

**Sources of
Tension in
Afghanistan
and Pakistan**

A Regional
Perspective



QUARTERLY MONITORING BRIEF

Report No. 3

May 9—July 15, 2016



China's support to the Afghan state is further expanded.



Afghanistan-Pakistan relations are blighted by open hostilities.



NATO countries will keep the support to the Afghan state at the current levels until 2020.

Afghanistan: Monitoring the Key Regional Powers

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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).

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

- NATO Foreign Ministers agree to extend Afghan [mission](#).
- The Afghan security ministries finally have [permanent heads](#).
- “Croatia and Afghanistan sign [agreement](#) on comprehensive cooperation”.
- President Ghani [dismisses high level](#) civilian and military officials of the Kabul (Hamid Karzai) Airport.
- President Ghani is set to establish an [anti-corruption judicial center](#).

Security

- Taliban manage [to cut off highway](#) linking Kabul to the northern gateways.
- Taliban’s Supreme Leader, Mullah Mansoor, is [killed in a US drone strike](#) deep inside Pakistan, the first drone strike in an area outside the tribal areas of Pakistan.
- Taliban leadership council selects [Haibatullah Akhundzada](#), the movement’s deputy, as the new Supreme Leader.
- [Infighting](#) among the Taliban in Herat claims many lives.
- [92 female police officers](#) return to Afghanistan after receiving training in Turkey.
- [IS militants resurface](#) in eastern Afghanistan. Fighting with government forces leaves many dead and injured.
- A deal between Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Afghan government has been delayed by [a single issue](#), according to Hekmatyar’s son, without specifying the issue.
- Reports have emerged of Afghan [spy agency supporting a splinter Taliban group](#), led by Mullah Rasool.
- President Barack Obama announces [keeping 8400 troops](#) in Afghanistan saying he will not allow Afghanistan to be used as a terrorist safe haven.
- NATO Warsaw Summit’s [declaration reads](#): “Together with the rest of the international community, our aim remains that Afghanistan will never again become a safe haven for terrorists who can pose a threat to our security”.
- Australia commits to provide [\\$ 300 million](#) to Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) until 2020.
- NATO [Secretary General says](#): “Our message is clear. Afghanistan doesn't stand alone. We're committed for the long haul”.
- NATO countries agree during the Warsaw Summit to continue funding Afghan security forces until [2020](#).
- Czech Republic has agreed to train 100 Afghan [pilots](#).
- Afghanistan is set to become the [164th member of the World Trade Organization \(WTO\)](#) following the ratification of the WTO Protocol of Accession by the Afghan parliament.

Socio-Economic Issues

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) concludes to negotiate new loans with Afghanistan after assessing reforms in the Afghan financial sector as [“success”](#).
- “The European Commission today announced [€125 million](#) funding for Afghanistan to support the government's reform agenda towards sustainable economic development and state building”.
- The USAID announces a massive [scholarship program](#) for Afghan women. The participants will be able to study in national and international universities.
- Alokozay Group, an Afghan business venture, commits to [invest \\$ 350 million](#) in Kabul by constructing six factories.

Afghanistan-Pakistan Tensions

- Son of a former Pakistani Prime Minister abducted in Pakistan [is recovered](#) by Afghan and US troops in Afghanistan.
- [Torkham crossing is closed](#) by Pakistani troops after Afghan troops resist construction of a structure by the Pakistani side.
- The Afghan government says that “it will not attend the next Quadrilateral Coordination Group's (QCG) meeting in Islamabad unless Pakistan fulfills its promises regarding the [fight against terrorism](#)”.
- Pakistani military’s spokesman says the world has [“abandoned”](#) Pakistan to face the threat of terrorism in the region alone.

