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# Introduction

On 05<sup>th</sup> September 2018, **Pakistan House** organised a one day International Conference in Islamabad on the subject of "*Pakistan's Geo-Strategic Requirements: Strategic Alliances or Partnerships*". Ms Sana Maqbool, News Anchor at PTV World, was the Master of the Ceremony.

The event witnessed the participation of ambassadors, eminent speakers, academics and policy practitioners from Pakistan and abroad, as well as healthy attendance by an audience from all walks of life including diplomats, military personnel, policy analysts, government officials, university students, and other dignitaries.

**Lt General Naeem Khalid Lodhi (Retd)**, former Defence Minister of Pakistan was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

**Lt Gen Phil Jones (Retd)** former Chief of Staff, NATO; **H.E. Mehdi Honardoost**, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan and **Ms Anne Marchal**, Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan graced the occasion as Keynote Speakers.

The esteemed Chief Guest, Keynote speakers, other dignitaries and audience members praised the event for providing eminent speakers with a platform to deliver their views in an enlightening and candid manner.

This report presents statements of the chief guest, keynote speakers, and provides with a comprehensive summary of key remarks delivered during the conference as well as an analysis and policy recommendations for the state institutions.

## PROGRAMME LAYOUT

<b>Opening Session</b>	
<b>Welcome Remarks</b> <b>Rana Athar Javed</b> DG Pakistan House	
<b>Remarks by Chief Guest</b> <b>Lt General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, HI (M) (Retd)</b> Former Defence Minister of Pakistan	
<b>Keynote Speaker-1:</b> <b>Lt Gen Phil Jones (Retd)</b> Former Chief of Staff, NATO, United Kingdom	
<b>Keynote Speaker-2:</b> <b>H.E. Mehdi Honardoost</b> Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan	
<b>Keynote Speaker-3:</b> <b>Ms Anne Marchal</b> Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan	
<b>SESSION-I</b>	
<b>Imbalance of Power &amp; Strategic Alliances</b>	
<b>Chair: Lt Gen Phil Jones (Retd), Former Chief of Staff NATO, United Kingdom</b>	
Imbalance of Power and Future of Pak-US Relations	<b>Lt Gen Khalid Rabbani, HI (M) (Retd)</b> Former Corps Commander, XI Corps, Pakistan and former Managing Director, Army Welfare Trust
Pak-India Relations: Risks and Opportunities	<b>Ambassador Abdul Basit (Retd)</b> President IPRI, Islamabad
Strategic Requirements: Calibrating New Alliances	<b>Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal</b> Associate Professor School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad
<b>SESSION-II</b>	
<b>Bipolarity or Multi-polarity: Options for South Asia &amp; Middle East</b>	
<b>Chair: Brigadier Ishaq Ahmad (Retd), Director Operations, Pakistan House</b>	
Pak-Russia Relations: Prospects Ahead	<b>Air Marshal Syed Athar Hussain Bukhari (Retd)</b> Former Ambassador to Syrian Arab Republic
Pakistan's Middle East Policy: Turkey, Syria and Beyond	<b>Mr. Kamal Alam</b> Visiting Fellow, Pakistan, Royal United Services Institute, London
Saudi Qatar Conflict: Implications for Middle East	<b>Ambassador Javed Hafeez (Retd)</b> Columnist and Foreign Policy Analyst

## Speaker Profiles

### **Lt General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, HI (M) (Retd), former Defence Minister of Pakistan**



Lt General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, HI (M) (Retd) has held important portfolios as the interim Defence Minister of Pakistan and the Defence Secretary of Pakistan. He was commissioned in the Army on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1974. He has served on various command, staff and instructional assignments in his career in the Army, including the important appointments of Directing Staff at National Defence College (now National Defence University) Islamabad, Commander Corps Engineers, Director General Engineering Directorate, Director General Staff Duties Directorate, General Officer Commanding Bahawalpur, General Headquarters Rawalpindi and Corps Commander Bahawalpur. On account of his distinguished military service, he has been conferred the award of Hilal-e-Imtiaz (M). Previously, he has also remained the Chief Executive and Managing Director of Fauji Fertilizer Co. Ltd & FFC Energy Limited.

### **Lt Gen Phil Jones (Retd), former Chief of Staff, NATO, United Kingdom**

Lt General Phil Jones (Retd) attended the Royal Military Academy (Sandhurst, UK) and was commissioned into The Royal Anglian Regiment in 1981. His early years in the Army were spent in deployments across the Europe. Later, he was appointed Assistant Chief of Staff (Plans) within HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps where he led the planning effort for a potential deployment to Iraq followed by a deployment of the HQ to Kabul as HQ ISAF IX. In 2007, he was posted to Washington D.C. as Military Attaché. In 2013, he was promoted to Lt General Rank and appointed Chief of Staff of NATO Supreme Allied Command Transformation (ACT) based in the US. Presently, he is a Senior Fellow at Cambridge Analysis Institute and Managing Director of Othrys Limited.



## **H.E. Mehdi Honardoost, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan**



H.E. Mehdi Honardoost is the Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, since 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2015. He has done B.A in Economics and M.A in data protection. Professionally he has served as the Deputy Director General of West Europe (2011-2015); Ambassador to Greece (2008-2011); Director General of Administration Department, Foreign Ministry of Iran (2005-2008); Director for East Asia Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran; Consul General in Mumbai, India (1999-2004); Director of East Asia Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran; Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Iran in Beijing, China; and Deputy Director of East Asia Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran.

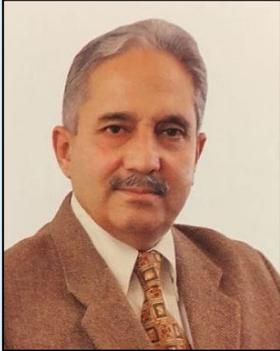
## **Ms Anne Marchal, Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan**

Ms Anne Marchal is the Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan. She joined the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan as Deputy Head of Minister Counsellor in October 2016. She has expertise in Political Sciences, International relations, Maritime Law and International Law.



She started her diplomatic career as the First Secretary (Political, Press) Royal Embassy of Belgium to India (with concurrent accreditation to Nepal, Sri Lanka, The Maldives), New Delhi. She has also served as the Administrator (visibility of vocational training projects) at European Commission, Brussels (1998-2000); Procurement Officer at European Commission, Brussels (2000-2001); First Secretary, Head of the Political, Trade, Press and Information Section Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh, Dhaka (2001-2005); Counsellor, Head of Development Cooperation Section Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan, New Delhi (2005-2010); International Policy Officer – Canada Desk European External Action Service, Brussels (2010-2012) and First Counsellor, Head of Political Affairs Section Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan, New Delhi (2012-2016).

## **Lt Gen Khalid Rabbani, HI (M) (Retd), former Corps Commander, XI Corps, Pakistan and former Managing Director, Army Welfare Trust**



Lt Gen Rabbani (Retd) HI (M) is the former 11 Corps Commander (Peshawar) and former Managing Director of Army Welfare Trust (AWT) headquartered in Rawalpindi. He is a graduate of Command and Staff College (Quetta), Higher Military Academy (Syria) and National Defence University (Islamabad). He also holds a Master's degree from the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

The retired General has served on various prestigious positions including Defence Attaché to Libya with concurrent accreditations to Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia and also Commandant of his alma mater, Command & Staff College (Quetta). He has personally led numerous infantry divisions for successful counter-terrorism operations in North and South Waziristan.

## **Ambassador Abdul Basit (Retd), President IPRI, Islamabad**

Ambassador Abdul Basit is a retired Pakistani diplomat who served as the former High Commissioner of Pakistan to India. He was appointed to this position in 2014 and was based at the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi. Previously, he served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Germany from May 2012 to March 2014. Abdul Basit holds a Master's degree in international relations from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad and joined the Foreign Service of Pakistan in 1982. During his career, he has been posted at Moscow, New York, Sana'a, Geneva and London. Currently he is the President of Islamabad Policy Research Institute.



## **Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad**



Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal is a Professor at the School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, where he teaches various aspects of Strategic Studies; International Security, Nuclear/Missile Proliferation, Terrorism including CBNR Terrorism and Countermeasures, Arms Control/Disarmament and Domestic and Foreign Policies of the country.

