

# Islamabad Dialogue

Report of Proceedings



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A Jinnah Institute  
Conference Report



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# Islamabad Dialogue

Report of Proceedings

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## About the Jinnah Institute

Jinnah Institute is a non-profit public policy organization based in Pakistan. It functions as a think tank, advocacy group and public outreach organization independent of government. JI seeks to promote knowledge-based policy making for strengthening democratic institutions and building public stakes in human and national security discourse. It remains committed to investing in policies that promote fundamental rights, tolerance and pluralism.

## Jinnah Institute’s Strategic Security Initiative (SSI)

JI actively seeks to articulate independent national security strategies for Pakistan that incorporate the country’s stated policy imperatives while making room for voices from civil society, parliament, academia and media experts. Jinnah Institute’s SSI also encourages constructive engagement between the international community and local policy and opinion makers on key national security interests, with the goal of seeking broad strategic convergences in multilateral and bilateral forums.

Jinnah Institute runs one of the leading peace initiatives with India through sustained Track II engagement. It has been at the forefront of bringing together stakeholders from India and Pakistan to develop bilateral strategies for regional security and stability.

JI is committed to broadening Pakistan’s stake in pursuing informed and inclusive policies on regional and global relationships with India, Afghanistan, South Asia, China, the EU, UK, and the United States.

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# Foreword

Several critical developments have taken place in Pakistan and India while the Islamabad Dialogue Conference Report was being written. The Abbotabad episode on 2nd May, which resulted in the killing of Osama Bin Laden has changed the security dynamic across the Pak-Afghan border. Groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda have vowed to step up their attacks against Pakistani government infrastructure and personnel. This has particular salience for Indo-Pak cooperation on terrorism and there is now a greater risk of the bilateral relationship being derailed by incidents such as 26/11 in Mumbai. The OBL episode and its effect on the War on Terror will also define the way India and Pakistan play down their differences over Afghanistan and participate in the Afghan reconciliation process.

**T**he trials of Mumbai attack suspects Tahawwur Rana and David Headley by US courts and Samjhota Express protagonists Swami Aseemanand in Indian courts has created challenges in the way India and Pakistan can engage over intelligence sharing.

Meanwhile, the Indo-Pak official dialogue has logged up many important events. Running parallel to the Islamabad Dialogue on 28th April was the meeting of Pakistani and Indian Commerce Secretaries in Islamabad for a fifth round of talks. The session dealt with CBMs through increased bilateral economic engagement and the creation of an enabling environment for trade and investment. Several initiatives are planned, including the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, removal of restrictions and closer coordination on trade through land routes, particularly the Wagah-Attari and Munabao-Khokrapar routes; formalization of mechanisms used by the Customs Liaison Border Committee; expansion of trade in petroleum products, electricity and cotton seeds; easing business visas and opening bank branches on both sides of the border. It was also agreed that a Joint Working Group on 'Economic and Commercial Cooperation and Trade Promotion' will be created and co-chaired by the respective Commerce Secretaries in bi-annual meetings.

On 13th May, Indian and Pakistani delegations met in Islamabad for talks on the Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project. Both sides discussed their positions on the issue and reaffirmed their commitment to the Indus Water Treaty. It was agreed that both sides will hold technical consultations as mandated by the Treaty. In a parallel development, Pakistan is expected to submit its case memorial against the Kishanganga Hydropower Project in July before the International Court of Arbitration after seeking formal arbitration last year. As scheduled by the Court, India will be obliged to submit a counter-case memorial after a lapse of six months.

From 20th-21st May, talks were held in Rawalpindi on Sir Creek after a lapse of four years to work out the international maritime boundary between India and Pakistan. In several sessions, the Indian and Pakistani delegates presented their positions on the issue and exchanged non-papers that contained viable suggestions to resolve Sir Creek. It was agreed that a subsequent round of talks would be held at later date with the issue close to being resolved.

From 30th-31st May, Pakistani and Indian Defense Secretaries met in New Delhi to resolve the Siachen issue. The ceasefire in effect since November 2003 was acknowledged and both sides presented their positions as well as suggestion for further conflict mitigation. It was agreed that the next round of talks on Siachen would take place in Islamabad.

From 2nd- 3rd June, an Indo-Pak Joint Working Group session on visa procedures was held in Islamabad. This was a followup session of the Interior/Home Secretaries' meeting in New Delhi in March this year, during which it was decided that a Joint Working Group will be created. The Working Group reviewed visa procedures in both countries and drafted a Bilateral Visa Agreement. It was agreed that a second session will be held in August later this year. Any outcomes on this track would be seen as the first real sign on a thaw on the ground after the Mumbai episode. People on both sides of the border cite restrictive visa regimes as one of the most important obstacles to travel, trade and communication between the two countries.

On June 17th Pakistan's Foreign Office lodged a formal protest against the Indian High Commission in Islamabad to say that its frigate PNS Babur was obstructed by warship INS Godavari, while the former was conducting humanitarian operations in the Gulf of Aden. New Delhi lodged an identical protest the following day in response to allegations suggesting aggression by the Indian warship and stated that PNS Babur's maneuvers at sea needed compliance with international regulations on navigational safety.

From June 23rd-24th, Indian and Pakistani Foreign Secretaries are scheduled to meet in Islamabad.