- US's Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan says Pakistan is [exaggerating](#) India's influence in Afghanistan and that India has four consulates in Afghanistan, not twenty four.
- A Pakistani [major is killed](#) as a result of fighting between the Afghan and Pakistani troops in Torkham.
- Pakistani military digs a trench in Torkham to [restrict movement](#).
- Afghan President and Pakistan's Prime Minister discuss [the fighting in Torkham](#) on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Tashkent.
- Afghan and Pakistani envoys to the UN [trade blows](#) in a security council meeting, following skirmishes between Afghan and Pakistani forces in Torkham.
- Police of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province claim to have [arrested two thousand Afghan refugees and deported](#) another four hundred to Afghanistan.
- Afghanistan's envoy to Islamabad meets relevant [Pakistani officials](#) in an effort to stem a wave of [arrests of Afghan refugees by the Pakistani police](#).
- Pakistan's government makes a [U-turn on](#) an earlier decision not to extend Afghan refugees' stay in Pakistan. The refugees are permitted to stay until the end of December 2016.
- President Ghani tells the NATO heads of states in Warsaw summit that peace initiatives to end "Pakistan's [undeclared hostilities](#) against Afghanistan" remain [unsuccessful](#).
- "Ghani demands [handover of Afghan militant](#) leaders based in Pakistan".
- Businesses in Pakistan reportedly [suffer losses](#) because of the ongoing conflict in border areas.

2. REGIONAL POWERS



1. INDIA	Who	The Source
1.1. Actions		
- May 19, 2016 Prime Minister Modi tweets birthday wishes to President Ghani. He gets the day right this time .	Deepshikha Ghosh	NDTV
- May 19, 2016 Indian envoy to Kabul visits Indian-funded Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health in Kabul to familiarize himself with the facility.	Official Facebook Page	Indian Embassy in Kabul
- May 21, 2016 Indian government will fund rehabilitation scheme of Kabul's oldest school, Habibia Lycee .	Official Website	Mashaal Radio
- May 23, 2016 President Ghani and Prime Minister Modi meet in Tehran; security and military cooperation is the main topic of discussion.	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
- May 23, 2016 India will be providing 1000 scholarships annually to Afghans until 2020. 7000 Afghans have already benefited from Indian scholarships .	Official Website	Afghanistan Times
- June 4, 2016 Prime Minister Modi tweets in Pashto and Dari before his trip to Afghanistan.	Email Pazarly	BBC Pashto
- June 4, 2016 Prime Minister Modi and President Ghani jointly inaugurate the Salma dam in Herat.	Official Website	Indian Prime Minister
- June 10, 2016 13 students and faculty of the Pashto and Dari department of the Jawaharlal Nehru University go to Kabul University for academic exchange .	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Embassy in Delhi
- June 14, 2016 Indian envoy to Kabul meets the Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister at the latter's office; the new visa regime for Afghans traveling to India is discussed.	Official Website	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- July 2, 2016 Indian government provides 170 thousand tons of wheat to Afghanistan.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Minister of Economy
- July 9, 2016 The Pentagon has decided to use an Indian satellite for getting quicker weather information in Afghanistan, a key to troops' movement.	Official Website	Times of India

