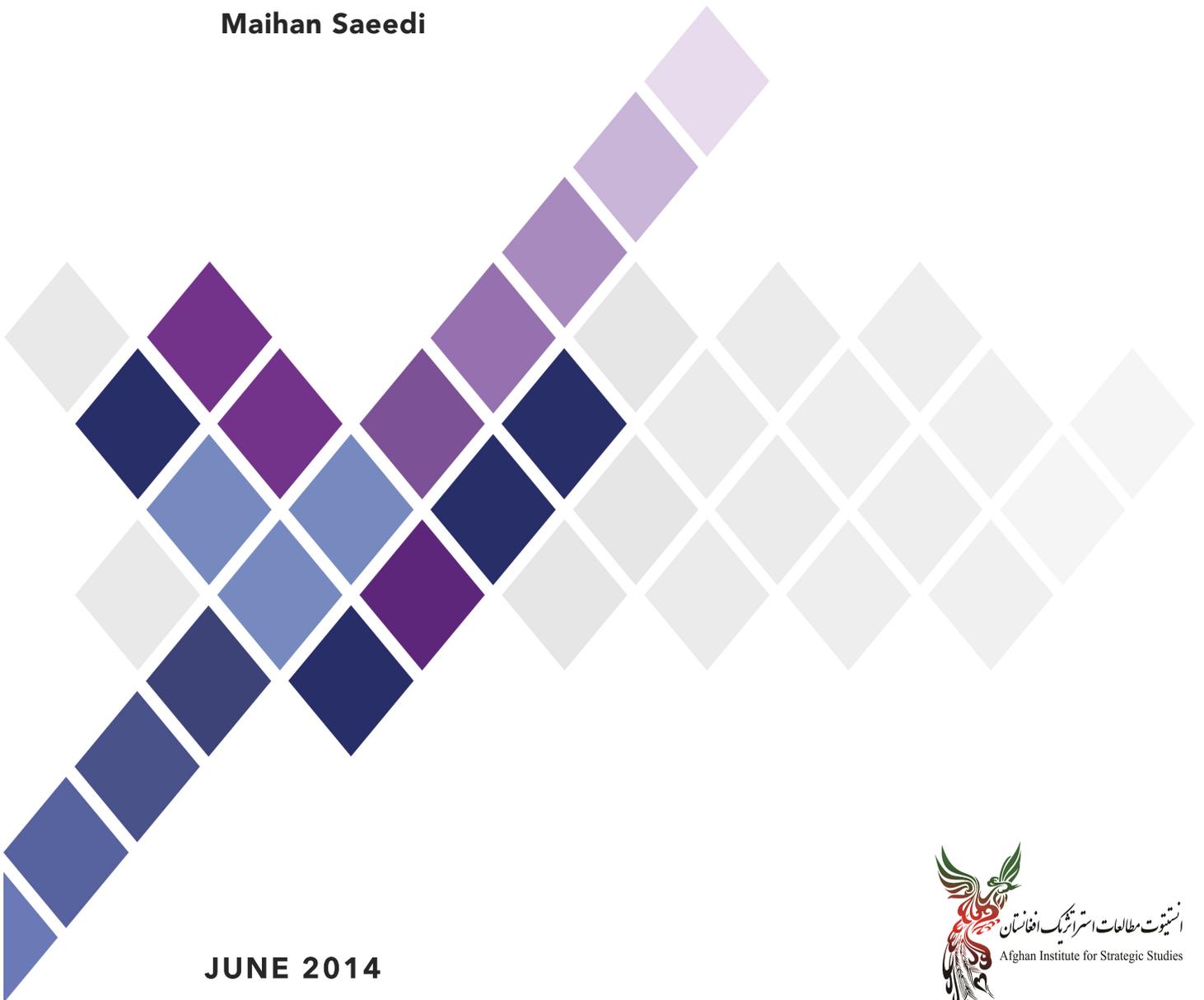


The Heart of Asia Process at a Juncture: An Analysis of Impediments to Further Progress

POLICY PAPER

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The complexity of relations among Heart of Asia Process (henceforth *HoAP* or *the Process*) participating states, the inner circle, cannot be understated. Brokering discussion on common threats and opportunities pertaining to Afghanistan within a single platform among states that have hitherto had difficulty interacting is a victory in itself. The brief timeframe in which it has done so should be underlined. Yet, the Process finds itself at risk of losing momentum. HoAP members need to be persuaded that this process will yield results. What are impediments to further progress? This policy paper attempts to answer this question and provides policy recommendations to HoAP stakeholders to mitigate such impediments.

Based on a wide range of interviews with selected experts on the Process and secondary data, this report's findings indicate that the Process' largest impediment is its equivocal objective and corresponding members' incentives system. Is the HoAP for Afghanistan or the broader region? If it merely serves one state, i.e. Afghanistan, it will most likely not evolve into a mechanism blessed with longevity. The aspiration of the Process should be to enhance addressing the inner circle's overlapping interests. These interests are primarily economic connectivity, mitigation of non-state actors' destructive behavior, and curbing illicit drugs production and trafficking. An incentives system and matching feasible action plans to cater these is direly needed.

Impediments to achieving these partially lie in Afghanistan, stewardship requires qualification and political determination. The Process is prone to managerial limitations. This is partially the product of a power vacuum, created by the exit of former drivers of the Process. While Kabul is distracted by elections, attention to the Process has plummeted on co-initiator Turkey's foreign policy agenda, and supporting states and organizations prefer not to overstep the mark.

In addition, there is a deficiency of institutional capacity and human resources in Kabul to act as the Process' hub, foremost at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and in ministries responsible for implementing and coordinating Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). This translates into operational and communicational limitations, and does not empower Kabul to initiate, lead and follow up sufficiently. The current team assigned to coordinate the Process, the Regional Cooperation Directorate (RCD) at the Afghan MFA, has to juggle Process tasks with running responsibilities – the Process cannot thrive on an ad hoc

basis. The new Afghan administration should appoint a diplomatically seasoned team exclusively to the HoAP to coordinate and monitor with amplified capacity. Considering the security situation in Kabul, relevant Afghan embassies should be given more responsibility. A trust fund for core Process coordination can resolve financial impediments, and hone the three-tier governance structure. An annual rotation system should also be introduced for CBM lead states, so that responsibility is shared and new ideas are introduced. The Process has to date received surprisingly few in-depth journalistic reflections, and scholarly analysis of the young Process has been limited. The HoAP urgently needs the establishment of a parallel track 2.

To fortify the Process, cooperation with existing multilateral bodies deserves closer examination and attention. Overlapping objectives can be combined to create synergies. Concurrently, participating states with economic prowess, such as China, should be stimulated to take the lead in CBMs to ensure that tangible headway is made. The outer circle of supporting countries and organizations should be stimulated to contribute more. Likewise, the United Nation's (UN) role could also be expanded to encourage wary members.

Irrefutably, the region has self-interest in acting to improve regional relations and particularly to work together to prevent Afghanistan from remaining a source of instability, endangering the neighborhood. The Process allows Kabul to contribute to setting its own agenda and is a useful platform for political dialogue. It should be sustained, and stimulated to address regional opportunities and challenges pertinent to all supporting countries, particularly in light of Afghanistan's triple transition and the post 2014/16 security landscape. Much will depend on the political will and merit of the new Afghan administration. Its vision of the country's foreign policy will directly affect the Process.

The Process stands at a critical juncture where momentum might be lost. Afghanistan is pivoting down on the international community's foreign policy agenda. Yet, it should jump up a few spots on the inner circle's agenda. The Process' life expectancy will be affected if both hub and spokes fall short of meeting the Process' objective as a product of disinterest or deficiency of political will. Further institutionalization is recommended to more adequately cater to the interests of members and to address impediments to further progress of the Process.

MAIN FINDINGS

Heart of Asia Process Achievements

- Sole regional process where **Afghanistan** is *in the lead*, allowing it to **contribute to setting its own agenda**.
- **Brokering discussion** within a **single platform** among states that have hitherto had difficulty interacting.
- **Ample regional interest**, as displayed by China's decision to host the 2014 ministerial conference as well as participation at the senior official level from all participating countries, including Pakistan.
- **Six CBMs initiated** that contribute to building trust and allowing people-to-people exchanges at the technical level.

Impediments to Further Progress of the Heart of Asia Process

(Geo)Political Impediments

- The Karzai administration has **not shown adequate political will** at the highest levels to fully endorse the Process.
- It is not a national process, and there are **no drivers** of the Process any longer, a power vacuum has grown. The Process has limited national reach in Afghanistan beyond the RCD.
- **Interest in the Process has plummeted** on co-initiator Turkey's foreign policy agenda, while supporting states prefer not to overstep the mark and leave it a forum led by the Process' immediate region
- The Process' **objective is equivocal**: is it first and foremost for Afghanistan or the broader region?
- It **lacks a convincing incentives system for members** to commit devotedly.
- Members in both the inner and the outer circle could, generally, **display more support**. Interest in the Process is slowly waning in certain capitals.
- **Financial resources** are existent but predominately **in the outer circle** of supporting states and organizations.
- It sits in a **complex region**: the Process' economically larger participating and supporting states have **geopolitical agendas**, tensions and mistrust prevail among them, and midst smaller regional powers.
- The Process **partially overlaps in purpose with several existing political and economic regional mechanisms**.

Operational Impediments

- Kabul does not initiate, lead or follow up sufficiently. This is partially entrenched in RCD **financial deficits**, Process **under-institutionalization** and **poor protocol channels between the three-tier governance structure**.
- There is a **deficiency of institutional capacity and human resources** at the MFA to act as the Process' hub.
- It has no entrenched mechanisms for formulation or implementation of CBMs, the CBMs **miss clear labor division, targets and gauges** to fuel and measure progress. Frequency of senior official meetings (SOMs) is insufficient.
- Media coverage and **independent analysis** of the Process has been **modest so far**.

Policy Recommendations for the Heart of Asia Process

Strategic Recommendations

- Kabul should show **unreserved political will** to nurture the Process at all government levels.
- **Reiterate the practical objective** of the Process and make sure that it caters to members' interests and concerns. An **improved incentives system and practical initiatives targeting the inner circle's national interests and red flags** should be presented. Dedicate more **attention to economic integration projects** that **increase economic interdependence**. All foreign-based Afghan diplomatic channels should be fully utilized.
- Kabul should **pursue active and creative diplomacy**. Drop reactive diplomacy and practice **pragmatic neutrality**.
- Process members should show **stronger devotion** until the Process has fully fledged.

Tactical Recommendations

- **Assign a diplomatically seasoned team** in Kabul to drive and coordinate the Process – with no other duties – in order to strengthen operational and communication capacity, and monitor implementation. HoAP **focal points** at relevant ministries should show stronger commitment. Relevant embassies need focal points.
- **Pass on the baton** by introducing an annual rotation system for CBM lead states. There should be a reevaluation of the weight and quantity of the six CBMs. Create **CBM metrics** demonstrating success, thereby inspiring the Process to produce results. Set up **task forces** to expedite initiatives.
- **Strengthen** senior official and technical level **interaction** by refining protocol and meeting more frequently.
- Establish a parallel **HoAP track 2** with research institutes from participating and supporting countries to feed new ideas into the Process. **Regular track 1.5 dialogues** pre ministerial conferences are vital.

PREFACE

With the drawdown of NATO-ISAF forces from Afghanistan in 2014 and most likely entirely in 2016, and the diminishing role of the international community; an Afghan-led inclusive regional forum that acts as a catalyzer for regional security, economic connectivity and cooperation is most welcome. Ideally, the Heart of Asia Process should be just that.

At the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) in Kabul we had received signals from diplomats and scholars that Process' members interest in it has somewhat waned since its conception and that it is not living up to its potential. As we explored existing analyses we were appalled by the lack of quality media coverage of the Process, and the limited academic inquiry in it. Subsequently, we decided to delve into this by means of a scholarly project and analyze impediments to progress of the Process. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) of the United Kingdom (UK), through their embassy in Kabul, kindly provided the monetary means necessary to conduct this project over a period of four months.

We have attempted to make this a comprehensive and cutting-edge analytical policy paper. We hope that this policy paper will provide the new Afghan administration, HoAP members and all other stakeholders with insightful reflections and valuable recommendations that could result in the fine-tuning of the Process and provide improved yields. Much of the latter will depend on the dedication and merit of the new Afghan administration – and members' support. Correspondingly, much will be determined by large member powers such as China, India and Russia. Many eyes look east to China, as Afghanistan's economically and geopolitically most influential neighbor.¹

Hopefully, the Tianjin ministerial conference this year will reiterate the necessity of the HoAP as a valuable institutional vehicle to address the common challenges that the Heart of Asia region, and more specifically Afghanistan, faces. It is also hoped that it will agree on mitigating some of the impediments that this policy paper has identified.

Our gratitude goes out to the FCO of the UK and their embassy in Kabul for their generous and thoughtful support throughout the entire project, Prof. Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh of Sciences Po in Paris and consultant for the UNRCCA, Dr. Barnett Rubin of NYU, Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva of JNU, and Ms. Rosheen Kabraji of Chatham

House for invaluable review of our research design and final drafts. The venerable Prof. Frederick Starr also kindly provided us with some reflections. Any inaccuracies in this work are our own.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Didier Chaudet, Prof. Emil Dzhuraev, Mr. Armands Pupols, and Mr. Alexey Yusupov for providing us with counsel and opinions on countries that we could not visit. Likewise, we would like to acknowledge the generous contributions of all consulted experts on the Process, this work would have had little value without them. Most of them are referred to in Annex 3, some preferred not to have their names disclosed. We would also like to thank Mr. Musab Omer, our principal researcher, for his diligence.

On a final note, we would like to clarify that the findings of this paper do not necessarily reflect those of the AISS, the FCO, or those of the Embassy of the United Kingdom to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Richard Ghiasy and Maihan Saeedi
June 2014, Kabul

SETTING THE SCENE

In a poem, the renowned Pakistani philosopher and poet Allama Iqbal (1877-1938) described Afghanistan as the *heart of Asia*. This phrase depicts Afghanistan's unique geographic location in this continent. As rightly accredited in the poem, Afghanistan can be either a centre of prosperity and stability, or a centre of poverty and instability. While the poem unquestionably embellishes the weight of Afghanistan on its neighbors, on both their development and security, a volatile Afghanistan distresses the broader region, and as the reaction to 9/11 has demonstrated, the effects are felt even further afield.

Historically, Afghanistan has acted as a land bridge between South Asia, Central Asia, China and the Middle East. Protracted conflict has, sadly, turned Afghanistan from a much-used bridge for civilizational, religious, scientific and commercial exchange to a shunned bridge. Barely anyone dares to use it anymore.

Following the events of 9/11, the international community – through ample sacrifice – has provided Afghanistan with the opportunity to stand tall again. The Afghanistan of today is not the anarchic country that it was in 2001. Yet, Afghanistan continues to face vast challenges: this year's political transition, the security transition, and most importantly socioeconomic development. There is still no indigenous economic engine to speak of. Youth (68 percent of the population is aged 0-25 years²), will need an ecology with proper incentives to opt for (re)construction rather than destruction. Concurrently, international aid will diminish, while security running costs will remain high, and a deficiency of government revenue will jeopardize institutional stability and effectiveness. As the new administration will deal with these challenges, Afghanistan's erratic neighborhood of tensions, mistrust, low levels of political interaction and economic interdependence will be the backdrop. On top of this, Afghanistan will face a post-2016 'zero-option,' whether the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) is signed by the new administration or not. With challenges and opportunities ahead, what role is there for the HoAP?

HoAP Conception

The HoAP or the *Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan*³ was co-initiated by Afghanistan and Turkey in 2011 to encourage the countries in and adjacent to the Heart of Asia (henceforth those countries will be referred to as the *Heart of Asia region*) to play a positive role in the stability

and prosperity of Afghanistan, and as an extension of that, the broader region.

The HoAP is essentially designed to bring the region together to discuss and attempt to solve challenges pertinent to the broader region, but with a distinct focus on Afghanistan. This is predominantly propelled by the destructive conduct of non-state actors. Their conduct requires new collective security arrangements⁴ and increased political dialogue. It is also driven by the potential of Afghanistan to herald positive externalities and economic derivatives upon stability.⁵ The rationale behind it has three major elements: 1) The US-led international community grasped that Afghanistan's woes require regional support. As a geopolitically vulnerable state with low levels of socio-economic development, Afghanistan relies much on the goodwill of its broader neighborhood and the agendas of regional powers. Brokering exchange and discussions can alleviate distrust and potentially result in closer cooperation. 2) Historically, Afghanistan has often been on the menu rather than at the table. The HoAP allows Afghanistan to lead a process where it sways more authority and permits it to better determine its own agenda from a regional perspective. 3) The challenges that Afghanistan faces do not merely affect itself and neither are they solely the produce of Afghanistan.

The Istanbul Process is loosely based on the 2002 *Kabul Declaration of Good Neighborly Relations*. The distinguishing feature of this declaration was recognition of certain fundamental issues: the role of the UN in international affairs, fighting terrorism (especially dismantling terrorist bases), respect for territorial integrity in the region, and non-interference policy. The HoAP finds its origins, however, in the US proposed New Silk Road initiative,⁶ and in a partnership between Turkey and Afghanistan in 2009. Turkey had an assertive foreign policy under then Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu, he saw Turkey as an emerging power that had no problems with neighbors or great powers.

Afghanistan was enchanted by the idea of Turkey as a 'co-steward' as it was seen as an expansion of Turkey's role as a broker with Pakistan. The two people whose personal partnership was essential to the Process were that of Turkish diplomat Burak Akçapar and Afghan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Jawed Ludin.⁷ They worked with the Center on International Cooperation at New York University and Norway on a track 2 level followed by a track 1.5 process that metamorphosed into the Istanbul Process. At the start of 2011, the Process' formation got a new impetus when

Hillary Clinton announced the "diplomatic surge" on Afghanistan in her Asia Society speech.⁸

In the Process Afghanistan has a permanent seat. It annually shares stewardship of the Process on a rotating basis with a voluntary co-chair. Turkey was followed by Kazakhstan, then China and the latter will retire from this position at the next ministerial conference in Tianjin on August 29, 2014. The RCD, a department at the Afghan MFA with supplementary commitments, was designated as the hub of the Process. The RCD runs daily operations and is responsible for overall coordination of the Process.

The Process' governance is based on a three-tier structure: 1) the ministerial tier, meeting annually for high-level political consultation, 2) the diplomatic tier, shaped by regular senior officials meetings (SOM) and tasked with coordination and supervision of the six CBMs (these Confidence Building Measures are frameworks to plan, coordinate and implement projects that instill trust and cooperation), and 3) the technical tier, that is responsible for the implementation of the CBMs.⁹ These tiers are supplemented by a *Ambassadors Contact Group*. This group is composed of Kabul-based ambassadors of participating countries.

Fourteen countries have committed to the HoAP: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These countries are also referred to as *participating* countries of the Process. They can be seen as the inner circle of the Process. It is unique that the Process has been able bring about the commitment of all these states – particularly having India and Pakistan, and Iran and the United States (US), the US is a *supporting country* in the Process, sit at the same table. The majority of these participating countries have, interestingly, not been closely engaged in US-led intervention in Afghanistan. Afghan neighbor Uzbekistan considered joining, however after the second ministerial meeting in Kabul in 2012 it indicated that it prefers to work on a bilateral basis.

Sixteen *supporting* states buttress the inner circle: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Iraq, Japan, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the UK, the US, and the European Union (EU) as a collective entity. These states, mainly traditional donors to Afghanistan since 2002, are not directly involved in the Process, but rather play a supporting role in the implementation of the six CBMs and offer counsel and technical expertise on a voluntary basis. The majority of these supporting states have actively participated in

US-led intervention in Afghanistan. So far, most of these countries have adhered to an observer stance to avoid stepping on participating countries' toes. There is indeed a fine line between active participation and overstepping. However, a few key inner circle actors do not accept the role of the US as a mere supporting state,¹⁰ and suspicions prevail about its precise role in the Process.¹¹

Within this outer circle, the Process is buoyed by a set of regional and international organizations which include the UN, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Conference on Interaction and CBMs in Asia (CICA). Eleven UN agencies support the CBMs. The Process is on a voluntary basis and is rather flexible as to members' commitments. An interesting observation is the ratio of the inner to the outer circle: the latter has twenty-eight members, while the inner circle has fourteen members. Please see the map at the end of the next section, *Heart of Common Interests?*, for a visual overview of participating and supporting countries.

HoAP Dissected

One of the biggest achievements of the Istanbul conference of 2011 happened at the margins, when Turkey and the US incited Kabul and Islamabad to talk to each other. Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of being a safe haven for Afghan Taliban, while Pakistan considers Afghanistan to be allied with India in an anti-Pakistan policy, and a safe haven for the Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan (TTP). There is still a long way to go before these two countries trust each other, but the Process helps Islamabad and Kabul to enter a more constructive phase where fewer accusations are heard, and more practical steps are taken to deal with pending issues. According to an interlocutor who has closely followed the Process since inception. "The Process was designed to facilitate constructive exchanges of ideas that were hard or impossible to achieve on a bilateral basis."¹² In that context, the HoAP has accomplished a core target.

Since the Istanbul conference in 2011, the forum was strengthened by two more annual HoAP ministerial conferences. Specifically, in June 2012 the conference was held in Kabul. At this conference, the roadmap was laid out for the achievement of targets identified in the previous conference: political consultation, CBMs and greater coherence. The standout of the conference was the agreement on CBMs. These CBMs were initiated to soothe tense ties, and stimulate confidence and trust through collaboration at political and technical levels. Yet,

these CBMs were in fact an afterthought added to create ongoing activities, they were never in the HoAP's blueprint. The main point of the Process was political dialogue leading to a stability pact, similar to the Helsinki Process leading to the OSCE,¹³ this was what the US and the EU had envisioned.¹⁴ That is why the CBMs have raised an imperative question: Is it to use technical benchmarks to achieve political success?

