders and travelers from around the world. The bilateral trade has huge potential which can boost both countries' weak economies and create more opportunities. In his recent visit to Islamabad, the Afghan foreign minister said his government aimed at integrating the two economies to turn challenges into opportunities, leveraging the two countries' God-given opportunities to build their future¹⁸. Pakistan also believes that economic integration can lift the region's prospects, increase employment opportunities, and decrease organized crime and militancy.

During this quarter, the two sides held several meetings, led by their commerce ministers and other senior officials,¹⁹ with a focus on enhancing the trade potential between the two countries. Various strategies have been discussed, including enacting smoother customs processes, efficient border management, and streamlining of trade procedures, as well as the expansion of goods and trade volume. However, despite these discussions and expressed intentions, no concrete efforts have been taken in the past two years.

In this backdrop, the business communities in the two countries can play a bridging role in economic integration. But they need their governments to take proactive steps to remove obstacles and promote trade relations, notably the implementation of a 2010 transit-trade agreement. In this way, both countries would be able to reset their relations which are facing headwinds due to security matters. There is a need to prioritize the establishment of a supportive regulatory framework and the provision of necessary infrastructure to facilitate trade activities.

The two countries need to understand that improved economic ties could lay the groundwork for a meaningful rapprochement. Additionally, it is also their shared national interest, which underscores the need for constructive engagement and collaboration rather than a tendency to shift blame or avoid responsibility. It is, therefore, imperative that both nations recognize the urgency of their respective roles in this endeavor. With

¹⁸ "Afghan soil not to be allowed to use against any other country: Muttaqi," *The Nation*, May 9, 2023, <https://www.nation.com.pk/09-May-2023/afghan-soil-not-to-be-allowed-to-use-against-any-other-country-muttaqi>

¹⁹ "Pakistan, Afghanistan express commitment to boost trade ties," *The Nation*, May 7, 2023, <https://www.nation.com.pk/07-May-2023/pakistan-afghanistan-express-commitment-to-boost-trade-ties>

greater cooperation and shared responsibility, more sustainable and mutually beneficial economic relations can be established which would lead to regional stability and prosperity.

CHAPTER 2

MULTILATERAL DYNAMICS AND DEVELOPMENTS VIS-À-VIS AFGHANISTAN

2.1 Developments on women's rights and humanitarian aid

The Taliban administration continues its unwavering crackdown on women's rights in the country. On April 7, the regime extended its ban on female aid workers engaged with the United Nations, the organization which has largely kept the country's economy and humanitarian operations afloat.²⁰ The ban directly violates the UN charter and risks jeopardizing UN aid services in the country which could have potentially far reaching consequences for the Afghan people, many of whom are on the brink of starvation in one of the worst humanitarian crises' in recorded history. In response UN experts demanded an immediate reversal of the order.

Three months earlier when the Taliban administration initially issued the decree banning female aid workers from national and international non-profit organizations from performing their duties, it had reassured UN officials that the decree did not include them. However, in a ministry meeting with UN officials the administration said that the government's supreme authority, Sheikh Hibatullah Akhundzada, had clarified that the ban extends to the UN, and that he had instructed the government's intelligence wing to enforce it.²¹

In the instance that UN aid programs continue, the ban could still cut off aid from donor countries which are facing funding fatigue. Aid donations especially through the UN have helped somewhat in stabilizing the Afghan economy but if aid money stops pouring into the country the economy could once again be derailed with life-threatening consequences for the millions who are already struggling to make both ends meet.

The UN extension ban has garnered widespread condemnation from international organizations and leaders. The high representative on behalf of the European Union

²⁰ Christina Goldbaum, "Taliban bar women from UN, threatening Afghanistan's last lifeline," *The New York Times*, April 7, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/07/world/asia/afghanistan-united-nations-women.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

²¹ Ibid.

released a statement expressing shock regarding the Taliban's decision to ban women working for the UN²² The statement said that this new decision further aggravates the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and constitutes a violation of international human rights law (including treaties to which Afghanistan is a party), international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.²³

On April 8, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) called on the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to revisit the "unacceptable" decision to ban women from working with the United Nations.²⁴ "The new edict will intensify the successive restrictive measures imposed on women and girls, including banning them from education, government jobs, and from working for non-governmental organizations," OIC said in a statement.²⁵

The UN reiterated its condemnation of the latest ban on its women aid workers on April 11. The Afghanistan Women Protester Movement coalition also asked the UN to press the de facto government to respect women's rights.²⁶ On April 28, the UN Security Council unanimously denounced the Taliban administration's prohibition and urged Taliban officials to "swiftly reverse" a crackdown on women's and girls' rights.²⁷ The UK's ambassador to the UN stated that the ban on UN female staff is a clear violation of the UN charter.

After a month-long assessment, the UN announced that it will continue its operation in Afghanistan without the presence of female staff, prompting criticisms from US officials. They called the continuation of humanitarian aid only for men, a serious punishment for Afghan women and girls, who have been completely erased from public life. ²⁸

²² "United Nations' expert urge Taliban to reverse ban on Afghan women working with UN," Reporterly, April 7, 2023, https://reporterly.net/latest-stories/united-nations-expert-urge-taliban-to-reverse-ban-on-afghan-women-working-with-un/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "OIC urges IEA to revisit ban on Afghan women working with UN," Ariana News, April 8, 2023, https://www.ariananews.af/oic-urges-iea-to-revisit-ban-on-afghan-women-working-with-un/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Rights activists urge UN to pressure Taliban on women's rights," Khaama Press, April 11, 2023, https://www.khaama.com/rights-activists-urge-un-to-pressure-taliban-on-womens-rights/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

²⁷ "Security council condemns Taliban ban on Afghan women working with UN," Khaama Press, April 28, 2023, https://www.khaama.com/security-council-condemns-taliban-ban-on-afghan-women-working-with-un/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

²⁸ Nizamuddin Rezahi, "US criticizes UN's decision operating in Afghanistan without female staff," Khaama Press, May 7, 2023, <https://www.khaama.com/us-criticizes-uns-decision-operating-in-afghanistan-without-female-staff/>

2.2 Taliban's persistent denial of terrorist threats

On April 2, Taliban regime spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said that the security forces of the Afghan interim government have destroyed Daesh, and that it is not a major threat as it was a year ago.²⁹ He said that the Afghan security forces “since August 2021, have arrested and imprisoned around 1,600 to 1,700 Islamic State militants and have killed more than 1,100.”

On April 13, Mawlavi Abdul Kabir, interim deputy prime minister of Afghanistan, met with foreign diplomats including ambassadors and political representatives of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, as well as the deputy head of UNAMA for Afghanistan and said that in light of security “having been achieved” in the country, political and humanitarian organizations can continue their missions with full confidence.³⁰

This messaging was relayed once again on April 24 when deputy spokesman Bilal Karimi said that the security of all diplomats and diplomatic missions in the country is ensured and that countries can continue their diplomatic activities in Afghanistan without any concerns. “We hope that no country, including Saudi Arabia, will have any concerns in our country and that they will be present in our country without any problems,” said Karimi.³¹

However, many observers hold that the Taliban are once again downplaying Daesh’s presence and level of influence in the country.

For one, Michael Kurilla, commander of US Central Command, claimed while speaking to Congress that ISIS is stronger today than it was before in Afghanistan. Kurilla added, “at least hundreds of thousands” of US people could be at risk from an attack by ISIS, which has the “ultimate goal of striking on the US homeland.” The American General estimated that there are at least 6,500 Daesh militants in Afghanistan, of which 4,000 are positioned close to the Tajikistan border.³²

This sentiment was reiterated by former US state department counterterrorism coordinator Nathan Sales who recently made a statement that “the terrorist threat

²⁹ For details, visit: <https://thefrontierpost.com/daesh-not-a-major-threat-to-afghanistan-mujahid>.

