

**Sources of  
Tension in  
Afghanistan  
and Pakistan**

A Regional  
Perspective



QUARTERLY MONITORING BRIEF

Report No. 2

March 1–May 8, 2016



China and Russia are more inclined to support the Afghan government militarily.

# Afghanistan: Monitoring the Key Regional Powers

Malaiz Daud



The collapse of all mechanisms to negotiate a settlement with the Taliban is set to increase bloodshed.



Efforts on the regional level to realize transit projects continue.



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**CIDOB Sources of Tension in Afghanistan & Pakistan: A Regional Perspective (STAP RP)  
Quarterly Reports on “Monitoring the Key Regional Powers”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

*The purpose of this series of quarterly monitoring reports (2016) is to monitor and track the actions, public statements of five key STAP RP regional actors (India, Iran, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia) on Afghanistan; the development of, and their participation in relevant international and regional discussion meetings, including the Istanbul Process, Heart of Asia, RECCA, SCO; the five key regional actors' economic decisions and agreements, including, but not limited to, the energy and infrastructure sectors, which have implications for the identified sources of tension in Afghanistan with regional implications (see CIDOB STAP RP Mapping Document at [www.cidobafpakproject.com](http://www.cidobafpakproject.com)).*

*The Sources of Tension (SoTs) identified in the Mapping Document are used as reference points to determine relevance and are specifically monitored in Section 1.*

*The content includes short summaries by topic and by country, on actions taken, public statements made, regional meetings held and how these develop as mechanisms for dialogue, and the participation of the key regional powers in relevant regional and international events, as well as in subgroups of international fora, such as the Heart of Asia. Economic activity and investments by the key regional powers in Afghanistan are also monitored, together with progress on, and shifting alliances in planned or actual economic projects. A short subsection on commentary from the media (in English) is included in each section.*

*Section 2 focuses on the key regional powers. Section 3 looks at regional dynamics and cross-cutting issues; and conclusions on the events of the past quarter are presented in Section 4. Section 5 presents publications by think tanks and research institutions in the region.*

## 1. THE CONTEXT

### Governance

- Head of Afghanistan's [Independent Election Commission resigns](#) two years after conducting the contested presidential election.
- Atta Mohammad Noor, the strongman ruling the important Balkh province, says he cannot be [removed by force](#), challenging president's constitutional authority.
- Secretary of State, John Kerry, visits Kabul to assert that the agreement of the current National Unity Government (NUG) is not for [two years but the five years](#) presidential period as foreseen in the constitution, [irking a number of politicians](#) including former president, Hamid Karzai.
- The NUG finally has an [attorney general](#), as the lower house of parliament approves seasoned human rights activist, Farid Hamidi for the post.
- President Ghani [says](#) that "Afghanistan is committed to reforms - we want to show visible gains at the two conferences [in Brussels and Warsaw] so our people see change is coming."

### Security

- Afghanistan's [Air Force Chief](#) is buoyed by recent acquisitions of combat aircrafts and claims his men can hit a target anywhere in the country any time.
- Reports of [Mullah Qayyum Zakir's](#), a prominent Taliban leader, joining Mullah Akhtar Mansoor's faction are rebuked by a rival Taliban faction.
- [Taliban create a smartphone app](#) to disseminate their messages and videos but it is soon taken down by the Google Play Store.
- In order to further consolidate his power, Taliban's supreme leader appoints [Mullah Omar's brother and son](#) to important positions within the movement.
- Hizb-e-Islami of Afghanistan, a smaller insurgent faction, are in talks with the Kabul government for agreeing a deal that will see its leader, [Gulbuddin Hikmatyar](#) come back to Kabul.
- Former Guantanamo detainee and powerful Taliban commander, [Mullah Qayyum Zakir](#), has urged the movement to negotiate a settlement with the US and Afghan governments.
- According to reports in local media in Pakistan, [Haqqani Network leaders played a key role](#) in securing allegiances of Mullah Qayyum Zakir and Mullah Omar's son and brother to Taliban's new Supreme Leader.
- Taliban announce the launch of their spring offensive, named ["Operation Omari"](#) and carry out a massive coordinated attack the very next day against the Afghan security forces in the heart of Kabul.
- [Five-year operation plan](#) of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) is approved by the National Security Council in a meeting chaired by President Ghani.
- President Ghani is reportedly considering [hanging](#) some Taliban prisoners as part of his new tougher policy.

