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Report- In-House Meeting

With Dr. Christophe Jafferlot
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Pictures of the Event



In-House Meeting with Dr. Christophe Jafferlot on Pakistan-US Relations

The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) organised an In-House meeting on April 19, 2016 with Dr. Christophe Jafferlot, Senior Research Fellow at the National Centre for Scientific Research, Paris. The Chairman Board of Governors, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood warmly welcomed the guest speaker. Ambassador Khalid opened the floor by stating that Pakistan and the US share an odd history, the two have remained the best of allies and have frequently fallen apart. There are discordant voices in the policy circles; President Obama in an interview recently questioned the US alliance with Pakistan. On the other hand, the recent visit by the Prime Minister of Pakistan to the US sensed a different tone. US shared its desire to broaden its relations with Pakistan beyond the security paradigm, which has been a characteristic of Pakistan and US relations.

Dr. Jafferlot began by saying that Pakistan and US have shared a torturous relationship with ups and downs in the last seven decades, however, the dilemma of this relationship has reached the end of its periodic cycle; a pattern that was set as early as the 50's. The security-driven relationship between Pakistan and US which can be best describe as the security-driven form of clientalism, is now exhausted. While clientalism does not belong to the International Relations study, it very clearly defines the nature of relationship between Pakistan and US. It describes the relationship of dependence based on exchanges of favours between two entities, and is asymmetric in nature.

He said that when Pakistan turned to the US in the early days of independence, it was the first move by Pakistan – a delegation was led by Quaid-e-Azam himself in December 1947 looking for financial and security support from the US to overcome the feeling of vulnerability from India. Truman, according to Dr. Jafferlot, was unsure and wanted to meet Indian leaders before choosing Pakistan. India however, was interested in non-alignment and was against Cold War, and did not choose US as a partner, and as a result, the US focused its orientation towards Pakistan. Following that, Pakistan joined CENTO and SEATO and gave Americans access to its bases, and in exchange, Pakistan received \$2 billion of assistance between 1953 and 1961. Only one-third of the monetary assistance was spent on security-related issues, whereas most of the money was invested into industrial and infrastructure buildup. Thence onward, the US used Pakistan to contain communism, both Soviet and Chinese, and Pakistan benefited from the American assistance vis-à-vis India.

In the following years, the parentheses changed when Kennedy in the early sixties, decided to come to the rescue of India following its border confrontation with China. Dr. Jafferlot stressed that Democratic presidents like Kennedy have always been more inclined towards having good relations with India than good relations with Pakistan; on the contrary, Republican presidents maintain a different orientation. Seemingly, when President Nixon took over, Pakistan's good relations with China were an asset for the US, as it wanted to have cordial relations with China as well. In order to do so, US used Pakistan's influence over China through negotiations which resulted in the visit of President Nixon to China. Soon after Reagan took over, Pakistan became the frontline state of the anti-Soviet Jihad for the US.

Dr. Jafferlot explained that the best relations crystallise when both the partner countries have common enemies, and this pattern repeated itself after 9/11, where once again, the US needed Pakistan to curtail militancy and extremism. US funded Pakistan through huge influx of monetary aid and weapons to fight a war which was not Pakistan's war, and which Pakistan was not prepared to fight. Once again, Pakistan allowed the US to use its airbase, US troops got access to its military bases, and the then President Musharraf handed over a number of Al-Qaeda militants including Sheikh Hamid Saleem, Abu Zubaidah, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who were amongst the most valued trophies. And, in exchange, the US provided very generous financial support – if one goes by the official figures of the US Congress Report, between 2002 and 2015, \$32 billion were transferred by the US to Pakistan; 55% of this money went to security-related issues and expenditures. Along with financial aid, Pakistan got weapons and other hardware including the F-16s.

According to Dr. Jafferlot, by 2007-08, there was some structural change and transformation in different episodes of aid US was offering to Pakistan. Pakistan and the US now were not sharing the same enemies anymore and on the other hand, the US and India growing relations changed the equation of relationship and alliances structurally.

Till the election year of 2008, the George W. Bush and President Musharraf period had ups and down but remained working. However, when President Obama took over and drafted the term 'AfPak', the US inclination shifted. After which the aid autonomy that Pakistan was once enjoying under the Bush Administration, the term 'Do more' was repeatedly used which reflected the reduction of autonomy. Although, the US was happy with the Pakistan military operations in Swat and South Waziristan, but they wanted Pakistan to do more. The US proposed Pakistan to launch an army offensive in the North Waziristan region which the then Pakistani COAS, General Kayani, strongly opposed. The American drew the conclusion that there was still characterisation of 'good' and 'bad' Taliban among the Army in Pakistan.. This eventually diminished the trust between Pakistan and the US. Conclusion being that Pakistan and the US do not have the same enemies. The Obama Administration realised that the US has to operate themselves through the use of drones. Following that, the drone programme became the main tool of the Obama Administration's military policy, and the number of drone strikes significantly increased after 2010, resulting in the death of civilians in Pakistan.

