Chaophraya Dialogue 17

Report of Proceedings



A Jinnah Institute Conference Report

JINNAH INSTITUTE | Australia India Institute

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Note

The proceedings detailed in this conference report took place prior to the meeting of the India-Pakistan NSAs in Bangkok and India's decision to restart the bilateral dialogue with Pakistan, taken on the sidelines of the Heart of Asia conference in Islamabad on December 9.

Australia India Institute | JINNAH INSTITUTE

About Jinnah Institute

Jinnah Institute (JI) is a non-profit public policy organisation based in Pakistan. It functions as a think tank, advocacy group, and public outreach organisation independent of the government. JI seeks to promote knowledge-based policy making for strengthening democratic institutions, and to build 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 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 polices on regional and global relationships with India, Afghanistan, other South Asian countries, China, the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States.

About Australia India Institute



The Australia India Institute (AII) is a leading center for the study of India. Through its teaching, research, public policy and outreach programs, it is building Australia's capacity to understand India. AII is also a hub for dialogue, research and partnerships between India and Australia. Based at the University of Melbourne, the Institute hosts a growing range of programs that are deepening and enriching the relationship between the two countries.

The University of Melbourne established the Australia India Institute in October 2008. In 2009, funding for the Institute was provided by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The University of New South Wales and La Trove University were also founding partners. In 2012 the Department of Industrial Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education and the State Government of Victoria provided additional core funding. The Ministry of Culture, Government of India, is funding a Tagore Centre for Global Thought at AII – one of three Centers globally that are being funded by the Government of India. AII will host a Chair in Indian Studies, funded by the State Government of Victoria and the University of Melbourne and a Visiting Chair in Indian Studies sponsored by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

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Introduction

The Chaophraya Dialogue is a joint India-Pakistan Track II initiative undertaken by the Melbourne-based Australia India Institute (AII) and Islamabad-based Jinnah Institute (JI), to encourage informed dialogue on relations between Pakistan and India. The process has so far led to seventeen rounds of dialogue and is now completing its seventh year.

The Chaophraya Dialogue is primarily meant to give informed members of the strategic community in both India and Pakistan an opportunity to interact with each other on a sustained basis. Past Chaophraya Dialogue participants have included political leaders, lawmakers, parliamentarians, senior former officials (including ambassadors, Foreign Secretaries, intelligence chiefs and top-ranking members of the Armed Forces), academics, historians and journalists from India and Pakistan. The Chaophraya Dialogue has encouraged participants to share the conclusions of each round with their respective governments. It was also a useful forum when the official dialogue process between India and Pakistan was adversely affected by the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai. During this period, this Track II process managed to bring together senior interlocutors from the two countries at various international destinations.

There have been several attempts in recent years to establish greater Indo-Pak peace and understanding through Track II dialogues, but these are generally characterised by episodic interventions without sustained follow-up or engagement with participants. While such meetings do contribute towards an increased level of understanding between the two countries, their effectiveness and impact need to be enhanced by pursuing a program of long-term engagement with national experts in India and Pakistan. This is what the Chaophraya Dialogue has been attempting to do over the last few years, to the extent that its importance has been recognised in parliamentary deliberations, and referenced in policy formulation on either side of the border.

The 17th round of the Chaophraya Dialogue was held exclusively for senior mediapersons and journalists from India and Pakistan in Bangkok from December 2-3, 2015. This conference reviewed and discussed bilateral relations by recapping recent official and unofficial developments; the issue of Kashmir; the shared challenge of terrorism and extremism facing South Asia today, and in light of November's Paris attacks; the future of Afghanistan after a violent summer offensive; and how altered states of public discourse in both countries affect peace building efforts and conflict prevention. Both sides were represented by senior journalists who discussed opportunities and challenges in the India-Pakistan relationship, and devised an appropriate set of policy recommendations in Working Groups on the second day of the conference, included at the end of this conference report.

State of Bilateral Relations I

For the past year-and-a-half, Pakistan-India relations have been locked into an extended period of free-fall. When India and Pakistan are not moving forward, they rarely manage to stand still and always slide back. Governments and establishments on both sides have (re)-adopted new hardline positions, encumbering prospects for the resumption of dialogue. The overhang of terrorism and the Kashmir issue is likely to continue to keep the peace process hostage to semantics while 'lesser' issues such as trade and visas are ignored at their expense. Climate change is another area where India and Pakistan need to cooperate and coordinate their regional responses urgently. Both countries share the Himalayan, Hindukush and Karakoram glaciers, and increased glacial melt (and not nefarious Indian designs) is a key source of summer flooding in Pakistan. Attempts to foster increased people-to-people contact, and the opening up of trade and visas can also have a sustained and durable impact on the bilateral relationship.

Pakistani participants expressed the concern that new redlines and preconditions by India have made it difficult for Islamabad and New Delhi to find common ground within the bilateral relationship. In India, the Shiv Sena and other far-right lobbies continue to harass and bully peace constituencies into a corner. Initially there had been a great deal of hope that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, backed by his clear parliamentary majorities, would have the mandate to take peace and rapprochement forward and commit himself to a revamped bilateral relationship with India's largest neighbour. Pakistan, conversely, has harbored an across-the-board consensus to improve relations with India for over a decade. However, New Delhi has wasted a year-and-a-half by refusing to engage with Islamabad, and this has begun to reduce the appetite for engagement in Pakistan. As a result, and particularly after the meeting between the two heads of state on the sidelines of the Ufa summit, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif simply cannot afford to be seen as making concessions or 'giving in' to Indian demands. At the same time, India should not read too much into, or overestimate, the appointment of a new NSA in Islamabad. NSA Naseer Janjua is not a proxy of the military establishment; as former corps commander Quetta, his appointment has more to

do with Pakistan's resolve to address the Balochistan issue, and has little to do with the country's policy vis-à-vis India.

The BJP's resounding defeat in the Bihar election also signals Indian political leaders' failure to successfully leverage Pakistan as an electoral issue. Pakistani politicians, for their part, no longer campaign on anti-India platforms. It remains to be seen whether or not the Bihar electoral outcome will result in foreign policy introspection in New Delhi, and therein more constructive engagement with Pakistan. Pakistan meanwhile has just completed the 3rd phase of its Local Bodies elections. While India was not invoked as an electoral issue, security forces have been picking up 'agents of India' on the streets of Karachi this past year, reflecting national sentiment when it comes to allegations of Indian-involved terrorism in Pakistan. On trade, Pakistan wishes to move forward, but the environment has to be right for a breakthrough to take place. At the same time, there is also an entrenched agriculture lobby in Pakistan that is against awarding Non-Discriminatory Market Access (NDMA) status to India. As for Kashmir, Pakistani delegates stressed that even if India refuses to discuss the issue under the Composite Dialogue framework, Islamabad will still push for it to be brought up at the level of the two Prime Ministers, Foreign Secretaries, or in the backchannel.

