

CGSS Interactive Series

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Pakistan – Uzbekistan: Finding Common Grounds



Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad

Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua SI(M), (Retd), Member Advisory Board CGSS

Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Januja (Retd) commenced the session with the Recitation of Surah Fatiha and further translated the meaning of the Surah to the audience

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

Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery (Retd) welcomed the Ambassador of Uzbekistan by stating that, Uzbekistan has a rich culture and Islamic heritage, and highlighted the fact that Mughals, which was one of the greatest Muslim dynasties in the sub-continent, came from the present day Uzbekistan. Pakistan and Uzbekistan have a lot of commonalities in culture and other aspects even Uzbek and Urdu language has a lot in common. General Jaffery extended his gratitude to the Ambassador for accepting the invitation after that he invited the Ambassador of the Uzbekistan, Furkat A. Sidikov, to start with his speech and presentation.



Ambassador Furkat A. Sidikov, Embassy of Uzbekistan

Excellency Furkat A. Sidikov started his address by thanking the Center for Global & Strategic Studies for arranging this event. The Ambassador stated that this idea for Interactive Series by the CGSS is a positive initiative which will assist in enhancing the Pak-Uzbek relations as the participants which comprises of the general public, will be better informed of the relationship between the two countries.

Ambassador Sidikov started his speech by explaining the commonalities found between the two countries. He laid particular emphasis on the languages that are being spoken and how close Urdu and Uzbek languages are. When Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, Pakistan was the first country to recognize Uzbekistan as a state and opened its embassy in Uzbekistan.

The Ambassador viewed that, Uzbekistan and Pakistan are strategic partners and have a common history. He specifically talked about the Tashkent agreement signed in 1966, in the capital city of Uzbekistan which proves the importance of Tashkent in historical perspective.

Ambassador highlighted the potential found in both the countries with regards to the surplus opportunities and this can be used as a ground to enhance the cooperation between the two nations. He said that economic cooperation must be on the top of the list of the two countries.

The Ambassador also identified the existing problem of lack of connectivity between Pakistan and Uzbekistan and said that the relationship has taken a negative toll due to the political upheaval in Afghanistan that lies between the two states. The recent commencement of Lahore to Tashkent air route has not only solved the problem of connectivity but will also help bringing the two countries together. Furthermore he stressed that it only takes two hours to reach Tashkent from Lahore. In conjunction to the reduced time of flight, the business community in both the countries would be the prime beneficiaries.

Uzbekistan is a gateway to the Central Asian States for Pakistan. Being an agricultural country the economy of the Uzbekistan is primarily dependent upon cotton processing. While identifying the achievements of Uzbekistan in the agricultural sector he mentioned that the cotton processing has increased from 55% to 65%. Identifying agriculture as a major area of cooperation, he told that Pakistan can gain from the advanced cotton machinery used in Uzbekistan.



The Ambassador highly acknowledged the positive role of Pakistan in securing peace and stability in the region and the country's efforts should not be undermined.

Uzbekistan is a landlocked country which is searching for ways to export its goods and services particularly related to cotton processing, and with the commencement of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Uzbekistan is looking forward to reaping greater benefits from the port cities of Karachi and Gwadar which will then allow Uzbekistan to create a market for its export goods in the international arena.

Excellency was optimistic about the relationship between Uzbekistan and Pakistan and suggested that both the countries should put in their utmost efforts in solving the problem of connectivity and other regional issues such as the security threats. Establishing people to people diplomacy and for this he offered that his embassy is actively pursuing.

While discussing the issues, Excellency mentioned that the second biggest problem is the lack of information regarding Uzbekistan in Pakistan and vice-versa. Despite the fact there are huge cultural commonalities between the two countries, Pakistanis do not know much about Uzbekistan and the same situation prevails in his country regarding Pakistan.

While sharing his personal opinion, he said that prior to his arrival in Pakistan he used to read a lot of articles about Pakistan but when he reached here and experienced practically, he could easily perceive that the reality is much more different than the literature he had reviewed. To offset the negative implications associated with this issue of lack of information, Excellency suggested that Pakistanis should learn about Uzbekistan from Uzbeks and Uzbeks should learn about Pakistan from Pakistanis.

Further to it, the Tourism industry of Uzbekistan should put its efforts in promoting attraction for Pakistani tourists. Islam could be a binding force between two states in this regard as Uzbekistan holds the landmarks of Islamic history – the unique copy of Hazrat Usman's Quran is in Tashkent which is the only one of its kind.