Of the forty-three CBMs that were identified at the Istanbul conference seven were prioritized at the conference in Kabul: *Disaster Management, Counter Terrorism, Counter Narcotics, Chamber of Commerce, Commercial Opportunities, Regional Infrastructure, and Education*. Later on, two CBMs, *Chamber of Commerce* and *Commercial Opportunities* were merged together as the *Trade Commerce and Investment Opportunities* CBM. These CBMs are currently led by ten participating states, on a voluntary basis. Three of these CBMs focus on present menaces facing the region, (natural) disasters, terrorism and narcotics, while the other three concentrate on opportunities and (economic) connectivity. To date, CBM focus has largely been on technical plans, and while implementation plans have been drawn up, no criteria are yielded to discriminate these plans.¹⁵ Please see the second last page of this section for an overview of the CBMs, pertinent states and organizations, and overlapping/ relevant organizations. Annex 1 provides an overview of activities per CBM and per country to date.

The third ministerial conference, held in April 2013 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, was dominated by three issues: regional cooperation post-US downsizing in Afghanistan in 2014; conflict among states in the region hampering greater coherence, and laxity in implementing the previously agreed upon CBMs; and migration, which poses a new challenge to regional security and economic cooperation. At this conference, Iran and Russia clearly expressed their concerns over the post-2014 situation. This concern is anticipated to be high on the agenda again at the 2014 ministerial conference.

Interestingly, at the Almaty conference there was a structural decline in the rank of attending government officials. This signaled diminishing interest, or as one Afghan official closely involved in the Process phrased it: "The novelty of it had faded, not the Process itself."¹⁶ All three ministerial conferences yielded declarations outlining commitments and general principles.¹⁷ While in the first declaration there was recognition of the role of the UN, in the second and third declarations there was more focus on the role of the UN Security Council. Furthermore, whereas the first declaration stressed the role of Afghanistan, in the second and third declarations

the tone shifted to regional responsibility, with a somewhat more economic emphasis. This was also reflected in amendments to the objective of the Process. The third HoAP ministerial conference declaration presented the objective of the Process as: *Stability and Prosperity in the 'Heart of Asia' through Building Confidence and Shared Regional Interests*. Outside of Kabul and Ankara most interlocutors spoken to by the authors of this report have pointed out that they find the objective equivocal. Irrespective, the HoAP has unquestionably survived a difficult birth and infancy, and this should be acknowledged.

Whose Responsibility?

An ostensibly intended byproduct of the HoAP is a gravitational shift that transfers responsibility for Afghanistan's stability and development away from the US towards the inner circle of participating countries and Afghanistan itself.¹⁸ Hence, the US has always been supportive but never pushed too much.

This has created complications. Key regional actors such as China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia all opposed the Afghan-Turkish approach right from the start. In the context of the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and then the BSA with the US, they saw the Istanbul Process as a way for the US to dominate the region through an Afghan government that was dependent on the US and could be easily shaped. Therefore in all discussions these countries always raised the question of US long-term intentions.¹⁹

China and Russia saw it as a US project to marginalize their preferred platform for regional affairs, the SCO. Iran perceived it as an initiative designed to legitimize US presence in Afghanistan. Pakistan was reluctant to approve an organization centered on Afghanistan and including India. Discussions with China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia were very antagonistic and the eventual declaration was very watered down.²⁰ It also did not receive the political support that drivers of the Process such as Mr. Ludin had hoped for: "We were hoping that it would become an integral part of Kabul's foreign policy agenda, it has come to run out of political steam."²¹

But as 2014 approached, both Beijing's and Moscow's stance changed and they came to prefer a longer presence of US forces in Afghanistan. Obama's recent announcement on the future of US troops post-2016 will have undoubtedly rung alarms in regional capitals.²² Observers must realize that the Process was never designed to be linked to the 2014 transition and to absorb possible immediate shocks from this transition,²³ "Observers often forget this."²⁴ It was meant to be a ship

that could carry the difficult bits [i.e. regional tensions and challenges].²⁵ The problem is that regional power members have never wanted a political process or a security mechanism, especially not if political ownership is in Afghan hands. It is impossible that Beijing, Islamabad, Moscow or any member capital would want to see Afghanistan as the hub for their security matters. One can, disputably, state that regional expectations of the HoAP do not fully match the blueprint. The odds that this process grows into a security mechanism are therefore very slim. The incentives to cater to regional common interests and the actual potential for cooperation were not granted sufficient analysis by the Process' designers.

Today, the Process stands at a rather critical juncture: members will need to be convinced of the utility of the Process, and it will have to support Afghanistan in tackling the daunting security and economic challenges it faces. Much hope is pinned on China, there is optimism that it can bring the Process to the next level according to the vast majority of non-Chinese interlocutors spoken to during authors' field trips. Yet, members should *collectively determine* if the HoAP will remain a steppingstone talk shop to established mechanisms, or whether it should transform into a more institutionalized platform with stouter practical impact. Stakeholders of the HoAP should all carry responsibility and ask themselves not what they want this forum to be, but what it *needs to be* to address Heart of Asia region common red flags and build on common interests. An overview of these interests and red flags is presented as a diagram at the end of this section.

Existing Studies and Research Query

The Process is a useful institutional vehicle for Afghanistan *and* the Heart of Asia region to address challenges and opportunities pertinent to them all and deserves to be placed under an analytical lens. Particularly now that Afghanistan is at the eve of a new chapter in its young democracy.

Existing analysis on the young HoAP is meager. There have been three relatively brief pieces focusing on ailments of the Process by the Afghanistan Analysts Network,²⁶ and a few concise reflections in scholarly journals.²⁷ The Process has at times been allocated a section in reports analyzing Afghanistan and the region.²⁸ There have been no papers that have extensively analyzed the Process, and internal and/or external impediments to the progress of the Process. However, commissioned reports with a narrower focus, such as on funding modalities, do exist.²⁹ The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) has embarked on a bold project to unite Afghanistan's broader region second track to share

interests and concerns and shape strategies for common stability post-2014, resulting in a pioneer joint declaration.³⁰ However, it does not solely concentrate on the HoAP. Statements of the Afghan MFA have predominantly shaped other 'analyses' on the HoAP, the bulk of journalistic output is near literal copies of these statements.

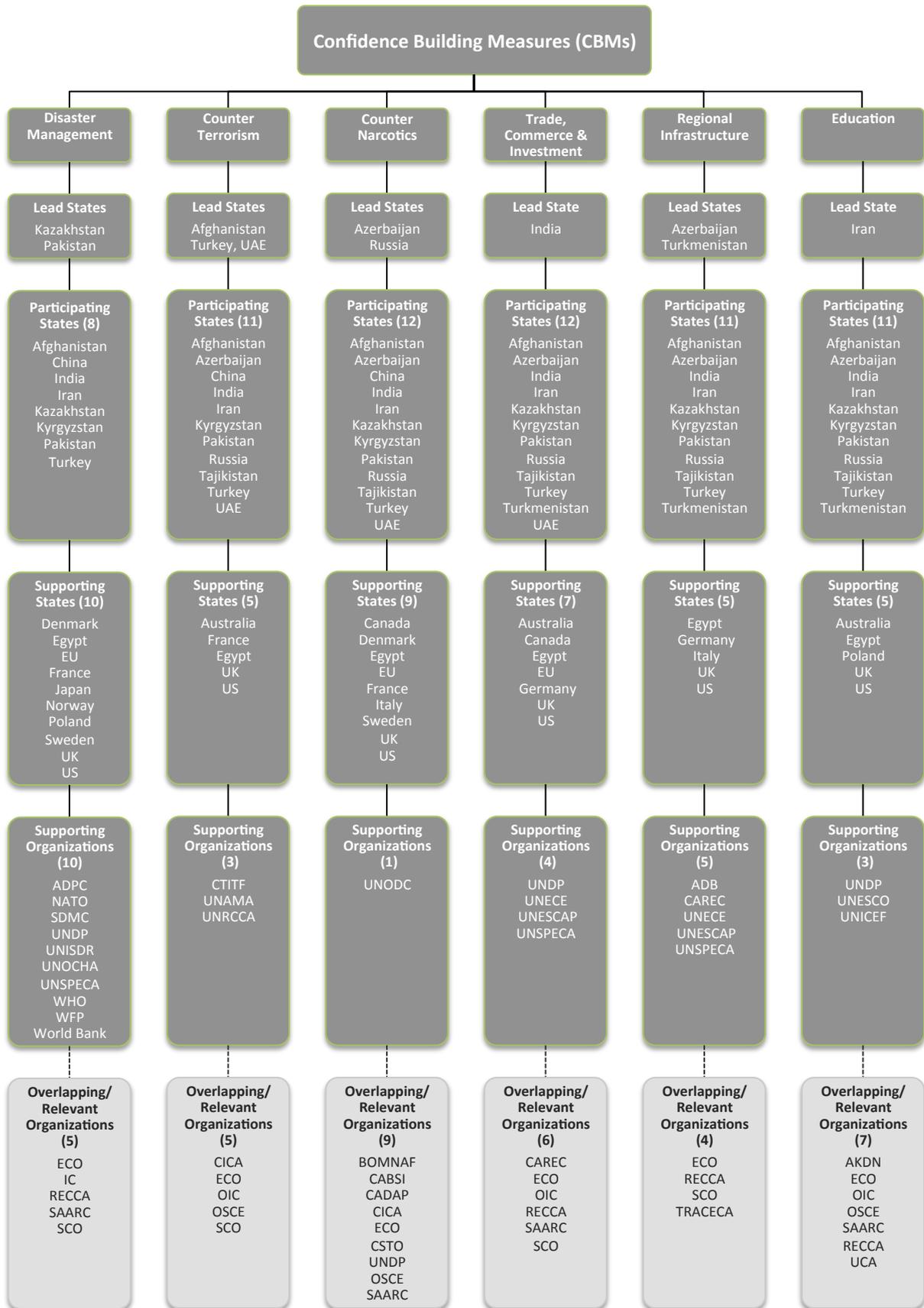
This policy paper has attempted to compensate for this deficit of scholarly reflections on the HoAP by analyzing participating countries' interests in and concerns about Afghanistan. It has also identified and analyzed impediments to the Process to fruitfully address these.

As the authors set the framework, the first step was to accurately define the Process, i.e. what has it been designed for? This has been based on the three ministerial conference declarations given to date and corresponding stated objectives, and to an extent on a number of conversations with interlocutors closely involved in the HoAP. Next, the authors collected data on thirteen selected participating states' (the main criterion was their involvement in the Process to date) national interests and red flags. These are generally based on secondary data.³¹ The authors also collected views on the Process itself, these are based predominantly on interviews. Since little academic work has been written on the HoAP, this report has adhered to a roughly 70/30 ratio of field/desk research respectively. Primary data is based on interviews and extensive discussions held with experts of reputed think tanks and senior officials in Afghanistan, as well as of selected member states, the UN and supporting organizations.

A flaw of this report is that it only partially covers the role of supporting states and organizations, since they generally stand at the sidelines, but more so because of project resource limitations. Some minor reflections on their role have been interwoven throughout the report.

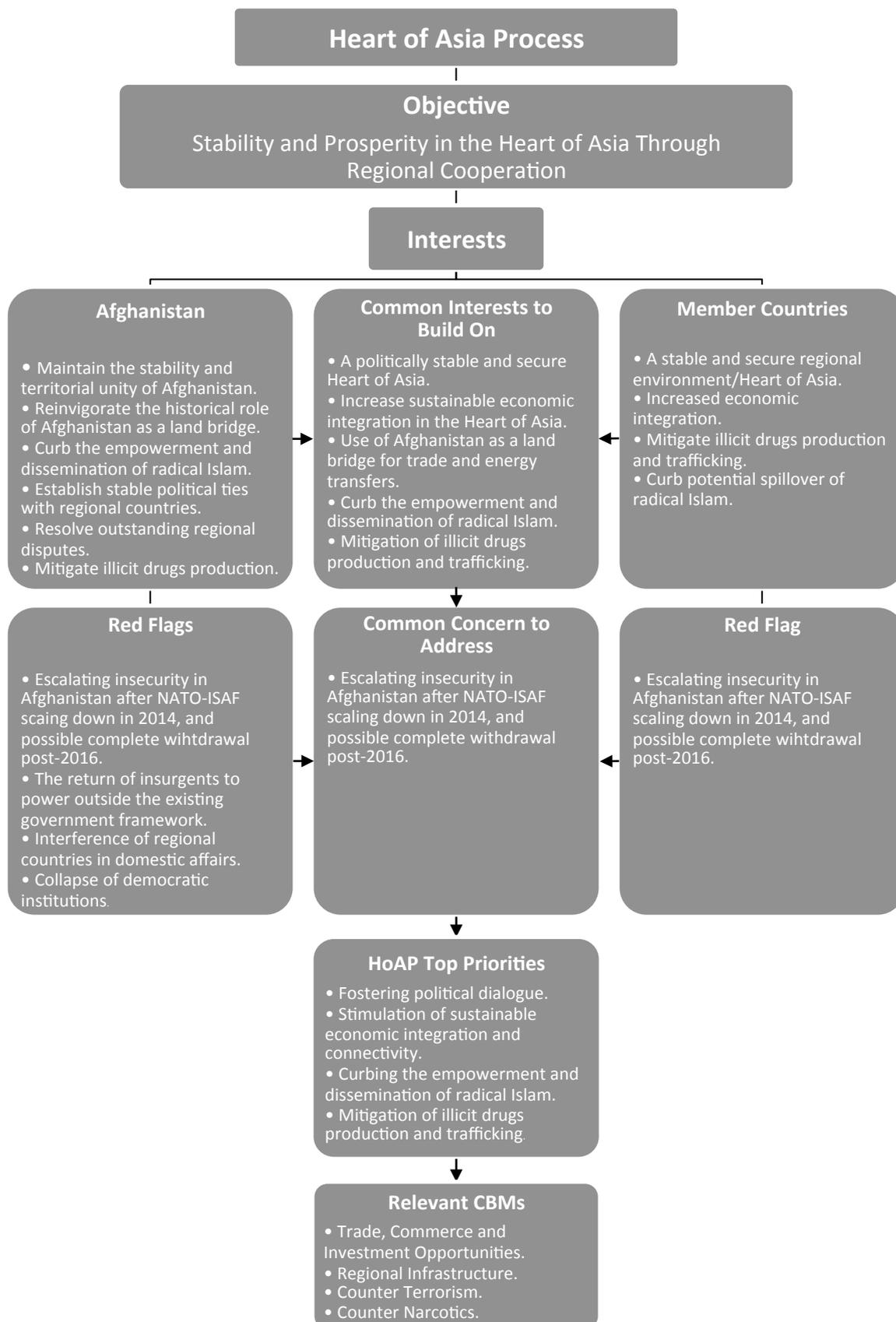
In presenting findings this paper firstly introduces the Process (this section), then covers the complexities and opportunities of the Heart of Asia region that affect the Process (*Heart of Common Interests?*), followed by an analysis of impediments to the Process. It then presents findings on the inner circle's interests, concerns and views on the HoAP (*Stances by Country*). This paper finally presents a conclusion, and provision of practical policy recommendations. For further rationale behind data collection and analysis, report breakdown and overall resources allocation, please refer to the methodology in Annex 2.

Overview of the HoAP CBMs and Pertinent States and Organizations



Note: the involvement of some *supporting organizations* is fairly hard to categorize: while some are official Process supporters, others, e.g. the World Bank, are present at meetings and are quite actively involved, yet are not formal supporters. This paper has decided not to distinguish them in this diagram. Source: <http://heartofasiaministerial-mfa.gov.af/>

Overview of the HoAP Members' Common Interests and Red Flags*



* This diagram provides an overview of selected HoAP participating countries' common interests and red flags based on findings shared in the next sections. Its purpose is to highlight common interests that the HoAP should build on, and common concerns that it should attempt to mitigate.

HEART OF COMMON INTERESTS?

The Heart of Asia region is not a single region or a new geographic entity, the HoAP rather borrows from adjacent regions and clusters them around a troubled state with demonstrable development potential, Afghanistan. Afghanistan does indeed find itself right at the centre of South and Central Asia, the Middle East, and the western periphery of the Far East; a mosaic of ethnically, culturally, linguistically and ideologically diverse states. The region has been home to ancient civilizations, rich cultural traditions, and spiritual movements.

Today, many of the states in these regions are prone to conflict that can be characterized by ethnic enmity, communal violence, and tensions at local, national and interstate levels. The most overlapping commonality is poverty. Yet, these countries have a shared concern that could be construed as a common interest, Afghanistan. If insecurity escalates in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF scaling down in 2014, and the feasibility of complete joint forces withdrawal by the end of 2016, this country, at the center of all these regions, presents them with a spillover threat of religious extremism and terrorism. And there is possibly also a scenario of increased illicit drugs production and trafficking. This situation would also hamper visions of Afghanistan as a natural resources provider, and as an energy and trade corridor. Both these threats as well as economic integration opportunities are domains that the HoAP could facilitate in mitigating and building on respectively.

Immediate Region Actors

The set of actors germane to the HoAP can be categorized as the *immediate region*, *extra-regional actors*, and *Afghanistan*, see also the map at the end of this section. Are there ample common interests to build on?

The immediate region actors, the inner circle, can be clustered as Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Azerbaijan, China and Russia. As an extension of a lack of political will and limited economic interdependence, Central Asia continues somewhat aloof on matters related to Afghanistan and misses the economic clout to be of much significance. There is fear of extremist spillover, while simultaneously it is not at ease with a liberal democracy and free media next door that could inspire political awakening and challenge vested regimes. Foremost, the blend of asymmetric rivalries

among Central Asian states and shock absorption strategies to mitigate external intrusion have a detrimental effect on a united and constructive stance towards Afghanistan. Tajikistan shares porous borders with Afghanistan, and combined with its low standard of socioeconomic development there is indeed potential for spillover of terrorism. A remedy proven quite effective for this is economic integration. Sadly, both Central and South Asia have some of the world's smallest interstate trade ratios.

A glance at Afghanistan's south and southeast underlines the HoAP's potential to catalyze economic connectivity. South Asia is no poster child for regional collaboration. The most notable mechanism is probably the economically oriented SAARC, which was the first formal regional initiative on cooperation in which rivals India and Pakistan participate. In the HoAP, continued non-cooperation and mistrust between these two member states is doing the Afghan-led process no good. While India has always enjoyed good relations with the government and people of Afghanistan, Pakistani ties with Afghanistan are tense. Kabul accuses Islamabad of sponsoring terrorist activities and interfering in its domestic affairs. Some circles in Pakistan consider Afghanistan as its strategic-depth and do not like to see India play any role in Afghanistan. India claims that it wants to revive centuries old ties with Afghanistan by supporting it with aid and investment, while Pakistan sees Indian presence in Afghanistan as a threat to its western borders and fears to be 'sandwiched.' Subsequently, Pakistan does not allow India to use Pakistani territory as a transit route to Afghanistan. This has led India to invest in an alternative trading route to Afghanistan and the Central Asian markets circumventing Pakistan by use of the Iranian port of Chabahar. This project has not yet been finalized.

Chabahar is indicative of the level of interstate tensions and mistrust in Central and South Asia and the need for a forum like the HoAP to soothe these. Chabahar is also indicative of the aspirations of geopolitical protagonists such as China, India, Russia and extra-regional actor the US on the one hand, and those of smaller regional players such as Iran, Pakistan and Turkey on the other. Precisely because of this power play and deficiency of sufficient interstate and interregional interaction, multilateral institutions are trusted to ease tensions by fostering political dialogue and facilitating economic integration and exchange. In Eurasia, multilateral mechanisms abound, but the only well-established forum that incorporates Central Asian, South Asian and the rest of the region's geopolitical protagonists is the SCO. For both Russia and China the SCO is the

preferred platform for regional affairs, and is progressively a vehicle for economic cooperation. The drawback is that the SCO is toothless, it does not serve as a collective defense mechanism and cannot provide hard security.

The role of SCO initiator China, progressively Asia's largest economy, is, debatably, vital for the success of any regional initiative in South and Central Asia. China was unsuccessful in the Great Power Games of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century and squandered the first eight decades of the last century in futile efforts to modernize. The China Communist Party (CCP) is therefore keen to avoid further costly mistakes. China is aware that the world has changed. It makes careful geopolitical calculations in which it tries to objectively analyze its geopolitical assets and liabilities. It then works out long-term plans to respectively enhance assets or minimize liabilities. What Beijing's precise long-term plans for the HoAP are will be seen as the Process evolves. But with tensions mounting with neighbors in China's east and south, Beijing deems it vital to nurture relationships with its north (China's north can be labeled secure, as Sino-Russian ties are at a historic high) and immediate west. It thus attempts to use its growing prowess to realize similar ties with Central Asia, and, expectedly, Afghanistan.

But while China's politico-economic clout grows, so does India's. China and India have historically enjoyed millennia of peaceful ties, and despite extensive contemporary trade relations both countries are involved in a somewhat low gear rivalry. Moreover, the all-weather friendship between China and Pakistan does not please India as both countries consider the rise of India as a potential hazard. India accuses China of laxity on regional issues due to its friendly relations with Pakistan. However, the urgency of the situation in Afghanistan is an opportunity for these three states to possibly collaborate in the HoAP.

The other influential geopolitical actor in the region, Russia, has been left with a bitter aftertaste of its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and it is unlikely that it will get closely involved again. However, it clings to its sphere of influence, Central Asia. This affects its foreign policy in the broader region. Moscow and Beijing initially both thought that the HoAP was designed to marginalize the SCO,³² a platform that both prefer to use for regional affairs. The Moscow initiated Eurasian Union, set for inauguration on January 1, 2015, certainly also carries weight in Russia's calculations on the HoAP.

Russia's main concerns are opium flow from Afghan territory and possible extremist spillovers in its sphere. Russia is particularly concerned about Afghanistan post-2014 and has expressed this worry at many HoAP meetings.³³

Another subject of popular discussion is the role of the UN in the Process. Russia, China, and Iran have insisted on stronger involvement. China's rationale behind this corresponds with its broader and stable foreign policy push for stronger UN involvement in multilateral affairs. The UN is currently involved in convening the ministerial conferences, and eleven UN entities have committed to support the implementation of the six CBMs.

