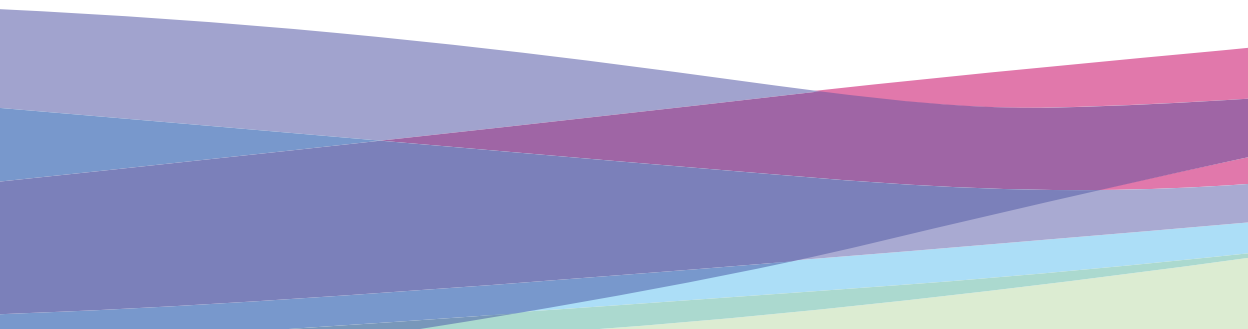


# Afghanistan-Pakistan Media Affairs

## *Challenges and Opportunities*

Rahimullah Yusufzai

December 2018

- The media in Afghanistan and Pakistan has never been so large, vibrant and independent.
  - It has attained unimaginable power and become a key player in politics and other walks of life. Media is the fourth pillar of the state and democracy in both Afghanistan and Pakistan in the true sense of the word.
  - Earlier, it was the mainstream print and electronic media that was dominant and had assumed unprecedented importance. Now the social media is making an impact in these two neighbouring countries and often taking the lead in breaking news even if it has lesser credibility than the mainstream media.
  - The media has tended to be overly patriotic and at times even aggressive in context of the perceived national interests of Afghanistan and Pakistan.
  - The poor relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan affect the work of journalists.
  - There is generally lack of awareness about each other due to the virtual absence of Afghan media in Pakistan and Pakistani media in Afghanistan.
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## List of Acronyms

APAPPS	Afghanistan Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity
APG	Afghanistan Policy Group
APP	Associated Press of Pakistan
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
PPG	Pakistan Policy Group
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
USA	United States of America





## Foreword

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is a German Political Foundation committed to the values of Social Democracy. Through its vast international network and offices in more than 100 countries, FES promotes democratic political culture, socially inclusive economic development as well as peace and stability. FES has more than a decade of experience in facilitating high level dialogues in South Asia. Working towards peace and security in Afghanistan is a key objective of FES in its regional work.

Over the last few years FES had established a network of four Policy Groups in Afghanistan, Central Asia, India and Pakistan. Each Policy Group has been composed of former and serving ambassadors, senior civil servants, military generals, parliamentarians, civil society leaders, analysts and journalists who bear in mind the strategic interest of their respective countries while deliberating mutually beneficial commitments and obligations. The Policy Groups engaged with each other and facilitated inter-regional track II dialogues with valuable inputs from experts in China, Iran, Russia and Turkey.

In April 2016, FES organized a bilateral meeting of Afghanistan and Pakistan Policy Groups in Kabul which was attended by the senior representatives of aforementioned Policy Groups. In that meeting, three core groups on security, economy and media were formed. Mr. Rahimullah Yusufzai was nominated by Pakistan Policy Group (PPG) as the head of Media group. PPG consists of a standing group of 15-20 prominent and influential academics, policy makers, former civil servants and military officers with influence in political, economic, military and media circles.

In 2017, both its offices in Islamabad and Kabul, and with the support of Pakistan Policy Group and Afghanistan Policy Group, FES organized an "Afghanistan-Pakistan Journalist Exchange Programme" in which prominent journalists from both sides of the border had a number of exchange visits. At the end of this exchange programme, it was decided that a study on "Afghanistan-Pakistan Media Affairs" will be authored by Rahimullah Yusufzai who has been heading the Media group from Pakistan.

We are highly thankful to Rahimullah Yusufzai for his tireless efforts in researching this study, for analyzing the situation of Afghanistan-Pakistan media affairs and for coming up with a number of valuable recommendations for state authorities of Afghanistan & Pakistan, media and civil society.