These events mark significant milestones in the official dialogue and the frequency of these meetings since Mohali is noteworthy. However, for the official dialogue to continue in an uninterrupted continuum and for outstanding issues like Kashmir to be resolved, in addition to the threat of terrorism undoing the gains made this year, Track II diplomacy has greater reason to take fresh initiatives for peacebuilding between India and Pakistan.

# Introduction

The Jinnah Institute (JI), Islamabad and the Center for Dialogue and Reconciliation (CDR), New Delhi, brought together key policy makers from India and Pakistan for a Track II discussion on issues that impact the bilateral relationship. In a two day conference, representatives from India and Pakistan discussed the peace process, the impact of terrorism on Indo-Pak ties, the issue of Kashmir and the role that the media can play in mediating the relationship between India and Pakistan.

Participants unanimously concluded that peace and cooperation between India and Pakistan is in the larger interest of both countries. To achieve this end, both India and Pakistan must make a concerted effort to bridge the trust deficit between the two nuclear states, increase cooperation to combat common enemies such as terrorism and work with sustained zeal to resolve outstanding strategic issues like Siachen and Sir Creek.

## SESSION I

### Bilateral Dialogue and the Peace Process

#### Current Status of the Indo-Pak Dialogue Process

After being derailed by the Mumbai terror attacks, the process of dialogue between the governments of India and Pakistan is now underway at multiple levels and embraces a variety of strategic and economic issues. Although the

process has been reinvigorated by the spirit of friendship and camaraderie displayed at Mohali by the Indian Premier Manmohan Singh and Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, movement forward on substantive issues is not guaranteed. The good news is that Mohali reaffirmed that the Indian and Pakistani leadership at the highest levels is committed to peace and regional cooperation. The not-so-good news is that many observers viewed Mohali with cynicism and believe that expectations attached to this stand-alone interaction are excessive. On balance, however, strategic optimism tipped the scales just a little as it was noted by many that the symbolic importance of Mohali exceeded its practical value. Participants of the Islamabad Dialogue agreed that Mohali was not just a one-off moment, but the affirmation of a post-Mumbai strategic shift towards pursuing Indo-Pak peace with renewed commitment and shared goals.

Mohali was followed closely by a number of secretary level talks on issues of tactical importance further augmenting the sense that India and Pakistan were committed to following through on strategies for cooperation and peace that went beyond symbolic stand-alone gestures. The current cycle of diplomatic interactions and talks at the secretary level have yielded some successes while emerging big ticket items like water sharing and trade agreements continue to be stumbling blocks despite the positive signaling from leadership in both countries. At a meeting of the Interior and Home Secretaries, it was agreed that India and Pakistan would establish a hotline that would enable direct information-sharing and contact during emergencies. However, no tangible headway could be made on bilateral trade.

While lauding the current commitment to peace and efforts being made in this vein, some participants noted with great concern that in previous years the same track of diplomatic interactions had taken place with similar outcomes. There was in fact a growing concern that a tranche of previously agreed confidence building measures (CBMs) have not been operationalized. Protocols related to the issuance of visas, facilitating trade and allowing banks to function in each other's countries, although agreed upon in principle, have not been implemented. Official hurdles and roadblocks in their implementation reveal a disjoint in political aspirations and ground realities.

Participants agreed that CBM's can greatly ease the atmosphere of hostility between the two countries and must continue to be vigorously promoted at the Track II level. Agreements made between the two countries must be honored in letter and spirit and across political and bureaucratic regimes in order to achieve durable peace.

#### Uninterrupted and Uninterruptible Dialogue

Delegates at the Islamabad dialogue noted that the resumption of talks gives cause for optimism in both countries. However, it was also stressed that optimism



should not lull the policy community or activists for peace in India or Pakistan into a state of complacency. This process has seen countless highs and lows. Despite peaks such as the one triggered by Mohali, the process remains vulnerable to attrition and executive lag unless parallel activity drills down at various levels of government and multiple channels of civil society to keep the dialogue running.

All participants appreciated the role of Track II dialogues and the crucial role they have played in keeping channels of communication open between the two countries, especially when official dialogue had stalled. Despite skepticism about the hard outcomes that Track II processes can never deliver, it was reiterated that Track II continues to perform a viable and credible strategic policy bridge between the two states that define their relationship in terms of adversarial postures instead of concord.

As a motor for leverage in official circles, it was noted that Track II has been able to influence important policy language, most notable is the recent inclusion of Track II language in the official communication of the Pakistani Prime Minister. In policy statements on India, PM Yusuf Raza Gilani has adopted the use of “uninterrupted and unintermittible dialogue” - a standard Track II formulation. Not only is this testimony to the value of Track II dialogues but also a reminder of their efficacy and outreach at the highest levels of government.

Despite the public and private lobbies for peace momentum at the track II Level, it was noted that Track I remain riddled with obstacles and constantly vulnerable to sclerotic policy management. Instead of shaping and executing policies that maximize the strength of the region’s opportunities, both countries have focused more on safeguarding their own very narrowly defined security agendas on outdated doctrines of national interest. Delegates at the Islamabad Dialogue recommended that there is an urgent need to bring greater candor and tenacity to the dialogue table while moving forward on areas for cooperation that are unlikely to compromise the security interests of either country. This is not a new formulation in either Track I or II, yet despite slow or no returns on this path, participants recognized the need to focus policy, executive and intellectual resources on issues of trade, media, water-sharing and people to people contacts as standard first-run initiatives of identified mutual interest.