³⁰ “IEA: Political, humanitarian organizations can continue missions with confidence,” Ariana News, April 13, 2023, https://www.ariananews.af/iea-political-humanitarian-organizations-can-continue-missions-with-confidence/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

³¹ “IEA and Saudi relations on solid ground, say Islamic Emirate,” Ariana News, April 23, 2023, https://www.ariananews.af/iea-and-saudi-relations-on-solid-ground-say-islamic-emirate/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

³² “Daesh not a major threat to Afghanistan: Mujahid,” *The Frontier Post*, May 12, 2023, <https://thefrontierpost.com/daesh-not-a-major-threat-to-afghanistan-mujahid/>.

environment in Afghanistan has deteriorated dramatically since August 2021 – and it is getting worse.”³³ He further elaborated that due to the various groups and the lack of capability to fight terrorism as well as the absence of US pressure, Afghanistan has become a breeding ground for growing terrorism. On April 23, a leaked Pentagon document said that “Afghanistan has become a significant coordination hub for the Islamic State as the terrorist organization plans attacks across Europe and Asia and engages in aspirational plotting” against the US.³⁴

In response to the leaked document, Mujahid, tweeted: “Some Western media published reports that a certified document of the US Ministry of Defense shows that Afghanistan has become a so-called center of terrorism; we strongly reject this claim.” He also said that Daesh and other militant groups “have been severely affected and are in the process of being destroyed” in the country.³⁵

Earlier on April 4, Mujahid without naming any countries said that “some countries are magnifying the ISIS group’s presence in Afghanistan and using it against the Taliban.”³⁶

On April 28, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CST) said that during its 37th meeting of the Working Group on Afghanistan there was a detailed exchange of views on the situation in Afghanistan. The participants noted the persistence of unfavorable trends in the security situation, including the growth of terrorist and drug threats emanating from the territory of the country.³⁷

Addressing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) defense ministers’ meeting in New Delhi, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said that extremist groups in

³³ “Afghanistan is a “safe haven” for terrorists with an increasing threat to the US, experts claim,” Khaama Press, April 19, 2023, https://www.khaama.com/afghanistan-is-a-safe-haven-for-terrorists-with-an-increasing-threat-to-the-us-experts-claim/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

³⁴ “ISIS using Afghanistan as terror base: leaked Pentagon documents,” Khaama Press, April 23, 2023, https://www.khaama.com/isis-using-afghanistan-as-terror-base-leaked-pentagon-documents/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

³⁵ “Leaked Pentagon document by US is propaganda: Mujahid,” Khaama Press, April 24, 2023, https://www.khaama.com/leaked-pentagon-document-by-us-is-propaganda-mujahid/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

³⁶ “Taliban’s Zabiullah mujahid claims other countries ‘using’ ISIS against group by magnifying its presence,” Reporterly, April 4, 2023, https://reporterly.net/latest-stories/talibans-zabiullah-mujahid-claims-other-countries-using-isis-against-group-by-magnifying-its-presence/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

³⁷ “CSTO security alliance meets on Afghanistan,” Ariana News, April 28, 2023, https://www.ariananews.af/csto-security-alliance-meets-on-afghanistan/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

Afghanistan have expanded their activities in neighboring countries.³⁸ He emphasized that international terrorist groups including Al Qaeda, ISIS, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) have increased their influence in the region. However, Shoigu's remarks were dismissed by the Taliban which said that "the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan not only maintains security and stability in Afghanistan after years of war, but also considers security and stability in the region as a helper with its economy-oriented foreign policy and does not want security threats to exist in any way."

2.3 Diplomatic developments on security and regional stability

On April 13, the interim Afghan foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and Pakistan's minister of state for foreign affairs Hina Rabbani Khar along with foreign ministers from Afghanistan's seven neighboring countries attended the 4th Ministerial Meeting of Afghanistan's neighboring countries in Uzbekistan's Samarkand.³⁹ Muttaqi attended despite a travel ban under the United Nations Security Council's sanctions.

At the meeting Muttaqi told delegates that "the recent positive developments in Afghanistan, such as the withdrawal of foreign forces, rise of a powerful central government, [improved] law and order and security, end of corruption, access to judiciary and justice, ban on narcotics cultivation and trade, and the overall positive resolve of the Afghan government have spawned new opportunities for close and meaningful cooperation between Afghanistan and the region." He also stressed the need for joint regional stability for the growth of economic prosperity in the country.⁴⁰

In the same meeting, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang proposed a key four-point proposal which included combating terrorism in Afghanistan, building an inclusive government there, the US' fulfillment of its responsibility, and carrying out practical cooperation with Afghanistan.⁴¹

On April 17, the G7 Foreign Ministers meeting was held, chaired by Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, focusing on the Afghanistan and Central Asian situation. Drawing from Japan's experience of the situation on the ground, Hayashi "emphasized

³⁸"Extremist groups in Afghanistan expand activity in region, says Russian Defence Minister," Afghanistan International, May 12, 2023, <https://www.afintl.com/en/202304287219>.

³⁹ "Muttaqi tells Samarkand Forum instability in Afghanistan will not benefit anyone," Ariana News, April 13, 2023, https://www.ariananews.af/muttaqi-tells-samarkand-forum-instability-in-afghanistan-will-not-benefit-anyone/?utm_source=dvtr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ "China's 4-point proposal for Afghanistan at 4th Foreign Ministers' meeting," Khaama Press, April 14, 2023, https://www.khaama.com/china-4-point-proposal-for-afghanistan-at-4th-foreign-ministers-meeting/?utm_source=dvtr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

the need to engage persistently and directly with the Taliban,” while addressing top diplomats of G-7 nations.

Tokyo’s comments came after the UN said it was being forced to make an “appalling choice” about its presence in Afghanistan as the de facto Taliban administration banned women from working for the organization.⁴²

Russia has called for a degree of engagement with the Taliban without formal recognition until the country fulfills its formal obligations. On April 26, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov urged the international community to engage with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) stating “the Taliban is a reality.” Speaking to reporters in New York after his visit to the United States, Lavrov said: “We assume that the Taliban is a reality. Talks with them on the ground are necessary.”⁴³

On May 2, the UN convened two days of discussions in Doha about how to deal with the Taliban rulers and put pressure on them to abolish the prohibition on girls and women working and attending school. During the discussions Pascale Baeriswyl, the ambassador of Switzerland, said that the situation in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime is a “very difficult dilemma” to deal with.⁴⁴ The conference ended with no formal acknowledgment of the Taliban, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said it was not the right time for him to directly engage with the Afghan rulers.

On May 6, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang proposed that coordination efforts for the reconstruction of Afghanistan should be stepped up. He so said while meeting with Pakistani President Arif Alvi in Islamabad. Foreign ministers at the tripartite meeting between Afghanistan, Pakistan and China in Islamabad emphasized the need to strengthen regional economic relations and stability in the country. Qin Gang called on the Taliban’s de facto authorities to form an inclusive government and respect the rights of all people of Afghanistan. Afghanistan, China and Pakistan have collectively

⁴² “Engage directly with Taliban in Afghanistan, Japan tells G-7 nations,” Anadolu Agency, May 12, 2023. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/engage-directly-with-taliban-in-afghanistan-japan-tells-g-7-nations/2874629>.