On the Indian side, the reading is that Prime Minister Nawaz's options on India are increasingly limited, and there are questions about whether or not other institutions in Pakistan favour the kind of eager engagement with India that Prime Minister Sharif has advocated. The appointment of an ex-military officer as NSA is also viewed with concern, and the feeling in India is that the 'other Sharif' is in the saddle in Pakistan. On Kashmir, Pakistan is seen as having retreated back to its older positions, in which only the Hurriyat leadership is treated as the elected representative of the Kashmiri people. The coarsening of language on Kashmir is seen as a direct consequence of Nawaz Sharif's own internal weakening. On cricket, the BCCI has a signed commitment to host a Pakistan home series, but there is enormous pressure on the government not to go ahead with this. On trade, Pakistan should stop dithering and award India Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status. For its part, India should encourage a nuclear deal between Pakistan and the United States.

Indian participants also tried to explain that Prime Minister Modi was not as politically hemmed in by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as he was made out to be by Pakistani media reports, and pointed to conciliatory statements by RSS leaders such as Mohan Bhagwat to clarify their point. In India it was generally felt that Prime Minister Modi presently enjoys greater political clout than ex-Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee did, given the latter's domestic reliance on political coalitions and power arrangements while in office. Participants from India also felt that the Indian media had paid significantly less attention to the Ufa Declaration than Pakistani media houses. The absence of the 'K word' from the Ufa Joint Statement proved to be a major stumbling block for peacemakers on both sides, and sound analysis had been swept away and replaced by negative rhetoric which did more damage than good to the health of the bilateral relationship. A few observers felt that both Prime Ministers Nawaz Sharif and Narendra Modi committed blunders over the past year-and-a-half that only served to confuse policy direction as far as India-Pakistan relations were concerned

thus contributing to the anti-Pakistan political tempo in New Delhi. One delegate from India agreed with a statement made by former Minister of External Affairs Salman Khurshid in Islamabad in that India had failed to chart a progressive course of policy on Pakistan. Delegates also agreed that there was an added responsibility on Track II interlocutors as flag-bearers of the dialogue process when governments chose not to engage at the official level.

State of Bilateral Relations II

Delegates from both countries agreed that India and Pakistan needed to deeply commit themselves to the SAARC project, and remember the 2004 January meeting which saw major bilateral breakthroughs on the sidelines of the larger meeting, including an agreement to create a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in South Asia. While SAARC may not necessarily be able to provide an alternate avenue for recourse for the two countries, it can certainly make Indo-Pak engagement more effective. There are serious concerns in Islamabad that the 19th SAARC summit, scheduled for 2016, may be postponed because of Indian intransigence and an unwillingness by Prime Minister Modi to travel to Pakistan. This will be a shame, especially given that there has not been a SAARC postponement for over a decade. If India calls off its participation in the Islamabad summit citing security reasons, other regional heads of state in South Asia may follow suit. There is also a sense in Pakistan that India's policy on SAARC is one of 'SAARC-minus-Pakistan'.

On the Indian side it is true that at one point India saw the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) as a viable alternative to SAARC's regional grouping. But this concept is finding less traction in India today. Instead, the foreign policy conversation in New Delhi is pivoted on growth, and the expanding commercial and strategic role of China in Asia. There is also greater interest in fostering economic cooperation with the Gulf, as well as with the Far East. In light of these priorities, the importance given to SAARC has gone down tremendously (as evidenced by trade structures and patterns). No Foreign Secretary in any SAARC country is likely to take well to orders or dictation by a Secretary General in Kathmandu. Prime Minister Modi's solution-oriented approach to foreign policy means that he is likely to travel to Pakistan only when he can be assured of tangible outcomes. Several Indian delegates also expressed the belief that it is only when India-Pakistan relations are at their lowest that an upward turn takes place. There were concerns, however, that if Indian Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj chose not to visit Islamabad for the upcoming Heart of Asia meeting, chances would be high that Pakistan would not attend the next Afghan summit hosted in New Delhi.

A number of participants stated that foreign policy making in New Delhi is increasingly shrouded in confusion, and it is not immediately clear 'who is minding the store'. The intervention to draw Abdul Basit's meeting with the Hurriyat leadership as a red-line took place in the last 24 hours prior to the NSAs meeting in August 2015. Delegates from Pakistan, meanwhile, felt that their country still did not have a 'Plan-B' when it came to India. Prime Minister Modi has shown that he is still the same leader he was when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat. Going forward, Pakistan must lower its expectations and learn to live with the current limitations of the bilateral relationship. This swing to the right is likely to adversely affect other institutions of state in both countries. The space for peace is fast shrinking, and Prime Minister Modi will be unable to climb down and respond to Islamabad's overtures if he remains hemmed into political grandstanding. The feeling in Islamabad is that India is now simply looking for reasons to call off talks with Pakistan. Ironically, this strengthens the Pakistani establishment's practice of viewing talks with suspicion. Worryingly, the 'new India' under the BJP will also strengthen the hands of hawks in Pakistan, many of whom have been on a back-foot for more than a decade. It is also important to see how other regions of Pakistan view India: Sindh, for instance, has the highest number of divided Hindu families travelling to and from India. The plight of fisher-folk is felt more keenly in Karachi than it is in Islamabad, and it is these marginalised constituencies that can benefit significantly from bilateral CBMs such as prisoner exchanges.

Indian delegates maintained that Prime Minister Modi's foremost foreign policy priority has been to bolster his international status and credibility as evidenced by his outreach to the United States, China and Russia. Before being elected Prime Minister, Modi was an international pariah. It is also significant that he is one of the first Prime Ministers of India who has not served as Foreign Minister, despite which he has demonstrated a fairly sound understanding of Indian foreign policy. Furthermore, it would be wrong to suggest that the RSS is holding the BJP back from taking an initiative with Pakistan. On the contrary, relatively conciliatory statements by Mohan Bhagwat and other members from the RSS ranks indicate that the party is not ideologically opposed to a healthy India-Pakistan relationship. The RSS-BJP relationship under Prime Minister Modi is also qualitatively different from the Vajpayee-RSS relationship the decade before. Problematically, however, there has been no real policy management in the Modi-sarkar; while Prime Minister Modi is good at identifying problems and finding solutions, he is still learning the subtleties of diplomatic engagement.

