



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies  
Islamabad**

**In-House Discussion**

**“Donald Trump’s Afghan and South Asia Strategy”**

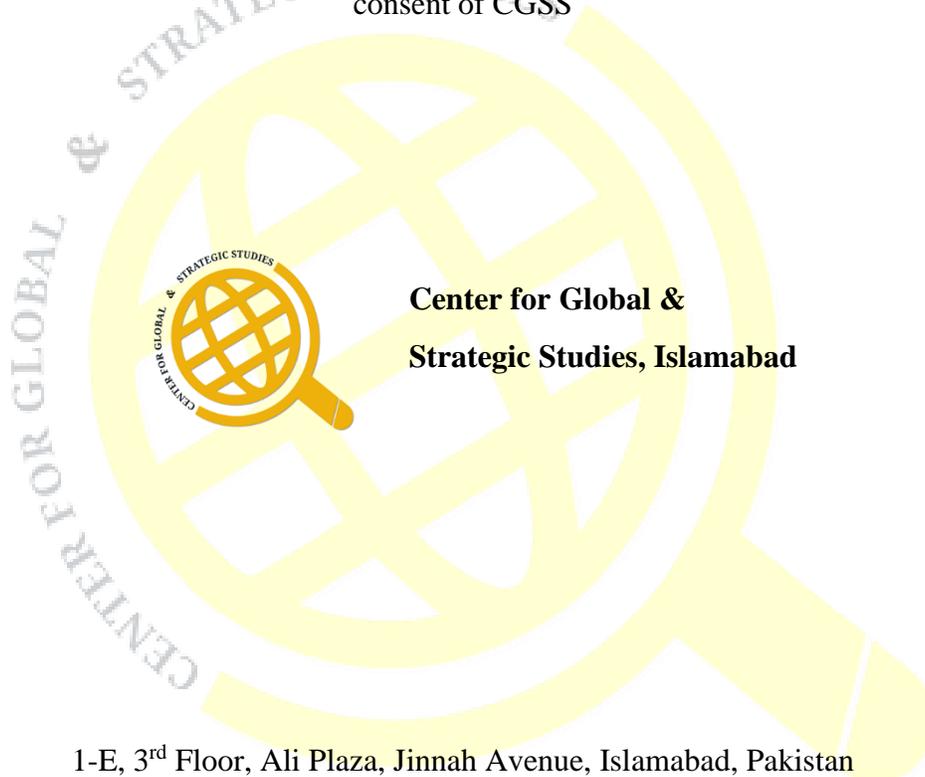
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On 29<sup>th</sup> August 2017, an In-house discussion was held at CGSS to discuss Donald Trump's new AF-Pak policy. A detailed deliberation was carried out by distinguished personalities on the options available to Pakistan. The event was chaired by Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir Ul Islam HI (M), (Retd) – Chairman CGSS. The session was attended by the following dignitaries:

- Ambassador Akram Zaki - Former Secretary General and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
- Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI(M) (Retd) – Former Federal Defence Secretary of Pakistan
- Ambassador Khalid Aziz Babar - Former Special Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Air Marshal Waseem-ud-Din HI(M), (Retd)
- Ambassador Amjad Majid Abbasi – Member Advisory Board CGSS
- Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd) – President CGSS
- Major General Waqar Ahmad Kingravi (Retd)
- Major General Hafiz Masroor Ahmed (Retd) – Vice President CGSS
- Brigadier Abdul Rehman Bilal (Retd)
- Mr. Khalid Rahim – Member Advisory Board
- Mr. Tauqir Ahmed – Member Advisory Board CGSS
- Lieutenant Colonel Athar Sultan (Retd)

The core agenda of the discussion was President Donald Trump's new Afghanistan Policy. In this session the participants discussed the speech, responses, and implications of Donald Trump's speech on Pakistan and region. Furthermore, the panel also presented series of policy recommendations.



While providing the analysis of Trump's New Policy, the participants were of the view that Trump's blunt accusation about terrorist's safe havens in Pakistan, which is impacting NATO's success in Afghanistan has created a trust deficit between the two countries. Following aspects were mainly considered:

- Donald Trump who has portrayed himself to be anti-establishment has been tamed by the establishment due to his alleged links with Russia, hence, his pro-establishment policy. It may be recalled that he has stated earlier his intentions to pull out of Afghanistan.
- The US Military is under tremendous pressure to portray a success in Afghanistan. Ever since the Second World War, the US military has been unsuccessful in all the conflicts in which they have participated.
- The policy inherently does not contain any thing new and is the same repetition of the past. The only difference is that this time the US President himself has stated it and has been very specific in the tilt towards India vis-à-vis Pakistan.
- Militarily, this is a war looking for a strategy. There are no clear cut objectives and no exit strategy.
- Geopolitically, however, the US presence in Afghanistan is important from the US point of view, due to the influence and effects created in the region, vis-à-vis Iran, China, Russia and Pakistan.
- The Haqqani network, a handful of tribesmen cannot be the most important factor in the defeat of the US forces. In any case the Taliban control nearly 66% of Afghanistan, therefore they do not really need safe havens in Pakistan.
- If at all such Trans-frontier operations are conducted by them, why they are not stopped at the border by the Afghan/ NATO forces who have access to the latest technology and resources.
- Repeatedly, the Pakistan Government has asked for the location of the network, but the information has not been provided.
- The present policy, it is quite apparent emanates from India, with the US acting as the pointman.

- The benefit being accrued to the military industrial complex is an added factor in the proposed strategy. To appeal to the businessman in Trump, the aspect of minerals have also been added by the policymakers.
- The presence of the US forces in Afghanistan poses a threat to Pakistan's nuclear assets. Trumps has early declared clearly his reasons for staying in Afghanistan, in his earlier statements.
- A very important point to be considered is that the Commander of the US force in Afghanistan was to be removed unceremoniously due to his failure, but on Tillerson's intervention, he was saved. He has been given full liberty to whatever he deems fit, which presents a very dangerous scenario for Pakistan. To save his job, it is possible that he may take a rash action, which could have profound effects.
- It has become quite clear, therefore, that bringing stability to Afghanistan is not in the US interest.

### **Possible Objectives**

As per the panelists, the possible core objectives of the newly devised regional policy of the US are to:

- Destabilize Pakistan and Denuclearize Pakistan.
- To create rifts between China and Pakistan.
- To contain China's progress as a global hegemon.
- To keep a check on Iran, exert influence and keep a watch on China and Russia.
- To access the natural resources of Afghanistan and CARs.
- To maintain its essence in the regional contours of the political affairs of Asia.
- Engaging India as counterweight to sabotage Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), specifically, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
- To decrease the progressive influence of Chinese led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Russian led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).
- To regroup the contractors, mercenaries, and militants in the region to make peace and stability in the region nearly impossible.



- To hide the embarrassment, pile up all the accusations on Pakistan, to mislead the US public opinion.
- To make full use of ever-increasing Indian propaganda against Pakistan of aiding and abetting terrorist groups.
- Knowing that the US military can no more win with “boots on ground” they have decided to use the Afghan Security Forces (ASF) as cannon fodder while controlling the fights from safe havens in well bunkered up localities.
- Afghan nation building is no more to be seen and the commercial work is expected to be handled by the Indians.
- The US has strategic plans of staying in Afghanistan for a long run, because whenever there is an effort made to bring the Taliban on the negotiation table there were clear efforts to derail the process, of which the killing of Mullah Mansoor and the leakage of news about Mullah Omar are examples.

Pakistan should ask from the US administration about their end strategy and what is their notion of victory in Afghanistan? Unless these queries are not answered, Pakistan cannot come up with any response.

### **Possible Action by the US**

In light of the above, the US could undertake the following actions.

### ***Economic Sanctions***

Economic sanctions, stoppage of military aid, directions to IMF to stop loans etc, would certainly have an effect on our economy and a comprehensive strategy needs to be formulated and executed.

### ***Military Actions***

This could include cross border raids and hot pursuit operations. Increase drone strikes, possibly on built up areas of Peshawar and Quetta, would entail crossing red lines and must be tackled accordingly/militarily. Public opinion would be a very strong factor in influencing our actions, in such a scenario.

### ***Fault lines***

The existing fault lines will be exploited as it is already evident. Increased activity in Karachi, Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan. These issues must be handled adroitly and with speed, in order to deny space to the Indians or the USA.

### ***CPEC***

This appears to be an increased propaganda against CPEC, especially in the print media. Apparently, the Pakistani public opinion is being moulded negatively. There is a dire need to counter this by clear statements, transparency by the government. The media both print and electronic needs to be used intensively to counter this propaganda.

### **Recommendations**

Pakistan's close relations with China, and being the only Muslim country having nuclear capability, the geographic and geostrategic location of Pakistan, and notably the potential ability of bringing Taliban on the negotiation table in the context of the peace process in Afghanistan, provides an impetus of being an effective and significant actor in the realm of geostrategic affairs in South Asia, particularly Afghanistan. Pakistan can take its leverages into account, while dealing with the US. If Pakistan utilizes its leverages (both



positive and negative) and its diplomatic channels effectively, the country can achieve milestones in dismantling the US hostile policies towards Islamabad.