## Changing the Constituencies for Peace

Despite the deep investment in hardened defence postures between both countries, public opinion remains a key driver of domestic politics in India and Pakistan. Powerful constituencies in both countries who benefit from ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan have stakes in maintaining the status quo. In both countries the state has used public education and state owned media to demonize the image of the other country over the last sixty three years. As a result, Indians and Pakistanis fear that despite changing imperatives there is a strong, entrenched resistance against expanding constituencies for peace on the other side of the border.

It was also noted that good news crawls on its belly while bad news spreads at warp speed. Recent surveys conducted by media houses in India and Pakistan say that the majority of people in both countries want peace. In a pattern that in neither surprising nor paradoxical given the investment both states have made in building enemy postures, respondents also identify each other’s countries as the most likely, dangerous and threatening enemy on other platforms. According to this survey, people in India and Pakistan seem to draw clear distinctions between the state apparatus and themselves. While respondents on both sides of the border often find the policies of the neighboring government contentious, they have little problem with the people of the other country. Session Working Groups thought it was essential to increase people-to-people contact along with formal government-to-government contacts, both to generate a higher public demand for regional peace and cooperation but also to build larger constituencies for change.

Citing evidence from social media, participants from India and Pakistan also identified disturbing new trends amongst young Indians and Pakistanis that point to a rapidly shrinking pool of champions and activists for peace between India and Pakistan. Uninformed by nostalgia, cultural resonance and familiarity of the older generations, the younger cohort of Indians and Pakistanis have grown up in the shadow of a nuclear arms race, vitriolic and one-dimensional media narratives, state driven enemy stereotyping and extremely limited opportunities for direct exposure to their counterparts from the other country. As a result, the inflammatory discourse emerging on social media platforms where young people from India and Pakistan interact is a deeply disturbing trend and does not bode well for regional cooperation and stability in the future. Participants suggested that younger people be made partners in developing Track II relationships between the two countries.

## The Impact of Terrorism

In 2005, the governments of India and Pakistan agreed that instances of terrorism will not impact dialogue between the two countries. However, the attacks of 2006 in Mumbai led to an immediate breakdown of this agreement and dialogue was terminated. Indian participants warned that if a similar incident were to occur in India, it would be unlikely that attempts at sanitizing dialogue from terror episodes would yield much traction, despite the current commitments to durable peace at the highest levels of government. Given real concerns about the likelihood of future attacks, it is imperative that both countries develop a sustainable process to ensure that channels of communication remain open during and after crises and the process of dialogue continues.

Participants from both India and Pakistan agreed that the termination of dialogue is counterproductive during times of crisis. Indian delegates also pointed to a growing realization in India that the last two years of disengaging with Pakistan have not yielded any tactical benefits. The loss of valuable strategic time and opportunity with the two centrist governments in place has obviously set back peace outcomes.

## The Role of the Security Establishment

Pakistani participants noted with concern the growing influence of the security establishment in India. While Pakistan's security and foreign policy has always been dominated by the military establishment, Pakistani policy makers are noticing an increasing role of the Indian military establishment in influencing policy vis-à-vis Pakistan. India's army continues to grow in size, arsenal and sophistication, with the majority of its muscle poised to flex in Pakistan's direction. While India cites a growing threat from China as its reason for unprecedented investments in its military apparatus, troop deployments and doctrinal initiatives such as Cold Start in India suggest otherwise.

Strategic bilateral issues such as disengagement from Siachen and troop draw-downs have also fallen prey to Indian military vetoes in maintaining a stand-off zone between India and Pakistan. Viewing the bilateral relationship from the military lens is unlikely to yield serious results since security establishments on both sides of the border have a vested interest in maintaining the stand-off between the two countries. Therefore, it is imperative that the civilian leadership, which has a greater interest in strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation, must lead the peace process. Political leaders must articulate a clear and viable logic to their respective publics for a paradigm shift in Indo-Pak relations from hostility to cooperation that can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes for both countries.

## Afghanistan

As the United States plans a troop draw down and phased redeployment from Afghanistan, this volatile country could become the newest battleground between India and Pakistan. This is not a new construct for the strategic community. Both countries view Afghanistan as a potential source of future conflict. India's increased diplomatic and economic surge in Afghanistan has raised alarm amongst Pakistan's military and political elite who view this enhanced Indo-Afghan engagement as a bid to strategically encircle and eventually weaken Pakistan. This belief has strengthened the anti-India lobby in Pakistan which has used India's activities in Afghanistan to mobilize public and policymaker opinion against India, thereby hampering the peace process.

India considers its engagement with Afghanistan a strategic investment in strengthening its position in the region and maintaining peaceful relationships with regional actors. Pakistani participants suggested that greater information-sharing and transparency around India's role and activities in Afghanistan would help allay fears within the Pakistani public and security establishment. This would also help weaken claims made by establishment hawks that India was out to get Pakistan and therefore no overtures of peace should be undertaken.

Given the strategic importance of Afghanistan and its potential to connect both India and Pakistan to new markets, a stable and peaceful Afghanistan could

become a common strategic goal with mutually reinforcing benefits for both countries rather than a zero-sum game between nuclear armed states. India and Pakistan need to engage with each other on what they perceive their role to be in Afghanistan and how both countries can prevent Afghanistan from becoming their newest battleground.

## Session I Recommendations

- Dialogue between the two countries must remain uninterrupted and uninterruptible.
- Better channels of communication and protocols for crisis diplomacy must be developed in both countries.
- Civil society in India and Pakistan must engage with each other at multiple levels and work towards increased information-sharing, people-to-people contacts and changing attitudes in both countries towards each other.
- Institutionalize regular contact and cooperation between military commanders and intelligence agencies at highest levels with oversight by the civilian government.
- Make meaningful and serious attempts to resolve outstanding issues like Siachen and Sir Creek.
- Facilitate and encourage the implementation of previously agreed upon CBMs such as increasing the number of direct flights, trade across the line of control, easing visa restrictions, facilitating the operations of each other's banks and telecoms.
- Provide platforms for young people to interact and learn from each other, with the goal of creating champions for peace in the younger generation.
- Reduce formal and informal trade barriers and work towards increasing the volume and variety of goods traded across the Indo-Pak border.
- Implement the Indus Water Treaty and work to develop common and improved frameworks for watershed management, making water an area for mutual cooperation.

## Combating Terrorism and Promoting Conflict Resolution

### The Situation Post-Mumbai

Terrorism has severely damaged the relationship between the two countries. According to Indian participants, while memories of Mumbai have faded, the incident has not been forgotten. The Indian middle class, which wields a lot of public and political influence, is skeptical of Pakistan's denials of aiding and abetting terrorism within India's borders. There is a need to address the concerns of Indian citizens which can be done by taking decisive action against the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks and their supporters.

Pakistani participants were of the view that Pakistan is genuinely invested in taking steps towards dismantling the infrastructure of terrorism within its borders. However, there are genuine capacity and resource constraints that prevent the criminal justice system from functioning efficiently. India needs to be patient with Pakistan given the nature of the problem and its extent. Participants urged India to give Pakistan strategic space thereby freeing up resources to focus on its internal problems, particularly the rise in extremism and militant outfits operating within its own borders against the Pakistani state and its citizens.

The appetite in India for giving Pakistan time and space is low. India continues to perceive Pakistan as a victim of self-created terror and therefore has little sympathy for Pakistan's current dilemma. However, the Mumbai attacks have become politicized on both sides of the border and the propaganda machinery operating in both countries has dominated the narrative, inflamed passions and misinformed the public.

There is a need to cut through the propaganda and focus on clear, dispassionate and transparent processes as well as a discourse that is solution oriented. The trial process should be used as an opportunity for peace and trust building rather than promoting mistrust and hostility. Pakistan must make the trial process transparent and India must facilitate sharing of evidence in the process to expedite the trial and subsequent prosecution of culprits.

### Terrorism and Extremism as Common Threat

Terrorism and extremism pose a clear and present danger to both India and Pakistan, but the bigger challenge is faced by Pakistan on daily threat count.

While Pakistan has seen extremist groups emerge during the Afghan jihad turn their guns inwards towards the country and its people, India has seen the rise of right-wing Hindutva terror and communal violence. Increasing violence in both states, aimed at its own citizens, is a common threat that both countries should work together to address the issue as a common threat.

Participants felt that certain sections of the Pakistani establishment have allowed terror groups to flourish in Pakistan in the past as an instrument of policy, but India has always issued strong denials of any levels of state complicity in incidents of communal violence. However, recent investigations into episodes such as the Mumbai communal violence and the Samjhota blasts show a high level of complicity by elements from the police, the military and local governments. This marks a disturbing regional trend and efforts need to be made to curb it. The use of state machinery to incite violence and hatred in India and Pakistan must be checked, while both countries need to adopt a zero tolerance policy for incitement to violence. Perpetrators of such crimes should be punished harshly regardless of their current or previous record of affiliation with the state.

Given the similarity in history, bureaucratic institutions and societal structures, India and Pakistan can share lessons learnt and devise common methods to combat the rising tide of extremism and terrorism in both countries. Confronting the extremist and terrorist threats should be grounds for cooperation and information-sharing that eventually leads to the development and strengthening of mechanisms for intelligence and information sharing.

### Intelligence-Sharing and Military Cooperation

Participants agreed that there should be greater intelligence-sharing and cooperation between military, intelligence and civilian law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border. However, this cooperation should only be institutionalized with clear oversight from both civilian governments. While some participants encouraged direct military contact to mitigate regional and global terrorism, other participants were strongly opposed to institutionalizing or promoting processes that could undermine the supremacy of the civilian leadership. Ultimately, it was agreed that all talks between India and Pakistan must be routed through or done with the knowledge and consent of the civilian leadership.

All participants were in agreement that in order to combat terrorism and extremism, the security establishments on both sides of the border should devise ways to institutionalize cross border communication, interdictions and information-sharing on matters pertaining to national security in order to prevent cross border crimes or incidents of terrorism. Furthermore, in the instance of any future terrorist attacks in either India or Pakistan, a possibility which cannot be ruled out, methods for information-sharing developed now should kick in for crisis management and de-escalating tensions during times of crises.



## Session II Recommendations

- States must actively condemn and act against perpetrators of extremist or terrorist acts.
- State sponsorship of terrorist or extremist groups is a policy that is highly inimical to the integrity and safety of any state. Therefore, collusion by elements of the state with members of terrorist or extremist groups should be punished harshly.
- Progress on the Mumbai terror trial must be shared openly with the public in both countries to counter media frenzy and propaganda. A transparent and efficient prosecution process should be conducted within Pakistan while India should aid and abet Pakistani prosecutors in collecting the evidence they require.
- Engage and encourage civil society actors to help curb the increasing trend of radicalization and use of violence to achieve goals in both countries.
- Prosecuting the perpetrators of Mumbai should become an opportunity for cooperation rather than a cause for escalating tensions.
- India and Pakistan must develop a joint mechanism for combating terrorism.
- Communication and information-sharing between the security establishments should be institutionalized in a bid to improve intelligence on the activities of terrorist outfits.
- Create common resource pools to combat and dismantle terror networks in both countries.

## SESSION III

## Bilateral Strategies for Kashmir

### The Current Situation in Kashmir

Kashmir continues to be a major source of contention between India and Pakistan. Despite numerous efforts in the past to resolve the Kashmir dispute, progress remains elusive. Successive governments have tried to develop roadmaps for peace but have failed in their implementation. Despite historical baggage, the recent meeting of the Indian and Pakistani premiers at Mohali has injected a new spirit of hope and optimism in the people of Kashmir who are eager to see positive movement on the resolution of the Kashmir issue. There is a search for innovative ideas for conflict mitigation and resolution.

The people of Kashmir have largely shunned an armed intifada to achieve freedom. Therefore, their desire to resolve the dispute through dialogue and peaceful means should be recognized by both India and Pakistan. Steps must be undertaken to achieve dispute resolution in accordance with the longstanding desires of the Kashmiri people.

### The New Kashmiri Nationalism

With Pakistan's focus on military operations along its western borders and its subsequent preoccupation with fighting terrorism within the country, Pakistan's official and unofficial intervention in Kashmir has been scaled back severely. Despite the lack of support from Pakistan, last year the world witnessed young Kashmiris rising up to independently resist the excesses of the Indian state and demand access to justice, security and a life of dignity.

The younger generations of Kashmiris are increasingly disillusioned by the inability of India and Pakistan to come to an agreement and facilitate a solution that mirrors the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. However, there is also a grudging acknowledgement of the fact that a solution without the involvement and continuous engagement of both India and Pakistan is not possible.

Therefore, there is a need to bridge the gap between aspirations and realities while both the Indian and Pakistani states need to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the people of Kashmir to resolve the issue. Failure to take note of the changing demographics and political tenor in Kashmir will only exacerbate the situation as the people of Kashmir continue to feel increasingly alienated.

### Bilateral Strategies for Peace

The longstanding unresolved Kashmir dispute keeps blocking the evolution of good relations between India and Pakistan. Persistence of the dispute has given rise to a variety of new issues over the years and complicated relations between India and Pakistan while making life tougher for the ordinary Kashmiri citizen. However, both sides must realize that bilateral strategies for peace must take into consideration the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Bilateral strategies for peace that are put into action must take cognizance of the fact that the process is as important as the solution. The efforts made in the Musharraf era to resolve the Kashmir problem, might have been technically sound but lacked popular support and buy in from stakeholders. As a result, the process initiated by the Musharraf regime ended with his departure from power. Any solution that is implemented needs to be owned by the people and their political leadership so that the process continues across regimes and does not fall prey to political ups and downs.

The debate around Kashmir needs to be focused on areas of mutual cooperation and they should be used to fuel the fires that can thaw the strategic and political

deadlock over Kashmir. Increased people-to-people contact and cross-LoC trade should be encouraged in an effort to improve the environment for future cooperation. More civil society engagement that can facilitate citizen-to-citizen dialogue needs to be strengthened and encouraged. All previously agreed CBMs should be implemented as a matter of priority and the dialogue between India and Pakistan should be time-bound to ensure that the matter is not delayed indefinitely. With regard to water sharing, many participants highlighted that non-compliance of the Indus Water Treaty is a highly likely source of future conflict in the Kashmir region. Therefore, efforts should be made to improve cooperation on water-sharing protocols.

## Session III Recommendations

- India, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir must engage in a meaningful dialogue at the formal government and non-governmental levels.
- Dialogue should be made time-bound and a timeline or roadmap for the resolution of the Kashmir issue should be developed in consensus with all stakeholders.
- The Kashmir valley should be demilitarized as militarization promotes a culture that legitimizes the use of force.
- Establish mechanism that allow all citizens the right to due process and institute transparent methods of dispensing justice in Kashmir.
- Ensure respect for human rights.
- Facilitate the implementation of previously agreed upon CBMs particularly with regard to people to people contacts and cross-LoC trade.
- Develop cooperative mechanisms for water-sharing and ensure the implementation of the Indus Water treaty.

## SESSION IV

# Media and the Indo-Pak Conflict

## The Current Media Landscape in India and Pakistan

Both India and Pakistan have experienced exponential growth in the number of media houses and operations in the last ten years. News bulletins that were previously limited to discrete and small units interspersed throughout the daily broadcast have now expanded into 24 hour news channels. There seems to be an insatiable South Asian appetite for information and analysis. As a result, media houses in both India and Pakistan are confronted with the challenge of filling up a 24 hour news cycle while maintaining viewer interest. Subsequently, the nature of reporting has been forced to change to keep up with public demand. People's reliance on electronic media, particularly television, as their primary source of information has increased. However, their demand for more balanced news or discerning analysis remains low to non-existent. This has allowed media houses to produce and successfully market shows high on emotion and low on content.