Kashmir

In Kashmir, civilians continued to bear the brunt of firing and shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) and Working Boundary/International Border, and these tensions continue to spill over and hijack progress in the wider bilateral relationship. A few participants cited the example of the Shiv Sena in India justifying its hardline policy on sanctioning cricketing ties with the unpredictable situation on the LoC. Pakistani participants, meanwhile, noted that the 2003 ceasefire on the LoC had been unilaterally proposed by Pakistan and reciprocated by India. Pakistan had also quietly acquiesced to the building of a double-fence despite the reservations of Pakistani Kashmiris. In spite of these measures, India continued to accuse Pakistan of infiltration.

For Pakistan, Kashmir remains the core bilateral issue, and Islamabad will not let this be brushed under the carpet or ignored. The exclusion of Kashmir from the Joint Statement issued at Ufa proved to be a stumbling block in Prime Minister Sharif's push for peace with India. While out-of-the-box thinking was needed to resolve the Kashmir issue, many participants agreed that the Four Point Formula was the closest that both sides had ever come to finding a mutually-acceptable solution. Pakistan still views the Musharraf Formula as a viable roadmap for resolving the Kashmir issue, but participants suggested that it be renamed 'Peace Formula' or 'Kashmir Formula' to make it more politically palatable. Indian participants stressed that even under this formula there was no question at all of redrawing borders and even Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had envisioned an arrangement in which borders could be made "irrelevant", not changed. It was not clear whether the Four Point Formula was intended to serve as a long-term Confidence Building Measure (CBM) or a final solution.

On the LoC, meanwhile, tensions have been increasing steadily since May 2014, and even after the formation of a coalition government in Srinagar. Broadly speaking, the situation on the LoC has not improved since. The only way to maintain the 2003 ceasefire is if soldiers on either side are given political orders "not to fire". The view in Pakistan is also that Indian generals are now increasingly driving policy, issuing statements and holding press

conferences when it comes to Kashmir, thus reflecting a militarised and securitised policy in New Delhi vis-à-vis the contested state. A few delegates felt that while infiltration had little to do with firing exchanges, Prime Minister Modi drastically raised the stakes by calling on Indian soldiers to retaliate disproportionately to firing from the Pakistani side.

Indian participants tried to explain that there are two levels at which India has to deal with the Kashmir issue: external and internal. At a bilateral level, Kashmir remains a symptom of the larger Indo-Pak dysfunction. It is not possible to impose a political solution to what is largely seen in India as a security problem. In order to thin the presence of the Indian Army in Kashmir, cross-border militancy will have to be reduced, which, in turn, can create the space for troop reduction. Some observers also felt that it was not possible to talk about demilitarising Jammu and Kashmir without first enabling and carrying out a reduction of offensive strategic and tactical weaponry in the wider bilateral context. The feeling in India is that Pakistan is "reversing" its position on Kashmir. India, for its part, will never consider a solution which involves a redrawing of borders. Interestingly enough, when it comes to Kashmir the Indian Army has a significant restraining influence on politicians, telling the BJP leadership that a hostile atmosphere only makes infiltration easier and the construction of fences on the Indian side impossible.

As far as political trends in Jammu & Kashmir go, Srinagar remains gridlocked in policy paralysis. There is acute policy paralysis within Kashmir, and the schisms between the PDP and BJP have been exposed by resentment over the 2015 flood relief package, a symptom of growing political malaise in the state. There is also growing disillusionment at the Centre's approach to the periphery and Prime Minister Modi's visit to Kashmir seems to have only alienated the population further. Indian participants observed that this sense of alienation created the space for the growth of Salafism and the only way to combat the spread of dangerous ideologies was to propagate a powerful counter-narrative in Kashmir.

Initially there was hope that when the PDP and BJP came together, their contrasting ideologies but strong mandates would create the space for new political CBMs that could restore stability in the Valley. However, the PDP has become increasingly constrained by national level politics. Internally within Kashmir there is increasing polarisation; indications on the ground in the Valley suggest growing anger over the BJP-PDP alliance, and misgivings about the relationship of these parties and the RSS. Within policy quarters in New Delhi there are genuine concerns with regard to the situation on the ground in Kashmir, and a possible return to militancy. In this regard, a proposed trip to Srinagar by the NSA should indicate how the government chooses to address these anxieties.

Analysts in New Delhi have also begun to ask if India may lose the Kashmir Valley altogether in the next ten years, as educated and social media-savvy young men take up guns. The sighting of the black flags of 'Daesh' in the Valley should be a particular cause of concern for policymakers in South Asia. Participants agreed that the rights of minority groups in Jammu & Kashmir should be safeguarded, and that the governments in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad

look into framing a joint policy to look after displaced Hindu pandits and displaced Muslim Kashmiris, allowing them to return to their homeland in a peaceful manner. When it comes to the subject of Kashmir, promoting people-to-people contact is also important, because any solution to the Kashmir issue will have to involve the Kashmiris themselves in the decision-making process.

Terrorism & Extremism

Delegates from both countries agreed that so far there has been no substantial or sustained India-Pakistan conversation to discuss how both countries will respond in the wake of a crisis, or indeed if the relationship can weather a complete breakdown after another terrorist attack. It was agreed that a Modi-Sharif backchannel should be established that can serve as a crisis management mechanism. In this vein, a terrorism hotline specifically for the two Prime Ministers was proposed, so as to allow the two leaders to speak in times of emergency.

It was felt that extremism is a greater challenge for Pakistan than it is for India, because of how it had become enmeshed with religious idealism. Pakistani delegates also pointed out that hundreds of Indians were dying in the Assam conflict and in the Nagaland, and that this terrorism was neither a new phenomenon, nor was it being exported from Pakistan. Furthermore, while Pakistan was moving away from its practice of using non-state actors, having learned the hard way the disastrous consequences of such mistakes, India continued to up the proxy ante in Afghanistan and Balochistan. On the subject of dialogue, reducing all conversation to terrorism alone is short-sighted, and seen to be a tactical move on the part of the Indians. Participants were in favour of a separate structured dialogue on terrorism, saying that this dialogue should be inviolable even if the relationship was to take a hit in the wake of a terrorist attack.

Pakistani delegates agreed that, on the subject of the Mumbai trials, Pakistan needs to stop dragging its feet vis-à-vis postponements, judicial changes and witness intimidation. Voices in Pakistan are increasingly calling for the state to do more to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks to justice and expedite the trials taking place in Rawalpindi. Pakistan also needs to "proactively cut off the hands of non-state actors, beginning with the oxygen that fuels their activities". This is in Pakistan's own national security interests. The rise of the Islamic State is another cause of concern, and the radicalisation of a new generation of young men in Indian Kashmir and sightings of black flags in the Valley are an ominous sign of turbulent times ahead. Participants also suggested the possibility of initiating a structured dialogue on

terrorism, separate from the framework of the main Composite Dialogue, which would remain unaffected by periodic breakdowns in the wider bilateral relationship.

