

Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs

1995 Nobel Peace Prize

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The Secretary General

Report of the Pugwash Meeting in Islamabad, 22 November 2016 (a short report by Paolo Cotta Ramusino)

Pugwash organized a meeting in Islamabad between a selected group of Afghans and Pakistanis to discuss the status of their bilateral relations, and the possible ways in which such relations could be improved.

Nobody has claimed that the status of these bilateral relations is a satisfactory one; the need for improving relations has been recognized by everyone, even though there are different visions about what should be done. The idea of organizing meetings on improving Afghanistan-Pakistan relations was, in any case, considered useful by all the participants, and in fact, many participants stressed the need of holding such meetings on a regular basis, with periodicity in the range of every few months (e.g., four months).

Issue # 1. Managing the Durand line and the region around it

There are of course different visions of the Durand line, either as a permanent border or as a division line imposed on a disputed territory. But for the purpose of improving relations, what is more relevant is the issue of the management of the region around the Durand line. Many pointed out that closing the Durand line is neither possible nor helpful. People of the same tribes live on both sides of the Durand line, and in fact, as someone pointed out, the tribes themselves could be helpful in improving relations, despite the existence of serious tensions on both sides of the Durand line. Border management, carried out in a cooperative way, could be helpful. On the other hand, the issuing of Pakistani Computerized National Identity Cards (CNIC) to people living on the Afghan side of the Durand line, as has been pointed out, is a dangerous interference, and an element that increases tensions.

Issue #2. Refugees

Many Afghan refugees (about 1.5 million) live in Pakistan, and have done so for many years. Many of them have acquired the right to citizenship, but often this right is denied, as shown recently by the case of Sharbat Gula, who was arrested in Peshawar. The forced repatriation of refugees, including those who were born or had lived for a long time in Pakistan, is an injustice that is a source of tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moreover, the expulsion of Afghan refugees who have been

allowed to live in Pakistan for the last 15 years, is not likely to have any positive effect on security in the region around the Durand line.

Issue #3. Non-state actors

There are many non-state actors in the region. The Afghan Taliban (TTA) and the TTP have been mentioned several times, even though it has been pointed out by several participants that it makes little sense to equate TTA and TTP. A participant said that an agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan could be made, in the sense that Afghanistan should forbid the TTP based on Afghan territory to operate inside Pakistan, and vice versa, that Pakistan should forbid the TTA based on Pakistani territory to operate inside Afghanistan. Others pointed out, though, that this proposal is, at once, neither feasible nor useful from the point of view of bringing about peace in the region. Afghanistan does not have an effective control on TTP when this organization is operating from Afghan territory. Most importantly, Pakistan does not have the power to deliver the TTA to Afghanistan, and so the Afghan government should find, by itself, an effective way of dealing with the TTA and bringing about peace in the country. It has also been said that it is so very easy to blame Pakistan for the failure of Afghanistan to deal effectively with the TTA. In this sense, quite often Pakistan becomes a scapegoat for the failure to bring peace to Afghanistan. And it was also mentioned that the Afghan Taliban are not really listening to Pakistan.

Issue #4. On the peace process in Afghanistan

There is a very strong common desire in Afghanistan to have peace after about 40 years of war. Some participants pointed out that a crucial element that contributed to the conflict with the Afghan Taliban was the exclusion of the Taliban from the plan for the reconstruction of Afghanistan (Bonn 2001). There have been, nevertheless, several attempts to bring about national reconciliation in Afghanistan. The Taliban's long-standing opposition to peace talks is certainly a relevant factor, but it must also be recognized that there are interests in Kabul that are somehow against peace, since there are beneficiaries of the war economy, as a few participants pointed out. It was also mentioned that the Americans themselves have, on several occasions, contributed to making things worse, and, in this framework, the recent killing of Mullah Mansour was mentioned. Since a complete victory *over* the Taliban, as well as any victory *of* the Taliban, is impossible, a negotiated peace is the only realistic option. One might then ask the question: can Afghanistan and Pakistan cooperate to facilitate a negotiated peace with the Taliban? There is some hope, but in the past there have been some serious disappointments and discouragement.

Issue #5. Afghanistan -Pakistan relations and the India factor

It is only in relatively recent times that relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have become seriously problematic. It was pointed out that up until 40 years ago, there was no recollection of bad relations. Even the Durand line was an issue that was somehow put aside for several decades. But after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan was induced by the US to help support the non-state actors (Mujahedin) in fighting the Soviets. This was the start of Pakistan's recent active involvement in Afghanistan. Pakistani support of the Taliban was later also a critical step. Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan were also worsened because of India's involvement, mainly as an economic partner of Afghanistan. While Pakistan resents the presence of India in Afghanistan, Afghanistan claims, with some good reason, that it has the right to develop economic relations with any country it wishes. In any case, different perceptions of Afghan-Indian relations are evidently an aggravating factor for Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. One participant noted that it was remarkable, in this framework, to see Afghans supporting India in India-Pakistan cricket games.

A few final remarks

The main issue in Afghan-Pakistan relations is the issue of peace in Afghanistan. Can Pakistan contribute positively to this effort? The idea underlining the Quadrilateral Consultation Group—namely, that the US and China would push Pakistan to push the Taliban to talk with the Afghan Government—did not work. Arm-twisting did not appear to be the solution. But Pakistan could facilitate talks between the Taliban and other Afghans, and contribute to generating some accommodation to peace talks that could help relieve Afghanistan from the burden of a 40-year-long war.

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**Pugwash Meeting
Final Participant List
Marriott Hotel, Islamabad, 22 November 2016**

Afghan delegation:

1. Dr. Anwarulhaq Ahady, Politician/opposition leader "New National Front"/former minister of finance and trade
2. Dr. Ghulam Farouq Azam, politician/academician/Jihadi figure
3. Dr. Jafar Mahdavi, MP/University lecturer
4. Haji Rohullah Wakil, politician/tribal leader/Jihadi leader
5. Ziaulhaq Amarkhil, chairman political stability society
6. Mohammad Sidiq Patman, politician/former deputy minister of education
7. Mohammad Hasan Haqyar, peace activist/writer/political analyst
8. Faridoon Khan Mumand, MP/tribal leader
9. Ms. Safia Siddiqi, writer/women rights and peace activist/former MP
10. Wazir Khan Zadran, peace activist
11. Mohammad Wali Akbarzai, peace activist
12. Painda Mohammad Hekmat Safi, from civil society
13. Dr. Ghairat Baheer, director of the political commission of Hezbe Islami Afghanistan HIA (Hekmatyar)

Pakistani delegation

1. Gen. Talat Masood
2. Hon. Sherry Rehman
3. Amb. Aziz Ahmad Khan
4. Gen. Asad Durrani
5. Amb. Qazi Humayun
6. Amb. Mohammad Sadiq
7. Amb. Ayaz Wazir
8. Brig. Saad Mohammad Khan
9. Rahimullah Yousufzai
10. Amb. Rustam Shah Mohmand
11. Amb. Tariq Azizuddin
12. Brig. Secondar Ali
13. Juma Khan Sufi
14. Khalid Aziz, former Chief Secretary KP, currently Head of Ripport, a think tank)
15. Raof Hassan, Director Regional Peace Institute

Pugwash:

Prof. Paolo Cotta Ramusino, Secretary General, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs