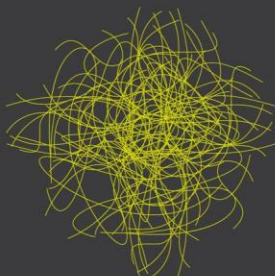


**Sources of  
Tension in  
Afghanistan  
and Pakistan**

A Regional  
Perspective



QUARTERLY MONITORING BRIEF

Report No. 2

April 1—June 30, 2014

↑ China is showing signs of growing interest in Afghanistan.

# Afghanistan: Monitoring the Key Regional Powers

↓ Afghan election's impasse is threatening to develop in a full-fledged crisis.

Malaiz Daud

○ Accusations and counter-accusations by Afghanistan and Pakistan over terrorist attacks in both countries continue.



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**CIDOB Sources of Tension in Afghanistan & Pakistan: A Regional Perspective (STAP RP)  
Quarterly Reports on “Monitoring the Key Regional Powers”**

## INTRODUCTION

*The purpose of this series of quarterly monitoring reports (2014) is to monitor and track the actions, public statements of five key STAP RP regional actors (India, Iran, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia) on Afghanistan; the development of, and their participation in relevant international and regional discussion meetings, including the Istanbul Process, Heart of Asia, RECCA, SCO; the five key regional actors’ economic decisions and agreements, including, but not limited to, the energy and infrastructure sectors, which have implications for the identified sources of tension in Afghanistan with regional implications (see CIDOB STAP RP Mapping Document at [www.cidobafpakproject.com](http://www.cidobafpakproject.com)).*

*The Sources of Tension (SoTs) identified in the Mapping Document are used as reference points to determine relevance and are specifically monitored in Section 1.*

*The content includes short summaries by topic and by country, on actions taken, public statements made, regional meetings held and how these develop as mechanisms for dialogue, and the participation of the key regional powers in relevant regional and international events, as well as in subgroups of international fora, such as the Heart of Asia. Economic activity and investments by the key regional powers in Afghanistan are also monitored, together with progress on, and shifting alliances in planned or actual economic projects. A short subsection on commentary from the media (in English) is included in each section.*

*Section 2 focuses on the key regional powers. Section 3 looks at regional dynamics and cross-cutting issues; and conclusions on the events of the past quarter are presented in Section 4. Section 5 presents publications by think tanks and research institutions in the region.*

## 1. THE CONTEXT

### Governance

- Afghan [mining law](#) is finally approved in the lower house of parliament after a year of deliberation and negotiations.
- Afghanistan has risen significantly in the [Mother's Index Ranking, being thirty three places](#) from the bottom, after being in the last ten for fifteen years.
- Sham Lall Bathija becomes the [first ever Afghan Hindu to hold an ambassadorial position](#) after he is appointed Afghanistan's ambassador to Canada.
- Argo district of Badakhshan province experiences [a major landslide](#) amid heavy rains that leave thousands dead and an entire village buried under mud.
- The Afghan Security Council approves the [strategic plan](#) for strengthening of Afghan armed forces.
- First round of Presidential and Provincial Council elections is successfully conducted, more than [seven million voters flock the voting centers](#), to the surprise of observers.
- [Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani make it to the second round](#) of the presidential election after no candidate passes the 50+1 mark in the first round of election.
- After second round of voting for Afghanistan's next president, the frontrunner of the first round, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, contends [his rival is leading him by a million votes](#) because of electoral fraud.
- An electoral impasse engulfs Afghanistan as one of the main candidates, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah severs all relations with electoral bodies over accusations of widespread fraud, resulting in the [resignation of CEO](#) of the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan.
- Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) [completes twelve years](#) since coming into being.

### Peace and Reconciliation

- Five Taliban leaders are released from the Guantanamo Bay detention center [in exchange for American soldier](#), Bowe Bergdahl, prompting an [angry response from the Afghan government](#) for violating the right of the former detainees to complete freedom by the US and Qatari governments.
- Taliban release a video of [arrival of five of its leaders](#) to Qatar in a luxurious motorcade, welcomed by Taliban members in the Gulf state.