Pakistani delegates were also of the opinion that there was a distinctly qualitative difference between terrorism in Pakistan and terrorism in India, given their different sources, casualties and collateral toll on society. Pakistan has lost between 40,000 and 80,000 citizens in its fight against terror since 2007. Interestingly, it was not until 2014 that the Pakistani government decided to take a hard-line against domestic terrorism, whereas, in India, a single terrorist attack quickly snowballed into the single-biggest roadblock within the bilateral relationship.

Some Indian participants drew comparisons between the IS-sponsored attack on Paris in November 2015 and the Lashkar-e-Taiban (LeT)-orchestrated attack on Mumbai in 2008. Indian delegates felt that the LeT continued to be patronised by the Pakistani state and army and remained a potent force in South Asia capable of carrying out spectacular attacks on Indian soil. Reasons for Western support to Pakistan include the importance of Pakistan's role in stabilising Afghanistan and the fear that Pakistan's nuclear weapons could fall into terrorist hands. Another 26/11-styled attack, or Mumbai-II, will only ratchet up tensions further and pressure Prime Minister Modi into acting decisively against Pakistan. For Prime Minister Modi, the possibility that a reconciliatory policy with Pakistan may end in failure is a possible driver of India's reluctance to move forward with Islamabad until concrete steps have been taken against militant outfits such as the LeT. Indian delegates maintained that if Pakistan can deal with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), as evidenced by a successful counterinsurgency operation in North Waziristan (NWA), the state should also be able to deal just as decisively with anti-India outfits.

Indian participants were also of the opinion that India and Pakistan must agree on the difference between an 'insurgent' and a 'terrorist'. One Indian participant said there was hardly any evidence of Indian involvement in Balochistan and that Pakistan should not look to try and draw 'moral equivalence' between acts of terror committed in Pakistan and those committed in India by non-state groups. It was further noted that in the early 2000s, the Manmohan-Musharraf dialogue went ahead despite provocations (a terror attack the night before Prime Minister Singh was due to inaugurate a bus service). However, the relationship in its present state may not be able to weather another large-scale terrorist attack. The Indian establishment also takes a very strong view on infiltration, and is likely to impose costs on Pakistan for maintaining militant infrastructure that targets India. At the very least, this is the political justification for taking such a stance. The unchecked growth of the LeT is a source of strategic concern for India and it is not clear if the LeT's growth owes more to malign strategic intent in Islamabad, or Pakistan’s loss of control over these rogue outfits.

Afghanistan

President Barack Obama's decision to stagger the pullout of troops from Afghanistan is likely to have a salutary effect in the country, especially after the fall of Kunduz signaled the unpreparedness of the Afghan National Army (ANA). Meanwhile, the domestic pushback in Kabul to President Ashraf Ghani's foreign policy initiatives, particularly with Pakistan, as well as the rapid rise of the Islamic State, are likely to present new challenges to Afghan stability in the coming months.

Pakistani participants were of the opinion that China can play a constructive role in facilitating Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation. Pakistan, meanwhile, continues to view undue Indian strategic influence in Afghanistan as a security concern. It should also be realised that as long as the Taliban continue to make gains on the battlefield, there will be little incentive for them to come to the negotiating table. In this context most participants were of the opinion that there was little hope for political reconciliation. In the absence of any real peace lobby in Afghanistan, the rapid rise of the Islamic State only added to Pakistani strategic concerns and fears about the viability of its western neighbour as a state that could withstand internal fractures. Optimism particularly amongst young Afghans, was the lowest it had been in a decade and security concerns were such that even U.S. Embassy staff could no longer travel by road in Kabul and had to be airlifted to Kabul Airport when they needed to leave the country.

Pakistani delegates further maintained that there are now severe limits on Pakistan's ability to deliver the Afghan Taliban to Kabul's doorstep and there needs to be international recognition of this. Furthermore, any major change to the political dispensation in Kabul is likely to drastically alter power dynamics within the country. Presently the Taliban were contesting as many as 24 out of 35 districts in Afghanistan with insurgents believing that they could fight and negotiate at the same time. The Taliban's treatment of areas post-capture is also not a positive development. The advancement of the Taliban in northern Afghanistan now threatens to spill over into Badakshan, where Uzbek fighters are already creating links with Uighur separatists. This is likely to provoke a reaction from Beijing. Even though many

Afghans prefer reconciliation to continued conflict, the reality is that after a successful summer offensive, there is little incentive for the Afghan Taliban to come to the negotiating table.

The Indian view on the subject of Afghanistan is that Pakistan's desire for 'strategic control' continues to be anathema. India takes exception to Pakistan's 'Monroe Doctrine' when it comes to Afghanistan, with an exclusivist policy that undermines efforts to promote regional stability. Indian participants stressed that their country enjoyed longstanding goodwill and historical linkages with the people of Afghanistan, and that it was in India's strategic interest to ensure that the country did not turn into a safe haven for terrorists. The fall of Kunduz, meanwhile, signals the first time that a major urban area has fallen into Taliban hands, thus flagging the hollowness of the US-Afghan pipedream of a stable and secure Afghanistan. Kunduz was an attractive prize for the Taliban given its ethnic mix (50 per cent Pushtun population). The Taliban continue to make inroads in southern and eastern Afghanistan, and are not vying for spheres of influence as much as they are jockeying for complete territorial control. It is quite clear that the Afghan Taliban view the Ghani-Abdullah administration as a stop-gap arrangement installed by the West. The idea of bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table is also flawed; as an organisation, the Taliban are riven by infighting and are suffering a severe crisis of leadership. As far as Indian investments in Afghanistan are concerned, abetting Afghan reconstructing has been a success of Indian foreign policy: every dollar that India has sunk into Afghanistan has reaped benefits. However, while India does have a strategic agreement with Kabul, it cannot and should not be expected to pick up the tab or foot the bill for the Afghan National Army.

On the subject of intra-Taliban negotiations, several delegates voiced their concerns about guarantees for the rights of women and other vulnerable groups, as a red lines set by Kabul in any future talks or negotiations with the Taliban. While the forthcoming Heart of Asia conference certainly offered the opportunity for a Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif-President Ashraf Ghani handshake, a simple photo-op is not be able to resolve all the stumbling blocks present in the Pak-Afghan bilateral relationship.

Indian participants spoke of the massive infrastructure and development investments made by New Delhi in Afghanistan and said that any security concerns harboured by Pakistan could, and should, effectively be addressed by joint mechanisms. This would be especially important as both Kabul and New Delhi steadily looked to operationalise various aspects of their strategic relationship and, in this context, it was more important than ever that Afghanistan becomes a regional unifier not a divider.