### Development

- An agreement of USD 6 million is inked between the Agricultural Development Fund and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of Afghanistan for providing [microcredits to Afghan farmers](#).
- Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, phones President Ashraf Ghani to arrange [high-level dialogue on migration](#).

### Afghanistan-Pakistan Tensions

- Former President Karzai blames Pakistan's insistence on [recognition of the Durand Line by Afghanistan](#) as an impediment to improving ties between the two countries.
- Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff [meets President Ashraf Ghani](#) in Kabul on his way back from Tajikistan, reassures of [his support for the Afghan peace process](#).
- After Pakistan fails to bring Taliban to the negotiating table, Afghan government considers [consulting](#) the US and china on the way forward, before President Ghani [declares an all-out war](#) on Taliban.
- Pakistani forces [fire rockets](#) into Afghanistan. The latter [summons](#) Pakistan's Ambassador to Kabul to object.
- After a lull, "Pakistan and Afghanistan return [to war of words](#)".
- A Gallup poll shows that [90 percent of Pakistanis](#) from all four provinces are in favor of not allowing Afghans into Pakistan without visas.
- A leader of one of the main Islamist political parties of Pakistan Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam – Samiulhaq group, says they [feel proud to support the Afghan Taliban](#).

- Afghanistan's new ambassador to Islamabad says Taliban [believe in war](#) and not peace.
- Pakistani authorities give a [three-day notice](#) to the Afghan refugees in the Torkham area along the Durand Line to return to their country or face forcible eviction.
- Afghanistan is planning to [take Pakistan to the UN Security Council](#) for its continued support to groups such as Haqqani Network and the Taliban at large.

## 2. REGIONAL POWERS



1. INDIA	Who	The Source
<b>1.1. Actions</b>		
<p>- <b>March 1, 2016</b> Indian envoy in Kabul <a href="#">honors Afghan athletes</a> who got medals in the South Asian Games, says Afghanistan's progress cannot be halted by threats and terror.</p>	Sayed Tariq Majidi	ToloneWS
<p>- <b>March 1, 2016</b> Former President <a href="#">Hamid Karzai addresses the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi</a>, attended by India's Minister of External Affairs.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Hamid Karzai
<p>- <b>March 27, 2016</b> India's Consul General in Herat <a href="#">hosts Afghan MP</a>, Mohammad Reza Khoushak.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Indian Embassy in Kabul
<p>- <b>March 30, 2016</b> India commits to provide <a href="#">USD 5 million</a> in the next five years to the Afghan Red Crescent Society for treatment of congenital heart disease in children.</p>	Official Website	The Pashtun Times
<p>- <b>April 8, 2016</b> Afghan and Indian officials discuss the delivery of the fourth and last <a href="#">Mi-25 helicopter gunship</a> to the Afghan Air Force, inauguration of the Salma Dam is also discussed in the meeting.</p>	Official Website	The Pashtun Times
<p>- <b>April 10, 2016</b> India's Envoy to Kabul <a href="#">inaugurates a research center</a> at Afghanistan's biggest private university.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Kardan University
<p>- <b>April 10, 2016</b> India's Ambassador to Afghanistan travels to <a href="#">the western Herat province</a> to discuss Salma Dam among others with local authorities.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Governor of Herat
<p>- <b>April 16, 2016</b> India's Ambassador to Kabul attends a <a href="#">panel discussion</a> on the challenges for and expectations of Afghanistan from the region.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies
<p>- <b>April 25, 2016</b> India's Consul General to Herat meets <a href="#">Governor of Farah</a> province.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Indian Consulate General in Herat
<p>- <b>April 26, 2016</b> India hosts the 16<sup>th</sup> round of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process <a href="#">Senior Officials Meeting</a> in New Delhi.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<p>- <b>May 2, 2016</b> India tightens visa controls for Afghans amid reports of <a href="#">Afghan passports</a> being used by Pakistanis.</p>	Abdi Joenda	ToloneWS
<b>1.2. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)</b>		
<p>- <b>March 3, 2016</b> India has approved <a href="#">\$156 million</a> for development of Chabahar port, denoting increase in investment.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- <b>April 12, 2016</b> Text of the <a href="#">International Transport and Transit Corridors Agreement</a> is finalized in a meeting of senior officials from India, Iran and Afghanistan, hosted by India's Ministry for External Affairs.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- <b>April 14, 2016</b> India's Ambassador to Kabul signs <a href="#">12 MoUs</a> with different Afghan ministries for projects of collective value of \$20.4 million.</p>	Official Website	The Pashtun Times
<b>1.3. Track II</b>		
<p>- <b>March 28, 2016</b> Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) and India's United Service Institute sign <a href="#">a memorandum of understanding for cooperation</a>.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies
<p>- <b>April 12, 2016</b> Indian delegates are part of the <a href="#">Chamber of Commerce and Industries</a> of SAARC delegation that hold discussions with AISS.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies
<p>- <b>April 17, 2016</b> A delegation of former Indian diplomats and Delhi Policy Group meet the former head of Afghan spy agency, <a href="#">Amrullah Saleh</a>.</p>	Official Facebook Page	The Green Trend
<p>- <b>May 3, 2016</b> Delhi-based O.P. Jindal Global University establishes a <a href="#">center for Afghanistan studies</a>.</p>	Official Website	Jindal School of International Affairs