**Rolf Paasch,**  
Resident Director,  
FES Pakistan

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Programme Officer,  
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## Rise in Media Power

In Afghanistan, the media has proliferated in an unprecedented way and benefited the most from the atmosphere of freedom of speech and expression since 2001-2002 in the post-Taliban period. It has gained immensely in terms of visibility and power compared to other institutions.

The Afghan media cannot be ignored even if its growing power is resented by the other powerful pillars of the state, including people in power and those with guns. Efforts to curb the media's independence have continued, but this hasn't diluted its enthusiasm and keenness to do a proper job in keeping with the principles of independent journalism. It is believed that the freedom gained by the Afghan media cannot be easily taken away as it has been won the hard way and is a guarantor for sustaining the country's fledgling democracy.

In Pakistan, two institutions that have gained immense power in the past decade are the judiciary and the media. While the judiciary has legal authority, the media operates largely on the basis of moral power. In fact, the judiciary became strong when the media played a key role in keeping alive the landmark lawyers' agitation that forced military ruler

General Pervez Musharraf in 2007 to restore the sacked judges of the superior courts. This marked the beginning of judicial activism that empowered the judges, particularly those sitting in judgement in the superior courts. It is widely acknowledged that this would not have happened without the active and supportive role played by the media.

Such is the importance of the media in shaping public opinion in Pakistan that it is often able to set the agenda for the other institutions to follow. The country's powerful military has a full-fledged media wing headed by a general that handles all media-related work and sponsors movies, dramas, anthems, etc to create a better image of the security forces. The elected government and its information department and the opposition parties maintain ever-expanding public relations cells. Though, the print media continues to retain its importance and the radio has made a comeback in Pakistan through the FM channels, the television channels have mushroomed to more than 100 and every day there are now an unbelievable 118 prime-time talk shows, 177 dramas, and about 100 morning and 57 crime shows. There are also over 300 radio channels while 1,750 newspapers in Urdu,

English and the regional languages are published daily.

Such is the diversity of the Pakistani television media that according to the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), 84 percent of the viewers watch news bulletins on TV channels, 65 percent watch drama TV channels, 36 percent Islamic TV channels, 34 percent sports channels, 28

percent morning shows and 21 percent watch news and current affairs channels. The viewership of the news and current affairs programmes, particularly the political talk shows, has dropped as often the same persons whose views are known are invited as guests to these programmes and participants indulge in distasteful verbal brawls.

## **Fallout on Media of Poor Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations**

While it is true that the growing power and independence of the media in Afghanistan and Pakistan has contributed to increased awareness about issues of public importance and strengthening of democracy in the two countries, this hasn't necessarily helped in improving their usually strained relations. The media has tended to be overly patriotic and at times even aggressive in context of the perceived national interests of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The often unfriendly relations between the two bordering Islamic countries has negatively affected their media and made it difficult to cooperate and collaborate with each other. It is becoming hard to say anything positive about one another in view of their embittered relations.

The poor relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan affect the work of journalists. Everything is seen from the lens of politics and security issues and journalists face hurdles if they want to pay a

visit to the neighbouring country and try to work freely. The two governments don't pay much attention to allowing exchange of media products and journalists' delegations. Such visits are generally arranged by international donors and organizations. The animosity in the Pak-Afghan relations also affects the working of the media and the objectivity of journalists covering issues concerning the two countries.

There is generally lack of awareness about each other due to the virtual absence of Afghan media in Pakistan and Pakistani media in Afghanistan. Those following the local media often hear negative news about each other as positive information is either not available or deliberately ignored. The people in the two countries usually get the information about each from mostly Western news network and not directly from their own media. This could fuel an image of the two countries that is misleading.

## Status of Afghan Media in Pakistan

The print media has been traditionally weak in Afghanistan. The circulation and sale of Afghan newspapers and journals in the two main languages, Pashto and Dari (Afghan Persian), is limited even in Afghanistan what to speak of countries like Pakistan. There is virtually no Afghan publication worth the name that is in demand in Pakistan. The language barrier is also the reason for the small number of Pakistanis following the Afghan media. There are a negligible number of Persian speakers in Pakistan while the Pashto script used in Afghanistan isn't understood much by Pakistani Pashto speakers.