Extra-Regional Actors

Since the end of the Bush administration extra-regional actor the US has moved away from a military solution for the Afghanistan dilemma towards a solution that lies within the confines of a regional approach. This approach was first characterized by the AfPak strategy, and has since shifted to a larger canvas stressing political dialogue and regional economic connectivity. The 'New Silk Road' vision is the most notable constituent of the latter, but does leave immediate region actors not included in its design, such as Iran, agitated. Overall, the New Silk Road did not get enough buy-in from regional countries. There was little political will to create trans-national trade.³⁴ The HoAP should attempt to identify incentives to instill will.

The US military and NATO-ISAF are expected to close the Afghan chapter by the end of 2016,³⁵ leaving Afghanistan at the 'mercy of regional powers.' As this 'zero-option' was announced in Washington D.C., President Barack Obama stated, "We have to recognize that Afghanistan will not be a perfect place, and it is not America's responsibility to make it one. The future of Afghanistan must be decided by Afghans."³⁶

The other influential extra-regional official HoAP supporter is the EU. While it has become an introverted and retired geopolitical power, the EU can generally be considered an actor with good ties with Process members. Brussels certainly has its agenda, but generally attempts to exert its economic clout through soft power rather than military force. Considering its considerable investment in Afghanistan since US-led intervention and its continued commitment, it can be considered a constructive extra-regional actor that has much to gain in seeing the HoAP blossom.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's foreign policy has taken a new direction after US-led intervention and it has become more active in regional and international affairs. In the past thirteen years Afghanistan has joined, or participated as an observer member in various regional organizations and initiatives. To mitigate the hazard that countries in the region meddle too much in internal affairs, foreign policy makers in Kabul realized that they have to push for cooperation and integration within the countries of the region. Afghanistan has fought hard to overcome the distrust and lack of confidence among the regional countries in order to promote itself as a connectivity hub.

The vacuum of support and corresponding security provision post 2014/16 makes it imperative for Afghanistan to keep ties with regional players sound, and engage them in solution-seeking strategies for the challenges that they collectively face. Kabul will have to choose what image and role it wants to project: will it be a hub of concern for the region, or a center of opportunity and positive competition? The HoAP has the potential to highlight and coordinate opportunity and positive competition.

Currently, Afghanistan is 'sandwiched' between two large neighbors adhering to negative competition: Iranian-Pakistani ties suffer from close ties between the latter and Saudi Arabia. Iran and Saudi Arabia are virtually in a protracted cold war that finds its roots in the Sunni-Shia divide and ethnic rivalry.³⁷ Both the civil war in Afghanistan between the Taliban and the United Front, and the recent conflict in Syria, is seen as a proxy war between these two states. Moreover, Pakistan's close bonds with the US dissuade Iran from seeking closer ties with Islamabad.

How relations develop between Islamabad and Kabul upon the incumbency of the new Afghan administration remains to be seen. One notable achievement is the *Afghanistan - Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement* (APTTA) that both states signed in July 2010 in presence of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. This agreement came into full effect on June 12, 2011 and replaced the outdated trade agreement of 1965 between the two countries.³⁸ The agreement allows Afghanistan to use the port of Lahore to export its goods: mainly dry fruits, carpets, and marble to India, for the first time. Yet, the agreement does not permit Indian goods to Afghanistan go through Pakistan, although it does allow Pakistan to transport its goods to Central Asia via Afghanistan. Even with these restrictions, the APTTA has been a major breakthrough in enhancing economic

and political cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

This is not to say that looking down the path ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan will necessarily see substantial changes, both the Karzai administration and Islamabad have frequently continued to play the blame game. Attempts from third parties such as China to cool heated ties have yet to be proven fruitful.

Common Interests and Concerns For Sale

While development of any state ultimately comes from within, geopolitically vulnerable Afghanistan needs a political and economic institutional vehicle such as the HoAP to foster dialogue, and create economic interdependence. With the triple transition in process it will have to smartly utilize the only multilateral forum that it leads. Economic integration and interdependence might positively impact the Afghanistan's immediate region's security architecture.

The Heart of Asia region is expected to remain complex and volatile in the absence of substantial and inclusive socioeconomic development, limited connectivity and trade, semi-functional multilateral institutions and ensuing ethnic and religiously motivated rivalry. Afghanistan's (lack of) development and possible subsequent negative spillovers to the region depends, foremost, on the political will and merit of the new Afghan administration. The reemergence of China and India as economic behemoths can be expected to have positive effects on the region – provided they design their foreign policy agendas on Afghanistan in line with the aims of the HoAP.

The planned full withdrawal of NATO-ISAF forces by 2016 could either ignite new tensions (or fuel old ones), or conversely bind the region. The HoAP should intend to pragmatically utilize the distress that a post-2014/16 Afghanistan could cause in the Heart of Asia region, and find the incentives to have members, foremost the participating countries, commit to the Process and its CBMs. There is common self-interest to do so, the Process' impediments, as perceived by members, should also be addressed. The next section gives a brief overview of national interests and concerns, and views on impediments to the Process.

IMPEDIMENTS TO THE PROCESS

While expectations for the HoAP abounded, it is important to be realistic about the intricacies of relations among the states that the Process encompasses both within the inner circle as well as certain relations between the two circles. Interstate trust is still limited among many of the actors and, in many cases, interstate and intraregional comprehension is far from profound. The participating and supporting countries of the Process have disparate levels of socioeconomic development, distinct political systems, and include a number of geopolitical powers with dissimilar agendas. Low levels of political and economic integration characterize the regions that form the greater Heart of Asia region. Indeed, large multilateral initiatives, examples being the SCO and ECO, have needed many years to gain shape and influence (the former disputably has the best track record). CICA took ten years before it held its first international conference. When looked at through that lens, the HoAP has done very well. It has created a political forum where key countries that have hitherto had little interaction sit at the same table and exchange views on matters relating to Afghanistan and on interests and concerns pertinent to them all, or at least the majority. The Process thus creates a much-needed collective role for members to benefit from Afghanistan's reconstruction and unique geographic location, and curb threats that an unstable Afghanistan might radiate. However, to build on common interests and mitigate common threats of predominantly non-state actors, the Process has structural impediments to further progress and, more fundamentally, for its continued existence:

(Geo)Political Impediments

1) The Karzai administration has not shown sufficient political will to hone the Process at the highest levels.³⁹ The polarization of Afghan politics at individual and ethnic levels has done the HoAP little good. Political unity and determination are key for stewardship of any multilateral initiative, if the hub is weak the spokes might easily break. This might change depending on the will, dedication and merit of the new Afghan administration. For the Process to thrive, political solidarity in Kabul is key. Kabul also faces the challenge of convincing member geopolitical actors that the Afghan regime is not under US tutelage. Some participating countries will not endorse the Process if they feel that the US and/or other Western powers use this forum to lighten their burden or shift responsibility.

Another major impediment is that the HoAP is not a national process, awareness of and involvement in the Process outside the Afghan MFA's RCD is negligible. An interlocutor closely involved in the Process since inception pointed out that none of the Afghan parliamentarians spoken to by this person since last year had heard of the HoAP.⁴⁰ For the Process to thrive, the input and support of a broader Afghan base is necessary.

2) Kabul's diplomacy is slow, reactive and not sufficiently creative. The incentives to motivate Process members are not adequately articulated. This led Former Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmoud Saikal to candidly say: "We [Kabul] do not think two-way, we just think about what we can get, how it benefits us, not how it benefits others."⁴¹ Kabul cannot afford members to lose patience or become disenchanted by lack of active involvement in the Process. "The Process should provide tangible output, it should not be a briefing forum" Mr. Ludin rightly pointed out.⁴² Otherwise, it might contribute to existing Afghanistan aid fatigue. The Process, moreover, needs to appropriately address urgent issues, e.g. Afghan-Pakistani ties.

HoAP participating countries, and supporting countries and organizations, will not cease to look at Afghanistan's existing woes and potential troubles post-2014/16 through their lens of national interest and concern. The HoAP does not satisfactorily cater to their interests, or concerns.

3) Some of the HoAP impediments find their root in the exit of individuals who were a real driving force behind the Process. At the beginning, the HoAP was driven by Turkey with then Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu relying on diplomat Burak Akçapar, currently the Ambassador of Turkey to India. Mr. Akçapar did a lot of work to convince Pakistan to join. Pakistan's original stance was that their participation was not possible since India was also included in the Process.⁴³ He also did a lot of work to bring in the Iranian government, who were suspicious that the US was behind the Process.⁴⁴ In Afghanistan, Jawed Ludin, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, was very involved. In the US, Marc Grossman worked the multilateral diplomacy. Now there is no one to drive the Process, and it is languishing. The fact that there was a structural decline in attendees' political rank at the Astana ministerial conference is indicative.

In addition, co-initiator Turkey is too 'small' to co-lead the Process,⁴⁵ it does not have sufficient political or economic clout to pull the cart for Afghanistan. Turkey

has also been preoccupied with elections, social unrest and the crisis in neighboring Syria. It is fair to conclude that Afghanistan has plummeted a few notches on Ankara's foreign policy agenda. Afghanistan's own interest has shifted to security transition, presidential and provincial elections. Subsequently, there have been delays and political survival calculations at the MFA and in relevant ministries.

Supporting state US has generally stood at the sidelines, because they did not want to overstep and also wanted to ensure that the HoAP remains an Asian-led initiative,⁴⁶ corresponding with D.C.'s policy to progressively shift the Afghanistan dilemma to the region to solve. A real driver, i.e. either an individual, a mechanism or a geopolitical power, of the Process is currently absent and this has resulted in a power vacuum.

4) The actual objective of the HoAP is equivocal.⁴⁷ Who and what is it precisely for? The main point of the Process was political dialogue leading to a stability pact, similar to the way in which the Helsinki Process led to the OSCE. Is the Process for Afghanistan, and/or is it for the region? Should it facilitate a new security paradigm or stress economic development? If the objective has been to build trust and catalyze cooperation in the region to the benefit of all, then what are the parameters of trust, i.e. how does one define and measure it? Part of the problem originates in the initial design of the Process. Initially it did not include CBMs. The CBMs were an afterthought added to create some ongoing activities.

5) The HoAP's members have not shown sufficient political will and commitment. There are reservations about the true initiator and intentions of the Process. Diverging geopolitical agendas both within the inner circle, and between the inner and outer circle have a detrimental effect on the Process.

The Process also overlaps with the deliverables of various established multilateral bodies in the region. Initiators and supporters of these mechanisms do not want to see the Process gain clout at their expense. This has created a vicious circle in which the Process is supported, while being simultaneously held back rather than taken forwards as an entrenched mechanism with pull.

Operational Impediments

6) There is a disconnection between CBM objectives and the financial means to attain them. The money, and a great deal of technical expertise, finds itself mainly in

the outer circle of supporting states and organizations. These do not hold decision-making power in the Process. In addition, many of them suffer from Afghanistan fatigue and are recalibrating their international agenda.

7) While there unquestionably is a notion of bureaucracy and passivity in Kabul, the absence of a secretariat and proper funding has serious implications.⁴⁸ Kabul has duly indicated the need for funds at previous conferences.⁴⁹ The RCD remains seriously under resourced.⁵⁰ Agreeing on funding has proven a serious challenge to date. Of the fourteen participating states many are still struggling economies. This does not make creating a trust fund easy, but larger economies could take the lead. Most of the money and expertise is in the outer circle of supporting countries and organizations, rather than the inner circle. The outer circle will not sign checks if it has too limited influence on decisions.⁵¹ And, there are countries that do not want the HoAP to become an established regional organization and compete with existing.⁵² They will need to be convinced of the urge of a small trust fund that covers core operational expenses. CBM financing needs a complex funding modality, this deserves additional research.

8) The impediments of the Process are an extension of the lack of institutional capacity and human resources in Afghanistan. Kabul has limited capacity to digest the complexities of regional diplomacy, and the corresponding forms and documents.⁵³ While much credit has to be given to the RCD for coordinating such an extensive multilateral forum to date, they are limited in size and in resources. None of the RCD staff is solely allocated to the Process. This has detrimental effects: Afghan embassies, for example, are often segregated from HoAP related activities.

9) The deficiency of clear and timely communication at the Process' hub is a major impediment. Many interviewees referred to inadequate communication, without authors specifically asking about it. Examples provided to the authors were invitations and briefings that are received last minute, and answers to queries that take too long – if returned at all.⁵⁴ Also, when information is received it is too formal and full of rhetoric.⁵⁵ Intra-ministerial communication is also impaired: relevant departments that should be kept in the loop on the Process are often uninformed about the latest developments.⁵⁶ A set of MFA officials subject to a training course by a Western think tank in spring 2014 had never heard of the Process.⁵⁷

An Afghan MFA official closely involved in the Process said that the problem is rather the laxity of participating and supporting states, some of them simply do not want to accept the objective of the Process, or to respond to RCD correspondence.⁵⁸

Similar communicational deficiency was also identified at an inter-ministerial level. Ministries involved in CBM implementation are ill informed and have limited communication with the RCD on the Process.⁵⁹ It is safe to conclude that the HoAP lacks an effective and efficient governmental communication infrastructure. The semi-functional nature of institutions in Afghanistan, and in a number of participating states, has a detrimental effect. An Afghan official closely involved in the Process pointed out that the communication problem is two-way, "We cannot only blame the MFA for lax communication, a number of supporting are also responsible for it."⁶⁰ The construction of an information-sharing platform is in the making and might resolve these issues, to some extent.

10) Considering the security dynamics in Kabul, Afghanistan is not the best candidate to serve as the hub. People to people exchange is hampered. For example, it is easier to fly from Kabul to New York City than to the capitals of its Central Asian neighbors, or to get a visa for most of them. Logistical hurdles such as deficiency of visa liberalization hamper exchange and progress at track 2 and track 3 levels.

11) CBM labor division has not been accurately defined:⁶¹ none of the CBM lead states, except for Turkey, thought that their responsibilities and corresponding criteria and timeframes were clear. If lead states are not clear about their objectives, how can CBM participating and supporting states and organizations be clear on them? Lead states need the guidelines, the diplomatic capacity and the economic clout to push for action.

If CBM lead states are not comprehensively backed by Kabul, their initiatives enjoy lesser enthusiasm from participating states, e.g. the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry's (FICCI) numerous initiatives were ill attended by other participating states. The preponderance of CBM progress has been bilateral rather than multilateral, e.g. CBM lead state India's activities to date. It is also worth asking if Kabul can handle coordinating six CBMs and if all six strongly add value to the objective of the Process.

And what role do supporting states exactly have?⁶² Some supporting states await instructions, while others

prefer not to seem too intrusive. While a flexible support framework and a voluntary nature of commitments should be sustained, parameters should be set to some extent.

12) Protocol in the three-tier structure needs tweaking. The large time-gap between the HoAP annual ministerial conference meetings is a major hurdle for a patient, i.e. Afghanistan, which needs quick and continuous treatment and supervision. As major decisions are made at the ministerial level only, the frequency of these meetings should increase, which is unlikely. Therefore decision-making authority should be shared with the SOM level. The Heart of Asia region's problems are too urgent to be dealt with sedately.

13) The pool of HoAP members is too large and this leads to the watering down of the effectiveness of the Process. While reducing the number of members will be awkward, initiatives should precisely for this reason focus on core common interests. The speed and efficiency of reaching consensus and initiating confidence building measures and projects in a multilateral body often depends on the lowest common denominator, i.e. in this case, the actor with the least incentive to consent.

14) The Process currently has no scholarly lifeline to speak of. Second track involvement in the Process is modest,⁶³ it needs agreements between research centers in the interest of scholarly reflections before ministerial conferences and SOMs so that decision makers are better informed. Media coverage in Afghanistan, the broader region and at an international level has been subpar. The Afghan MFA has not launched a PR campaign for the HoAP to create buzz.

In conclusion, the D.R.S. (Direction, Rhythm, Speed) of the Process is flawed: the Direction of the Process is not clearly defined yet, does it want/need to remain a process or does it need to become a sufficiently institutionalized regional mechanism, notwithstanding supporting states' disinterest in the latter? Will CBM technical achievements be sufficient to claim political success?; the Rhythm, i.e. the methodology to achieve its objective does not have a well-defined framework and protocol; and the Speed is too slow to keep up momentum.

STANCES BY COUNTRY

Afghanistan

National Interests

- Maintenance of the stability and territorial unity of the country
- Sustenance of political stability
- Reinvigoration of the historical role of Afghanistan as a land bridge
- Substantial socioeconomic development through regional connectivity
- Establishment of good ties with all regional countries
- Curbing the empowerment and dissemination of radical Islam
- Combating illicit drugs production and trafficking
- Persuasion of Pakistan that terrorism and extremism will destabilize the entire region
- Implementation of large infrastructure projects like CASA-1000 and TAPI
- Resolving regional disputes
- Making the HoAP a role model for cooperation and regional integration

Red Flags

- Escalating insecurity after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014
- The return of the Taliban to power outside the existing government framework
- Interference of regional countries in domestic affairs
- Collapse of democratic institutions

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

Initially, the international community had no clear-cut regional strategy for Afghanistan and it was only after 2007 that the international community started talking about a regional approach for Afghanistan. It was the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference for Afghanistan (RECCA) that brought countries in the region together to work on Afghanistan. Yet, RECCA was too economic-oriented and had no major security, political and social agenda. Hence the need for a comprehensive regional initiative that could bring regional countries together to work on the security and stability of the region.

Afghanistan does indeed require a regional platform to interact with countries in the region. Afghan leadership has come to realize that without the support of regional countries it will be difficult to achieve security in the country. Former Afghan Foreign Minister, Zalmay Rassoul, described the regional initiative as “By far the

most successful attempt of many initiatives that have tried to promote regional cooperation over the past decade.”⁶⁴

Interviewed Afghan officials active in the Process have complained that some of the participating countries are not very enthusiastic about the Process, and have shown little interest in making it a success.⁶⁵ They do not believe in the ability of Kabul to carry forward such an initiative and doubt its institutional capacity.⁶⁶ While the spokes blame the hub of being weak, the hub perceives the spokes to be feeble.

According to the Afghan Ambassador to India, Afghanistan understands the importance of the Process, and will not allow it to fail.⁶⁷ However, the reality is that Afghanistan does face serious challenges in implementing the CBMs.⁶⁸ It is time for Afghanistan to move beyond talks and planning and actually start implementing these CBMs on the ground. To serve this, an environment of positive economic competition should be established among regional countries, so that Afghanistan can play its vital role of a regional land bridge for cooperation and integration between South and Central Asia.

While views on the Process amongst the Afghan government are generally positive, some officials outside the MFA are critical of the Process. One of the main reasons that the Process has not shown any tangible progress is the lack of funds, according to Feroz Masjidi, Director of Strategy, Policy and Planning at the Afghan Ministry of Commerce (MoC).⁶⁹ He further added that infrastructure is the backbone of cross border cooperation and vital to the progress of the HoAP. Members should devote more resources to infrastructure development.⁷⁰

Of course, Afghanistan takes pride in its position as the focal country in the Process. Yet the lack of capacity and commitment at the Afghan Foreign Ministry⁷¹ jeopardizes efforts to make this initiative a meaningful platform for regional dialogue, Afghan ambassador to the UAE Najibullah Mojadidi commented.⁷² His opinion on the Process was shared: the non-existence of a clear vision and implementation plan will undoubtedly undermine the initial enthusiasm with which this initiative was launched.⁷³ Mr. Saikal questioned: “Does the country [Afghanistan] currently have the capacity to lead Afghan-related regional processes? The answer is no.”⁷⁴ However, Afghanistan can and should be the most suitable leader of these initiatives. “What is needed is to increase our capacity so that we better cater for the needs of members, and display effective leadership.”⁷⁵

Kabul cannot afford to risk losing the Process' momentum at this juncture.

Prof. Mirwais Balkhi of the American University of Afghanistan believes Afghanistan must view the Process as part of a bigger picture. Afghanistan should take into account the historical problems that exist among the regional countries and "should not be naïve and hope that this initiative will result in wonders."⁷⁶ That will not happen, he concluded: "We should not talk of substantial progress expressed in years but in decades. We will need to be very patient."⁷⁷ However, Afghanistan and the immediate region cannot afford to wait decades for the HoAP to resolve the menaces that face them.

Azerbaijan

National Interests

- Maintenance of a stable position on global and regional issues
- Developing friendly relations with neighboring states
- Demilitarization of the Caspian basin
- Ensuring the stability of Afghanistan through capacity building assistance
- Investment in Afghanistan's petrochemical industry
- Linking Azerbaijani-relevant transportation routes with Afghanistan
- Examination of the transferability of the Azerbaijani development experience

Red Flags

- Recognition of independence of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region by Armenia
- Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

Diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Afghanistan stretch back to 1994 and have been honed in the last few years as a result of rising Azerbaijani economic performance and ambitions. Azerbaijan, the Caucasus' largest economy and an increasingly more active actor in the region, is a full-fledged member of the HoAP, leading two CBMs. There are no domestic complications in Azerbaijan that hinder HoAP participation, but on a regional level the running conflict with Armenia is a distraction, and Azerbaijani-Russian ties are an element in the equation when considering

decisions in the HoAP.⁷⁸ Russia does not want the HoAP to grow too influential, and this leaves its mark on the Azerbaijani stance.