## 2. IRAN

Who

The Source

**2.1. Actions**

<p>- <b>April 15, 2016</b> Iranian President and Afghan CEO <a href="#">meet in Istanbul</a> to discuss trade ties, Chabahar port, Afghan refugees and road and rail links.</p>	Official Website	BBC Persian
<p>- <b>April 15, 2016</b> Police in Iran arrest a suspect in the <a href="#">rape and kill case of a six-year old Afghan refugee girl</a>.</p>	Official Website	Voice of Refugees
<p>- <b>April 17, 2016</b> Amid outrage in social media about the brutal rape and killing of an Afghan refugee girl, <a href="#">Iran's Vice President, Mayor of Tehran, Chief of Police of Tehran</a> and other officials promise swift and unbiased action against the perpetrator of the crime.</p>	Official Website	BBC Persian
<p>- <b>April 28, 2016</b> Iran has proposed to host the next round of consultations on joint projects between India, Iran and Afghanistan <a href="#">in Tehran</a>.</p>	Official Website	Sputnik News Dari
<p>- <b>April 30, 2016</b> Iranian Ambassador to Kabul and Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs meet at the latter's office to discuss the location of a planned Afghan consulate general in Iran and Iran's plans for opening a <a href="#">cultural center in Herat</a>.</p>	Official Website	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**2.2. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)**

<p>- <b>April 10, 2016</b> The <a href="#">Chabahar port agreement</a> will go through another round of discussions between Afghanistan, Iran and India.</p>	Wahid Waissi	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- <b>April 12, 2016</b> Text of the <a href="#">International Transport and Transit Corridors Agreement</a> is finalized in a meeting of senior officials from India, Iran and Afghanistan, hosted by India's Ministry for External Affairs.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**2.3. Public Statements**

<p>- <b>April 15, 2016</b> Iran's President says his government will start the <a href="#">registration process of 1.4 million</a> Afghans who live in Iran illegally.</p>	Official Website	BBC Persian
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**2.4. Media Commentary**