Public opinion is an influential driver of domestic political discourse and as a result, a key factor in shaping a country's diplomatic outlook and determining strategic priorities. As one of the primary drivers of public opinion, the media becomes a key factor in influencing the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan. Unfortunately, the media on both sides of the border has often worked to escalate conflict between the two countries rather than working to mitigate it. This trend needs to be checked if Pakistan and India are to establish lasting peace and cooperation. Subsequently, it plays a critical role in shaping public discourse on the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan. News programming stripped of rigorous fact checking protocols is a dangerous thing as it is now emerging as one of the leading agents shaping public opinion.

## Objectivity vs Activism

Journalist ethics dictate that media persons have a duty to report with honesty, integrity and responsibility. However, given the contentious nature of the Indo-Pak relationship and the potential for small events to escalate into larger conflict, some participants felt that media persons have an additional responsibility to help mitigate conflict. Few participants were of the view that media persons should not be burdened with the tasks that have been the traditional domain of civil society actors, peace activists and political leaders. However, all delegates agreed that the media's primary responsibility was to report facts objectively and sans bias.

It was noted that despite being aware of journalistic ethics and best practices, reportage in both countries is not devoid of emotion or personal opinions. In

fact, coverage pertaining to the other country is often laden with negative biases and thin on facts and objectivity. In a bid to curb this trend, it was agreed that media persons should be encouraged to become more cognizant of the potential for conflict between the two countries and their ability to potentially aggravate the situation. Media persons need to be encouraged to refrain from negative editorializing or commentary in the absence of facts.

Many participants were of the view that, given the impact that media has on public opinion, media persons should be act as agents for positive change. Since a more peaceful relationship between India and Pakistan is in the collective interest of the region, media persons should be encouraged to endorse this goal and work towards it by helping tone down negative rhetoric against the other country, making a concerted effort to present facts, not opinions and to proceed cautiously when dealing with matters likely to inflame passions on both sides of the border. While media persons should not overlook their duty towards objective and accurate reporting, they should also not neglect their responsibility towards creating a more informed, just and peaceful society.

## The Race for Ratings

The corporatization of the media in both India and Pakistan, the subsequent race for ratings and grabbing market share has altered the dynamics of news reporting. For media corporations, ratings are king and content that is likely to grab higher ratings is given preference over content that is balanced. In the South Asian context, it has been observed that conflict attracts much greater viewership than overtures of peace. As a result, media houses and television anchors have a strong incentive to focus on reporting and generating conflict rather than peace.

The race for ratings in both India and Pakistan, even at the cost of national peace was painfully apparent in the immediate aftermath of 26/11. Incendiary reportage emanating from both India and Pakistan inflamed passions and created a war like stand-off between the two countries based on information that had not been corroborated. In the event of a terrorist attack such as 26/11 where events are moving with speed but information is not available with accuracy, media houses on both sides of the border were seen focused on “breaking the news first” rather than providing accurate information. This is a dangerous trend that needs to be curbed as it goes against basic journalistic ethics and has potential to create uncalled for conflict between India and Pakistan.

## Increasing Access

An unrelenting information deficit on both sides of the border regarding the other country has reinforced the atmosphere of hostility and skepticism between India and Pakistan. The media is a powerful source of information and it has not been leveraged to its full extent in helping bridge the information divide between India and Pakistan. On the contrary, by allowing the information divide

to persist, the media has helped fan the fires of public hatred towards the other country and strengthened damaging stereotypes.

Due to the longstanding ban on Pakistani channels in India, the information deficit is worse on the Indian side. Until recently, Indian entertainment channels were easily available on Pakistan’s cable networks and were highly popular amongst large swathes of the public. The easy access to entertainment channels allowed the Pakistani public a more nuanced view of life in India which led to a less one-dimensional understanding of the country and its people. However, since access was limited to entertainment channels, Pakistanis no longer have a window on Indian news or analysis. As a result, people in both countries remain ignorant of the narratives shaping opinion across the border and become commoditized consumers of a steady diet of one-sided rhetoric.

Exacerbating the situation is the event-based paradigm of cross-border reportage. Reporting pertaining to the other country tends to be event based and the events that make it to the headlines tend generally to be of a negative nature as the media’s focus tends to be on conflict rather than peace. While the world’s attention was focused on the plight of Pakistanis in the aftermath of the devastating floods of 2010, Indian public had access to very limited and anemic reporting of events in Pakistan due to the lack of Indian journalists in Pakistan and low appetite in Indian media houses for broadcasting non-conflict news. The situation in Pakistan, when it comes to reporting on issues in India, is no different. As a result, negative stereotypes are reinforced and public demands for regional cooperation and peace continue to be stymied by misinformation.

Strict government regulation of the numbers and movements of media persons from across the border in both countries has worsened the situation. Allowing easy access to each other’s media persons on the ground in the other country is likely to help improve the quality of reporting. This will also allow reporting to become more rational and nuanced, reflecting the complexity of the situation and help with creating greater cross border understanding.

## Session IV Recommendations

- Reporters, editors, producers and media owners must work towards a more balanced, nuanced and accurate system of reportage that presents facts and penalizes inflammatory or misleading content.
- Facilitate the opening up of borders to increased numbers of media people in both countries.
- Encourage freer access to information by increasing cross border media presence, utilizing social networking tools and building trust and partnerships between media people from both countries.
- Remove legal and practical barriers to broadcasting channels from across the

border in an effort to increase access to information, create balancing counter narratives in the public domain and encourage exchange of information and ideas.