Azerbaijan has expressed further commitment to Afghanistan, as it is a fellow Muslim state, and because Azerbaijan intends to become more involved in humanitarian issues, according to Dr. Vugar Bayramov, Chairman of the Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD) in Baku.⁷⁹ Dr. Bayramov said that Azerbaijan wants to become more influential in the broader region.⁸⁰ To do so physical connectivity is key. Out of the three land based routes that connect Central and South Asia with Europe, two cross Azerbaijan. The country, thus, invests heavily in logistics and trade. "In the broader framework, stability in Afghanistan is thus of great relevance to us."⁸¹

Azerbaijan believes that leadership plays a fundamental role in development and is thus keen to promote stability in Afghanistan by providing capacity building assistance and training programs. Azerbaijan will continue to be a part of the international efforts in Afghanistan even after the 2014 transition. It is committed to remain actively engaged in the HoAP and will aid Afghanistan in the framework of other regional initiatives.⁸²

With respect to illicit drug trafficking, Azerbaijan is increasingly becoming a favored transit country for the smuggling of drugs from Afghanistan to Europe, and is thus of serious concern to Baku.⁸³ Moreover, Azerbaijan has vocalized its inability to secure international borders in the occupied territories that surround Nagorno-Karabakh.⁸⁴ Therefore, the development of a strong network of border control cooperation units to fight drug trafficking is one of Baku's chief priorities.

While views on the Process are generally positive in Baku and support for it is irrevocable, analysts interviewed in Baku believe that interest in the Process has somewhat waned and that it now finds itself at a critical juncture.⁸⁵ These analysts agreed that the main problem is that the Process has no clear vision or roadmap. It is too abstract.⁸⁶ They expressed that another notable limitation is the broad number of participating and supporting states and organizations. The Process does indeed comprise forty-two members and they are at noticeably different positions on the development trajectory. Every single country needs a clearly defined commitment and objective. Simply participating is not sufficient.⁸⁷ Indeed, if members are not assigned any task(s) attendance becomes rather symbolic. Interviewed analysts also concluded that there is a deficiency of communication on the exact role and

duties of the CMB lead states, Kabul has failed to deliver this.⁸⁸ Other representatives from other states leading CMBs have also supported this view.

Azerbaijani interlocutors' observations shared a strong emphasis on pragmatism, and stated that the main limitation of the Process is that it has no secretariat, no budget to speak of, and as a result of these two factors, has too few meetings.⁸⁹ The Process needs more meetings in order to discuss action plans and progress. Indeed, Afghanistan's dire challenges require more frequent gatherings. Baku also felt that Kabul has failed to clearly communicate what they want from the Process, and what they specifically need per CBM.⁹⁰ A part of the problem is the communication channel. For instance, the role of the Afghan embassy in Azerbaijan is negligible.⁹¹ As a result of such a deficiency of diplomatic exchange, the Azerbaijani government is relatively unacquainted with the intricacies of the Process.⁹² Bearing in mind the security situation in Kabul, the role of embassies can undeniably not be understated.

Interestingly, according to two interlocutors interviewed in Baku, Azerbaijan also looks into the transferability of components of its development experience:⁹³ i.e. political-economic best practices of its own development trajectory that could possibly be emulated in other developing states' development trajectories. Although the canvas differs, Afghanistan is seen as a potential candidate for such transferability and there is scholarly interest in Azerbaijan to delve into the intricacies. If feasible and partially emulated this would be a remarkable display of Azerbaijani soft power, whether displayed through the HoAP or outside of it.

China

National Interests

- Domestic political stability
- National security and territorial integrity
- Sustainable socioeconomic development
- Stable regional environment conducive to economic growth
- Stability in its restive Xinjiang SAR and Tibet SAR
- Avoiding military confrontation
- Energy import security
- Strategic expansion of economic and energy interests in Central Asia

- Expansion of SCO capacity and reach
- A stable and prosperous Central Asia
- Regional infrastructure development and increased economic interaction
- Closer ties with Afghanistan, but not at the expense of relations with Pakistan
- Prevent alarming Moscow over endeavors in Central Asia
- Avoid deterioration of ties with the Islamic World

Red Flags

- Unstable Pakistan as a result of radical Islamists surge
- Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014/2016, which could have a regional spillover effect
- Extremist spillover from Afghanistan

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

What potential role is there for China in the HoAP? It can possibly soothe relations between Russia and Iran, devise a role for the SCO and CICA compatible with the HoAP, and become involved in Afghanistan in a fashion that reassures Pakistan about India's role in Afghanistan. It would also need to work out a framework for regional cooperation with remaining US-NATO presence until 2016. It is a tall order.

As co-steward in 2013-14 China has punched somewhat below its weight in the HoAP so far. It supports three CBMs, but leads none. Considering Beijing's belief in infrastructure construction and economic cooperation as a building block of (regional) development, it is somewhat surprising that it does not participate in the Regional Infrastructure and Trade, Commercial and Investment Opportunities CBMs. Yet, its decision to host the next ministerial conference on August 29, 2014 is politically symbolic and is a sign of anticipated mounting support to post-2014 Afghanistan.

Ties between Beijing and Kabul have grown firmer in Karzai's second term as President and there is progressive interaction at both track 1 and track 2 levels. President Karzai has already visited China on four occasions since 2010, and the number of scholarly meetings has also quickly picked up pace. Afghanistan received observer status at the SCO in 2012, and signed a strategic partnership in that same year. China now has strategic partnerships with all of the five Central Asian states, as well as with Afghanistan.

To assess China's current role in the HoAP as co-steward and its potential future role, it is essential to

briefly examine bilateral ties, and China's prevalent foreign policy, which is generally determined by its broader development objectives and domestic challenges.

Afghanistan and China have enjoyed respectful ties since antiquity, and will commemorate sixty years of warm diplomatic relations during the modern era in 2015. Beijing has always treated Afghanistan in a consistent, cordial and respectful fashion, leading President Karzai to call China a "stable neighbor."⁹⁴ Yet, the exceptional Beijing-Islamabad bond is seen as a serious hurdle to the next level of trust. Beijing takes Islamabad's concerns and wishes in strong consideration as it interacts with Afghanistan. This can be considered a serious impediment to its ties with Kabul.

Remarkably, China is a party with strong contacts to both the current Afghan government and the Taliban. As a sign of goodwill it has initiated a series of trilateral meetings with Afghanistan and Pakistan. China is an actor that could cement better ties between Kabul and Islamabad, either diplomatically or by pushing for common economic development.

Beijing has to date categorized Afghanistan in the same league as its foreign policy on Central Asia: one of mutual respect and economic pragmatism, and characterized foremost by natural resources extraction and export of Chinese goods. China is very interested in Afghanistan's incredible untapped natural resources. However, the biggest concerns are security and logistics. Extracting is one thing, getting resources out of the country another. Beijing has come to realize that the security dynamics of Afghanistan require a different approach. China is particularly concerned about possible radical Islam spilling over into fragile Tajikistan, spillover into and backfiring in Pakistan, and possible training of and influence on separatist Uighurs in its volatile Xinjiang SAR. The frequency and pattern of recent terrorist attacks in China's train stations and public spaces has underlined the urge to combat the roots of terrorism with stronger commitment. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly stated that there is zero tolerance towards terrorism. This will have knock-on effects on its policy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. For the first time one can see Chinese diplomats focusing specifically on Afghan security and stability.

China respects bilateral and multilateral mechanisms and participates through observation first, before it renders stronger involvement appropriate. In the HoAP, China is still in an observation phase. Dr. Ye Hailin, Head of the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at China's

largest think tank, the Chinese Academy for Social Sciences (CASS), stated that China wants to participate actively in the Process, but it has to fall under China's regional collaboration strategy. Lately Beijing has been pursuing a sub-region cooperation approach.⁹⁵ Ultimately, Beijing looks at the HoAP through the lens of national interest and prevalent foreign policy strategies.

Views in China on the Process, based on interviews by this paper's authors, ranged from generally positive to somewhat negative.. Chinese reflections were of an intensely realistic and pragmatic nature. Interviewees agreed that the Process has not failed, but has simply not attracted enough attention yet. Neighbors have concerns post-2014 and view the Process in light of the security situation. "Although there is no clear blueprint, there is potential for the Process."⁹⁶

Two Chinese scholars from the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) emphasized that the HoAP has managed to reunite regional powers, and called it an admirable achievement.⁹⁷ The HoAP does not need to emphasize too many principles, it should be about concrete plans. This is a deficiency that many interviewees in China have underlined. Afghanistan likes to label itself as a land bridge, it should create concrete plans to materialize it. "And remember, location means nothing without a house."⁹⁸ Afghanistan is branding itself as an asset to the region, but the Afghan government has failed to show that by means of economic indicators, physical and social infrastructure, or security.

Most Chinese scholars agreed that we should not expect too much from the Process if domestic challenges are not solved: they are the main problem.⁹⁹ Frankly, the HoAP requires preconditions before it can be effective, such as national reconciliation and political unity. "The state is currently in cardiac arrest."¹⁰⁰ Kabul should attempt to allay the security concerns of investors, "the Taliban you can beat but not eliminate."¹⁰¹ Consequently, Afghanistan needs to start paying more attention to socioeconomic development, rather than security.

One critical scholar from Peking University, who preferred anonymity, looked at the operational design of the Process: "Little has been done at past ministerial conferences. Too much time was spent on rhetoric and peripheral issues."¹⁰² This scholar continued: "Some of the current CBM lead states were not the most suitable to commence leading these, and no gauges and parameters were set."¹⁰³ The interviewee from CASS accentuated an important point, echoed by other key interlocutors: government capacity in Afghanistan is an

impediment to progress of the Process.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, an interesting observation of one Chinese scholar was that Turkey was too small to co-initiate the Process.¹⁰⁵ A close observer of the Process from a supporting organization seconded this.¹⁰⁶

The Process has fundamental flaws. The objective is not fully transparent, it has too many members, the CBMs were not part of the original blueprint, and there are no clear roadmaps for cooperation and progress.¹⁰⁷ Other interviewees agreed: there are too many countries and too many organizations in the Process, and foreign ministers only see each other once a year.¹⁰⁸ The Process does not focus too much on current problems, but rather the future.¹⁰⁹ Referring to the absence of substantial CBM progress, Prof. Qian Xuemei of Peking University said that the new Afghan government should promote one or two concrete and detailed programs with practical implementation plans for each CBM so that relevant countries can understand the exact needs of the Afghan government.¹¹⁰

However, financial support for implementation of CBMs is lacking. This is the main reason for less than impressive progress on that front. Therefore, a trust fund must be setup, co-sponsored by all member countries: the ADB, the UN and/or the World Bank could play a role.¹¹¹ Chinese scholars agreed that to convince members to donate to a trust fund, Kabul needs to find a common agenda for the region, it has to identify common interests – this should be the goal.¹¹² “If it fails to do that, members should not expect too much from the Process in the future, in which case it might serve well as a coordination mechanism at best, Chinese scholars pointed out.”¹¹³ Also, rather than focusing on large and hard goals, “The HoAP should focus on proximate objectives first.”¹¹⁴

For these (small) steps there have to be more pre-dialogues before ministerial conferences, and more proposals from Kabul.¹¹⁵ “Kabul should engage more, it should become more proactive. It should clearly tell members what they want and expect.”¹¹⁶ Kabul has to express its voice, particularly at the next conference: “Speak loudly”¹¹⁷ was advised by Prof. Du Youkang, Director of the Center for South Asian Studies & Pakistan Study Centre, of the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai.

The aforementioned Peking University scholar who preferred to stay anonymous also sees Afghanistan’s economic weakness and its aligned foreign policy as an impediment. Kabul has to hone its pragmatic skills and focus on strengthening itself: “The finger pointing and

the blame game between Afghanistan and Pakistan is futile, it should stop. It is simply lose-lose.”¹¹⁸ Initiatives to make Pakistan gain more trust should be pursued.

The role of the US was articulated too: the US should become more involved, after all they initiated the HoAP.¹¹⁹ They also have a strong hand in the country’s stability. The future of Afghanistan still largely depends on US attention.¹²⁰ Interviewees were vocal about China’s own role too: of course China could also do more. The Silk Road Economic Belt proposed by President Xi could possibly find overlap with the HoAP and initiate more support from Beijing.

There was strong consent among Chinese interviewees that Afghanistan needs external support or it will collapse. Countries with competing interests should find a consensus, the HoAP is a useful mechanism for that.¹²¹ However, the survival of the HoAP will be determined in the near future, 2014-16 are of vital importance. If there is no progress in these coming three years, members countries might lose their interest in the Process all together.¹²²

The revered Prof. Wang Jisi of Peking University accentuated that even if China’s foreign policy is cautious, the political will to support Afghanistan obtain security and prosperity is absolutely there in Beijing.¹²³ It is now up to the new Afghan administration to decide what it precisely needs and wants.

China is expected to play a more active role in Afghanistan henceforth. The main focus of Chinese foreign policy in the foreseeable future is regional stability.¹²⁴ “After all, NATO comes and goes, we are here forever.”¹²⁵

India

National Interests

- Sustaining and promoting pluralistic democracy
- Improvement of relations with Pakistan, China and Japan
- Strengthening the relationship with Iran and Russia to weaken the Pakistan-China nexus
- Revival of historical and cultural ties with Afghanistan
- A regional cooperative approach for stabilization of Afghanistan
- Expansion of Chabahar port in Iran to gain access to Afghanistan and Central Asian markets, bypassing Pakistan
- Successful completion of TAPI gas pipeline to import natural gas from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan and Pakistan
- Support of a democratically elected government in Afghanistan

Red Flags

- Control of areas of Pakistan adjoining India and Afghanistan by radical Islamists
- Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect
- Return of resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan with the clandestine support of Pakistan
- Deterioration of bilateral ties with China, Russia, and the US

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

Historically, Afghanistan and India have enjoyed a very close and cordial relationship that is embedded in their history, cultural overlap and political interaction. India was one of the few countries that actively supported the United Front forces that were the last remaining pockets of resistance against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Ever since the establishment of the Afghan interim government in late 2001, India has been one of the staunchest supporters of the new Afghan government, and remains one of its major financial contributors.

Afghanistan and India share common security challenges and recognition of this led Afghanistan to sign a SPA with India, the first of its kind during President Karzai's October 2011 visit to New Delhi. The HoAP provides India with the opportunity to have access to Central Asian oil and gas reservoirs through Afghanistan and Iran. The hurdle to India in this context is Pakistan.

India is worried about a Pakistani-controlled Kabul, or rather a Pakistani-influenced Kabul. Delhi believes that Pakistan's hard power approach has backfired and earned less support than it was banking on.¹²⁶ On the contrary, India's soft power approach has earned it a lot of recognition, respect and trust in the Afghan government and among common Afghans.¹²⁷

Publicly, India extended its support to the peace and reconciliation process of the Afghan government, but it is very much concerned about the possible assimilation of hardcore Taliban members with close ties to the Pakistani establishment. The new Afghan administration would face the challenge of balancing its relationship between New Delhi and Islamabad. Afghanistan holds a strategic position in the national security arena of both countries, and needs support from both for its own security and development. One significant common interest is to remove transit dependence on Pakistan. The Zaranj-Dehlaram road built by India intends to do just that and connects Afghanistan to the Chabahar port of Iran. This port also permits transportation of iron ore from the Hajigak mine, the mining rights of which have been granted to the Steel Authority of India (SAIL)-led consortium. This would surely boost the economic connectivity among these three countries.

According to Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva of Jawaharlal University, New Delhi, the intra-regional trans-boundary trade within South Asia is only 5%, while extra-regional trade accounts for 95%.¹²⁸ The smaller countries in South and Central Asia look for regional integration but the bigger economies like India look for larger and more stable markets beyond the region.¹²⁹

Regional countries have been involved in Afghan issues for a long time, yet unfortunately not many have changed their policies and approaches towards conflict stricken Afghanistan. This makes it difficult for these countries to come together and work under the umbrella of the HoAP. Unless South and Central Asian countries resolve their disputes, it would be naive to expect much out of this Process. The ingredients of regional cooperation are simply missing in the Process. As of now there are no clearly defined agendas and goals. Therefore, major projects like Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline (TAPI) or CASA-1000 need to take off and ignite regional belief in a common destiny of prosperity and connectivity. If any of these two projects actually takes off it will be a game changer for the region.

There is much potential for investment opportunities in Afghanistan. The HoAP could act as a platform for

dialogue to intensify investment in Afghanistan. It needs to consistently highlight this potential so as to attract regional countries and other stakeholders that are interested in the Process. Afghanistan needs a platform like the HoAP where people can freely express positive developments that have been taking place.¹³⁰

If the Process wants to regain momentum then the current political system of Afghanistan has to be supported, consolidated and protected. The constitutional framework that gives legitimacy to the political system in Afghanistan also needs to be strengthened. The other important thing would be to increase institutional capacity in Afghanistan.¹³¹

Lt. Gen. R.K. Sawhney, Distinguished Fellow at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) highlighted that one of the reasons why this Process is not moving forward as swiftly as expected is due to the lack of institutional capacity in Afghanistan. The government lacks the resources to engage other states to follow up on previous commitments.¹³² Dr. Suba Chandran, Director of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), New Delhi had similar views and emphasized that the capacity of the Afghan Foreign Ministry needs to be enhanced, for it acts as the “de facto secretariat of the Process.”¹³³ Mr. Vikram Sood, former Director at the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) underlined the deficiency in the implementation of the Process and said that the lack of effective implementation of the action plans is the biggest challenge.¹³⁴ Why would the HoAP be effective?¹³⁵ The Process seems too complex to survive on its own and will remain limited. To be successful, it has to have clearly defined goals with time and target orientation and active support of all stakeholders.¹³⁶ Otherwise, it will be very hard for the HoAP to survive.

Iran

National Interests

- Gaining recognition and respect from regional states and the International Community (IC)
- A regionalist approach to maintain peace and stability in neighboring countries
- Withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan and reduction of US presence in Central Asia
- Greater and more active role in Afghan peace talks
- Effectively counter illegal import of drugs from Afghanistan

- Curbing any excessive Saudi influence on the neighborhood
- Stable Afghan government
- Construction of transport links between Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia
- Protecting the rights of Hazara (Shia group) in Central Afghanistan, and other Dari/Farsi speaking minority groups
- Strengthening ties with selected ethnic groups in Afghanistan
- Repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran

Red Flags

- Return of a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan
- Unstable Pakistan as a result of radical Islamists' surge
- Israel's further belligerence towards occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon
- Use of Afghan or Pakistani territory by Israel or any other Western country, directly or indirectly (through Baloch separatists/jihadist groups), to destabilize Iran

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

After the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Iran has played a crucial role in the state-formation and reconstruction process in Afghanistan. Iran was instrumental in the establishment of the Afghan Interim Authority in December 2001, during its participation in the Bonn Conference held under the auspices of the UN. Iran opposes the presence of international forces in Afghanistan and calls for their immediate withdrawal. It is the only country in the region to publicly oppose the BSA. Iran initially had some serious reservations about the concept and goals of the HoAP because it believes the Process to be US initiated.

One of Tehran's gravest concerns concerning Afghanistan is that almost 50% of Afghan opium production travels through the country. It is estimated that Iran hosts between 1 - 4 million drug addicts.¹³⁷ Therefore, the National Drug Control Headquarters of Iran (DCHQ) has declared drug addiction to be the single largest social harm, and the main hurdle for the country's development.¹³⁸ Iran and Afghanistan share 582 miles of border and it is a significant challenge for the security forces of both countries to counter the illicit drug trade. In recent years, Iran has invested a lot in surveillance equipment and in the training of custom officials, as well as border police. Moreover, Iran actively engages with Pakistan and Afghanistan in joint operations and border liaison offices.¹³⁹ Iran has coordinated a 'Triangular Initiative' with the help of UN sponsorship and has conducted six joint operations

between Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Overall, in order to succeed completely in uprooting the drug menace, Iran will have to work closely with its neighbors and needs more support from the international community.¹⁴⁰ Iran has succeeded to some extent in its counter narcotic strategy but there is still much to do to combat this problem. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) gave credit to Iran for holding back a flood of heroin in 2009. It is estimated that Iran seizes nearly 60% of global opiates,¹⁴¹ such best practices should be shared and applied in the HoAP.

According to Dr. Mohammad Ali Khusrawi of Tehran University, Afghanistan needs international assistance. However, the Iranian government does not agree with the international approach, nor in the way in which “this so called war on terror”¹⁴² has been managed. The US policies go against the interests of Iran and against the principles of regional cooperation. Iran has joined the HoAP with an open mind to aid Afghanistan, however “the efforts of Iran are being ignored,” Dr. Khusrawi added.¹⁴³

Kazakhstan

National Interests

- National security, strengthen regional peace
- Stable ties with China, the EU, Russia and the US
- Ensuring Kazakhstan’s entry to the top 30 most developed countries
- Preventing spread of radical ideologies within its territory
- A politically stable and economically sustainable Central Asia
- Diversification of its economic development
- Regional infrastructure development
- Curbing illicit arms and drug trafficking by supporting international efforts
- Creating stability in Afghanistan through infrastructure development in the country
- Resolution of conflicts in accordance with the UN Security Council

Red Flags

- Deteriorating ties with China, the EU, Russia and the US
- Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

Astana has realized that great powers come and go, but neighbors stay.¹⁴⁴ Kazakhstan leads the Disaster Management CBM along with Pakistan and has also expressed its willingness to participate in the implementation of all other CBMs except the Counter Terrorism CBM. Kazakhstan has particularly stressed infrastructure development in Afghanistan and the broader region as key to common economic growth.¹⁴⁵

Afghanistan and Kazakhstan share cordial relations. The two countries do not share border, and the chance of instability spillover from Afghanistan to Kazakhstan is negligible. Despite this, Kazakhstan is the most devoted Central Asian state to Afghanistan’s reconstruction process. Much of this is an extension of the growing Kazakh economy and Astana’s desire to become Central Asia’s leading power. In order to tackle regional and international threats to global peace and stability, Kazakhstan believes that these two areas have to be dealt with separately. Therefore, Kazakhstan fully supports any multilateral efforts that aim at eradicating these threats.¹⁴⁶ Kazakhstan has actively participated in all initiatives on Afghanistan, including the Bonn International Conference, Istanbul Process, RECCA, the NATO Summit in Chicago, and the Tokyo Donor Conference.

Astana believes that many of Central Asia’s problems are a product of economic underdevelopment and political mismanagement, and that the region hence needs strong commitment from regional platforms and the international community, especially the UN, to address them. It is in favor of a wide-ranging and continued international effort led by the UN to bring lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, which in turn would have a positive effect on the region.¹⁴⁷

Astana views stability in Afghanistan as necessary to contain the spread of terrorism, religious fundamentalism and illicit drug trafficking beyond Afghan boundaries. It advocates that multilateral institutions should prioritize the creation of a counter narcotics safety belt around Afghanistan to prevent illegal drugs trafficking.