1.2. Public Statements		
<p>- May 24, 2016 Prime Minister Modi asks his security officials to assess a request by President Ghani for more helicopters.</p>	Karim Amini	Tolnews
<p>- June 4, 2016 Inaugurating Salma dam, Modi says: “We are reviving a region, restoring hope, renewing life and redefining Afghanistan’s future”.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Embassy of India in Kabul
<p>- June 4, 2016 Prime Minister Modi says it was the love showered on him by the Afghans that brought him for the second time to Afghanistan.</p>	Official Facebook Page	President Hamid Karzai
<p>- June 10, 2016 Indian officials confirm reports of kidnapping of an Indian citizen in Kabul and say they are working with the Afghan government for the release of the abductee.</p>	Official Website	BBC Persian
<p>- June 22, 2016 India’s Minister of Water tells an Afghan governmental delegation that India’s government is willing to help Afghanistan in the area of water management.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Energy and Water
<p>- June 23, 2016 India’s envoy to the UN says Afghanistan has India’s full support for strengthening its defense capabilities.</p>	Official Website	The Pashtun Times
<p>- June 23, 2016 India’s External Affairs Minister says India is committed to security and economic prosperity of Afghanistan and will stand like a rock with it.</p>	Official Website	DNA India
<p>- June 24, 2016 Prime Minister Modi says an independent, stable and peaceful Afghanistan is the desire of every Afghan.</p>	Official Twitter Account	Amar Sinha
<p>- July 1, 2016 Condemning an attack on a Police convoy in Kabul, India’s President says they stand shoulder to shoulder against terror with Afghanistan.</p>	Official Website	NDTV
1.3. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)		
<p>- May 23, 2016 Iranian, Afghan and Indian leaders sign the Chabahar Port agreement in Tehran.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President’s Office
<p>- June 12, 2016 The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management of India and Ministry of Agriculture of Afghanistan pen an agreement of cooperation.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Minister of Agriculture
<p>- June 23, 2016 The Vice Chancellor of the Delhi University agrees to sign an MoU with the Kabul university based on a request by representatives of the Afghan embassy in Delhi.</p>	Official Website	Afghan Embassy in Delhi
<p>- July 13, 2016 Indian envoy to Kabul signs agreement of \$25 million for funding 87 small</p>	Official Facebook	Afghan Minister of

development projects in the rural areas of Afghanistan with the concerned Afghan officials.	Page	Economy
1.4. Media Commentary		
- June 12, 2016 Pakistan's CPEC Challenge	Tanveer Arain	The Friday Times

2. IRAN

Who

The Source

2.1. Actions

<p>- May 21, 2016 Afghan citizens are no longer required to buy return flight tickets to become eligible for an Iranian visa.</p>	Official Website	BBC Persian
<p>- May 23, 2016 Afghan and Iranian presidents meet in Tehran. Iran's President says there are problems related to water in the Harirod region which is of concern to Iran and that his country's security is dependent on Afghanistan's security.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- June 2, 2016 A trilateral meeting of the Deputy National Security Advisors of Iran, Russia and Afghanistan is held in Kabul to discuss terrorism and drug trade.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan National Security Council
<p>- June 2, 2016 Iran will host the next round of trilateral meetings of the Deputy National Security Advisors of Afghanistan, Russia and Iran.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan National Security Council
<p>- June 25, 2016 Iran's union of Saffron producers expresses concern about the growth of saffron production in Afghanistan.</p>	Official Website	8am
<p>- July 7, 2016 Iran's President in a telephone call with President Ghani reiterates his wish for starting dialogue on water management and a strategic cooperation agreement between the two countries.</p>	Official Website	Sputnik News Dari
<p>- July 12, 2016 A group of Afghan mercenaries sent to Syria by Iran's revolutionary guard receives advanced sniper training by Hizbollah fighters.</p>	Noor Zahid & Mehdi Jedinia	VOA Persian
<p>- July 11, 2016 Iran's Consul General in Herat announces the commencement of construction work of Herat-Khawaf railway line that will cost \$200 million.</p>	Ali Sher Shaheer	Khabarnama News

2.2. Public Statements

<p>- May 13, 2016 Iran's Supreme Leader tells families of Afghans who lost their lives in Syria, "I am proud of you".</p>	Golnaz Esfandiari	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
<p>- May 23, 2016 Iran denies reports Mullah Mansour had visited the country prior to his killing in Baluchistan province of Pakistan.</p>	Official Website	Dawn
<p>- May 23, 2016 Talking to President Ghani, Iran's Supreme Leader praises Afghan people as zealous,</p>	Official Facebook	Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