He holds PhD and M. Phil in International Relations and M.A. in Political Science. Dr. Jaspal, as a Guest Speaker/Visiting Lecturer, has delivered and still continues to deliver lectures at many professional and training institutions including distinguished NATO School, Oberammergau, Germany; Centre of Excellence: Defence Against Terrorism, Ankara, Turkey; National Security & War Courses of Pakistan's National Defence University; Intelligence Bureau Academy; Command and Staff College Quetta; Air War College, Karachi; Foreign Service Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Strategic Studies Department, National Defense University, Islamabad. Dr Jaspal is a widely published scholar and provides frequent expert commentary to international and local electronic media, i.e. BBC, PTV, Al. Jazeera, etc.

## **Air Marshal Syed Athar Hussain Bukhari, HI (M) (Retd), Former Ambassador to Syrian Arab Republic**

Air Marshal Syed Athar Hussain Bukhari is the former ambassador of Pakistan to Syrian Arab Republic. Previously, he served as an Air Marshal in Pakistan Air force. He was commissioned in Pakistan Air Force in 1978 in GD (P) Branch. He is an accomplished Fighter Pilot who is a qualified Flying Instructor and a graduate of Combat Commanders School. His career has encompassed a wide range of operational, training and command assignments. He has commanded a Fighter Squadron, a Fighter Wing and an Operational PAF Base. He holds Master's Degree in National Security Strategy from National Defence University, Washington (USA) and a Master's Degree in War Studies from National Defence University, Islamabad. He has also qualified Air Command and Staff Course from Iran.



During his long and illustrious career in PAF, he remained on various important command and staff appointments which include Director General Joint Operations (GHQ), Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Training) and Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Personnel) at Air Headquarters, Islamabad. He is recipient of Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military), and Sitara-i-Basalat.

### **Mr. Kamal Alam, Visiting Fellow on Pakistan, Royal United Institute, United Kingdom**

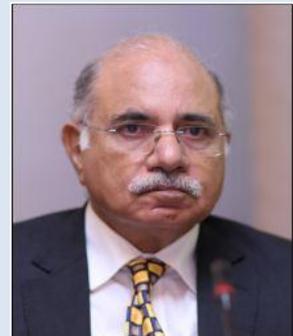


Mr Kamal Alam is a Visiting fellow on Pakistan at Royal United Institute (RUSI), UK. Mr Kamal's research focuses on Pakistan defence issues, Pakistan military's relationship with the Arab States, Syrian Army and the non-Arab countries. Previously, he worked at the Syrian Institute for Strategic Studies in Damascus. He has also worked on the Syria Programme at the Aspen Institute in Berlin and has been a visiting lecturer at several military academies and staff colleges in the Middle East, Britain and Pakistan.

Mr Kamal holds a BA from the University of Durham in the Politics & History of the Middle East with Arabic, his undergraduate dissertation which was a comparative work on the idea of war in Judaic and Islamic theology was supervised by Rabbi Robert Ash. Kamal also studied in Damascus focussing on Syrian History and currently advises several Damascus and Deirez-Zor based family offices. His PhD examines the Geopolitics of Afghanistan & the Arab World, focusing primarily on trade corridors set up by the Arabs and Turks in medieval times and what relevance they hold for the modern geopolitics of the Middle East and Central Asia.

### **Ambassador Javed Hafeez (Retd), Columnist and Foreign Policy Analyst**

Ambassador Javed Hafiz (Retd) joined Pakistan Foreign Service on October 1972. He has served as Ambassador of Pakistan in Tajikistan, Myanmar, Greece and Oman. Currently, he is serving as the President of Islamabad Centre for Political Studies. He is also a columnist (Urdu and English) and Political analyst on TV channels (Urdu, English and Arabic). His areas of interest are Afghan relations, Pak-US relations, Pak-India relations, Middle-East developments and political developments in Pakistan.



## Keynote Addresses

### **Lt General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, HI (M) (Retd), former Defence Minister of Pakistan (Chief Guest)**



Lt General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, HI (M) (Retd.) was the Chief Guest at the occasion. He emphasized the importance of geo-economy over geo-politics and geo-strategy. The latter are the tools to reach at the roots of geo-economy. Highlighting the difference between alliances and partnerships he said that the former is more partisan in nature, whereas the latter is more inclusive in nature. Speaking in context of Pakistan, he said that there are two blocs: The American Bloc and The Chinese- Russo Bloc. It is important to know who is responsible for shaping Pakistan's current geo-strategic situation. If Pakistan is not totally responsible then it is important to know how much leverage it has to make its own choices. Being a smaller partner in an alliance limits the choices she has. He was keenly interested to know the options that Pakistan has to remain in a bloc despite the bloc's adamancy to remove her, as diplomacy always have some limitations. The principles of diplomacy cannot be deployed in a situation where doors are closed.

### **Keynote Speaker-1:**

### **Lt Gen Phil Jones (Retd), former Chief of Staff, NATO, United Kingdom**



Lt General Phil Jones (Retd) started his speech with speaking of his regimental [Anglian Regiment (Royal Anglian Regiment is an infantry regiment of the British Army which was formed in 1964)] background and its formal affiliation with Frontier Force Regiment, historically, which he believes remains a connecting factor between the British and Pakistani Armed Forces that endures beyond the day to day turmoil in geopolitics.

He paid tribute to Pakistani security forces for their courageous and sophisticated work in bringing

stability, peace, and prosperity in previously turbulent parts of Pakistan. The advances they have achieved in modern counter-insurgency warfare have come at great economic costs and loss of lives.

He added that it is from this narrative of increasing stability that Pakistan has become strong and confident in her drive towards industrialization, economic modernization, and regional economic integration. In spite of this, Pakistan still faces many complex enduring internal and external challenges which she can tackle through a national strategy that has long-term vision and endurance. Hence, when considering the role of partnerships and alliances, Pakistan must assess them through a grand strategy. Today, this art is lost in many quarters of the World where short-term and reactive-self-interests have a say.

Pakistan's national security is dependent on her diplomatic, economic and trade relationship. It is supported by flourishing commerce and a strong economy. This opens the doors for more sophisticated, strategic and influential relationships for Pakistan, with her neighbors and other states.

He highlighted three areas with potential to increase engagement:

Firstly, forging closer relationships based on intensified trade opportunities while encouraging and supporting the diversification of the economy and economic partners. Also the attraction of the economic corridor across Asia and into the Chinese market. This shall not be limited to trade itself, but also a development of shared sense from an independent Islamic point of view of the future of keys in fiscal reform such as Islamic Banking, Fintech (Use of technology in field of finance), the operations of Central Banks, and the modernization and diversification of the business environments. In this context, Pakistan can continue to expand its economic corridor to Gulf and the Middle East to gain dividends. These strategies in the field of commerce, trade and economics lend themselves to a network of partnerships of which some are focused narrowly around business and trade while others broadly revolve around shared strategic interests.

Secondly, substantial engagement in regional military cooperation. This field lends itself to structured alliances. In his experience, alliances of any value must be for something-and-against something. Pakistan as a non-aligned country may wish to think long and hard about defining herself by any formal alliance. Pakistan's security relations are already well established and respected among other nations including UK as illustrated by the leading role of Pakistan in the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC). But in his view, Pakistan has played this role down in recent years, therefore, it is little known outside her direct relationships.

Thirdly, Pakistan can build upon these well-established military relationships around the Globe. In order to catalyze real growth in military capability and capacity through military coalition interoperability (The ability of different military groups to operate in conjunction with each other). In this context, Pakistan can use her good offices to achieve positive influence. He gave an illustration from Jordan, where a series of seminars known as Acaba process was held with an aim to create a set of independent, non-aligned and moderate Islamic solutions to stabilize Somalia. He appreciated the set of recommendations of that seminar and opined that there is absolutely a role and a need for this sort of catalytic non-aligned thinking that bridges Western and Asian approaches to security solutions.



He added that alliances or partnerships only become relevant, and stand a chance of success where these interests overlap with those of other nations. The term alliances or partnership is easy to speak of but they represent great and serious opportunities together with potentially complex and costly responsibilities. They are supported by enduring commitments for good and bad situations.