Kazakhstan strongly believes that industrialization is one possible solution to lessen Afghanistan’s dependence on narcotics and foreign aid.¹⁴⁸ Afghanistan can use the HoAP to help it move from an aid economy to a sustainable economy. Kazakhstan has the potential to become an investor of major infrastructure projects in the region. Kazakhstan strongly supported the New Silk Road Initiative at the HoAP ministerial conferences, and

has invested around three billion US dollars so far in its implementation.¹⁴⁹ The successful completion of this initiative would allow Afghanistan to export its goods through the Western Europe–China transport corridor and also ease its dependence on transit via Pakistan.

For Kazakhstan, the biggest achievement of the HoAP has been the cognitive shift in Kabul to decide to initiate a multilateral process.¹⁵⁰ According to a Kazakh diplomat interviewed in Kabul, there is concern about the institutional capacity of the Afghan MFA and relevant ministries to interact with HoAP members.¹⁵¹

As the ministerial conferences have not achieved much so far, there is an immediate need to build Task Forces for each CBM.¹⁵² Mr. Nurkenov, a Kazakh diplomat in Kabul, pointed out that the Process has to evolve into something that offers more specific and concrete projects to work on.¹⁵³ The annual gap between the ministerial conferences is too large to bridge. One hurdle is the Afghan MFA's formal approach to diplomacy and overuse of rhetoric, this does not aid the progress of the Process.¹⁵⁴ The other problem is that various participating countries are not serious about their role and this is having a detrimental effect on advancement of the Process.¹⁵⁵

Kyrgyzstan

National Interests

- Strengthening and consolidating ties with CIS countries, China and the West
- Strengthening ties with regional powers
- Economic cooperation with the broader region
- Dealing effectively with internal threats resulting from domestic ethnic tensions
- Reducing drug trafficking and export of religious extremism from Afghanistan
- Increasing cooperation with Islamic countries
- More active participation in regional organizations like the SCO and CSTO
- Development of Afghanistan's transit potential and export of electrical energy through successful implementation of CASA-1000

Red Flags

- Surge of ethnic tensions within its territory
- Deterioration of ties with Russia and China
- Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect.

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

In the Process, Kyrgyzstan has expressed its willingness to participate in the implementation of all six CBMs. However, it does not lead any particular CBM. It would have been an important diplomatic gesture by Kyrgyzstan to get involved more actively with a leading role. According to Prof. Dzhuraev of the American University in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan has been insufficiently active in implementing any of its CBM commitments.¹⁵⁶ Hurdles are partially economic: Kyrgyzstan's economy is negligible, and it has very few economic resources to maintain an active international profile. Its political system remains fragile, with the regime's own survival the key political issue.¹⁵⁷ Its public service, including diplomatic corps, remains cut off from significant investment and continues to be of poor quality. In a written interview, Dr. Juraev of the OSCE Academy said that he cannot recall a single top state official who would be able to clearly explain to its own citizens what the HoAP is and why Kyrgyzstan is subscribing to it.¹⁵⁸

Kyrgyzstan's foremost concerns are drug trafficking and the export of religious extremism from Afghanistan.¹⁵⁹ Its interests in Afghanistan are in its transit potential and the export of electricity to and through Afghanistan.¹⁶⁰ The latter is embodied by the CASA-1000 project that would transfer clean hydropower from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan. It will provide both Afghanistan, as well as Pakistan, energy security and be conducive to warming ties between Kabul and Islamabad.

One of the Process' most remarkable achievements is that it has become a continuous and broadly multilateral effort, instead of a one-off and/or a few countries' efforts, as was the case with certain previous initiatives.¹⁶¹ According to Prof. Dzhuraev, the HoAP has become the focus of all international discussions, efforts and awareness when it comes to Afghanistan's reconstruction and regional development. Without such a focal effort, too many initiatives were getting lost in the multiplicity of often unnoticed events.¹⁶²

The Kyrgyz Ambassador to Afghanistan, Mr. Abdurazakov, underlined that the HoAP is the only Process led by Afghans and permits them to decide which domains of development of regional cooperation have priority.¹⁶³ The adoption of confidence building work in the HoAP is the key method of proceeding. In contrast to being tied to concrete projects, amounts etc., the focus on CBMs stands to provide a more long-term and in-depth foundation for further cooperation.¹⁶⁴

The biggest achievement of the Process so far remains the fact that these CBMs were agreed upon.¹⁶⁵ However, the implementation of the CBMs is still in the making, having not registered any notable accomplishment to date.¹⁶⁶ This is partially the product of a deficiency in political stability and domestic security in Afghanistan.¹⁶⁷ The region is another detrimental factor and Afghanistan would be better off applying a multi-vector foreign policy to curb detrimental foreign influence on the Process.¹⁶⁸

Prof. Dzharev argues that there is a need to establish some form of institutional mechanism for regular, day-to-day monitoring, communication, transparency, and awareness raising surrounding the Process. Such an institutional mechanism could be in the form of a special HoAP secretariat under the auspices of the UN (preferably, directly under the Secretary-General) – the most broadly legitimate entity.¹⁶⁹ This way the Process would be able to gain more vibrancy on a continuous basis, and “not go up and down from conference to conference.”¹⁷⁰ Ambassador Abdurazakov stressed the importance of more active behavior of members.¹⁷¹

Multilateral initiatives need an incentives system for member to commit. As of now the Process is largely a political discussion forum, where states are participating simply because there are no alternatives, who would want to publicly claim they do not want to help Afghanistan?¹⁷² The Process should stop being about Afghanistan only, and it must become about other states' own interests too. Only if all countries gain something can the Process become successful. Maintaining wide international consensus is important, but even more so in order to get things done on the ground. The Afghan government should pointedly work in a bilateral format with major actors who are able and willing to play some role – be it Ankara, Astana, Baku, Beijing, or Delhi.¹⁷³ The progress achieved on a bilateral basis may later expand into trilateral and multilateral initiatives. This is easier to kick-off, rather than attempting to get a dozen countries to agree on a point.¹⁷⁴

The HoAP is a highly complex and ambitious initiative counting on continuous work of all participants for years to come. It is essential that the momentum of the Process does not diminish.¹⁷⁵

Pakistan

National Interests

- Promotion of Pakistan as a dynamic, progressive, moderate, and democratic Islamic country
- A relatively stable and inclusive Afghan government with ample Pashtun representation
- Limiting the role of India to include only development activities in Afghanistan
- Remaining the largest exporter to Afghanistan
- Security of its western border
- Combatting terrorism within its own territory and stop the flow of drugs from Afghanistan
- Balancing interests between Iran and Saudi Arabia
- Developing friendly relations, especially with immediate neighboring states and major powers around the world
- Access to untapped natural resources in Central Asia, with the construction of projects like Casa-1000 and the TAPI gas pipeline
- Cultivating goodwill among the non-Pashtun minorities in Afghanistan

Red Flags

- Lose its influence over Afghanistan
- An Afghan administration unsympathetic to Islamabad
- Increase of Baloch nationalism and separatism
- Rebirth of the 'Pashtunistan' idea
- Use of Pakistan as a scapegoat after 2014 to keep Afghanistan united against a common enemy

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

Pakistan is considered important in the HoAP, simply because of its sway on Afghanistan's development. It is important to note that Pakistan has agreed to participate in a regional process centered on Afghanistan that includes India. This is a big change. Along with Kazakhstan, Pakistan leads the Disaster Management CBM and participates in the implementation of all other CBMs in the Process.¹⁷⁶ Pakistan has acted dutifully and seems to want to be as helpful as possible.¹⁷⁷

What makes Pakistani leaders distrustful of the HoAP is, undoubtedly, the strong links between Afghanistan and India. It evokes memories of an old enmity between Pakistan and India, dating back to 1947. For some in Pakistan, Afghan diplomacy never lost a possibility to express their desire to be closer to India rather than to commit to regional friendship with its immediate neighbors. One can remember, for example, a statement from president Karzai while visiting India in November 2012: “We want to welcome you with a red

carpet while others will get a grey carpet.”¹⁷⁸ This causes frowns in Islamabad, where closer strategic ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan are preferred.¹⁷⁹

In Pakistan, one does not hear much about HoAP’s achievements, “empty words” is the sentiment most frequently expressed when one talks about the Process.¹⁸⁰ Expressed more diplomatically, other interlocutors said that the image inspired by Muhammad Iqbal, of Afghanistan as the heart of Asia, is indeed beautiful, but far from the truth. Afghanistan can be important for its immediate neighbors’ security, but analysts do not necessarily see it as all decisive in this regard.¹⁸¹ Afghanistan is a source of problems for regional stability indeed, but among many others for immediate neighbors Pakistan and Iran.¹⁸² In a written interview, Pakistani analysts and officials said that Tehran is much more worried by its difficult relationship with the US and Israel. For Pakistan, the cold war with India is what delineates Islamabad’s geopolitical fears, the Pakistani regional vision stays Indo-centric.¹⁸³ For China and the Central Asian states, security issues are only partly linked to Afghanistan, and can be dealt with by firm internal security policies. For other states in the HoAP, like Turkey, India, Russia, and the UAE, the link between security issues coming from Afghanistan and their territories is murky at best.¹⁸⁴

Islamabad also doubts the capacity of the institutions and officials that manage the HoAP.¹⁸⁵ Of course, Pakistan prefers the Process to work, as it would create a better environment for the entire region, Pakistan included.¹⁸⁶ The problem is that there are too many diverging interests between regional countries, and between states outside the immediate region and those within. Therefore, the international community, rather than creating an entirely new mechanism, should have strengthened existing regional mechanisms.¹⁸⁷ There is also a practical angle to this. There is fear that the HoAP might be used as a Trojan Horse, i.e. in the interest of non-regional actors’ military interests. Ironically, this has encouraged countries in the region, which were initially doubtful of the Process, to be actively part of it after all.¹⁸⁸

Yet, not all views on the Process in Islamabad are grim. The Process has made Afghanistan’s direct neighbors feel that they should respect Afghan sovereignty more than they used to do.¹⁸⁹ The HoAP has garnered support for Afghanistan, not just from its immediate neighbors but also from those who are more distant.

However, for those neighbors to become more actively involved, there is also a need to make the whole Afghan

regional environment feel truly part of the HoAP. The Process still appears to be very much influenced by external forces.¹⁹⁰ Here one has in mind, first and foremost, Iran, which has felt sidelined even in the Iran-led Education CBM. If the HoAP is just seen as a tool for Western influence, or more precisely American power projection after 2014, Afghanistan’s neighbors will not take it seriously, and it will become another failed attempt for regional dialogue.¹⁹¹

The new government of Afghanistan should interact with participating countries more closely and secure bilateral as well as multilateral agreements on border management, eradication of drug trafficking and human smuggling. It should also try to secure long-term soft-loans to stabilize its economy.¹⁹² In the meanwhile, Pakistan could also contribute more, by becoming more supportive to intra-Afghan reconciliation and reintegration processes.¹⁹³ Jointly with Afghanistan, it should take steps to secure borders and regulate economic movement between Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁹⁴

Maybe the best way to strengthen the HoAP in the Afghan regional environment is to strongly associate it with the ECO.¹⁹⁵ This includes Afghanistan’s entire neighborhood and two Turkic states, i.e. Turkey and Azerbaijan. At an administrative level, the ECO is still of interest to the Pakistani foreign ministry, which is not the case for the HoAP. Even if the ECO is not a success story, it is at least a mechanism that seems free of the diplomatic and geopolitical games associated with the HoAP.¹⁹⁶

Russia

National Interests

- Securing favorable conditions for overall Russian development
- More focus on bilateral ties to defend national interests
- Reducing the political and economic influence of the US in Russia’s sphere of influence
- Keeping military control over Central Asia and secure borders of Central Asian states bordering Afghanistan
- Curtailing drug addiction within its own territory by reducing the flow of Afghan opiates
- Political stability in Afghanistan
- Containing movement and activities of Islamic insurgents in its sphere of influence

- Keeping up with China's economic influence in Central and South Asia
- Use of Afghan territory to diversify its energy exports to South Asia
- Supporting the democratically elected government in Afghanistan

Red Flags

- Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect, particularly in Central Asia
- Loss of influence over Central Asia

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

Russia is concerned by the hasty withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, leaving the country with an uncertain future that could negatively impact its regional interests.

While Russia fully supported the ousting of the Taliban from Afghanistan, it remained suspicious of US-led efforts in Afghanistan and the West's long-term strategic goals. Some Russian hardliners wished to see the US-led forces get bogged down in Afghanistan and suffer the same fate as the Russians did. More pragmatic Russians are worried of such a scenario, as it will encourage Islamic radicals to strike Central Asia and export their radical Islam in the region.

Russia, along with Iran and Pakistan, was initially reluctant to join the HoAP. The argument was that there are already too many regional initiatives and new mechanisms would make regional cooperation more confusing and scattered.¹⁹⁷ Russia prefers to see the SCO as the focal point for regional efforts.¹⁹⁸ It does not want the HoAP to become a regional organization competing with the existing ones,¹⁹⁹ and has therefore not been very active in the Process. Since prospects of the HoAP evolving into a more permanent and influential platform have diminished for the time being, Russia has not changed its stance at all.²⁰⁰ The images of the disastrous USSR invasion of the country are still fresh in Russian minds, so it is happy to take a back seat and watch the HoAP events unfold.

Russia is well aware of the challenges as well the opportunities of post-2014 in Afghanistan. The role of regional countries will increase with the withdrawal of NATO-ISAF forces, and Russia has therefore frequently discussed the subject with allies in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and in the SCO. Both organizations have special programs in place to counter drug trafficking too. Russia's main concern in Afghanistan is probably its illicit drugs production and to

counter narcotics is Moscow's top priority in the HoAP.²⁰¹ Terrorism cannot be eradicated, while drug production and trafficking are equally serious threats and the Process should focus on practical measures to deal with narcotics.²⁰² Russia is doubtful of the Afghan government's ability to prevent drug cultivation in Afghanistan and its flow into Central Asia, which in turn reaches Russian cities.²⁰³ Russia has frequently accused the US of failing to tackle the narcotics problem in Afghanistan.²⁰⁴

Russia is seriously concerned about the future of Afghanistan after 2014. It believes that Afghan security forces might not be ready to counter the challenges that await them. The greatest hindrance to any good prospects in Afghanistan is the rigid stance of the Taliban.²⁰⁵ The Taliban are not concerned about the unity of the state and want to come back into power at any cost, which could make Afghanistan once again a battleground and turn back the progress it has made in the last decade.²⁰⁶ It is precisely for this reason that it is important that supporting states understand the urgency of the matter and double their efforts in the Process.²⁰⁷ How the HoAP will develop will largely depend on the Afghan input. Despite all good intentions, other countries remain in doubt about Afghanistan's capacity to run the Process. Kabul should not overplay its hand in dealing with principal players.²⁰⁸

A Russian diplomat in Kabul pointed out that the HoAP's objectives should overlap more with members' national interests, it has failed to build on that sufficiently so far.²⁰⁹

Tajikistan

National Interests

- Extending and strengthening relations with China, the EU, and Russia
- A non-military resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan
- Maintaining relations with Afghanistan based on good neighborly and pragmatic principles
- Preventing flow of illicit drugs from Afghanistan
- Preventing the dissemination of religious extremism from Afghanistan
- Regional approach for the development of Afghanistan
- Successful implementation of CASA-1000 electricity project

- Continuing cooperation with the US and its allies in the war on terror
- Strengthening ties with states sharing Tajikistan's language and culture, e.g. Afghanistan and Iran

Red Flags

- Escalation in conflict with Uzbekistan
- Deterioration of relations with Russia
- Unstable Afghanistan/ escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could spillover to Tajik soil

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

Afghanistan and Tajikistan established diplomatic ties in 1992, but subsequent turmoil in both countries prevented the flourishing of close bonds. The Republic of Tajikistan has traditionally been directly affected by instability in Afghanistan. During the Afghan civil war and the Taliban regime, Tajikistan experienced a wave of insecurity and instability. Tajikistan has limited military capability and may not be able to tackle serious security challenges. Consequently, current stability in Afghanistan needs to be protected at any cost.

Tajikistan does not lead any of the CBMs. However, it has agreed to participate in implementation of five CBMs in the HoAP. Drug trafficking is a serious menace to Tajikistan, which it would like to see resolved by the HoAP. The difficult terrain between Afghanistan and Tajikistan allows drug lords to establish cross-border networks. Drug trafficking gives rise to corruption within framework of both states, which in turn endangers stability and security. The HoAP intends to provide Afghanistan and Tajikistan with a more comprehensive platform from which to counter this menace.

There is also potential for economic cooperation. Afghanistan is keen to import electricity from Tajikistan. Afghanistan, Iran and Tajikistan have reached an agreement to set up a joint commission. This commission will explore possibilities to transfer approximately 500KW of electrical energy from Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Iran.²¹⁰ The other major project anticipated, is the export of Tajik electricity to Afghanistan and Pakistan through the CASA-1000.

Prof. Haji Mohammad Umarov of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan said that Tajikistan will play its role as a responsible neighbor and will be part of any regional initiative that focuses on promotion of cooperation and regional integration.²¹¹

Turkey

National Interests

- Creating a peaceful and stable environment in the region
- Strengthening its relations with US and European countries
- Developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Central Asian states
- Preventing the possibility of a regional war with sectarian spillover
- Cultural and political integration of all Turkic people
- Strengthening cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan to promote stability in Afghanistan
- Promotion of regional cooperation for the security and stabilization of Afghanistan
- Training of Afghan security forces to fight terrorism and narcotics

Red Flags

- Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect
- Division of Syria

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

Turkey along with Afghanistan and UAE leads the Counter Terrorism CBM, and participates in the implementation of all other CBMs. Turkey hosted the first HoAP ministerial conference in Istanbul and later hosted a senior officials meeting in Ankara on October 18, 2012.²¹²

Turkey had a very internationalist foreign policy before domestic and regional problems set in. Ankara was also a very important driver of the Process at first and now seems distracted and as a result Afghanistan has plummeted on its foreign policy agenda.

Turkey initiated a trilateral program known as the *Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Summit*, the purpose of which was to improve relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The first summit was held in 2007 in Turkey and brought Pakistan and Afghanistan's leaders together. Since then, six more summits took place until 2012.²¹³ While not a product of the Process, Turkey has also invested generously in the development of Central Afghanistan. Construction is the leading sector for Turkish investments. From August 2002 to the end of 2010, the total amount of contracts by Turkish contracting companies in Afghanistan reached USD2.8 billion, and they have completed 330 projects so far.²¹⁴

Interlocutors interviewed in Turkey stated that Ankara is very content with the progress of the Process and does not feel at all that interest in it has faded.²¹⁵ In a number of participating states there are domestic issues that have required, and still require, closer attention, e.g. social unrest and the Syrian refugees crisis in Turkey, elections in India, but this does not mean that the Process is of less interest now.²¹⁶ Nor has the Process under-delivered: people should be realistic, advanced economies are used to quicker results and tend to project expectations,²¹⁷ as expressed by diplomat Ahmet Hanoğlu of the Turkish embassy in Kabul.

High-level political interest in the HoAP in Turkey has somewhat faded, but this has been a result of domestic and regional challenges. This has not been the product of disbelief in the Process' capacity to materialize progress or the lack of capacity and vision in Kabul.²¹⁸ An official at the Turkish MFA underlined that irrespective of current priorities in Ankara, Turkey and Afghanistan have historically had incredibly close ties and just like Afghanistan, "We are a fellow-bridge, our dedication to the reconstruction of Afghanistan will remain unaltered."²¹⁹

The HoAP is an opportunity for a broader Turkish approach to contribute to conflict resolution, reiterated by Ambassador Alev Kılıç (ret.) currently director of the Center for Eurasian Studies (AVIM) in Ankara: "Our close involvement is part of our overall contribution to Afghanistan."²²⁰ The HoAP was a much-welcome initiative, because there was a strong need for an Afghan-led and regionally supported mechanism to resolve challenges stemming from Afghanistan and the lack of substantial cooperation in the Heart of Asia region.²²¹ Positive reflections on the HoAP were shared by colleagues at AVIM: it has led to fresh thinking, to closer ties with participating states, more frequent and more articulate communication: "It has definitely been a very yielding undertaking."²²²

Reflecting on claims that the Process lacks a clear objective, there was strong consensus among Turkish scholars that the objective is clear and that there should not be too strong a push to restate objectives and set parameters. During an interview with Prof. Selçuk Çolakoğlu, Head of the Asia-Pacific Studies Center at the International Strategic Research Organization (USAK) and advisor at the Center for Strategic Research (SAM) held in Ankara in April 2014, the HoAP does not need a clear definition, the definition will simply evolve organically as the Process does.²²³ Prof. Şaban Kardaş, President at the Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) seconded Prof. Çolakoğlu:

"The Process does not need substantial revisions, it is moving along just fine."²²⁴ Indeed, in light of the young age of the Process, and considering the complexities of the regions it encompasses, the HoAP has performed relatively well.

Interviewees in Ankara shed some light on the future of the Process and gave cautionary counsel: Afghanistan's immediate neighbors should contribute more, especially those with more diplomatic and economic clout, like China.²²⁵ The HoAP can only succeed if it aligns its interests with those of the great powers in the region.²²⁶ Certainly, without the consent of China, India and Russia the HoAP will have difficulty materializing its objectives.