Uzbekistan is a land of doctors, engineers, mathematicians, highly revered scholars, scientists, musicians, and the world's greatest inventors. Samarqand is regarded as the center of the scientific innovations and the fact that Al Khwarizmi, the greatest inventor of Algebra, was also an Uzbek. The Ambassador assured that Uzbekistan and Pakistan relations would be closer and cordial in future if efforts are made in the right direction.

Salient Points of the Presentation (Shown to the Audience)

- *Uzbekistan is located in the heart of Central Asia lies between two major water ways, the Amudayar River and Samudyar River.*
- *Encompasses an area of 449000 square kilometers.*

- *Have rich and diverse land scape. Mountains, plains, deserts are present in the country.*
- *The country is abundant with natural resources*
- *The land is at the crossroad of civilizations since history.*
- *The country is known for its renowned medical physicians, Mathematicians, astronomers, scientists, historians, philosophers such as Abu Ali ibne Sina (genius medical physician and the father of medical canons), Abu Rehan Beroni (mathematician, geographer, astronomers, historian and the inventor of first world globe), Al-Khuwarzmi (creator of Algebra)*
- *The land possess amazing heritage, immense natural resources and optimal opportunities for the economic development.*
- *However the country's full potential was not unlocked.*
- *When the Uzbekistan was mainly a supplier of raw material the whole economy of the country was based on the agricultural items.*
- *Production capacity of the country was mainly dependent upon the agricultural products.*
- *The industrial sector of the country was mainly based on the cotton processing and production of agricultural machinery.*
- *Private sector of the country which is the major driver of the economy of the country was under developed.*
- *New Uzbekistan after its independence from the Soviet Union started from a scratch.*
- *Clear goals and new priorities were set forth from the very beginning of Uzbekistan ensured the future development of the country.*
- *The evolutionary and gradual developmental path of Uzbekistan is charted by Islam Karimov, the first president of Uzbekistan*
- ***Uzbek Model of reforms (principles to the transition to the social oriented market economy)***
 1. ***Priority of economy over politics:*** political reforms will be free of any political dogmas and outdated political stereotypes.

2. ***The state have the leading role in reforming:*** the state shall determine the main priorities, directions and stages of reforms.
3. ***The supremacy of law in all aspects of the society's life:*** the constitutions and law adopted through democratic process shall be observed by each and every one with no exception.
4. ***Strong Social policy in place:*** Market reforms shall be implemented alongside with simultaneous effective measures to ensure reliable social protection for the population.
5. ***The transition to the market economy is to proceed in an evolutionary way, taking into account objective economic laws.***

- These principles showed robust economic stability. The economy of the country increased by 5.5 percent.
- Annual GDP grew by 8% in the last decade
- Income per capita increased 8.7 times since 1991
- Population of the country grows 5 times that reaches up to 31 million people.
- Structural transformations are taking place in the economy.
- Until 1991 the GDP of Uzbekistan was dependent on the agricultural productions but now the industrial sector have become the major driver of the economy. It is sharing more than 24 % of the total GDP.
- Agricultural sector's share in GDP get down from 33% to 17%
- Small businesses and private companies are also working in the country.
- Now more than 90% of all the economic entities belong to small and private businesses sector and shares 56% of the total GDP.
- Private sector produce 36% of the industrial output, entire agricultural output.
- Private sector is working to ensure the sustainability of the economy of Uzbekistan, creating new jobs and working for the welfare of the population.
- New industries for economic growth also introduced such as commercial and passenger car industries, equipment for oil and gas sector and agricultural machinery. Petrochemical sector, modern construction material industry, railway construction, house hold

appliances production, pharmaceutical, textile tanning industry and a number of other new sectors have been created to support the economy of Uzbekistan.

Question-Answer Session:

Q: Keeping in view the presence of students in the audience, Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Taimur Akram, (Retd), put forth the question that what are the various educational opportunities in Uzbekistan?

Answer: Mr. Sidikov replied the question with great enthusiasm and stated that the government of Uzbekistan has made substantial efforts in the educational sector while ensuring that free and high quality education is being offered to all the citizens. Uzbekistan spends about 7 to 8 percent of the total GDP on educational facilities which is approximately \$5 billion. There are 42 international Standard Universities in Uzbekistan while the literacy in Uzbekistan is 98 percent. Uzbekistan is a young nation where about 60 percent of the Uzbek population is under the age of 25 years. Uzbekistan follows the American education system which consists of elementary middle and high school. After which there are specialized school which caters for the interest of the students.

Uzbeks can speak at least 3 languages Uzbeks, Russian and English. While stressing the significance of Urdu for Uzbeks, he explained that the Tashkent Oriental University had established the Urdu department in 1976 which has a unique library and has more than 5000 books in Urdu. Last year Urdu department is also opened in other institutes.

