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Report – In-House Meeting
with
“Turkish Media Delegation”

September 16, 2019



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PICTURES OF THE EVENT



A 22-member media delegation from Turkey visited Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) on September 16, 2019 to exchange views on issues of mutual interest. Members of the delegation included Prof. Dr. Halil Toker, Professor at Urdu Department, Istanbul University, Prof. Dr. Muhammet Savaş Kafkasyali, President, SDE (Institute of Strategic Thinking), Mr. Gokhan Gokce, Head of Planning, TRT World, Mr. Cemal Demir, President, GASAM (South Asia Strategic Research Center), Mr. Ogun Duru, Foreign News Editor, Anadolu Agency, Ms. Deniz Kilisliođlu, Senior Correspondent, NTV, Mr. Sinan Tavukcu, Vice President, SDE (Institute of Strategic Thinking), Ms. Ismihan Yilmaz, Investigative Department, TRT World, Mr. Atif Ozbey, Coordinator, Kanal 5, Mr. Ismail Eray Çelebi, Ankara Representative, UlusalKanal, Ms. Sevil Erkuş, Diplomatic Correspondent, Hurriyet Daily News / Hurriyet, Mr. Ridvan Tezel, Ankara News Editor, Milliyet, Ms. Iklim Öngel, Ankara News Editor, Cumhuriyet, Mr. Yasir Emre, Group Leader, Special News, TürkMedyaDijital, Mr. Burak Erdem Çelik, Diplomatic Correspondent, Sabah, Mr. Yahya Kurtkaya, Correspondent, TRT Haber, Mr. Muhammed Vefa Özalp, Correspondent, Milli Gazette / TV 5, Mr. Riza Yasar, Anchorperson, On 4 TV, Mr. Mehmet Şakir Saraç, Correspondent, Yeni Safak, Mr. Aykut Olgun, Cameraman, TRT Haber, Mr. Behlul Cetinkaya, Anadolu News Agency, Islamabad Station, and Ms. Merve Sebnem, Columnist, Daily Sabah.

While welcoming the guests, Director General ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, said that the world is changing very rapidly as focus is being shifted towards Asia. Today, United States and China are in competition which President Trump also, at times, calls rivalry. US has launched an Indo-Pacific strategy and wants India to play an active role as a counter weight to China. Pakistan and China are very close to each other and therefore, a new kind of alignment is emerging where China and Pakistan are on one side, whereas US and India are on the other. Pakistan, he said, want to have good relations with both China and US.

Ambassador Chaudhry said that friendship with US has emboldened India. Consequently, the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has adopted a hard-line approach as he wants to create a Hindu state. As a result, lives of minorities are increasingly becoming difficult. Modi has also adopted a very highhanded policy in Kashmir which is a dispute between India and Pakistan since 1947. There are a number of UN resolutions on Kashmir and Pakistan feels that this

dispute should be resolved peacefully according to UN resolutions. However, India not only occupied, but also annexed Indian Occupied Kashmir in August 2019. People of Pakistan and Kashmir have been connected for centuries and therefore, there is a reaction in Pakistan. There is a clampdown and curfew in Kashmir. International community is also waking up to the situation which is very grave. Most of the international leaders including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have spoken in solidarity with the Kashmiri people.

On its West, Pakistan shares border with Afghanistan. Situation in Afghanistan is also not clear. Trump had directed his team to hold direct talks with Taliban, and there was a ray of hope. But dialogue has now been cancelled. Pakistan believes that there is no military solution to Afghanistan quagmire and ultimately, all parties will have to come to the table for talks. There are over 3 million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. If there is destabilization or civil war, Pakistan will suffer. Luckily, all parties want peace in Afghanistan and Turkey has also played a very important part in the peace process.

On Iran, the Director General said that tensions between Iran and US and Iran and Saudi Arabia are a matter of grave concern. Pakistan enjoys very cordial relations with both Iran and Saudi Arabia and Pakistan believes that tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia or Iran and the US are not good for the region.

On Pakistan's relations with Turkey, the Director General said that Turkey enjoys a special place in the hearts of people of Pakistan. Pakistan's friendship with Turkey is regardless of which government is there in Ankara. He also hoped that the good relations between Pakistan and Turkey will not only be confined to political relations, but will also translate into good economic relations.

A member of the Turkish delegation inquired whether there is any data available of people being killed in Kashmir. The Director General said that many international organizations including Amnesty International and Genocide Watch are documenting the deaths in Kashmir. There are 700,000 Indian troops in Kashmir. All sorts of atrocities are being committed including custodial killings and blinding youngsters by the use of pellet guns. Kashmir is a Muslim majority area but Modi is now trying to convert it into a Muslim minority area by bringing people from other regions to settle there.

Another Turkish guest said that Pakistan is the only Muslim nuclear country. Does that put a responsibility on Pakistan's shoulder? The Director General replied that all nuclear weapon states should be responsible. Pakistan developed nuclear weapons to deter India. Some of the BJP leaders are talking irresponsibly regarding nuclear weapons. There should never be a nuclear war.

A member of the delegation wondered whether more countries in the region like Malaysia would also like to forge close alliance with China. The Director General said that China has come up with the idea of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Every country in Asia and even beyond wishes to be part of this initiative. China is a champion of globalization, while West is slow on globalization.

A question was also raised regarding part of Kashmir under China's control. The Director General said that there was an agreement between China and Pakistan in 1963 according to which a certain part of Kashmir called the Aksai Chin is now part of China. But this arrangement is subject to final settlement of the Kashmir dispute.

A member of the delegation said that it is said that China has built concentration camps in Xinjiang province. There are also reports that India is also building concentration camps in Assam. Is India copycatting China? The Director General replied that India is actually copycatting Israel viz-a-viz Palestine. As Israel established settlements in occupied lands, India is also following suit in Kashmir. He also said that there is no comparison between Kashmir and Xinjiang, as Kashmir is an internationally recognised dispute. On Russia's relations with Pakistan, the Director General said that Pakistan's relations with Russia are warming up. Focus of this relationship is economic in nature, and Russia was keen to build north-south gas pipeline. However, due to some hurdles, this project could not be realized.

Another member of delegation said that Turkey too has a problem as it is hosting a huge number of refugees from Syria. The Director General said that Pakistan does not subscribe to regime change from outside. While Pakistan remains neutral in the conflict, it is deeply concerned regarding the human suffering in the Syrian conflict. Pakistan hopes that civil war will end and Syrian refugees will go back to their home.