Turkmenistan

National Interests

- Positive neutrality towards all states in the world
- Open door policy to encourage foreign investment and export trade
- Economic cooperation with the broader region
- Maintaining good relations with Turkey, and more focus on bilateral relations
- Development of transportation routes for easy access to new markets
- Strengthening ties with China to reduce dependency of gas export to and via Russia
- Political stability in Afghanistan
- Successful implementation of TAPI gas pipeline to export natural gas to Pakistan and India via Afghanistan
- Preventing the inflow of drugs from Afghanistan into its territory
- Counter drug trafficking by taking lead role in Caspian Sea Initiative
- Solution to the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline issue

Red Flags

- Deterioration of relations with Russia over the export of natural gas
- Any attempt to push for the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline that could lead to confrontation with Russia
- Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a spillover effect on the region

Expectations from and Reflections on the HoAP

Turkmenistan leads the Regional Infrastructure CBM in the HoAP and participates in the implementation of the

Trade, Commerce and Investment Opportunities CBM and the Education CBM. During the second senior officials' preparatory meeting of the Process hosted by Ashgabat in April 2012, the Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, Mr. Rashid Meredov, clearly stated that Turkmenistan supports any initiative that is aimed to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan.²²⁷ Turkmenistan is keen to export natural gas to India and Pakistan and stability in Afghanistan is therefore one of the Turkmen authorities' key interests.

Due to security constraints and lack of funds the construction of the USD2 billion TAPI gas pipeline did not take off during the mid 1990s. India joined the project in 2008 and things have started to move along. The HoAP provides Turkmenistan with an excellent opportunity to talk with various stakeholders and speed up the construction of this initiative. The successful completion of this project would help Ashgabat lessen its dependency on Russia and China for the export of natural gas.

Turkmenistan's main concern about Afghanistan is to stem the flow of opium from Afghanistan and to counter drug trafficking. As Afghanistan's neighbor, Turkmenistan considers stability in Afghanistan crucial for its own development. In a written interview with Mr. Armands Pupols of the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA), he stated that compared to other regional initiatives, the HoAP has managed to draw higher attention to regional engagement and ownership. It clearly underlines that countries in the region are interested in a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.²²⁸ The question is whether the HoAP should be like a political umbrella for all existing and future regional activities related to relevant CBMs, or that it should cover specific activities based on concrete criteria.²²⁹ Such questions would be resolved with the greater support and cooperation of the Afghan administration and by strengthening the institutional capacity of the Process.²³⁰

Please note: Unfortunately we were not able to collect reliable data from Turkmen sources. Instead we referred to Mr. Armands Pupols of the UNRCCA who is based in Ashgabat.

United Arab Emirates

National Interests

- Developing closer ties with its neighbors in the Arabian Peninsula through the GCC
- Maintenance of effective, stable and wide-ranging ties with the IC

- Resolution of regional and international disputes according to UN guidelines
- Promoting stability and security in Afghanistan
- Opposing violent extremism by promoting a culture of moderation and non-violence
- Training Afghan imams to promote moderate Islam
- Actively participating in the reconstruction of Afghanistan through fund provision
- Stability in Egypt and Syria as key to stability in the wider Arab region

Red Flags

- Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a spillover effect on the region
- Return of Afghanistan as a safe haven for terrorist organizations, e.g. Al-Qaeda
- Unstable Pakistan as a result of radical Islamists' surge

Expectations From and Reflections on the HoAP

The UAE is the only Arab country that has deployed its troops in Afghanistan to assist the US-led international stabilization mission in Afghanistan. The UAE has supported Afghanistan since Process commencement. It has repeatedly supported talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. The UAE is one of Afghanistan's biggest donors from the Arab region, and has promised to stand by Afghanistan after 2014 and assist the country in its reconstruction challenge.²³¹ In the HoAP the UAE leads the Counter Terrorism CBM along with Afghanistan and Turkey, and also participates in the implementation of the Counter Narcotics CBM and the Trade, Commerce and Investment Opportunities CBM.

The UAE has limited political ambitions in Afghanistan, yet is against stronger Iranian involvement in Afghanistan. In July 2013, the Foreign Ministers of the UAE and Afghanistan agreed to the signing of a long-term strategic partnership and also signed two separate agreements on security cooperation and transfer of prisoners.²³²

To develop the Afghan economy, UAE aid to Afghanistan totaled USD267.3 million from 2009 to 2012,²³³ and included projects such as Kandahar airport, as well as the provision of food and aid to orphans and persons with special needs. The UAE is also working with HoAP member states and other organizations on joint projects that include the construction of a highway which links north and south Afghanistan.

While outside of the HoAP framework, other support comes through the *Dubai Process*, now known as the *Afghanistan Pakistan Cooperation Process* (AFCP), a mechanism for Dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan.²³⁴ The Dubai Process started in 2007, with the support of the Canadian government, to engage Afghan and Pakistani authorities on better border management. 12 meetings have taken place so far and these have helped Afghan and Pakistani officials to develop trust.²³⁵ This Process has shown some progress and various joint technical working group meetings have taken place discussing customs data exchange and biometric systems.²³⁶ According to the Afghan Ambassador to the UAE, Mr. Mojadidi, the UAE is not a very active participant, but does contribute through low level meetings and channels outside the HoAP such as the AFCP. The problem of this relative inactivity lies with the Afghan MFA, the UAE is passionate to help.²³⁷ The UAE also has the funds to invest in Afghanistan and become more active in the Trade, Commerce and Investment Opportunities CBM but will be hesitant without security.²³⁸ Ambassador Mojadidi shared that the UAE has conveyed to the embassy that they are keen and ready to help, all they need are the facilities.

Ambassador Mojadidi further added that Emirati interest has waned because the team that currently leads it in Kabul is weak.²³⁹ The Process is slow and the Afghan MFA's interest lies more with the elections and security.²⁴⁰ When Deputy Minister Jawed Ludin left the Afghan MFA it severely affected the Process: "The Afghan embassy here never receives any reports or briefings on the Process."²⁴¹ There are governmental lessons from the UAE to be learnt by Afghanistan: "Learn from us as we have developed through strong leadership and regional cooperation."²⁴² The UAE hope that the new Afghan administration is somewhat better equipped and carries the vision of the HoAP forth with the same spirit as when it was launched.²⁴³

Please note: Unfortunately we were not able to collect data from the Emiratis in the Emirates, instead we referred to the Afghan embassy in Abu Dhabi.

Overview of National Interests and Red Flags per Country

This table provides a schematic overview of the core and secondary national interests and red flags for the thirteen selected participating HoAP states in relation to the Heart of Asia region, and more specifically Afghanistan. Its content is based on a number of reports consulted,²⁴⁴ and on discussions with interlocutors. Core interests are defined here as objectives whose development or outcomes are pivotal to the country's national interests, while Secondary Interests are of national significance too, only to a lesser extent. Red Flags are concerns whose development or outcomes are so critical that any change would most likely result in vast and direct policy changes.

Country	Core Interests	Secondary Interests	Red Flags
Afghanistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of the stability and territorial unity of the country • Sustenance of political stability • Reinvigoration of the historical role of Afghanistan as a land bridge • Substantial socioeconomic development through regional connectivity • Establishment of good ties with all regional countries • Curbing the empowerment and dissemination of radical Islam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combating illicit drugs production and trafficking • Implementation of large infrastructure projects like CASA-1000 and TAPI • Persuasion of Pakistan that terrorism and extremism will destabilize the entire region • Resolving regional disputes • Make HoAP a role model for cooperation and regional integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalating insecurity after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014 • The return of Taliban to power outside the existing government framework • Interference of regional countries in domestic affairs • Collapse of democratic institutions
Azerbaijan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of a stable position on global and regional issues • Developing friendly relations with neighboring states • Demilitarization of the Caspian basin • Ensuring the stability of Afghanistan through capacity building assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in Afghanistan's petrochemical industry • Linking Azerbaijani-relevant transportation routes with Afghanistan • Examination of the transferability of the Azerbaijani development experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of independence of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region by Armenia • Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic political stability • National security and territorial integrity • Sustainable socioeconomic development • Stable regional environment conducive to economic growth • Stability in its restive Xinjiang SAR and Tibet SAR • Avoiding military confrontation • Strategic expansion of economic and energy interests in Central Asia • Energy import security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of SCO capacity and reach • A stable and prosperous Central Asia • Closer ties with Afghanistan, but not at the expense of relations with Pakistan • Fear of extremist spillover from Afghanistan • Regional infrastructure development and increased economic interaction • Prevent alarming Moscow over endeavors in Central Asia • Avoid deterioration of ties with the Islamic World 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unstable Pakistan as a result of radical Islamists' surge • Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining and promoting pluralistic democracy • Improvement of relations with Pakistan, China and Japan • Revive of historical and cultural ties with Afghanistan • A regional cooperative approach for stabilization of Afghanistan • Support of a democratically elected government in Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the relationship with Iran and Russia to weaken the Pakistan-China nexus • Expansion of Chabahar port in Iran to gain access to Afghanistan and Central Asian markets, bypassing Pakistan • Successful completion of TAPI gas pipeline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of areas of Pakistan adjoining India and Afghanistan by radical Islamists • Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014 • Return of resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan with the clandestine support of Pakistan • Deterioration of bilateral ties with China, Russia, and the US

<p>Iran</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining recognition and respect from regional states and the International Community • A regionalist approach to maintain peace and stability in neighboring countries • Withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan and reduction of US presence in Central Asia • Greater and more active role in Afghan peace talks • Effectively countering inflow of drugs from Afghanistan • Curbing any excessive Saudi influence on the neighborhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable Afghan government • Construction of transport links between Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia • Protecting the rights of Hazara (Shia group) in Central Afghanistan, and other Dari/Farsi speaking minority groups • Strengthening ties with selected ethnic groups in Afghanistan • Repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return of a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan • Unstable Pakistan as a result of radical Islamists' surge • Israel's further belligerence towards occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon • Use of Afghan or Pakistani territory by Israel or any other Western country, directly or indirectly (through Baloch separatists/jihadist groups), to destabilize Iran
<p>Kazakhstan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National security, strengthen regional peace • Stable ties with China, the EU, Russia and the US • Ensuring Kazakhstan's entry to the top 30 most developed countries • Preventing spread of radical ideologies within its territory • A politically stable and economically sustainable Central Asia • Diversification of its economic development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional infrastructure development • Curbing illicit arms and drug trafficking by supporting international efforts • Creating stability in Afghanistan through infrastructure development in the country • Resolution of conflicts in accordance with the UN Security Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deteriorating ties with China, the EU, Russia and the US • Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect
<p>Kyrgyzstan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening and consolidating ties with CIS countries, China and the West • Strengthening ties with regional powers • Economic cooperation with the broader region • Dealing effectively with internal threats resulting from domestic ethnic tensions. • Reducing drug trafficking and export of religious extremism from Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing cooperation with Islamic countries • More active participation in regional organizations like SCO and CSTO • Development of Afghanistan's transit potential and export of electrical energy through successful implementation of CASA-1000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of ethnic tensions within its territory • Deterioration of ties with Russia and China • Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect
<p>Pakistan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of Pakistan as a dynamic, progressive, moderate, and democratic Islamic country • A relatively stable and inclusive Afghan government with ample Pashtun representation • Limiting the role of India to include only development activities in Afghanistan • Remaining the largest exporter to Afghanistan • Security of its western border • Combating terrorism within its own territory and stop the flow of drugs from Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing interests between Iran and Saudi Arabia • Developing friendly relations, especially with immediate neighboring states and major powers in the world • Access to untapped natural resources in Central Asia, with the construction of projects like Casa-1000 and the TAPI gas pipeline • Cultivating goodwill among the non-Pashtun minorities in Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lose its influence over Afghanistan • An Afghan administration unsympathetic to Islamabad • Increase of Baloch nationalism and separatism • Rebirth of the "Pashtunistan" idea • Use of Pakistan as a scapegoat after 2014 to keep Afghanistan united against a common enemy

Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing favorable conditions for overall Russian development • More focus on bilateral ties to defend national interests • Reducing the political and economic influence of the US in Russia's sphere of influence • Keeping military control over Central Asia and secure borders of Central Asian states bordering Afghanistan • Curtailing drug addiction within its own territory by reducing the flow of Afghan opiates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Stability in Afghanistan • Containing movement and activities of Islamic insurgents in its sphere of influence • Keeping up with China's economic influence in Central and South Asia • Use of Afghan territory to diversify its energy exports to South Asia • Supporting the democratically elected government in Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect, particularly in Central Asia • Lose influence over Central Asia
Tajikistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending and strengthening relations with China, the EU, and Russia • A non-military resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan • Maintaining relations with Afghanistan based on good neighborly and pragmatic principles • Preventing flow of illicit drugs from Afghanistan • Preventing the dissemination of religious extremism from Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional approach for the development of Afghanistan • Successful implementation of CASA-1000 electricity project • Continuing cooperation with the US and its allies in the war on terror • Strengthening ties with states sharing Tajikistan's language, culture, e.g. Afghanistan and Iran 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalation in conflict with Uzbekistan • Deterioration of relations with Russia • Unstable Afghanistan/ escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could spillover to Tajik soil
Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a peaceful and stable environment in the region • Cultural and political integration of all Turkic people • Strengthening cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan to promote stability in Afghanistan • Promotion of regional cooperation for the security and stabilization of Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening its relations with US and European countries • Developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Central Asian states • Preventing the possibility of a regional war with sectarian spillover • Training of Afghan security forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a regional spillover effect • Division of Syria
Turkmenistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive neutrality towards all states in the world • Open door policy to encourage foreign investment and export trade • Economic cooperation with the broader region • Political stability in Afghanistan • Successful implementation of TAPI gas pipeline to export natural gas to Pakistan and India via Afghanistan • Preventing the inflow of drugs from Afghanistan into its territory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining good relations with Turkey, and more focus on bilateral relations • Development of transportation routes for easy access to new markets • Strengthening ties with China to reduce dependency of gas export to and via Russia • Counter drug trafficking by taking lead role in Caspian Sea Initiative • Solution to the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterioration of relations with Russia over the export of natural gas • Any attempt to push for the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline that could lead to confrontation with Russia • Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a spillover effect on the region
UAE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing closer ties with its neighbors in the Arabian Peninsula through the GCC • Maintenance of effective, stable and wide-ranging ties with the IC • Resolution of regional and international disputes according to UN guidelines • Promoting stability and security in Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposing violent extremism by promoting a culture of moderation and non-violence • Training Afghan imams to promote moderate Islam • Actively participating in the reconstruction of Afghanistan through fund provision • Stability in Egypt and Syria as key to stability in the wider Arab region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalating insecurity in Afghanistan after NATO-ISAF withdrawal in 2014, which could have a spillover effect on the region • Return of Afghanistan as a safe haven for terrorist organizations, e.g. Al-Qaeda • Unstable Pakistan as a result of radical Islamists' surge

CONCLUSION

The Heart of Asia region borrows from a number of regions, of which Afghanistan forms the epicenter. This is precisely why the HoAP is a tricky, as well as promising, institutional vehicle. The majority of states in these regions are subject to low standards of living; ethnic, religious and economic rivalry; limited economic connectivity; and mistrust. The challenges that Afghanistan faces do not merely affect the country itself. However, neither are these problems solely the produce of Afghanistan alone. The region has to become aware that regional challenges, foremost those stemming from non-state actors, need a collective approach in order to reach a resolution. Yet, stakeholders and observers of the HoAP will have to be realistic about their expectations of the Process. Swift and vast progress in regions as complex as those that the Process encompasses is not a given, not even when interests and concerns overlap.

A number of participating states argue that the HoAP overlaps with existing multilateral structures. While this is undeniable, the HoAP is a useful institutional vehicle for Afghanistan to propagate the concerns and opportunities it sees for itself and the broader region, particularly in light of the possible post-2016 complete withdrawal of US-led NATO-ISAF forces. While one chapter closes and another opens, the Process finds itself at a juncture. Members will need to be convinced of the utility of the Process, and it will have to support Afghanistan in tackling the daunting security and economic challenges it faces.

As Kabul co-stewards the Process, it has to better incorporate the interests and calculations of immediate region powers, and to an extent those of extra-regional powers. That is a reality that Kabul cannot neglect. Afghanistan is not of interest to small players, but very much of interest to regional and great powers. Among the latter two, what happens in Afghanistan is arguably secondary compared to interests of greater importance to their policies on the Greater Middle East and Central and South Asia. Yet, all members share a common red flag: fear of escalating insecurity in an independently-led Afghanistan post 2014/16 that could radiate regionally.

There is currently a vicious circle where the hub, i.e. Kabul, and the spokes, i.e. member countries and organizations, underline one another's absence of commitment and passivity. This is a zero-sum practice and should be resolved. Kabul will have to initiate resolving this by reiterating its commitment to the

Process and by addressing impediments outlined in this policy paper, so that it can better build on common interests and concerns that Afghanistan and Process members share.

The common interests that the HoAP has to concentrate on are: 1) Fostering political dialogue among the members of the inner circle, along with input from the outer circle, 2) Contributing to sustainable economic integration and connectivity in the Heart of Asia region. Physical and digital infrastructure is key to support this, 3) Curbing the empowerment and dissemination of radical Islam, 4) Mitigation of illicit drug production and trafficking. The existing Regional Infrastructure, and Trade, Commerce and Investment Opportunities; Counter Terrorism; and Counter Narcotics CBMs could serve these interests. It is vital that this happens in a speedy and efficient fashion. The HoAP should avoid a scenario where it is perceived as a steppingstone political talk shop to established regional mechanisms. Once the Process loses momentum it will not be easy to regain it. RECCA is a living example of this. Whereas RECCA missed a political component to push for economic cooperation, the HoAP will need stronger commitment to economic cooperation to survive as a political forum.

In support of this, it is imperative that the Process is not impeded by internal restraints. It has to instead focus on dealing with the many external challenges it faces.

The HoAP finds itself at a juncture. Kabul and all stakeholders will have to decide which path they want to pursue. Inaction should not be an option. But if in doubt, rather than rigidly molding the Process' framework and forcing it to institutionalize, the Process should be allowed to organically take shape over time. This does not imply that the objective, strategies and tactics to achieving it should not be clearly pursued in the course of it.

This paper has attempted to analyze the intricacies of the Process by shedding more light on its impediments, and by identifying the common interests and concerns that the inner circle of participating countries hold. A list of recommendations to hone the Process has been included and we advise its consideration.

The Process still remains relatively under-researched and is possibly subject to further impediments that this report has failed to identify. Further academic inquiry is advised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the HoAP provides Afghanistan more sway to lead and articulate itself than in any existing multilateral mechanism in which it participates, stewardship comes at a price. The Process is a valuable single platform that can serve both Afghanistan and the region well. Based on the impediments and the interests that the previous sections have underlined, below are recommendations for the Afghan administration and all HoAP members and stakeholders. These recommendations are clustered as strategic, i.e. dealing with the bigger picture and more long-term oriented, and tactical, i.e. more operational-oriented.

Strategic Recommendations

1) The Afghan administration should show unreserved political vision and will to further hone the HoAP at all government levels. The Process cannot thrive if there is no unity and political determination. This unity has to be forged by top-level government. Kabul should send a strong signal to all members that it is capable and committed. A multilateral platform's hub cannot be perceived to be feeble.

A neutral stance in Afghanistan's foreign policy is essential. It should not align with any of its neighbors or extended neighbors, rather balance relations with them, with long-term Western capacity building and financial support. Afghanistan does not need to choose sides as alignment policy largely failed in its last three decades. Kabul should rather focus on responsible neutrality honed by political determination to bring the Process to fruition. The Process' members will gain more confidence in Afghanistan and the Process if it displays that it is able to productively co-coordinate it. There needs to be more focus on practical security measures and economic endeavors that demonstrably benefit members. The most effective method for the Process to gain more esteem is to build trust through the achievement of real and durable results. To give a signal that the Process has a serious commitment to common economic development, the economic ministers of the supporting countries could be invited to the annual ministerial conferences.

2) The practical objective of the Process should be reiterated by Kabul. It should remind members why the HoAP is imperative to the interests of the region. It has to be made sure that it does not solely serve Afghanistan. The HoAP cannot be perceived as a charity organization that countries participate in to brand themselves as altruistic towards Afghanistan, or to please larger geopolitical powers. The Process has to

contribute more substantially to member states' foreign policy agenda – quid pro quo is as relevant as it has always been. The HoAP has to clearly signal that there are no aspirations to forge the Process into a security mechanism. China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia among others undoubtedly do not want an Afghan-centric organization to have any kind of say in their security arrangements. The post-2016 US-led NATO/ISAF forces complete withdrawal might make participating states at least contemplate soft security coordination. This deserves further study.

The Process will also need to define its deliverables more clearly²⁴⁵ and create projects rather than market them. Existing efforts and projects should be supplemented rather than paralyzed.

3) Re-instill interest in the HoAP by identifying and proposing initiatives that serve the majority of members – incentives are a great motivator. Member states will always look at Afghanistan through their lens of national interest, therefore Kabul has to pragmatically feed their desires and mitigate their concerns. Afghanistan has to shift itself from being a threat to being seen as an opportunity.

Shared national interests, of which curbing the empowerment and dissemination of radical Islam, mitigation of illicit drugs production and trafficking, and economic development are the most important, should be prioritized. It will be particularly useful to have members with pragmatic economic foreign policies, e.g. China, onboard. China's ability to finance (through innovative methods, such as the resources for infrastructure (R4I) approach, and construct large infrastructure projects should be given close consideration.

4) The Process should bridge existing multilateral bodies such as CAREC, CICA and the SCO if they have overlap in purpose, some of their projects could be promoted within the HoAP discussions as building blocks for regional trust. One such initiative could be to divert some of the vast flow of money allocated to counter narcotics by international and intergovernmental organizations to the HoAP Counter-Narcotics CBM.

Indeed, at the ministerial conference in Almaty it was echoed that the Process does not substitute already existing mechanisms for regional cooperation, but rather desires to complement them²⁴⁶. Simultaneously, participating states with economic prowess such as China and India should be asked for greater involvement, so that headway is made. If these major

powers take the lead in pushing the community forwards by using their individual economic heft, more progress might actually be made. By throwing their collective weight behind specific aspects, e.g. funding and initiative deadlines, of the Process, this might generate a momentum of its own. Yet, the push by great powers like China and India could also backfire: smaller countries could feel sidelined. This scenario should be strictly avoided and delicately handled.

