

**Sources of
Tension in
Afghanistan
and Pakistan**

A Regional
Perspective



QUARTERLY MONITORING BRIEF

Report No. 3

July 1—September 30, 2014

↑ The violence in Xinjiang has clearly prompted China to prevent Afghanistan from descending into chaos post-2014.

Afghanistan: Monitoring the Key Regional Powers

Malaiz Daud

↓ Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are in a constant state of souring.

○ India is steadfast in its support to Afghanistan in a variety of areas.



With the support of

CIDOB

BARCELONA
CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**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).

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

- Afghanistan's National Security Council decides [against banning Facebook](#) after some officials had complained of its use against the national interests of the country.
- Afghanistan is ranked 7th in the [Fragile States Index](#).
- Afghanistan will become the [14th full member](#) of the Main Intergovernmental Agreement (MIA) on development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Transport Corridor (TRACECA) coming December.
- Afghanistan becomes a member of the [International Organization For Standardization](#) (ISO).
- The Afghan government has [run out of cash](#) as the election impasse and the dwindling international support are taking a toll on the country's finances.
- US President, Barack Obama, asks presidential candidate, Abdullah Abdullah, [not to resort to violence](#) amidst the deepening electoral crisis as the latter alleges fraud against his rival, Ashraf Ghani.
- US Secretary of State, John Kerry, brokers a deal between the Afghan presidential candidates that provides for audit of all votes cast in the second round and establishment of a ["government of national unity"](#).
- Outgoing President Hamid Karzai salvages the deal on the national unity government following further disagreements, managing to get the [signatures](#) of both candidates on the agreement.
- After months of uncertainty, Afghanistan gets its second elected president. Ashraf Ghani is [sworn in](#) in Kabul. His rival is appointed as the CEO of the new government in line with agreement reached earlier.

Security

- NATO Secretary General asks the Afghan government to [sign the Bilateral Security Agreement](#) (BSA) with the US within two months.
- Afghan President condemns a [bomb attack](#) in a busy market in the Paktika province which leaves scores dead and injured.
- Three Indian nationals who had been kidnapped by the Taliban are [freed](#) by the Afghan security forces.
- NATO promises to provide Afghan security forces with [185 war-planes](#) of different types until 2017.
- The Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) [graduates its first batch of officers](#) who will now take up appointments in the Afghan National Army (ANA).
- Residents of Ghazni province [hang four Taliban militants](#) to avenge the beheading of fifteen villagers by the Taliban in the Ajristan District.
- A group of militants in Afghanistan pledges allegiance to the [Islamic State \(IS\)](#).
- The Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States and a separate agreement with NATO are [signed](#) by the new Afghan government on its second day in the office.

Development

- Kabul gets first private shuttle company with [80 buses starting to operate](#).
- Afghan [female cricketers](#) is granted around half a million USD grant to receive leadership and skills training in an exchange program with Pakistani and Indian cricketers.
- Afghan Saffron export sees a [67% increase](#), with Europe as the main destination for the "red gold".
- A three-day [agricultural exhibition](#) is held in Kabul.

Afghanistan-Pakistan Tensions

- Pakistani army asks the Afghan government to either [eliminate or handover Mullah Fazlullah](#), chief of the Pakistani Taliban.
- A high level [military delegation from Afghanistan visits Pakistan](#), to discuss the issue of Pakistani artillery shelling of the Afghan province of Kunar with their Pakistani counterparts. The Pakistani side raises the issue of sanctuaries for the Pakistani Taliban on the Afghan side of the Durand Line.
- The Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan (EPAA) reports that Afghan and Pakistani authorities have found a [solution](#) for the transit issues between the two countries.
- Afghan National Security Council rebuffs Punjabi Taliban's [announcement](#) that they will end militant activities in Pakistan and instead solely focus on Afghanistan as ["no news"](#).
- Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs [reprimands](#) Pakistan's *chargé d'affaires* to Kabul to lodge an objection against the stop and search of vehicles belonging to the Afghan General Consulate in Peshawar by the Pakistani police.