In context of the electronic media, the number of Pakistanis regularly able to listen to Afghan radio stations and watch Afghanistan's numerous television channels isn't very high. Afghan music, mostly in Pashto, certainly has many ardent fans in Pakistan and they make it a point to gain access to it by whatever means possible, often through the internet. The more than 2.5 million Afghan refugees also prefer to tune in to their homeland's TV and radio channels, though their long stay in Pakistan has made them accustomed to read Pakistani publications, listen to the country's radio and watch its wide variety of TV channels. However, the general

animosity towards Pakistan among sections of the Afghan society clouds their judgement about the credibility of the Pakistani media.

Afghan TV channels can be watched in Pakistan on privately owned dish antennas. Some cable operators illegally show Afghan TV channels, but stricter government controls enforced by Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) is making it difficult and costly to do so. PEMRA officials insist there is no ban specifically on Afghan television channels as all foreign TVs need license for landing rights in Pakistan costing Rs10 million for five years along with 30 percent annual fee.

No Afghan media organization has a regular office in Pakistan. Opening such an office would be a challenge. Bureaucratic hurdles and security clearance would take time and possibly need political intervention by the two governments. The cost can be fairly high to post a journalist in Pakistan. One Afghan television channel in Pashto (Shamshad TV) discreetly opened a small office in Peshawar, but it was later closed down. In the past, the Afghan media organizations generally found a way out by appointing someone already living in Pakistan, such as an Afghan refugee, as its correspondent there.

Like other Afghan refugees, the journalists too could sometimes face harassment by the police and other law-enforcement and security personnel. A few complained of being questioned by the intelligence agencies if they reported something that is considered objectionable.

Some Afghans used to work for the Afghan and the international media in Pakistan, but most have left for Western countries or returned to Afghanistan due to difficult working conditions or in search of better prospects. Abdul Haq Omari of Tolo TV and Zabih Shafaq of Azadi Radio were among the last Afghan journalists still working in Pakistan from their work stations in Islamabad and Peshawar. Both returned to Afghanistan a couple of years ago after finding it difficult to continue working in Pakistan due to security and bureaucratic issues. Now mostly Pakistani Pashto-speaking journalists are working in place of Afghans mostly for the international media broadcasting in Pashto.

As the Afghan journalists generally didn't possess legal documents such as work permit to do journalism in Pakistan, they lived in fear of being stopped from working. Accreditation issues hamper the work of Afghan journalists as they aren't legally permitted to work if they are unable to get accredited with the Pakistani information

departments at the federal and provincial levels. Security clearance is also required from the intelligence agencies when the government's information departments give them accreditation cards.

Work permits are presently non-existent for Afghan journalists in Pakistan. Afghanistan and Pakistan would have to sign an agreement to allow journalists from the two countries to work legally on reciprocal basis. Such an arrangement that worked fine for a number of years between India and Pakistan before collapsing could serve as a model to begin with.

Gaining access to conflict zones is a challenge for all journalists, including Pakistanis, but Afghan journalists cannot hope to be invited to media visits occasionally arranged by the military for local and foreign journalists. As Afghan journalists aren't accredited, they don't get invited to official media events in Pakistan. They seek help from Pakistani colleagues to cover such events or keep themselves abreast by following the happenings in the Pakistani media, particularly the TV channels.

At times the conditions for Afghan journalists became dangerous in Pakistan. The Peshawar-based Afghan journalist Janullah Hashimzada working for the Afghan and international media in Pakistan



was assassinated by four masked gunmen on August 24, 2009 in the Khyber area bordering Afghanistan. His killers haven't been arrested and his family is still seeking justice. The

incident served as a reminder for Afghan journalists that they too could meet such a fate.

## Status of Pakistani Media in Afghanistan

Presently, there is no office of any Pakistani media organization in Afghanistan. No Pakistani journalist is based in Afghanistan, though journalists from Pakistan pay occasional short trips on reporting assignments. A few Pakistani journalists faced arrest and deportation when they entered Afghanistan without proper travel documents in the past.

All Pakistani newspapers were banned in Afghanistan by President Hamid Karzai's government in 2012 when a Peshawar-based Pashto newspaper, Wahdat, published a news item containing objectionable term for slain Afghan soldiers. The mistake was committed by one small newspaper, but all Urdu and English newspapers and magazines were banned. The ban still exists and no real effort seems to have been made to resolve the issue. It is doubtful if this issue has ever been raised and discussed in bilateral meetings between officials from the two countries.