Tactical Recommendations

5) Assign a diplomatically seasoned team an office to coordinate the Process. This could either continue to be the RCD at the MFA or designated elsewhere. It is important that the head of this team has a good track record of getting things done. The team should not have other commitments, as juggling affects deliverables. They will have to be sufficiently robust to fill the power vacuum and tie up loose ends in the Process. A committed and fitting team could replace individual drivers and act more efficiently than a mechanism prone to bureaucracy and thus inefficiency.

In support of this, HoAP permanent focal points at relevant ministries should be assigned with no other commitments. These focal points can mitigate Kabul's institutional weakness to act as the Process' hub and increase diplomatic interaction hampered by the security situation in Kabul. Focal points at relevant embassies could act as lobbying groups and promote Afghanistan as a center of cooperation and development, and the HoAP as the forum to materialize it. The HoAP team should closely monitor performance at relevant ministries.

6) Push for a trust fund to cover core expenses of the Process at the next ministerial conference, as financial impediments limit competence. This trust fund should merely cover RCD operational expenses. The sharing out of the funding should be based on members' economic prowess. Both participating, as well as supporting states and organizations should fund, although the latter in a more modest scope. If a more sizable fund is green lighted the UN should be considered to oversee it. The Process cannot be impeded by internal restraints. It has to focus on external ones, i.e. restraints to security and connectivity.

7) The game is big, but capacity in Kabul is little. Therefore, communication and operational channels at the RCD, MFA and in relevant ministries should be improved.

An intra-government outreach campaign should be designed to raise awareness in the public and private sector. A more strict protocol mechanism should be designed and monitored. HoAP designated teams should also be stimulated at participating countries' ministries of foreign affairs, this will be conducive towards coordination and efficiency. Essential to this is a higher rate of SOM meetings and technical meetings to address governance and communication deficiencies between the three governance tiers. These two levels cannot passively await the annual ministerial conferences to catalyze exchange and activity. The SOM functions as a bridge, it should be held more frequently. There should also be better planning/anticipation of meeting dates.

8) It is key that a parallel HoAP Track 2 with research institutes from participating and supporting countries is created. This will feed the Process with independent reflections and make sure that policymakers are better informed. It will also keep the discussion alive between the annual ministerial conferences. Frequent pre-conference dialogues can result in better-prepared and more action-oriented ministerial conferences and SOMs.

Afghanistan's track 2 should attempt to gain a solid understanding of member states' psyche and primary foreign policy interests. It is also essential that, impartial, scholarly reflections on relations with Pakistan are provided to policy advisors and makers. Afghan-Pakistani ties need to cool down, and should become subject to more transparency and accountability. Finger pointing has a detrimental effect and shifts resources away from self-reflection and development on both sides

9) The CBM lead state baton has to be passed on: this will act as a flushing mechanism and introduce new ideas. This can be realized by introducing an annual rotation system. CBM metrics should be created to demonstrate success thereby driving the Process to produce results. In support of this, task forces can be setup to expedite initiatives. Enhanced guidelines should be created to secure that CBM lead states' initiatives serve in a multilateral way, not just bilaterally. Simultaneously, participating states with economic prowess, such as China, should be encouraged to take the lead in certain CBMs, pushing the forum forwards. Criteria have to be set to prioritize CBMs projects. Many small steps are better than large but slow steps. It is important to keep the Process running and not lose momentum.

The hub of the Process, without a proper secretariat, does not have the capacity to coordinate six CBMs. A

streamlining of the number of CBMs should be considered: the current amount is too many to coordinate and oversee for Kabul.²⁴⁷ The Regional Infrastructure CBM could be merged with the Trade, Commerce and Investment Opportunities CBM, while the Education CBM is conceivably better served outside the Process on a bilateral basis. The Process is better off concentrating on fewer CBMs, yet with better allocation of resources. Another suggestion worth delving into is to have international organizations co-lead the CBMs. Their expertise and financial resources could make a positive difference.

10) The name of the Process should henceforth be the *Heart of Asia Process* rather than the *Istanbul Process*. A multilateral mechanism with forty-two members among which mistrust and rivalry still persist should not carry the name of a single city.

This paper recommends *participating and supporting states and organizations* specifically to:

11) Avoid a pending scenario where they could be perceived to piggyback. Members should show more proactivity by bringing more ideas and proposals to the table and should actively support major developmental projects that appear on the Process' future agenda. While there is surely a fine line between support and overstepping, supporting states and organization could yield their network, experience and deep(er) pockets to hone the Process.

12) Show stronger commitment to make the Process a success. They must avoid initiating and hosting bi- and trilateral meetings on Afghanistan that do not invite Afghanistan to the table. Co-deciding on a state's fate without that state's input is indicative of moral flexibility. The whole purpose of the HoAP for Afghanistan was to be a player, rather than a spectator. But to remain in the field, Afghanistan needs stronger support of all members.

The next page offers a table with impediments to the HoAP and recommendations for the HoAP combined.

Overview of HoAP Impediments and Recommendations

	Impediments	Recommendations
(Geo)Political/ Strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of drivers to run the Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a diplomatically seasoned team a separate office from the RCD to coordinate the Process.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghanistan’s insufficient neutral stance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue pragmatic neutrality, practice active and creative diplomacy, drop reactive diplomacy.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate political will at top levels of Afghan government to fully endorse the Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new administration should show unreserved political will, unity, and determination at all government levels to nurture and hone the Process.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equivocal objective of the Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reiterate the practical objective in a way that clearly underlines incentives for members. The Process should contribute more substantially to the inner circle’s national interests and red flags.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficiently persuasive incentives system for participating states 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-instill interest by identifying and proposing practical initiatives for common interests that serve the majority of member states, particularly political dialogue, economic integration, counter terrorism and counter narcotics. The Process should also focus on contemporary problems and tensions, e.g. Afghanistan-Pakistan relations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlaps with existing regional mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge existing multilateral bodies if they have overlap in purpose, and strengthen existing cooperative arrangements and mechanisms. MoUs with established regional organizations should be signed and parallel initiatives should be avoided.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial resources are available foremost in the outer circle of supporting states and organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentives should be provided to generate money flow into the inner circle.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient support from member states in both the inner and outer circle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both circles should show stronger commitment to make the HoAP a success and avoid initiating and hosting bi- and trilateral meetings that do not invite Afghanistan to the table.
Operational/ Tactical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex region with generally weak and bureaucratic institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A neutral and proactive Afghan foreign policy stance to balance relations with (extended) neighbors with traditional donors’ support.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of a secretariat and adequate funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress the need for a trust fund to cover core Process expenses at the next ministerial conference with larger economies taking the lead.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficiency of institutional capacity and human resources in Kabul to act as the Process’ hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A diplomatically seasoned team should strengthen operational and communication capacity, and monitor activities’ implementation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear labor division, targets and gauges with regard to the CBMs endorsed in the Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce an annual rotation system for CBM lead states, also push for CBM metrics demonstrating success thereby stimulating the Process to produce results. Set up task forces to expedite initiatives.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor media coverage and independent analysis of the Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a parallel HoAP track 2 connecting research institutes from participating and supporting countries.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large aperture between annual ministerial conference meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase frequency of SOM meetings, decision-making authority should be shared with SOM level.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear and timely communication by the Afghan MFA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication and operational channels at the MFA and in line ministries. An intra-government outreach campaign should be designed to raise awareness in the public and private sector.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Overview of Activities per CBM and per Country²⁴⁸

Overview per CBM

DISASTER MANAGEMENT (DM) CBM

Objectives

- Organizing disaster response seminars among focal points for exchange of information and best practice with a view to the development of joint guidelines.
- Creating a mechanism for pooling of knowledge and experience on dealing with the impact of disasters and proven mitigating strategies.
- Developing robust regional early warning information and pre-identification system for droughts and other water related threats.

Activities

- A consultation meeting on Lead TFPs and Regional Focal Points (RFPs) was convened on September 20, 2012 in Islamabad, Pakistan, to formulate and agree on a draft implementation plan for the DM CBM. The co-lead countries, Kazakhstan and Pakistan, jointly formulated the draft. The meeting was attended by the representatives of the two lead countries, representatives of five regional TFP countries: Afghanistan, China, India, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey, representatives of three supporting countries: Norway, Poland and Sweden, and representatives of four international organizations: the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the World Bank and the EU.
- The second TFP meeting was held in Astana, Kazakhstan on September 4, 2013.
- Pakistan organized a training program for the Afghan 'Search and Rescue Team' of the Afghan Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), in January 2014 as part of an activity under the DM CBM.
- Pakistan organized a two day international seminar on 'Sharing Experiences and Developing Regional Hazard and Risk Picture for Action Plan,' on May 12-13, 2014.
- The third regional technical meeting on the DM CBM took place in Islamabad on May 14, 2014.

COUNTER-TERRORISM (CT) CBM

Objectives

- Contributing to expanding and strengthening the existing CT measures and initiatives and, where needed, enhancing coordination among them.
- Taking effective measures for countering the financing of terrorism, including identifying financial sources and preventing their flow to terrorists, terrorist acts, and terrorist organizations.
- Enhancing capacities of counter-terrorism institutions of participating states.
- Preventing cross-border movement of explosives and lethal devices as well as precursors used for their production.
- Furthering effective border cooperation, control and management.
- Taking effective measures to understand and mitigate the relevant factors of violent extremism.

Activities

- The first technical meeting on the CT CBM took place on September 3, 2012 in Ankara, Turkey.
- The second technical meeting on the CT CBM took place in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on September 18, 2012. The meeting was organized by the Hedaya Center. A draft implementation plan for CT in Afghanistan was produced at this meeting.
- The third technical meeting also took place in Abu Dhabi on July 26, 2013.
- A workshop on C-IED was held in Abu Dhabi in August 2013.
- Afghanistan hosted a workshop on *Terrorism Financing* in Kabul, Afghanistan on February 26-27, 2014.
- The second workshop on C-IED was held in Kabul on March 8-9, 2014. Experts from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and the UN participated in this workshop.

COUNTER-NARCOTICS (CN) CBM

Objectives

- Realization of measures on updating the system of control of the legal circulation of drugs and their precursors on the territories of the participating states of the HoAP.
- Carrying out task-oriented work on prevention of drug addiction, and lowering the availability of drugs.
- Introduction of new methods and means of treatment, social and medical rehabilitation of drug addicts based on existing realities of the participating states.
- Working out and introducing modern tools for detection and analysis of drugs and their precursors.
- Exchange operative and strategic information on criminal acts and structure, places and methods of production and modus operandi of narcotic traffickers, including concealments, as well as on analysis techniques.
- Concentration of efforts of competent agencies in the struggle against transnational forms of trafficking of illicit drugs and their precursors.
- Carrying out task-oriented work on the reduction of the scale of illicit production.

Activities

- The first regional technical meeting took place at the Russian embassy in Kabul on December 5, 2012.
- The second technical meeting on the CN CBM took place on January 25, 2013 in Baku, Azerbaijan.
- The third technical meeting took place in June 2013 in Kabul.
- An anti-Cannabis seminar was held in Moscow, Russia on March 5, 2014.

TRADE COMMERCE AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES (TCIO) CBM

Objectives

- Set up an information network sharing commercial opportunities in Afghanistan.
- Promote trade, foreign investment and joint ventures in promising Afghan economic sectors.
- Promote basic physical and financial infrastructure and enable the policies pertinent to foster trade and investment.
- Promote greater physical connectivity, particularly surface transport routes and networks.
- Put in place dispute settlement mechanisms for trade and investments.
- Promote liberalization of bilateral air-services agreements among the regional countries.
- Capacity building programs at the Afghan Chambers of Commerce.
- Encourage greater interaction among Chambers of Commerce in the region.
- Harmonization of quality/safety standards between and amongst Afghanistan and participating countries

of the HoAP.

- Establishment of bonded warehouses.

Activities

- FICCI has organized four meetings of TFPs in New Delhi on September 20, 2012; April 18, 2013; August 29, 2013; and May 15, 2014. FICCI has also organized training of Afghan Chamber officials and B2B meetings in 2013.
- The Indian embassy hosted a technical meeting on the TCIO CBM in Kabul on January 29, 2013.
- The *India-Afghanistan Partnership Fair* was organized in Mazar-e-Sharif on March 4-5, 2013 to promote innovative partnerships between business groups and NGOs of the two countries.
- Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BCCI) organized a fair with the support of USAID, FICCI and nine Northern Chambers of Commerce and Industries. More than forty organizations, twenty from India and twenty from the nine northern Afghan provinces showcased products and services in agriculture, mining, clean energy, education, health and ICT.
- FICCI also organized the event, *Doing Business with Afghanistan* on November 18-20, 2013 in New Delhi, India. The event attempted to uncover Afghanistan's massive investment potential, and provided an excellent opportunity for Afghanistan and its near and extended neighbors to engage in a sincere dialogue to build confidence and promote economic cooperation at the regional level. In addition to ministers and senior government officials, more than seventy business groups including female entrepreneurs and thirty exhibitors participated in the event. The Indian External Ministry released a paper, *Doing business with Afghanistan*, and an MoU was signed and exchanged between FICCI and ACCI at the event.
- FICCI organized a *Road Show on Investment Opportunities in Afghanistan* in association with AISA in Mumbai on November 20, 2013. It helped to spread awareness about the investment potential in Afghanistan and acquainted the Indian business community with the legal frameworks, procedure, incentive packages and support services offered by the government of Afghanistan.
- Financial Access for Investing in the Development of Afghanistan (FAIDA), a subdivision of USAID and the Indian embassy in Kabul have organized interactive business meetings with the *Afghanistan Builders Delegation* on January 31, 2014 in New Delhi.
- The Afghan MFA and The University of Central Asia hosted the *Small and Medium Enterprises and Regional Trade in Afghanistan* and the *Heart of Asia Regional Symposium* in Kabul on February 23, 2014.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE (RI) CBM

Objectives

- Elaboration and implementation of projects aimed at infrastructure development in and around Afghanistan, main ports in the heart of Asia region and linking them via roads and railroads for shipment of goods and energy to and from Central Asia, South Asia, Europe and Asia.
- Bilateral and multilateral cooperation on establishment of direct flights between the main cities in the region.
- Cooperation on attracting investments for implementation of infrastructure projects, including through holding business fora (in coordination with relevant CBM working groups) by representatives of participating and supporting states of the HoAP and potential investors.
- Cooperation on capacity building, by means of seminars, workshops and by holding meetings of scientific research institutions, representatives and centers specialized in the field of economic integration.
- Arranging review meetings of representatives of participating and supporting states and relevant international organizations of the HoAP for discussion of ways to further improve regional infrastructure and elaboration on practical strategies.

- Preparation of review meetings of representatives of participating and supporting states and the relevant international organizations of the HoAP for discussion of infrastructure projects and problems in their realization, in order to undertake relevant measures.
- Holding regular consultations among the participating states of the RI CBM with the aim to further update the present Action Plan.

Activities

- The first meeting of the RI-CBM working group took place in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on January 24, 2013. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the draft *Action Plan* for the RI-CBM and identify key activities.
- The second working group meeting also took place in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on September 10, 2013. During this meeting the participants reviewed the implementation of the Action Plan and put forward a series of recommendations on this CBM and the development of RI.

EDUCATION CBM

Objectives

- Promoting regional understanding and dialogue among the Heart of Asia countries by focusing on historical, cultural and religious commonalities and the mutual benefits gained from such exchanges.
- Strengthening connections among the people of the region by promotion of common interests and shared values based on principles of the good neighborhood and mutual respect for national sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity as prerequisites of peace and stability in the region.
- Promoting knowledge and awareness of the rule of law and respect for legal international obligations.
- Developing joint cultural exchange programs including art, literature, music, etc.
- Providing opportunities for exchange of special talent and expertise in the fields of sport, music, art, literature and language through short, medium and long term training programs.
- Holding regional academic debates in the field of sciences, technology, humanities, education, law, journalism, literature, etc.
- Organizing educational and training programs to meet the needs of the countries of the region for implementation of their national development strategy when requested for.
- Fostering dialogue among regional religious scholars.
- Promoting allocation of quotas for Afghan students at educational institutions in the region.
- Promoting peace in the region through investment in education programs and the establishment of specialized research institutions.
- Promoting tolerance and acceptance of cultural, religious and ethnic diversities.
- Developing mechanisms and providing opportunities to national icons and special talents of the Heart of Asia countries to demonstrate their skills and talents at the regional level.
- Organizing regional sport events among relevant Heart of Asia Countries.
- Developing joint educational/awareness raising programs to discourage the use of narcotic and psychotropic drugs and substances.
- Exchanging successful educational methodologies and sharing of tested techniques for developing improved educational curricula.
- Preparing refugees for re-integration in their homeland.
- Providing educational and training support for one another.

Activities

- The Ministry of Human Resources Development of India has nominated the joint secretary of the Central Universities and Languages as the TFP for this CBM.
- The first technical meeting took place at the embassy of Iran in Kabul on December 16, 2012.
- The second technical meeting took place on April 17, 2013 in Tehran, Iran.
- The third technical meeting also took place in Tehran, on September 16, 2013.
- A book exhibition was organized in Kabul by Iran in November 2013.

Overview per Participating Country

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN – COUNTER-TERRORISM CBM

- Afghanistan has created organizational structures within its MFA, the RCD and is organizing and coordinating meetings across the region at the technical staff level, senior level and minister level.
- Afghanistan hosted the second ministerial conference on June 14, 2012.
- Kabul hosted a senior officials meeting on March 25, 2013.
- On November 18, 2013, the ACCI and the FICCI signed an MoU to further strengthen business partnerships and economic relations between the two countries.
- The MFA of Afghanistan and The University of Central Asia hosted the *Small and Medium Enterprises and Regional Trade in Afghanistan and the Heart of Asia Regional Symposium* in Kabul on February 23, 2014.
- Afghanistan hosted the second workshop on C-IED under the CN CBM in Kabul on March 8-9, 2014. Experts from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and the UN participated in this workshop.

THE REP. OF AZERBAIJAN – COUNTER-NARCOTICS AND REGIONAL INFRA. CBM

- Baku hosted the second working group meeting for the implementation plan of the CN CBM in January 2013.
- Baku also hosted a SOM on February 6, 2013.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

- China does not lead any CBM, however, it has been a co-steward of the Process since the Almaty ministerial conference and will host the upcoming fourth ministerial conference of the HoAP on August 29, 2014 in Tianjin.

THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA – TRADE COMMERCE AND INVESTMENT OPPS. CBM

- The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), in partnership with the governments of India and Afghanistan and in cooperation with Afghan investment and business organizations, organized the *Delhi Investment Summit on Afghanistan* on June 28, 2012 in New Delhi, India.
- FICCI organized four meetings of TFPs in New Delhi on September 20, 2012; April 18, 2013; August 29, 2013; and May 15, 2014. FICCI organized training of Afghan Chamber officials and B2B meetings in 2013.
- The Indian embassy hosted a technical meeting on the TCIO CBM in Kabul on January 29, 2013.
- On April 6, 2013 India removed tariffs on four hundred and sixty Afghan goods to boost bilateral trade.
- A capacity building program was organized by FICCI for a delegation of ten ACCI officials from June 17-24, 2013 in New Delhi.
- FICCI in association with the EPAA organized B2B meetings with a *Fresh and Dry Fruits' Traders*

delegation from Afghanistan in Mumbai and Hyderabad on June 24-25, 2013.

- On November 18, 2013, H.E. Salman Khurshid, Indian Minister of External Affairs, inaugurated the *Doing Business with Afghanistan* international conference in New Delhi under the HoAP umbrella. During the conference, FICCI organized a series of events to attract business. ACCI and FICCI signed an MoU to further strengthen business partnerships and economic relations between the two countries.
- FICCI also organized a *Road Show on Investment Opportunities in Afghanistan* in association with the AISA in Mumbai on November 20, 2013.
- FICCI in collaboration with the FAIDA, a department of USAID and the Indian embassy in Kabul organized interactive business meetings with the *Afghanistan Builders Delegation* on January 31, 2014 in New Delhi.
- New Delhi hosted a SOM on January 17, 2014.

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN – EDUCATION CBM

- Iran has organized three regional technical meetings for the implementation of the Education CBM, two of which took place in Tehran and one in embassy of Iran in Kabul.
- Iran organized a book exhibition in Kabul in November 2013.

THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN – DISASTER MANAGEMENT CBM

- Astana hosted the second TFP meeting of the DM CBM on September 4, 2013.
- Kazakhstan hosted a SOM in Almaty on April 25, 2013.
- The third ministerial conference was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan on April 26, 2013.

THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

- No specific information on activities of any HoAP CBM could be found on Kyrgyzstan.

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN – DISASTER MANAGEMENT CBM

- A consultation meeting on the *Lead TFPs* and the *RFPs* was convened on September 20, 2012 in Islamabad. The objective was to formulate and agree on a draft implementation plan for the DM CBM jointly formulated by the co-lead countries, Pakistan and Kazakhstan.
- Pakistan organized a training program for the *Afghan Search and Rescue Team* from ANDMA, in January 2014 under the DM CBM umbrella.
- Pakistan organized a two-day international seminar on *Sharing Experiences and Developing Regional Hazard and Risk Pictures for the Action Plan*, on May 12-13, 2014.
- Pakistan hosted the third DM CBM technical meeting in Islamabad on May 14, 2014.

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION – COUNTER-NARCOTICS CBM

- The Russian embassy in Kabul hosted the first regional technical meeting on the CN CBM on December 5, 2012.
- With the sponsorship of NATO, the *Federal Drug Control Service* of Russia provided training to twenty Afghan CN police officers on October 23, 2013.
- Russia hosted an anti-cannabis seminar under the CN CBM in Moscow on March 5, 2014

THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

- No specific information on activities of any HoAP CBM could be found on Tajikistan.

THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY – COUNTER-TERRORISM CBM

- Turkey hosted the first ministerial conference on November 2, 2011.
- Turkey hosted the first technical level meeting of the CT CBM in Ankara on September 3, 2012.
- Ankara also hosted a SOM on October 28, 2012.