Altered States of Public Discourse

Participants pointed to the explosion of private television in South Asia, particularly after 1995, as the single biggest contributor to the debasement of public discourse within the India-Pakistan relationship. The media's capacity to do damage to the state of bilateral relations is enormous, and at least some of the downturn in the Indo-Pak trajectory has to do with the manner in which the media has amplified jingoistic sentiment in times of conflict, therein raising the political costs for governments in New Delhi and Islamabad to engage with each other. There is no alternative to dialogue, but this dialogue would be better held away from the glare and scrutiny of the media spotlight, as evidenced by the Ufa debacle.

Strengthening liberal constituencies on both sides of the border is also key to challenging nationalist rhetoric and war-mongering. Journalists are better suited to rising above the fray, provided they are not guided by Target Rating Points (TRPs) and jockeying for better ratings. The media in India and Pakistan should try to focus on delivering hard news, rather than 'infotainment'. Popular cinema can also help provide a better understanding of both societies, as seen by the huge cinematic appeal of Bhajrangi Bhaijan in both India and Pakistan, and the fact that this movie about breaking stereotypes has become one of the highest grossing films at the Indian box office in 2015. The example of the 'Zindagi' channel in India was raised to showcase how a television channel has changed Indian perspectives on Pakistan; Zindagi is currently the third most financially viable channel in India, watched as far south and east as Bangalore and Kerala.

In Pakistan, there is a lack of understanding about the internal issues that drive public discourse in India. This lack of understanding only serves to complicate relations between the two societies. One Pakistani participant took the view that Pakistani media is still "5 years behind" the Indian media in terms of how it controls the narrative and shapes public discourse. However, it remains to be seen if it is the media that adjusts itself to policy in Islamabad and New Delhi, or if policymaking in these capitals responds to how the media frames bilateral relations. Participants also discussed, and agreed, that the two governments

should implement and enhance their existing bilateral agreement to allow the posting of three journalists from the other side in their respective capitals. Keeping in view the proliferation of private print and electronic media channels, the number of such resident journalists from the other side should also be increased.

Indian delegates were of the opinion that the powerful reach of television as a medium of communication owed itself largely to structural models in the subcontinent: the media's overdependence on the market and protection-driven format meant that coverage was determined by ratings. Therefore the success of shrill commentary, as exemplified by certain news channels in India, meant that other TV channels had been quick to replicate this model. It was further noted that there was a lack of filtering or layering of discourse at the expense of genuine expertise and nuance. On the question of India-Pakistan ties, nearly all coverage in India was reduced to cross-border terrorism, and attempts for normalisation are automatically subject to this same treatment, as evidenced by the Pakistani High Commissioner's meeting with Hurriyat representatives prior to the cancellation of NSA-level talks. This is one of the reasons why the Ufa agreement came under intense scrutiny, despite having largely been welcomed by many segments of the strategic community in India.

With regard to the events of 26/11, it was suggested that terrorism had irrevocably transformed the Indian psyche on the subject of engagement with Pakistan. Although only 173 people were killed in the Mumbai attacks, over 1.2 billion Indians were affected by televised coverage of the carnage that left a lasting impression. However, it was important to discourage misplaced jingoism by politicians and anchorpersons, since such jingoism only serves to perpetuate hostility between the two neighbours and reduce all conversation on engagement to progress on terrorism alone.

The media is also responsible for obstructing fair and impartial coverage of incidents taking place on the Line of Control and makes it even more difficult to ascertain facts in times of crisis. Print media fared better, since it lacked the ratings compulsions that drove commentary in television media. This meant that newspapers often had more space for objectivity and impartial reporting; but at the same time the fact there are no Indian media correspondents stationed in Pakistan means that there is, at best, a limited understanding of major events such as democratic transitions, or changes in the security establishment taking place in Pakistan. It is unfortunate that the visas of two print correspondents (for The Press Trust of India and The Hindu respectively) were not extended, as this has only hampered print coverage of Pakistani news. While recent media-sponsored initiatives such as "Aman ki Aasha" are welcome, ultimately political deadlock between the two states hampers people-to-people contact from making any headway, or breaking new ground.

It was noted that there is a severe dearth of information about India and Pakistan in each other's countries, and this lack of information is responsible for driving media narratives on either side of the LoC. It is important for evening talk show hosts to reach out to, and include, panelists from India and Pakistan so that the debate on their shows is not one-sided. With the advent of social media, the "hashtagging of narratives" was flagged as a new way to funnel

news content in South Asia. As far as social media is concerned, the proliferation of online platforms has not had a positive effect on healthy reporting. Once again, the absence of filters and accountability makes online news and reporting an unreliable vehicle for transmitting information. In this regard, delegates noted that the meeting between the Indian BSF and Pakistan Rangers was a relatively low-key media affair, and not burdened by high expectations.

The erosion of editorial control also means that professional journalism in both countries has been increasingly replaced by hysterical, hyper-nationalistic coverage of international affairs on television. The rise of broadcast media in Pakistan during the Musharraf years, particularly in 2001 and 2002, aptly demonstrated how private media could be a mobiliser of public opinion and could in fact rally national sentiment in a way that state media could not. Participants felt that if there was another terrorist incident in India, a media trial would quickly erupt and follow, in which Pakistan would immediately be blamed by news anchors even in the absence of hard evidence linking Pakistan to the incident, as had been the case with Gurdaspur and Udhampur in 2015.

Appendix A
Joint Resolution

Senior media persons and journalists from India and Pakistan traveled to Thailand for the 17th Chaophraya Dialogue to review recent developments in bilateral relations, and formulate recommendations for policymakers and media in both countries to increase bilateral engagement. At the end of the two-day dialogue, participants arrived at the following joint resolution.

1. They noted with satisfaction the recent meeting between the two Prime Ministers in Paris, and expressed the hope that this could lead to a revival of bilateral dialogue. They strongly urged that the Indian External Affairs Minister attend the forthcoming Heart of Asia ministerial meeting on Afghanistan in Islamabad;

2. They recommended that the dialogue process be delinked from confidence building measures that have already been agreed upon. CBMs must continue, and expanded where possible. Cross-LoC connections, meanwhile, must be encouraged and facilitated;

3. They expressed the view that the backchannel be restarted/commenced and kept away from media glare to devise further confidence building measures;

4. They suggested that the elected leaders of both parts of Kashmir meet annually to explore and promote trade, people to people interaction, implement agreed CBMs and build good-will;

5. They emphasized the importance of cultural exchanges, people-to-people contacts and sporting links between the two countries, and urged that visa restrictions be eased to facilitate these interactions;

6. They suggested that India and Pakistan consider the possibility of joint bilateral dialogue on Afghanistan to explore their common interests;

