The presentations and subsequent discussions in Working Group 4 were built around issues concerning India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan (and the broader region in general). Specifically, they focused on: (i) Prospects for a stable and peaceful political, economic, and security transition in Afghanistan and the role of regional actors in ensuring this; and the potential impact of these transitions on regional stability; (ii) concrete steps that can be taken to make forward movement on bilateral political and economic relations between India and Pakistan in the short to medium term; and (iii) specific proposals for forward movement on the Kashmir dispute. The group included some 28 attendees, including scientists, diplomats, scholars, and peace activists from Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China, the US, Canada, Russia, UK, and Turkey. The group sought constructive approaches and, when possible, viable solutions in order to create a follow-on document to use for the consideration of policy makers as well as Pugwash’s work in South Asia.

**Afghanistan, its upcoming transitions, and the impact on regional stability**

The group accorded significant time to the discussion on Afghanistan. The discussion kicked off with an analysis of the current situation. Ultimately, six topics/questions were considered key:

- Regional proxy wars in Afghanistan and the potential for them to continue; and its potential impact on post-2014 Afghanistan and the region
- What can the regional countries do to support Afghan elections?
- What are the prospects for successful political reconciliation in Afghanistan? What could a regional role be in moving it forward?
- If the economic situation is truly as grim as some participants suggested, how best can the situation be revived?
- The linkage between presence of international forces and the insurgency
- U.S. plans for post-2014 Afghanistan and uncertainty surrounding troop numbers; credibility of the international community’s assistance pledges, etc.
There seemed to be a general agreement on broad themes. Everyone supported a stable and peaceful Afghanistan and reiterated that a failure to achieve this will have serious repercussions, not only for the Afghans but also for regional countries – most of all, Pakistan. Urgency to fast track the peace process comprising of integration and reconciliation with the support of regional actors was conveyed. The group members argued for establishment of a comprehensive dialogue process at three levels – local, regional and international. All participants fully supported the need for all political processes to be Afghan-led and for regional countries to support, but not interfere, in the efforts. There was also a consensus on further integrating Afghanistan into the South Asian economy through increased regional trade and connectivity. All participants wished for the development related progress made in Afghanistan to be kept intact even though the opinion seemed open to an internal Afghan renegotiation of the Afghan constitution.

As soon as one goes beyond these broad areas of convergence however, there seems to be little clarity on how specifically to achieve most of these goals. The general mood in the room was decidedly pessimistic even though most participants agreed that the international community had contributed significantly to development and social improvement in Afghanistan. There is a serious concern however that the progress made in the last decade may not hold unless a number of structural impediments are addressed. Some of the practical obstacles to peace identified included: lack of coordination among local, regional and international players; and lack of neutrality by regional and international actors; dependence on a war economy; growing ethnic tensions spilling over into violent conflict; and rampant corruption and lack of accountability of the Afghan government.

There was an in-depth discussion on the question of political reconciliation in Afghanistan. As the situation stands today, the chances of a final deal on reconciliation seem slim. Fundamental differences of positions were apparent in various shades of opinion from Afghanistan and what it would/should take to create an inclusive arrangement comprising of all Afghan political factions, including the Taliban. The debate on the nature, framework, and viability of an intra-Afghan dialogue was inconclusive; everyone wants an Afghan-led process but without much clarity on how that is to be handled specifically and what role regional actors could play to make it happen. The mutual suspicions among some of the key regional and international actors are real. Uncertainty is dictating policies; this could further harden stances and fuel proxy wars as regional states hedge their bets.

Perhaps nowhere is the difference of opinion among Afghan and other regional representatives more stark than on the role of the coalition forces. Views ranged from considering coalition forces as the main reason for the perpetuation of the insurgency to those arguing that a hasty withdrawal of these forces would plunge Afghanistan into further chaos. Those holding the former view are also skeptical about the international coalition’s plan for the drawdown of troops in 2014 and believe that the U.S. may still want to keep military bases for the foreseeable future. This would spell the failure of any potential reconciliation with the Taliban according to them. On the other hand are those who believe that U.S. is not interested in maintaining a large presence. The bilateral security agreement (BSA) between the U.S. and Afghanistan will be an important instrument that will allow minimalist presence.