In his view, alliances can only prosper when they have a genuine long-term strategic purpose, one that is shared by all its members. A short-term tactical fix will not withstand the inevitable long-term strains that will be placed on any alliance. Therefore,

there has to be something fundamental that pulls the parties together and which transcends short-term interests and self-interests of a state.

He emphasized that it is important to keep alliances' purpose at the forefront of its members' interests. Unless a conflict is deemed unavoidable, this purpose must surely be to avoid conflict by combining a strong deterrence posture with an equally strong political and economic performance that together discourage potentially hostile states from military adventurism or economic warfare.

Speaking of NATO, as an illustration he said that, although its strategic purpose remains relevant, as the Euro-Atlantic region is buffeted by crisis, yet its relevance and influence has been questioned over the years due to the frequent lack of consensus amongst its members, on its future role and priorities, especially during periods of relative peace and stability, which has frequently tested its unity of purpose. Alliances need to share long-term values and priorities instead of interests or perceived risks, for which mutual trust and shared view is essential.

His suggestions for Pakistan were:

First: Pakistan must see all relationships with other sovereign states in the context of long-term national strategy rather than short-term, reactive approach as strategic relationships take decades to build and only months to destroy.

Second: In order to take opportunities that the World offers, Pakistan must balance itself in international relations. One of Pakistan's real strength is its ability to be non-aligned which opens a wide range of economic and trade avenues. This balance is of immense value to Pakistan and it is here where real economic opportunities of tomorrow lie. Whereas, presently, Pakistan shall avoid un-balancing of her strategic posture and turning her back on one set of friends for their tough language.

Third: Pakistan shall not see international relationships as entirely binary, zero-sum or linear. These relationships can never be based on



either security, or trade, or religion, or culture. All these factors can form a mixture. Before coming to any conclusions, Pakistan must check the entire aspects of a relationship in terms of depth, breadth and longevity.

He concluded by suggesting that Pakistan must look towards the grand-strategic and long-term plan, and maintain a balance in order to maximize opportunities and see relationships in their rich texture. The failure and success of alliances are defined by whether its member nations have a common strategic purpose and mutual trust. If these ingredients are absent then modest and less comprehensive partnerships for a specific purpose and specific period needs to be achieved.

### **Keynote Speaker-2:**

#### **H.E. Mehdi Honardoost, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan**



H.E. Mehdi Honardoost started off his speech by sharing his view on definition of Geo-politics. In his view, this scientific field has various meanings which includes acquisition of power knowledge, knowledge of competition, effects of geographical factors on politics and foreign relations etc. Since the end of Cold war its significance has been increased.

He added that some intellectuals consider geo-politics as effectiveness of geographical factors on politics which include geographical location, resources, mobility, transportation and technological changes.

Geo-politics has a hybrid meaning where three basic elements of power, politics and geography combine.

He said that new areas of partnerships have emerged due to the developments in the International power structures and changing political and economic positions. One of the most important new areas is South West Asia: A region situated in the middle of three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa. It consists of geopolitical areas of Central Asia, the South Asia, Caucasus, Persian Gulf and the Middle East. This vast geographical region comprises of 25 countries; an area of 12 Million Square km; a population of 530 million. 9/11 is considered as the event which put South West Asia in the International developments and put Pakistan and Afghanistan as the frontline states in the war against terrorism.

He highlighted the following areas of cooperation between Pakistan and Iran:

### 1. **Organization of Cooperation of Islamic Countries (OIC)**

Interaction with Islamic countries has been the first priority of Pakistan as Islam was the basic factor of her independence. Iran also has legitimacy with Islam, so Pakistan has a special place in the foreign policy of Iran.

In this connection, Iran and Pakistan have participated in most of the OIC conferences but unfortunately, because of the differences on views among some countries, effectiveness of the organization could not be materialized.

### 2. **Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)**

One of the most important cooperation between Pakistan and Iran is ECO. It can play its role in regional economic development. It also provides an opportunity for both countries to coordinate their politics in line with economic growth and create necessary ground to facilitate economic activities in order to encourage investment and trade, and remove transit hurdles between the two countries.



### 3. **D-8 Group**

One of the ways to enhance cooperation between Iran and Pakistan has been the creation of Common Islamic Market. To achieve this goal and prepare appropriate ground for mobilization and effectiveness of the market, utilization of forums like D-8 Group has been useful, and trade and economic arrangements, under this group of eight Islamic countries (Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt and Nigeria), can mutually benefit them. D-8 can provide a good opportunity for every member country especially Iran and Pakistan. But unfortunately, this group has not been very effective in the creating economic ties between the two countries. So, this group in the terms of cooperation between the two countries is a potential factor rather than an active factor.

### 4. **Energy (Iran- Pakistan Gas Pipeline)**

The demand for natural gas is growing high in 21st century. Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline in this regard is highly a strategic project. Completion of remaining part of the project in Pakistani territory will be highly significant in view of energy problems in Pakistan. Utilization of this project and its connection with important project of CPEC will be basic change and vast economic development in Pakistan and the region.

He said that in view of important interests of Iran and Pakistan in this project, Iran expects from brotherly country of Pakistan to take steps to complete it and take a final decision in this regard. Pakistan can utilize from investment capabilities of some Chinese and Russian Companies for the completion of this project.

### 5. **Utilization of Border Market Potential**

The long border between Iran and Pakistan can be used to develop border markets which can play basic role in economic and trade developments between the two countries, but unfortunately, attention has not been given to it.

### 6. **Gwadar and Chabahar Ports**

He said that officials of Iran and Pakistan rightly call Gwadar and Chabahar ports complementary rather than competitive. These two ports play an important role in economic development of the region, with the establishment of rail network between the cities of Gwadar and Chabahar stretching it to Europe and Central Asia; and by the construction of railway network to China in Pakistan.

Today, it is realized that Pakistan and Iran need cooperation for bringing durable peace in Afghanistan to overcome the problems in the region, especially during recent times when both countries oppose US administration's new strategy regarding Afghanistan.



He concluded by saying that Iran and Pakistan should strive further with strong resolve for enhancing bilateral cooperation between the countries. This cooperation is in the interest of the Islamic World. He added that bringing durable peace and security in Afghanistan with cooperation of Afghans is necessary. It is time for regional convergence that can fill the power gap created by hegemonic countries. **Such cooperation among important regional countries: Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and other regional states, who have, until now, tilted towards US interests, can create a Great Alliance in this geopolitical and sensitive region.**

### Keynote Speaker-3:

#### Ms Anne Marchal, Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan



Ms Anne Marchal said that Pakistan and European Union share diplomatic relations since 1962 when European Union was just an Economic Community. The cooperation between the two entities has increased significantly since then, in form of cooperation agreement of 2004 and five year engagement plan, which has ended recently, and now there is a new engagement plan in offering. She added that the EU-Pakistan relations are based on pure diplomacy, therefore, they shall be assessed in their own merits but also in wider geo-strategic implications.

She broadly mentioned few areas of cooperation: Sustainable development; Education (specifically, in the field of higher education by giving scholarships to Pakistani students under the Erasmus Plus Program and providing opportunities for research under Horizon 2020 program); Vocational Training; Rural Development and Provincial Development, all these areas are important for the stability and prosperity of Pakistan.

EU also puts effort on promoting trade through GSP Plus (The Generalized System of Preferences is a preferential tariff system which provides for a formal system of exemption) which helps in the uptake of Pakistani export to EU. Pakistan-EU also share partnership on migration which is very important to remove suspicion towards genuine movement of people. **Another big milestone of cooperation was the visit of European Election Observation mission which despite some bureaucratic impediments once more witnessed a democratic transition in Pakistan.** Some other areas of cooperation include Energy, Aviation and Climate Change.

She also publicized ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) summit which is going to take place in Brussels in October 2019. This summit will provide a fantastic opportunity to the new government of Pakistan to engage with European heads of state. Now, the most

important discussion between Asia and Europe is connectivity in which CPEC is central point of discussion and give a huge opportunity to European investors.