<p>- <b>April 15, 2016</b> Syria War: The Afghans sent by Iran to fight for <a href="#">Assad</a></p>	Fariba Sahraei	BBC World
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3. CHINA	Who	The Source
<b>3.1. Actions</b>		
<p>- <b>March 2, 2016</b> China pledges to provide <a href="#">300 million yuan to the Afghan security forces</a> in the near future.</p>	Official Website	Mashaal Radio
<p>- <b>April 12, 2016</b> In response to a potential failure of talks between Kabul and the Taliban as well as the imminent threat posed by the IS, China has proposed to form a <a href="#">four-country security bloc</a> (China, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan).</p>	Ting Shi	Bloomberg
<p>- <b>April 12, 2016</b> China will <a href="#">train Afghan police</a> and spend \$327 million on economic aid in the country in the next year.</p>	Ting Shi	Bloomberg
<p>- <b>April 17, 2016</b> China pledges <a href="#">\$70 million</a> to support the ANDSF.</p>	Official Website	Khaama Press
<p>- <b>April 19, 2016</b> China's Foreign Minister meets the Afghan National Security Advisor in Beijing, says his government is ready to <a href="#">deepen cooperation with Afghanistan</a>.</p>	Official Website	China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- <b>April 20, 2016</b> China's <a href="#">"Legal Chief" meets the Afghan National Security Advisor</a> and says both countries should work together in realm of law enforcement.</p>	Official Website	Xinhua Net
<p>- <b>April 21, 2016</b> China's Military Chief meets the Afghan National Security Advisor and stresses on the importance of <a href="#">counter-terrorism intelligence sharing, also promises joint exercises and personnel training</a>.</p>	Official Website	China Military News
<p>- <b>May 8, 2016</b> The Center for Strategic Studies of the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Republic of China jointly convene a <a href="#">one-day seminar</a> themed "One Belt, One Road", in which Chinese envoy to Kabul participates.</p>	Official Website	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>3.2. Public Statements</b>		
<p>- <b>May 1, 2016</b> China and Pakistan intend to help the Afghan government in its <a href="#">effort to establish peace and stability</a> in Afghanistan, China's Foreign Minister and Pakistani Prime Minister's Advisor on Foreign Affairs announce.</p>	Official Website	Tolonews
<b>3.3. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)</b>		
<p>- <b>March 2, 2016</b> China and Afghanistan establish a <a href="#">joint commission</a> to assess the needs of the Afghan security forces.</p>	Official Website	Mashaal Radio
<p>- <b>April 30, 2016</b></p>	Official	Afghan



<p>China and Afghanistan are negotiating an agreement for <a href="#">export of Afghan saffron</a> to China. China has already concluded a study on the quality of the Afghan saffron.</p>	Facebook Page	Ministry of Agriculture
<p>- <b>April 30, 2016</b> Afghanistan's Council of Ministers approves a memorandum of understanding on cooperation between the Afghan National Army and the army of the <a href="#">People's Republic of China</a>.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p><b>3.4. Track II</b></p>		
<p>- <b>April 30, 2016</b> Pashto section of the China International Radio <a href="#">publishes a new book</a> in Pashto language.</p>	Official Facebook Page	CRI Pashto



4. RUSSIA	Who	The Source
<b>4.1. Actions</b>		
<p>- <b>March 1, 2016</b>  <a href="#">President Putin's Special Envoy</a> for Af-Pak meets President Ghani in Kabul to discuss cooperation in different areas of mutual interest.</p>	Official Website	Mashaal Radio
<p>- <b>March 2, 2016</b>            Third meeting of <a href="#">Afghanistan-Russia Joint Economic Commission</a> is held in Kabul, co-chaired by Russia's Deputy Minister of Energy and Afghan Finance Minister.</p>	Official Website	Afghan Ministry of Finance
<p>- <b>March 3, 2016</b>            Afghan Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock meets the Deputy Minister of Energy of Russia in Kabul, it is decided to create a <a href="#">permanent joint commission</a> for cooperation in the field of agriculture.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Minister of Agriculture
<p>- <b>April 26, 2016</b>            Former Afghan president, <a href="#">Hamid Karzai, is given a tour of the Moscow Grand Mosque</a> by its Vice Mufti.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Hamid Karzai
<p>- <b>April 26, 2016</b>            Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai <a href="#">meets with the Minister of Foreign Affairs</a> of Russia. Issues of mutual interest are discussed.</p>	Official Twitter Account	Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- <b>April 27, 2016</b>  <a href="#">Russia's Defence Minister</a> meets his Afghan counterpart on the sidelines of Moscow Conference on International Security, discusses military cooperation.</p>	Official Website	Russian Ministry of Defence
<p>- <b>April 27, 2016</b>            Afghanistan's Defence Minister and former President Hamid Karzai are invited to the <a href="#">5<sup>th</sup> Moscow International Security Conference</a>, with former delivering a speech.</p>	Official Website	Sputnik News Dari
<p>- <b>April 27, 2016</b>            Minister of Defence of Russia says he is pleased to see that <a href="#">military cooperation</a> between Russia and Afghanistan has significantly increased recently.</p>	Official Website	Sputnik News Dari
<p>- <b>April 28, 2016</b>            Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia says his government is ready to help Afghanistan to <a href="#">free itself from the menace of terrorism</a> and narcotics.</p>	Official Website	Sputnik News Dari
<b>4.2. Public Statements</b>		
<p>- <b>March 1, 2016</b>            Russia's Foreign Ministry announces <a href="#">Russia is ready to support the ANDSF</a>, including training arrangements in universities and training centers in Russia.</p>	Official Website	Mashaal Radio
<p>- <b>April 26, 2016</b>            Russian Foreign Minister <a href="#">says</a>: "Afghanistan is very close to us. Our people share sense of true friendship".</p>	Official Twitter Account	Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<p>- <b>April 27, 2016</b> Russia's Defence Minister announces an <a href="#">"intergovernmental agreement"</a> was signed in January of this year for provision of military and technical support to Afghanistan.</p>	Official Website	Russian Ministry of Defence
<p>- <b>April 27, 2016</b> President Putin's Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan says his government is gathering information on <a href="#">financial sources of ISIS in Afghanistan</a>, which will be shared with the international community once completed.</p>	Official Website	Sputnik News
<b>4.3. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)</b>		
<p>- <b>April 27, 2016</b> Russian and Afghan Defence Ministers agree to establish a joint <a href="#">committee</a> for expansion of military cooperation.</p>	Official Website	Sputnik News Dari
<p>- <b>May 7, 2016</b> Russia and Afghanistan are set to sign a <a href="#">long-term, comprehensive cooperation treaty</a>, according to Afghan President's office.</p>	Official Website	Mashaal Radio