On the economy, the optimistic take is that Afghanistan’s mineral wealth will be sufficient to allow it to grow. Yet, others argued based on current statistics that the economic growth, largely driven by the “war”, will likely be unable to sustain the economic transition next
year. An economic collapse it was agreed will radiate negativity beyond Afghanistan’s borders and affect Pakistan first and foremost.

As for the political transition, there was universal consensus on the need to make the 2014 Afghan elections successful even though there was recognition that the electoral process may not be perfect. The lack of credibility of the previous Afghan elections was recalled and participants suggested the need for a positive role by neighboring countries to allow the elections to proceed smoothly and for mechanisms to ensure fairness and transparency. To be sure, much hinges on Kabul’s ability to get through the political transition smoothly.

**Policy Recommendations:**

- Consolidation of rule of law, strengthening of democratic culture, and inclusion of all political factions in Afghan society is necessary for the political process to mature;
- International community must continue to provide assistance in the social and economic sectors. Specifically, the agriculture sector and regional integration were highlighted as key areas of focus;
- SAARC needs to play a more active role for integration of Afghanistan into South Asia’s regional economy;
- Regional actors need to play a positive role in helping Afghanistan’s political transition. They need to recognize the diversity and plurality of Afghan society and only facilitate the process of an intra-Afghan dialogue;
- The regional actors and broader international community must develop a comprehensive plan and model for their engagement for strengthening peace and reconciliation process before the 2014 deadline for international troop drawdown. The process must be Afghan-led, inclusive in its representation and supported by the international community;
- Efforts must be made to continue the reconciliation with the Taliban at a neutral venue. The Doha Process is the best hope and needs to be revived;
- Far more transparency is needed in the dealings of the regional actors to overcome the trust deficit among them. Non-interference arrangements under international guarantees need to be considered;
- Intelligence agencies of key foreign actors in Afghanistan need to have a dialogue to end the intelligence battles that continue to destabilize Afghanistan;
- More ethnic representation from Afghanistan for major conferences such as Pugwash would be fruitful to get a holistic view of the situation and to mainstream neglected voices; [The group noted the absence of Iranian and CAR participants in the working group and desired that they be included in future discussions]
- Track-II workshops on initiatives like the Silk Road (regional integration possibilities in general) to produce concrete ideas should be considered;
- All parties to the conflict in Afghanistan must respect international humanitarian law in their conduct;

**The state of India-Pakistan relations**

The session on India-Pakistan relations assessed the state of the bilateral relationship and examined the short and medium terms prospects of improving ties between the two states. In particular, the session focused on four issues:

i. Assessment of the bilateral political relationship
ii. Crisis management on the LoC and IB
iii. Future of Indo-Pak economic relationship
iv. Resolving the outstanding conflicts (Sir Creek and Siachen)

One of the major concerns some participants had was the impact of the upcoming Indian Parliamentary elections on the bilateral dialogue. While some participants argued that there is unlikely to be any real improvement in Indo-Pak relations till the new government is formed in New Delhi, others opined that the nature of the dialogue process is unlikely to undergo any significant change irrespective of who takes power in New Delhi. While some participants argued that the issue of Pakistan is likely to play a major role in the upcoming elections in India, others pointed out that the Indian political parties are most likely to focus on various internal issues in the run up to the 2014 elections. The elections will however bring a certain level of caution in the mind of the Indian establishment in moving ahead on dialogue with Pakistan.

Some participants made the argument that we should not put too much emphasis on building trust as a prerequisite for sustainable peace between the two sides. Instead, the focus should be on clearly identifying what is doable and creating mechanisms in achieving them. Others disagreed though and argued that game-changing initiatives were required to put India and Pakistan on the positive path.

There was unanimous agreement among the participants that fostering an economic relationship between the two sides can go a long way in normalizing their relationship. However, it is not moving forward due to lack of political will and technical problems. It was further pointed out that normal trading relations must begin right away rather than waiting for Pakistan to grant MFN status to India.