Afghanistan is also a very important part of the geo-strategic discussion, and EU has been at the forefront for trying to find a solution. It hosted a Brussels Conference in 2016 and ASEM summit is also an opportunity for EU to engage with Pakistan on this topic. Concluding her speech, she was optimistic about the EU-Pakistan relations and reminded that more than the big power, there is also the EU which is also a global power that is misunderstood sometimes.



## Noteworthy Snippets



*“The difference between alliances and partnerships is that the former is more partisan in nature, whereas the latter is more inclusive in nature.”*

**Lt General Naeem Khalid Lodhi (Retd)**



*“To prosper, alliances must have long-term genuine purposes. There has to be something fundamental, something that transcends the long-term national interests of the countries connected”.*

**Lt General Phil Jones (Retd)**



*“The most basic factor of the independence of Pakistan was Islam, that’s why interaction with Islamic countries has been the priority in the foreign policy of Pakistan. As Islamic Republic of Iran also has legitimacy with Islam, so Pakistan has special place in the foreign policy of Iran”.*

**H.E. Mehdi Honardoost**



*“There is already a decent relationship between EU and Pakistan, but there is much more that can be achieved in regards to migration and trade.”*

**Ms Anne Marchal**



*"We would like to go ahead and shake hands with the US so that, not only Pakistan, but this region can see peace. We have to work with the principle of non-interference. There has to be a strategy of mutual respect."*

**Lt General Khalid Rabbani (Retd)**



*"No matter what you do in India-Pakistan relationship, you will never be able to go far without solving the core issue between the two countries which is the conflict of Jammu and Kashmir."*

**Ambassador Abdul Basit (Retd)**



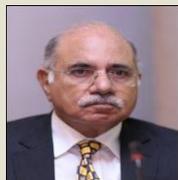
*"Pakistan enjoys a distinguishable strategic location. It is a geographical advantage that made China invest in Pakistan and as well as other states. Yet, it forms a challenge as well."*

**Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal**



*"Due to limited people to people interaction, the people of Russia and Pakistan hardly know about each other's culture. Russia and Pakistan have to travel a significant distance to come closer."*

**Air Marshal Syed Athar Hussain Bukhari (Retd)**



*"Iran has emerged stronger in the Middle East while the GCC, which was started with very attractive slogans of common defense and common currency, is virtually dysfunctional."*

**Ambassador Javed Hafeez (Retd)**

## Conference Report



The conference formally commenced with the recitation of The Holy Qur'an. In his introductory remarks, Director General (DG) Pakistan House **Rana Athar Javed**, humbly welcomed the honourable guests. The chief guest Lt General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, HI (M) (Retd), the former Defence Minister of Pakistan; Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, His Excellency Mehdi Honardoost; Lt General Phil Jones (Retd), former Chief of staff NATO and Ms Anne Marchal, Deputy Head of EU delegation to Pakistan were greeted with gratitude. The participation of esteemed scholars, distinguished ambassadors,

defense attachés and eager students was highly acknowledged.

While highlighting the importance of the conference, he emphasized that reconstruction and reestablishment of new policy patterns, based on the Geo-strategic importance of Pakistan, is very important. It is a core subject in the spectrum of Pakistan's foreign policy and it addresses the vital issues that Pakistan is confronted with. The process of re-establishing Pakistan's relations, based on her integration with regional and international community that includes the United States, Russia, China, EU, Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE, is taking a positive trajectory.

He added that the perceived notion of Pakistan's foreign policy from outside world has a major impact on Pakistan's national security. How major powers, based on the priorities of their own national interest have been giving importance to Pakistan, has a huge effect on her foreign policy. And now, future relations of Pakistan are based on those perceived notions.

Pakistan has always played a key role in establishing regional and international stability. Her sacrifices in war on terror cannot be overshadowed as thousands of lives were lost in fighting this war. Pakistan through its military operations; Zarb-e-Azb, Radd-ul-Fasaad and Rah-e-Nijaat, has managed to gain peace and strategic stability in the region.

Acknowledging the key roles played by distinguished speakers in the past, he added that despite the efforts made by Pakistan to achieve regional and international

stability, her role is never acknowledged rather it has made to suffer in the form of suspension of financial aids. However, Pakistan is analysing her Geo-strategic settings and how these settings will provide her a way to reach its true potential in the international arena.

Shedding the light on the importance of the conference, he said that Pakistan, in order to engage in relations with other countries on a permanent basis, is changing the dynamics of her foreign policy. To have alliances or partnerships with other regional and international countries is a matter of great concern for Pakistan.

This seminar will bring new dynamics and aspects for the construction of framework for Pakistan's relationships with other countries. Looking forward with a pragmatic approach, Pakistan's relations with other nations should be considered as mutually inclusive.

Concluding his brief introduction to the conference, he argued that Pakistan is a nation state, as a nation state, and with her geo-strategic advantage she has a right to establish relations that serve the best of its national interests.



**Lt General Khalid Rabbani HI (M) (Retd)**

commenced his talk expressing that Pakistan wants good relations with the US. In international politics states strive to have good relations with the major powers. Pakistan's foreign policy is concerned with maintaining good relations with states within and outside the region. Pak-US relations have taken different trajectories since 1950 but today it stands at the lowest. The nature of this relationship has remained transactional based on national

interests and needs of the time. The partnership lacked durability, mostly, because of the third party interventions which complicated the nature of that relationship. The relationship could not advance because the US and some of the Western countries kept viewing Pakistan through other countries' prism and in this process Pakistan's national security has been always been undermined. No state would compromise on her national security at any cost. The speaker emphasized on having bilateral relationship with the US based on overlapping interests in the areas of diplomacy and business, which has not been the case.

Historically analyzing the Cold War, he said that there were two blocs; the US and the Soviet Union. As the war gradually expanded Pakistan also became a part of it by joining the US bloc. At that time it was in Pakistan's interest to join hands with the US to fight Soviet occupation in Afghanistan which brought both countries very close to each other. After the success in Afghanistan against Soviets, Pakistan was left alone. Quoting Henry Kissinger he said that it was a superficial friendliness without concrete content. With the absence of that content Pakistan was left in vain. He shed light on Hilary Clinton's statement that US has a history of moving in and out of Pakistan. After the cold war Pakistan expected to have a good relation with the US based on stronger lines but it was in fact transactional in nature. Pakistan despite fighting war on terror, for over a decade, was suspiciously looked at to do more. If this blame game had been avoided by the US both countries could have better relations.

Mr Rabbani further elaborated on the importance of peace and why it is crucial in this region. Firstly, peace in this region would help Pakistan to establish good relationship with some of the major power, the US not being an exception because whatever is going wrong in this region is blamed on Pakistan. To establish peace in region a necessity and a top most priority of Pakistan. Pakistan's sincere efforts to fight terrorism and bring peace are usually undermined by the West. It is understood that in the absence of peace no development would take place.

Describing the current scenario in Afghanistan, he said that the country is totally dominated by the non-state actors and in this regard the Afghan government seems helpless. Despite the massive US and NATO investments to win war in Afghanistan, the country is not stable yet. The point is that so much blood has been spilled and wealth poured in but to no end. Pakistan is also a part of the Afghan strategy and it must be accepted by all actors that this strategy has failed. This failure must not be blamed solely on Pakistan by the US and other Western countries. As part of this strategy Pakistan launched a relentless campaign ensuring that Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is clear of menace of terrorism, once and for all. The US alleged Pakistan of intervening in Afghanistan and was asked to manage her borders. She then started fencing on western border. One of the major reasons for this fencing was to control the insurgent elements. Although this idea is not productive as far as the regional connectivity and trade is concerned, yet Pakistan obliged. Pakistan is capable of defending her borders from infiltrations.

He added that Pakistan's concern is over the alleged terror havens that the US thinks Pakistan has. In response Pakistan has denied and asked the international community to point out these sites because Pakistan is obliged to eradicate the curse of terrorism and has been doing so for many years. Pakistan is greatly concerned about the intra-Afghan political dialogues in due time rather delaying it. Ironically, the fundamentalist regime of India is being rewarded by other countries. This is not a matter of concern for Pakistan but if this rewarding impinges her security through Afghanistan then Pakistan is going to look deep into it.