brave and smart. He adds progress of Afghanistan is Iran's progress and that the latter treats Afghans with respect, "unlike the US and UK" .	Page	
- May 23, 2016 Continuing, the Supreme Leader says that issue of water sharing and management should be discussed.	Official Website	Mehr News Agency
- June 4, 2016 Iran's Supreme Leader says Iran has no intention of cooperating with its enemies, USA and UK, in regional affairs.	Official Website	Mashaal Radio
- June 21, 2016 Iran's General Consul in Herat says they have not received an official request for removing one of consulate's walls that hinders construction of a road.	Official Facebook Page	8am
2.3. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)		
- May 23, 2016 Iranian, Afghan and Indian leaders sign the Chabahar Port agreement in Tehran.	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
2.4. Media Commentary		
- May 24, 2016 Has Iran stabbed Pakistan from back yet again		Times of Islamabad
- June 1, 2016 India and Pakistan can both benefit from Chabahar	Gulshan Sachdeva	Hindustan Times
- June 6, 2016 Are the Taliban and IS teaming up to stop IS?	Arash Karami	Al Monitor



3. CHINA	Who	The Source
3.1. Actions		
<p>- May 17, 2016 Afghan CEO meets with members of the Global Trade Promotion Council of China.</p>	Official Website	Afghan CEO
<p>- May 18, 2016 Following meetings between the Afghan CEO, China's Premier and Vice President, the two sides agree to continue cooperation in a number of areas. China announces numerous projects for Afghanistan.</p>	Official Website	Afghan CEO
<p>- May 18, 2016 Afghan CEO and his delegation of half a dozen ministers meet the President of China.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan CEO
<p>- May 18, 2016 Afghan CEO meets local authorities of the Xinxiang region; issues of mutual interest are discussed.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan CEO
<p>- June 20, 2016 Officials from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology of Afghanistan attend a summit on transfer of technology and joint innovation, hosted by the Ministry of Science and Technology of China.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Communication & IT
<p>- June 20, 2016 China will provide educational opportunities, scholarships and technical and financial assistance for establishing information technology cities in Afghanistan.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Communication & IT
<p>- June 20, 2016 A working committee will be established between Chinese and Afghan officials with the aim of opening the representations of the China-South Asia Technology Transfer Center in Afghanistan.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Communication & IT
<p>- June 24, 2016 Afghan Ministers of Finance and Agriculture travel to China to discuss issues of mutual interest with Chinese officials.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Minister of Finance
<p>- June 24, 2016 China and Afghanistan's presidents meet on the sidelines of the SCO summit, the former urges deepening cooperation in security and counterterrorism spheres.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- July 3, 2016 China delivers military hardware for the very first time to the Afghan government. China will provide transport aircrafts later in the year to Afghanistan.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan National Security Council
<p>- July 4, 2016 Direct flights between Kabul and Urumqi will resume after a three-year pause.</p>	Zhao Yishen	Xinhuanet News

China's envoy to Kabul hails the move.		
<p>- July 10, 2016 Chinese envoy to Kabul hands over four explosives-detecting scanners to the Afghan government.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Radio Azadi
3.2. Public Statements		
<p>- May 17, 2016 China's President assures of comprehensive support to the ANDSF and says China will support Afghanistan's bid for becoming a full member of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan CEO
<p>- May 23, 2016 China's Foreign Ministry responds to Mullah Mansour's killing: "China hopes that the Afghan peace and reconciliation process can continue to be pushed forward and relevant parties remain committed to peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region".</p>	Official Website	China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- June 20, 2016 Deputy Minister of Science and Technology of China says relations between Afghanistan and China have deepened in the past two years.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Communication & IT
3.3. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)		
<p>- May 18, 2016 Several cooperation agreements are signed between China and Afghanistan in the fields of economic and technical cooperation, connectivity, inspection and quarantine.</p>	Official Website	Afghan CEO
<p>- June 20, 2016 Afghan officials sign an MoU of cooperation with the China-South Asia Technology Transfer Center.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Communication & IT



