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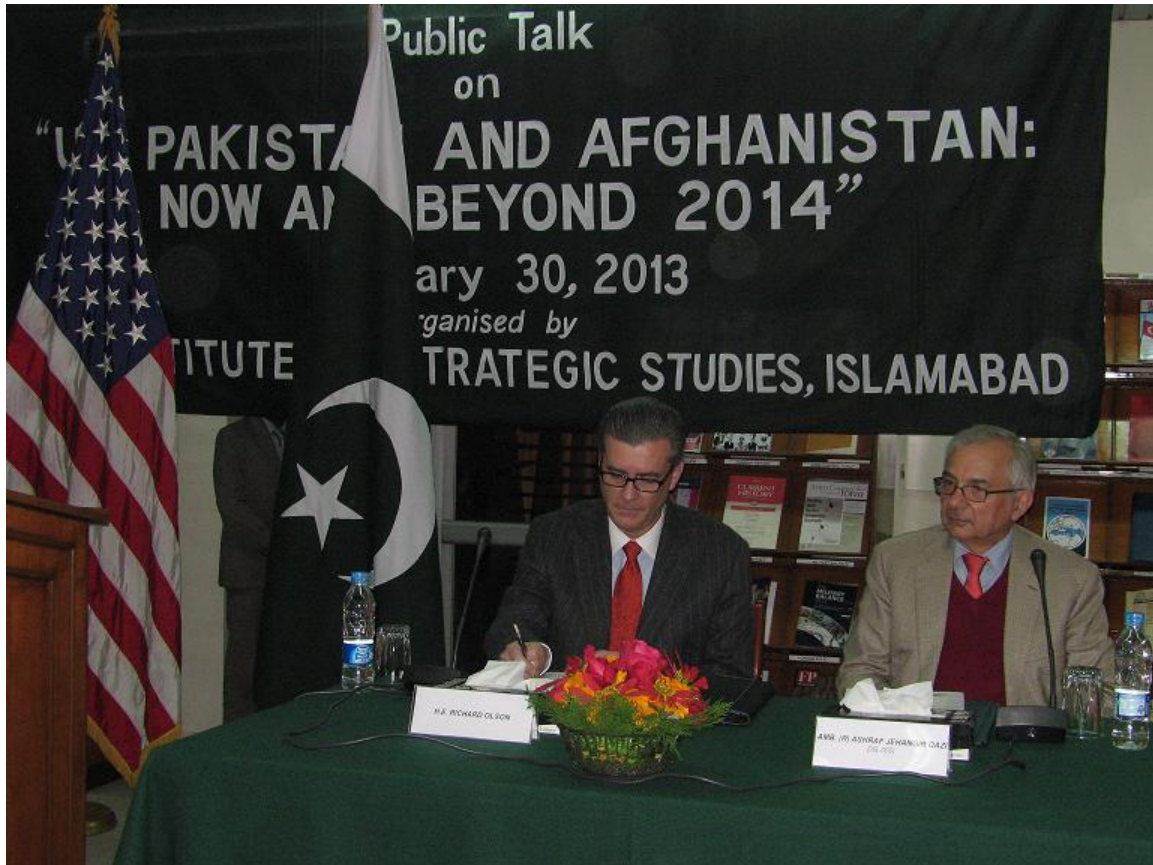
**The United States, Pakistan, and
Afghanistan:
Now and Beyond 2014**

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**THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES,
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The United States, Pakistan, and Afghanistan: Now and Beyond 2014



The Institute of Strategic Studies organized a public talk under its Distinguished Lecture Series titled “The United States, Pakistan, and Afghanistan: Now and beyond 2014”. The speaker, of the talk was H.E. Richard Olson, Ambassador United States of America who presented an insightful and comprehensive overview of the US-Pakistani relationship. Mr. Olson began by saying that United States is committed to a cooperative and long-term partnership with Pakistan – far broader than any one issue, and centered on areas of mutual interest. He emphasized on the fact that this relation that both the countries share is not transient, out of convenience or dictated solely by the requirements of today. He said that US was one of the first countries to recognize

Pakistan after its independence, and has collaborated with Pakistan on many grounds, there is no doubt that Pakistan and US relations have been through difficult times, yet it has endured and matured despite difficulties it faced.

