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## *Report – Public Talk*

# **“Contours of Pakistan’s Security Landscape”**

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## Pictures of the Event



The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a Public Talk on January 9, 2018 titled "*Contours of Pakistan's Security Landscape*". The guest speaker at the occasion was Pakistan's Minister of Defence Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan.

Welcoming the speaker, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISSI thanked honourable Federal Minister of Defense Engineer Khurram Dastgir Khan for his presence and sharing views on the "*Contours of Security Environment of Pakistan*". Ambassador Mahmood said that this is a highly important subject as it has acquired particular significance in the wake of recent developments in the volatile South Asian region.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Khalid was of the view that security for an individual or a state is not a product but a process. It is indeed a continuous process; complex challenges keep emerging. He recalled that ever since its inception, Pakistan has grappled with countless threats to its security environment. Pakistan has a hostile India perched on one side and an unstable Afghanistan on the other. Accordingly, security has been the top priority on our national agenda.

Ambassador Mahmood said that in modern times, national security extends beyond relying simply on hard power means. It includes non-traditional security challenges, increasingly involving non-state actors, which impact the country's development, economic progress and growth, as well as political stability. Explaining the complexity of challenges, Ambassador Mahmood said that Pakistan faces internal and external challenges of a diverse nature that fall under both traditional and non-traditional components of security. Unfortunately, due to its geographical location, Pakistan's internal security challenges get compounded as a result of the external threats that exist in its volatile neighborhood.

Describing the Indian challenge, Ambassador Mahmood said that unremitting violations by India at the LoC and across the Working Boundary are the example of a conventional security threat from a traditionally hostile rival. In 2017 alone, more than 900 such violations took place, as compared to 382 in 2016. He was of the view that Indian bid to feverishly build up and modernize its conventional and nuclear capability, accompanied by its menacing military doctrines like Cold Start and hinting at abandoning its policy of No First Use of nuclear weapons - all this happening with the support and collaboration of the US and other Western powers - has

had the effect of disturbing the regional strategic balance and poses an ever escalating security threat to Pakistan.

Ambassador Mahmood said that Pakistan has been making untiring efforts to promote the peace process in Afghanistan to avoid opening a second violent front on its western border. It has not only consistently supported an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned dialogue process between the warring parties in Afghanistan, but has also effectively neutralized the terror outfits on its own side of the border - thanks to Operation Zarb-Azab and the continuing Radd-ul-Fasad kinetic operations.

Regarding Pakistan's efforts in fighting terrorism, Ambassador Mahmood said that Pakistan has accorded the utmost importance to the concept of regional security by fully supporting all anti-terrorism initiatives in the region through physical and monetary means. He said that Pakistan has sincerely fought against the scourge of terrorism by putting our own lives on the line and have stood with the states that shared the vision of making South Asia a terror free zone. However, Ambassador Mahmood said that it is unfortunate that the American President, through his totally unwarranted scathing tweets and misplaced rhetoric, blames Pakistan for the US failures in bringing about peace and stability in Afghanistan. It is quite clear to those who can see through such tirades, that such empty accusations are based on fabricated and false notions propagated by Pakistan's inveterate enemies who want to hinder our efforts at achieving internal stability and economic progress. It is no wonder that President Trump's outburst has evoked a strong response from all the strata of Pakistani nation, as well as from the friendly countries like China, Iran, Turkey and Russia. Trump's ill-considered approach towards Pakistan is also being criticized by saner elements in the United States itself.

Ambassador Mahmood said that the internal challenges to Pakistan's security are not confined to the law and order situation, but also encompass issues such as economic security, water and food security and political instability. He said that internal security environment is dominated by non-traditional threats of extremism, sectarianism, terrorism and militancy. Our internal difficulties have been exacerbated by external enemies who infiltrate the society through spy networks - such as the case of Kulbushan Jadhav, the Indian spy who confessed to have orchestrated deadly terror attacks including the Safoora bus attack of 2015 and several others.