TURKMENISTAN – REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE CBM

- Turkmenistan hosted two working group meetings on the RI CBM in Ashgabat. The purpose of the first meeting was to discuss the draft Action Plan and identify key activities for this CBM.
- During the second meeting, the participants reviewed the implementation of the Action Plan and put forward a series of recommendations on CBMs and the development of RI.

THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – COUNTER-TERRORISM CBM

- The UAE hosted the second and third technical level meetings on the CT CBM in Abu Dhabi. The second meeting was organized by the Hedaya Center and a draft implementation plan was produced to CT in Afghanistan.
- The UAE hosted a workshop on C-IED in Abu Dhabi in August 2013.

Annex 2: Methodology and Questionnaire Copy

Methodology

A number of diplomats whom we met in Kabul prior to project commencement contended that HoAP members' interest in it has faded, and that it is not living up to its potential. This sparked our curiosity to embark on a research project to assess if the Process indeed is at a juncture where inaction could work detrimental to the Process' objective.

This report is specifically, but not exclusively, designed for HoAP stakeholders at both policy advising as well as policy-making levels. We believe that this paper will shed more light on impediments to the Process. Hopefully, it will result in policy measures to resolve or at least moderate these, so that the momentum of the Process is not lost. In the interest of broad readership we have attempted to provide our findings in a clear and readable fashion.

For our qualitative methodology we have decided not to allocate resources too much to progress of the HoAP to date, since the Process is relatively young and progress in itself is hard to measure, i.e. what are metrics to assess a Process' advancement? In addition, in gauging progress it is no easy task to determine what activity falls entirely under the HoAP umbrella. There is overlap with existing bilateral ties' and multilateral mechanisms' programs and activities. Rather, we decided to take the Process' objective, juxtapose it with members' interests and concerns on regional affairs revolving around Afghanistan, and analyze impediments to the Process to address them. These impediments are categorized as (geo)political and operational. No distinction was made between inner circle members, the participating countries; and the outer circle of extra-regional countries, and regional and international organizations.

As we set the framework, our first step was to accurately define the Process, i.e. what has it been designed for? We based this on the three ministerial conference declarations and corresponding stated objectives. To an extent, we based it on a number of conversations with practitioners closely involved in the HoAP. We next, attempted to identify participating countries' interests and red flags, generally based on secondary data. We collected views on the Process based predominantly on primary data, i.e. authors' interviews. For our data compilation we have tried to create a roughly 70-30 percent ratio of field-desk research respectively. This ratio differs per country, the variable was whether fieldwork was an option or not. Existing analyses on the young HoAP is slim: there have been a few relatively brief pieces focusing on ailments of the Process by the Afghanistan Analysts Network, and concise reflections in scholarly journals. The Process has at times been allocated a subsection in reports, e.g. the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) analyzing Afghanistan and the region. None of these pieces have extensively analyzed the Process. Precisely because the current pool of analyses on the Process is small and shallow, we have opted for the aforementioned ratio.

In our collection of primary data we decided to allocate closer attention to interlocutors in (1) the Process' initiator, Afghanistan; (2) Turkey as a product of their active involvement since early stages of this forum, and Pakistan since Kabul alleges that it obstructs the Process' progress; (3) countries with a relatively and progressively heavier economic and geopolitical clout in the region: China and India; and (4) CBM lead states in order to obtain (more detailed) views on operational impediments. In our selection of interlocutors we have attempted to refer to a diverse body of (senior) government officials and scholars of both participating states, and supporting states and organizations who are involved in the Process in some capacity. We expected this to provide us a more comprehensive view on the Process and, in our opinion, it has. Logically, the sample size of interviewees per selected country cannot be perceived as fully representative of their respective country's stance on the Process, yet it is indicative.

Out of the fourteen participating states we have selected all but Saudi Arabia to examine because of its limited activity and participation. This brings our total of selected states to thirteen. We have decided not to include a separate section on the broad supporting body of the HoAP in our analysis due to the limited nature of their involvement in the Process, but more so because of our own capacity restraints. Their role and some of their views have been interwoven throughout the report. We have designed a fourteen-questions questionnaire that we have used for our interviews with interlocutors both in Kabul as well as in visited countries. A copy of the questionnaire that we have used for all interviews can be found in this annex. In the design of this questionnaire we have attempted not to push interviewees in a given direction. Individuals at Chatham House, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New York University, and Sciences Po have reviewed both our methodology and

questionnaire, see the second title page for more details on them. These individuals have also kindly provided peer review of the drafts that led to the end product, this report. Their constructive criticism has been addressed, and has undoubtedly enriched this paper. Any flaws in this paper are entirely our own.

Envisioned field trips to eight participating countries were reduced to five as a result of logistical and technical issues. The countries that we have visited to collect primary data are: Azerbaijan, China, India, Turkey and the UAE. China and India were visited in April, all others countries in March 2014. These countries were visited by either of the two authors, Richard Ghiasy or Maihan Saeedi. For four countries, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan we have referred to field advisors. They have also disseminated our questionnaire to their network and have provided us with supplementary views through email. In Kabul we have held two focus groups. One to exchange insights, assess deficiencies in current analyses on the Process, and one to reflect on the impediments to and recommendations for the HoAP that we have come up with. The first focus group was held in the second week after commencement of the project in February and the second one was held in mid May. Their reflections on our methodology and findings were taken into consideration and led to some amendments.

As for the breakdown of the report we have chosen to (1) introduce the HoAP and share some of our analyses on it and impediments that we have identified, (2) provide the bigger picture of complexities and opportunities in the Heart of Asia region, and (3) presents our findings on selected participating states' interests and concerns in the Heart of Asia region, and views of selected experts and practitioners on the Process. The report lastly provides a conclusion and recommendations to address the identified impediments.

Questionnaire Copy

On the Heart of Asia Process (HoAP)

1. Why, in your opinion, was the HoAP launched in the first place?
2. What progress has the Process made so far?
3. What have the Process' biggest achievements been?
4. What are impediments to the Process?
5. Would you say that interest in the Process has faded since conception?
6. If so, what should be done to reinvigorate the Process? By whom?

Country/Organization Specific

7. What are your country's/organization's expectations from the Process?
8. What has your country/organization done so far under the umbrella of/as a product of the Process?
9. What domestic/institutional impediments are there to progress of the Process?
10. What more could your country/organization do to contribute to the HoAP?
11. What regional/international impediments are there to progress of the Process?
12. What more could the Afghan government do to hone the Process?

On the 2014 Ministerial Conference in China

13. What do you expect from the next ministerial conference in China?
14. What do you recommend China to prepare for this conference/do for the Process?

Annex 3: Institutions and Experts Consulted

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

- Ambassador Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Afghan Embassy in New Delhi
- Ambassador Sultan Ahmed Baheen (retd): Director-General, Third Political Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Prof. Mirwais Balkhi: American University of Afghanistan
- Prof. Mansoor Ehsan: Karwan University
- Mr. Abbass Farasoo: Deputy Director-General, Regional Cooperation Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Jawed Ludin: Former Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Feroz Masjidi: Director, Strategy, Policy & Planning, Ministry of Commerce
- Ambassador Najibullah Mojadidi: Afghan Embassy in the United Arab Emirates
- Ms. Roya Rahmani: Director-General, Regional Cooperation Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Fazlullah Reshteen: Counselor, Afghan Embassy in Abu Dhabi
- Mr. Mahmoud Saikal: Former Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

- Mr. Farhad Bayramov: Researcher, Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD)
- Dr. Vugar Bayramov: Chairman, Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD)
- Prof. Vusal Gasimly: Head, Economic Analysis and Global Affairs Department, Centre for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SAM)
- Mr. Rashad Karimov: Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SAM)
- Mr. Cavid Veliyev: Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SAM)

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

- Prof. Du Youkang: Director, Center for South Asian Studies & Pakistan Study Centre, Institute of International Studies, Fudan University
- Dr. Hu Shisheng: Director, Institute of South and Southeast Asian & Oceanian Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR)
- Dr. Lan Jianxue: Associate Research Fellow, Department for Developing Countries Studies, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)
- Dr. Li Li: Deputy Director, Institute of South and Southeast Asian & Oceanian Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR)
- Dr. Li Qingyan: Assistant Researcher, Department for International and Strategic Studies, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)
- Prof. Qian Xuemei: School of International Studies, Peking University
- Prof. Wang Jisi: President, Institute of International and Strategic Studies (IISS), Peking University
- Dr. Wang Shida: Researcher, Institute of South and Southeast Asian & Oceanian Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR)
- Dr. Wang Xu: Center for South Asian Studies, Peking University
- Prof. Yang Cheng: Deputy Director, Center for Russian Studies, East China Normal University
- Dr. Ye Hailin: Head, Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)

THE EUROPEAN UNION

- Ms. Alice Plane: Political Advisor on Regional Cooperation and Economic Development, European Union Delegation to Afghanistan

THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

- Ms. Dorothea Gieselmann: Desk Officer, Task Force Afghanistan-Pakistan, German Federal Foreign Office

THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

- Mr. Vishal Chandra: Research Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA)
- Dr. Suba Chandran: Director, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS)
- Mr. Goutam Ghosh: Deputy Director, International Wing, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)
- Mr. Manoj Joshi: Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation (ORF)
- Prof. Nirmila Joshi: Director, Central Asian Studies, United Services Institution (USI)
- Brig. Gurmeet Kanwal: former Director General, Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)
- Ambassador Lalit Mansingh (retd): former Foreign Secretary
- Ms. Ashima Marwaha: Focal Point, Heart of Asia Process, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)
- Prof. S.K. Pandey: Center for Russian and Central Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)
- Mr. Gopalaparum Parthasarathy: Former Ambassador to Pakistan
- Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva: Chairperson, Center for European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)
- Gen. P.J.S. Sandhu (retd): Deputy Director, United Services Institute (USI)
- Lt. Gen. R.K. Sawhney: Distinguished Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF)
- Gen. P.K. Singh (retd): Director, United Services Institute (USI)
- Ms. Parveen Swami: Editor-in-Chief, The Hindu Newspaper
- Ms. Vikram Sood: Former Director, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)
- Prof. K. Warikoo: Dean, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)
- Mr. John Wilson: Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation (ORF)
- Mr. Niteen Yeola: Political Officer, Indian Embassy in Kabul

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

- Mr. Mohandes Majid Qasimi Faiz Abadi: Professor, Sharif University of Technology
- Dr. Reza Jalali: Professor, University of Tehran
- Dr. Mohammad Ali Khusrawi: Professor, University of Tehran

THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

- Mr. Azat Nurkenov: Third Secretary Political, Kazakh Embassy in Kabul
- Mr. Zhunus Yergaliyev: Political Counselor, Kazakh Embassy in Kabul
- Dr. Sanat Kushkumbayev: Chief Research Fellow, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies Under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

THE KYGRZ REPUBLIC

- Ambassador Avazbek Abdurazakov: Kyrgyz Embassy in Kabul
- Prof. Emil Dzhuraev: American University of Central Asia
- Dr. Chinara Esengul: Assistant Professor, International Relations Department, Kyrgyz National University and the Academy of Management under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic

- Dr. Shairbek Juraev: Deputy Director, Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) Academy

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

- Mr. Khalid Aziz: Chairman, Regional Institute of Policy Research and Training (RIPORT)
- Air Commodore Khalid Iqbal (retd): Former Assistant Chief of Air Staff

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

- Ambassador Mikhail Alekseyevich Konarovskiy (retd): former Deputy-Secretary General of the SCO; former Ambassador to Afghanistan; and Senior Research Fellow, Institute for International Studies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Ilya Timokhov: First Secretary, Political Section, Russian Embassy in Kabul

THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

- Mr. Kholikov Bakhtiyor: Chief Specialist, Foreign Affairs Department, Centre for Strategic Research under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan
- Mr. Kholiknazarov Khudoberdi: Director, Centre for Strategic Research under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan
- Mr. Iskandarov Kosimsho: Director, Centre on Studies of Afghanistan and the Region
- Prof. Muzaffar Olimov: Director, Research Centre Sharq
- Prof. Abdul Nabi Starzada: Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan

THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

- Prof. Selçuk Çolakoğlu: Deputy Director, International Strategic Research Organization (USAK), and Advisor at the Center for Strategic Research (SAM)
- Mr. Ahmet Hanoğlu: Third Secretary, Political, Turkish Embassy in Kabul
- Prof. Şaban Kardaş: President, Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM)
- Ambassador Alev Kılıç (retd): Director, Center for Eurasian Studies (AVIM)
- Mr. Ümit Alpaslan Kiliç: First Secretary, Center for Strategic Research (SAM)
- Ms. Özge Nur Öğütçü: Specialist, Center for Eurasian Studies (AVIM)
- Mr. Oytun Orhan: Middle East Researcher, Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM)
- Dr. Mesut Özcan: Chairman, Diplomacy Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Aslan Yavuz Şir: Senior Specialist, Center for Eurasian Studies (AVIM)
- Prof. İhsan Sezal: Dean, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, University of Economics and Technology (TOBB)
- Mr. Engin Turesin: Head of Section, Deputy Directorate General for Southern Asia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Mehmet Yegin: Head, Center for American Studies, International Strategic Research Organization (USAK)

THE UNITED KINGDOM

- Ms. Joanne Cappa: Political Officer, UK Embassy in Ankara
- Mr. Chris Fitzgerald: Political Officer, UK Embassy in Kabul
- Mr. Andrew Harvey: Second Secretary Political, UK Embassy in Baku

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

- Mr. Chris Ausdenmoore: Political Officer External Affairs, US Embassy in Kabul
- Ambassador Ronald Neumann (retd): Former Ambassador to Afghanistan
- Dr. Barnett Rubin: Director and Senior Fellow, Center on International Cooperation, New York University (NYU)

- Prof. Frederick Starr: Founding Chairman of the Central Asia - Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, and Research Professor, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University
- Ms. Vaida Vidugiris: Political Officer, US Embassy in Kabul

CHATHAM HOUSE

- Mr. Hameed Hakimi: Research Assistant/Project Coordinator, Royal Institute of International Affairs
- Ms. Rosheen Kabraji: Asia Programme Manager

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

- Ms. Adrienne Woltersdorf: Resident Representative, Afghanistan Office
- Mr. Alexey Yusupov: Head of Office, Almaty, Kazakhstan

INSTITUTE FOR PROSPECTIVE AND SECURITY STUDIES IN EUROPE

- Mr. Didier Chaudet: Head of Programme, Iranian and South Asian Studies

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

- Mr. David Gallalee: Director, Office of the NATO Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan

ROYAL UNITED SERVICES INSTITUTE

- Mr. Raffaello Pantucci: Senior Research Fellow
- Mr. Edward Schwarck: Research Fellow, Asia Studies

THE UNITED NATIONS

- Mr. Fakhrulla Azamov: Research Officer, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- Mr. Mark Pont: Special Advisor Regional Affairs/Senior Political Affairs Officer, United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA)
- Mr. Armands Pupols: Political Affairs Officer, United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA)
- Mr. Álvaro Rodríguez: Country Director, Afghanistan Country Office, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Prof. Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh: Director, Specialization on Human Security at the Master's of Public Affairs (MPA), Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po, Paris); and Consultant for the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA).
- Mr. Hashim Wahdatyar: National Programme Officer, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

THE WORLD BANK

- Mr. Robert Saum: Country Director for Afghanistan and Bhutan, South Asia Region

Please note, this list does *not include* a range of additional consulted experts: they preferred complete anonymity for varying motives. A few listed experts did not prefer direct referencing in the text body.

Annex 4: Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACCI	Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADPC	Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
APTTA	Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement
BOMNAF	Border Management in Northern Afghanistan
BSA	Bilateral Security Agreement
CABSI	The Central Asia Border Security Initiative
CADAP	Central Asia Drug Action Programme
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CATF	Central Asian Trade Forum
CBM	Confidence Building Measure
CCP	The Communist Party of China
CICA	Conference on Interaction and CBM in Asia
C-IED	Counter-Improvised Explosives Device
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CN	Counter Narcotics
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CT	Counter Terrorism
CTITF	Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force
DM	Disaster Management
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
FCO	Foreign and Common Wealth Office
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
FICCI	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry
GCC	The Gulf Cooperation Council
HoAP	Heart of Asia Process
HPC	High Peace Council
IC	International Community
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IPSE	Institute for Prospective and Security Studies
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resources and Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDRF	National Disaster Response Force
OIC	Organization for Islamic Cooperation
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RCD	Regional Cooperation Directorate
RECCA	Regional Economic Cooperation Conference for Afghanistan
RFP	Regional Focal Point

RI	Regional Infrastructure
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAR	Special Autonomous Region
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SDMC	SAARC Disaster Management Centre
SPA	Strategic Partnership Agreement
TAPI	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline
TCIO	Trade, Commerce and Investment Opportunities
TFP	Technical Focal Point
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia
TTP	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan
UCA	University of Central Asia
UNDP	United Nations Development Agency
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia
UNSPECA	United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
USAID	United States Agency for International Aid
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Annex 5: Notes and References

- ¹ The majority of experts whom we interviewed stated that the Process' future capacity and perceived esteem in the next 2-3 years will largely depend on what China will bring to the table this year and envisions for the Process in general.
- ² "National Joint Youth Programme (NJYP)," *United Nations Development Programme*, April 2009, http://www.undp.org.af/whoware/undpinafghanistan/Projects/dcse/prj_youth.htm
- ³ While the Process is also known and more frequently referred to as the *Istanbul Process* in some states, e.g. China, this paper will adhere to referring to it as the *Heart of Asia Process (HoAP)*.
- ⁴ Tadjbakhsh, Sharbanou, "Central Asia and Afghanistan: Insulation on the Silk Road, Between Eurasia and the Heart of Asia," *Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)*, Paper 3, <http://openbriefing.org/docs/caadnafghanistan.pdf>
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Author's Skype interview, HoAP interlocutor, May 2014
- ⁷ Written interview, HoAP analyst of a supporting state, April 2014
- ⁸ Labott, Elise, "Diplomatic Surge to Help End Afghan War, Clinton Says," *CNN*, February 19 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/02/18/clinton.afghanistan/>
- ⁹ We have drawn the Process' labor division from the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference Declaration established in 2012 at the Kabul Ministerial Conference.
- ¹⁰ Quie, Marissa, "The Istanbul Process: Prospects for Regional Connectivity in the Heart of Asia," *Asia Europe Journal*, April 2014, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10308-014-0385-7>
- ¹¹ Authors' interviews with interlocutors, February-May 2014
- ¹² Authors' interview, close Process observer of a supporting organization, Kabul, June 2014
- ¹³ Written interview, HoAP analyst of a supporting state, February 2014
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Dr. Middlebrook, Peter and Millswith, Landell, "Study of Funding Modalities for Heart of Asia Confidence Building Measures," *EU commissioned report*, p. 12, December 2013, <http://www.netlinksdemo.com/hoa/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Report-Study-of-Funding-Modalities-for-Heart-of-Asia-Confidence-Building-Measures-December-2013.pdf>
- ¹⁶ Author's interview, Afghan official involved in the HoAP, Kabul, February 2014
- ¹⁷ See these links for a copy of all three declarations: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/istanbul-process-on-regional-security-and-cooperation-for-a-secure-and-stable-afghanistan.en.mfa>, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/10569>, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/19668>
- ¹⁸ Quie, Marissa, "The Istanbul Process: Prospects for Regional Connectivity in the Heart of Asia," *Asia Europe Journal*, April 2014, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10308-014-0385-7>
- ¹⁹ Written interview, HoAP analyst of a supporting state, May 2014
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Author's interview, Mr. Jawed Ludin, Kabul, May 2014
- ²² Lander, Mark, "U.S. Troops to Leave Afghanistan by End of 2016," *The New York Times*, May 27 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/28/world/asia/us-to-complete-afghan-pullout-by-end-of-2016-obama-to-say.html?_r=0
- ²³ Authors' interview, close HoAP observer of a supporting organization, Kabul, June 2014
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ruttig, Thomas, "'Afghanistan Conference in Istanbul: The Clogged Arteries of the 'Heart of Asia'," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, November 1 2011, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistan-conference-in-istanbul-the-clogged-arteries-of-the-heart-of-asia>, Kazemi, S. Reza, "Afghanistan Conference in Kazakhstan: Will the 'Heart of Asia' Start Throbbing?," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, April 25 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistan-conference-in-kazakhstan-will-the-heart-of-asia-start-throbbing> & Kazemi S. Reza, "Over-promising, Under-delivering: The Outcome of the Afghanistan Conference in Kazakhstan," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, April 30 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/over-promising-under-delivering-the-outcome-of-the-afghanistan-conference-in-kazakhstan>
- ²⁷ For example: Quie, Marissa, "The Istanbul Process: Prospects for Regional Connectivity in the Heart of Asia," *Asia Europe Journal*, April 2014, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10308-014-0385-7>

- ²⁸ For example: Tadjbakhsh, Sharbanou, "Central Asia and Afghanistan: Insulation on the Silk Road, Between Eurasia and the Heart of Asia," *Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)*, Paper 3, <http://openbriefing.org/docs/caadnafghanistan.pdf>
- ²⁹ See Dr. Middlebrook and Landell Millswith's Study of Funding Modalities for Heart of Asia Confidence Building Measures, December 2013.
- ³⁰ See: <http://www.fes-afghanistan.org/pages/regional-declaration-on-afghanistans-peace-and-stability-launched.php>
- ³¹ Brown, Vanda Felbab, "Narco-Jihad: Drug Trafficking and Security in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Brookings*, December 2009, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2010/01/12-counternarcotics-felbabbrown>; "Mapping the Sources of Tension and the Interests of Regional Powers in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Barcelona Center for International Affairs*, December 2012, http://www.cidob.org/es/content/download/33651/537343/file/INFORME+AF-PAK_2012.pdf; Tellis, Ashley J., Mirski, Sean, "Crux of Asia: China, India, and the Emerging Global Order," *Carnegie*, January 10 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/01/10/crux-of-asia-china-india-and-emerging-global-order/f0gw>;
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Annex 6: About the AISS

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