2. REGIONAL POWERS



1. INDIA	Who	The Source
1.1. Actions		
<p>- July 1, 2014 India helps Afghanistan in its bid not to have the latter's banks blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) due to lack of a money laundering legislation.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
<p>- July 1, 2014 India announces new liberal visa policy for Afghans which will allow visitors to stay for up to two years in India.</p>	Ghanizada	Khaama Press
<p>- July 2, 2014 Indian Ambassador to Kabul calls on the Afghan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, to discuss issues of mutual interest.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
<p>- July 2, 2014 Spokesman of India's External Ministry states that a "credible, peaceful and transparent election, accepted by all" is necessary for a peaceful, united and stable Afghanistan.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Indian Embassy, Kabul
<p>- August 9, 2014 India announces a grant of USD 1 million for construction of a cricket stadium in the southern city of Kandahar.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Indian Embassy, Kabul
<p>- August 16, 2014 India's independence day is celebrated by its embassy in Kabul.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Indian Embassy, Kabul
<p>- August 16, 2014 Tolonews conducts an interview with the Indian Ambassador to Kabul, in which a variety of issues pertaining to the relations between Delhi and Kabul are discussed.</p>	Official Youtube Channel	Tolonews
<p>- August 16, 2014 India's Prime Minister conveys his best wishes to President Hamid Karzai and Afghan people on the occasion of the 95th Independency Anniversary of Afghanistan.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- August 31, 2014 India offers 37 scholarships to the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of Afghanistan to pursue their postgraduate studies in India.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Agriculture
<p>- September 7, 2014 India's Deputy National Security Advisor meets Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq, Abdullah Abdullah's running mate, in Kabul.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq
<p>- September 10, 2014 India's Foreign Minister meets President Karzai in Kabul, promises India's continued support and cooperation with the government of Karzai's successor.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- September 10, 2014 Indian gifts a huge flag of Afghanistan to President Karzai in a ceremony attended by</p>	Official Youtube	Afghan President's

India's Foreign Minister and other dignitaries.	Channel	Office
- September 29, 2014 India's Vice President meets the newly-appointed CEO of Afghanistan in Kabul.	Official Facebook Page	Abdullah Abdullah
- September 29, 2014 India's Vice President meets the outgoing President of Afghanistan and his successor in Kabul.	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
1.2. Public Statements		
- July 12, 2014 Indian Embassy in Kabul believes an agreement between the presidential candidates will strengthen faith of the Afghan people in democracy and promote national unity .	Official Facebook Page	Indian Embassy in Kabul
- July 27, 2014 The Indian Embassy in Kabul "wishes all the very best for Afghan students going to India for pursuing their education ".	Official Facebook Page	Indian Embassy in Kabul
- August 17, 2014 Indian Prime Minister says his government is committed to a strong, peaceful, united, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan.	Mohammad Asef Ahmadzai	Pajhwok News Agency
- August 19, 2014 Indian Prime Minister tweets : "Independence Day greetings to the people of Afghanistan. India's ties with Afghanistan are strong & will grow further in the coming years".	Official Twitter Account	Narendra Modi
- September 23, 2014 Indian Prime Minister states : "We wholeheartedly welcome the agreement between the two Afghan leaders - Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah."	Official Twitter Account	Narendra Modi
- September 23, 2014 "We want Afghanistan to be happy ", Indian Prime Minister tells CNN.	Fareed Zakaria	CNN
1.3. Track II Events		
- July 24, 2014 Afghan social media provider wins Special Mention Award at the mBillionth event in New Delhi.		Wadsam
- July 27, 2014 Afghanistan's Deputy Ambassador to Delhi is invited as the Guest of Honor to the International Interdisciplinary Conference on "Contemporary Issues in Commerce, Management, Computer Applications and Social Sciences," in Haryana.	Ashraf Haidari	Afghan Embassy in Delhi
- August 5, 2014 An international seminar is held at Pune University titled: "Post 2014 Afghanistan after US Drawdown: Rethinking India's Policy".	Ashraf Haidari	Afghan Embassy in Delhi