## 5. SAUDI ARABIA

## Who

## The Source

## 5.1. Actions

- **March 1, 2016**

Saudi Ambassador to Kabul [meets with Mohammad Umer Daudzai](#), an opposition leader and a senior official under President Karzai.

Official  
Facebook  
Page

Mohammad  
Umer  
Daudzai

## 5.2. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)

- **May 3, 2016**

Office of Afghanistan's CEO reports that Saudi Arabia has agreed to issue [work permits](#) for Afghan passport holders but the Afghan government has to fulfill some of Saudi's conditions.

Official  
Website

Radio Azadi

## 5.3. Media Commentary

- **March 2, 2016**

Nuclear Red Alert. Saudi Fight-Bombers Equipped with Nuclear Warheads

Manilo  
Dinucci

Global  
Research

- **April 8, 2016**

What is Modi doing in [Riyadh](#)?

Khuldune  
Shahid

The Friday  
Times

- **April 10, 2016**

Afghanistan open for business – [lots of it](#)

Haseeb  
Haider

Khaleej  
Times

### 3. REGIONAL DYNAMICS AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

**March 1, 2016:** Sixth ministerial-level Pakistan-US Strategic Dialogue is held in Washington DC ([Link](#)).

**March 2, 2016:** Advisor in Foreign Affairs to Pakistan's Prime Minister says Afghan Taliban leaders live in Pakistan ([Link](#)).

**March 26, 2016:** Pakistan and Iran sign an agreement to boost mutual trade by ten folds in the next five years ([Link](#)).

**March 31, 2016:** Officials from Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Afghanistan and Turkey discuss technical details of the Lapis Lazuli Corridor agreement in Ankara ([Link](#)).

**April 1, 2016:** "US, Saudi Arabia join hands to sanction Pakistani entities ahead of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Riyadh" ([Link](#)).

**April 2, 2016:** A prominent German diplomat claims that an alleged Indian spy arrested in Balochistan was sold by the Taliban to the Pakistani forces ([Link](#)).

**April 3, 2016:** The Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process Fifth Counter Terrorism Confidence Building Measure Technical Group Meeting is held in Kabul, co-chaired by the Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister and the UNSG Special Representative to Afghanistan ([Link](#)).

**April 4, 2016:** India and Saudi Arabia ink five agreements including one on sharing intelligence on terrorism financing and money laundering ([Link](#)).

**April 4, 2016:** A special meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), a joint body of Afghan institutions and international donors, is convened in Kabul ahead of donor meetings in Brussels and Warsaw ([Link](#)).

**April 9, 2016:** US-Afghan Bilateral Commission meets in the presidential palace in Kabul ([Link](#)).

**April 9, 2016:** The TAPI Pipeline Investment Agreement is signed in Ashgabat by the Ministers of Petroleum of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India ([Link](#)).

**April, 13 2016:** Afghanistan's CEO participates in the 13<sup>th</sup> summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), convened in Istanbul ([Link](#)).