### Security

- Council of Ministers of the Afghan government laments US for [eavesdropping on telephone conversations](#) of Afghans, calling it a violation of Afghanistan's national sovereignty and human rights.
- President Hamid Karzai [refuses to meet](#) his American counterpart in the US airbase in Bagram, [they talk on the phone](#) instead.
- Afghan President welcomes the decision of the US President to [withdraw all American military forces](#) by the end of 2016 from Afghanistan.
- [Romanian forces end their operations in Afghanistan](#) in a ceremony attended by country's Prime Minister, Victor Ponta.
- Taliban launch a major attack in the northern districts of Helmand province, which the Afghan National Security Forces pacify, resulting in the death of almost 300 Taliban and close to 100 police, soldiers and [civilians](#).

### Development

- Afghanistan's National Institute of Management and Administration has taken first steps to become the first Afghan vocational training institute to [acquire international accreditation](#).
- According to Business Insider, Afghanistan's [highest-valued export](#) is opium.
- Afghanistan has become a [full member of Organization for Cooperation of Railways](#) (OSJD).

### Afghanistan-Pakistan Tensions

- President Hamid Karzai discusses [shelling of Pakistani forces](#) across the Durand Line in the Kunar province with the NATO Commander in Afghanistan and US Ambassador to Kabul.
- Afghanistan summons Pakistani Ambassador to Kabul to [lodge a formal protest](#) over the shelling of the Afghan province of Kunar by the Pakistani forces.
- Afghanistan's National Security Council terms Pakistan's shelling against targets inside Afghanistan an effort by Pakistan to [disrupt the second round of presidential election](#).

## 2. REGIONAL POWERS



1. INDIA	Who	The Source
<b>1.1. Actions</b>		
- <b>April 21, 2014</b> Indian representatives take part in the fourth and last meeting of the <a href="#">“Track 1.5” meeting of “Abdu Dhabi Process”</a> , organized by EastWest Institute.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
- <b>May 6, 2014</b> India pledges <a href="#">USD 1 million to help the survivors of a landslide</a> in the Argo district of Badakhshan province which left more than two thousand people dead.	Official Website	Afghan President’s Office
- <b>May 17, 2014</b> New Delhi <a href="#">hosts a meeting of the Trade and Investment Confidence-Building Measure (CBM) of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process</a> .	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
- <b>May 23, 2014</b> Indian Prime Minister designate, <a href="#">Narendra Modi, speaks to President Hamid Karzai</a> after a terrorist attack on the Indian consulate in Herat.		The Times of India
- <b>May 23, 2014</b> Indian Prime Minister designate, Narendra Modi, <a href="#">calls Indian Ambassador</a> to Kabul to bolster morale in the wake of a terrorist attack against the Indian consulate in Herat.	Official Facebook Page	Indian Ministry of External Affairs
- <b>May 25, 2014</b> President <a href="#">Hamid Karzai is amongst eight leaders invited</a> to the swearing-in ceremony of the Indian Prime Minister designate, Narendra Modi.	Official Facebook Page	Indian Ministry of External Affairs
- <b>May 25, 2014</b> Indian Ambassador to Kabul meets the Afghan Minister of Interior Affairs, commends <a href="#">Afghan police in limiting the damage</a> of the terrorist attack against the Indian consulate in Herat.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Minister of Interior Affairs
- <b>May 27, 2014</b> President Hamid Karzai <a href="#">meets outgoing Indian Prime Minister</a> , invites him to visit Afghanistan.	Official Website	Afghan President’s Office
- <b>May 30, 2014</b> Indian <a href="#">Foreign Secretary flies into Herat to meet Indian consulate staff</a> after a terrorist attack.	Official Facebook Page	Indian Embassy, Kabul
- <b>May 31, 2014</b> Indian <a href="#">Foreign Secretary meets President Hamid Karzai</a> in Kabul after meeting India’s Herat consulate staff.	Official Website	Afghan President’s Office
- <b>May 31, 2014</b> Indian Foreign Secretary <a href="#">meets the Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister</a> in Kabul.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs
- <b>June 2, 2014</b>	Official	Indian