The Pakistani students are most welcomed to study in Uzbekistan, however as a personal opinion the Ambassador commented that “We don’t think Pakistani Students will be interested in going and study in Uzbekistan keeping in view the inclination of youth towards the West” he further shed a light on the fact that despite the cordial relations between both the countries there is no Uzbek student in Pakistan and no Pakistani student in Uzbekistan. While discussing the standard of education in the country the Ambassador said that for every ten students there is one teacher.

Q: Mr. Makhdoom Babar- Member Advisory Board CGSS, questioned that 400 Pakistani doctoral students have went to Cuba which is very far and despite its closeness to Pakistan in

terms of cultural and religious similarities, Uzbekistan has no Pakistani students. What could be the reasons behind this fact? Is it the lack of attention from the Pakistani Authorities? What role can media play in this regard?

Answer: The Ambassador of Uzbekistan agreed with Makhdoom Babar's suggestions and intellectual questions but identified a loophole that there is lack of information between the two countries that has precluded exchange of students. At the same time, he ensured that Uzbekistan is working on the legislative level to overcome this problem.



Q: Dr. Munawar Deen Chaudhry, Microbiologist, questioned that the production of cotton in Pakistan is at stake keeping in view the fact that the cotton viruses have damaged the crop. This is mainly because there is lack of disease-resistant cotton seeds available in Pakistan. Furthermore, there is a culture of excessively using pesticides and fertilizers in Pakistan that has its own drawbacks. In the light of these issues, are there any hybrid seeds available in Uzbekistan? What is Uzbekistan's stance on the use of fertilizers and disease-resistant seed? Is there any industry producing them?

Answer: The Ambassador of Uzbekistan appreciated the question and in his reply to the question, he stated that there is a high quality of cotton available in Uzbekistan. He mentioned that specialized fertilizers are being produced and used in the agricultural sector coupled with specialized disease-resistant seeds. Moreover, he said that projects are being carried out to enhance cotton processing



capacity of Uzbekistan. He explained that special technologies and good chemicals to protect the crops from harmful diseases are being used in Uzbekistan and if Pakistan wants to have the specialized seeds then Uzbekistan government will be happy to sell them to Pakistan for the production of high quality cotton.

Q: Mr. Anees Ali Shah, student from National Defence University (NDU), questioned that do you foresee a Democratic transition in Uzbekistan keeping in view the rising role of China in Uzbekistan? As Uzbekistan is also a part of OBOR that in turn would result in enhanced exports

of China to all the countries in the region, how do you see the Chinese exports affecting the GDP of Uzbekistan?

Answer: The reforms in Uzbekistan are not targeting any foreign agenda but they are for the benefit of Uzbek people. New rule of Democratic reforms are being adopted in Uzbekistan according to which all the systems have been made online using the electronic system. It has been made necessary to respond to people's queries within 10 days and anyone facing issues can run a query online and the government is bound to respond to these queries. Ambassador



also stated that "Mohila" is the legislative unit that is responsible to find jobs for the people, solve their problems and maintain contact with the government bodies. Head of the "Mohila" is elected for 2 years and he is responsible for the protection of rights of women and all other citizens. "Mohila" is basically the bridge between government and the local people. Uzbekistan has its own model of democracy and is working closely with the international partners on its democratic reforms. There is a need to focus on cooperation and Uzbekistan is actually thinking about expanding cooperation with other countries as well.

Q: Mr. Hanif Kakar, student from National Defence University (NDU), questioned if there are any opportunities for the Pakistani Students to go on scholarship for study in Uzbekistan as provided by different countries such as China, UK, USA?

Answer: At present, there is no system of scholarships for the Pakistani Students as the Pakistani students have not been found interested in going to Uzbekistan for higher studies. However, the Ambassador explained that the system of religious education in Uzbekistan is very well developed and the country has a rich Islamic heritage. There are good interpreters of Quran in Uzbekistan which could be beneficial for Pakistan. The Ambassador further said that if they see an influx of interested students for higher studies in Uzbekistan then we will force the government to start a student exchange program.



The ambassador believes that as Islam is now being propagated as an extremist religion and the world blames Muslims of being terrorists, therefore we must show it to the world that Islam is a moderate and peaceful religion which does not promote and disseminate the extremist ideas and the best way to overcome radicalization is through providing extensive Education.

Q: Advocate Zalidar Ahsan Shah, Member Advisory Board CGSS put forth a question that the International media has spread negative perceptions about Pakistan to spoil the reputation of the country. Being an Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, what are your views about Pakistan?