2. IRAN	Who	The Source
2.1. Actions		
<p>- July 2, 2014 Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran travels to Kabul to meet President Karzai, amongst others.</p>	Official Youtube Channel	Afghan President's Office
<p>- July 2, 2014 Based on the information provided by the Iranian police, Afghan police apprehend an Iranian national in the western city of Herat for an alleged murder in Iran.</p>		BBC Pashto
<p>- August 6, 2014 Iran's Ambassador to Kabul meets Afghanistan's Foreign Minister, who asks for an increase in the numbers of visas issued to Afghans by the Iranian embassy in Kabul.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Wadsam
<p>- September 2, 2014 USD 100 million Indian funding will be made available to Iran to upgrade the Chabahar Port with a view to facilitate India's access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.</p>		
<p>- September 12, 2014 Iranian and Afghan Presidents meet on the sidelines of the 14th Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, discuss Afghan elections.</p>	Official Website	Iranian President's Office
<p>- September 27, 2014 Iranian and Afghan Ministers of Foreign Affairs meet on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly Meeting in New York.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- September 27, 2014 Iran's Ambassador to Kabul attends a farewell meeting with President Karzai as the latter bows out.</p>	Official Youtube Channel	Afghan President's Office
<p>- September 29, 2014 Iran's Vice President meets the newly-appointed CEO of Afghanistan, Abdullah Abdullah, in Kabul.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Abdullah Abdullah
<p>- September 29, 2014 Iran's Vice President meets the outgoing President of Afghanistan in Kabul.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
2.2. Agreements (Negotiated/Signed)		
<p>- July 21, 2014 An agreement of mutual cooperation in the health and medical sciences is signed between the governments of Iran and Afghanistan.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
<p>- August 6, 2014 A bilateral commission of consular services is established between Iran and Afghanistan whose next meeting will be held in Kabul.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2.3. Public Statements		
<p>- July 2, 2014 Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran says his country will continue its friendship with Afghanistan regardless of who wins the presidential election.</p>	Official Youtube Channel	Afghan President's Office

<p>- September 12, 2014 Iran's President says all parties in Afghanistan should be part of the country's march towards democracy, promises "all-out ties in all fields" with Afghanistan.</p>	Official Website	Iranian President's Office
<p>- September 27, 2014 The Iranian Foreign Minister says that his country is interested in continuing mutual cooperation with Afghanistan's next government.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs



3. CHINA	Who	The Source
3.1. Actions		
<p>- July 1, 2014 China helps Afghanistan in its bid not to have the latter's banks blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) due to the lack of a money laundering legislation.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
<p>- July 10, 2014 The Ninth Senior Officials Meeting of the Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process is held in Beijing, co-chaired by the Chinese and Afghan Deputy Foreign Ministers.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
<p>- July 12, 2014 Deputy Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan and China meet on the sidelines of the Istanbul Process Senior Officials Meeting in China.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- July 23, 2014 China appoints a special envoy to Afghanistan.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
<p>- July 23, 2014 China's newly-appointed Special Envoy to Afghanistan meets the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan in Kabul.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
<p>- August 29, 2014 China postpones the 4th Ministerial Conference of Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process planned to be held in Tianjin due to inconclusive Afghan presidential election.</p>	Said Reza Kazemi	Afghanistan Analyst Network
<p>- September 7, 2014 Senior Chinese security officials meet Afghanistan's National Security Advisor in an unspecified location to discuss terrorism.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- September 15, 2014 Afghanistan's carpet makers participate in the Qinghai International Tibetan Carpet Exhibition and Silk Road Carpet Trade Fair 2014, winning the best design and quality awards.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan
<p>- September 27, 2014 China's Ambassador to Kabul attends a farewell meeting with President Karzai, and invites the outgoing president for a ping pong game in the Chinese Embassy.</p>	Official Youtube Channel	Afghan President's Office
<p>- September 29, 2014 China's Minister of Human Resources and Social Affairs meets the outgoing and newly-elected Presidents of Afghanistan as well as its newly-appointed CEO, in Kabul.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Abdullah Abdullah
3.2. Public Statements		
<p>- July 8, 2014 Chinese Foreign Ministry announces that the Senior Officials Meeting of the Istanbul Process will be held in Beijing on July 10th, co-chaired by Deputy Ministers of Afghanistan and China.</p>	Hong Lei	Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry
<p>- July 8, 2014</p>	Hong Lei	Chinese