Indian Foreign Secretary <a href="#">meets the Governor of Herat province</a> during her visit to the aforesaid province.	Facebook Page	Ministry of External Affairs
<b>1.2. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)</b>		
- <b>April 21, 2014</b> Afghan authorities discuss <a href="#">the draft agreement to use the Chabahar port</a> with Indian and Iranian representatives in Kabul.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
- <b>June 12, 2014</b> India <a href="#">signs off the draft agreement</a> for the Chabahar Port, after more than a decade when the idea was first tossed by the former Iranian president in 2003.	Parul Chandra	The Asian Age
<b>1.3. Public Statements</b>		
- <b>May 6, 2014</b> Former Indian Prime Minister says <a href="#">he is saddened by the loss of life and damage</a> caused by a landslide in the Argo district of Badakhshan province.	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
- <b>May 17, 2014</b> New Delhi considers <a href="#">Chabahar and the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline</a> projects as important components of Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
- <b>May 23, 2014</b> Indian Vice President condemns <a href="#">a terrorist attack on the Indian consulate in Herat</a> , says such acts cannot weaken India-Afghanistan friendship.	Official Facebook Page	Indian Embassy in Kabul
- <b>May 23, 2014</b> Indian Prime Minister designate says he <a href="#">salutes the Afghan security forces</a> "for their valiant efforts to fight the terrorists in Herat".		The Times of India
- <b>May 31, 2014</b> India will soon <a href="#">reopen visa section</a> of its consulate in Herat which was closed in the aftermath of a terrorist attack, India's Foreign Secretary announces.	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
- <b>June 2, 2014</b> Indian Embassy in Kabul terms <a href="#">abduction of an Indian national</a> who was working for an NGO in Herat as "unfortunate".	Official Facebook Page	Indian Embassy in Kabul



2. IRAN	Who	The Source
<b>2.1. Actions</b>		
<p>- <b>April 19, 2014</b>  <a href="#">Iran executes six Afghans</a> from the northeastern Takhar province on the charges of narco-trafficking.</p>	Ajmal Aryan	Azadi Radio
<p>- <b>April 21, 2014</b>            Iranian representatives take part in the fourth and last meeting of the <a href="#">“Track 1.5” meeting of “Abdu Dhabi Process”</a>, organized by EastWest Institute.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry Haaretz
<p>- <b>May 17, 2014</b>            Iran is offering USD 500 per month and residency permits to <a href="#">young Afghan refugees to fight for the Assad regime in Syria</a>.</p>		
<p>- <b>May 17, 2014</b>            Iranian <a href="#">delegates attend</a> the Trade and Investment Confidence-Building Measure (CBM) meeting of Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process in New Delhi.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
<p>- <b>June 2, 2014</b>            Afghan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs <a href="#">meets the Deputy of Iranian Foreign Ministry</a> for Iranian Diaspora, Parliamentary and Consulate Affairs.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
<p>- <b>June 2, 2014</b>            Iranian Embassy in Kabul begins to issue <a href="#">electronic visas</a>.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
<b>2.2. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)</b>		
<p>- <b>April 21, 2014</b>            Afghan authorities discuss <a href="#">the draft agreement to use the Chabahar port</a> with Indian and Iranian representatives in Kabul.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
<p>- <b>June 2, 2014</b>            Iranian and Afghan Deputy Foreign Ministers discuss ways to operationalise a <a href="#">prisoner exchange agreement</a>.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
<p>- <b>June 10, 2014</b>            Iranian Authorities agree to <a href="#">extend the visas of 600 thousand Afghans for another six months</a>.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
<p>- <b>June 10, 2014</b>            Several Meetings have been held between Iranian and Afghan authorities to finalize the draft of the <a href="#">Strategic Partnership Agreement</a> between the two countries.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
<p>- <b>June 12, 2014</b>            Iran is <a href="#">reviewing the draft agreement</a> for the Chabahar Port, which has already been agreed upon by India and Afghanistan.</p>	Parul Chandra	The Asian Age
<b>2.3. Public Statements</b>		
<p>- <b>June 2, 2014</b>            Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister strongly <a href="#">rejects claims that Iran’s government is sending Afghan refugees to war in Syria</a>.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry



### 3. CHINA

Who

The Source

#### 3.1. Actions

<p>- <b>April 21, 2014</b> Chinese representatives take part in the fourth and last meeting of the <a href="#">“Track 1.5” meeting of “Abdu Dhabi Process”</a>, organized by EastWest Institute.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry AISS
<p>- <b>April 23, 2014</b> Deng Xijun, <a href="#">Chinese Ambassador to Kabul, takes part in the “High Tea”</a> series of lectures of the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS).</p>	Official Facebook Page	
<p>- <b>May 19, 2014</b> <a href="#">President Karzai arrives in Beijing where he meets the Chinese Premier</a> to discuss a host of issues of mutual interest.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President’s Office
<p>- <b>May 19, 2014</b> Chinese Premier announces that in addition to monetary support, China has sent <a href="#">experts to Afghanistan</a> to deal with the aftermath of Argo landslide.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President’s Office
<p>- <b>May 19, 2014</b> Chinese government announces <a href="#">USD 1.62 million for humanitarian aid</a> to Afghanistan.</p>	SunZhao & Yao Chun	People’s Daily
<p>- <b>May 20, 2014</b> Afghan President is <a href="#">given a tour</a> of the historic Wuxi city by its mayor. Wuxi is the IT hub of China.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President’s Office
<p>- <b>May 21, 2014</b> Third round of training for 15 Afghan diplomats under the <a href="#">US-China Training Program for Afghan Diplomats</a> was held in China.</p>	Official Facebook Page	US Embassy, Kabul
<p>- <b>May 21, 2014</b> President Hamid Karzai attends the <a href="#">Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA)</a>, hosted by Beijing.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President’s Office
<p>- <b>May 27, 2014</b> Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) <a href="#">convenes a conference titled</a>: “China and its Neighboring Countries: Towards Common Prosperity and Development”. Afghanistan is amongst the countries discussed.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Institute of Strategic Studies (AISS)

#### 3.2. Public Statements

<p>- <b>April 23, 2014</b> “China favors <a href="#">a stable state in Afghanistan</a> and would provide support to reach this goal”, says the Chinese Ambassador to Kabul.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Institute of Strategic Studies (AISS)
<p>- <b>May 19, 2014</b> Chinese Premier hopes his country will enjoy the same kind of <a href="#">friendly relations</a> with Afghanistan’s next government, commends Afghan people for participation in the first round of presidential election.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President’s Office
<p>- <b>May 19, 2014</b> Chinese Premier says his country is ready to further <a href="#">train Afghan experts</a> in their</p>	Official Website	Afghan President’s

respective fields.		Office
<b>3.3. Media Commentary</b>		
- <b>May 9, 2014</b> China's <a href="#">'New Silk Road'</a> Vision Revealed	Shannon Tiezzi	The Diplomat