### **Identification of Grey Areas in the US policy**

- The current US policy is not a full reflection of American thinkers, therefore, Pakistan must identify the different views and engage those segments which could make them understand what is missing in this new US policy. Precisely, Pakistan need to make the US understand that no picture can be painted if the “significant” and “insignificant” would be given equal prominence.

### **Active and Sober Response**

- An active response may not be the need of time, rather Pakistan needs to come up with a sober response. Pakistan, has to focus on the salients of Trump’s speech, to first look into the implication of this new policy and then respond to it.
- Resolutions should be passed in the Parliament and all the provincial assemblies as a collective state response (as already been done). Each media channel should designate unanimous one hour talk daily to give our synchronized perspective.
- A joint session of ruling party, opposition, heads of all forces and a logical and methodical national narrative on Afghan issue – encompassing, analysis of the past and realistic review of the situation in hand and suggested way forward should be discussed.

### **Mobilization of Civil Society**

- Instead of creating fear or a radical atmosphere, Pakistan should mobilize Civil Society and the religious sector, and strategically, let Civil Society to take charge and ownership while having dialogue at every level. The pro-active role of religious parties will be taken negatively in EU also and would be detrimental to our entire process to combat this situation and India will be at convenience to dig holes in our perceptives and/or narrative.

### **Collaboration with Regional States to Address the Upcoming Security Challenges**

- Daesh issue should be taken up as the most important one with those countries which share a common border with Afghanistan – the recent wave of terrorism should be attributed to

Daesh because this smoke can turn into fire for the region and it may not affect the US much but it will negatively affect the region.

- Consultation with the regional actors such as Iran, China, Russia, Turkey as well as Saudi Arabia to devise a collective consolidated response for the Trump's policies should be prioritized. UN forum should be the first choice to endorse Pakistan's counter response to the Trump's statement regarding Pakistan.
- Pakistan can convince Russia that India being their strategic partner is now playing in the hands of the US which could harm their national interest and security. Pakistan must take Turkey and Iran on board, and should stay neutral in the conflicts between Saudi Arabia, Iran and Qatar to avoid sectarian clashes in Pakistan.

### **Global Persuasion of Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Narrative**

- Acknowledgment of Pakistan's narrative is not visible neither in intelligence at the US nor in EU circles, power corridors, think tanks and media – this is a terrible failure of diplomacy and Pakistan needs to make a comparative chart of performances of both sides with facts and figures and it should be made more visible and reachable to masses and all the concerned. Pakistani community and groups should be mobilized along with the foreign missions. Dossiers should be made and circulated.
- Pakistan must convey to the US and the rest of the World that Pakistan is a victim of terrorism itself and has lost over 80,000 precious lives. Pakistan has spent over 120 billion dollars on War on Terror, therefore, how can Pakistan harbor terrorist and support terrorism.
- The US should pin point the locations of terrorist camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan should have the right to do surgical strikes in Afghanistan on those terrorist camps which are used for terrorism in Pakistan. A clear message should be sent to Afghanistan that any terrorist attack originating from Afghanistan will be considered as an act of war and Pakistan will take all measures to defend its sovereign land.
- The US should capture Mullah Fazalullah and hand him over to Pakistan otherwise; Pakistan has the right to do surgical strike on his hideouts. The US should ask Afghanistan the purpose of those 17 Indian consulates alongside Pak-Afghan border.

- The US should explain to Pakistan about the signed contract with former Black Water now named XI in Afghanistan, the presence of ISIS in Tora Bora area and task of “Orange Force” established by the US.

### **Formulation of Domestic Harmony and Cohesion**

- Pakistan must safeguard its internal fault lines, such as, Balochistan, Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan. The US is highly confused and frustrated because his Chinese containment policies have failed drastically, whereas, Trump has been pushed by its establishment to develop a harsh and hostile strategic narrative towards Asian region.

### **Contextualization of the US deeper Interests in the Region**

- The US has clear intentions to destabilize Afghanistan because a destabilized Afghanistan leads to a destabilized Pakistan. Pakistan should be conscious about penetration through bringing the contractors back (Black Water). Apprehensions of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in this context, Washington must be addressed, that CPEC is purely an economic partnership with no intentions of military build-up in future.



### **Swift and Effective Repatriation of Afghan Refugees**

- Pakistan should brief the UN that Pakistan has done enough for the Afghan refugees and they must make arrangements of the repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. However, some of the Afghan refugees must be cultivated for long term use.

