



ISSI
Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad

TUESDAY DIALOGUE

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PICTURES OF THE EVENT





The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) has begun a new series of *non-attributable informal discussion* on key relationships of Pakistan. The series titled "Tuesday Dialogue" brings together experts, academics, former diplomats and others for free floating discussion. The objective of the series is to generate ideas for providing policy inputs to the government.

The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) held the first Roundtable Discussion on Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations under its Tuesday Dialogue series on January 29, 2019. The agenda for the session was to discuss the possible future of Afghanistan and the steps that need to be taken by Pakistan to contribute to bringing peace in Afghanistan and the region. The session was divided into four components: prospects of the ongoing peace process; post-settlement security and political conditions; challenges to peace settlement and the contingency scenario in case of a civil war.

The main points raised during the discussion were as follows:

1. The situation in Afghanistan is important because of its geographical proximity to Pakistan hence careful and calculated steps need to be taken by the latter.
2. Though the agreement between the Afghans and Americans is no doubt a big milestone, the real difficulty will come when the Taliban start talking to the National Unity Government. Again the pressure will be on Pakistan, hence, this will also be a test of Islamabad's diplomacy.
3. Not all parties in Afghanistan are on the same page hence some sort of intra-Afghan dialogue is deemed necessary for any success to prevail. A kind of dialogue in a certain format among the Afghans themselves (not imposed on them from outside) should take place.
4. The effectiveness of the Taliban team which is being led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar is also questionable. There is the question of whether the negotiating team has influence over the local commanders fighting within Afghanistan or if the deal that is being cut with the Americans will be binding on the people fighting on ground.



5. In the new context, both India and Iran cannot be seen as a hindrance for the peace process given they each have vested interests for a peaceful Afghanistan. However, competition between Islamabad, Delhi and Tehran when it comes to Afghanistan cannot be entirely dismissed once the US leaves Afghanistan. No country will want the others influence to have an over shadowing effect.
6. Pakistan's rhetoric on Afghanistan needs to change. Instead of saying it needs a friendly government in Afghanistan, Islamabad should say Pakistan desires a stable and neutral government in place in Kabul.
7. Pakistan has gotten involved way too much. As a result, the world views Pakistan and the Taliban as one entity. Islamabad needs to dispel this notion. Efforts to dismantle this impression have so far failed hence any failure on Taliban's part will automatically be deemed as Pakistan's failure. Pakistan should not become active to the extent that it should be seen as taking responsibility.
8. Pakistan's planning commission regime has destroyed the country's soft power - there should be a one window operation/ clearance related to Afghanistan related issues. Sideways, people within the Government of Pakistan need to change their attitude and become more sensitized to the plight of the Afghans.
9. Because of Pakistan's condescending and casual attitude towards projects, many have not been completed - Fatima Jinnah Hospital being a case in point. This demeanor needs to be shed because any goodwill we were aiming for will be lost.
10. One step that should be taken is by learning and understanding the Afghan psychology - something which has been ignored resulting in the perceptions Afghans have towards Pakistan being solidified into anger and distrust.

Participants:

1. Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan
2. Ambassador Ayaz Wazir



3. Ambassador Muhammad Sadiq Khan
4. Ambassador Tariq Azizud Din
5. Lt. Gen. Asad Durrani (Retd.)
6. Brig. Said Nazir (Retd.)
7. Dr. Syed Rifaat Hussain, NUST
8. Mr. Imtiaz Gul, CRSS
9. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG, ISSI
10. Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, DG, ISSI (Moderator)