7. They expressed the hope that the two countries would meet soon to increase bilateral trade and economic cooperation and urged Pakistan to give Non-Discriminatory Market Access (NDMA) status to India;

8. They agreed that the two countries should work towards stronger cooperation within South Asia, and focus on making SAARC a more effective platform for regional integration;

9. They urged the two governments to give visas to journalists and media persons from the other side to travel as well as permission to work in each other's countries. To this end, they recommended that the SAARC agreement which provided for long-term visas to journalists to visit and report from each other's country, be implemented in letter and spirit;

10. They called on the two governments to implement and enhance their existing bilateral agreement allowing the posting of three journalists from the other side in their respective capitals. Keeping in view the proliferation of private print and electronic media channels, the number of such resident journalists from the other side should be enhanced;

11. They suggested that measures be taken to ease formal and informal restrictions on the broadcast of electronic media from the other side. Similarly they called upon the removal of restrictions on newspapers, periodicals and all other published matter originating from the other side;

12. They called upon media houses in both countries to set up an exchange program for training journalists from the other side;

13. They recommended that media houses engage local stringers across the border for print and television coverage of local events;

14. They called on the media to ensure that diversity of opinion is reflected on all issues, thus allowing the public in both countries to make informed choices;

15. They called on the media in both countries to invest resources in independent investigative journalism on terrorism and conflict, as these were areas of concern for

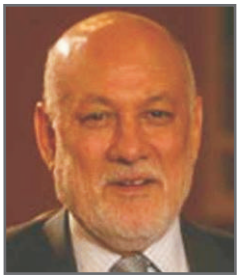
both countries;

16. They called on the media to exercise the highest professional standards at all times, and avoid speculative and inflammatory reporting on issues related to tensions between the two countries;

17. They recommended that media institutions invest resources in reporting on the SAARC region, in particular on countries like Afghanistan.

Appendix B
Conference Delegates

Pakistan



Aziz Ahmad Khan

Ambassador (retd.) Aziz Ahmad Khan joined the Pakistan Foreign Service in 1969, and served as Pakistan's High Commissioner to Malaysia (1995 to 1996) and Ambassador to Afghanistan (1996 to 2000). He has also served as the Spokesman for Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2001 to 2003), Additional Foreign Secretary (2000 to 2002), and Director General of the Foreign Service Academy (2002 to 2003). He then proceeded to serve as Pakistan's High Commissioner to New Delhi (2003 to 2006). Ambassador Khan has served in various capacities in Pakistan Missions in Buenos Aires, Brasilia, Maputo, Vienna and Lisbon. He is currently Jinnah Institute's Honourary Vice President, on the Board of the recently-established Regional Peace Institute, and Executive Advisor to the International Relations quarterly The Criterion.

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Rahimullah Yusufzai

Rahimullah Yusufzai is a renowned journalist for both print and broadcast media in Pakistan. He serves as the Resident Editor of The News in Peshawar, and as a Senior Analyst for Geo TV. He is also a Correspondent for the BBC World Service, mainly working for its radio programmes in Urdu, Pashto, Hindi, Uzbeki and English. He also works for ABC News and contributes articles to a number of newspapers and periodicals in a number of countries.Mr. Yusufzai has been reporting on Afghanistan since the start of the Afghan conflict in 1978. He also writes on political and security issues in Pakistan, particularly on the conflict in FATA and Balochistan.

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Hamid Mir

Hamid Mir was declared an Information Hero by Reporters Without Borders in2014. Mr. Mir survived an assassination attempt and received six bullets on April 19, 2014 in Karachi. He is still carrying two bullets in his body. He survived first attempt on his life when Taliban planted a bomb under his car in 2012. Mr. Mir wrote about threats to his life just few days before that incident. Despite threats from intelligence agencies and religious extremists he refused to leave Pakistan and working in very dangerous circumstances. Mr. Mir started journalism in 1987 from Daily Jang Lahore as a sub-editor and thenz reporter. He wrote his first book in 1990 at the age of 24 marketed by Jang Publishers. He became youngest Editor of a National Newspaper (Daily Pakistan, Islamabad) at the age of 30 in 1996. He is currently writing a regular Urdu column in national dailies since 1994, and hosting Capital Talk for GEO News since November 2002. Capital Talk is the oldest current affairs talk show on Pakistani media which created highest rating records in 2011. Mr. Mir also played an important role in breaking a deadlock between India and Pakistan in 2003 by initiating a dialogue between Indian and Pakistani parliamentarians and writers through his talk show. Mr. Mir also hosted a historical dialogue between Muslim, Christian and Jewish scholars in New York's Makki Mosque in 2006. Currently he is working as the Executive Editor of Geo TV.

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Mohammad Malick

Mohammad Malick is presently Managing Director, Pakistan Television (PTV) Corporation Limited. A media career spanning 29 years places Mr. Malick in the category of Pakistan's senior most journalists and media professionals. He has held top positions in the country's top publications and TV channels including serving as Editor of daily The News; daily The Muslim; weekly The Tribune, to name a few. He established Europe's first multicultural satellite television channel, TV Asia, and its affiliated radio station in UK, and produced award-winning television programming. Rated amongst Pakistan's top five current affairs TV anchors, Mr. Malick has hosted hundreds of hours of current affairs programmes interacting with the country's political, business and bureaucratic elite.This varied and rich experience has enabled him to develop a keen understanding of the media world and an incisive comprehension of its business, socio-economic and political trends. His multi-faceted career has endowed him with a thorough understanding of politics-both domestic and global, economy, international affairs etc. He has traveled to over 20 countries in connection with his professional obligations, participating in innumerable seminars and conferences, both within Pakistan and abroad. He routinely delivers lectures at Staff College (for senior bureaucrats), NDU, universities, and other equally reputable forums.

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Mariana Baabar

Mariana Baabar is one of the senior most female journalists in Pakistan print media with 36 years of experience. She also has extensive work experience in the electronic media and contributes to international and national electronic media, including the BBC English, Hindi, Pushto and Persian service. She is presently Diplomatic Editor with The News International in Islamabad. Readers in India are familiar with her writings in Outlook, The Hindu and recently in Amar Ujala.

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Badar Alam

Muhammad Badar Alam is the editor of the Herald magazine. He has been a journalist since 1993 and has worked with publications such as daily Jang Lahore, daily The News Lahore, The News on Sunday, and the Herald. In early 2000s, he served as deputy editor of the South Asia Free Media Association's internet-based news and views portal. He has also worked as the Pakistan correspondent for a Delhi-based daily, Mail Today, between 2007 and 2010.