⁴³ “Lavrov says talks with IEA are ‘necessary,’” Ariana News, April 26, 2023, https://www.ariananews.af/lavrov-says-talks-with-iea-are-necessary/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

⁴⁴ “UN Security Council presidency calls Afghanistan ‘difficult dilemma,’” Khaama Press, May 2, 2023, https://www.khaama.com/un-security-council-presidency-calls-afghanistan-difficult-dilemma/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

underscored the critical importance of trilateral cooperation in promoting the objective of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.⁴⁵

2.4 Economic investments and development

In a historic development, the Deputy Minister of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan Zia Rahman Aryoubi said that the technical study of the TAPI Pipeline Project has been completed and there is no obstacle ahead of its implementation. The TAPI pipeline is expected to carry 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas each year along a route stretching 1,800 km from Galkynysh, the world's second-biggest gas field in Turkmenistan, to the Indian city of Fazilka near the Pakistan border.⁴⁶

On April 7, Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) officials of the interim government of Afghanistan, said that the annual trade between Kabul and Tehran reaches more than one billion dollars. Simultaneously, the process of trade and joint investment is also expanding between the two countries on a daily basis, the officials said. ACCI has also emphasized that Iran is the biggest trading partner of Afghanistan in the current situation.⁴⁷

On May 1, the Afghanistan Foreign Ministry says the Chinese Embassy in Kabul will resume issuing visas to Afghan citizens in two days. This comes after numerous calls from Afghan business owners. Reports said that the economic relations between Afghanistan and China have been overgrowing, and soon, China may have the second-largest trade with the country.⁴⁸

According to provincial authorities of Kandahar, an international company has begun officially exporting natural gas from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan. Mohammad Yunus Mohmand, the head of the country's Chamber of Commerce and

⁴⁵ "China calls on Pakistan to coordinate in rebuilding Afghanistan," Ariana News, May 6, 2023, https://www.ariananews.af/china-calls-on-pakistan-to-coordinate-in-rebuilding-afghanistan/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

⁴⁶ "Afghanistan completes technical study of TAPI Pipeline project," Business Turkmenistan Information Center, <https://business.com.tm/post/10051/afghanistan-completes-technical-study-of-tapi-pipeline-project#:~:text=Technical%20study%20of%20the%20TAPI%20Pipeline%20Project%20has>.

⁴⁷ "Afghanistan, Iran economic ties boosted: officials," Ariana News, April 7, 2023, https://www.ariananews.af/afghanistan-iran-economic-ties-boosted-officials/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

⁴⁸ "China will resume issuing visas to Afghans," Khaama Press, May 1, 2023, https://www.khaama.com/china-will-resume-issuing-visas-to-afghan/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

Investment, said the gas transfer from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan is a crucial milestone in economic development.⁴⁹

Meanwhile on May 9, the foreign ministers of Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen trilateral cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and jointly extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ "Afghanistan is transit route for exporting Turkmenistan's gas to Pakistan," Khaama Press, May 1, 2023, https://www.khaama.com/afghanistan-is-transit-route-for-exporting-turkmenistans-gas-to-pakistan/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

⁵⁰ "CPEC will be extended to Afghanistan as trilateral cooperation set to deepen," *Dawn*, May 9, 2023, https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=09_05_2023_001_007.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL MEDIA PERSPECTIVES FROM PAKISTAN

3.1 Introduction

As this quarter began, the social media users from Pakistan kept a watchful eye on the unfolding situation in Afghanistan while at the same time remained mindful of the economic and political turmoil at home. Since the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, the human rights situation in Afghanistan has worsened. The Afghan women have been barred from work and university education. Moreover, the Afghan human rights activists are persecuted whenever they speak up against or resist the strict measures of the Taliban government. In Pakistan, this treatment of the Afghan human rights activists has worried many of the human rights activists who fear that such developments could completely silence the dissenting voices in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the UN official's statement in favour of recognizing the Taliban government invited massive criticism worldwide. Pakistani human rights activists also could not bear the news and many human rights activists expressed their concern and condemnation of the statement on social media.

In addition to this, the meeting of Pashtun nationalist leadership with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, left many in disbelief. Some doubted the sincerity of the nationalist leaders to their people.

Conclusively, as the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan is not improving, it has become a cause of huge distress among Pakistan's human rights activists. The harsh and inhumane treatment meted out to refugees in Pakistan once again grabbed the attention of the human rights activists and others on social media when a story emerged of the police benefiting financially from the Afghan refugee's plight.

3.2 Human rights violations in Afghanistan

As the Afghan Taliban clampdown on human rights, and especially women rights, is increasing daily, the regime arrested an education activist, Matiullah Wesa, recently. His

arrest outraged the international community. Pakistani human rights activists on social media condemned the action and called for his immediate release.⁵¹

 **Ziauddin Yousafzai**  @ZiauddinY · Apr 11

مطیع الله ویسا د تعلیم، سولې او امن یو نه سترې کیدونکې او سپېڅلې مبارز دي. د هغه بندۍ ساتل ډیر ظلم دي. زر تر زره د خوشي کړي شي.

#ReleaseMatiullahWesa
& #MessengerOfEducation
#LetAfghanGirlsLearn



⁵¹ <https://twitter.com/ZiauddinY/status/1645733010157740033?s=20>

3.3 The question of recognition

When the UN official hinted at the possibility of recognizing the Taliban government, it extremely perturbed the Pakistani human rights activists. Many took to the twitter and condemned the statement.⁵²



Naila Inayat @nailainayat · Apr 19

...

Afghans at the mercy of wolves. "UN is looking to sit down with the **Taliban** in **baby steps** to officially recognise Afghanistan's caretaker regime and utilise the militant group's need for recognition as leverage."



independent.co.uk

UN official says looking to recognise Taliban as 'heartbreaking' exit ...
UN could leave Afghanistan by May if the Taliban does not permit its staff to work in the country

3

10

39

8,528

↑

3.4 A too costly meeting

When the foreign minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Amir Khan Muttaqi, visited Pakistan for attending a trilateral meeting between China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, he met with the Pakistani Pashtun nationalist leadership. This meeting of the Pashtun nationalist leadership with the Afghan foreign minister invited the ire of the Pashtun nationalists active on social media.⁵³

⁵² <https://twitter.com/nailainayat/status/1648698483879317504?s=20>

⁵³ <https://twitter.com/mjdawar/status/1654955011669983235?s=20>



Mohsin Dawar

@mjdawar



Pashtun nationalism has always disproved those who equated Taliban to Pashtuns. This resistance to terror should not be sacrificed for political expediency, because the identity of Pashtuns is at stake.