4. RUSSIA	Who	The Source
4.1. Actions		
<p>- May 25, 2016 Afghan National Security Advisor attends the 7th International Conference of High Representatives Supervising Security Matters in Russia.</p>	Official Twitter Account	Afghan National Security Council
<p>- May 26, 2016 Afghan National Security Advisor meets Russia's Minister of Interior, terrorism and counternarcotics efforts are discussed.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan National Security Council
<p>- June 2, 2016 A trilateral meeting of the Deputy National Security Advisors of Iran, Russia and Afghanistan is held in Kabul to discuss terrorism and drug trade.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan National Security Council
<p>- June 16, 2016 Afghan and Russian Deputy Foreign Ministers meet in Moscow, discuss a range of issues including military cooperation.</p>	Official Website	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- June 16, 2016 Russian Deputy Foreign Minister agrees to provide training opportunities for 15 Afghan diplomats and increase the number of scholarships for Afghan students.</p>	Official Website	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- June 18, 2016 The Chief Executive Officer of Russian Helicopters says they are ready to train Afghan Air Force's technical staff and engineers.</p>	Official Website	Khaama Press
<p>- June 23, 2016 Russian envoy to Kabul meets Afghanistan's National Security Advisor, shows his government's support to the ongoing talks between the Afghan government and Hekmatyar-led Hizb-e-Islami.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan National Security Council
<p>- June 24, 2016 Russia's government exempts several Afghan products from custom's duty, from which Afghan fresh fruit and vegetable traders are set to benefit the most.</p>	Zarmina Mohammadi	ToloneWS
<p>- July 13, 2016 Security in Afghanistan – together with Ukraine and air safety in the Baltic Sea – is one of three topics discussed at the NATO-Russia Council.</p>	The NATO Secretary General	The NATO
4.2. Public Statements		
<p>- May 23, 2016 Russia's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan says killing of Mullah Mansour will seriously hinder negotiations with the Taliban.</p>	Official Website	RFE/RL Gandhara
<p>- May 26, 2016</p>	Official	The Pashtun

Spokeswoman of the Russian Foreign Ministry says “ISIS-controlled branch” in Afghanistan is as active as ever and seeking to expand to the north of Afghanistan as well as the Central Asia.	Website	Times
- June 6, 2016 Russia’s Foreign Ministry calls on Taliban to cease violence during the month of Ramazan.	Official Website	Sputnik Dari
- June 11, 2016 Spokeswoman of Russia’s Foreign Ministry says there is little hope of direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.	Official Website	Mashaal Radio
4.3. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)		
- June 16, 2016 Russian and Afghan Foreign Ministries sign a protocol for holding consultative meetings on yearly basis.	Official Website	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- June 23, 2016 Afghan and Russian governments are negotiating a bilateral cooperation agreement aimed at expansion of political and military relations.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan National Security Council

5. SAUDI ARABIA	Who	The Source
5.1. Actions		
<p>- May 19, 2016 Afghan and Saudi envoys to Islamabad discuss problems of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Hajj opportunities for the refugees and peace in Afghanistan.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ambassador to Islamabad
<p>- May 19, 2016 Afghan and Saudi Finance Ministers meet; the latter promises to organize a meeting of Gulf states in Jeddah for support to Afghanistan. He also says that Afghanistan can benefit from Islamic Development Bank and Saudi Fund for Development.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Minister of Finance
<p>- May 26, 2016 Saudi Arabia stops issuing visas to Afghans under the age of 40, who want to go to the Gulf Kingdom to perform omra Hajj.</p>	Safiullah Aminzada	BBC Persian
<p>- May 28, 2016 A Saudi charity organization announces \$5 million assistance to Afghan refugees in Pakistan.</p>	Official Website	Afghan Ministry of refugees & Repatriation
<p>- July 26, 2016 Saudi Arabia's police arrest an Afghan wanted by the Afghan police for stealing and deport him to Afghanistan.</p>	Official Website	Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs
<p>- July 1, 2016 President Ghani arrives in Saudi Arabia for performing <i>omra</i> Hajj and is received at the Jeddah airport by Jeddah's governor.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- July 2, 2016 Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Minister of Defense meets President Ghani in Mecca to discuss cooperation in a number of areas.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- July 2, 2016 Representatives of Saudi-based Afghan traders and laborers meet President Ghani, express concern about Saudi government's unwillingness to allow them obtain Afghan passports. Afghans living in Saudi Arabia use Pakistani passports.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- July 2, 2016 Saudi Arabia's King hosts President Ghani for an iftar reception; both sides discuss terrorism, trade and peace efforts in Afghanistan.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
5.2. Public Statements		
<p>- May 27, 2016 Ka'ba's grand imam says Taliban and IS are outside the circle of Islam since they are misinterpreting Islam.</p>	Official Website	Azadi Radio

- July 2, 2016

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince says his government will use its influence to urge Gulf states to [expand cooperation](#) with Afghanistan.