4. RUSSIA	Who	The Source
<b>4.1. Actions</b>		
- <b>April 6, 2014</b> Russia's former and current <a href="#">ambassadors visit</a> the Afghanistan Center at Kabul University (ACKU).	Official Website	ACKU
- <b>April 21, 2014</b> Russian representatives take part in the fourth and last meeting of the <a href="#">"Track 1.5" meeting of "Abdu Dhabi Process"</a> , organized by EastWest Institute.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
- <b>April 22, 2014</b> Russia's Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, <a href="#">Zameer Kabulov, calls on President Hamid Karzai</a> to discuss issues of mutual interest.	Official Youtube Channel	Afghan President's Office
- <b>May 17, 2014</b> Russian <a href="#">delegates attend</a> the Trade and Investment Confidence-Building Measure (CBM) meeting of Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process in New Delhi.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
- <b>May 20, 2014</b> President Vladimir Putin of Russia meets his Afghan counterpart in Shanghai, discuss terrorism and extremism in the region and <a href="#">expanding economic and military ties</a> .	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
- <b>May 20, 2014</b> President Vladimir Putin accepts Afghan President's request to <a href="#">send a high level delegation to the oath-taking ceremony</a> of the new Afghan president.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
- <b>May 27, 2014</b> A competition is held in St. Petersburg to select a design for the <a href="#">renovation of the Russian Cultural Center in Kabul</a> . The building was destroyed during the civil strife.	Sergey Oreshkin	Design Boom
- <b>June 10, 2014</b> Russia's <a href="#">Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan</a> calls on President Hamid Karzai, discusses second round of Afghan Presidential election.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
<b>4.2. Public Statements</b>		
- <b>April 22, 2014</b> Russia's Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan commends Afghan government's <a href="#">"realistic and independent stance"</a> regarding Crimea and Ukraine.	Official Youtube Channel	Afghan President's Office
- <b>May 1, 2014</b> "Igor Sergun, director of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Russian General Staff, has said that the Russian military estimates the possibility of Afghanistan <a href="#">breaking up into ethnic enclaves</a> backed by foreign powers at 31 percent".	Richard Weitz	The Diplomat
- <b>May 27, 2014</b> Russia's Ambassador to UN says President Barack Obama's withdrawal timetable from Afghanistan is a "schedule" since <a href="#">it is not condition-based</a> .	Richard Weitz	The Diplomat
<b>4.3. Media Commentary</b>		
- <b>May 4, 2014</b> Russian Companies Turn East as Western <a href="#">Funds Dry Up</a> .		TheMoscow Times

## 5. SAUDI ARABIA

Who

The Source

## 5.1. Actions

## - April 18, 2014

A police officer from the Committee of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice [hits an Afghan woman](#) on forehead in the Makkah Park. The matter is investigated by the authorities.

Al Arabiya News

## - April 21, 2014

[Saudi Ambassador to Kabul calls on the Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs](#) to discuss the Afghan peace process, development cooperation and Afghan laborers in the Gulf Kingdom.

Official Facebook Page

Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs

## - April 21, 2014

The Saudi Foreign Minister, Saud Al-Faisal, sends an official invitation to his Afghan counterpart for [participation in the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the Islamic Council of Foreign Ministers \(ICFM\)](#), planned for 18-19 of June 2014.

Official Facebook Page

Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs

## - May 13, 2014

Saudi Arabia [expels thirteen Afghan children](#), aged between six and fifteen, due to lack of proper documentation.

Syed Tariq Majidi

Tolonews

## - May 24, 2014

According to a directive of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Committee for the Relief of the Afghan People provides [food and relief to the victims of floods and landslides](#) in the northern Afghanistan.

Saudi Embassy, Washington

## 5.2. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)

## - May 24, 2014

Saudi Embassy in Kabul [signs a memorandum of understanding with the Afghan Red Crescent](#) to provide assistance to the victims of recent floods and landslides.

Saudi Embassy, Washington

## 5.3. Media Commentary

## - April 5, 2014

Afghanistan again at a [crossroads](#)

Nadir Atash

Arab News

## - April 7, 2014

Afghanistan and [democracy](#)

Khan Bahadur

Arab News

## - June 2, 2014

US meddling in [Afghanistan](#)

Editorial

Saudi Gazette

## - June 23, 2014

Tricks and ruses in the Afghan [election](#)

Camelia Entekhabi-Fard

Al Arabiya

## - June 25, 2014

Why Tehran and Washington's love affair cannot hold [still](#)

Abdulaziz Tarabzoni

Al Arabiya

## - June 25, 2014

Saudi Arabia threatened by ISIS advance in [Iraq](#)

Fahad Nazer

Al Monitor

### 3. REGIONAL DYNAMICS AND CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

**June 10, 2014:** Tajikistan and Afghanistan discuss opening a transit route between Afghanistan and China through Tajikistan and connecting Afghanistan to Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan-Russian rail network ([Link](#)).