2:03 AM · May 7, 2023 · **395.9K** Views

3.5 Refugee crisis

While the living condition of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan keeps on worsening, the emergence of a story on social media about the use of Afghan refugees as a source of generating income by the Karachi police angered the Pakistani human rights activists. Many tweeted against such treatment and called for the improvement of Afghan refugees' living conditions in Pakistan.⁵⁴

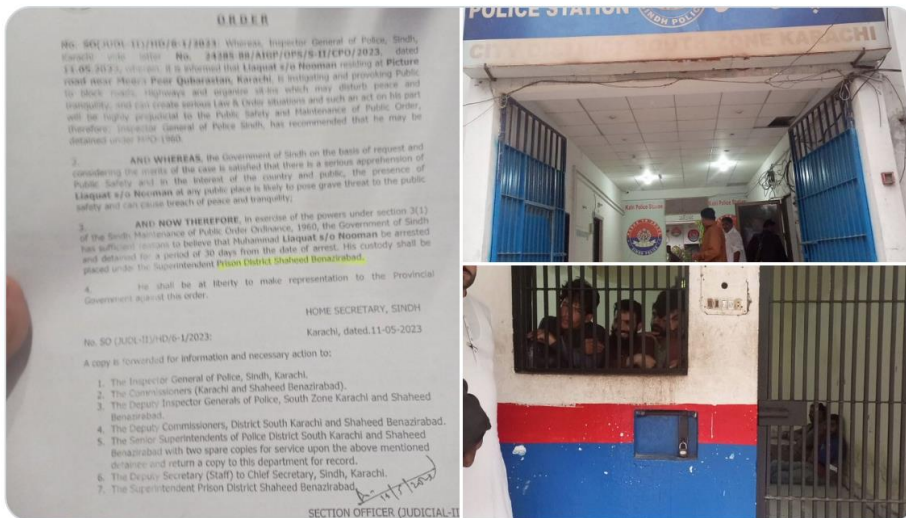
⁵⁴ https://twitter.com/Moni_Kakar/status/1659628912576479250?s=20



Moniza Kakar
@Moni_Kakar

...

Afghan refugees have now become a source of income for the Karachi Police. On May 10, the police contacted some afghan refugees and called them to Police station to return their personal belongings, as they were discharged by the Magistrate. The police demanded a huge amount of 1/4



11:35 PM · May 19, 2023 · 27.2K Views

ANNEX-1

MONITORING OF POSITIONS AND ACTIONS [FROM PAKISTAN]

GOVERNMENT AND OFFICIALS

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
April	13	Dawn	During an inclusive interview with Voice of America defence minister Khawaja Asif warned Afghanistan's Taliban rulers that Islamabad will strike terrorist hideouts inside the neighboring country if the latter were unable to rein in anti-Pakistan militants.
April	20	Dawn	Defense ministry submitted a report to Supreme court highlighting that the terrorist threat has increased as compared to 2018 and 2021, as the environment in Afghanistan worsened after August 2021, and with the withdrawal of US forces 1,500 terrorists had been released from jails and the latest military equipment was available to the TTP fighter, which made the threat more potent.
May	5	The Express Tribune	Against the backdrop of Afghanistan's foreign minister's Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi visit to Islamabad, Pakistan's foreign ministry said it "is a continuation of Pakistan's political engagement process with Afghanistan, which, inter alia, included visit of Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to Kabul on 29 November 2022 and visit of a high-level delegation led by the Defense Minister of Pakistan to Kabul on 22 February 2023."
May	8	Daily Musalman (URDU)	Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Muttaqi suggested to the government of Pakistan and the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to sit down for talks to resolve their issues.
May	12	The Nation	There will be no talks with the terrorist outfits that do not respect country's laws and the Constitution, Pakistan responded to Afghan Taliban suggestion.

Actions Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
March	31	Pakistan Observer	The Pakistani authorities are making all-out efforts to facilitate the movement of around 385,000 Afghan people a month through the Pak-Afghan border crossing points by

Month	Date	Source	Detail
			introducing the Integrated Border Management System, exclusive counters, and other measures.
April	17	The Express Tribune	Pakistan's head of the diplomatic mission in Kabul returned to the Afghan capital after more than four months after he survived an assassination attempt.
May	8	Daily Jang (URDU)	An Urdu daily revealed that during a meeting between Afghan delegation and Pakistani officials at the level of delegations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistani officials presented irrefutable evidence, including concrete evidence, of terrorism emanating from Afghan soil to Pakistan.

Visits and Meetings

Month	Date	Source	Detail
March	21	The Express Tribune	An Afghan Taliban delegation, comprising intelligence and security officials, quietly visited Islamabad recently to discuss a way forward toward addressing Pakistan's concerns regarding the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)
March	26	The Frontier Post	During a meeting, the acting Consul General of Afghan Consulate Peshawar, Hafiz Mohibullah Shakir, and businessmen from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa agreed over launching collective efforts for the removal of hindrances between Pak-Afghan bilateral and Transit trade.
April	2	The Nation	The Pak-Afghan Liaison Committee met to discuss various issues impeding the smooth operation of bilateral trade and the promotion of commercial activities in the region.
April	7	Bakhtar News Agency	Acting Higher Education Minister, Mawlavi Neda Mohammad Nadeem, met with Pakistan's Charges d'Affaires to Afghanistan Mohammad Junaid Wazir. The two sides discussed the historical and cultural ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Minister Nadeem, in this meeting, stressed good educational relations between the two countries and sharing scientific and research experiences.
April	9	Dawn	Newly appointed chief collector (customs) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Fayyaz Anwar, chaired a meeting at the Torkham border to discuss issues related to Pak-Afghan trade. The participants, including Pakistani and Afghan traders and relevant officials, held a "thorough discussion on the performance of relevant public sector institutions along with the problems of Pak-Afghan businessmen
April	12	The Express Tribune	Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, was expected to visit Islamabad as the two neighboring countries continue to struggle to find common ground on how to deal with the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliates.

Month	Date	Source	Detail
April	16	Daily Dunya (Urdu)	Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari assured the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's (IEA) minister of foreign affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi of Pakistan's commitment to a stable Afghanistan during a phone conversation.
May	07	Dawn	Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari met with the Afghan Taliban minister of foreign affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi on his visit to Pakistan. The two sides held a candid and in-depth exchange on key issues of mutual concern, including peace and security, as well as trade and connectivity.
May	07	Daily Jang (URDU)	Syed Naveed Qamar, Federal Minister for Commerce, along with his Afghan counterpart, Haji Nooruddin Azizi, co-chaired a high-level formal meeting on bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
May	07	The Nation	A delegation of businessmen met with the newly appointed Chief Collector Customs, Fayyaz Anwar, and informed him about the issues that are causing hindrances in Pak-Afghan trade.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
April	24	Twitter	A Pakistani Pashtun nationalist leader, Sardar Hussein Babak, echoed the same criticism against the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan that the Taliban interim Foreign Minister Ameer Khan Mutaqi had expressed after the suicide bombing of a mosque at Peshawar Police headquarters in January. "Why a suicide bomber from Afghanistan doesn't explode in India, China, Russia, or Punjab (in Pakistan) and only carry out attacks in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan?"
May	9	Daily AAJ (URDU)	Pakistan's religious parties affirmed their full cooperation with Afghanistan. Maulana Fazl ur Rehman showed strong commitment and willingness to sacrifice everything for a peaceful Afghanistan.

Visits and Meetings

Month	Date	Source	Detail
May	9	The Express Tribune	During a meeting with Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Muttaqi, Maulana Hamidul Haq Haqqani, the Ameer of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Pakistan, said that the improvement in the Pakistan-Afghan relations would promote peace in both countries and bring positive changes in the economic condition of both the peoples.

Month	Date	Source	Detail
May	8	Daily AAJ (URDU)	Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi met a Pakistani political party's delegation in Islamabad. The Muttaqi-led delegation met Maulana Jamiat-i-Ulema Islam head Fazlur Rahman, Jamat-i-Islami chief Sirajul Haq, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, Aimal Wali Khan of ANP and others.

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
April	1	Al-Burhan (Monthly)	The Pakistani religious scholars argued that Afghanistan is a traditional society with traditional economic practices, therefore it does not need loans from non-Muslims to build an industrial society.

