



Seminar



Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad



Seminar Report

Regional Challenges and Prospects-Pakistan, Iran and Gulf Countries Relations



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Seminar Report

“Regional Challenges & Prospects-Pakistan, Iran & Gulf Countries Relations”



Organized by
Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad
at
Marriott Hotel, Islamabad

Participants

The Seminar was attended by almost 275 participants including renowned Scholars, Civil Servants, Armed Forces Officers, Analysts and Students.

- Host** Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir UI Islam, HI(M), (Retd) -
Chairman, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS)
- Guest Speakers** Ambassador Akram Zaki- Former Secretary General and
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
- Ambassador Khalid Mahmood - Former Ambassador of
Pakistan to China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Mongolia
- Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar - Former Special Secretary,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI(M), (Retd) - Former
Federal Defence Secretary of Pakistan
- Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd) - President
CGSS
- Mr. Amer Hashmi - Advisor, National University of Sciences and
Technology (NUST)
- Moderator** Ambassador Amjad Majid Abbasi - Senior Member Advisory
Board, CGSS

The Event

The Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized a Seminar on “Regional Challenges and Prospects-Pakistan, Iran and Gulf Countries Relations” on 24th May 2017 at the Marriott Hotel, Islamabad, bringing together leading experts, diplomats, scholars, government representatives and armed forces officers. The event was attended by almost 275 people from various institutes. The event was hosted by Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir UI Islam HI(M), (Retd)- Former Director General Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Chairman CGSS and was graced by Ambassador Akram Zaki- Former Secretary General and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood - Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Mongolia, Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar – Former Special Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI(M), (Retd) – Former Federal Defence Secretary of Pakistan and Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd) – President CGSS.

In the second session of Panel Discussion, Ambassador Amjad Majid Abbasi- Senior Member CGSS, acted as the Moderator of the Panel where Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir UI Islam HI(M), (Retd) - Chairman CGSS and Mr. Amer Hashmi – Advisor, National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) also joined the Keynote Speakers as the Panelists.

The objective of the Seminar was to discuss the security threats being faced by Pakistan, Iran and Gulf States and to work out on a strategy that can be mutually beneficial for the all the countries. A detailed discussion was carried on how the respective countries can work together on the areas of mutual interests for enhancing strategic collaboration.

It was also discussed that incredible business opportunities exist between Pakistan, Iran and Gulf States. Pakistan, Iran and Gulf States have always been a point of interest for the global powers as this region has tremendous business and investment opportunities, and bilateral ties can be further strengthened through business ventures which will yield into mutually beneficial situation for Pakistan, Iran and the Gulf States.

Introduction of the Speakers

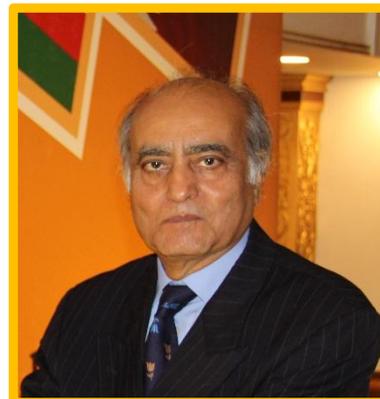
Ambassador Akram Zaki- Former Secretary General and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Ambassador Akram Zaki has previously served as the Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. He has also served as Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Nigeria, the Philippines and the United States and remained as the Secretary General of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.



Ambassador Khalid Mahmood - Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Mongolia,

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood has served as the Ambassador of Pakistan to China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Mongolia. Throughout his career, he has dealt with multilateral aspects of Pakistan's Foreign Policy. He has served as the First Secretary and later as Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York. He has worked as the Director General (UN) and later as Additional Secretary of United Nations, Asia- Pacific and



African region in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad. He is also a Former Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Economic Cooperation organization (ECO). Presently he is the Chairman of Institute for Strategic Studies Islamabad.

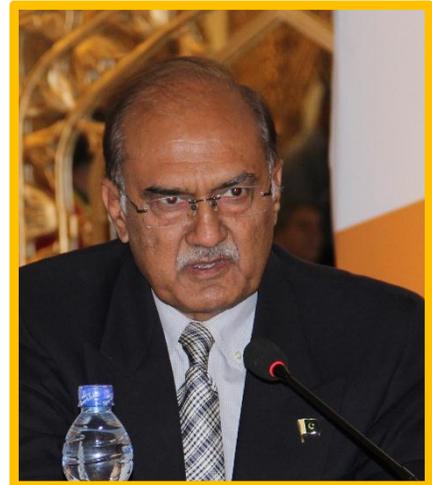
Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar – Former Special Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar has served as the Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran, Mexico and Zimbabwe. He also remained permanent advisor of Pakistan to the UN in Geneva. He has served as the deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN in New York.



Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI(M), (Retd) – Former Federal Defence Secretary of Pakistan

Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI(M), (Retd), has served as the Federal Defence Secretary of Pakistan. He has served on various command, staff and instructional assignments during his career in the Army. He also remained Corps Commander in Bahawalpur.



Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir UI Islam, HI (M), (Retd) – Chairman CGSS

Lieutenant General Zahir UI Islam, HI(M), (Retd), is the former Director General of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). He has also served at Commander 5 Corps, Karachi. Presently he is the Chairman of Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad.



Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd) – President CGSS.

Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd) is the former Director General Anti-Narcotics Force and has also remained Pakistan's Ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina. He has served on various command, staff and instructional assignments including Military Intelligence Directorate, General Headquarters and Inter-Services Intelligence Headquarters.



Mr. Amer Hashmi – Advisor, National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)

Mr. Amer Hashmi, is an Advisor at the National University of Sciences and Technology. Mr. Hashmi is a graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government's prestigious Leadership Program on 'Innovation for Economic Development' and a Business graduate from the York University in Toronto, Canada. He specializes in National Economic Development, Public Policy Framework, International Relations, Corporate Strategy, Global Finance and Marketing.



Ambassador Amjad Majid Abbasi- Senior Member, Advisory Board CGSS

Ambassador Amjad Majid Abbasi is the Senior Advisory Board Member at the CGSS. A third generation soldier turned diplomat, he served on many diplomatic assignments at Tunis, Dubai, Tajikistan, Brunei and Turkey. His last assignment was Pakistan's Ambassador to the Union of the Republic of Myanmar.



Seminar Report

SESSION-I

Welcome Note by Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir UI Islam HI(M), (Retd)- Chairman CGSS

The first session was chaired by Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir UI Islam, HI(M), (Retd), who expressed his gratitude to the worthy panelists and the participants. On behalf of the Center for Global & Strategic Studies, he welcomed all to the seminar on “Regional Challenges & Prospects – Pakistan, Iran and Gulf Countries.” He paid special gratitude to honorable speakers, Ambassador Akram Zaki, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Ambassador Khalid Aziz



Babar, Lieutenant General Khalid Naeem Lodhi HI (M), (Retd), and Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd), for sparing their valuable time.

General Zahir (Retd), stated that we all are gathered here to discuss the security challenges that are common to Pakistan, Iran and Gulf Countries as well as to ponder on the prospects and possible way forward that could be worked upon by the respective governments, diplomatic corps and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) of these countries to deal with the existing regional security threats, diplomatic mistrust and economic challenges. This seminar will unearth many hidden prospects that could be helpful for the regional countries as well as for the development of their mutual relations. We all know that Pakistan shares an inimitable relation with Iran and other Gulf Countries. Furthermore, Pakistan and Iran are economic and strategic partners. Although the relations between both Iran and Pakistan faced some ups and downs due to the security situation and strategic environment of the region because of the religious and cultural commonalities. Pakistan enjoys close and strong historical relations with Gulf Countries. More than 3 million Pakistani’s are living and working in the Persian Gulf region countries.

Pakistan also enjoys extensive cultural, defense and trade ties with most of the members of Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC). Pakistan also imparts training to Army, Naval and Air Force cadets from different Gulf Countries through different training courses. Pakistani soldiers from all three armed forces as well as from Special Services Group (SSG) maintain their permanent bases in Saudi Arabia to safeguard Makkah and Madina, the two holiest places of Islam in the world. Pakistan always remained ardent supporter of several Arab causes. Pakistan, Iran and Gulf Countries share common challenges and common security threats including terrorism, religious extremism and developing economy. Nearly all of them are developing states, mainly dependent on oil production and are struggling to stabilize their respective economies.

**Speaker 1: Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery, HI (M), (Retd) –
President CGSS**



The topic of Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery, HI(M), (Retd) speech was “Pakistan’s Outlook in Regional Challenges”. While speaking to the participants he stated that in the light of the current global scenario, many regions are passing through a transformational period. Pakistan, Iran and the Gulf States are bestowed with one of the critical strategic locations in the world. The region is home to world’s largest oil reserves, due to which it enjoys an immense importance internationally. It is also home to the

oldest civilizations of the world and has been the melting pot of various cultures in history. Pakistan lies on strategically important crossroads where it bridges the Gulf with China, Central Asia and even India whereas Russia is also in close proximity and therefore, the heartland of the world Island. Immense potential exists for mutual cooperation between the Gulf Countries, Iran and Pakistan. He further gave a brief overview of the relationship of Pakistan with Iran and the Gulf States, especially pertaining to the emerging challenges under the current global political environment.

After the independence of Pakistan in August 1947, Iran had the unique distinction of being the first country to internationally recognize the sovereign status of Pakistan. In keeping with the warmth and closeness of relations between the two countries, the King of Iran was the first Head of State to visit Pakistan in March, 1950. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah told the first Pakistani Ambassador to Iran, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, that he was going to a country with which Pakistan had the most cordial relations in the world. The mutual sentiments of friendship between the two neighboring Muslim countries have been based on the solid foundation of historical ties spanning several centuries, ethnic links, shared strategic outlook, close cultural bonds, and economic prospects supported by cooperation in various fields including exchange of visits by their leaders and senior officials. Iran has been a respected, popular and favored nation with Pakistanis, with about 76% of the people viewing it favorably, according to a survey. The support by Iran during both our wars always needs to be kept in mind, while discussing our relations.

Sharing close ties, both the countries became members of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 which was renamed CENTO, the Central Treaty Organization, in 1959. The importance of Iran was also recognized even in the 60s. In 1964, Pakistan and Iran joined Turkey to establish the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) to allow socio-economic development of the member states. Iran is an energy rich country and a key operator of the Strait of Hormuz which caters to a significant proportion of the world's oil needs.

