

CGSS Interactive Series

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Pakistan – Bosnia: Possibilities and Opportunities



Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad

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Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery, HI(M), (Retd), commenced the session of the Interactive Series by thanking Ambassador Nedim Makarevic and other participants of the Roundtable for attending the discussion session on 'Pakistan-Bosnia: Possibilities and Opportunities'.



General Jaffery (Retd), acknowledged the fact that Ambassador Nedim Makarevic was the first Ambassador to visit the Army Public School after the attack in Peshawar in 2014. By profession Ambassador is an IT expert and engineer, and his wife is a faculty member at NUST and teaches genetic engineering. General Jaffery (Retd), also stated that Ambassador Nedim Makarevic is quite active in the diplomatic corp and supports Pakistan's stance on all issues.

Ambassador Nedim Makarevic

The Ambassador Nedim Makarevic thanked General Jaffery (Retd), for inviting him to this forum where he could share his country's culture and perspective with the fellow participants. He further continued by saying that he has been serving in Pakistan for the past 3 and half years and in these years he has realized that people have many misconceptions about Bosnia and Herzegovina.



He further stated that he is not here to talk about war or violence but to show the greater public about his country's history, culture and geographically and where do they exist on map. The population of Bosnia and Herzegovina is less than 4 million out of which 2.2 million are Bosniak Muslims. There are three distinct ethnic groups, also known as constituent people. The composition of population in Bosnia is as follows:

- Bosniaks 51%
- Bosnian Orthodox :Serbs 31%
- Bosnian Catholics :Croats 14%

➤ Others 4%



The official languages of Bosnia are Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian and the official currency is Convertible Mark (KM). He further shared some basics such as, the Capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina is Sarajevo and Bosnia is known as the heart of Europe with 51,125 Km² of area, due to its eographical location. Bosnia is situated in the Balkan Peninsula of South Eastern Europe. Neighbouring countries are Serbia and Montenegro in the east, Croatia in the north, west and south. The country has a weather where summer is hot and winter is very cold. Three distinct cultures of Slavic/Illiran (because of the origin), Turkish (Ottoman period), Austro-Hungarian (western influence), can be found in the country.

The Ambassador further presented the historical background while explaining the influence of different Empires such as the Ottoman Empire and Austro-Hungarian Empire on different sectors such as architecture, music, food, culture, tradition and religion. He also explained the richness



of Bosnia's natural and wildlife. The Ambassador further shed a light on the sports such as Winter Olympics and Sarajevo Film Festivals that are arranged by Bosnia and Herzegovina.

While elucidation the importance of education for Bosnians, Ambassador Nedim Makarevic also explained went out to explain that the literacy rate in Bosnia, according to him, is less than 3 percent and if not mistaken, he believes it to be zero percent. It is mandatory for the Bosnians to send their kids to school to attain basic knowledge and education or else the parents have to face the punishment as per the Bosnian laws. If people are not following the law, a verdict will be issued against them.

The Ambassador further highlighted the problems of Pakistan as for him terrorism is the biggest issue which has deteriorated the socio-economic situation in the country. Mostly people here in Pakistan do not send their kids to schools to acquire knowledge because they have other priorities and their priority is to invest in other things other than education. Hence, they send their kids to madrassas because they provide education free of cost and do not care about the kind of knowledge they are disseminating in their kids.

Pakistan has an abundance of natural and beautiful landscape with immense potential in tourism industry, Pakistan has beautiful valleys like Hunza, Kashmir, Kaghan, Naran and many other in the northern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Batistan. Beautiful deserts in Baluchistan and Sindh are also a gift of God, however, unfortunately the bane of terrorism has taken away the opportunity to flourish this industry. Despite all these beautiful tourism destinations people are afraid of visiting Pakistan because of the pertaining security situation of the country which has affected nearly every walk of life.



Bosnian government has established a strong system of education where there are both private and government run educational institutions. There are some institutions where English is being

taught and the medium of communication is English to accommodate the foreign students. This aspect of educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina attracts foreign students from around the world.