One of the major concerns of the Indian participants was the perceived inability of the Pakistani establishment to bring down the hostility along the LoC and IB. Some Pakistani participants argued that the circumstances of the events on the LoC were not clear and took exception to blaming Pakistan. The very fact that the meeting between the two Prime Ministers took place on the sidelines of United Nations General Assembly in New York is itself very significant. However, there has not been much momentum in taking the process forward thereafter.

On the nuclear dimension, it was pointed out that Pakistan’s investment in tactical (battlefield) nuclear weapons and India’s initiatives to develop missile defense systems is counterproductive to regional stability. The group felt that the two countries should have a more thorough and serious dialogue on nuclear issues.

Policy Recommendations:

- There is no military solution to the problems between India and Pakistan. The outstanding issues between the two sides can only be resolved through a sustained dialogue process;
- Promotion of people-to-people contacts is a must for bringing peace and stability to the region. India and Pakistan should liberalize their visa regimes so that more people can travel to each side;
- More trade routes between India and Pakistan should be opened;
- There was a proposal to link the electricity grids of the Indian and Pakistani Punjabs so as to share electricity between the two countries;
• There should be regular dialogues between the two militaries. The group recommended instituting NDU (Pakistan) and NDC (India) exchanges through annual group visits including seminars. A beginning can be made by inviting retired officers of respective forces as guest speakers;

• The Army Chiefs of both countries should meet each other at regular intervals to discuss the functioning of military CBMs. Moreover, the DGMOs should meet face to face in order to deescalate the situation on the LoC whenever there is a crisis. When the DGMOs meet to discuss ceasefire violations and other related military CBMs, it is desirable to include foreign service personnel in such meetings;

• Intelligence chiefs of the two countries should also meet periodically;

• The two sides should explore the possibility of conducting joint India-Pakistan investigation of ceasefire violations;

• There is a need to seriously address the nuclear dimension in the relations between the two sides. To start with, the basic understanding of issues like minimum deterrence, sufficiency, their use of the nuclear jargon needs to be mutually agreed upon.

**Jammu and Kashmir: Pathways ahead**

The final session of the Working Group was on Jammu and Kashmir. The group briefly discussed some of the specific proposals for resolving the Kashmir conflict. The two major questions that the session addressed were:

i. Is there a possibility to return to the formula being discussed by the two governments in 2006-07 or will the two sides have to start afresh?

ii. Does this formula continue to have some traction in Islamabad today?

The group expressed optimism in moving forward with four-point formula put forward and negotiated upon in 2006-07. Most of the participants were of the view that the four-point “Musharraf” formula has by far been the best proposal. It was however pointed out that the formula must be seen as a framework and not as a final solution in itself; this was its original intent as well. While a number of people from J&K are receptive towards the formula, it was also pointed out that this was presented to the people of J&K as a fait accompli and hence was not inclusive enough.

Some participants argued that adequate emphasis must be given to neutral issues such as the impact of climate change in Kashmir and innovative management of natural resources, among others. Several members of the group pointed out that no solution to the Kashmir conflict is possible if India and Pakistan do not show the necessary political will. Some worried that both India and Pakistan seem comfortable with the status quo which will be counterproductive in the long term. Ultimately, the group agreed that the Kashmir problem can only be resolved by dialogue and political will and that this needed a cognitive shift in Indian and Pakistani thinking on the Kashmir question.

**Policy Recommendations:**

• People of Jammu and Kashmir should be made part of any process to resolve the Kashmir conflict

• The four point formula that was under consideration during 2006-2007 should be revived as it can provide an effective road map to peace in J&K
• India and Pakistan should explore the possibility of creating a special economic zone in Jammu and Kashmir with duty-free access to India and Pakistan. Commerce along the LoC could help in creating jobs and economic growth within communities and help establish stronger ties.

• The existing roadblocks to cross-LoC trade and travel (including banking and telecommunications) should be removed. The establishment of a proper banking system is also key to foster transit trade from Indian Kashmir through Pakistan.

• More trade and travel routes across the LoC should be opened

• It would be desirable to support meetings among the political leaders from all regions of J&K in a third country. They could discuss the potential pathways ahead in resolving the Kashmir conflict and submit their recommendations to the respective governments. Pugwash could bring these leaders together, as it has in the past.

• There is a need to bring more representative voices from Kashmir to neutral meetings such as Pugwash.