As global politics remained very dynamic during the last decade and a half, Iran and Pakistan also faced the brunt in shape of some ups and downs in the relations with each other. As the case with all relationships, some irritants, and hurdles always do crop up, due to external influences or misperceptions. However, in inter-state relations, the long term national interests always take priority. The starting point to counter the persisting challenges should be the realization that the security and economic well-being of Pakistan and Iran are closely linked. The two countries have been a source of strength to each other whenever they cooperated in dealing with important regional security issues, and the same must be revived again for the betterment of the region. In the recent years the efforts to increase the bilateral relations between the two countries have further increased. The historic Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project is a living example through

which Pakistan will be able to meet its energy needs. Simultaneously, Iran can also be an attractive market for our textiles, rice and other agricultural products, other speakers would be covering their aspects in details. Besides expanding cooperation bilaterally, Pakistan and Iran should also take steps to promote mutual cooperation at the regional level within the framework of the ECO together with other member states.

There is no denial of the fact that security is one of the most pertinent challenges being faced by the region in shape of direct threat or proxy wars. Simultaneously, certain elements keep on creating irritants to cause embarrassment to Pakistan by creating issues at the borders. This objective of the anti-state elements are also well understood by our neighboring partners such as Afghanistan and Iran. Pakistan has always considered Iran as its friendly neighbor and will continue to extend its support towards its immediate neighbor in all shapes and forms. A more coordinated effort needs to take place between Pakistan and Iran so that the two countries can collaborate to address this growing menace of terrorism.

For Pakistan, friendship with both Iran and Saudi Arabia is critically important. We should, therefore, always strike a balance in our relations, and encourage both of them to commence a dialogue for resolving mutual differences and establishing a security forum with the goal of settling disputes peacefully, and strengthening peace and stability in the



Persian Gulf region. In view of the direct relevance of peace and stability in the Persian Gulf to Pakistan's security, Pakistan should play its own constructive role in such a forum.

Pakistan's relations with other countries in the neighboring region are underscored by the fact that we share the same blood. The relations between Oman and Pakistan are excellent. Relations between Pakistan and Oman are characterized by friendliness, cooperation and common perception over regional and international issues. Both countries are members of the OIC and Non-Aligned Movement. 30% of Omanis are of Balochi origin from Pakistan's Balochistan province, having settled in Oman over a hundred years ago. Gwadar, a strategic port under the CPEC, was formerly part of Oman and was sold to Pakistan on 8th September 1958 as a gesture of friendly relations and goodwill shared between the two countries, which was integrated within Balochistan, and became a full sub-division of the Gwadar District. There are over 85,000 Pakistani immigrants resident in Oman. While speaking about Oman's cooperation with Pakistan in its economic endeavors, the country allowed extension of Pakistan's continental shelf zone therefore assisting in operations of CPEC. Pakistan remains thankful to its neighbor regarding the extension of Pakistan's territorial waters from 240,000 square kilometers to an additional 50,000 square kilometers. As of 2013, Pakistan is ranked on the 10th number as the export partner to Oman whereas the two countries also actively engage in military cooperation specially naval exercises, training and exchange of defence delegations and defence procurement.

The people of our region have been in Bahrain since 1920. The first group to arrive in Bahrain were the people who came with the army of Al-Khalifa and were majority Balochs. Both countries share common faiths, cultures and values which strengthen the bond between the two countries. Bahrain is famous for its rich culture and heritage, and is also home to large reserves of oil and pearls. According to current statistics, approximately 50,000 Pakistani expatriates are living in Bahrain who are employed in key sectors including their police force. The cooperation between Pakistan and Bahrain is further strengthening at the state level as six agreements were signed in 2014 which includes, establishment of joint ministerial commission for bilateral cooperation, agreement for promotion and protection of investment, cooperation in food security, air services agreement, cooperation between interior ministries and cooperation in the fields of power

and water. Pakistanis have contributed towards the development of Bahrain since long and continue to do so. However, as economic progression and development of bilateral ties are desirable for all, at the same time the emerging threats in the Gulf region are common to all which are acting as an obstacle in pursuing the common objectives. The threats to Gulf States through terrorism and otherwise have a direct impact on Pakistan and Pakistan has always remained proactive in countering those dangers.

Kuwait and Pakistan's alliance is also well known. During the conflict of 1990's, Pakistan's military's assistance in de-mining operation is still acknowledged by the Kuwaiti people. The existing relations between Kuwait and Pakistan are based on common interest, mutual respect and co-operation. Kuwait perceives Pakistan as a strategically important Muslim country whereas Kuwait has also stood by our country during the times of natural calamities. The assistance extended to Pakistanis after the 2005 earthquake is still recalled as a brotherly gesture. There is a need for enhancing economic cooperation between Pakistan and Kuwait in industrial, agriculture, energy and defense sectors whereas both the countries have been economic and trade partners for long. After a travel ban of 6 years, the government of Kuwait has removed ban on visas for Pakistanis which has commenced a new era of relations between the two countries. Pakistan has time and again stated that it will endow all efforts towards creating peaceful region, and this commitment has remained a priority.

Relations between Pakistan and Qatar are shaped by Pakistan's generally close relations with the Arab world due to religious affiliations and geographical proximity. Pakistan and Qatar's economic alliance in shape of LNG import is one of the most prominent examples of bilateral cooperation. Qatar has been hosting 115,000 Pakistanis and therefore Pakistan through its manpower has been contributing towards the development and prosperity of Qatar.

Pakistan and the UAE have always enjoyed close fraternal relations. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan's friendship with President Ayub Khan led to an exemplary bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the UAE. The United Arab Emirates, commonly referred to as the UAE, has the highest proportion of Pakistani population amongst the other Gulf States. Due to close proximity, many people migrated to the emirates and till

date continue to serve at key positions, and hence have contributed towards the development of cities such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi. To quote just one example, our national carrier, PIA, is responsible for the raising of Emirates Airline as we took it as a responsibility to share our intellect and capabilities with our neighboring brothers.

Today, Pakistanis contribute in the services and manufacturing sector of UAE which helps the country in boosting its revenues while remittances back home also makes an impact, leading to a mutually beneficial situation. Simultaneously, UAE considers Pakistan as one of its strategic partners as almost a decade ago the two countries signed a Defence Cooperation Agreement to further strengthen their military alliance.

There is a misperception existing that Pak-UAE ties have been affected, especially after the resolution on Yemen. However, time has proved that the relations have moved forward and are now back to the usual cordiality.

The people of Pakistan have a strong emotional and religious affiliation with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has remained as a close ally of Pakistan and supported the country in its pursuance of its objectives. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are the leading members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). There was a misperception that our refusal to send our troops to Yemen have affected relations with Saudi Arabia but that hiccup apparently has been overcome. Pakistan has undertaken the safety and protection of Makkah and Madina, as well as Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity. Saudi Arabia also called for peace and stability in Pakistan and praised the Pakistani military's efforts to fight terrorism. Pakistan has always remained supportive of its closest ally but, at the same time, the changing world political order and the situation in the Middle East also calls for Pakistan to navigate its policies carefully through the issues faced by the region, in a balanced and unbiased manner.



There is no denial of the fact that the Gulf region is home to sectarian issues, because of which a continuous threat of conflict exists. Although much of the violence is fuelled by external elements, we can play a significant role to address this growing concern as far as possible. It is time for the Muslim countries to unite and show solidarity towards the common threats which cannot be achieved unless we iron out our differences. The new concept of 'Arab NATO' being pinned by President Trump needs to be evaluated thoroughly vis-à-vis the consequences on the Muslim world in general. By no means, should we allow foreign interests if any, to compromise the security and stability of the Gulf Region, Iran and Pakistan. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have remained close allies and will continue to do so, it is time that the potential flash points, persisting since long must be put to an end through a dialogue by engaging the stakeholders. Pakistan can play a possible role in this regard.

Speaking on the economic perspective, Saudi Arabia is also among the top 15 export partners of Pakistan with which bilateral trade volume has gone above US\$ 4 billion per annum and is likely to be further increased in the years to come. Saudi Arabia has supported us during the times of sanctions and has been instrumental in addressing the fuel demands in the country. Presently approximately 2.2 million Pakistanis are working there and each year millions of pilgrims visit to perform religious obligations of Ummrah and Haj.

No mention of the region can be complete without mentioning Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a major factor in ensuring peace and stability in the region and Pakistan's policy towards



Afghanistan is well known, hence, I will not dilate more upon the subject. A peaceful Afghanistan is essential for Pakistan and the region.

To conclude, Pakistan has always remained close with the Gulf States and its immediate neighbors. Having a policy of being a friendly neighbor and a supportive Muslim country, Pakistan is bestowed with multiple responsibilities which it has continuously fulfilled in shape of extending support to its regional partners. This attitude of Pakistan will remain the same as the changing global political dynamics are further creating challenges in the region, whereas we advise the policymakers to prioritize our relations with Iran and the Gulf States so that we emerge as a strong and allied bloc in the world map. Pakistan has started to explore its development sector with the commencement of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, commonly referred to as CPEC, under which we have welcomed the regional countries to invest in Pakistan so that mutually beneficial economic gains can be earned. We strongly believe in creating, sustaining and strengthening relations with our Muslim brothers. The irritants being created to hamper Pakistan's efforts in its fight against terrorism must be negated through a mutual effort by all. Pakistan and Iran share a 909 km long border, which must be respected by all concerned. The interest of Pakistan, Iran and the Gulf States will only be ensured if we are aligned on one page, this will further strengthen our stance in various international organizations, and prove invaluable to the region, which is critical in world politics in the current scenario.

Speaker 2: Ambassador Akram Zaki - Former Secretary General and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs



While speaking on the topic “Pakistan’s Future Policy towards Iran and Gulf Region in the Background of Current Environment” he said that Iran and Gulf countries of West Asia or Middle East are very important for Pakistan with whom we have historical, cultural, religious, economic, political and strategic relations. Unfortunately, this energy rich, strategically important, Muslim West Asia is in turmoil and facing multiple conflicts, in which major World Powers,

Regional Powers and Non-State actors of various shades are fighting many battles in different dimensions. It is difficult to identify who are allies and who are adversaries.

