

Aspire-KP Roundtable on Pakistan-Afghanistan Tensions and Their Regional Implications- Summary of Proceedings and Recommendations

- 1) **Background:** Advocacy for Sustainable Policy and Implementation Reforms (Aspire-KP) is a not-for-profit and registered platform of public service professionals from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is dedicated to research and advocacy on issues of public importance. On November 15, 2025, Aspire-KP arranged a Roundtable on “**Pakistan-Afghanistan Tensions and Their Regional Implications**”. The event provided a platform to Afghanologists, academia, civil society and intelligentsia to assess the situation and provide their input for consideration of the Government of Pakistan while treading the subject with Afghanistan. List of participants is annexed.
- 2) **Summary of Proceedings:** Proceedings of the Roundtable started with recitation from the Holy Quran. Muhammad Shehzad Arbab opened the deliberations with a brief introduction of Aspire-KP and objectives of the Roundtable. Dr. Qibla Ayaz gave an overview of the current situation and tabled the issue. Participants were provided ample time for deliberations. Summary of the proceedings was presented by Hifz ur Rahman.
- 3) **Summary of Recommendations:** Following is a summary of the recommendations in the Roundtable:
 - a) While dealing with Afghanistan, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of their psychology and world view. Being neighbours, Pakistan and Afghanistan are dependent on each other in so many ways and it is almost impossible for both to find alternatives for substituting this dependency. We need to explore, access and make use of our common intellectual capital for determining our relationship;
 - b) The Government may press into service the intellect and experience of those who understand Afghanistan and Afghans. It will lead to reinforcement of our approach to the subject.
 - c) Conflict, friction and tension do not resolve differences. They will create more problems and more miseries for both countries especially for Pakhtuns in both countries. The loss for Afghanistan will be catastrophic in view of its current situation of economic and social instability;
 - d) It is in the interest of both countries to give a chance to an all-encompassing diplomacy where all segments of society and all shades of opinions including intelligentsia, religious leaders, media, academia and traders play their role- positive role- for reducing frictions and creating an atmosphere conducive for peace and tranquillity. It is time to make use of Citizen Diplomacy through meaningful people-to-people contact;
 - e) Pakistan and Afghanistan are trading partners. The Chambers of Commerce and Industry, traders, exporters, importers, and clearing agents are major stakeholders in this trade and have a definite role to play. Marginalizing and discouraging these stakeholders will have devastating effect on the trade which will lead to unemployment and resultant militancy in both countries. It is in the interest of people in both countries that trade is separated from politics.
 - f) The treatment of exporters and importers on custom frontiers is not only discouraging trade but leading to hatred and hostility. Torkham happens to be a centuries old opening for trade and commerce. The situation on this point radiates our impression as a nation. The issues on this opening need immediate attention.
 - g) The Government of Pakistan may reassess its visa policy and its application at operational level.
 - h) The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa may consider an institutional arrangement to facilitate the export and import industry and the chambers of commerce and industry and help in resolution of their problems in the arena.

- i) Afghans who are desirous of investment in Pakistan may be facilitated and encouraged. Likewise, students seeking admissions in different universities may be allowed to carry on their education and complete their higher studies.
- j) Implementation of the policy regarding Afghan Refugees require a higher degree of care and stringent oversight to eliminate the impression of maltreatment and excesses. Issues relating to women and children need utmost care. While executing the policy, the implementation agencies must adhere to our social, societal and moral values so as to eliminate the possibility of exploitation of isolated incidents of maltreatment on social media platforms.
- k) Intelligentsia in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa owe a responsibility to the youth in this province as it has failed to provide the new generation with a correct perspective of our relationship with Afghanistan through intellectual discourses. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa genuinely needs a Reflective Movement. Aspire-KP may think of institutional arrangements in this regard.
- l) Relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is complex and this complexity has immediate, as well as far reaching implications not only for both countries but the region as well. Keeping in view the centrality of our relationship with Afghanistan to the situation in Pakistan, Aspire-KP may present the issue to a larger audience drawing participation from all over Pakistan.