### **Use of Soft Power to Change the public Opinion**

- Apprise the US public and the West through cultural dialogue and media that we are humans like any other living in this planet and you all are most welcome to engage with Pakistan, through seminars and conferences with civil society, media and intellectuals. Meeting of

Pakistani Ambassadors with officials of those countries would initiate goodwill between Pak-US administrations.

- Establishing a team of experts in balancing soft power with hard power who should assist the foreign minister.
- Pakistan must not bend to rhetoric of the US state department/administration by ensuring correct protocol between the ranks of the visiting officials and use of hard power as the anvil and hammer with soft power diplomacy.
- The Afghan businessmen and students should be engaged in open dialogue by inviting small groups. All think tanks in Islamabad and other cities can initiate this strategy of narrative promotion.

#### **Devising of Long Term Consolidated Policy**

- No doubt, operational strategy is effective for the short term plans; however, Pakistan has to be innovative in formulating medium and long term policy measures. Our institutions are lagging behind in understanding the essence of military alliances. Military, institutions should be made aware of the importance and benefits of the alliances.

#### **Strategy of Rapprochement**

- Pakistan must keep working for rapprochement. Creation of joint task force management should be initiated between Pakistan Army and NATO to ensure the cross border terrorism, penetration and infiltration by militants. Furthermore, the US should assist Pakistan in fencing the borders at its western fronts. Pakistan should plan the policy of neutrality in Afghanistan war.
- Pakistan must has to ensure its basic interests while dealing with the US, for instance resolution of Kashmir dispute, peace in Afghanistan, safeguard its nuclear program and nuclear assets and its sovereignty.
- Pakistan must enhance the strategic partnership and have defense pacts with China and Russia. There is no doubt that China is our reliable partner and has no intentions to destabilize, disintegrate and denuclearize Pakistan, therefore, Pakistan should take advantage of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to achieve its objectives. Apparently, we have

no option but to be part of the Russia-China-Iran-Turkey bloc, while maintaining normal relations with the US.

- It should ensure timely completion of CPEC as it will help Pakistan in having the Chinese veto, if in case the US makes effort to take Pakistan's nuclear program to the Security Council.
- Pakistan should decline the US military and development aid to have dignified diplomatic relations like any other sovereign state. Pakistan should tell the US that the country can no longer be their ally on war on terrorism; furthermore the US should distinguish between terrorists and freedom fighters.
- A Pro Pakistan lobbying in the US is essential to win the hearts and mind of the public. This is crucial in order to influence American public opinion
- Pakistan must initiate propaganda policy in India through all available resources to convince Indian public that Indian strategic engagement with the US in Afghanistan will be disastrous for them as it is the case with Pakistan.

#### **Enhancement of Tactical and Technical Security Apparatus at Strategic and Operational Level**

- Pakistan needs to enhance its intelligence and surveillance policy mechanism through modernizing the equipment and logistics in order to attain effective results. For instance, it should focus more to increase its aviation logistics for intelligence, surveillance and security.
- Intelligence cooperation must be sustained and there should be no unilateral action allowed inside the territory of Pakistan. As far as the leverages are concerned, Pakistan must make use of them effectively.
- Diplomatically, Pakistan is lagging behind in understanding the intensity and necessity of the role of diplomatic channels for persuasion of our interests. For instance, giving least significance to the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the US in perspective of declaring Pakistan "a state sponsoring terrorism", whereas, our diplomats and authorities seemed least interested in lobbying in favour of Pakistan. It is the responsibility of Pakistan's representative in the US to meet every single senator to project Pakistan's narrative.
- Pakistan must tell the world that its nuclear weapons are defensive, that is primarily focused on countering India's possible future aggression. It is need of the time for Pakistan to go out

and develop relations with other countries as well such as China, Russia, Iran, etc. as already mentioned.

- Pakistan must demand for an apology in response to the US current policy statements towards Pakistan. The belligerent utterance of giving billions of dollars to Pakistan in War of Terror (WOT) by the US is completely incorrect. Washington must be briefed that in this war Pakistan has suffered loss of billions of dollars and human lives.
- As far as the non-NATO ally status is concerned, Pakistan has attained vey minimum advantage of being a NATO ally; therefore, Pakistan should deliberately withdraw before the US reverses the status of Pakistan.
- We must realize that to force the US forces to leave Afghanistan or to change its policy, domestic pressure in the US is the key, as happened in the Vietnam War. There is no other method by which a withdrawal from Afghanistan can be enforced.