Answer: The Ambassador stated that he was posted to Pakistan as an Ambassador in year 2015, and he is proud to be here. He found a lot of similarities in the cities of both the countries. Especially between Lahore and Tashkent. While discussing the similarities between cities of both, Uzbekistan and Pakistan, the Ambassador quoted his daughter who is 20 years old found so many commonalities which made her opined that there is no difference between Lahore and Tashkent.



At this point the Ambassador again highlighted the lack of information about the success of Pakistan. He said that there is a huge difference between the available literature regarding Pakistan and reality. He acknowledged that Pakistan has sacrificed a lot of its people and forces in fighting against terrorism that has struck, both, the country and the whole region but unfortunately the world is unaware of this fact and the efforts made by Pakistan to counter terrorism. Ambassador found Motorways (Roads) excellent and suggested that Pakistan is in need to actively participate in promoting the good and soft image of itself to make the world know

Amir Habib Khattak, Psychological Counselor International Medical Corps, suggested that Pakistan needs to work on promoting the good image of Pakistan. Since track two diplomacy is not proving to be beneficial therefore, Pakistan must start promoting the national Television of Pakistan. Pakistan should use social media to promote its culture and show its softer image to

the world. Cultural exchange programs and inviting more people to our country will be very beneficial in this regard and it will help to change the mindset of the people regarding Pakistan.

Mr. Amir Khattak congratulated the Ambassador for accepting the invitation and discussing the prospects of cooperation between Uzbekistan and Pakistan. He asked the Ambassador about his plans about investing in agricultural universities in Pakistan who are doing very well in the field of agricultural innovations. He suggested that the government of Uzbekistan can reap benefits from the soil of Pakistan via the route of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Q: Mr. Khalid Yousuf Chaudhry asked that as India is maintaining good relations with Uzbekistan as well as increasing its influence in the Central Asian Republics (CARs), what will be the policy of Uzbekistan regarding the issue of Jammu and Kashmir?

Answer: The Ambassador elaborated that Uzbekistan wants a peaceful solution of the Kashmir issue and believes that the issue must be solved as per the International laws where Kashmiris must be given their due rights. The Ambassador further said that we should work out to change views and terminologies. Both, India and Pakistan must try to find the solution to the problems in a collaborated manner. Let's find common grounds for cooperation.



Remarks by Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua SI(M), (Retd), Member Advisory Board CGSS

Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua SI(M), (Retd), a senior member of Advisory Board of CGSS also gave a detailed overview for future enhancement of relation between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. He identified four fields where we can bilaterally work:

1. Agriculture
2. Education
3. Language
4. Religion

The architectural side of Uzbekistan also similar to Pakistan. The Urdu language came with the Mughals and the Mughals came from Uzbekistan. On a comment made by a person from the

audience that “Uzbeks are the decedents of Russia” Brigadier Janjua elaborated that Uzbeks are not the decedents from Russia rather they have much older history and rich heritage than Russia. Uzbekistan has its own system of governance and is very rich in religious education. So they do not need religious system or anyone else to teach them. They have a long history of progress that dates back to the time period of innovations and scientific development that can be witnessed by the number of world famous philosophers, scientists, mathematicians and astronomers this land has produced.

Talking about the religious side of the Uzbekistan, Imam Bukhari and Imam Tirmizi belonged to this land. He further quoted that he has read somewhere that after the independence of Uzbekistan in 1991 many countries approached them to give them their system of governance, their books and education, rules and laws which Uzbeks refused to accept by saying that we have our own cultural heritage, we have Quran, we have hadees and we have our own system of religion which is very good indeed and assistance in shape of another doctrine was not required where someone else would come and teach.

Brigadier Janjua (Retd), finally concluded his speech by saying that we should not say that Pakistan and Uzbekistan do not have their say in the international system and they get dictations by the powerful countries. In reality these countries have their own say in their own manner but as far the influence is concerned we should not discuss it rather we should divert our focus towards the positive aspects of the foreign policy of both Uzbekistan and Pakistan and we must find the common grounds for expanding cooperation between both the states. We should discuss the common grounds and must design strategies on how to avail benefits by sending students to the high quality international standard universities in Uzbekistan and how the Uzbek students can come for higher studies to Pakistan. There are tremendous fields of cooperation between Uzbekistan and Pakistan, we can go there and see how the agricultural equipment and chemical free fertilizers are being made. As far as scholarships are concerned, the Uzbek government and Pakistani government can be asked to create opportunities for the student’s exchange.

Concluding Remarks

Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery, HI(M), (Retd), concluded the session by thanking the Ambassador for his time and sharing his views, and further mentioned that the recent developments in happening in Uzbekistan can be a lesson for us.