Dr. Jafferlot maintained that the increased use of drone strikes was not only the reduction of autonomy; it was entrenchment of Pakistan's sovereignty. The increase in drone attacks, followed by the Raymond Davis episode, the Bin Laden raid, and the Salala operation showed disconnect between US and Pakistan. It also became a major reason why anti-American sentiments grew since 2010. Quoting the PEW survey, Dr. Jafferlot said that by July 2010, 59% of Pakistanis described the US as an enemy, and only 11% as a partner, whereas only 8% expressed confidence in Obama.

Another reason Dr. Jafferlot highlighted, was the closeness between US and India. The turning point of US and India relations came with the signing of the 123 Agreement in 2008, which was validated by the Indian Lok Sabha. America's growing relations also transformed the US view of Pakistan as an ally and a partner. This nuclear agreement was only the tip of the iceberg; the US and India signed numerous agreements including many military-related deals, where the US sold

scores of weapons. While visiting India in 2010, President Obama signed more than \$5 billion worth of agreements and deals. This visit also, to some extent, alienated Pakistan when US proposed India to play a bigger role in Afghanistan. The US was planning a withdrawal from Afghanistan and invited India to take over after they withdrew from Afghanistan. Dr. Jafferlot also quoted a statement made by the US official during the visit in 2010 that, “the US appreciates India’s enormous contribution to Afghanistan in development and welcomes Indian assistance until Afghanistan achieve self-sufficiency.’

Dr. Jafferlot stressed that to achieve this change of opinion; the Indian diaspora has played a pivotal role in the Indian politics along with massive investments by the US corporate sector in India. Till the early years of the 21st century, it was possible to say that India was a common enemy of Pakistan and the US, ten fifteen years later, the scenario changed. The main reason of this shift, according to Dr. Jafferlot, was the series of incidents that happen in 2011, especially after the Salala incident which resulted in retaliation from both Pakistan and the US. The blockage of supply lines by Pakistan post-Salala incident, and sanctions by the US made both the countries realise that there has to be working cordial relations between them.

The 2013 visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to the US resulted in ease of tensions prevailing between both the countries. Nawaz Sharif was successful in getting \$6.6 billion worth of loan from the IMF, and assurances from Senator Kerry that drones strikes will stop. A transactional relationship was revived to some extent. Another comforting development for the Americans was the Army offensive in North Waziristan. Following that, General Raheel Sharif’s visit to the US, both in 2014 and 2015, was very well received. Dr. Jafferlot was of the view that there is a real shift and that the relationship between Pakistan and the US has resumed back to its old pattern. For the first time since 2002, the US aid to Pakistan will be well below \$1 billion. Another reason he highlighted which will continue to maintain a distance between Pakistan and US relations is the role of another external player in the form of China.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is definitely more useful for the development of Pakistan. Also, the strong relations between Pakistan and China contrast the growing relations between India and the US. In addition, India is useful to the US to contain China’s growing global ambitions. Dr. Jafferlot stated that if China is increasing its cooperation with Pakistan, the US is, in return, equally investing in India. This may be a critical juncture when after 70 years of ups and downs, the US and Pakistan relations may be at a standstill. It will not break, as US has many reasons to maintain its relations with Pakistan, of which Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal and capability is one. Concluding his presentation, Dr. Jafferlot said that if Pakistan and the US have promoted development together, then the Kerry Lugar Bill would have been a success which in retrospect has been a failure. Dr. Jafferlot ended by quoting Ayub Khan who used to say, “I play one lion against the other,” so Pakistan is pivoting from one lion to another. He was skeptical that with the kind of development China is bringing to Pakistan, it will be able to respect Pakistan’s sovereignty, because if Pakistan has the same problem with another big partner like the US, it will have a cost also in the form of state sovereignty and national sovereignty, which are always at stake when a country makes a shift.

Question and Answer / Discussion Session

One of the questions that were raised to Dr. Jafferlot was regarding the growing Chinese interests in Pakistan and why should Pakistan not accept Chinese investments when the US has lost its interest in Pakistan and is opting for more cooperation with India?

Dr. Jafferlot responded by saying that to engage Pakistan should remain a priority not for the US alone, but also for the West at large, instead of pushing Pakistan into the arms of China.