Pakistan has high stakes in the area, Iran is our next door neighbor with a long historical background. In the Gulf Countries, including Saudi Arabia, millions of our nationals are gainfully employed and are contributing to Pakistan's limited foreign exchange balances. To really understand the multi-dimensional crisis of this most unstable region, it is necessary to have a look at the background of Major Power's involvement.

After the defeat and breakup of the Ottoman Empire, the European powers established themselves in the Middle East. England and France divided spheres of influence in the region under **Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916** and later acquired mandate from the League of Nations to run those countries. Palestine was one of the countries that came under British Mandate. The Belfour Declaration of 1917 promised homeland to the Jews in Palestine and fair deal to the Arab majority of Palestine and thus sowed the seeds of conflict in the region.



Before World War I, United States had limited contacts with the Middle East; confined to education, missionary work and business. American oil companies became active in the Middle East during the interwar period starting in 1920's. Israel was established in 1948 and Israel's support and protection has remained an important element of American foreign policy since then. The United States has three important interests in the Middle East. a. Oil b. Israel c. Control of the strategic region.

The policy of strategic control started after the Second World War, Preventing any rival political power from entering or emerging in the strategic region, (whether USSR/Russia, Arab nationalism or Islam) has been the top priority.

The United States of America emerged as a major global power as a result of Second World War. In August 1944, Anglo-American Petroleum Agreement was signed, President Roosevelt told the British Ambassador, 'Persian oil is yours, we share oil of Iraq and Kuwait, and Saudi Arabian oil is ours'. The USA firmly established itself in Saudi Arabia and used it as a base for promotion of its interests.

In 1951, Dr Mussadeq, Premier of Iran nationalized Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The United States intervened to re-store the authority of Raza Shah and the influence of United States was established in Iran also.

In 1955, Bagdad Pact was formed to check Soviet Union's expansion in the Middle East. After the revolution of 1958 Iraq left the Pact and it was renamed CENTO. Pakistan also came under US influence along with Iran and Turkey.

In Egypt, Naguib-Nasser revolution was friendly to USA from 1952 to 1954, but later Nasser turned to the Soviet Union for obtaining arms. In 1956, Syria signed an agreement



with the Soviet Russia providing Russia a foothold in the Middle East, from 1958 to 1961 Syria remained united with Nasser's Egypt.

During the six day war of 1967, Israel defeated the Arabs, occupied Sinai, Golan Heights and other Arabs territories. In 1973, when Egypt took the initiative and recovered large area of Sinai, United States intervened on the



side of Israel, and become more deeply involved in strengthening Israel. Meanwhile, in 1971, with retreat of Britain from the Gulf region, American influence also expanded in those Gulf States. In 1976 US arranged Camp David Accord. In 1977 Egypt and Israel established diplomatic relations, undermining Arab unity.

The year 1979 was a very important year, The Islamic Revolution of Iran in February 1979, deposed the Shah of Iran, who was an important ally of USA and Iran was a major centre of American Power. The CENTO was dissolved. Sadam Hussain became the President of Iraq, who was used against Islamic Revolution. In December 1979 the Soviet Army intervened in Afghanistan. The United States developed a new concept of "Greater Middle East", which also included Pakistan and Afghanistan. The next decade was the decade of war, Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988). Iraq failed in defeating Iranian revolution and began to be looked upon as a threat to Israel.

In Afghanistan, the resistance was organized and supported by the United States, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and many others under the cover of UN Resolution. It was glorified as Jihad and thousands of fighters from 43 countries were brought into FATA (Pakistan) and Afghanistan to support the Afghans against the Soviets.



The Soviet Union was forced to withdraw from Afghanistan, was badly weakened and split into 15 States, leaving America as a sole Super Power, in which hawkish thinkers and politicians began to make plans for global domination and a New World Order.

Islam as a Political Force: With the rise of nationalist sentiments in Muslim countries, Western writers and thinkers, started writing against Islam as a potential threat to Western civilization and values. Even the Secretary General of NATO, after the fall of the Soviet Union, in order to justify to continue this NATO far into the future said that the next threat and challenge is going to be posed to the Western civilization from Islam. Although **red** has been removed, now **green** has to be removed from the map. So, this is the thinking, and this is the background. If we ignore this, we can't understand what is happening in the Middle East.

In 1997, a new Think Tank was established in Washington D.C. by Neocons, under the name of 'A Project for New American Century'. The aim was that the advantages USA had gained by becoming the only Super Power in the world, should be further enhanced, by increasing the military power of the USA to establish the USA hegemony over global affairs by building military power, and permanently stationing forces in Southern Europe, Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The Doctrine of Preemptive Strike and Regime Change were proclaimed to prevent rise of any rival power.

With the election of President Bush many important Neocons and promoters of the ideas mentioned above, became his cabinet members. Global Domination became the official policy. The policies of pre-emptive strike, regime change, preference for military approach over diplomacy became manifest.

Pressures for regime change in Afghanistan, Iraq even Iran began to unfold slowly. After 9/11 attack Afghanistan was attacked in the year 2001 under the UN cover International Security Assistance Force (ISAF); a coalition of NATO and Non-NATO countries. In 2003, NATO assumed the leadership of ISAF. In 2003, by falsely accusing Saddam of weapons of mass destruction, he was overthrown and Iraq was destroyed.

The results were unfortunate for US policymakers, because the Shia majority, whom Saddam had controlled, came to power, and developed co-operative policy towards Iran. A new arc or power area developed connecting Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, where Hezbollah was defying Israel, and fought a major battle to expel Israel from Lebanon. In Afghanistan also, the object of destroying Taliban's strength failed. The Taliban are still a major force, controlling a large area of Afghanistan.

In 2006, the Bush Administration started another project for the "New Middle East". This project was introduced publicly by Washington and Tel Aviv at a press conference by the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert with the expectation that Lebanon would be the pressure point for realigning the whole Middle East and thereby unleashing the forces of "constructive chaos." This "constructive chaos" –which generates conditions of violence and warfare throughout the region– would in turn be used so that the United States, Britain, and Israel could redraw the map of the Middle East in accordance with their geo-strategic needs and objectives.

Obama Administration: Under the Obama's Administration the policies of President Bush continued, because the Neo-cons remained powerful. There was, however, some noticeable change of attitude regarding Iran and Cuba.

Global economic and financial crisis: The huge expenditure incurred in two useless wars in Iraq and Afghanistan contributed to a global economic and financial crisis, which started in USA in 2007, and spread to Europe and other regions in 2008 and 2009. Meanwhile, China's economy continued to grow and China also helped to protect counties in East Asia against economic meltdown. The geo-economic center of gravity gradually moved from Euro-Atlantic to Asia pacific. The Obama administration started policy of "Pivot Asia" and re-balancing.

Arab Spring: Economic pressures and political discontent pushed the Youth in Arab countries towards protest and demonstrations against long established ironfisted regimes. By the use of social media, protests developed into mass movements. Starting from Tunisia and Egypt, these movements spread to many other Arab countries and were given the name of Arab Spring by the US Magazine, “Foreign Policy”.

Regime Change: Any regime, whether a democracy, dictatorship or a monarchy, which supports imperial policy is accepted and patronized. But any regime, even if democratically elected, which follows independent policy is subjected to pressure for policy change becomes a victim of subversion, even of military intervention for regime change.

The neo-liberals evolved the concept of humanitarian intervention claiming to support Human Rights and Democracy, and tried to turn the movement to serve the imperial interests. They continued to destabilize the Middle East and North Africa. We can see what has been happening in Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Egypt, Iraq and Syria. The





destruction of Libya and coup against the elected leader of the Egypt, explain the point how humanitarian intervention destroyed innocent human beings and the homelands.

Non-state actors are created and used as an instrument of policy of regime change. By 2012, Arab Spring had been reduced to Autumn or Winter of Arabs, except in Syria, which is now in the eye of storm. Many terrorist groups, regional countries and big powers are all involved in Syrian civil war.

Syria: In order to understand Syria, we re-call the story of Afghan Jihad. We know who created Al-Qaeda, who brought and trained fighters from 43 countries to FATA (Pakistan) and Afghanistan. We know how they were later given the new title of Terrorists, and encouraged to move to different countries, and to setup their cells or centers.

In Iraq there developed an Al-Qaeda of Iraq, (AQI). Some ex-soldiers of Saddam joined it against the present regime. It was an affiliate of Al-Qaeda, and it was split into two parts, Al-Qaida of Iraq and Al-Nusra. They both were fighting with each other and somebody was supporting both sides. Who was supporting both the sides? I have no answer yet. Al-Nusra later on became the resistance in Syria and it was banned by Syria. So part of Al-Qaeda of Iraq (AQI) or Al-Nusra became the favourite “popular resistance” to the Syrian Government of Bashar Al Assad, whose removal is now the declared aim of USA and its allies. AQI was converted into Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), from the year 2008 to 2013. Then after 2013 or in 2014, it became Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or Daesh, i.e. from ISIL to ISIS. Most of us know how original Al-Qaeda was created and by whom.

The US claimed it had made a coalition of 65 countries to fight Daesh/ISIS; Saudi Arabia has a coalition of 39 countries for that purpose. One wonders, who is supporting Daesh? Iran and Russia, who support Bashar Al Asad, are obviously working against Daesh. When Russia bombs Daesh, why do the Western nations protest, if they really are against Daesh. Turkey was getting involved in Syria and against Russia. But after the failed Coup Turkey has changed its policy.

Donald Trump during his election campaign speeches had given some indication that he would improve relations with Russia, act against Daesh and try to settle the Middle East Conflict. However, the deep States have forced President Trump to be on the defensive by starting investigation about Russia's role in his election. He had been forced to launch Missile attack in Syria and to complicate the situation further.

Iran has remained under great pressure and tension for its peaceful nuclear program. Then, there has been a ten year agreement between Iran and Western powers. But America's long term objective of regime change in Iran has not been really abandoned.

Clash of Civilization: Clash of Civilization theory of Huntington has been modified in the West to promote clash within the Islamic civilization on sectarian basis. Recently, an effort has been made to raise this clash to the level of states, i.e. between Saudi Arabia and against Iran and its friends, what else is needed to destroy political Islam. Now, President Trump is taking a hard line against Iran, even raising doubts about the US-Iran nuclear agreements and enhancing the chances of war.