- Provide more comprehensive and consistent news coverage of events in the neighbouring country while moving away from the current events based paradigm of reportage in an effort to develop a more nuanced public understanding of cross border conditions.
- Organize frequent and consistent interactions between media persons from both countries.
- Provide sensitization training to media persons on responsible reporting during escalating tensions between India and Pakistan or times of crisis and conflict.

## Islamabad Dialogue Joint Resolution 29th April, 2011

- We welcome the resumption of dialogue between the highest levels of leadership between the two countries and the meeting of the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers at Mohali.
- We are encouraged that India and Pakistan have committed themselves to discussing and resolving all outstanding issues, particularly Kashmir and terrorism.
- The new environment of cooperation and mutual respect between the two countries that was reinvigorated at Mohali must now be followed up with fresh, bold and innovative measures which will ensure the permanent transformation of the relationship between India and Pakistan from an adversarial one to a partnership for regional prosperity. We propose measures that include consideration of a no-war pact, a redeployment of troops, a peace treaty between the two countries and the renunciation of the use of violence, in any form, by either country.
- Given the re-establishment of both ministerial and official contacts between the two governments in various fields, we feel it is important that there be military-to-military contact as part of an effort to promote greater understanding between the two militaries.
- Ways and means to enhance and facilitate people-to-people contact must be initiated, especially with regards to the contact between Indian and Pakistani university students, Indian and Pakistani journalists, Indian and Pakistani businessmen, Indian and Pakistani artists and musicians and Indian and Pakistani senior citizens.
- We welcome the recent agreements to address the granting of Most Favored Nation status for India and the removal of non-tariff barriers for Pakistan. A liberalized bilateral trade regime is of urgent importance and must be pursued vigorously. The economic uplift of the people of India and Pakistan is the ultimate reward that both countries must seek through the peace process. Trade also reduces tensions and promotes normalcy between nations. A

prosperous safe, secure and stable Afghanistan is of vital importance to both India and Pakistan. The current geopolitical situation offers an unprecedented opportunity to both India and Pakistan to explore ways to cooperate and enable greater regional security and prosperity.

- We recognize that Kashmir continues to be a critical component of the South Asia dynamic and therefore sustained attention for any meaningful advance in the Indo-Pak peace process. Respect for human rights should be accorded the highest priority.
- We agree that the region should be consecutively demilitarized.
- We recommend that New Delhi and Islamabad should facilitate a dialogue between representatives from all parts of Jammu & Kashmir reflecting all shades of political opinion as part of an inclusive peace process.
- We appreciate that both India and Pakistan have continued cross-LoC trade and people to people contacts during the period that official dialogue was suspended.
- We endorse existing CBMs and calls for their effective implementation through the removal of obstacles, particularly in cross-LoC travel and trade including the opening of additional travel routes.
- We call upon the two governments to provide banking and communication facilities for cross-LoC trade as well an upgradation of trade infrastructure.
- We agree that the governments of India and Pakistan should jointly invest in the ecological preservation of the Indus Basin along with the formation of a joint Intra-Kashmir Environmental Study Group.
- We agree that terrorism should not be used as an instrument of policy. To that end sectarian and communal bias in the functioning of the agencies and institutions of the state are unacceptable and measures should be taken to discourage them. It was held that legal and legislative hurdles be removed to effectively prosecute cross border and transnational crimes; judges of the higher courts and members of bar councils should have an institutionalized framework of interaction that facilitates and encourages transparency in the process of prosecuting acts of terror; FIA and NIA, as nodal agencies, should have regularly scheduled and unscheduled interactions to cover all aspects of cooperation to combat terror; institutional capacity should be built and strengthened on both sides of the border for a thorough and professional investigation and prosecution of acts of terrorism.
- We urge, that the media maintain professional standards when reporting on bilateral issues, especially, all acts of terror in order to address professional and fair reporting across the border and to enhance person-to-person contact and access to accurate information.

- We strongly recommend an open visa regime with no restrictions for accredited journalists in both countries.
- We believe it is essential for both India and Pakistan to have open access to cross-border media products, including (but not limited to) television channels and films.
- We recommend that there should be no restrictions on the number of correspondents based in either country.
- We recommend an exchange of correspondents/media professionals between media houses across the border to report on a full spectrum of issues for a dedicated amount of time.
- We recommend that media houses in both countries should hold sensitization workshops for all media professionals reporting on Indo-Pak issues.



# Delegations

## INDIA

Sushobha Barve	Executive Director, Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation
Salman Haider	former Foreign Secretary
Yusuf Tarigami	Member J&K Legislative Assembly
Anuradha Bhasin	Executive Editor, Kashmir Times
Teesta Setalvad	civil rights activist, Editor, Communalism Combat
Siddharth Vardarajan	author and Strategic Affairs Editor, The Hindu
Gul Mohd Wani	Senior Associate Professor, University of Kashmir
Baijayant Panda	Member Lok Sabha
Manvendra Singh	former Member Lok Sabha
Jyoti Malhotra	TV anchor and Consulting Editor, Business Standard
Zubair Dar	Program Officer, Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation

## PAKISTAN

Humayun Khan	former Foreign Secretary
Aziz A. Khan	former Ambassador
Riaz Khokhar	former Foreign Secretary
Rifaat Hussain	Chair, Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, QAU
Nasim Zehra	Director Current Affairs, Dunya TV
General (retd) Talat Masood	defense analyst
Mohammad Malick	Editor, The News
Mosharraf Zaidi	columnist
Arif Kamal	former Ambassador
Zahid Hussain	author and senior journalist
Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan	Prime Minister, Azad Jammu & Kashmir
Sherry Rehman	President Jinnah Institute and Member National Assembly

# Chronology of Recent Events in the Indo-Pak Bilateral Relationship

## 2010

**1st January:** Pakistan and India exchanged lists of nuclear sites after a year of strained relations. The annual exchange has been a regular feature since the 1988 India-Pakistan Non-Attack Agreement which aims at the prohibition of attacks on nuclear installations times of conflict.