Chinese Foreign Ministry states that successful completion of the electoral process in Afghanistan will ensure peace, stability and development so the electoral dispute should be resolved through continued dialogue.		Foreign Affairs Ministry
- July 10, 2014 Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation through mechanisms such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
- July 12, 2014 Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister reaffirms his country's commitment to stability and peace in Afghanistan.	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry
- July 23, 2014 China's Special Envoy to Kabul states that Afghanistan is a "very important neighbor and that China is looking for a more prominent role in the country".	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
- July 24, 2014 China's Special Envoy welcomes minimal US military presence post-2014 in Afghanistan, asserts importance of investment and joint Sino-Indian ventures.	Saibal Dasgupta	The Times of India
- August 18, 2014 China's President observes that relations between his country and Afghanistan have strengthened in the last few years in a message to President Karzai.	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
3.3. Agreements Negotiated/Signed		
- July 2, 2014 Draft of an agreement between Afghanistan, China and Tajikistan to establish a border "connecting point" is debated in the Afghan parliament.	Official Website	Lower House of the Afghan Parliament
- September 15, 2014 Afghanistan's carpet makers earn contracts , amounting up to USD 1 million, following their participation in the Qinghai International Tibetan Carpet Exhibition and Silk Road Carpet Trade Fair 2014.	Official Facebook Page	Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan
3.4. Media Commentary		
- July 30, 2014 Afghanistan a building block for China-India ties	Raffaello Pantucci	Reuters

4. RUSSIA	Who	The Source
4.1. Actions		
<p>- July 1, 2014 Russia helps Afghanistan in its bid not to have the latter's banks blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) due to lack of a money laundering legislation.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
<p>- July 2, 2014 Russia's "Central Military District" conducts an exercise on potential threats that may be posed from Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the international military forces.</p>	Official Website	Kremlin
<p>- September 18, 2014 President Karzai and Russia's Ambassador to Kabul hold a farewell meeting as the latter's term in Afghanistan comes to an end.</p>	Official Website	Afghan President's Office
<p>- September 21, 2014 Outgoing Russian Ambassador to Kabul calls on Afghanistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, congratulates the latter on the "National Unity Government" deal.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4.2. Public Statements		
<p>- July 10, 2014 Russia's President says that withdrawal of the international military forces from Afghanistan will not make the country "any better or calmer" so Russia and its regional allies should be prepared.</p>	Official Website	Kremlin
<p>- July 17, 2014 Russia's President says that Afghanistan's problems are due to the failure of the American foreign policy.</p>	Official Website	Kremlin
<p>- August 14, 2014 Russia's President states that his country is interested in stability in Afghanistan so if NATO members invest resources in supporting it, this doesn't run counter to Russia's interests.</p>	Official Website	Kremlin
<p>- August 14, 2014 Afghanistan is the problematic part of the region and its election should be finalized soon, Russia's President says in a speech in the 14th SCO Summit in Tajikistan.</p>		Afghanistan Times
<p>- September 21, 2014 Outgoing Russian Ambassador says he hopes that relations between Russia and Afghanistan in the future will continue to be based on friendship and mutual respect.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4.3. Media Commentary		
<p>- August 28, 2014 NATO, the finger of death</p>	Timothy Bancroft-Hinchey	Pravda
<p>- September 26, 2014 Central Asia Prepares for Afghan 'Threat' (Part 2)</p>	Bruce Pannier	Radio Liberty