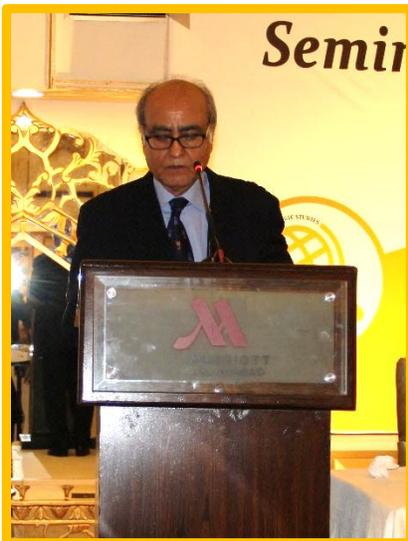
Unfortunately, the strategic partnership between global hegemon and two regional hegemons Israel and India will continue to pose serious security problems to the Muslim Middle East as well as for Pakistan. Russia, China, Iran and Turkey have a good prospect for working together to settle the crisis in Syria and Middle East. Pakistan should cooperate with those efforts for peace and stability in the Region and focus finding peaceful solution to problems of Syria and Afghanistan.

Pakistan's future policy should focus on following point:

1. Stabilization of Pakistan-Afghan border, continued dialogue for improving relations with Afghanistan, keeping firm stand on basic issues.

2. Staying neutral in Saudi Arabia-Iran controversy, continue quiet efforts in both countries for reducing tensions between them. Maintaining close relations with Gulf countries as well as with Iran.
3. Having joined the 39 countries alliances, exercising our influence in favor of moderation, reconciliation and peace.
4. Cooperating with China, Russia, Iran and Turkey in ending conflict and resolving Syrian Crisis through negotiations.
5. Continue strategic dialogue with USA to reduce misunderstandings and expand cooperation in trade, commerce, health and education.
6. Working hard for internal unity and making the people of Pakistan stakeholders in development projects.
7. and Lastly, Trust in God and hope for the best

Speaker 3: Ambassador Khalid Mahmood - Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Mongolia



The topic of Ambassador Khalid Mahmood’s speech was “Future Challenges and Opportunities for Strategic Collaboration”. He stated that Pakistan, Iran, and the Gulf states are all pearls in the string of shared civilizations, historical experiences, and religious belief: The natural alliances that exist between these countries do not merely stem from theological commonality but also from their cultural and historic ties. However, there is no doubt that there have been fissures. Iran and the Persian Gulf states on account of the differences in their sectarian ideologies, ethnicity, and their competing regional aspirations have had a troubled past.

Pakistan has historically enjoyed cordial fraternal relations with these Muslim countries. They have indeed proven as reliable helpful partners. Pakistan’s foreign policy objectives since its inception, anchored in its Constitution, also commit it to maintain brotherly ties with all Muslim countries. However, a complicating factor has been intra-Arab and Iran-Arab rivalry and competition, compounded by foreign interference and intervention. They

are now pitted against each other in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq as well as in Bahrain. Pakistan's geostrategic affinity with these countries makes it a plausible link between the two sides.

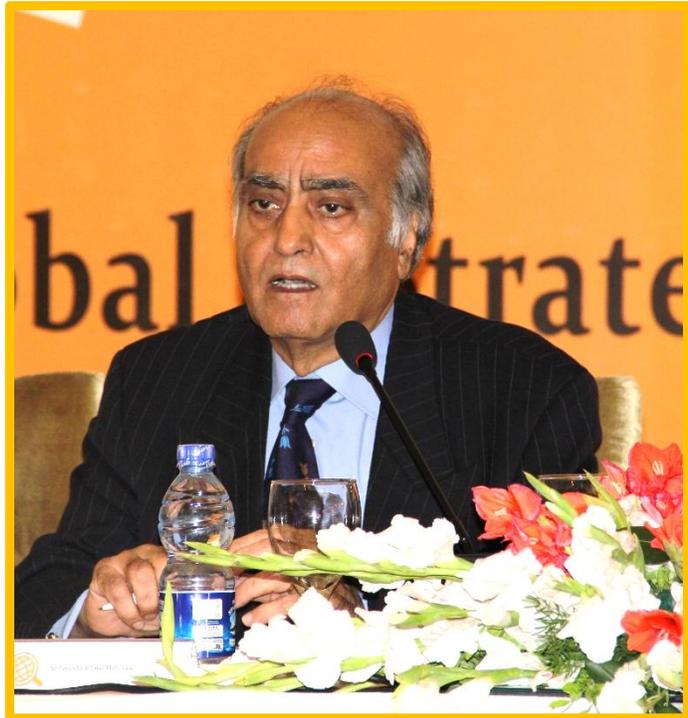
Pakistan shares with Iran geographical border and bonds of common faith, culture, and history. The brotherly ties between Pakistan and Iran predate the creation of Pakistan. In the pre-partition days, the Muslim League had mobilized relief assistance for the earthquake victims in the Iranian Seistan-Baluchistan. And the Muslim League under the Quaid-e-Azam had passed a resolution demanding of the Soviet Union to withdraw from the Iranian territories it had occupied. The ties of mutual love and friendship had deepened after Pakistan gained independence. Iran was the first country to recognize independent Pakistan and Pakistan was the first country that recognized the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979. Iran's ready support to Pakistan in its difficult times, particularly during the 1965 and 1971 wars and after natural disasters, is etched in the memory of Pakistani nation. Among other things, they together with Turkey established RCD and its successor ECO, besides coordinating their policies in the framework of OIC, NAM and the UN system.

Of course there have been difficult phases too causing strains in their mutual relations, but generally, it has been a bond of brotherhood informed by mutual trust, compassion and confidence. In my long diplomatic career, particularly during my Ambassadorial tenure in Tehran from 1994 to 1997, I personally witnessed the ebb and flow in this important relationship.

His stint as Ambassador in Iran, unfortunately, coincided with a rough patch in the bilateral relations. For one, this period saw the rise of the Taliban which, in spite of our two countries' common goal of promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan, pitted Pakistan and Iran on the opposing sides. Then there have been intermittent bloody sectarian incidents in Pakistan in which, among others, an Iranian diplomat and a number of cadets lost their lives. The border across Baluchistan was as disturbed as now. And our bonhomie with the United States starkly contrasted with the running bitter antagonistic Iran-US relations. This state of affairs naturally put severe strains on Pak-Iran

relationship. It is a shining testimony to the resilience of the unbreakable bond between our two countries that their bilateral ties survived this violent buffeting.

How does the present situation differ from the mid-1993? The ouster of Taliban in Afghanistan removed the main divisive issue. Henceforth, Pakistan and Iran were too jointly and in harmony, to work for peace, stability, and prosperity of Afghanistan. We have to be watchful of the size, nature, and purpose of the continued albeit limited US presence in Afghanistan and to ensure that no other country tries to gain an advantage there to our detriment.



The triple bane of militancy, terrorism and sectarian violence regrettably continues to stalk the region. However, in the recurring unfortunate violent incidents in Pakistan while the sectarian overtones cannot be totally excluded they are more acts of terrorism. Pakistan would continue to need the cooperation of Iran and rest of the international community in countering this challenge.

The situation across the border in Baluchistan, as I stated before, remains disturbed. Iran's resort to mortar shelling and the threat of military strikes across the border is indeed very unfortunate. The situation, in fact, calls for intensified cooperation between Pakistan and Iran on security related issues under the existing mechanisms of the Joint Ministerial Commission, Special Security Committee, and the Joint Border Commission. The same goes for our two countries efforts, in collaboration with Afghanistan, to counter rampant drug smuggling.

For well-known reasons, Pakistan and Iran's relations with the United States have followed different trajectories. However, Pakistan has never become a party to any US designs against Iran. It cannot think of ever doing so. The position adopted by Pakistan

in the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Iran's nuclear program stands in contrast to the pro-US stance say of India. The US naively thinks that it's aggressive.

Actions against Iran will have no fallout in Pakistan. No matter what the state of Pakistan-Iran relationship, any military attack against Iran will be seen as a precursor to an attack against Pakistan's strategic assets.

In the best of times, even when there were no factors militating against the development of close Pak – Iran ties, bilateral trade, and economic cooperation have mostly lagged behind their strong mutual political and strategic cooperation. The imposition of UN and US-European sanctions against Iran, particularly those targeting Iranian banks and its energy sector, had aggravated the situation. Joint Trade Commission and the Border Trade Committee need to expeditiously find solutions to the impediments in the way.

Similarly, several mega projects like Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline, Taftan- Quetta Transmission Line, Noushki-Dalbandin sector of Quetta-Taftan National Highway, up gradation of Quetta-Taftan Railway Line and increased import of electricity from Iran are moving rather slowly.

In the context of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Pakistan and Iran along with Turkey, as founding members of



ECO, should strive to make the Organization more relevant, effective and visible. The recommendations made in this regard by the Eminent Persons Group, on which I have had the honor to serve, merit urgent attention and support.

Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project right now is perhaps the most important issue in the field of bilateral economic cooperation. This project is in the mutual interest of the two countries. According to the agreement signed between Pakistan and Iran, we were

supposed to have completed the pipeline on our side by December 2014 so as to start the import of Iranian gas, failing which we would have to pay a hefty penalty. This has not been possible because of financial constraints and the American sanctions on Iran. Following the nuclear deal between Iran and the West, hopes have been raised regarding the early realization of the gas pipeline project. The US has, however, conveyed that there is no change in its policy towards the pipeline project.

Likewise, Pakistan has always enjoyed fraternal relations with all Gulf Arab nations. Saudi Arabia, in particular is the closest ally of Pakistan. Their bilateral relationship is marked by a high degree of trust and brotherhood. There is no contentious issue between them. It is hard to recall any occasion when they differed on regional or international issues. The revenue it evokes being the host of Haramain Al Sharifain apart, Saudi Arabia has been a generous supporter of Pakistan in bailing it out during its financial woes. I recall from personal experience the oil facility it readily provided following the imposition of sanctions in the wake of 1998 nuclear tests by Pakistan. Saudi Arabia is also among the 15 top export partners of Pakistan with which bilateral trade volume has gone above US\$ 4 billion per annum and is likely to be further increased in the years to come. Currently, more than 2.2 million Pakistanis are gainfully employed in Saudi Arabia, a source of much needed foreign remittances. Saudi Arabia has always supported Pakistan on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and encouraged Pakistan and India to initiate confidence building measures. The Islamic Military Alliance that Pakistan has recently agreed to join and lead has also been conceived by Saudi Arabia while other countries of the region have promptly joined it to fight the common peril of terrorism. With other Gulf States like UAE, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain, we equally enjoy deep fraternal ties. A considerable number of skilled workforce from Pakistan resides in these countries, supplementing our foreign exchange reserves.