Dealing with the huge number of Afghan refugees and the socio-economic challenges that come in tandem, Pakistan's internal security environment has also remained under stress.

Ambassador Mahmood hoped that China-Pakistan economic cooperation would eventually bring order to internal and external security environment of Pakistan and the region on the whole. As the \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) materializes, there are many who wish to see it falter and fail. He explained that the reasons for this lies deep within the wider contours of geopolitics, i.e. the Great Game of geo-economic and political rivalry among bigger players. As fate would have it, Pakistan occupies a central place in this Great Game having being blessed with abundant resources and a unique locus . That is why our security environment is innately significant to the security of the entire region.

### **Text of the Speech by Engineer Khurram Dastgir Khan**

*Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISS  
Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:*

When Twitter doubled its characters to 280 in September last year, who knew what infamy awaited us in the New Year? Even when Ambassador Khalid Mahmood and I discussed the possibility of today's event, President Trump's now-infamous New Year tweet was still some days away. Ever since the Autumn of 2016, we are living in a post-truth era. Now in 2018 we are also living in the age of post-tweet crisis.

Yet, acceleration of communication does not alter fundamental facts about global security and the landscape of Pakistan's security. Just one of the salient features of this landscape is that Pakistan shares borders with the two most populous as well as the two most rapidly growing countries on the planet. Pakistan's security landscape is regional. Global powers are thus relevant in the regional context.

One of the new contours of Pakistan's security are the nascent relations with the Russian Federation. Russia in its previous incarnation as the Soviet Union was an antagonist, not only due to its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, but previously because Pakistan had taken a firm pro-West stance during the Cold War.

Since 2013, Pakistan has concluded its first-ever defence cooperation agreement with Russia, completed purchase of some defence equipment, and has conducted joint military exercises.

Once Pakistan was a member of Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Today Pakistan has become a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

An opening has been achieved lately with neighboring Iran. The recent visit by Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff was significant in opening a conversation, which has been followed by a meeting by the two National Security Advisors. The current PML-N government has also revitalized Pakistan's longstanding defense relations with longstanding friends, Turkey and Saudi Arabia respectively.

The new contour that is visible but not delineated precisely is China. The consequences of the deepening of Pakistan's enduring relationship with China through the Belt and Road Initiative are coming into view gradually. As the Gwadar node of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is built, and China's investments in Pakistan reach fruition, relations between "all-weather friends" and "iron brothers" are for the first time in history achieving real economic amplitude beyond platitudes.

Pakistan's node is perhaps the most advanced in all of BRI to-date.

Pakistan and China share the aims of internal reconciliation in Afghanistan, steady Pak-India relationship, and stable security situation within Pakistan. Yet in terms of security cooperation, Pakistan and China remain partners and are yet to become allies in the traditional sense of the word.

And now, India. The unremittingly hostile, anti-Pakistan stance by the current Indian government has reduced drastically the space for any advocacy of peace. India has wasted a precious political moment in Pakistan, where there has been political consensus on peace, and no political party has been indulging in India-bashing to get votes. The escalation in Indian bombings on the Line of Control has been matched with escalation in anti-Pakistan rhetoric, which often descends to baiting and bashing. India today is a highly militarized and an increasingly belligerent neighbor.

After refusing to own up to it since 2004, almost to the day a year ago the then-new Indian Army Chief General Bipin Rawat publicly confirmed India's Cold Start doctrine against Pakistan. India has amassed men, material, and garrisons along its border with Pakistan, while its China-specific Mountain Strike Corps has been languishing.

Pakistan's perception of threat from India is not reflex; it is based upon a thorough assessment of Indian capacity to threaten Pakistan militarily from an unprecedented forward position. The past year was the deadliest yet for Indian bombings of civilians on the Line of Control. In 2017, more than 1,300 Indian ceasefire violations, the highest ever in the recent past, have resulted in 52 deaths and 175 were injured.