5. SAUDI ARABIA	Who	The Source
5.1. Actions		
<p>- July 6, 2014 King of Saudi Arabia sends a message of felicitation to President Karzai on the eve of the holy month of Ramadan – the Muslim month of fasting.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- July 6, 2014 Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia also sends a message of felicitation to President Karzai on the eve of the holy month of Ramadan – the Muslim month of fasting.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- August 11, 2014 Afghan airlines fail to meet the newly-established technical standards by the Saudi government for airplanes carrying Hajj pilgrims to the Kingdom.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
<p>- August 19, 2014 Saudi Arabia allows Afghan airlines to transport Afghan pilgrims to the country on an exceptional basis this year, reversing an earlier decision to ban Afghan airlines because of technical issues with their carriers.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan President's Office
<p>- August 19, 2014 Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia sends a congratulatory message to President Karzai on the occasion of the 95th anniversary of Afghanistan's Independence.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- August 19, 2014 Saudi Arabia executes a Pakistani national in connection with the murder of an Afghan after a royal order is released.</p>	Ghanizada	Khaama Press
5.2. Public Statements		
<p>- July 6, 2014 King of Saudi Arabia in a message to President Karzai says that he wishes prosperity and development of Afghanistan.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- August 19, 2014 King of Saudi Arabia congratulates President Hamed Karzai on the occasion of the 95th anniversary of Afghanistan's Independence, says he wants to see a developed and prosperous Afghanistan.</p>	Official Facebook Page	Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<p>- September 28, 2014 Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Kabul tells Radio Liberty Pashto that his country is willing to help in the peace process of Afghanistan.</p>		Radio Liberty Pashto
5.3. Media Commentary		
<p>- July 5, 2014 Who is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi?</p>	Bruce Riedel	Al Monitor
<p>- September 14, 2014 Face up to ISIS, but don't ignore Iran</p>	Eyad Abu Shakra	Al Arabia

3. REGIONAL DYNAMICS AND CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

July 10, 2014: The Senior Officials meeting of the Istanbul Process stresses on the importance of successfully concluding the presidential elections, in which millions of Afghans took part ([Link](#)).

July 14, 2014: The 18th Ministerial Working Group Meeting of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline Project (TAPI) is held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan ([Link](#)).

July 23, 2014: A workshop on the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process is hosted for governmental and nongovernmental agencies by the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul ([Link](#)).

August 17-19, 2014: The first meeting of the Afghanistan-Tajikistan-India Trilateral Process is held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan from 17-19 August 2014 ([Link](#)).

August 19, 2014: Afghanistan and Tajikistan sign an agreement for cooperation in the fields of culture, arts and publishing ([Link](#)).

September 7, 2014: First round of ministerial talks on opening a new transit route to the black sea takes place between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan Azerbaijan and Georgia ([Link](#)).

September 10, 2014: A conference on prospects of cooperation between Afghanistan, India, Central Asia and the US is held in New Delhi ([Link](#)).

September 13, 2014: Afghanistan's President attends 14th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The Summit reaffirms commitment to peace and security in Afghanistan ([Link](#)).

September 25, 2014: Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs attends the Informal Session of SAARC Council of Ministers in Maldives ([Link](#)).

September 26, 2014: The ninth session of the SPECA Governing Council and the 2014 SPECA Economic Forum, will be held under the Chairmanship of Afghanistan in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, from 4 to 5 December under the theme of "Improving connectivity: a key contribution of SPECA to the success of the Transformation Decade of Afghanistan" ([Link](#)).

September 27-28, 2014: "Herat Security Dialogue III" is held in Herat, Afghanistan ([Link](#)).

4. SUMMARY OF TRENDS FOR THE QUARTER

Towards the end of the quarter, there was finally an end to the highly contested presidential election of Afghanistan. Despite the fact that John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, had managed to get Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah agree to form a government of national unity, disagreements persisted until an eleventh-hour intervention by the outgoing president, Hamid Karzai, who got signatures of both of the candidates on the power-sharing deal. Ghani was sworn in as the new president of the country, and subsequently signed a decree to appoint Abdullah as the CEO of the newly-formed government.