MILITANT ORGANIZATIONS

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
April	20	Twitter	Leader of Pakistani Taliban (TTP), Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud, issued a message on the occasion of Eid ul Fitr. TTP leader stated that the group is still committed to negotiations while accusing Pakistan's government of disrupting the process. He also reiterated that his group has no foreign agenda, and its struggle is limited to Pakistan.
April	20	Twitter	AQIS leader Usama Mahmood has criticised Pakistan for announcing a new military operation against militant groups. He extended his support to TTP, however, while the TTP denied any regional aspirations.
May	5	Twitter	Pakistani Taliban's (TTP) Umar Media published 47 pages long 15th issue of Urdu flagship "Taliban" magazine". The central focus was the political and economic crisis in Pakistan, and vehemently criticized the NSC's recent decision of military operation against the TTP.
May	15	Twitter	Pakistani Taliban (TTP) commander Sarbakaf Mohmand criticized senior Deobandi political leader Maulana Fazal ur Rehman for a political protest in the capital. He urged that armed struggle like the Afghan Taliban is the only option for establishing an Islamic system in Pakistan

Action Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
April	20	Twitter	Pakistani Taliban (TTP) supporters launched a high-quality Pashto magazine, "Mujahid." The first issue commemorated the TTP's contributions to the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, expressed loyalty to the Afghan Taliban, and aimed to generate support for the TTP.
May	8	Twitter	A key militant group from North Waziristan, "Aryana group," merged with the Pakistani Taliban (TTP). This is the 31st militant group that joined the TTP since July 2020 and the 10th from North Waziristan.
May	16	Twitter	Pakistani Taliban's (TTP) Umar Media released pictures of a special squad trained with laser guns (fixed with sophisticated thermal-scope devices) at its al-Farooq military camp.
May	16	Twitter	ISKP al-Azaim Media published a 75-page 22nd issue of the bi-weekly Pashto flagship "Khurasan Ghag" (Voice of Khurasan) magazine. The key themes reflect the Salafists' criticism of "Deobandis" and "Sufis" over religious differences, triangulating it with the ISKP war against the Afghan Taliban.

MILITARY LEADERSHIP AND ISPR

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
April	14	The Express Tribune	Army chief General Syed Asim Munir explained in an in-camera briefing on the national security situation in the National Assembly Hall that the current campaign against terrorists was part of the already approved strategy of the state and that talking to the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was a mistake.

Action Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
April	6	Dawn	The Pakistani security forces killed eight militants, including their commander, in a special operation near Afghanistan border, the military's media wing said in a statement. Meanwhile, the statement also said that one Pakistani soldier died, and four others were wounded during the shootout.
April	15	Dawn	In a clear shift from the policy of the previous regime, Chief of Army Staff Gen Syed Asim Munir acknowledged that a strategy to engage with terrorists had allowed them to regroup in the tribal areas.

Visits and Meetings

Month	Date	Source	Detail
May	7	The News International	In a meeting with the Acting Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir stressed the need for "enhanced cooperation" between Pakistan and Afghanistan to effectively tackle the common challenges of terrorism and extremism.

CIVIL SOCIETY & OTHERS

Public Statements

Month	Date	Source	Detail
March	31	The News International	Experts at the roundtable discussion organized by the Institute of Regional Studies on 'Political power struggle within Afghanistan and its spillover effect on the region' observed that the ideological bonding of the Afghan Taliban seems impervious to existing differences between them. The contemporary tussle is because of the Taliban's transition from insurgency to a political movement.
March	31	The Frontier Post	Representatives of the cross-border business community believed that a deal could be reached if both countries' governments resumed talks for the alignment of border issues and reopening of all the trade routes including Nawa Pass and Gorsal Border points with neighbor country Afghanistan and due to the reopening of these trade routes, countless business opportunities will be made available not only for the people on both sides of the border, but it will also help the business community to boost their business internationally which will ultimately bring peace, happiness and economic prosperity to the war-affected province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
April	03	Daily Mashriq (URDU)	People at Wana demanded to stop damaging trade relations with Afghanistan. They stressed that Pak-Afghan border Angoradah Gate is the backbone for the employment of the war-torn people of Lower Waziristan.

Action Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
May	6	The Nation	The representatives of political parties, civil society, academics, and journalists, among others, expressed their views on the Afghan peace process, 'Pak-Afghan bilateral relations; challenges and way forward' and 'Emerging Afghan situation and its implications for the region' a consultation on 'Afghan peace and reconciliation; Pakistan's interests and

Month	Date	Source	Detail
			policy options', organized by an Islamabad-based think tank Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS).

AFGHAN REFUGEES

Action Taken

Month	Date	Source	Detail
March	23	Dawn	Police asked all the Afghans and all the Afghan families residing in Peshawar to immediately register themselves with the nearest police station in three days and added that legal action would be taken against those failing to register in the stipulated time.
April	18	Shia Waves English	Representatives of Afghan refugees in Pakistan complained that, despite having legal documents, they are still detained and tortured by Pakistani officials, and only released upon paying a bribe.
April	30	Dawn	A group of women from Afghanistan held a protest in Islamabad, Pakistan, warning the United Nations and the international community against recognizing the Taliban or holding any discussion about the matter at Monday's meeting in Doha.
May	02	The Express Tribune	Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation announced that 211 Afghan migrants returned to the country from Pakistan through the Spin Boldak crossing point in southern Kandahar province.
May	03	The Express Tribune	Over 340 Afghan migrants returned to the country from Pakistan through the Spin Boldak crossing in southern Kandahar province and were referred to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
May	6	Daily Mashriq (URDU)	The International Association of Pakistan-Afghanistan Journalists (IAPAJ) commenced its activities in the capital city of Islamabad in March by distributing 'Press ID Cards' to exiled Afghan Journalists currently residing in Pakistan. The initiative was taken by a number of Afghan journalists currently residing in Pakistan in cooperation with the Pakistan National Press Club.
May	9	Daily Mashriq (Urdu)	703 immigrants living in Pakistan returned to Afghanistan through the Spin Boldak crossing in Kandahar province.

Visits and Meetings

Month	Date	Source	Detail
April	08	Daily AAJ (Urdu)	Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, KP, agreed in a meeting that AIU should

Month	Date	Source	Detail
			develop a framework for the education and training of children of Afghan refugees.
April	17	TOLO News	The acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi, in a telephone call with Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari urged the release of Afghan inmates prior to Eid-al Fitr, a spokesman said.

Media Commentary

Month	Date	Source	Author/Editor	Detail
March	23	Dawn	Opinion	An English daily opined that sustained diplomatic efforts must continue in order to convince the Afghan Taliban to not let their soil be used to host anti-Pakistan terrorists.
April	15	Dawn	Editorial	Despite the Afghan Taliban's intransigence and lethargy in cracking down on their ideological comrades, it would be unwise of Pakistan to unilaterally cross over into a sovereign nation to strike at the terrorists.
May	5	The Nation	Salman Javed	A senior analyst proposed that to unlock the full potential of their and robust economic ties, Pak-Afghan free trade and transit must be restored without political tensions.
May	7	The Nation	Opinion	An opinion in an English daily asserted that our policy on Afghanistan has always been flimsy at best. We need decisive action, and the trilateral dialogue should be the perfect opportunity through which we gauge what all can be done. We have the support of our long-time ally, China.
May	9	The Express Tribune	Dr Moonis Ahmar	In order to ensure that Afghanistan should be part of the 21st century, and not the 10th, an analyst believed that not only Taliban but also other stakeholders in the country should start the process of dialogue meant to establish lasting peace and stability and pave the way for economic, human, and social development so as to improve the present and future of the Afghan people.