According to the Pakistan embassy in Kabul, about 1,500-2,000

Pakistani newspapers were brought to Afghanistan daily for sale before the ban was imposed. The readers included diplomats, government officials, traders, staff of international organizations, INGOs, academics, students, Pakistanis working in Afghanistan, etc. Over a period of time, readers start losing interest if a particular newspaper of their choice isn't available and they have no other option, but to switch to another one. Those interested, however, can still access the Pakistani newspapers through the internet.

Concerning the electronic media, Pakistani Urdu and Pashto TV channels can be watched in Afghanistan on privately owned dish antennas and through some cable operators. However, these aren't widely available. Many Afghans during their stay in Pakistan as refugees learned to speak and even write Urdu and many still have an interest in reading Pakistani newspapers and watching Pakistan's TV channels.

## Reasons of Information Vacuum Between Neighbours

Though Afghanistan and Pakistan are neighbours and have to co-exist, their relations have generally remained unfriendly due to border disputes and their closeness to the rival superpowers such as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and United States of America (USA) in the past.

Politics and security issues dominate the narrative in terms of the often uneasy bilateral ties. The matters of life and death in view of the spiraling violence and general insecurity prevent the creation of the necessary goodwill to do anything meaningful for improving the relationship.

Suspicion and mistrust dominate the Afghanistan-Pakistan relations on account of both historical

reasons and the existing situation of general insecurity due to the frequent acts of terrorism on both sides of their Durand Line border. The occasional confidence-building measures have failed to overcome the distrust characterizing the uncertain relationship between the two countries.

The inability of the media to be read, heard and seen in each other's country is considered part of the mutually antagonistic policies made in Islamabad and Kabul. This precludes listening to and understanding each other as just one side is heard regarding a particular event or issue.

# Creating Culture of Engagement

## Establishing Institutional Relations Between Media Stakeholders

As journalists are supposed to be neutral and also opinion-makers, they could play an important role in creating the right conditions for peace and friendly relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan by highlighting commonalities and the positive aspects of the relationship and downplaying jingoistic and overly nationalistic positions taken by certain elements.

The representatives of journalists' unions and the officials of media organizations in Afghanistan and Pakistan may have met informally on rare occasions during trips arranged by the government or donors and held consultations on issues of mutual interest, but these occasional interactions haven't achieved anything tangible.

Though past attempts to form a joint association of Afghan and Pakistani journalists haven't worked, such efforts ought to continue. There is need for doing proper homework before making another attempt to bring together journalists from the two countries on one platform. Holding regular meetings would be ideal, but the forum could also be kept alive and working through the use of technology, particularly

an internet-based webpage. An agenda of reasonable and doable objectives needs to be agreed upon to start with. The local journalists' unions and press clubs would have to be involved in this effort. Lack of resources has always been a constraint in materializing this idea. Therefore, some funding from official and non-official sources would be needed to sustain this initiative and make it effective.

Efforts to invite participants from both countries to take part in TV talk shows discussing bilateral issues and events haven't made any real headway on account of concerns that they would say unpalatable things. It is rare to watch discussants from the two countries in a TV programme focusing on issues of mutual concern, but it depends on the host of the show to make it balanced or one-sided. Often, the host being in control of the show makes it biased in favour of his or her country.

Lately though, discussions were held during meetings of the Afghanistan Policy Group and Pakistan Policy Group sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) for evolving a joint strategy to lobby their respective

governments to allow the free flow of information in the two countries. One of the stated objectives was to consider lowering the landing rights license fee for TV channels from Afghanistan and Pakistan so that these become available to viewers in both countries. However, this would require regular interaction and lobbying because incidents of violence happening regularly in the two countries damage whatever little has been achieved in terms of creating the right conditions for such initiatives.

The Afghan government had a plan since the last few years to open offices of the state-owned Bakhtar news agency in a few neighbouring countries, including Pakistan, but it hasn't materialized yet. It could be a good beginning as the

Afghan people would start learning more about Pakistan through the eyes of Pakistan-based Afghan journalists working for Bakhtar. Reciprocal arrangements could be made by opening Bakhtar's office in Islamabad and the state-owned Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) could have a presence in Kabul.

If it works well and there are no security and financial issues, this arrangement could be extended to the other state-owned media organizations and also privately run television and radio channels. The primary concern though would be ensuring security for the media houses and journalists operating in the two countries in view of past complaints about harassment at the hands of security agencies.