From the above, it is evident that both Iran and Saudi Arabia are Pakistan's close brotherly Islamic states. However, with Iran, occasionally strategic differences do arise. Moreover, while Saudi Arabia has normal ties with India, Iran has a wide-ranging close relationship with India which sometimes does constrict its relationship with Pakistan.

As the Arab states and Iran have had a troubled relationship, the affinity that both these sides enjoy with Pakistan is one of the few points of commonality between them. The diverse religious community in Pakistan enjoys abiding feelings of affection for all these countries alike. It is important for Pakistan to encourage these brotherly countries to resolve their differences amicably as their mutual rivalry is detrimental for the Islamic Ummah, especially Pakistan.

In this context, the subject of Pakistan's leading role in the newly formed Islamic Military Alliance (IMA) of which into is not a member, is also being projected as a point of dissent between Pakistan and Iran. The recently held Arab-Islamic- American Summit in Riyadh has aggravated the situation adding to the tension, division, and mistrust already afflicting the Muslim world. Although it was not a meeting of the Alliance, the Summit's outcome does impinge upon the as yet inchoate Islamic Military Alliance. Turning the Islamic Alliance set up to counter terrorism into an instrumentality whose objective is to isolate Iran will only dilute and weaken its proclaimed purpose. That this should be happening at a time when Iran has reelected a moderate President who believes in reaching out to the world and who was responsible for the nuclear deal with 5+1 world powers is beyond comprehension. Pakistan, along with other like-minded member states should resist such undesired transformation of the Alliance. On the other hand, Iran needs to be reassured that Pakistan would not allow its friendship with other countries in the Persian Gulf region to come in the way of the development of friendly relations with Iran. In my view, Iran



should take comfort in the fact that the Alliance includes Pakistan and that it will be headed by a Pakistani General and not one from some other country. This assures that the Alliance cannot possibly be used against Iran; its focus will remain on countering terrorism.

The Middle East has faced significant power struggle all along. The policies of the major powers have failed to bear any fruit. Be it the conflict and bloodshed raging in Syria and Iraq, refugee exodus or the war in Yemen, not to speak of the Palestine issue crying for an early just solution, the policies of the United States and its allies have proven to be counterproductive. It is imperative that the regional countries along with allies with suitably aligned interests such as Pakistan attempt to resolve their issues by themselves assuming the roles of major stakeholders. For this purpose, with the help of platforms such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and OIC, the Gulf States and Iran can amicably address issues of joint regional significance.

All is not grim bereft of any hope. A phenomena taking the world by storm is the wave of region economic connectivity being spearheaded by China through the “Belt and Road Initiative” of which Pakistan is a major participant. Through its flagship project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan is rapidly becoming a hub of economic activity in the region. China is the top trading partner to half the Gulf States, as well as to Iran in the current fiscal year (2016-17). Iran among other regional countries has been encouraged by Pakistan and China to join the project which offers mutually lucrative prospects for all its participants. Similarly, the Arab states of the Gulf with their robust energy resources can likewise complement this mega initiative. Thus, there are innumerable prospects for the cultivation of better cooperative economic ties among the Gulf States, Iran, Pakistan, and China. This development driven nexus offers a better alternative to the security-centered drive pushed at the Riyadh Summit.

The Greater Middle East comprising the Arab world and Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran is gripped with conflict, foreign intervention, extremism, terrorism, and Islamophobia as well as sectarian and ethnic schisms. The situation demands that countries search for common ground. Pakistan due to its proven expertise and experience in successfully

fighting terrorism is an asset to its brotherly nations of the Gulf and Iran. It is imperative that we sink our differences and unite in the face of our common challenges.

To conclude, as will be evident from my statement, I endorse the recommendations earlier made by Ambassador Akram Zaki.

**Speaker 4: Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar - Former Special Secretary,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs**



Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar spoke on the “Business Opportunities between Pakistan and Iran” and started his speech by thanking the Chairman CGSS for inviting him to speak on the subject.

He said ‘When I was asked to speak at this forum, I thought a lot on how to approach the subject. I had two choices. First, to list the opportunities and give a rosy picture of the future. Second, to share details of some of the projects and issues actively pursued by me during my tenure as Ambassador to Iran,

highlight factors which could have contributed to their successes or failures, and outline a possible way forward. I chose the second option.

Being neighbours and sharing over 900 kilometers of border, we have virtually endless business opportunities between the two countries. These include construction of gas and oil pipelines; opening of new border crossing points to promote trade and tourism; barter trade arrangements; cooperation in oil and gas exploration, drilling and extraction; training and transfer of technology in oil, gas, refinery and petrochemical sectors; supply of crude oil and petrochemical products by Iran; up-gradation of Quetta-Taftan railway track to promote trade; construction of Noushki-Dalbandin sector of Quetta-Taftan National Highway; supply of 1,000 MW of electricity from Zahidan to Pakistan’s main grid at Quetta; provision of 1,000 MW gas fired generators and opening of a branch of Iran’s Milli Bank in Pakistan. Most of these projects remained dormant during my tenure for one reason or another. I will therefore focus on those projects and issues on which I spent considerable time and which could be considered as case studies.

Let me start with the most talked about subject in recent years, namely, the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, which has been in the works for the last more than two decades. A win-win proposition and a doable project. Iran could earn valuable foreign exchange and Pakistan will be able to plug its supply and demand gap.

Under a CPEC arrangement, the gas could also be provided to China. Again a win-win proposition for all parties, with Pakistan earning transit revenue.

Considerable time was initially wasted on the question of Indian participation in the project. After protracted negotiations, Iran and Pakistan finally signed an Inter-Governmental Framework Declaration and a Purchase Agreement in 2009, an Operations and Heads of Agreement in 2010 and the Government of Pakistan issued Performance Guarantees in the same year. In 2012, the two countries initiated a Government-to-Government "Cooperation Agreement", under which Iran agreed "in principle to arrange for the financing of up to US\$ 250 million" for the procurement of pipes, valves and compressors for the Pakistan side of the pipeline. The pledged amount was enough for the construction of approximately 80 kilometers, out of the 781 kilometers of the pipeline on Pakistan's side of the border. We still needed to find funds for the remaining 700 kilometers.

On 13th March 2013, a foundation laying ceremony was held on the Iranian territory, close to the border between the two countries. Three Boeing aircrafts carrying Pakistani Parliamentarians and VIPs participated in the ceremony, which was inaugurated by the Presidents of the two countries.

We were then very close to starting the construction of the pipeline. Having seen from the helicopter, while travelling to the inaugural site, that Iran had already placed pipes at some points along the route till the border, ready to be welded together, I was optimistic that the pipeline would be a reality soon. However, I was wrong. On reaching of age of 60-years, I retired from service in May 2013, and reportedly Iran later declined to fund the project citing 'acute financial constraint', as the reason. That was that as far the project was concerned.

According to the website of Inter State Gas Systems Limited of Pakistan, which I skimmed through before coming here, it seems that we are now on a slightly different track and are working on Gwadar-Nawabshah LNG Terminal and Pipeline Project as "an alternative



strategy to Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Project”. In addition we are now embarked on the Turkmenistan– Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) gas pipeline project aimed to bring natural gas from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

The second project on which I spent considerable time and to which I attached a lot of importance was the opening of new border posts between the two countries. I was of the view then and continue to believe that trade cannot be promoted between the two countries through only one border post at Taftan-Mirjaveh, as cargo trucks from Karachi have to first go to Quetta and then to Taftan border, making the journey to Iran more than twice as long as compared to the direct route along the Makran Coastal Highway to border point at Gabd-Rimdan. The third feasible crossing point was at Mand-Pashin point around the middle of the 900 km border.

The idea was to later establish markets on both sides of the border, especially at the Gabd-Rimdan point, where Pakistan could make available meat, rice, wheat and other products for Iran and Iran could sell petroleum products, dry fruits and other items. The Gabd-Rimdan route could also be used by tourists as well as pilgrims from Pakistan going to Mashhad.

An understanding to open these two new posts was reached in Tehran in 2011 during the visit of former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani.

Six years have since passed without the implementation of decision, as far as I know. The third project on which I focused was a barter trade proposal. On the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Beijing in June 2012, former President Zardari and former President Ahmedinejad agreed to the promotion of barter trade between the two countries. It was proposed that Pakistan could sell one million tonnes of wheat to Iran in exchange for urea fertilizer.

In November 2012, Pakistan and Iran agreed to “trade one million tons of wheat”, out of which 100,000 tons was to be traded on Government-to-Government basis and the remaining quantity of 900,000 tons through private parties. However, the deal was once again not implemented till the time of my departure as the two sides could not resolve differences over sanitary issues.

It was also regrettable that a large number of agreements, signed by the two countries in the past had not been implemented and were on paper only. For instance, the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) was signed by the two countries in 2004 and became operational in September 2006. Under the PTA, Pakistan granted tariff concessions to Iran on 338 tariff lines, while Iran granted tariff concessions on 309 tariff lines.

However, tariff and non-tariff barriers were subsequently imposed on imports from Pakistan. Pakistani fruits such as Oranges (‘Kinnow’) and mangoes were banned from time to time and exorbitant tariffs were imposed on Pakistani textile and garments and surgical goods. These measures violated the PTA provisions between the two countries. Preferential trade agreements are signed as a win-win deal between two countries. It cannot be a winning situation for one party only. Pakistan and Iran can double their trade volume if they honour agreements. Pakistan can sell rice, meat and meat preparations, fruits & their preparations, agricultural products, non-value-added textiles and textile items, and ready-made garments; while Iran can provide petroleum products, chemicals, plastics, iron ore, and articles of iron and steel.

Another subject which came under discussion was the desire of Iran to open a branch of its Milli bank in Pakistan. A number of meetings were held between the two sides. However, no agreement could be reached.