ANNEX-2

MONITORING OF POSITIONS AND ACTIONS [MULTILATERAL & CROSS-CUTTING]

- March 25, 2023:** A delegation of the interim Afghan government visited the Afghanistan Consulate General in Khorog, the capital of Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region in Tajikistan. This visit came when the Afghan embassy in Tajikistan was not handed over to the Taliban.
- March 26, 2023:** Against the backdrop of the announcement made by the de facto authorities in Afghanistan regarding schools for girls above grade 6 that they will remain closed until further notice, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) called on the de facto authorities to immediately reopen education facilities at all levels, to girls and boys, women and men, and prioritize investing in education as a critical component of Afghanistan's development.
- March 31, 2023:** The UN Human Rights Office, OHCHR, expressed deep concerns over the arbitrary arrests including the detention of girls' education activists, journalists, and media workers by the Taliban. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) called on the de facto authorities of Afghanistan to immediately release the activists detained for advocating for women's rights.
- April 01, 2023:** The UAE sent a plane carrying 38 tonnes of urgent medical and food supplies to Afghanistan to meet the needs of thousands of Afghan families affected by earthquakes that struck northeastern Afghanistan.
- April 02, 2023:** According to Zabihullah Mujahid, the interim Taliban government spokesperson, the security forces of the Afghan interim government destroyed Daesh, and it is not a major threat as it was a year ago.
- April 03, 2023:** The Deputy Minister of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan Zia Rahman Aryoubi said that the technical study of the TAPI Pipeline Project has been completed and there is no obstacle ahead of its implementation.
- April 04, 2023:** The World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations said that Japan had provided an additional \$5 million toward the emergency response in Afghanistan.
- April 04, 2023:** Russia's presidential envoy for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov announced that Russia's consulate in northern Mazar-e-Sharif reopened after almost two years.
- April 04, 2023:** Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman for the Taliban, without naming any countries, accused some countries of magnifying the ISIS group's presence in Afghanistan and using it against Taliban.
- April 04, 2023:** "Humanitarian aid alone cannot meet the needs of the millions of Afghans who have lost their jobs and been forced to take on huge debts and sell their possessions just to be able to buy food needed for survival," found a new report commissioned by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). "We must reverse this devastating economic disaster. A stable economy, thriving private sector, and the reintroduction of development

programmes are important to complement the work of humanitarian organizations”, it added.

April 06, 2023: Russian Ambassador Dmitry Zhirnov met with Amir Khan Muttaqi and discussed political, security and economic cooperation between Afghanistan and Russia, according to Hafiz Zia Ahmad, deputy spokesperson for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

April 06, 2023: The US government released a review of the chaotic 2021 troop withdrawal from Afghanistan which largely laid the blame on Donald Trump, saying President Joe Biden was “severely constrained” by the decisions of his predecessor.

April 07, 2023: The Taliban administration extended a ban on women working in aid organizations to the United Nations, putting at risk one of the country’s last sources of badly needed aid.

April 07, 2023: UN experts demanded the immediate reversal of the Taliban’s recent order banning Afghan women from working with the United Nations in Afghanistan.

April 07, 2023: The High Representative on behalf of the European Union released a statement expressing shock regarding the Taliban’s decision to ban women working for UN.

April 07, 2023: According to Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) officials of the interim government of Afghanistan, the annual trade between Kabul and Tehran reached more than one billion dollars. Simultaneously, the process of trade and joint investment has also been expanding between the two counties on a daily basis, the officials said. ACCI also emphasized that Iran is the biggest trading partner of Afghanistan in the current situation.

April 08, 2023: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) called upon the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to revisit the “unacceptable” decision to ban women from working with the United Nations. “The new edict will intensify the successive restrictive measures imposed on women and girls, including banning them from education, government jobs, and from working for non-governmental organizations,” OIC said in a statement.

April 11, 2023: The United Nations in Afghanistan reiterated its condemnation of the de facto authorities’ latest ban on women aid workers. The statement called the curb on women as the discriminatory measures implemented by the Taliban authorities to severely restrict women and girls’ participation in most areas of public and daily life in Afghanistan.

April 11, 2023: In a press conference, the Afghanistan Women Protester Movement coalition asked the UN to pressurize the de facto government to respect women’s rights.

April 12, 2023: The acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Mawlawi Amir Muttaqi, met with the Japanese envoy to Afghanistan Takashi Okada and discussed bilateral relations and the current political situation in the country.

April 12, 2023: Thomas West, the US special representative for Afghanistan, met with a range of diplomats, civil society leaders and other stakeholders in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey, in a trip to the region. The US State Department said in a statement that West “is conducting outreach in the region to secure input as the international community seeks solutions to Afghanistan’s compounding challenges, made worse by the Taliban’s

(IEA) recent decisions to limit women's participation in humanitarian operations and ban them from their vital work for the UN."

- April 12, 2023:** Kazakhstan delivered 81 cargos of food aid to Afghanistan to assist and deal with the victims of natural disasters.
- April 13, 2023:** Director Pak-Afghan Joint Chambers of Commerce & Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi welcomed the Customs Department's approval of the cross-stuffing of Afghan and Uzbek cargo at Karachi Port.
- April 13, 2023:** Interim Afghan government said that it should be noted "that the Islamic Emirate does not want to create obstacles for the United Nations" and that their decisions should be "respected by all sides".
- April 13, 2023:** Mawlavi Abdul Kabir, interim Deputy Prime Minister of Afghanistan, met with foreign diplomats including ambassadors and political representatives of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, as well as the deputy head of UNAMA for Afghanistan, and the head of the Aga Khan Foundation.
- April 13, 2023:** The interim foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi of Afghanistan, and minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar of Pakistan along with foreign ministers from Afghanistan's seven neighboring countries, attended the 4th Ministerial meeting of Afghanistan's neighboring countries in Uzbekistan's Samarkand.
- April 14, 2023:** Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang proposed a four-point proposal in the fourth foreign ministers' meeting among neighboring countries of Afghanistan in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
- April 15, 2023:** India signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the UN World Food Programme (WFP) for humanitarian food assistance of 10,000 tons of wheat for the people of Afghanistan.
- April 16, 2023:** The US special envoy for Afghanistan, Thomas West, met with Afghan Future Thought Forum members in Doha as well as heads of mission of key allies and partners. West called on the international community to address the ongoing problems of the country and said that "every Afghan participant at the forum voiced support for dialogue and opposition to armed conflict as a solution to the country's challenges."
- April 17, 2023:** Uzbekistan hosted ministerial meetings in Samarkand, attended by representatives of China, Russia, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The Taliban's foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, also attended despite a travel ban under the United Nations Security Council's sanctions.
- April 17, 2023:** The G7 Foreign Ministers meeting was held, chaired by Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, focusing on the Afghanistan and Central Asian situation. Drawing from Japan's experience of the situation on the ground, Hayashi "emphasized the need to engage persistently and directly with the Taliban," while addressing top diplomats of G-7 nations.
- April 17, 2023:** The political deputy prime minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Mawlavi Abdul Kabir, met with a delegation of religious scholars from Russia's Muslim community. Magmedovich said the purpose of their visit to Afghanistan is to develop relations

between Russia and Afghanistan. He also noted that there are 20 million Muslims living in Russia and the visit will further strengthen the relationship between Muslims.

April 17, 2023: The deputy prime minister of Afghanistan's interim government, Abdul Ghani Baradar, said Kazakhstan is ready to reopen the Afghan embassy and consulate soon.

April 18, 2023: Japanese ambassador to Afghanistan, Takashi Okada, met with Deputy Prime Minister Mawlavi Abdul Salam Hanafi to discuss Afghanistan's challenges. During the meeting, Deputy Minister Hanafi emphasized the need for understanding and dialogue to solve the existing problems in the country.