**June 15, 2014:** Pakistan launches a major offensive against terrorists in North Waziristan after an attack on the Karachi airport by the militants ([Link](#)).

**June 22, 2014:** “The historic city of Bamiyan in Afghanistan is declared as the first SAARC Cultural Capital for 2015” by the Colombo-based SAARC Cultural Centre ([Link](#)).

**June 22, 2014:** Afghanistan attains vice presidency of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) from the Asia Group ([Link](#)).

**June 23, 2014:** Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) launches a report analyzing the impediments to the “Heart of Asia” process in the presence of 60 participants from the member countries ([Link](#)).

**June 25, 2014:** “NATO Foreign Ministers review progress in the ISAF mission, take stock of the ongoing election process and finalise operational plans for the launch of a new NATO-led mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces after 2014” ([Link](#)).

**June 26, 2014:** Afghanistan and Pakistan occupy 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> positions in the “Fragile States Index” respectively, the only two countries from the region making it to the top 10 ([Link](#)).

**June 27, 2014:** Pakistan seeks Afghanistan’s cooperation in the North Waziristan operation launched against militants based in tribal areas ([Link](#)).

**June 27, 2014:** Thousands of civilians from North Waziristan flock into Khost and Paktika provinces of Afghanistan to flee the Pakistani offensive ([Link](#)).

**June 28, 2014:** Pakistani and Indian diplomats meet in a track-2 meeting in Thailand to discuss change of governments in both countries as well as peace and security in Afghanistan ([Link](#)).

**June 28, 2014:** President Hamid Karzai presents a list of conditions to the Pakistani government in return for cooperation in support of Pakistani onslaught in North Waziristan ([Link](#)).

**June 30, 2014:** Pakistani military launches ground offensive two weeks after pounding militant hideouts in North Waziristan ([Link](#)).

#### 4. SUMMARY OF TRENDS FOR THE QUARTER

“2014 is a crucial year not only for Afghanistan but also for the region. It seems Afghanistan’s transition in a way is a transition for the whole region, with the regional powers eagerly following the developments in Afghanistan”, concluded our last report. The region as a whole seems to have geared its efforts more and more towards ensuring stability in Afghanistan. This is especially true when it comes to Russia and China – in addition to India.

With the Ukrainian conflict still raging, Russia has a difficult balancing act to follow between its cooperative policy on Afghanistan with the US and its allies and major differences in places like Syria and Ukraine. Russia is extremely concerned the Afghan government, like the Iraqi government, may considerably weaken or even completely collapse once the NATO forces are withdrawn. That may make the country once again a terrorist safe heaven, creating a new security challenge for Russia and the Central Asian Republics. This vulnerability has prompted Russia to take a much more proactive role in multilateral and bilateral mechanisms of interaction on and with Afghanistan. The Afghan election presents another uncertainty. Realizing this, President Hamid Karzai has consistently conveyed the message to both Russia and China this quarter that the next Afghan government will continue his policies towards these two powers.

China has unexpectedly upped the tempo of its diplomatic activities in relation to Afghanistan. China will be hosting the “Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process” ministerial meeting this August. It has swerved from its traditional hands-off policy from “the graveyard of empires”. However, the suspicion is still there that China wants to negotiate with Taliban in future for security of its economic interests in Afghanistan. Therefore, it has turned down an offer to allow its territory to be used for transportation of goods for the international military forces. On the other hand, Chinese government has accepted to train a limited number of Afghan police personnel in its country, is conducting a joint project with the US government to train Afghan diplomats and provides moral and material support the Kabul Authorities.