So what were the factors that inhibited conclusion of mega projects and hindered trade between the two countries?

First, wide ranging international sanctions on Iran created major problems. The sanctions prohibited banking transactions with Iran.

Second, Iran itself felt financial crunch and was not in a position to finance some of the projects outlined by me earlier. Other friendly countries were also reluctant to fund projects that involved Iran during the sanction period.

Third, there was international pressure not to undertake mega projects with Iran. India itself opted out of the gas pipeline project due to the US pressure and after New Delhi signed a civilian nuclear deal with Washington in 2008, as an alternate source of energy.



Fourth, security situation on the border and regional alignments have cast a negative shadow on the promotion of trade, people to people contacts and cultural cooperation.

So is there a hope? Can we turn around things in the future?

- a. The short answer is 'no', even after the lifting of Western sanctions, if we continue to interact with each other in the manner we have done in the last 70-years, and 'yes', if we recognize the importance of our relationship and make amends.
- b. The answer would be 'Yes', if we do not let external pressures to influence our relationship;
- c. The answer would 'Yes', if we follow the principle of reciprocity in dealing with each other, including on the question of establishment of equal number of diplomatic and consular missions in the two countries.
- d. The answer is 'No' if we continue to resort to filibustering to divert internal attention from essentially domestic issues. Tensions between states have consequences for trade and commerce.

- e. The answer would be 'Yes' if the two countries are sensitive to each other's security concerns and not allow each other's territory to be used by a third party to their advantage.

It is obvious that Iran is an important country for Pakistan and vice versa. The two neighbors do not have a border dispute. They provide strategic depth to each other and Iran can play an important role in narrowing Pakistan's energy gap.

With that analysis, let me conclude by giving the following suggestion. An important step forward could be to institutionalize high level talks between the two countries. At the Political level, it could be between the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the President of Iran assisted by their respective Foreign Ministers, Interior Ministers and Economic and Trade Ministers; at the Armed Forces level between Pakistan's Army Chief and the Head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard; and in the intelligence field between heads of intelligence agencies of the two countries. They could meet biannually, alternatively at Islamabad and Tehran, to workout projects and remove any misunderstandings'.

**Speaker 5: Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, HI (M), (Retd) -
Former Federal Defence Secretary of Pakistan**



He presented his speech on the "Security and Counter Terrorism Challenges in Pakistan, Iran and Gulf Countries". He started by saying that this August forum needs no reminder that terrorism emanates from extremism, that normally is an outcome of lack of political, social and economic justice, sense of deprivation and exploitation of these cleavages by adversaries.

The terrorist entities formed are not strictly hierarchical organizations, neither do they rigidly follow any central leadership or command. Most of them are up for sale, at times in franchise format. So these troubles could be homegrown, foreign sponsored or combination which is mostly the case. It is this unique

nature of these creatures that we find, at times, the same countries sponsorship and fighting terrorist at a time, occasionally with the same names.

Now before we embark upon finding a panacea for this very complicated, but potent hydra with, multiple heads and reincarnation abilities, we need to scan the genesis of this monster.

Quite some time back when a political party with religious leanings won election in Algeria, they were kept away from power. Iraq was invaded giving a false premise, Sudan was divided and East Timor was carved out because some ethnic /religious groups reportedly were being persecuted but the continued oppression of Kashmiris and Palestinians goes unnoticed by the world conscience.

When Muslim brotherhood party wins elections in Egypt, they were deemed not worthy of forming the government. The Gaddafi of Libya committed the sin of challenging the tyranny of petro-dollars. But an array of monarchs elsewhere, towing the line, face no threat of the imposition of democracy.

Afghanistan has been converted into ashes in so called hot pursuit of Al Qaeda. Syria is battered into nearly a non-entity and Yemen as a country is just on paper maps. In this backdrop the emergence of counter forces, mostly irregulars, was natural. And countries who had grudges against the sole super power, but could not face them overtly, found good opportunity to align with few terrorist outfits.

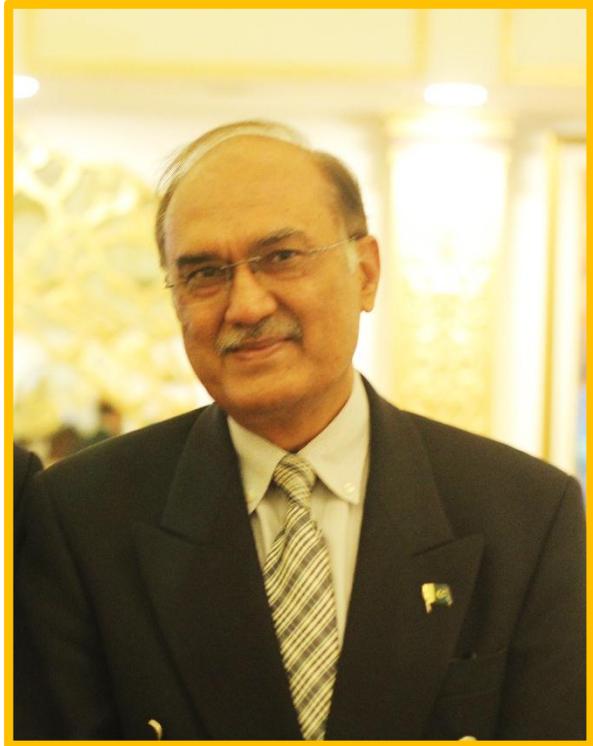
But this was not all, asymmetric nature of conflicts, deterrence in employment of regular forces, gave further rise to proxy wars thus raising and abetting militias and irregular forces and employing them liberally by some very some very civilized countries.

Add to this landscape the treachery of information operations, false flag actions and media manipulations. And we find ourselves confronted with herculean task that is telling on the resources of even well governed, economically strong countries and much more difficult to be tackled by misgoverned and weak countries.

Focusing closer in the region we face a comical situation.

- a. We are allies of US and Indo-US nexus defies all other relations.
- b. India vows to teach us a lesson and attack comes from Afghan side.

- c. We are forging an alliance with China-Russia-Turkey with Iran a neutral member of this bloc. And NOC to General Raheel Sharif to head hotchpotch Army of 39 countries with clearly anti-Iran ambitions and under US tutelage.
- d. We are under a heavy burden of debt provided by international monetary institutions under strict control of US but aspire to benefit from China centric CPEC that, would be an eye sore for Americans.
- e. We understand that acme of diplomacy lies in multilateral approach but the balancing act must be seen as credible. In our exuberance to gain from all sides. Let us hope and pray we don't lose all glimmers of bright future. Diplomacy has its limits as has politics and military strategy, that is why only the combination of both works.
- f. If we look at the situation of Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan and Kashmir and try to gauge the mood of the stakeholders. It resembles a specter where in an arena several blind boxers are hitting out at each other without any aim and objectives; and referees instead of putting a stop to this fight, are shouting 'box on' as they need to perpetuate these proxies for their own interests.



Having understood the genesis of terrorism a very complicated socio-economic and politico-military phenomenon, let us scan the prospects of fighting it out successfully, by Middle East, Iran and Pakistan.

Middle Eastern monarchies are in a good position to fight out this menace due to rich resources, absence of large scale deprivation, strict implementation of laws due to nature of regimes, and last but not the least, well aligned with the dominant super power. Exceptions are Iraq, Libya and Syria and their vows can be attributed to imposition of democracy, falling in anti-American camp and destruction of stable regimes. Emergence

of multiple independent zones, division of Syria, Iraq and Yemen seems to be on the horizon.

So the roar going on in these countries are purely politico-military struggle with terrorism only as a tool of fighting. Thus this fire cannot be extinguish by the anti-terror forces, it can only be controlled through diplomacy resulting into footholds of new emerging political realities in the shape of Russo-Chinese-Iranian alignment.

Iran on the other hand is not a victim of large scale terrorist activities. They have wisely and intelligently adopted a forward strategy by fighting out proxy wars away from their land in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere. So Iran by some way may be seen as the part of the problem, actually they have devised a strategy to keep the problem away at arm's length through activity and not passivity. Coming closer home, we have allowed things to happen creating ideal environment for nurturing extremist, terrorism on grand scale. Lack of socio-economic justice, illiteracy of mammoth proportion, absence of health facilities and economic opportunity combined to evolve into a fertile land and people to get ignited and exploited by known and unknown enemies for different motives.

Add to this specter the pliable regime and inter institutional rivalries, resulting into disunity, disharmony and confused foreign policy and nearly stunted diplomacy.

The off trumpeted success against terrorism is mainly in the kinetic spectrum, and there are hardly any mentionable success in the field of diplomacy, socio-economic indicators and internal harmony. Surrounded by threats from all around and internally, our efforts to balance out between Iran and Saudi Arabia and between US and China are actually likely to antagonize all. With Indo-US nexus completely perched and controlling the Afghan Unity government have dashed all hopes of peace in the region. Our inability to make the world aware of the atrocities perpetrated in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) and hybrid war waged by Indians in our hinterland, has left us alone to fight out this menace.

So what do we do?

- a. Ensure that all Iranian and Saudi backed madrassas are closed and sealed.

- b. Join wholeheartedly, China-Russo efforts to open communication channels with Afghan Taliban with trying to convince them into negotiations with other Afghan stake holders.
- c. Keep yourself away from Islamic Coalition Army as now it is very clear, it is meant to fight Iranian influence in Middle East.
- d. Stop appeasing India as it is amply clear that nothing has worked with them.
- e. Start doing with India what they are doing to us.
- f. Internally reorganize governance and create a common platform to discuss and formulate effective diplomacy, plan and execute all requisite formats of anti-terrorism, with all stakeholders on board. Such that a focused and centrally controlled anti-extremism, anti-terrorism effort could be undertaken.
- g. Make a clear distinction between friends and foes and stop playing in an artificial balancing act that could prove counter-productive.

In the end I would like to urge that if given a chance between war and peace the prudent option is naturally peace. But if war is imposed on you, do you have a choice of not fighting back?

SESSION –II

Panel Discussion/Question and Answer

The panel discussion was moderated by Ambassador Amjad Majid Abbasi, Senior Member Advisory Board, CGSS. He thanked all the participants of the seminar. He stated that today's presentations have been of great significance because eminent scholars, analysts and experts have graced this occasion and shared their views with us which have highlighted the challenges as well as opportunities. He congratulated the CGSS for bringing such a professional group of analysts who highlighted bitter but truthful facts.