He asserted that Pakistan looks forward to have meaningful cooperation with the US and other neighbouring countries. This is the only way to ensure peace and stability in the region. Forgetting the bitterness of the past, Pakistan and the US have to ensure bilateral relations, manage their differences and redefine their interests in the region. Pakistan is ready to help and facilitate this relationships on the principle on non-interference and mutual respect.

Expansion of war in Afghanistan would only exacerbate the situation instead of resulting in peace as it has been for the last two decades. Now is the time for diplomatic efforts and political solutions that is what Pakistan has always wanted- local Afghan political solution. It would lead to stability, in accordance with the will of the Afghan people.

In his concluding remarks he said that Pakistan's relationship with the US and the Western countries should not be based on counter terrorism and Afghan oriented. If this is not understood, long-term relationship is unlikely to happen. Pakistan and the US need to revisit their policies in order to establish relations that are mutually inclusive. With the emerging economic opportunities in South-Asia, countries would join hands to bring prosperity in the region.



**Ambassador Abdul Basit** started discussion with a prediction that both Pakistan and India are more likely to normalize their relations. He said that today the two nations are faltered. However, in past, approaches to resolve the outstanding conflicts have remained fruitless as both countries have always been at daggers drawn. Wars have been fought, composite dialogue processes have been tried, confidence building measures and back channel diplomacy efforts have been made. In 2015, a comprehensive bilateral dialogue process was outlined but all have been abortive efforts.

He stated that giving up hope will not solve our problems. Despite India's arrogant attitude and war hysteria, Pakistan needs to continue making sincere and serious diplomatic efforts to improve bilateral relations. He also highlighted that it was not an easy task to work over as things have taken worst shape in the last four years. India continues her atrocities in the held Kashmir and is now trying to change demography of the occupied valley by revoking the articles 35A and 370 from the Indian constitution to cease the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

While revealing India's belligerent designs he said that India is employing 'Offensive Defensive Doctrine' of Ajit Doval which aims at destabilizing Pakistan, both politically and economically. Another 'Cold Start' posture by India is in line against Pakistan to encircle Pakistan through military machinery deployments. The delusion propagated by India that Pakistan is not forthcoming on the issue of terrorism and not addressing Indian concerns is otherwise. In this regard he exemplified that in Mumbai Attacks' trial, it is India, not Pakistan that is delaying the conclusion of the trial despite Pakistan's efforts and commitment. Similarly, India has long been delaying substantive talks on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir on pretext of terrorism. He said that on the part of India it is calibrated indifference when it comes to Pakistan, India is trying to ignore and isolate Pakistan in different ways. Whereas Pakistan is pursuing policy of calculated passions. Since India does not have appetite to move forward from conflict management to conflict resolution, it becomes very difficult for Islamabad to establish cultural and

trade relations with India because she is not ready to give dialogue process a chance to establish long delayed peace.

Mr. Abdul Basit stressed on the resolution of the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir that is hanging between the two countries for the last seventy years. He said that unless and until this core issue is resolved, mutual trust, which is so important for normalization of relations, cannot be established. If India continues to procrastinate or prevaricate on Jammu and Kashmir nothing can be achieved despite Pakistan's efforts. Further, he indicated that India is now making diplomatic efforts to weaken Pakistan's stance on the issue of terrorism and has been trying to project Pakistan in a state of civil-military conflict and imbalance, which is beyond the fact.

By studying Indian foreign policy moves, one can easily draw conclusion that presently, India is triggering a cultural war to convince Pakistanis to become pessimists and forget about the Kashmir conflict. This Indian propaganda seeks to divert Pakistan's attention towards other issues like terrorism and provincialism. After having killed 100,000 innocent Kashmiris and having brought miseries over them, now India wants Pakistan to forget about Kashmir and reset the relations on these terms, which is impossible and Pakistan cannot even think about this.

While agreeing to current state of Pakistan's policy on Kashmir, he said that Pakistan needs calculated passions and there is no need to take steps in haste because Pakistan cannot afford to compromise over Kashmir. Pakistan needs to decide the nature of her relationship with India. The discussions are underway regarding regional integration and promoting SAARC for trade relations and economic cooperation. But owing to Pakistan-India trust deficit, mutual cooperative framework cannot be built on such rickety bilateral structure. The relations are so severe between the two nations that even Pakistani artists cannot perform in India.

Referring to his experience as Ambassador of Pakistan to India, he said that unless India realizes that Jammu and Kashmir is the root cause of all bilateral issues nothing can move forward. In the past, India and Pakistan have remain engaged in back channel diplomacy to discuss Jammu and Kashmir and both were close to strike a deal but then Mumbai attacks happened that reversed all developments. India alleges that whenever the efforts are made to resume the dialogue process between the two countries, some destabilizing activities take place. Pakistan too has suffered from these disturbing activities. So suspending substantive talks on Jammu and Kashmir on the pretext of terrorism does not make any sense.

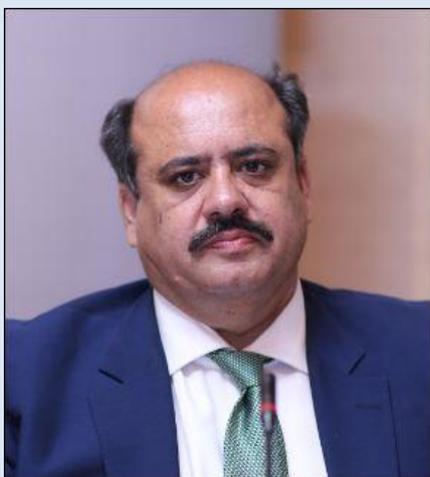
By quoting Indian PM's sudden visit to Pakistan last year he said that such visit was being portrayed by India as good will gesture and India's willingness to establish cordial relations with Pakistan but following the visit, Pathankot incident happened and immediately finger was pointed out at Pakistan without evidence. Mr. Ambassador said that it is a pressure tactic of India to keep bullying Pakistan on the issue of terrorism. Rejecting India's allegations he said that Pakistan has been forthcoming, cooperative and ready to do her part on the issue of terrorism but India continues to take other side. However, on Pakistan's part India fails to oblige, one example in this regard is involvement of Indian spy commander Kulbhushan Jadhav in subversive activities to destabilize Pakistan.



Ambassador Abdul Basit recommended some necessary measures to ensure cordial relations and resumption of talks between the two neighbours. Firstly, he said that on 9th December 2015 the two countries had agreed on 'Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue' which encompassed all bilateral issues, is the best platform to resume dialogue process. Secondly, improved, peaceful and normal environment in the Indian held Kashmir (IHK) must prevail. Thirdly, draconian laws just like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and Public Safety Act must be immediately revoked. Lastly, the urban areas in the IHK should be demilitarized along with formalization of the 2003 Ceasefire Agreement.

He further proposed that in order to find solution to the issues of Jammu and Kashmir and terrorism, a joint mechanism consisting of Foreign Secretaries and National Security Advisors from the two countries should be formed through sincerity and strong will. But he regretted that India lacks in such will and remains all the time distant in responding, despite the fact that Pakistan always remains ready and the new government has also shown readiness to normalize relations with India. He said that next year in (2019) general elections will be taking place in India and in Indian domestic political spectrum, Pakistan always remains an issue. During elections campaigns, Pakistan remains a targeted agenda to acquire vote bank. However, unlike in India, in Pakistan, India never remains an election campaign agenda, all political parties reiterate their willingness to have normal relations with India.

Finally, Ambassador Abdul Basit suggested that till the new government comes in India, Pakistan could wait and keep fingers crossed. Meanwhile, Pakistan should continue her efforts to show the world, atrocities and human right violations done by India in the Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK). This is our moral, political and diplomatic responsibility. It should be made clear that Pakistan wants normalization with India but not at the cost of Jammu and Kashmir. Resolution of Kashmir issue in accordance with the aspirations of the People of Jammu and Kashmir is Pakistan's prime objective. And no other solutions will be tenable, sustainable and successful unless it is acceptable to the People of Jammu and Kashmir.



**Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal** While defining the importance of Pakistan's distinguishable strategic location, said that Pakistan enjoys pivotal strategic advantage in the region that is why China is also going to invest in Pakistan. Along with strategic advantage and opportunities, Pakistan is confronting with some serious threats and challenges as well. India and Afghanistan continue to pose threat to Pakistan. Eighteen yearlong inconclusive war on terror on Afghan soil and presence of the US troops have further complicated the regional apparatus. Throughout the war on terror, Pakistan has been an important ally of the US

and continues to provide route for the US supplies to the war torn Afghanistan.

As an American ally in the war on terror, Pakistan has been receiving the US assistance as Coalition Support Fund (CSF) and Security Aid. However such assistance has been

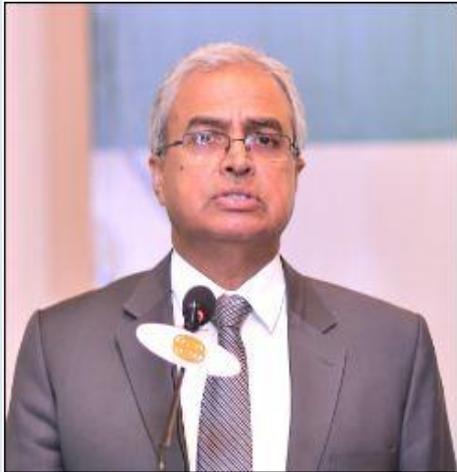
suspended by the incumbent US administration. Commenting on the issue of the US aid and support to Pakistan, Dr. Jaspal said that despite cutting aid, Pakistan continues to provide route to the US supplies to Afghanistan.

Analysing the Indo-Pak relations, he expressed that India continues to create hardships for Pakistan and is trying to isolate Pakistan. However, the growing US-India partnership is also a cause of concern for Pakistan. Such partnership is also aimed at containment of China and disturbing the CPEC project which both the US and India consider threat to their regional and global aspirations and interests. But another concern for India regarding her relations with China is India-China trade. It is difficult for India to give up more than \$100 billion annual trade with China merely to appease the US.

Dr. Jaspal noted that being an ally and dependent on the US, it has become very difficult for Pakistan to present her own narrative. While quoting Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, he said that the US should recognize Pakistan's sacrifices. International politics is driven by strategic and economic interests however, norms and sacrifices are always surpassed by preferred interests. Dr. Jaspal said that it is not the US concern that how much Pakistan has sacrificed but they see if their interests are served. So being an ally, the US wants Pakistan to do whatever she can to facilitate them in the crisis.

He said that no one else is listening to the US and this is why she is in contact with Pakistan because she have been an ally of the US in war on terror. He said that the Americans are more aware and they know all activities of the Taliban. On the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr during the three day ceasefire, the US commander in Afghanistan said that all channels are open and they are in touch with them. But the problem is that if they move ahead they will have to legitimize the Kabul government and the entire political system which means despite fighting eighteen year war in Afghanistan they have achieved nothing. In order to avoid such scenario they need scapegoat and Pakistan is an easy option for them.

In the conclusion Dr. Jaspal said that fundamental changes are taking place in international political environment which can be in-between good and bad for Pakistan so the country needs to play her own cards rather than depending on someone else. Further he said that Pakistan cannot be isolated by any one because at the time of current crisis Pakistan has rightly tilted to Russia. Hence, trilateral cooperation among Russia-Pakistan and China is in right direction to secure Pakistan's national interests.



**Air Marshal Syed Athar Hussain Bukhari (Retd)**, former Ambassador to Syrian Arab Republic, talked about Syria specifically the Russian intervention and achievements in Syria. Then he gave an insight on the military, political and the diplomatic successes of Russia in Syria, how they are related to present Pakistan-Russia relations and what are Pakistan's expectations in the future.

The speaker was at the time serving ambassador to Syria from 2015-2017 when Russia intervened with massive air strikes on Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al-Nusrah Fronts with huge success. He held the opinion that fighting the ISIS, the Al-Nusrah and the Al-Qaida elements is the responsibility of the international community. During service in Damascus he had met many officials of the Syrian government and ambassadors and a few countries like Algeria, Russia, China, South Africa, Serbia and Iran, according to him had great insight on the situation in Syria. He addressed three questions regarding the regression-intervention in Syria: Firstly, why did Russia intervene? Secondly, its timing and thirdly why only air campaign?

Addressing the first question why did Russia intervene, he explained various factors: Syria and Russia are long-time friends, Russia having a naval base in Syria (Tartus) and influence over the only and last country in the Middle East. He further added that if Russia had let the opportunity go, Bashar-al-Assad's government would have ended and there might have not been any other government over which the Russians would have the same kind of influence.

The question behind the timing of the Russian intervention could be linked to the speech given by the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in which he said clearly that they are going to defend certain important areas only and leave other areas. It was an indirect message given by the President that they were losing against the rebels and opposition. There are also rumours in the diplomatic communities that the Iranians also went to the Russians around that time asking for their intervention to save Bashar ul-Assad's government with the fear that the rebels (opposition) and terrorists (Jihadists) would take over.

There is a technical reason for Russia to opt air campaign only because air power is inherently flexible. Engagement and disengagement of forces is easy without any

commitment and there are chances of less casualties in utilizing air power. President Putin actually used this flexibility many times during the intervention while drawing down the Russian forces. Russia gave message to the Syrian government to be serious in dialogues with the rebels in order to reach political solutions. The manpower and material was provided by Iraq to the Syrian government whereas Russia provided Syria with air cover leading to the gradual defeat of all the rebels and terrorists.

The last stronghold of ISIS is now *Idlib* (In North-western Syria) but most of the area is back with the Syrian government by now. The speaker then expounded a less known fact, the formation of Ministry of National Reconciliation by President Bashar al-Assad, within six months of the crises that had begun in Syria in 2011. According to the speaker and his experience of serving in Syria, the mentioned ministry had played vital role in diffusing the situation there and in the accomplishment of the task of getting rid of the terrorists and rebels. He quoted personal examples of the affected persons of the war who helped finding many missing persons and also got a lot of people from the rebel side towards either laying down their arms or getting them on this side of the Syrian government. They also collaborated with the Russians in the implementation of these tasks.

On the diplomatic side, Russia has used its Veto Power many times in favour of Syria and Russia itself since 2011. This is the reason why there has been no military action by Security Council of UN. In 2013 when a chemical attack took place, Russia was the one to help prevent the almost confirmed American intervention because the Red Line was crossed. Russia then convinced the Syrian government to give up all the chemical weapons under the Office of Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Astana talks was another good diplomatic effort in parallel with Geneva talks but there was a fine difference between these talks. Geneva talks was looking at the overall political solution of the Syrian crises whereas the Astana talks, consisting of Turkey, Iran, and Russia, was focused on ceasefire between the warring parties in the areas where the fighting was taking place.

The speaker further shed light on Russia's revival. The country is revitalizing its economy, gaining military strength, enhancing energy exports, exerting its geographic significance and diplomatic sagacity. In Syria, Russia actually used military and diplomacy right at the appropriate times. He praised the personality and leadership qualities of the Russian President in this regard. Similarly, Russia is doing efforts in building economic blocs like BRICS with the cooperation of emerging economies. It is one of the founding members of Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, it also established Eurasian Development Bank, and is a member of G20 and the SCO as well. Under the SCO, for the

first time India and Pakistan both participated in counter terrorism exercise (Peace Mission 2018) and at the closing event both countries danced to Punjabi tunes which is a positive sign. Russia declared China a natural partner while signing a 30 years contract on oil and gas.

According to the speaker, Pakistan and Russia have convergence on wide range of global issues which is why they should have better relations. This includes peaceful resolution of international conflicts, international security, the establishment of multi-polar world, strengthening the central role of UN, and supremacy of International law in state relations etc. As far as Pakistan is concerned, in the wake of many geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-strategic changes taking place in the region, there is strategic need to diversify its foreign and defence policies and strengthen its relation with all major countries including Russia. Pakistan should be friends with all countries. Russia also acknowledges Pakistan's strategic significance in the region particularly with respect to final settlement of Afghanistan. Both countries have good chance of cooperation against the menace of terrorism in the region. Cooperation in the economic sector is also possible. If Russia joins China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), it would give Russia access to the Indian Ocean, also connecting other Central Asian Republics (CARs) to Gwadar Port. It will add to Pakistan's economic growth and development. Areas of cooperation are basically defence, trade, investment, energy, science, technology, agriculture, education and culture as foresighted now.