India is firm in its commitment to help Afghanistan in any way possible. Its decision to fund procurement of Russian weapons for the Afghan security forces is yet the strongest indication of this commitment. With Chabahar Port agreement in its final stages, India is looking to expand its economic relations with Central Asia through Iran and Afghanistan. Iran remains close to the Afghan government but still maintains links with political groups independent of official channel. The rumor in Kabul prior and during the election was that Iran has spent millions of dollars to buy loyalty from different camps. Majority of this money is said to be aimed at supporting Dr. Abdullah Abdullah’s bid. It may be part of the wider Iran-Saudi Arabia game, in which each has attempted to outbid the other. Saudi Arabia continues to be the most disengaged of the regional powers in the Afghan affairs. Qatar has clearly overtaken Saudi Arabia in playing a role in the Afghan peace and reconciliation process to the dismay of the Afghan government that sees Saudi Arabia as a more reliable partner.

With wars raging in Syria, Iraq and Pakistan on sectarian lines, the whole region is in turmoil. Afghanistan has not experienced any sectarian violence so far but could easily plunge into it should one of the regional powers – either Iran or Saudi Arabia – decide to open another front in the wider theatre of war. Regional and international consensus for stability in Afghanistan was still intact in this quarter but this could change as gaps are widening in other places, from Ukraine to Syria to Iraq.

## 5. PUBLICATIONS FROM THE REGION

**April 1, 2014:** PTRO. *The Home Front: The Role of Women in Afghanistan's Peace and Reintegration Programme*, Peace Training and Research Organization (PTRO). Available [here](#).

**May 1, 2014:** Giustozzi, Antonio and Quentin, Peter. *The Afghan National Army: Sustainability Challenges beyond Financial Aspect*, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU). Available [here](#).

**May 1, 2014:** CPAU. *Contributing to Peace Consolidation in Afghanistan: Needs Assessment Country Report*, Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU). Available [here](#).

**June 1, 2014:** Jackson, Ashley. *Politics and Governance in Afghanistan: the Case of Nangarhar Province*, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU). Available [here](#).

**June 11, 2014:** Isar, Sarajuddin. *A Blessing or a Curse? Aid Rentierism and State-Building in Afghanistan*, The Glocal. Available [here](#).

**June 17, 2014:** Ghiasy, Richard and Saeedi, Maihan. *The Heart of Asia Process at a Juncture: An Analysis of Impediments to Further Progress*, Afghan Institute of Strategic Studies (AISS). Available [here](#).

**June 19, 2014:** Kamalakaran, Ajay. *Stability in the subcontinent is critical for Russia's Asia pivot*, Russia and India Report. Available [here](#).

**June 24, 2014:** Mousavian, Seyed Hossein. *How Iran Won the Afghanistan Deal with the US in 2001*, Iran Review. Available [here](#).

**June 24, 2014:** Bukhari, Shujaat. *Youth and Jihad in Kashmir*, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. Available [here](#).

**June 24, 2014:** Weitz, Richard. *Moscow's Afghan Endgame*, The Diplomat. Available [here](#).

**June 27, 2014:** AAN Team. *Little Bridges: AAN's new report on the slowly growing links between Afghanistan and the Central Asia republics*, Afghanistan Analyst Network (AAN). Available [here](#).

**June 27, 2014:** Betkerur, Neharika. *Afghanistan: can the private sector be a driver for growth?*, Observer Research Foundation. Available [here](#).

**June 28, 2014:** Sakhuja, Vijay. *Rim of the Pacific Exercises (RIMPAC): Thaw in China-US Tensions?*, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. Available [here](#).

**June 30, 2014:** Osman, Borhan. *The prospect of peace talks after the Bergdahl deal: A Taliban perspective*, Afghanistan Analyst Network (AAN). Available [here](#).

**June 30, 2014:** Barmin, Yuri. *Russia and Saudi Arabia – the new Gulf Partnership?*, Russia Direct. Available [here](#).