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Mosharraf Zaidi

Mosharraf Zaidi is the Campaign Director for Alif Ailaan – a political campaign to help end Pakistan's education emergency. Previously, he has held senior positions with governments and various international organizations. Until January 2013, he was the principal advisor to the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. His responsibilities at the Ministry include working on Pakistan's key strategic relationships, communication outreach and public diplomacy. Over the course of his career as a government advisor, he has supported local government reform in New York City (for the New York City Council), administrative reform in the Government of the Punjab (for the Chief Minister of the Punjab) and numerous reform efforts including technology policy, higher education and capital markets reform for the Government of Pakistan. He has also advised the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the UK Government's DFID, and the Danish and Swiss governments on policy issues in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the South Asia region. Mr. Zaidi writes a regular column for The News in Pakistan. His articles also appear in a variety of publications including Al-Shorouk in Egypt (in Arabic), Foreign Policy, The Nation, the Times of India, the National, and the Wall Street Journal. He is a frequent contributor to television and radio, including CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera English, National Public Radio, PTV and Geo News.

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Meher Bokhari

Meher Bokhari is a Pakistani journalist and award winner for Most Popular Anchor Agahi Awards 2015. She has worked for several mainstream channels as a political commentator and senior producer. Having started her career with coverage of social issues, she rose to prominence with the release of the Taliban flogging video which gained international attention and her interviews of Taliban spokesperson Haji Muslim on controversial issues such as women's education. She has since moved onto current affairs including politics and foreign affairs. Currently she is hosting and producing NewsEye, a flagship show on Dawn News. Born and raised in Pakistan, Ms. Bokhari went on to do a double degree in Mathematics and Business Administration with a minor in economics at University of Waterloo in Canada. She travels regularly for seminars and workshops on journalism and media coverage, recently as a keynote speaker on Innovative Journalism at Stanford University. Some of her popular works include documentaries on earthquake victims and rehabilitation in Kashmir and Balochistan, flood coverage in 2010, and the quest for more provinces including Suba Hazara.

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Moeed Pirzada

Dr. Moeed Pirzada is a prominent political commentator, a TV Anchor and a columnist. He advises key public sector organisations on communication strategies and has worked with international organisations as consultant on issues related to policy and governance. He is currently Director of Governance & Policy Advisers (GAPA) and is Editor Strategic Affairs and lead Anchor for Dunya News. He has also moderated several national and international seminars and conferences on various policy issues. He was part of the Educational Task Force, organized by British Council of Pakistan, is Ambassador for Alif Ailan Campaign (Dfid), Member of PILDAT's Citizen Group on Electoral Process and has done consulting assignments for USAID, John Snow Institute, Packard Foundation, Leads Pakistan, Inter Media, FNF, British American Tobacco, NDU, Friedrick-Ebert-Stiftung, Commonwealth Secretariat and Planning Commission of Pakistan among others. He has been invited to present papers and speak in International conferences and seminars in Pakistan, India, UK, USA, Korea and Turkmenistan. He has been invited to talk to students and faculty at Harvard, Georgetown, Columbia, NDU, LUMS, NUST, FAST, SDPI, Jinnah Institute, Foreign Services Academy, Civil Services Academy, National School of Public Policy, Forman Christian College University and other institutions across the country. He has been a columnist with Khaleej Times (2007-8) and his articles have appeared in The Dawn, Express Tribune, Pakistan Today, The News, The Daily Times, in Pakistan and the Guardian in UK (2002-7) and in magazines like Al Jazeera, Newsline, PIQUE and World Times. His television programs are archived on websites like PK Politics, Awaz TV, Zem TV and other web portals. He is active on social media with more than a million following his blog on Facebook and Twitter. Moeed Pirzada has been a Britannia Chevening Scholar at London School of Economics & Political Science where he studied Media & Internet Regulation (MSc, 2003), has studied International Finance & Economic Policy at School of International & Public Affairs, Columbia University, New York. (MIA, 2002) He earlier did his MBBS from University of Punjab (1988) and served in Civil Services of Pakistan 1990-2000. He has been a member of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, London (IISS), Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London (RIIA) and Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).

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Ali Dayan Hasan is a human rights activist and media analyst. He has specialized expertise in media freedom issues in Asia. He served as Human Rights Watch's Pakistan director between 2003 and 2014 and was responsible for researching, authenticating and writing reports, briefing papers and news releases produced by Human Rights Watch on Pakistan. He advocates South Asian human rights concerns globally with regional bodies, national governments, international financial institutions and is a regular contributor on Pakistan in the international media. In addition to appearing frequently as a commentator on television, his opinion pieces have appeared in major international media.

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Mehr Tarar

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India



Siddarth Varadarajan

Siddarth Varadarajan has been an academic, a journalist as well as an editor. He has formerly served as an editor for the Hindu where he covered the NATO intervention in the Balkans as well as the conflict in Kashmir, the Iraq War and also the destruction of Afghanistan's Pre-Islamic heritage by the Taliban. Mr Varadarajan joined the Times of India as an editorial writer in 1994, following many years as a professor at New York University. Come 2004, he was the Deputy Editor at the Hindu and in 2009, he became the Chief of the National Bureau at the Hindu. Mr Varadarajan has been recognized by the UN Correspondents Association for print journalism with the Elizabeth Neuffer Memorial Prize Silver Medal. He has also been inducted into the Bernardo O'Higgins Order by the President of Chile for print journalism and promoting Indo-Latin American relations and has also received the Ramnath Goenka Award for Print Journalist of the year (2010). He has also published a book called, 'Gujarat: The Making of a Tragedy'. Earlier this year, Mr Varadarajan founded The Wire and currently serves as its Founding Editor.

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Happymon Jacob

Dr Happymon Jacob is Professor of Diplomacy and Disarmament Studies at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University where he teaches courses on Nuclear Disarmament, and National Security & International Relations. Dr Jacob is a regular columnist with the Srinagar-based Greater Kashmir daily and a frequent Op-Ed Contributor to The Hindu, India's leading English language daily. He is the author of three monographs and has edited 5 books. Dr Jacob has been organizing and/or participating in the three most influential Indian-Pakistan track-two dialogues: Chaophraya Dialogue, Pugwash India-Pakistan Dialogue and, the Ottawa India-Pakistan Dialogue. Dr Jacob has written extensively about Indian foreign policy, Kashmir conflict, India-Pakistan relations, and security issues in general. Dr Jacob is also a member of the international Governing Council of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Pugwash Conferences of Science and World Affairs.

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Sanjaya Baru

Dr Sanjaya Baru is the Director of Geo-Economics and Strategy at the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London. He has served as the Media Advisor to the former Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh and also served as his spokesperson and principal speechwriter (2004-2008). Dr Baru has also served as Chief Editor of the Business Standard, India. (2009-11); The Financial Express (2000-04) and has also been the Editorial Page Editor of The Times of India (1994-98) and has been an Associate Editor with The Economic Times (1990-1994) as well. Outside of the media, Dr Baru has had an extensive career in academia having been a Professor with the Indian Council for Research in International Economic Relations (1999-2000) Departments of Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University (1985-86) and at the University of Hyderabad(1979-1990). Dr Baru is also a Visiting fellow at the School of Economic Studies, University of East Anglia, UK, and the East-West Centre, Hawaii.