Certainly, these conclusions and suggestions will make their way to those who formulate policies as well as decision makers. In addition to enriching each one of us with some very thought provoking ideas.

Panel discussion is designed to enlighten us further over some important issues concluded earlier. The panelist include Lieutenant General Khalid Naeem Lodhi, HI (M), (Retd), Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery, HI (M), (Retd), Ambassador Akram Zaki, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar, and Mr. Amer Hashmi.

Panel Discussion

Ambassador Amjad Majid Abbasi moderated the session and asked that how it is possible to stay neutral between Saudi Arabia and Iran, with so much on stake at one side. Could we discuss certain doable steps?

Ambassador Akram Zaki's Response:

Pakistan is a sovereign state, it has a parliament. The issue must be taken to the parliament for the approval and discussion. It was done before, during the war in Yemen, the agenda was discussed and a mandate was given by the decision makers and those who represent the nation they decided that we will stay neutral in this regard and never to take side of either party. Any delineation from the given mandate must go back to the parliament and parliament must reaffirm it. We should neither please Arabs nor Iranians. Pakistan faced similar situation during Iran-Iraq war, when Pakistan was pressurized by the Arabs to support Iraq in this war but the government of Pakistan denied this by opting neutrality. During the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the government of Iran was revolutionized that resulted in negativity of Iran towards Pakistan. In 1985, the relations with ECO started again. After gaining nothing from Arab-Israel war, the Arabs realized the value of neutrality and decision of staying non-aligned. With one of the largest Muslim population in the world, Pakistan enjoys significant importance. We are the nuclear power and have very strong armed forces, so we should think in that capacity. Therefore, Pakistan must not act like a mouse. We should not act on the foreign policy of foot mats that lie in front of everybody.

We must have our own strategic vision. We lie in three regions that are Central, West and South Asia. Pakistan should act like a mature country and if we do that we will be able to create our say in the international system. Pakistan must maintain good relations with other Muslim states from Central, South and West Asia which can be considered as three dimensions of Pakistan's Politics. Pakistan must formulate a foreign Policy with 3 dimensions that is economic, diplomatic and cultural dimension, and if we assert these triangular interests then, even the greatest powers in the world will look towards Pakistan and it will make Pakistan great. Article 40 of the Constitution of Pakistan also states that Pakistan must keep good and amicable relations with other Islamic countries. We must not be submissive, if you show flexibility and going to retreat, others will tend to take advantage from this situation. Pakistan must not surrender and must not retreat, stay firm because once you will do that others will compel you to retreat further.

Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi's HI (M), (Retd) Response:

Pakistan's relations with Iran can be viewed through the prism of economic, political, cultural and diplomatic aspects.

It is Pakistan who must identify which interest to be pursued with Iran and must realize which interest will antagonize the other interests and which will not.

But one thing is for sure that Pakistan has to work hard to achieve something and Pakistan has to be independent in its decision making and act like a sovereign state.

General Lodhi (Retd), then quoted a verse of Allama Iqbal:

ہو صداقت کے لیے جس دل میں مرنے کی تڑپ
پہلے اپنے سیکر خالی میں جاں پیدا کرے

This means that, if you are strong within yourself you will not be driven by the external forces.

The General further elucidated that, Pakistan has entailed huge foreign debt from countries like US and others, therefore, its hands are tied, therefore, Pakistan is in need

to come united and strong especially from within hence, to become independent and sovereign.

The moderator of the session Ambassador Amjad Majid Abbasi asked Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar that during his speech he talked about the “barter trade arrangements” between Pakistan and Iran. In my opinion it is the best option because of the international pressure that is coming up from all sides. Barter trade if enhanced, could be important in various areas. What is your point of view regarding the prospects and possibilities available in this regard?

Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar’s Response:

The Ambassador explicated that barter trade between both the countries was agreed upon in the wake of international sanctions and economic embargos on Iran by the International community due to the persuasion of Iran’s nuclear program. It was agreed that Pakistan will barter wheat with Iran for fertilizers (Urea), but eventually it did not work out. Most Pakistanis view the relations between Iran and Pakistan in very generic terms, we look everything from the perspective of Islamic brotherhood and Muslim Ummah, but the ground realities are different, but they are not as rosy as portrayed and claimed by the masses. It has been more than two decades since the commencement of Oil/Gas pipeline between Iran and Pakistan, however, no concrete progress has been noted so far. The agreement was inked by the former President of Pakistan Mr. Asif Ali Zardari and his counterpart Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, but the sluggish behavior of bureaucracy and the political rift in the country did not let it happen. Both the countries must decide at first place that whether they have political will to go in certain agreement or not. If it is not then we should not start it at first place. We need clarity and adopt realistic approach in handling bilateral relations.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood’s Response:

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood supported the opinion of Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar mentioning the slow progress on any initiative that we take with Iran; be it economic or the gas pipeline projects such as Iran-Pakistan (IP) and further highlighted that, it does not necessarily mean the projects were not feasible or desirable. However, he attributed this slow progress to certain financial and political constraints, international political

pressure that did not let this project to materialize. Pakistan has huge energy requirements and currently, we are facing severe energy crisis. We are in need of more energy resources from various countries such as Qatar (Liquefied Natural Gas) and others because more energy projects and pipelines are pivotal for the progress and development as well as to meet the need of energy crisis in Pakistan. Therefore, we must work upon IP (Iran-Pakistan) along with TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) simultaneously. Talking about the developmental issues, even TAPI has certain problems, for instance, the security situation of Afghanistan is un-favorable, making it a substantial demerit of this energy resource project. We need to bring investments and keep on pursuing such projects.

Ambassador Akram Zaki's Response:

Iran-Pakistan (IP) was initiated as Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline and then it became 'IP'. On the other hand, TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) was started as TAP (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan). The Ambassador then shared his experience that I was removed from the IPI and sent in to TAP that eventually made IPI – IP and TAP – TAPI. This was because we did not act and are not acting like a sovereign state, and accepted the foreign pressure. Eventually TAPI got much importance while IP is losing its significance. India which is supposed to be a part of either of two projects does not seem to be keen on TAPI because of Pakistani factor as both the pipelines will be in the benefit of Pakistan some way or the other. In the opinion of the Ambassador, TAPI is not going to materialize in the near future due to the security situation in Afghanistan and the turmoil which is has been there since more than one and a half decade. If you are giving importance to TAPI and not IP you will lose both the projects. Therefore, we must prioritize IP project and once it is done then go for TAPI.

Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar's Response:

The Ambassador highlighted the financial aspects of the energy projects with Iran. He said that we are currently importing 75 MW of electricity from Iran into the town of Mand in the Makran district in Balochistan, Pakistan. Furthermore, we are also importing 100 Megawatt that is being utilized in Gwadar, Balochistan Pakistan.

But, here the question arises is, how are we going to pay for the bills that will generate due to the high cost of imported electricity? One day or another, we have to pay for the establishment of pipelines. Our billing and metering system is outdated, the revenue which is generated by this is not enough to pay high bills. It is pertinent to mention here that, Iran gave us high tension lines directed towards the border area but when it came to billing we could not pay because of the factors of energy theft and line losses'. A common perception exists that the pipeline is almost completed and soon Pakistan will be able to get benefits out of it but the ground realities are different. Iran is working on the construction of domestic pipeline in patches and built it up to Iran Shahr, which is 250 km away from the Pak- Iran border. The Ambassador raised a few apprehensions. We have to be clear upon this fact that even if the pipeline is completed will Pakistan be able to pay the bills? And keeping the security situation of the region in view what if the pipeline is cut off? What is our contingency plan? Are we sure that this pipeline will help us? We have to see the real viability.

Ambassador Amjad Majid Abbasi then concluded the session by making a remark about the personality of a leader, according to him, Pakistan, in order to develop and prosper needs a man of words and character who could take firm and fare decision for the benefits of the country and the whole nation.

Question and Answer Session

Q#1: How can we define stability in international arena, when USA is spending \$ 620 billion as their military expenditure, China – \$ 220 billion, India spends \$ 21 billion, Russia as well as other regional powers also have high military budget. The recent deal of worth \$ 110 billion between Saudi Arabia and USA is another example where countries are spending billions of dollars on their military modernization? (Dost Muhammad Barech, National Defense University)



Answer by Ambassador Akram Zaki

Although they are claiming this military modernization as an effort to create peace and stability in the international arena, but in reality they are significantly contributing in creating instability by actually creating non-state actors. This is the declared policy of USA as of June 2006 that 'we must keep the region unstable we must spread chaos'. They created non states actors in the region which they are using against the regional peace, security and stability. Russia and Iran are in touch with Taliban in Afghanistan, therefore, US is trying to frighten them by dropping mother of all bombs (MOAB) and conveying that we are not going to let you stabilize the area. Unless and until, USA is in Afghanistan is not going to change its foreign policy towards the region. There can be no peace and stability in the country hence, in the whole region.

Answer by Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, (Retd)

Let's have a look on this who favors peace in Afghanistan.

- a. Pakistan favors peace in Afghanistan because it is understood that without having peace and stability in Afghanistan there will not be any peace in Pakistan
- b. Afghans want peace in Afghanistan
- c. USA does not want pace in Afghanistan because they want an excuse to stay in the country.
- d. Unity government will not be there the moment there is peace in Afghanistan.
- e. Drug mafia does not want peace in Afghanistan.

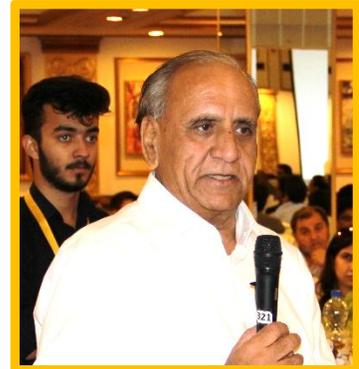
Q#2: We are asked not to have a diplomatic and business relationship with Israel by our brotherly Muslim countries, hence, Israel became our enemy. So my question here is, why we are not asking these states not to have diplomatic relations with India? Why we cannot ask them what they are asking from us? (Tauqir Ahmed - Member Advisory Board CGSS)



Answer by Ambassador Akram Zaki

Our decision to not have diplomatic relations vis-à-vis Israel dates back to the era of Quaid-e-Azam. 1947 Lahore resolution, at the same time recognizing Israel resolution was also presented. When UN decided to divide Palestine into two parts, Quaid-e-Azam principally rejected this resolution because Israel came into being out of aggression. We don't have any issues with recognizing Israel after the Palestinian issue is solved on the basis of two states solution on the basis of pre-1967 borders. Some Arab countries have established relations, some openly some clandestinely. Religious factor in our country become very vocal and governments are very much sensitive in this regard. Wait for appropriate time and decision. But the issue may trigger religious backlash that may destabilize the country due to pressure from religious parties.