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General Jaffery (Retd), further added few words due to his expertise in the country which he gained during his tenure of being appointed as the Ambassador of Pakistan to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia is home to Pyramids of Europe. These Pyramids have water system beneath them, which has been in place for centuries. People of Bosnia are very friendly especially towards Pakistan, whereas Sarajevo is like the Jerusalem of Europe where there exists distinct cultures and religions. For instance, there are 150 mosques in Sarajevo, as well as many churches and cathedrals. Bosnia is the only country in Europe where we can hear Azan (Call of Prayer for Muslims)

General Jaffery (Retd), also shared some history by stating that Bosnia underwent turmoil for many years and during that period approximately 300 rounds of various shells were fired on Sarajevo. The resilience shown by people of Bosnia and Herzegovina during war era is exemplary.

Mrs. Nedim Makarevic-Wife of Ambassador

The wife of Ambassador Nedim Makarevic, also used the opportunity to express her feelings. According to her, Pakistani students are very intelligent but all they need is the right direction and guidance. As she is a lecturer at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) Pakistan, she elucidate her experience with her



students that whenever any task is being assigned to them they do it willingly. Students have this

idea that if they want to change the political system of Pakistan they have to change their educational system and they are quite willing to do this.

Mrs. Makarevic was of the view that, many people in the underprivileged areas do not send their kids to school. While explaining the war and post war situations of Bosnia she elucidated that even after a war, Bosnians were able to salvage themselves because they have what is necessary for a nation to progress and develop and that is education and knowledge which nobody can take away from us. She believes that anything can be taken away from a person be it money, house or other material things but not education. Therefore, one must invest in their children's education and think not in the present but as far as ten years down the road.

Question and Answer Session

Q:1: Do we have educational forums between Pakistan and Bosnia? Or any exchange programs between the universities? (Haseeb-ur-Rehman)

Ans: As an answer to this question the Ambassador replied that we do not have much collaboration on the government level, but we are thinking to expand our cooperation in this regards. Although we had Bosnian students who came here in Pakistan as refugees in 90s but currently there are not any such students. We have signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and NUST, Pakistan for the student exchange program, through which we seek to expand the collaboration between professor, students and academia.



Q:2: Is there any collaboration between Bosnia and Pakistan to establish and expand their relations while using cyber technology? (Muhammad Iftekhar Yezdani)

Ans: The Ambassador opined that although the cyber space is efficient for the dissemination of views and ideas but he does not think that it should be used to further strengthen bilateral

relationships. We cannot use Facebook to teach our students and kids about science and technology as social media has no use in the field of academia.

He further said that we can use social media and cyber space to tell the original story of Pakistan, to tell the world that Pakistan and its nationals are the main victims of terrorism. While explaining the biasness of foreign media outlets towards Islam and Pakistan the Ambassador quoted the incident of Army Public School (APS) massacre that happened on 16th December 2014, he stated that on that day Pakistan lost more than 130 people and majority of them were students but nobody has taken that incident seriously. The well-known channels like BBC and CNN only displayed the ticker of this horrific news as if it is of no importance, because they did not want to project the original story. International community was of the view that these actions have been perpetrated by bunch of crazies while not giving due credits to the Pakistan Army which is fighting these terrorist organizations since more than a decade.



Contrary to that, after few weeks, nearly every foreign media mourned the death of 12 people in Paris in the wake of Charlie Hebdo attack although, the deceased were the one who disrespected the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The Ambassador said that he was greatly moved by the Peshawar school incident and was eager to meet the students and parents of the martyred students, and for that purpose he actually went there very next day after the reopening of the Army Public School (APS) and went on to meet the student, teachers and parents of the martyred students.

