

# UPCOMING TWO-DAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

on

## Evolving Situation in Afghanistan: Role of Major Powers and Regional Countries



Organized by



**Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI)**

in Collaboration with

**Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), Germany (Pakistan Office)**



**Date: May 18-19, 2016**

**Venue:**

**Shamadan Hall, Serena Hotel, Islamabad**



## *The Institute*

Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) is an autonomous think tank. It is dedicated to undertaking research, analyses and evaluations of important national and international politico-strategic issues and developments affecting Pakistan and the region. One of the prominent areas of activity of the institute is organizing national and international seminars/conferences. To know more about IPRI, you may visit our website, [www.ipripak.org](http://www.ipripak.org)

## *Concept Outline*

The UN Security Council Resolution 1368 unanimously adopted on September 12, 2001 condemned the September 11 attacks on the United States and called on “all countries to cooperate in bringing the perpetrators, organisers and sponsors of the attacks to justice and that those responsible for supporting or harbouring the perpetrators, organisers and sponsors would be held accountable”. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was established in 2001 for this purpose and Pakistan assisted this force by providing land and air passage to facilitate the ISAF. Later on, NATO overtook the command of ISAF and Pakistan was also declared a major Non-NATO ally by the Bush Administration. In the process of the US-led war against terrorism, Pakistan rendered huge sacrifices in terms of human casualties and economic losses. According to report titled “War Related Death, Injury, and Displacement in Afghanistan and Pakistan 2001-2014” issued by the Costs of War Project at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, at least 21,500 civilians were killed in Pakistan between 2001 and 2014. Pakistan has also suffered a total loss of \$107 billion during these last 14 years as a result of the war on terror with \$4.53 billion loss in the outgoing fiscal year, according to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2014-15.

President Bush had declared that the US had strategic interests and moral responsibility towards a stable and secure Afghanistan. Later as a part of US counter terrorism strategy, President Obama came up with a more pragmatic and limited mission for Afghanistan i.e. “to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its safe havens in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan.” Now, Osama Bin Laden is dead and Aymen al-Zawahiri led international Jihad of al-Qaeda has been considerably weakened in Afghanistan and they have shifted their focus towards Middle East. Afghanistan, as a state remains structurally weak and chronically dependent on outside support in military, political and economic terms. The death of Mullah Omar has led to a struggle for power within the ranks of the Taliban. The new leader Mullah Akhtar Mansoor does not

command overall authority like Mullah Omar and splinter groups have emerged within the Taliban. This has made the peace process more complicated as the smaller groups of the Taliban are now joining hands with the ISIS to counter the Taliban headed by Mullah Mansoor. The Pentagon has warned recently that the ISIS is “operationally active” in Afghanistan and is fighting the Taliban for the establishment of a safe haven for itself. Afghanistan after 15 years of counter terrorism operations still remains vulnerable to terrorism.

After the withdrawal of the US forces, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) do not have the capacity to provide adequate security, at least in the short term. There are weaknesses in the ANSF, which make them dependent on operational support of foreign forces. The takeover of Kunduz in 2015 by the Taliban manifested their vulnerabilities. In the face of new threats like emergence of the ISIS etc., the ANSF will continue to depend upon external support; in financial and training terms. In its current shape, it would be unrealistic to expect the ANSF to pressurize the Taliban and inflict unbearable losses on them; to bring the latter to the negotiating table.

Militarily, Pakistan’s Operation Zarb-i-Azb to root out terrorists and their sanctuaries in FATA is a success. However, the cooperation of Afghanistan is essential to eliminate the Pakistani Taliban’s safe havens there. It is imperative for the two nations to make coordinated efforts to fight terrorism.

Being a major stakeholder in Afghanistan’s peace and stability, Pakistan has been supportive of an Afghan owned and Afghan led peace process with the Taliban. Stability in Afghanistan is necessary for economic development of both the countries. The success of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) also depends, inter alia, on a stable security situation in Afghanistan. A peaceful Afghanistan can ensure regional stability and economic integration.

Like Pakistan, major world powers and the regional countries also have stakes in the peace and stability of Afghanistan. In this regard, the on-going efforts of the US, Afghanistan, Pakistan and China are encouraging. The mutually supportive policies of the major powers and the regional countries will be required to achieve the goal of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

In this Context Islamabad Policy Research Institute and Hanss Seidel Foundation is organizing a two day International Conference, to highlight the existing challenges to Afghanistan’s security and stability, and suggest viable options for Pakistan and other stakeholders. Speakers have been invited from academia, media and policy making spheres. To have balanced discussions, special emphasis is made on having a fair and international outlook of the conference both in terms of the speakers and the themes to be debated. The major themes and subthemes for the speakers are as under:



- **An Overview of Afghanistan's Situation**
  - Conceptualization of Peace and Framework for Reconciliation in Afghanistan
  - Current Security Situation in Afghanistan: ANSF and Emerging Challenges
  - Socio-Economic Problems of Afghanistan: Minimizing the Human Cost of War
- **South Asia's Security Concerns in Afghanistan**
  - The Spillover Effects of Afghanistan's Instability on Pakistan
  - Understanding India-Afghanistan Engagement
  - Progress and Prospects of Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process
- **Transnational Security Problems and Neighbouring Regions**
  - Stakes and Role of Saudi Arabia in Afghanistan
  - Niches of Iranian Engagement in Afghanistan
  - Multi-faceted Linkages between Afghanistan and Central Asian States
- **Stakes and Role of States Assisting Peace in Afghanistan**
  - United States Troops Withdrawal and Commitment to the Stability of Afghanistan
  - Russia's Interest and Potential to Contribute in Peace and Reconciliation in Afghanistan
  - China's Afghan Diplomacy and Objectives

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