Official
Website

Afghan
President's
Office

3. REGIONAL DYNAMICS AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

May 12, 2016: “Construction of the CASA1000 electricity transmission line project is officially inaugurated in Batash city of Torsanzadah district of Tajikistan” ([Link](#)).

May 18, 2016: The 5th meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) is held in Islamabad ([Link](#)).

June 7, 2016: An MoU is signed for the extension of the Kajaki dam in Helmand province between the Afghan government and a Turkish company ([Link](#)).

June 9, 2016: The 7th meeting of the Oversight Coordination Body (OCB) was held by the Afghan government to brief international partners on the capacity and performance of the ANDSF ([Link](#)).

June 15, 2016: Agreement for construction of Bakhsh Abad dam in the southwestern Farah province is signed between the Afghan government and an Italian company ([Link](#)).

June 15, 2016: The 6th meeting of the Afghanistan-Turkmenistan Inter-governmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation is held in Kabul ([Link](#)).

June 16, 2016: “Indian steel companies will export rails worth \$150 million to Iran next month as part of a pact between the two countries for developing railway at the strategically important Chabahar port” ([Link](#)).

June 17, 2016: Ukraine contributes to the Resolute Support Mission by sending a team of experts for clearing improvised explosive devices ([Link](#)).

June 17, 2016: A group of Syrian rebels sends a letter to President Ghani, urging him to take action against Afghans fighting at the behest of Assad government ([Link](#)).

June 23, 2016: Afghanistan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs hosts ambassadors of Islamic countries to Kabul for an *iftari* dinner ([Link](#)).

June 24, 2016: Security concerns stemming from Afghanistan are a major talking point at the SCO Summit in Tashkent ([Link](#)).

June 24, 2016: China-Russia-Mongolia trilateral summit is held in Tashkent ([Link](#)).

June 26, 2016: Afghanistan applies for full membership of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) ([Link](#)).

July 11, 2016: President Ghani represents Afghanistan at the 16th Summit of the Heads of States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) ([Link](#)).

4. SUMMARY OF TRENDS FOR THE QUARTER

Leaders of the National Unity Government (NUG) have managed to keep the international community heavily involved in Afghanistan, despite the Afghanistan war fatigue and financial constraints faced by the Western countries. By keeping almost the same level of financial commitment to the ANDSF until 2020, the international community has sent a strong message to both the Taliban and Pakistan. President Obama's decision to keep thousands of US soldiers on Afghan soil and allow greater operational flexibility further strengthens Afghan state's position vis-à-vis its armed opponents. The commitments may be revoked in the event of other imperatives overtaking Afghanistan. For now, Afghanistan has solidified its position globally.

On the contrary, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are at the lowest point imaginable. The two countries have gone from war of words and clandestine violent campaigns against each other to openly fighting with each other. Pakistan's position has become very tenuous after the failure of QCG and the killing of Mullah Mansour on its soil. US congress' recent hearing on whether Pakistan is a "friend or a foe" is a testimony to Pakistan's precarious position globally. Regionally, Chabahar Port agreement is interpreted in Pakistan as a design by India, Iran and Afghanistan for marginalization and encirclement of Pakistan.

While Iran and Pakistan's relations have experienced a downward spiral, China's relations with Afghanistan have improved remarkably. China's decision to expand its cooperation to military support in the form of providing military training and hardware to Afghanistan would have been unimaginable a few years earlier. The failure of the QCG is a blow to China's efforts for ending the Afghan conflict. China, none the less, has firmly resolved for strengthening of the current Afghan state.