## **Impact of Regional Dynamics on Afghanistan-Pakistan Media Relations – What Went Wrong**

Afghanistan and Pakistan have mostly been part of rival world and regional camps and this generally had negative fallout on their overall relations, including media ties. Their political alignments in world politics were antagonistic to each other. This was another cause, together with their unfriendly bilateral ties, of the deep mistrust in the relationship.

Afghanistan was earlier among the leading non-aligned countries but after the communist Saur Revolution in April 1978 it moved closer to the Soviet Union and became involved in the Cold War on the side of Moscow against the US and its allies. The Western and Islamic support for the Afghan mujahideen against the Soviet occupying forces and the Afghan communist regime brought a change in Afghanistan's foreign relations as it moved away from Moscow and closer to Washington, Islamabad, Tehran, Beijing and Riyadh. Presently, it is firmly in the US camp, though Kabul has also been trying to improve relations with Moscow, Beijing and other anti-US capitals. Afghanistan has also become very friendly with India much to Pakistan's discomfort.

As for Pakistan, it was a close ally of the US during the Cold War and an opponent of the USSR. However, Pakistan also befriended China and this relationship blossomed without affecting its relations, at least until recently, with the US. Nowadays, Pakistan has been moving away from the US and inching closer to Russia. Its relations with China have deepened further while the hostilities with India have increased. However, the single biggest factor for the animosity in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations is Pakistan's enmity with India and growing Afghanistan-India friendship. This has negatively impacted the already lukewarm Afghanistan-Pakistan media relations. Islamabad cannot dictate Kabul to choose its friends on Pakistan's whims. Also, Kabul has to show more sensitivity to Islamabad's concerns regarding New Delhi, more so in terms of security matters.

As a corrective measure, Kabul and Islamabad have to keep aside the India factor and deal with each other at the bilateral level in the interest of their people because as they say friends can be changed but not neighbours.

## Recommendations for State, Media and Civil Society

- Ink Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the ministries of information and culture of Afghanistan and Pakistan to ensure improvement in bilateral relations and enabling their citizens to better understand each other's issues and aspirations through free flow of information.
- Develop a mechanism for regular interaction between the official information departments of the two countries instead of having one-off, once-in-a-while meetings that only briefly focus attention on issues.
- Create a separate joint working group for improving media relations between the two countries in addition to the five working groups focusing on security, trade, border and refugees' issues and established as part of the Afghanistan Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS) in early 2018 on Pakistan's initiative.
- Entrust the joint working group with the task to look into the hurdles in the way of cooperation between the public and private media of the two countries and propose steps for removing the bottlenecks. Also, give suggestions for clearing misconceptions about each other through timely action and discussing issues in the working group instead of the media.
- Remove legal hurdles to enable an agreed number of journalists from Afghanistan and Pakistan to legally work for their respective media organizations in the two countries for a fixed period of time on reciprocal basis. Look into the similar bilateral arrangement that existed between India and Pakistan for a number of years to see if it can be followed and improved.
- Do away with any existing ban, announced or unannounced, on media products between the two countries after a joint review at the official level and allow circulation and sale of newspapers, journals and books published in Afghanistan and Pakistan subject to their respective laws to ensure free flow of information.
- Devise a mutually agreeable system with provision for special and affordable rates

for license for landing rights in the two countries, particularly in Pakistan where PEMRA rules apply, to facilitate the public and private TV channels based in Afghanistan and Pakistan to broadcast in the two countries after meeting the legal and commercial requirements.

- Encourage and facilitate opening the offices of the state-owned Bakhtar news agency of Afghanistan in Islamabad and of the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) in Kabul. Extend this arrangement to the other public and private media organizations keeping in view the security and financial issues.
- Facilitate exchange of movies, documentaries and TV dramas made in Afghanistan and Pakistan to be shown in the two countries for better understanding of their history and culture.
- Form a joint committee of the representatives of the private media of the two countries to identify challenges and recommend the way forward for mutually beneficial collaboration between the private print and electronic media organizations.
- Identify positive stories of cooperation, friendship, inter-

marriages, joint ventures, etc between Afghans and Pakistanis and get these publicized through the media in the two countries to show that the relations aren't always unfriendly.