Answering another question regarding the 123 Agreement and defence deals between India and the US, and the role of US in maintenance of peace and stability in the South Asian region, Dr. Jafferlot said that, there is no doubt that a pro-Indian attitude exists in the US which is due to the obsession US has towards China; to curtail China, India is clearly one of the nations they have to maintain relations with. However, reservation exists in the US regarding the Indo-US nuclear deal, especially among the military as India enjoys close ties with the Russian Federation. On the other hand, India is very well aware of US nature of imposing sanctions on countries, and it will hence try not to be a complete ally of the US – India is no one's ally it does not tie its ends with any one country. As far as the question of Pakistan is concerned, Dr. Jafferlot maintained that US should certainly try to defuse the anxiety that exists in Pakistan which can be done in many ways. Cooperation can be carried out in the scientific field, but unfortunately these sectors remain unexplored.

Another comment was made regarding Pakistan and US relations that both the states need each other in a changing strategic scenario and the new directions that are emerging in their relationship over the 21st century. These trends are evident in the new Strategic Dialogue that Pakistan and the US are now undertaking, and the statements that both the countries are making which reflect the fact that while the relationship between Pakistan and the US remains security-oriented, there is also an understanding that the direction of this relationship needs to move away from its security orientation into a more robust relationship in terms of developing cooperation in non-traditional areas. The continuation of the Strategic Dialogue is necessary to overcome these challenges, which will help to move the direction of this relationship forward from security to a more robust relationship in other areas of cooperation. The security dimension will exist, but only in terms of Afghanistan and the peace process in that country. The new direction of Pakistan-US cooperation will help explore the fields of education, women empowerment, science and technology, alternative energy projects in Pakistan and establishment of a 'Knowledge-based Corridor' in terms of improving the education standards in Pakistan and improving and solidifying the scientific base of Pakistan in universities and at the college level.

Dr. Jafferlot responded by saying that the level of collaboration between Pakistan and the US is bound to be low, of course the US needs Pakistan for the Afghan conflict resolution and Pakistan also needs the US. Secondly, all the non-traditional fields were part of the Kerry-Lugar Bill (KBL) which turned out to be a failure. The assessment of this five-year plan remains to be made, and now, it will be difficult for the Congress to give money for the same thing. Thirdly, the atmosphere in the US shows that a form of Islamophobia is gaining momentum in the US, and this problem also exists in many European countries, and which is evident from the way Donald Trump is running his election campaign.

Another question posed to Dr. Jafferlot was about US concern about democracy and the influence of religion in the Pakistani politics as the West believes that segregation of religion from politics and state will help curb extremism.

Dr. Jafferlot responded by saying that the US considers that there should be less religion in politics in the Muslim world. However, he said that he would argue otherwise, there should be more religion in politics, at least for South Asia. Militancy is not a form of religion, it's an ideology; the Islamic religion consists of the 'Darga' culture which is open to Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. This is the foundation of this country and the religious identity of Pakistan and South Asia at large. If this kind of religion is upheld in politics, there will be less extremism and less militancy. The secularism that Pakistan and India has defined in his part of world is not anti-religious, not e-religious, is not a-religious, it is recognition of all religions on par. This is also stated in the Pakistani, as well as the Indian constitution, where minorities are officially recognised. Pakistan can develop more by returning to its roots, because that is the fundamental identity. Another element to understand is the notion of social justice and equality. Democracy is useful because it is bound to bring equality in the course of time. Democracy would help to fight militants, because militants exploit inequalities which exist in the socio-economic fabric.

Responding to another question, Dr. Jafferlot said that the problem that lies with productive usage of non-military aid is that there is no planning of where to spend it; this is the reason why the KLB failed in the first place. There is a need to build mechanisms and institutions which is the key for this kind of aid to be productive. He further said that there have been very few countries in the world which in seven decades of their existence, has had three phases of military rule and equal phases of democratisation which may not reflect confusion, but it reflects instability, and also, resilience.

In his concluding remarks, the Chairman Board of Governors, ISSI, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood said that the losses that Pakistan has suffered in terms of life and destruction of society and the ill-effect it has had on the economy and development of the country is nothing in comparison to the aid US has given to Pakistan. And we hope there is recognition of this colossal loss of Pakistan. Also, there is a discordance regarding who is the enemy for Pakistan and for the US. Furthermore, Ambassador Mahmood said that it is for US to recognise and realise that India is nobody's ally. While commenting on the issue of CPEC, Ambassador Mahmood said that CPEC is a huge project which is based on the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, and this project is a result of exhaustive planning and thinking. There is no denying that there won't be any problems at the domestic or regional level with such big projects, however, CPEC is a result of a long process of interactions between Pakistan and China over several years. He further added that there has been a campaign in the world by interested quarters against the CPEC, and India has come out clearly against it. Nevertheless, both Pakistan and China are determined for its success and Pakistan has no reason to doubt Chinese intentions.