The Ambassador said that being a human, an ambassador and a Muslim he thought to do something to show the original face of Pakistan to the world despite no assistance from foreign Media or any other organization. He has a strong belief that music is the best medium to reach out to the masses and for that he vocalized a song that portrays the spirit of students which got high views from the social media users. This is a bright example of using cyber space for benefit.

Suggestion by Mr. Makhdoom Babar

On the role of media in expanding relationship between Pakistan and Bosnia Mr. Makhdoom Babar explained that the people in both the countries do not know much about each other because there is lack of cooperation at the official level between both the countries. He suggested that Media can be the voice of people, so we can telecast Bosnian Drams on our channels with Urdu dubbing and subtitles just like Turkish dramas that are being played on our local channels and are very popular among the masses. We must have diplomatic and political contact to further enhance the media partnership.



Q:3: How many students you expect from Pakistan to visit Bosnia for educational purposes every year? (Haseeb-ur-Rehman)

Ans: The Ambassador explained that there are very few students that visit Bosnia every year. Currently only one student from Pakistan is studying in Bosnia which is a very meagre figure. Furthermore, we can offer more visas to students under student exchange programs. Unfortunately, the people of Pakistan have very less information about Bosnia and for them it is not a very developed country and not a feasible spot to send their children for higher studies. Here the people who have money send their children to the countries like UK, USA, Germany and etc, not knowing the fact that the standard of education in Bosnia is very high and even Europeans do admire this fact.

On the other hand, the Ambassador said that there are 30 scholarships offered by Pakistan for the Bosnian Students but people are so afraid of the security situation and terrorism in Pakistan that they are not availing this opportunity.

Q:4: What are the prospects for trade and business in Bosnia for Pakistanis? What kind of opportunities you are offering for the investors? (Zalidar Ahsan Shah)



Ans: As per the Ambassador, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still considered as a post war country, hence, they don't have to pay taxes and duties on the trade and businesses in Europe. Therefore, if one has a textile mill or other industries operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina they may manufacture their products and export them to Europe on subsidized tax policies. This presents an enormous opportunity for Pakistani investors. While talking about the business opportunities in Bosnia the Ambassador further elucidated that currently 1.3 million tourists visit Bosnia and Herzegovina even though the population of the country is less than 4 million. There is a massive opportunity for the hotel industry to establish themselves there.

Bosnia is offering company registration on minimum amount, for example in other European countries one has to pay a lot of money which is equivalent to millions of Pakistani Rupees to register its company whereas in Bosnia one can register in only 750 dollars. All you need to have is the presence of the owner and an accountant and you can get a working visa.

Bosnia charges 10 percent income tax which is the lowest in entire Europe and in comparison to Germany, which charges 60 percent, this percentage is very low. There is a great potential for surgical goods.

General Jaffery (Retd), added by stating that he has a friend in Bosnia who owns a textile company and he agrees with the Ambassador that there is a huge potential for such endeavors.

Load shedding is like a cancer to the economy of Pakistan and Ambassador said he hate only this aspect of the country. Therefore, there is need for more people to work for the energy sector to get rid of this curse.

Q:5: What kind of incentives are you offering for new investors coming in to Bosnia? (M. Asad Ansari)

Ans: The biggest opportunity offered by Bosnian Government is that once you register your company, you get a working visa but in other European countries they only offered resident visa and to work there you have to spend more.



Q:6: Is there any particular industry the Government of Bosnia is focusing on and investing in? (Dr. Basharat Hasan)

Ans: Following industries are more feasible for the investors in Bosnia:

- Metal Industry
- Defense Industry
- Plastic Industry
- Leather Industry (especially for cars such as BMW and Mercedes)
- Wood Industry (Bosnia has one of the best quality wood)
- Tourism (Bosnia hosts 1.3 million tourist across the world every year)



Concluding Remarks

At the end, the President of Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery, HI(M), (Retd) concluded the session by once again showing his gratitude to the participants for attend and especially Ambassador Nedim Makarevic for such an informative talk. He further hoped that cordial relations between Bosnia and Pakistan will prosper in future.