As the electoral dispute dragged on, Afghanistan's economic woes became even graver. The Ministry of Finance announced that the government would not be able to pay the salaries of public servants beyond the end of September. On the other hand, Taliban intensified their summer offensive. Several provinces in the North and Northeast saw rising levels of violence. The fighting in the southern Helmand Province still continues.

In the region, India remained Afghan government's closest ally. India's new government relaxed the visa regime for Afghans visiting India and gifted a huge flag of Afghanistan to the outgoing President Karzai. The highlight of their support was their pledge to provide USD 100 million for upgrading the Iranian port of Chabahar to enhance Afghanistan's connectivity with the rest of the world.

Relations between Afghanistan and Iran remained cordial during the quarter. Despite reports in Kabul that Iran and Russia were behind further complicating the election impasse, the highest echelon of the Iranian government continued to reiterate that it will respect the result of the election and is prepared to cooperate and even expand relations with the incoming government.

Interaction between China and Afghanistan was at an all-time high this quarter. China now has a Special Envoy for Afghanistan. China was supposed to host the Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process but it was postponed due to the electoral dispute in Afghanistan. There were several bilateral meetings between the officials of the two countries.

Russian authorities, President Vladimir Putin in particular, continued criticism of the American policy globally but also in relation to Afghanistan. However, they emphasized the fact that in Afghanistan their interests converged with those of the Americans and their allies.

There were limited interactions between Saudi and Afghan officials during the quarter. Saudi Arabia's presence on multinational fora was also insignificant. Relations between the two countries are friendly but there were no moves of strategic importance to report.

5. PUBLICATIONS FROM THE REGION

July 11, 2014: Kakar, Kawun. *Is coalition government in the best interests of Afghanistan?*, Afghanzariza. Available [here](#).

July 23, 2014: Joshi, Ravi. *Why is India's West Asia policy ineffective*, Observe Research Foundation (ORF). Available [here](#).

July 24, 2014: Markey, Daniel. *Afghanistan Anxieties Rein in Indian and China*, Asia Unbound. Available [here](#).

July 28, 2014: Rehman, Sherry. *Winning our own war: 10 things to do beyond North Waziristan*, Jinnah Institute. Available [here](#).

August 4, 2014: Naseer, Noreen. *Pakistan Conflict Ridden Region of Federally Administered Tribal Areas: Case Study of Kurram Agency's Sectarian Conflict and its Impact on Women and Children*, Project Pakistan. Available [here](#).

August 11, 2014: Bansal, Alok. *India at 68: Beginning of a New Dawn*, India Foundation. Available [here](#).

August 13, 2014: Powers, Liam. *Empire and the Rising Violence in Xinjiang*, The Diplomat. Available [here](#).

August 27, 2014: Farasoo, Abbas. *Afghanistan and Regional Cooperation*, Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS). Available [here](#).

August 29, 2014: Kazemi, S. Reza. *Will the "Heart of Asia" start beating? A review of the regional cooperation process*, Afghanistan Analyst Network (AAN). Available [here](#).

September 2, 2014: Suslov, Dmitry. *How to avoid a new stagnation in the US-Russian relationship*, Russia Direct. Available [here](#).

September 8, 2014: Abdali, Shaida Mohammad. *Recommitting to a Shared Mission Against Terrorism*, Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS). Available [here](#).

September 18, 2014: Hosseini, Seyed Mohammad Ali. *ISIS and the Threadbare Scenario of "War on Terror"*, Iran Review. Available [here](#).

September 27, 2014: Sood, Vikram. *New Delhi has to be prepared for new Pakistan-based Jihadi threats*, Observer Research Foundation (ORF). Available [here](#).

September 28, 2014: Jayakodi, Aruni. *Constitutional Implications of a National Unity Government*, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU). Available [here](#).