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Praveen Swami

Praveen Swami is currently the National Editor (Strategic and International Affairs) of the Indian Express. He was also formerly the Diplomatic Editor of the Daily Telegraph and an Associate Editor with The Hindu. He has been described by the BBC to be, " one of India's foremost experts on Islamic terrorism". And indeed as a journalist, analyst and author he has extensively covered the Kashmir conflict, Islamic Terror Outfits as well as the comparatively less known Maoist insurgency. Mr. Swami over his career has received many awards and recognition for his work. In 2006, he was awarded the Ramnath Goenka Award for 'Excellence in Journalism' in recognition of his work on Kashmir. Mr. Swami has also been recipient of the Sanskriti Samman Award (1999) and the Prem Bhatia Memorial Award for Political Journalism (2003). Mr Swami also served as Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow at the US Institute of Peace (2004-2005). Mr. Swami has authored two books on the Indo-Pak conflict.

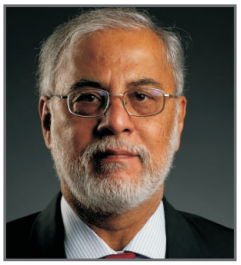
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Ajai Shukla

Col (retd.) Ajai Shukla is a Consulting Editor (Strategic Affairs) with Business Standard newspaper. He writes on strategic and international affairs, diplomacy, defence policy and the Indian defence economy. He also runs a strategic affairs blog, Broadsword (ajaishukla.blogspot.com), which is visited daily by 3,000-5,000 readers from across the world.Over the last 10 years, Mr Shukla has published more than 200 opinion pieces and 800 news analysis articles on defence and security in Business Standard and in international publications like the London-based Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) journal. Ajai is also a frequent commentator on television. He is an old hand at TV, having been a prime time news anchor and war correspondent with New Delhi Television (NDTV), when he reported extensively the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and the conflict in India's insurgency-afflicted northeastern states and Jammu & Kashmir. In 2013-14, he was a member of the team that established Doordarshan News' revamped 9 p.m. news bulletin, Newsnight. Before taking up journalism, Ajai was an Indian Army officer in the armoured corps officer for over two decades, retiring as a colonel. From 1979-2001, he saw military service across India's border, including in Jammu & Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan. He spent a year with the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Mozambique. Whilst in the army, he was selected for the Staff College course at Wellington and for the Senior Command Course at Mhow.

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Manoj Joshi

Dr Manoj Joshi is a celebrated journalist and author. Dr Joshi was first a political editor for the Times of India following which he was a comment editor with the Mail Today. He has also collaborated with the Hindu, India Today and the Financial Express. He has covered a broad range of issues starting with the insurgency that gripped the Punjab in the 1980's, Indian intervention in Sri Lanka in 1987, the Siachen conflict, Indo-Pak issues from 1987-2009, Sino-Indian issues and Indo-American relations. He has also served as member of the National Security Council Advisory Board from 2004-2006. And in 2011, the Government of India's Cabinet Committee on Security appointed Dr Joshi to its National Task Force. Dr Joshi has also published two books on Kashmir.

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Sushil Aaron

Dr Sushil Aaron is Director of Projects at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. He was for several years a Political Adviser at the British High Commission, New Delhi, covering India-Pakistan relations, Kashmir, Afghanistan and wider foreign policy issues. He has previously been a Sir Ratan Tata Fellow at the London School of Economics and Research Fellow at the Centre de Sciences Humaines. He is interested in India-Pakistan relations, South Asian affairs and Indian politics – and his publications include Straddling Faultlines: India's Foreign Policy in the Greater Middle East.

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Mallika Joseph

Dr Mallika Joseph is Deputy Director of the Australia India Institute @ Delhi. She was also the Honorary Director of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi until 2015. She served as the Executive Director of the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) from January 2012 until December 2014. She is the first woman and the youngest ever to assume both these positions. Dr Joseph specialises in security sector reform (SSR) and is one of the 24 experts selected worldwide and inducted into the UN Roster of SSR Experts in 2009; she is one of the two experts from Asia to have made it to the UN Roster in 2009. She received the UK Chevening Fellowship in 2009. Prior to that, she was awarded the Mahab ul Haq Award for collaborative research in South Asia, and was a Ford Foundation exchange scholar and spent a semester at the University of Notre Dame, US. She has a PhD in international relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University, and has worked on various issues relating to South Asian security.

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Zakka Jacob

Zakka Jacob is the current Deputy Executive Editor of CNN-IBN and was formerly a news anchor at China Central Television in Beijing (2011-2013), where he was given the best foreign expert award for two consecutive years. And before that he was an Associate Executive Producer at Headlines Today (2003-2011), where he debuted as the youngest anchor on an English new network in India. He reported on some of the most defining moments in the region in the last decade such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Sri Lankan Civil War, 26/11, Benazir Bhutto's assassination and the Indian General Elections of 2004-2009.

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Varghese K George

Varghese K George is the US Correspondent of The Hindu. India's most respected English newspaper with a circulation of more 1.3 million copies and published from 17 centers across India. Until recently, he was the political Editor of the Hindu, based in New Delhi. Over the last 15 years, he has written extensively on Indian politics, political economy, society & foreign policy. From 2008 to February 2014, he was the chief of Bureau (Political) of the Hindustan Times, the country's second largest English language daily. From 2002 to 2008, he worked for the Indian Express in various roles. George has written extensively on the rise of he BJP and Mr Narendra Modi, documented the politics of the Congress party, and closely followed the dynamics of Caste-based politics in India. His reports have won Geonka Journalis of the year 2005, the Prem Bhatia Award or Excellence in Political Reporting, Transparency International Award for fighting corruption and Intelrnational Press Institute award for excellence in Journalism. In 2013, he was selected for the Emerging Leader Fellowship at the Australia India Institute, Melbourne University, Australia. Varghese has an MA in Modern Indian History from the Delhi University and an M Phil in International Relations from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. His M Phil Dissertations in 2002 dealt with the social and political unraveling in Middle Eastern countries as a result of globalisation.



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Ishan Dhar is the Project Officer for the Chaophraya Dialogue – India Chapter. His research interests concern Political Islam and conflicts to which Muslims are a party. In May 2015, he completed his Bachelor of Arts (Political Science) from the George Washington University in Washington DC. Ishan has previously worked at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi.

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