April 18, 2023: The United Nations deputy secretary-general Amina Mohammed said that the organization plans to arrange a conference in the coming days to discuss granting recognition to Afghanistan's Taliban, stressing the need for engagement with the fundamentalist authorities.

April 18, 2023: The United Nations is ready to take the "heartbreaking" decision to pull out of Afghanistan in May if it can't persuade the Taliban to let local women work for the organization, the head of the U.N. Development Program said.

April 19, 2023: The top inspector general for Afghanistan accused the Biden administration of stonewalling his efforts to procure records about assistance to the country since the U.S. military evacuation, warning that American taxpayer dollars were probably ending up in the hands of the Taliban.

April 19, 2023: "The terrorist threat environment in Afghanistan has deteriorated dramatically since August 2021 – and it is getting worse," Nathan Sales, a former State Department counterterrorism coordinator, made a statement.

April 20, 2023: A UN-convened meeting on Afghanistan next month will not focus on the possible international recognition of the Taliban administration, a UN spokesperson stressed after comments by the deputy UN chief sparked concerns and confusion.

April 20, 2023: Pakistan's ministry of defense submitted a report to Supreme court and hoped that the recent understanding among China, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan to counter terrorism would produce better results in six to eight months.

April 21, 2023: Vedant Patel, the deputy spokesperson for the US Department of State, said any discussion at the UN meeting about recognizing the Taliban administration would be unacceptable to Washington.

April 21, 2023: Qatar sent nearly 60 tons of educational materials and food aid to Afghanistan as part of its ongoing efforts to promote education in the crisis-hit country.

April 22, 2023: India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said that India is looking "positively" at the meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan to be hosted by UN chief Antonio Guterres in Doha next month.

April 22, 2023: Sheikh Hibatullah Akhundzada, supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA,) said that he would not allow foreign interference in the Islamic governance system in Afghanistan.

April 22, 2023: "Solving the problems of the oppressed people of Afghanistan by forming an inclusive government representing all ethnic groups, religions and people of Afghanistan

are emphasized and supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran,” Ebrahim Raisi, president of Iran said in a statement.

April 23, 2023: Afghanistan has become a significant coordination hub for the Islamic State as the terrorist organization plans attacks across Europe and Asia and engages in “aspirational plotting” against the U.S., a leaked Pentagon document revealed.

April 24, 2023: The Islamic Emirate’s deputy spokesman Bilal Karimi said the security of all diplomats and diplomatic missions in the country is ensured and that countries can continue their diplomatic activities in Afghanistan without any concerns. “We hope that no country, including Saudi Arabia, will have any concerns in our country and that they will be present in our country without facing any problems.” said Karimi.

April 24, 2023: The Taliban senior spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that “Some Western media published reports that a certified document of the U.S. Ministry of Defense shows that Afghanistan has become a so-called center of terrorism; we strongly reject this claim,” Mujahid tweeted.

April 25, 2023: The Islamic State leader behind the 2021 Kabul airport suicide bombing that killed about 180 people including 13 US service members has been killed by the Taliban, according to US officials.

April 25, 2023: The Afghan Taliban are ready to cooperate with the US in combating the Islamic State (IS) as they see jihadists ‘a threat to their own powerbase,’ Washington Post reported.

April 25, 2023: In response to a meeting of a number of Afghans in exile in Vienna, the interim spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid of Afghanistan said that such meetings are not in the interests of Afghanistan and that people who attend such events abroad have lost their “prestige” inside the country.

April 25, 2023: Rina Amiri, the US special envoy for women, girls and human rights in Afghanistan, said that the US would not have a normal relationship With the Taliban without respect for human rights.

April 25, 2023: Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the administrative deputy prime minister, met with Cihad Erginay, the Turkish ambassador in Kabul, and spoke that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) wants good relations with all foreign governments.

April 25, 2023: Naseer Ahmad Faiq, the Chargé d’Affaires of Afghanistan Permanent Mission to the United Nations, said that the recognition of Afghanistan’s de facto regime is not on the agenda of the UN meeting on Afghanistan.

April 25, 2023: Turkey deported 9,000 Afghan refugees to Afghanistan since the beginning of 2023, Human Rights Watch in Turkey said.

April 26, 2023: Martin Griffiths, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said that the United Nations is urging donor countries to honor their commitments to Afghanistan. Griffiths said that donor countries had committed \$4.6 billion to Afghanistan.

April 26, 2023: Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov urged the international community to engage with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) stating “the Taliban is a reality.”

Speaking to reporters in New York after his visit to the United States, Lavrov said: “We assume that the Taliban is a reality. Talks with them on the ground are necessary.”

April 26, 2023: Former US special envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad welcomed the UN secretary general’s move to appoint a special coordinator on Afghanistan affairs and said the upcoming meeting in Doha must produce a road map for engagement with Kabul – a step that “will define the ambassador’s mission”.

April 26, 2023: Russia invited India to join group of 4 Nations on Afghanistan to bring stability to the war-torn nation.

April 26, 2023: The UN chief appointed former Turkish Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioglu as his special coordinator to provide an independent assessment of how to deal with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

April 26, 2023: The Russian Foreign Minister said that Moscow “will not recognize the de facto government unless it fulfils its internationally recognized obligations.”

April 28, 2023: Amnesty International said that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted a resolution condemning the ban on women working for the organization in the right direction but has failed to restore the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.

April 28, 2023: The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CST) said that during its 37th meeting of the Working Group on Afghanistan there was a detailed exchange of views on the situation in Afghanistan. The participants noted the persistence of unfavorable trends in the security situation, including the growth of terrorist and drug threats emanating from the territory of this country. It was noted that Afghanistan was still in a difficult economic situation and the Afghan people were facing problems in the social and humanitarian sphere.”

April 28, 2023: Addressing the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) defense ministers’ meeting in New Delhi, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said that extremist groups in Afghanistan have expanded their activities in neighboring countries.

April 28, 2023: Lee Kyung-chul, South Korea’s special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, met with officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme, and other organizations, to talk about South Korea’s humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and its refugees in neighboring nations.

April 28, 2023: The U.N. Security Council unanimously denounced the Taliban administration’s prohibition on Afghan women working for the U.N. in Afghanistan. It urged Taliban officials to “swiftly reverse” a crackdown on women’s and girls’ rights.

April 28, 2023: The Human Rights Watch in a new statement said that Afghanistan’s Special Envoys should hold firm line on rights during their Doha meet. Meanwhile, in a letter to the United Nations Secretary-General, 81 Afghan activists and academicians, called for the cancellation of the Doha meeting.

April 29, 2023: Barbara Woodward, the UK ambassador to the United Nations stated that the Taliban’s recent decision to ban Afghan female staffers of the UN is a clear violation of the basic principles of the United Nations Charter, including the principle of non-discrimination.