Speaking about the nature of relations that both the countries share, Ambassador Olson said US relationship with Pakistan is not formed solely by our commitments and responsibilities in Afghanistan. The future of Afghanistan is important to Pakistan more than US since Pakistan shares its border with Afghanistan. US would like to ensure Pakistan that 2014 is not going to be a repeat of 1989; instead we continue to look over the horizon. He said that United States sees Pakistan as a country with global influence, regional weight and as a country with a growing role in the Islamic world. This makes cooperation between Pakistan and US ever more important in future. He stressed that US wants to remain a close partner of Pakistan through the period of evolution and beyond, to assist Pakistan in reaching its potential economically and politically.

Talking about US assistance to Pakistan, Ambassador Olson said that US tripled its authorized civilian development assistance to Pakistan under the Kerry Lugar Berman Act (KLB). Since 2009, US has disbursed more than \$ 3billion in projects and humanitarian assistance, despite the economic challenges US faces. Beside monetary assistance, US is also helping Pakistan to address areas where Pakistani people could most benefit from US support and assistance programs. Ambassador Olson talked about major priority programs in Pakistan which are as follows:

Energy

Keeping in mind the energy crisis in Pakistan and its direct effect on the livelihood of people US has increasingly assisted Pakistan to overcome its domestic energy production. United States is assisting Pakistan to modernize its power plants at Tarbela, Satpara and Gomal Zam dam, in order to increase transmission efficiency as well as upgrade and expand Pakistan's hydroelectric output. In addition, the US is also helping

Pakistan to gain access to multi-donor funding for Diamer Basha Dam, which would dramatically increase Pakistan's electricity production.

Women Council

Ambassador Olson said that Secretary Clinton launched the US-Pakistan Women's Council with Foreign Minister Khar in 2012. The main goal of the council was to promote economic opportunities for women in Pakistan at small and medium scale in order to enable their contribution in the society. The council also actively promotes education for women in Pakistan to bring prosperity and social stability in the country.

Agriculture and Dairy Industry

Under the US irrigation projects, United States is working with farmers to increase crop yields, and conducting joint research on plant diseases that threaten wheat and cotton. US has already created more than 200,000 acres of new farm land. Besides agriculture, US is also assisting Pakistan to improve its dairy industry by modernising farms in Punjab as well as improving the health and output of livestock by training veterinarians and administering vaccines against deadly diseases.

Roads

US has built over 650 km of roads, primarily in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). It is also helping to construct the Peshawar Ring Road, and major bridges damaged after the 2010 floods. In addition, US is also funding the reconstruction of Peshawar-Torkham Highway.

Education

United States plans to build or refurbish 800 primary schools and is spending millions of dollars on teacher training. It is also providing 10,000 scholarships to students at university level and is also providing scholarships through the Fulbright program. In addition, more than 1,000 Pakistanis visit US on embassy-funded exchange programs.

Economic Growth

Pakistan has a positive trade balance with United States, two-way trade between Pakistan and US totalled over \$5 billion in 2011. Also, US is the largest single export market for Pakistan and more Pakistani goods flow to US markets than US products to Pakistan. US signature assistance in the economic sector is to facilitate the flow of investment dollars into Pakistan's under-funded small to medium sized business community. To support the private sector investment US has made an initial investment of \$44 million in its two major funding bodies i.e. venture capital funds and private equity funds which will attract additional local and foreign investments directly into Pakistani business.

Health

With the aim of bringing quality health care to Pakistan, the US has funded many projects which include a new \$4.5 million obstetrics and gynaecology ward at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center, and built a new training institute that will upgrade the Jinnah Medical Centre's capacity as a first-rate centre for medical education in Pakistan. In addition, US will also fund construction of a new \$10 million public hospital in Jacobabad and renovate and equip many health units throughout FATA and other rural parts of Pakistan as well as continue to assist federal, provincial and local health departments throughout Pakistan.

Security Assistance

US continues to invest approximately \$1 billion a year in security assistance, providing advance equipment and training to maximize the effectiveness and resilience of the Pakistani forces. In addition, US disbursed over \$1.8 bn in Coalition Support Fund in the 2012 and \$19 bn since 2001.

Democracy

United States does not support any one political party, or any one candidate. It is for the first time in Pakistan's history that one civilian government transfers power to the next in accordance with the constitution, which reflects the will of Pakistani people.

Ambassador Olson also talked about the framework of bilateral engagement between Pakistan and US which is designed to foster communication and lead to cooperation between the two countries. This framework includes working groups in areas that the two countries have jointly identified as high-priority, which are:

1. Energy
2. Economic issues
3. Water
4. Counter-terrorism,
5. Law enforcement
6. Non- proliferation
7. Defence cooperation

He stressed on the fact that there is no denying that some distrust still lingers on both sides between Pakistan and US the only solution to which is regular discussion and meeting between our leaders and a belief that we can work together to prevent miscommunication and misunderstanding. He said that it is through open channels of dialogue that we can manage the inevitable disagreements that have in the past pushed both the counties into cycles of recrimination.