Deadlier still continue the gross violations of human rights in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

From political repression and suppression of freedom of speech, to maiming, blinding, and killing civilians by firing pellets and through mass killings, *enforced disappearances*, torture, *rape* and *sexual* abuse continue apace under the fig-leaves of Terrorist Activities and Disruptive Act (TADA), Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and Public Safety Act (PSA).

Cold Start deployment against Pakistan, lethal violations of line of control, and human rights-abuses in Kashmir are compounded by India's use of third countries for espionage against Pakistan. The recent case of Kulbushan Yadav is illustrative of the "Not War, Not Peace" strategy of India deployed against Pakistan.

The perception of India is one of the foundational divergences between Pakistan and the United States.

For nearly two decades, United States has deemed India its strategic partner as a counterweight to China, as reiterated in the recently announced US National Security Strategy. The United States has been trying to convince Pakistan that India is not a threat to Pakistan, and therefore Pakistan should change its strategic stance.

The truism remains true: threat is calculated on capacity, not intent. Both India's capacity and intent are hostile to Pakistan.

Yet India is not the only source of divergence between strategic worldview of Pakistan and the United States. What Nadia Schadlow has termed “American Denial Syndrome” is the second and more topical. The United States has conducted its longest war bar none in Afghanistan. It has spent nearly a trillion dollars, sacrificed more than 2000 US soldiers and injured thousands.

What is the result? The graveyard of empires has not closed its gates. As Secretary of Defense James Mattis announced in June 2017: We “are not winning in Afghanistan right now”.

The denial is in the causes of “not winning”.

Pakistan is the scapegoat, because “billions and billions” is a handy excuse to forestall realistic, rigorous analysis.

“Billions and billions” is a callously transactional, counter-productive and offensive argument to Pakistan; whose people, armed forces, economy, and infrastructure have suffered losses and pain beyond imagination during the anti-terror alliance with the United States since 2001.

Shall we put a price-tag on use of ground lines of communication, air lines of communication which average 300 sorties daily, use of ports and air-bases, the matchless intelligence cooperation that decimated Al-Qaeda, the three million Afghan refugees we continue to host, and thousands of Pakistani civilians and armed forces personnel who lost and continue to lose their lives by hand of those who operate from across the border in Afghanistan ... the list continues.

Today's Pakistan is post Zarb-e-Azb, one of the largest anti-terror operations ever executed by any country in recent history.

We cleaned North Waziristan, we cleaned FATA, we cleaned Karachi and we cleaned Baluchistan. We are contributing to global counterterrorism efforts through Pakistan Navy's participation in TF-150 and TF-151.

US forces may have the counterinsurgency manual; Pakistan armed forces have done it and prevailed over terrorists.

The way forward is not through threats, notices, and suspensions of support.

Mutual recrimination distracts us from prize on which we should direct our eyes: a sustainable peace in a democratic Afghanistan. This is Pakistan Foreign policy's highest objective.

The Afghan war will not be fought on Pak soil. We have eliminated safe havens and are clearing the remnants of terrorists from our soil. Yet 43% of Afghanistan's districts are outside the control or influence of Afghan government. Half of Afghanistan is practically a safe-haven.

It is convenient to blame Pakistan for cross-border terrorism, but the United States has not lifted a finger to help us fence the border, which Pakistan has begun successfully. It is convenient to blame Pakistan for the US failure in pacifying Afghanistan, yet the US has not lifted a finger to pursue internal reconciliation seriously.

Instead, its finger is on the "kill" button in Afghanistan. "We are not nation building again, "President Trump said pithily last August, "We are killing terrorists". The Trump Administration has suspended strategic dialogue with Pakistan, yet complains of failure of high-level communication; which is bound to fail until backed up by consistent dialogue at working level.

In his book "Playing to the Edge", Michael Hayden disagrees that the OBL incident poisoned the relationship between the United States and Pakistan. In fact, he writes, "It merely tore the veil off."