Q#3: Iran has a proven capability of defense against cyber security? Will they help us in case of any cyber-attack on Pakistan? (Amar Jaffery – President NFO Security Association)



Answer by Mr. Amer Hashmi

I have come across students and companies working for cyber security measures, cybercrimes and cyber warfare. But unfortunately we are unable to institutionalize any company or state organizations. Pakistan has a very easy infrastructure to get infiltrate into via cyber means. I second Ambassador Akram Zaki that we need think tank for strategic visions. We are collaborating and are in touch with bureaucrats, decision makers and media houses. The cyber forums such as Google, Amazon they all have the backing of CIA and military. But in Pakistan it is very easy to get in to our system and launch a cyber-attack, our country is insecure. If someone wants to damage Pakistan it can actually penetrate into our system. We do not have any state mechanism to deal with the issues of cyber security.

Q#4: Our relations with Iran has been hostage to sanctions and pressures by the international community. We may side with Gulf Coalition and we may not ride on two boats. (Ishtiaq Indrabi – Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Norway)



Answered by Ambassador Khalid Mahmood

Post 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, the relations with Iran were cold and good relations are merely rhetoric. I don't believe in this thing that sanctions are the prime reason behind the weak relations between Iran and Pakistan. Even before that, we had no worthwhile relationship. The sanctions just aggravated the issue. For strategic relationship, robust economic relations are a prerequisite. As far Islamic coalition, how can Pakistan say no to be a part of the alliance fighting terrorism when it is itself a part of war on terror?

The current visit of President Trump exposed the real picture. True nature of the Islamic Military Alliance is not clear, yet therefore, we must not jump to the conclusion.

However, apparently this Islamic Military Alliance seems to counter Iran.

Pakistan's involvement in this alliance is favorable for Iran, as, Pakistan can set the direction of policy of alliance so that it cannot be used against Iran. This alliance may become a way to iron out differences between the Ummah especially Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Answer by Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar

We cannot overlook the proxy and sectarian outlook of the alliance. There seems no reciprocity from the Muslim countries when it comes to our problems. Why we want to fight their wars as no Muslim country is ready to station their troops on Pakistan-India border.

The Ambassador further elaborated that when he was working at the UN, he came across the Ambassador from Palestine. According to him, his country stands neutral on the issue of Kashmir. My humble request is let's look for the interest of Pakistan without relying on other countries. Why can't we even clean our cities and the local governments? We have everything they are just mismanaged.

We should not be a part of any proxy alliance.

The ambassador was of the view that the Arab alliance is bound to fail. He cited the example of Warsaw pact and NATO as the two major defense pacts. All other alliances have not succeeded. The reason is the lack of technical expertise as well as other necessary mechanisms.

Q#5: In the light of global power politics, how would you see the global power transition? How Russian intervention in the Middle East is contributing to consolidation of old power? (Asia Maqsood – Strategic Vision Institute)

Answer by Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI(M), (Retd)



We say that US power is waning but it still has economic and political clout. The Russia and China even together can't counter the power of USA, however, both the powers are rising and there is no doubt about it. Perhaps, if both China and Russia provide anti-aircraft missiles to Taliban then the tides can change in favor of these rising powers.

Mr. Riaz Khokhar - Former Foreign Secretary, contributed with his valuable comments and said, in my experience our leaders behave like supplicants and my question is how independent and sovereign Pakistan is? Who made our relations?

The current Islamic military alliance is against Iran which is quite clear. We suffered because we supported French and British in Suez Canal Crisis and Arab still forgive us for that.

Why we are involving in this Arab alliance when we have a lot of problems at our home ground?

Our biggest problem and tension is our relationship with India, which was mismanaged since its start. Along with it Pakistan and Iran have huge mistrust between them. So are we are taking decisions in the interests of Pakistan or are we doing it because our leaders wants to do this or have their own personal interests? He further elaborated that USSR was economically and politically weak but was strong militarily, so the military did not

saved it from collapsing, therefore, Pakistan must work on improving the economic relations and condition of the country.

Answer by Ambassador Akram Zaki

In response to these comments made by Mr. Riaz Khokhar, Ambassador Akram Zaki added that Pakistan has difficult relations with two of its neighboring countries that are India and Afghanistan, apparently with the other two neighbors; Iran and China the relations seems good but joining this Saudi based Islamic Military Alliance, Pakistan is risking its relations with Iran as well.

Now the global strategists in the west are spewing hatred and divide in the Islamic civilization, the goal is to destroy the political Islam by creating a Sunni-Shia divide. They encourage “Mullas” (Religious Scholars) but are actually afraid of political Islam.

The whole situation regarding Islam was changed after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Islam is in danger because of our internal conflicts and we are destroying the very essence of Islam by fighting amongst each other.

In the light of current treatment of our Prime Minister and Former Chief of Army Staff (General Raheel Sharif) by the Saudi officials, I can say that we must have not gone there in the first place.

He further suggested that, Pakistan must prioritize the security of its borders while maintaining good relations with Iran.

Q# 6: Iran is being accused of promoting terrorism by Trump and Saudi King Salman, so how Pakistan can play a constructive role in this situation? (Fida Hussain – FM 99)

Answer by Ambassador Akram Zaki

Who is promoting terror, is totally subjective. Everyone has their own opinion. It is the matter of on which side you are, if you are at side A then side B is spreading terrorism and vice versa. The reality is non-state actors such as ISIS were created and who is fighting them; Russia and Iran. Getting on to the ideology of ISIS, we can conclude that they are spreading Salafism and Wahabism and their support needs no introduction.



We have to introspect this fact that how US and other western citizens are coming to join ISIS without been unchecked, how is it possible that their respective governments are not taking any actions against this thing? It is pertinent to mention here the fact that their prime objective is to destroy all the symbols of Islamic Civilization as they did in Baghdad and Damascus, both of them were considered as the symbols of enriched Islamic civilization.

According to a Canadian writer Michel Chossudovsky, CIA created Daesh, whereas, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are also providing financial support to them. So if Saudi Arabia is making an allegation on Iran for supporting and harboring terrorism then they must first look at their own self before pointing fingers on others.

Major General Khawar Hanif (Retd), commented that it is understandable that the international environment is not favorable for regional peace. So what are the prospects and way forward for Pakistan vis-à-vis bilateral and regional negotiations? When it comes to dialogue, what we can bring on the table? What is our leverage with India? What are we doing to secure our national interests?

Q# 7: What is our counter policy regarding rowing Indo-Iran nexus? (Anees Ali Shah, National Defense University)

Answer by Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI(M), (Retd)

My only answer to this question is “do to India, what India does to us”. I am not referring to wagging war with India, my suggestion is that employ a hybrid policy of

- a. Economic war
- b. Political war
- c. Cultural war
- d. Military skirmishes

And I believe that we are capable enough to fight back.



Q# 8: Shall we follow the policy of neutrality between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Please answer the question with respect to the teachings of Islam? (Raja Irshad - Advocate)

Ambassador Amjad Majid Abbasi made a comment on it that we should stay fair and take the right path and I think Islam teaches us the same thing.



Answer by Ambassador Akram Zaki

We must focus on the internal development of our country and must not interfere and involve in other's problems. We should keep a low profile foreign policy. Clandestine war should be conducted with India as Naeem Khalid Lodhi (Retd), suggested. We must understand that there are no friends and foes in the international system. For instance China and India are expanding trade ties despite having rivalry. Furthermore, US and China as well as Russia and United States are all cooperating with one another.

Islam teaches us the middle path, therefore, we must stay neutral in Saudi-Iran rivalry.

Answer by Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar

It is important to understand that India is encircling us and operating from Zahedan Indian consulate in Iran via proxies as there are no Indian nationals living there. Iran sealed the border with Afghanistan and the goal is that people may not cross and target Iran, we do not have control on our borders with Iran and Afghanistan. We have to control and manage our border, we must fence the borders with Afghanistan slowly and gradually. This lack of control and mismanagement of border control is resulting in the infiltration of terrorists in Pakistan.

Answer by Ambassador Khalid Mahmood

In 1998 Pakistan conducted nuclear tests, I was Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia then, in anticipation I facilitated a request to meet the King. I was informed by a source that the King is ready to meet me tomorrow. King said we are members of NPT and against the nuclear tests but we will support you because we know the reason behind these tests. The Crown Prince also received me the other day, and repeated the same remarks regarding Pakistan's nuclear testing. We cannot flatly refuse KSA as it has

helped us in difficult time. They could have said that we are neutral but they did not do so and supported Pakistan. Now I leave you with the question that what will be the response of Iran and Saudi Arabia in case of Pakistan's war with India?

Concluding Remarks by Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir UI Islam, HI (M), (Retd)

General Zahir UI Islam (Retd), concluded the event by thanking the participants. He further stated that it was a very frank discussion and participation by the panelists and audience. General Raheel has joined with the assent of PM, in my opinion it should have been discussed in the foreign office. The issue of Sunni Shia divide should have been thoughtfully discussed.

We must adopt independent foreign policy that must be away from any external pressure and if we will do that then we can talk to US and other powers.



In Salala Attack, Pakistan asked US for an apology, which was refused by the US administration and they said we are not going to apologize, but if a nation holds its ground it can achieve anything. We saw that later on the US apologized for the incident. It is observed that the responsible elites don't speak out on the matters of importance.

This event organized by the Center for Global & Strategic Studies is good in a sense that people shared their thoughts and opinion in quite frank and open manner so that we identify the problems and the way forward to handle them.

At the end of the ceremony, the Chairman of the Center for Global and Strategic Studies Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir UI Islam, HI (M), (Retd) presented the souvenirs to the worthy panelists.



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