#### 4. SUMMARY OF TRENDS FOR THE QUARTER

With President Ghani's bilateral overtures to Pakistan and efforts to engage Pakistani allies (US, China and Saudi Arabia) faltering and in the wake of Taliban's spring offensive, he seems to have had no choice but to make a radical policy shift. His tough stand to respond to the Taliban threat has gotten him much needed political boost inside the country, especially amid a political turmoil, a weakening economy and an extremely difficult security environment.

The region, however, continues to be very favorable for the Afghan state. Russia's policy change to cease all cooperation with the US and NATO countries in Afghanistan increasingly seems to be a tactical move to put pressure on the West. The much anticipated Russia-NATO summit saw Afghanistan as the only topic on which the two sides still have consensus. Meetings between Afghan and Russian officials in this quarter furthered cooperation between the two sides. Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) were promised to receive support from Putin Administration.

On the other hand, China is unfazed by the presumed failure of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) and continued its interactions with the Afghan officials. China's willingness to provide military support to the Afghan government is further evidence of its much deeper role in Afghanistan now. China, like Russia, is very serious about its cooperation with the Afghan government to combat the militant extremist Islamic outfits.

This is all good news for India not only because it is Afghanistan's closest ally in the region but also because it has been hit the hardest by Islamist terrorist groups. India's effort to project itself in Afghanistan through development and economic cooperation continued in this quarter. With Russia and China becoming the prime drivers of military cooperation with Afghanistan in the region, Indian and Afghan governments focused their efforts on civilian cooperation.

Interactions between Iranian and Afghan authorities were very positive. With sanctions lifted, Chabahar port project could potentially become a game-changer for Afghanistan since Pakistan has practically choked Afghan transit. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, has further faded as it is battling militarily on different fronts in the Middle East and is grappling with new economic realities due to falling crude oil prices.

All in all, while things could not have been better for the Afghan government regionally, it is facing – and failing in most cases – a myriad of challenges domestically. The good news for the Afghan government – and bad for its violent opponents – is that the regional consensus for support to the current Afghan state has further solidified.

## 5. PUBLICATIONS FROM THE REGION

**March 1, 2016:** Karas, Tania. *Don't know, don't care: How Afghans won't be deterred by Europe's border restrictions*, IRIN. Available [here](#).

**March 26, 2016:** Baloch, Sobdar. *US Should Not Give Nuclear-Capable F16s to a Rogue Pakistan*, Eurasia Review. Available [here](#).

**April 13, 2016:** Mitra, Devirupa. *With Chabahar Text Finalized, India's Dream of a Road to Afghanistan Gathers Speed*, The Wire. Available [here](#).

**April 14, 2016:** Gady, Franz-Stefan. *Will the Afghan Air Force Make a Difference in the 2016 Fighting Season?*, The Diplomat. Available [here](#).

**April 14, 2016:** Osman, Borhan. *Operation Omari: Taliban Announced 2016 Spring Offensive*, Afghanistan Analyst Network (AAN). Available [here](#).

**April 25, 2016:** frolovsky, Dmitriy. *Russia's Plan for Afghanistan: Putin is preparing for worst-case scenario in Afghanistan*, The Diplomat. Available [here](#).

**April 26, 2016:** Sood, Rakesh. *Kabul's season of uncertainty*, The Hindu. Available [here](#).

**April 26, 2016:** Kureev, Artem. *Reasons to be hopeful after Russia-NATO summit*, Russia Direct. Available [here](#).

**April 26, 2016:** Gabuev, Alexander. *Did Western Sanctions Affect Sino-Russian Economic Ties?*, Carnegie Moscow Center. Available [here](#).

**April 29, 2016:** V. Pant, Harsh. *India's Challenge in Afghanistan*, Livemint. Available [here](#).

**April 29, 2016:** Nasir, Zeb Un Nisa. *Rebuilding Lives After Zarb-e-Azb?*, Jinnah Institute. Available [here](#).

**May 3, 2016:** Liuhto, Maija. *Iran's great game antagonizes natural Afghan allies*, Middle East Eye. Available [here](#).

**May 4, 2016:** Zuenko, Ivan. *"Rust Belt" on the Border with Russia in the Public Eye*, Russian International Affairs Council. Available [here](#).

**May 5, 2016:** Boudet, Anne-Emmanuelle. *The issue of drug trafficking from Afghanistan in Central Asia and proposed solutions*, Russian International Affairs Council. Available [here](#).