Now all veils are off and it is time for a courteous yet ruthlessly candid dialogue between Pakistan and the United States, with everything on the table. Impulses appear to be running ahead of policy in the twenty-first century.

A reminder is in order. Logistics trump strategy. This is as true today as for Napoleon and Hitler attacking Russia. "In wartime, logistics eats strategy for lunch," Michael Schrage has written.

Finally, Afghanistan.

Pakistan sees Afghanistan as a sovereign neighbor with whom we share abiding bonds of history, trade, and culture. We respect sovereignty of Afghanistan and wish to see our neighbor prosper as a democracy. But Pakistan would like this courtesy be reciprocated.

As Robert Frost wrote, "Good fences make good neighbors".

Pakistan's defence is robust. Our vigilant and highly-trained armed forces continue to protect and defend our land, sea, and air borders. Robustness of our arms is buttressed by the robustness of Pakistan's democracy. Pakistan has come out of a very dark period of terrorism, energy shortage, and economic deprivation.

The people of Pakistan wish to preserve this peace for which they have paid with blood of their neighbors, friends, relatives, and armed forces.

This past Saturday, I visited the home of Second Lieutenant Moeed in Lahore. Lt. Moeed, age 21, was martyred by cross-border fire in North Waziristan in December. No more.

Let us choose cooperation over castigation. Yet faced with castigation, this resilient nation will rise as one to defend itself.

*Pakistan Paindabad—Long Live Pakistan*

### **Question-Answer Session**

In response to a question about whether Pakistan has impressed upon US on unacceptability of Indian role in Afghanistan, Mr. Dastgir said that Trump administration has suspended high level dialogue with Pakistan since last year. He said that we will raise this issue again when those talks are resumed.

Replying to a question about need for Pakistan to counter President Trump ruthlessly, the Minister said that dialogue must not be shut with US as it has presence in Afghanistan. He also said that mutual recrimination distracts us from peace in Afghanistan, and Pakistan have potent leverages over US and the government knows what step to take at appropriate time.

A question was asked whether Pakistan should develop Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) as part of making our defences robust against United States. The Minister replied that all needful steps are being taken by the government to keep our defence robust.

In response to a question about time duration of US supply lines through Pakistan, Minister answered that it was former President Musharraf mistake to accept US supply line without any serious paperwork. He added that due to political tensions with Iran and Russia, US will not be

able to reroute supplies into Afghanistan via Northern Distribution Network (NDN) and Pakistan remains the only viable supply line.

Responding to a question about the continuity of current Pakistani policy towards US after the 2018 elections, the Minister said that current policy reflects the national consensus and it will be up to the next government if they would like to re-evaluate the policy or not.

In a reply to a question about problems created as a result of slashing the repatriation date of Afghan refugees to thirty days recently, the Minister said that remnants of Jihadi groups are using Afghan refugees as a hide out, so Pakistan needs to speed up the process repatriation in order to counter security threats.

Responding to a question about real intentions of current US hostility towards Pakistan, the Minister said that it is in the realms of speculations as to why now US decided to raise tensions with Pakistan and that he will refrain from answering it at the moment. He referred to Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif's statements and said that US is scapegoating Pakistan for its failure in Afghanistan.

A question was raised about Pakistan's measures to counter non-traditional security threats. Mr. Dastgir replied that there has been farsighted legislation in this regards by his government and sustenance of Pakistani democracy and political stability is also vital for fighting non-traditional threats to Pakistan.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISSI in his concluding remarks thanked the Defence Minister for his candid and comprehensive overview of Pakistan's security environment and challenges. He said that US-Pakistan relations have always been transactional, but we must acknowledge that this is the lowest point in relationship and the business is not as usual. Ambassador Mahmood added that Pakistan should continue to formulate policies in its own national interests and lines of communications should be kept open with US to better convey our priorities and sentiments.