- April 30, 2023:** According to a statement, the IEA said there was no truth in Sergei Shoigu's comments made during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) meeting of defense ministers. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan not only maintains security and stability in Afghanistan after years of war, but also considers security and stability in the region as a helper in its economy-oriented foreign policy and does not want security threats to exist in any way," the IEA's statement read.
- May 01, 2023:** Representatives from approximately 25 countries and NGOs, including those from the United States, China, and Russia, as well as significant European aid contributors and important neighbors like Pakistan, were invited to the two days of talks by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.
- May 01, 2023:** Japanese Ambassador to Kabul Takashi Okada for the first time since the IEA's takeover in August 2021, traveled to Kandahar province and met with local officials and a number of traders in the province.
- May 01, 2023:** The Afghanistan Foreign Ministry said the Chinese Embassy in Kabul will resume issuing visas to Afghan citizens in two days. This came after numerous calls from Afghan business owners.
- May 01, 2023:** According to the provincial authorities of Kandahar, an international company began officially exporting natural gas from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan. Mohammad Yunus Mohmand, the head of the country's Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said the gas transfer from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan is a crucial milestone in economic development.
- May 01, 2023:** Suhail Shaheen, head of the political office of Taliban in Qatar, said that he met with the director of Afghanistan and Pakistan desk of the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office of the United Kingdom and the Special Envoy of China for Afghanistan in Doha.
- May 02, 2023:** A United Nations Security Council committee agreed to allow the Taliban's interim foreign minister, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, to travel to Pakistan from Afghanistan to meet with Pakistani and Chinese counterparts, according to news reports.
- May 02, 2023:** The UN convened two days of discussions in Doha about how to deal with the Taliban's de facto rulers and put pressure on them to end the prohibition on girls and women working and attending school. During the discussions, Pascale Baeriswyl, the ambassador of Switzerland, said that the situation in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime is a "very difficult dilemma" to deal with.
- May 02, 2023:** The Deputy Spokesperson of the US Department of State rejected the findings of the SIGAR report and said that the possibility of the Taliban using US aid is not real. Vedant Patel, principal deputy spokesperson at the US Department of State told Afghanistan International that the mechanism of sending aid and cooperating with relief organizations is such that the Taliban de facto authorities cannot use the aid.
- May 02, 2023:** An international conference on Afghanistan organized by the United Nations ended in the Qatari capital with no formal acknowledgment of the Taliban, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said it was not the right time for him to directly engage with the Afghan rulers.

- May 03, 2023:** After the two days of UN-led talks between 25 nations and groups of representatives, focusing on issues related to Afghanistan, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres told reporters in Doha, that the international organizations will never be silent in the face of a systematic attack on women and girls' rights.
- May 03, 2023:** The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the United Nations will stay in Afghanistan to deliver life-saving aid to millions of desperate Afghans despite the Taliban's restrictions on female employees, and the limited funding the organization is faced with.
- May 04, 2023:** U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West said that participants in the Doha meeting agreed that political dialogue among Afghans is a central part of the solution to all challenges.
- May 04, 2023:** The foreign ministers of India, Russia and Pakistan at the Shanghai Cooperation meeting called for a representative government in Afghanistan and the protection of women's rights.
- May 05, 2023:** Shahabuddin Delawar, the interim acting minister of mines and petroleum of Afghanistan, met with Cihad Erginay, the Turkish ambassador to Kabul, to discuss various issues, including investment opportunities.
- May 05, 2023:** Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirmonovich Mirziyoyev and his German counterpart, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, discussed the security situation in Afghanistan and the threat posed by Daesh.
- May 06, 2023:** Interim Public Health Minister, Deputy Minister of Finance Mawlavi Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzada, and a few other officials of Afghanistan travelled to Iran to attend the G5 conference, according to a statement from the Public Health Ministry.
- May 06, 2023:** The United Nations said it will continue to keep Afghan female employees working from home after the recent ban on Afghan women working for the global organization.
- May 06, 2023:** Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang proposed that coordination efforts for the reconstruction of Afghanistan should be stepped up, he said while meeting with Pakistani President Arif Alvi in Islamabad.
- May 06, 2023:** Pakistan's chairman Senate Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Resources, Senator Abdul Qadir, said the strategic dialogue between the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan, China and Afghanistan is very important and welcomed to establish an atmosphere of trust and cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan for regional peace and stability.
- May 07, 2023:** Foreign ministers at the tripartite meeting between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China in Islamabad emphasized the need to strengthen regional economic relations and stability in the country.
- May 07, 2023:** Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang called on the Taliban's de facto authorities to form an inclusive government and respect the rights of all people of Afghanistan.
- May 07, 2023:** Some members of the US House of Representatives criticized the UN's position to continue operating in Afghanistan without its female staff. They called the continuation

of humanitarian aid only for men, a serious punishment for Afghan women and girls, who have been completely erased from public life.

- May 08, 2023:** Afghanistan, China and Pakistan have collectively underscored the critical importance of trilateral cooperation in promoting the objective of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.
- May 08, 2023:** The ambassador of Japan in Afghanistan said during a trip to Kandahar province that the political representation of his country will remain in Afghanistan and that Tokyo will continue to support this country.
- May 09, 2023:** Zabiullah Mujahid, interim Afghan government's spokesman, dismissed claims made in the latest report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) about the functioning of courts and the enforcement of Sharia in the country.
- May 09, 2023:** Fiona Frazer, the Human Rights Chief of the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, said in a statement that the Taliban's corporal punishment is against international law. She urged the Taliban leadership to halt all executions immediately.
- May 09, 2023:** The foreign ministers of Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen trilateral cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and jointly extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan.
- May 11, 2023:** Wang Wenbin, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, announced that for the first time, the Taliban has given a written pledge to not allow terrorists like the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) to operate from Afghanistan.
- May 12, 2023:** Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed Abdulrahman Jassim Al Thani, arrived in Kandahar and met with officials of interim Afghan government, including Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund.
- May 12, 2023:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan announced that 125 tons of humanitarian aid including medicine, medical supplies, food and textile products were delivered to Afghanistan.
- May 13, 2023:** Russian Special Presidential Representative for Afghanistan and Director of the Foreign Ministry's Second Asian Department Zamir Kabulov said that the Doha meeting did not open any good prospects for resolving Afghanistan issues.
- May 13, 2023:** The Coordination Office for the Trans-Afghan railway project was inaugurated in Tashkent's capital city of Uzbekistan. The Trans-Afghan Railway Coordination Office was established to facilitate project implementation.
- May 13, 2023:** The UN Chief, Antonio Guterres, in a Tweet said, "We must not remain silent in the face of targeted attacks against women and girls anywhere in the world."
- May 15, 2023:** Nooruddin Azizi, the Minister of Trade and Industry of interim Afghan government met with Cihad Erginay, the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Afghanistan, and his accompanying delegation, and discussed the expansion of trade relations between the two countries.
- May 15, 2023:** Taliban's governor for the northern Balkh Province, Hajji Mohammad Yosouf Wafa, met with the Consul General and senior diplomats of six regional countries in Mazar-e-Sharif.

- May 16, 2023:** The Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate for Political Affairs, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, met with the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, and her accompanying delegation in Kabul. He stressed that "based on the recent significant achievements and developments on various grounds, the international community should have constructive and positive engagement with the Islamic Emirate".
- May 16, 2023:** The acting minister of Mines and Petroleum of interim Afghan government, Shahabuddin Delawar, met with the United Nations Secretary and advisor Tom Gragg in Kabul. According to the statement released by the ministry, both sides discussed various topics, including economic development and growth, attracting foreign investors to the country's mines, and the repatriation of Afghan refugees.
- May 16, 2023:** An Iranian delegation led by Hussein Yahyawi, the country's consul general in Mazar-e-Sharif, met with the governor of the Kunduz province to discuss commerce and tourism-related matters.
- May 18, 2023:** The United Kingdom decreased its humanitarian aid to Afghanistan from £246 million to £100 this year, according to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI), the independent body responsible for scrutiny of UK aid.
- May 18, 2023:** In a telephone conversation, Afghan acting Foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, and his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir Abdullahian, Foreign Minister of Iran, held talks over the expansion of cooperation in several sectors, including trade, electricity, railway, border, water issues, and the release of Afghan prisoners in Iran.