While identifying the areas of cooperation, the speaker also highlighted few challenges in the Pakistan-Russia relations. Both countries carry a history of trust deficit embedded in the Cold War, the military and diplomatic leadership of both countries have to work harder to remove the baggage of mistrust. One reason behind this mistrust is lack of cultural exchange between the two countries. Due to the limited cultural activities the people of both countries have limited knowledge regarding their traditions, values, music and behaviours. Besides the interaction among the government officials and parliamentarians, the people to people contact, academia and generous exchange can serve catalyst to further improve relations. Both countries have a long distance to travel to overcome these challenges in order to actually achieve the desired goals. It would be a mutually beneficial relationship unlike a transactional relationship which Pakistan have with the other major powers. It must not be done at the cost of the US relationship as Pakistan shares different relations with both countries.

In the concluding remarks the speaker stated that amid transformation of global politics from unipolar to multipolar order, Pakistan and Russia are getting closer. Both countries have the opportunity to translate high level engagements into tangible outcomes that is the backdrop of certain events such as partial withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, the India tilt towards the US and the West, and Russian resurgence. Recent upward trajectories in economic, political and security ties at bilateral and multilateral levels are manifestation of foreign policy direction which could mean that both countries are ready to cooperate and forget bitterness of the past. Defence and economic relations seem to be immediate priority of both the countries. Pakistan's full membership into the SCO has provided it with new avenues of security and economic cooperation with Russia, China and Central Asian states. The SCO can facilitate Pakistan and India to resolve their long outstanding issues to move towards economic cooperation and regional connectivity. Both Russia and Pakistan are interested in bringing peace to Afghanistan while relinquishing their unilateral interest to avoid the menace of extremism and terrorism which may emanate from Afghanistan. Russia is also warming up towards Pakistan to possibly reap the fruits of CPEC which is positive point for both the countries to enhance their economic trajectories. Both sides need to comprehend their emerging new realities in the region and should coordinate for prosperous future of the region and at the global level.



**Mr. Kamal Alam**, started his talk by drawing attention of the audience towards the history of Middle East. In order to understand contemporary Middle East it is important to understand Ottoman Empire because what is happening now in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq today is a reflection of what happened almost hundred years ago when Ottoman Empire was in its last years fighting against the allied powers. Modern day Turkey is less than 30% of what existed then because the whole coast of the Mediterranean was given to the Greeks and French, Constantinople (Istanbul) was occupied as well by the British and French, the

Russians were encroaching from the Caucasus, the British and the French armies were pushing north for now what is Syria, to push back the Ottoman army. The Turks fought back, defeated the British army and began the liberation of Turkey and that is where Turkey stands now.

The speaker continued his talk on the position of Turkey, saying that it is the second largest army in the NATO and perhaps the most important country as far as Middle East is concerned. On the friction between Turkey and NATO, Pakistan could play a role in the future of Europe considering the refugee crises and terrorism as this is what Pakistan can relate to. Discussing Pakistan's policy towards Turkey, Turkey faces almost the same problems as Pakistan does when it comes to NATO asking to do more in terms of militancy or terrorism, hosting of refugees. Just like some groups in Afghanistan that are fighting against the Pakistan army likewise in Syria, there are some international actors backing terrorists that fight the Turkish Army. For Pakistan there is a lesson to learn from Turkey, which being a NATO member is up against its own NATO members supporting the enemies, the YPG (People's Protection Units) and the PYD (Democratic Union Party)-terrorists allied to PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party). This is where the shifting stance comes in, Turkey, Russia or Syria would more or less decide the future of Syria as far as the circumstances are concerned.

The speaker further stated reasons on how warring Syria has changed the world in many ways. This is the first war where the US led regime changes failed disastrously as earlier they had at least managed to remove the governments of Saddam, Qaddafi and Taliban in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan respectively. Pakistan needs to see that the Middle East is changing, Russia has played its cards very well with far few resources in contrast to the Americans in Iraq with 150,000 troops but still could not manage to win the war.

The Russians less than 5000 ground troops, choosing smart air power and Special Forces in the counterinsurgency campaign in Syria achieved great success. Now it can be hardly denied what Russia has done and shown to the US.

Allegations on Pakistan regarding the backing of terrorist outfits by the US comes in contradiction with testimonies of leading generals from the US and Britain to senate and parliament, where they agreed that Western intelligence agencies used to support groups in Syria and Libya that turned out to be ISIS and Al-Qaeda. He added that every intelligence agency has to back an asset that will win its war. If Iraq and Syria were destabilized the price was not paid directly by the intervening parties but it was paid by Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, the countries which have the most refugees.

As far as Pakistan's stance on Middle East is concerned the country has kept remarkable neutral stance despite having pressure from all quarters to take side. It was a courageous decision not to send troops in Yemen likewise Pakistan stayed neutral on the issue of Qatar blockade. General Raheel Sharif's appointment as the head of Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition has met lots of criticism but the speaker thinks that it is a right decision which is actually moderating the Saudi view towards leading Shia militias such as Muqtada al-Sadr (Iraq) or Southern Brigade, in the region. In the past as well, Pakistan has played neutral role in ending Iran-Iraq war. So, Pakistan should not take sides because its own sectarian balance is very delicate. At the same time it must realize that interventions or force removing governments does not work. The country must not seek zero sum game that means establishing better relations with one country must not be done at the cost of other country and vice versa especially in the case of USA and Russia. One can work with all of them.

Pakistan could play a major role in the Middle East due to various reasons. It is perhaps the only military in the Islamic world that is affiliated in tactical insurgency apart from that its army recruitments are made on the basis of merit rather than sectarian basis. Pakistan is a leading trainer of the Arab militaries. Currently there are more than 250 Saudi cadets in Pakistan, four of the highest ranking naval officers of the Saudi navy at the moment have graduated from the Pakistan Naval War College, Lahore and more than half of the Iraqi pilots in the past few years have been trained by the Pakistan Air Force. Although this goes back to 1947, when the British left India, all the Indian regiments that were in places back then when they were called, Mesopotamia or Palestine, became regiments of the Pakistan Army. So, Pakistan has always been involved in the Middle East because of its involvement with the British Indian Army in both the great wars.

According to some declassified history, the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden opined that during the Suez Canal War in the 1950's, Pakistan could play a big role either

as a fighting force or as a mediator. Looking to the future where Pakistan stands today, the new government in Pakistan has made it very clear that Pakistan would play a mediating role between Iran and Saudi Arabia without taking sides

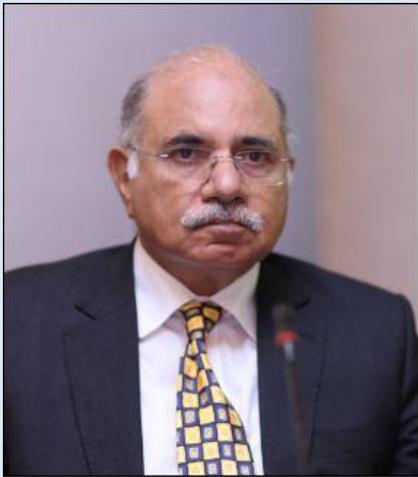
Speaking of Turkey he said that Turkey has been a historical friend and an ally of Pakistan. Both the militaries are very close and turkey faces similar threats as Pakistan. There is a massive amount of collaboration to be done, there are deals being done in military helicopters, aircraft and joint production of tanks. Looking at the Middle East now, China has emerged as a big player. China is becoming one of the biggest investors in Syria. The Chinese also have military trainers on the ground mostly medics and engineers. They are not taking part in offensive operations so dynamics are changing.