India's support to Afghanistan continued unabated in the quarter in question. It is interesting to see India extending critical military support to the ANDSF, especially airpower. The language of Indian leaders and officials has also become more aggressive in support of the Afghan state. Completion of the Salma dam and the signing of the Chabahar port agreement were the big stories of this quarter. India's support to Afghanistan, in fact, is so dense that many other forms of assistance rarely make it to the news.

Saudi Arabia remained as uninvolved as in the previous quarters. Apart from a \$5 million support to Afghan refugees, there was not much to report on. Iran, on the other hand, was much more engaged. The big shift in Iran's policy is that it no longer denies sending Afghans to fight in Syria. President Ghani – the Afghan government as a whole – has refrained from taking up the issue of Afghans fighting in Syria with the Iranians. There is a marked contrast between the positions of Iran's Supreme Leader and its President in their dealings with Afghanistan; the former showing glimpses of Iran prior to the nuclear deal.

Finally, Afghanistan was one of the main topics discussed in the Russia-NATO Council. Afghanistan was the only issue of consensus in the previous meeting of the Council between the two sides. Policies of both sides remain unchanged vis-à-vis Afghanistan. There were frequent interactions between Russian and Afghan officials. Russia's urging of the Taliban to reduce violence during the month of Ramazan

increases the pressure on the insurgents. Despite contacts with Mullah Mansour late last year, Russia's response to this killing was timid. The strongest condemnations of his killing came from President Karzai and Pakistan.

5. PUBLICATIONS FROM THE REGION

June 22, 2016: Barakat, Sultan. *Is the Iranian-Saudi “cold war” heating up? How to reduce the temperature*, Brookings Doha Center. Available [here](#).

June 23, 2016: Khalil, Ahmad Bilal. *The Rise of China-Afghanistan Security Relations*, The Diplomat. Available [here](#).

June 23, 2016: Hasnain, Syed Ata. *India and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, Swarajyamag. Available [here](#).

June 23, 2016: O. Wolf, Siegfried. *Pakistan – Friend or Foe?*, South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF). Available [here](#).

June 27, 2016: Bleuer, Christian. *Chechens in Afghanistan 1: A Battlefield Myth That Will Not Die*, Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN). Available [here](#).

June 27, 2016: Joshi, Prateek. *The changing dynamics of Iran-Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship*, The Observer Research Foundation (ORF). Available [here](#).

June 30, 2016: Qaane, Ehsan. *The ICC’s Planned Visit to Afghanistan: Crimes, capacities and the willingness to prosecute*, Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN). Available [here](#).

July 1, 2016: Gupta, Kanchi. *India-Japan Cooperation on Chabahar Could be a Game Changer for Asia*, The Wire. Available [here](#).

July 4, 2016: Katoch, P.C. *The Afghan conundrum: As big powers continue their charade, Afghanistan loses peace*, South Asia Monitor. Available [here](#).

July 4, 2016: Carter, Stephen. *Illegal mining for Chinese market fuels Taliban in Afghanistan*, China Dialogue. Available [here](#).

July 6, 2016: Kamalakaran, Ajay. *How Russia helped rebuild a newly independent Bangladesh*, Russia Beyond the Headlines. Available [here](#).

July 9, 2016: O. Wolf, Siegfried. *Bangladesh’s Counter-Terror Act: Need for a Political Solution*, Indrastra. Available [here](#).

July 12, 2016: Bamzai, Sandeep. *Imperilled Kashmir*, Observer Research Foundation (ORF). Available [here](#).

July 12, 2016: Mudabber, Zabihullah. *Afghanistan’s Role in Central Asia-South Asia Energy Projects*, The Diplomat. Available [here](#).

July 13, 2016: PIPS. *Reconstruction of the National Narratives and Counter-Violent Extremism Model for Pakistan*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS). Available [here](#).