- Pool the knowledge, experience and resources of international organizations working in Afghanistan and Pakistan to facilitate meaningful interaction and cooperation between the Afghan and Pakistani media in the interest of peace and solidarity in the region.
- Conduct an independent joint study on Pak-Afghan relations to identify missed opportunities for improving bilateral media relations and exploring chances that may emerge in future to build the relationship on a strong footing.
- Enable and motivate the media in Afghanistan and Pakistan to collaborate for covering events of common interest taking place in the two countries and undertaking joint ventures.
- Involving and sensitizing the political parties and civil society groups in the effort to improve Pak-Afghan media relations with the objective to promote overall bilateral relations.





**Pictorial Highlights  
of  
Afghanistan – Pakistan Journalists'  
Exchange Programme 2017**



Afghan journalists meeting Mr. Sartaj Aziz, National Security and Foreign Adviser at Foreign Office, Islamabad (2017)  
Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo



Afghan journalists meeting Major General Asif Ghafoor, Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) at Islamabad (2017)  
Photo by ISPR



Afghan journalists meeting Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting at PTV head quarter, Islamabad (2017)  
Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo



Afghan journalists attending a roundtable dialogue on "Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations – Transforming their relations through media" at Islamabad.  
Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo





Afghan journalists meeting with leading journalists and members of Pakistan Policy Group at Islamabad (2017)  
Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo



Afghan journalists meeting with leading journalists and members of Pakistan Policy Group at Islamabad (2017)  
Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo



Afghan journalists meeting with leading journalists and members of Pakistan Policy Group at Islamabad (2017)  
Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo



Afghan journalists meeting with leading journalists and members of Pakistan Policy Group at Islamabad (2017)  
Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo





Afghan journalists meeting with the office bearers and senior journalists at Lahore Press Club (2017)  
Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo



Afghan journalists meeting with the office bearers and senior journalists at Lahore Press Club (2017)  
Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo



A group photo of Afghan journalists with Acting Secretary of SAFRON, Commissioner Afghan Refugees and Convener of Pakistan Policy Group at Ministry of States and Frontier Regions, Islamabad (2017)

Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo



A group photo of Afghan journalists with Secretary Information and Press Secretary of Chief Minister Punjab at Lahore (2017)

Photo by FES Pakistan / Arslan Barijo





Pakistani journalists meeting with the Chief Executive of Afghanistan,  
Dr. Abdullah Abdullah at Kabul, Afghanistan (2017)  
Photo by FES Afghanistan



A group photo of Pakistani journalists with the Chief Executive of Afghanistan,  
Dr. Abdullah at Kabul, Afghanistan (2017)  
Photo by FES Afghanistan



Pakistani journalists meeting with Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan at Kabul (2017)  
Photo by FES Afghanistan



A group photo of Pakistani journalists with Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan at Kabul (2017)  
Photo by FES Afghanistan





A group photo of Pakistani journalists after landing at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul (2017)  
Photo by FES Pakistan



Pakistani journalists posing for a photo at Kabul, Afghanistan (2017)  
Photo by FES Pakistan



At Ariana News studio, Kabul, Afghanistan (2017)  
Photo by FES Afghanistan



At Ariana News studio, Kabul, Afghanistan (2017)  
Photo by FES Afghanistan



At Ariana News studio, Kabul, Afghanistan (2017)

Photo by FES Afghanistan

## About the author

Mr. Rahimullah Yusufzai is a senior journalist and political and security analyst for Pakistan's largest television network Geo TV. Currently, he is serving at The News International as its Resident Editor for Peshawar. He is also a correspondent for the BBC, working for its Urdu, Pashto, Hindi and English radio services. He contributes articles to the monthly Newline in Karachi, the Gulf News in Dubai and other national and international publications. He has held positions in Pakistan's journalists unions.

He was among the first journalists to report the rise of the Taliban in Kandahar in early 1995. He was also the first to interview Taliban movement founder Mullah Mohammad Omar and interviewed Osama bin Laden twice in 1998.

Mr. Yusufzai has been reporting on the Afghan conflict since 1978 and has widely travelled in Afghanistan. He has also reported and analyzed the conflict in Pakistan's tribal areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and Balochistan. He has co-authored books on Afghanistan, the Taliban and al-Qaeda and has received the civil awards - Tamgha-e-Imtiaz award in 2004 and Sitara-e-Imtiaz award in 2009 - from the Government of Pakistan for his achievements in the field of journalism.

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