The Trump administration is not interested in the Middle East, he wants to pull-out the American establishment which is different to Trump despite otherwise. Former CIA officers who have served in Afghanistan to this day admit that they should have spoken to militant groups like the Haqqani back in the 1980's and 1990's. According to an article "Don't be Spooked by Pakistan" written by CIA Director, Pakistan has done what any military would do if there was a war in Afghanistan and that is the same situation for Turkey, it is doing exactly what any other military would do when they have war raging in their neighbourhood. The speaker illustrated an example of what happened in England regarding the alleged killing of Russian agent by Russia in the recent days to infer that there is a paranoia in England, now, that if anything goes wrong, Russia is to be blamed for it. Obviously, Britain has a legitimate concern that the Russians are coming to the Britain and they need to be aware. **Similarly, Pakistan just beside Afghanistan, has legitimate concern over anyone who exists in Afghanistan and has every right to intervene. Pakistan should not be apologetic, it should talk about realities.**

The speaker in his concluding remarks expressed realistic views about the situation going on in Syria. Syria war is winding down and the last offence is to begin. Russia has won counterinsurgency campaign, one can argue what the methods and means were. At the end of the day Might is Always Right, it is not about morality or Human Rights, it has never been in any war. It is always good to pop those questions in think tanks, universities but back in the field most commanders just want victory and of course there is a code of conduct. Even the Americans have been accused of war crime in Raqqa, in Syria and most of Iraq for the extensive air strikes. It goes both ways, it is hard even on the most precise ammunitions to pin point airstrikes because today war is fought mostly by plain cloth people. Terrorists hide in hospitals and schools and it is very hard to know who to hit. Mistakes have been made some can argue that deliberately or not. The speaker expressed that Pakistan is going forward and it is in a prime position at least

in the OIC or the Islamic world to be a mediator, a neutral country that can solve crises without taking part militarily. He highlighted the positive role of Pakistan's military in training the majority of the armies not just in the Islamic world but beyond that.

At the end the speaker emphasized say that there is an opportunity of neutrality, Pakistan can assert itself and be a big power in the Middle East, and it already is a big military power. It trains almost all of the top graduates of many of the Arab, Iran and Turkey armies. So going forth is what Pakistan should prefer.



In his brief introduction to the conflict, **Mr. Javed Hafeez** argued that Saudi Arabia-Qatar conflict is a mismatch as Qatar in its geography and population is way smaller than Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has the area of 2,149,690 sq. km which is two and half times the size of Pakistan while Qatar has the total area of just 11,586 sq. km which is the size of Estonia. Qatar has a population of about 2.6 million out of which 88% are foreigner workers.

Historically analyzing this conflict, he stated that Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) was creating tensions in the Middle East as Gulf countries were threatened of spread of Iranian revolution. In 1981, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was created and it supported Iraq to fight against Iran which was the common enemy of the Gulf States. The aim of GCC was to establish political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries to protect their interests.

In 1997, Qatar began exporting Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to other countries since then Qatar has become the world's leading LNG exporter. Export of natural oil and gas has benefited Qatar in every way. This boosted Qatar's economy and now it has GDP per capita of \$129,726.

In 1995, with the new Emir, Qatar witnessed a media revolution as Al-Jazeera TV was launched and it gave an alternative point of view to the Arab world.

He added that diplomatic tensions between Saudi Arabia and Qatar dates back to the Arab spring. The rise of Muslim brotherhood in Egypt was viewed by Saudi Arabia as a challenge to its state identity. Qatar, on the other hand saw that rise as an opportunity

as it was in favour of Muslim brotherhood. Qatar's support for pan-Arabism was different from Saudi Arabia's approach of pan-Islamism.

On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates broke off relations with Qatar. These four countries accused Qatar of supporting extremist elements and destabilizing the regional order. All these countries threatened to cut diplomatic and trade relations with Qatar and put 13 demands on her which were to meet in only 10 days otherwise the offer becomes void. Qatar's relationship with Iran is complicated as both countries share largest gas field in the world. Saudi Arabia on the other hand is in dispute with Iran over certain regional issues and does not want Iran's influence in the Arab world. Gulf States demanded Qatar to reduce its diplomatic relations with Iran, the shutdown of Turkish military base in Qatar, closure of Al-Jazeera TV and denunciation of terrorist groups.

He deliberated on the fact that Qatar's 80% of food requirements were meeting through the imports from Gulf neighbours; Saudi Arabia and UAE. It was predicted that Qatar will surrender to these demands but, evidentially, this did not happen. Iran and Turkey helped Qatar to get out of that problem by providing political and economic defense to her. In the result, nationalistic slogans were appeared in the favour of Qatar's



Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and was paid tributes for bringing the country out of foreign hands.

He added that now, Saudi-Qatar relations are taking different directions as Saudi Arabia is planning to turn Qatar into an island by digging a canal across the border which would physically separate the Qatari peninsula from Saudi land. The government plans to build 60km long and 200m wide channel. This Saudi initiative would obviously change the geography of Gulf and will have huge impact on diplomatic relations among Gulf States.

Concluding his remarks Mr. Hafeez argued that in the result of Qatar blockade, Iran has emerged as a strong regional force and GCC's approach towards this issue has seen as dysfunctional. Analytically speaking, Qatar has a strong influence in the region and it cannot be thrown out of the Gulf. Arab solidarity is losing its essence, the core issues like The Israeli–Palestinian conflict are going out of the spotlight. Pakistan in this regard adopted a progressive approach by staying neutral in Saudi Arabia-Qatar conflict as Pakistan has both political and economic relations with these two countries. And Pakistan should continue to make efforts to stabilize the relations between both countries.

## Analysis & Recommendations

The ensuing analysis of speeches reflect that Pakistan's foreign relations shall be based on long-term strategic interests rather than short-term considerations. For this purpose, Pakistan must see her relationship with other states in terms of depth, breadth and longevity. Her assessment of an alliance shall be on whether she has aligned common strategic purpose and mutual trust with that alliance.

The potential areas of engagement with other countries are: economic Diversification, regional and international military cooperation.

With Iran, Pakistan shall increase bilateral and multilateral engagements through Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), D-8 group, ECO. The two countries need to discuss prospects of connectivity between the Chabahar and Gwadar ports and economic zones on the border.

Regarding European Union, the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) summit held on 18-19 October, 2018 is an opportunity for the new government to increase bilateral engagements with the European countries as well as European Union.

The Afghanistan crisis must be resolved through diplomatic and political means rather than the use of force. Afghanistan can only become stable with a local Afghan solution. Instead of blame-game on Afghanistan, US and Pakistan shall seek to establish mutually inclusive relations.

Until and unless the Kashmir issue is resolved, Pakistan and India cannot improve their relations. Despite, Indian Government's unproven allegations on Pakistan, Pakistan needs to continue sincere and serious diplomatic efforts to improve the bilateral relations. US-Indian strategic partnership is also a concern for Pakistan.

Pakistan and Russia have also many areas for future engagement. The leaders of both countries need to remove the trust deficit left by the Cold War. Russia can join the CPEC project to give it access to the Indian Ocean which will also the Central Asian Republics (CARs) to Gwadar port. Both countries also need to build cultural linkages so that people to people contact is improved.

## **Recommendations:**

Following recommendations for the policy practitioners and concern quarters are proposed:

- **Neutrality in Middle East**

Pakistan must keep neutral stance in Middle East as it has done in Qatar blockade and Yemen war. It shall not take sides in such conflicts and give its national interest the first priority.

- **Regional and International Military Cooperation**

Pakistan's Army experience in Counter-insurgency and Counter-terrorism can be used to increase military cooperation with Middle Eastern countries and other countries.

- **Engagement in area of Connectivity**

Russia, Iran and other countries shall be invited to invest in CPEC for mutual benefit. This is will enhance regional connectivity in short-term and connectivity with Europe in long-term.

- **Pak-India talks shall be based on issue of Kashmir**

The Kashmir issue shall be the focal point of discussion between Pakistan and India in future talks regarding normalization of relations. And Pakistan shall not limit itself only to bilateral means for the solution of Kashmir issue but shall highlight the case in UN and other multilateral forums such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

- **Regional Cooperation in Afghanistan**

The regional countries must be aligned on bringing stability in Afghanistan. The role of Pakistan, Russia, China and Iran is very essential in this regard. For this a local solution shall be sought that's accepted by the Afghan people.

## Photo Gallery