**25th February:** A meeting between the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan was held in New Delhi. The talks focused on the Kashmir issue along with terrorism, Balochistan and water. The delegations shared evidence related to the Mumbai attacks.

**6th May:** Ajmal Kasab, the lone militant captured alive after the 2008 Mumbai attacks was sentenced to death by the Mumbai High court. He was found guilty on many accounts, including murder and waging war on India.

**5th July:** The Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan held talks in Islamabad aimed at resuming a tentative peace process derailed by the 2008 Mumbai attacks. The talks were the third secretary-level contact since the Mumbai attacks in November 2008. The discussion was dominated by Indian concerns on terrorism, violence in India-administered Kashmir, rivalry in Afghanistan and reported allegations that Pakistan’s intelligence agency was behind the 2008 attacks.

## 2011

**6th February:** Pakistani and Indian Foreign Secretaries met at Thimpu on the sidelines of the SAARC conference. They discussed the need to resume a constructive Indo-Pak dialogue that addressed all outstanding issues.

**28th-29th March:** Pakistani and Indian Interior/Home Secretaries met in New Delhi and discussed the importance for both sides to have continued engagement on outstanding issues. It was decided to set up a hotline between the Home Secretary of India and Interior Secretary of Pakistan so that real time information could be shared on security threats.

**29th March:** Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani visited Mohali on the invitation of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to watch the ICC World Cup semi-final between Pakistan and India. The Pakistani Prime Minister was accompanied by members of his Cabinet and other parliamentarians. The event came to symbolize the ‘Mohali spirit’ of Indo-Pak cooperation and dialogue.

**31st March:** March 31st: Under-trial confession made by Swami Aseemanand in Ajmer, protagonist of the Samjhota Express bombing of 2007, revealed that the attacks were planned and executed by militant s associated with the right-wing Hindutva movement. Aseemanand's explosive statement in court implicated serving officials of the Indian army to the attacks.

**18th-22nd April:** Members of the India-Pakistan Judicial Committee on Prisoners visited jails in Karachi, Rawalpindi and Lahore. It was recommended by the Committee that discrepancy in figures of prisoners be reconciled; immediate consular access be made available to fishermen and prisoners; cases of juvenile prisoners, women, prisoners suffering from illness, physical or mental disability should be treated humanely; that all prisoners should be provided legal aid at all stages.

**28th April:** Pakistani and Indian Commerce Secretaries met in Islamabad for a fifth round of talks. The session dealt with CBMs through increased bilateral economic engagement and the creation of an enabling environment for trade and investment. Several initiatives are planned, including the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, removal of restrictions and closer coordination on trade through land routes, particularly the Wagah-Attari and Munabao-Khokrapar routes; formalization of mechanisms used by the Customs Liaison Border Committee; expansion of trade in petroleum products, electricity and cotton seeds; easing business visas and opening bank branches on both sides of the border. It was also agreed that a Joint Working Group on 'Economic and Commercial Cooperation and Trade Promotion' will be created and co-chaired by the respective Commerce Secretaries in bi-annual meetings.

**13th May:** Indian and Pakistani delegations met in Islamabad for talks on the Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project. Both sides discussed their positions on the issue and reaffirmed their commitment to the Indus Water Treaty. It was agreed that both sides will hold technical consultations as mandated by the Treaty.

**20th-21st May:** Talks were held in Rawalpindi on Sir Creek after a lapse of four years to work out the international maritime boundary between India and Pakistan. In several sessions, the Indian and Pakistani delegates presented their positions on the issue and exchanged non-papers that contained viable suggestions to resolve Sir Creek. It was agreed that a subsequent round of talks would be held at later date with the issue close to being resolved.

**30th-31st May:** Pakistani and Indian Defense Secretaries met in New Delhi to resolve the Siachen issue. The ceasefire in effect since November 2003 was acknowledged and both sides presented their positions as well as suggestion for further conflict mitigation. It was agreed that the next round of talks on Siachen would take place in Islamabad.

**2nd- 3rd June:** An Indo-Pak Joint Working Group session on visa procedures was held in Islamabad. This was a followup session of the Interior/Home Secretaries' meeting in New Delhi in March this year, during which it was decided that a Joint Working Group will be created. The Working Group reviewed visa procedures in both countries and drafted a Bilateral Visa Agreement. It was agreed that a second session will be held in August later this year.

**10th June:** Canadian-Pakistani national Tahawwur Hussain Rana was acquitted by a US court for non-involvement in the Mumbai attacks on 26/11. The Chicago jury could not link Rana with suspect David Headley in that case.

**23rd-24th June:** Indian and Pakistani Foreign Secretaries are scheduled to meet in Islamabad.