Shedding light on the Afghanistan situation, Ambassador Olson explained that the nature of friendship between Pakistan and US is not based on the situation in Afghanistan. This partnership is long term, but, however, this does not diminish the urgency of the need to work together to bring Afghanistan at peace. We recognise the mistakes of the past and ensure that 2014 will not be 1989; United States will not disengage from the region. US commitment is quiet clear in Afghanistan. He explained that Afghanistan is not clearly the country it was a decade ago. It is an increasingly

independent country, substantially more connected. Although Afghanistan faces many challenges, but the advancements made should not be denied.

Presenting some facts and data regarding the current situation in Afghanistan, Ambassador Olson said that over two-thirds of Afghans now have access to mobile phones, television and radio. Over eight times as many children are enrolled in schools out of which one-third of them are girls, and more than 10 times as many students attend university. Sixty per cent of Afghans now have access to basic health care up from nine percent in 2001. The maternal mortality rate has declined eighty percent.

While talking about the role of international community to ensure a stable Afghanistan, Ambassador Richard Olson reiterated that during the past two years, US, Pakistan and the international community have contributed a lot to make tangible commitments to Afghanistan's future. At the Istanbul Conference, the international community agreed to a vision of an Afghanistan at peace and integrated with the region. At Bonn, eighty-five countries and fifteen international organisations announced firm commitment to a "Transformation Decade" in Afghanistan through 2024. At the Chicago Summit, NATO and ISAF allies committed to provide \$3.6 billion a year to sustain Afghan National Security Forces. In Tokyo, the international community pledged an additional \$16 million in civilian assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan. In addition, to show United States dedicated commitment to Afghanistan, US has signed a 'Strategic Partnership Agreement' with Afghanistan and has designated Afghanistan as a Major Non NATO Ally.

When discussing the issue of reconciliation the Ambassador explained that President Obama and President Karzai have agreed to an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. US role is to help open the doors for the talk, including support for a new and neutral office in Qatar, where negotiations can take place between the Afghan High Peace Council and representatives of Taliban. He laid emphasis on the fact that this has

to be an Afghan-led peace process, with Afghans talking to Afghans to find a way forward for their country.

Articulating Pakistan's role in the peace process, the Ambassador said that for Pakistan, supporting progress towards peace in Afghanistan is not a matter of altruism, but is instead a critical sovereign interest. Discussing the role of the Core Group which includes Pakistan, Afghanistan and US, he said that the Core Group has met nine times and has made progress in putting in place the mechanics to facilitate peace talks. This according to him should be seen as a strong signal of the seriousness of our intentions.

Concluding his talks, Ambassador Olson said that sustainable peace in Afghanistan is not only good for Afghanistan, but a promise of significant regional development. This will redouble greater regional economic integration. Pakistan is the centre to this vision of an interconnected region – a geostrategic bridge. Expanding regional links is critical for Pakistan's economic future as Pakistan is positioned at the crossroads between energy and mineral resources of Central Asia and alongside large markets in India. In conclusion, he emphasised that US will remain engaged in this region in hope to bring peace and development. US assistance to Pakistan in different arenas is a sign of US long term investment in future of Pakistan. The US will maintain cooperation with Pakistan in our joint efforts to counter extremism, combat terrorism and protect both our peoples from the scourge of senseless violence.

Replying to a question regarding the Kabul Delhi strategic partnership and the initiative of the New Silk Route Ambassador Olson said that this partnership is not an attack on Pakistan. Strategic partnerships happens between many countries and has an over arching framework which include many elements beside defence and security. Talking about the New Silk Route, he said that it is an attempt to bring together countries of the region, to open economic opportunities and raise the stake of interdependency in order to bring a common interest in peace and stability of the region at large.

When asked about the change of administration in Obama's second term and the relation in light of the nuclear issue, the Ambassador candidly replied that there is going to be continuity in the policy and it will follow the same strategic direction with a little more emphasis on the domestic issues in US. He said that second term for President Obama will bring new tasks and challenges. US administration has its faith in Pakistan's nuclear program however, the nuclear issue will be dealt with diplomacy as it has been done in the past

Wrapping up Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, said that US and Pakistan need to acknowledge that they still need to harmonise their ideas on the future of Afghanistan and Pakistan and that it will be decided, first and last, by the will of their people.

*Prepared by
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