

Report

**In-House Meeting
With American Diplomats on Future
of Pakistan-India Relations**

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**THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES,
ISLAMABAD**

In-House Meeting with American Diplomats on Future of Pakistan-India Relations

A three-member delegation of American Diplomats visited Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) on April 12, 2011 to discuss the future of India – Pakistan relations. The delegates included Mr. Walter Douglas, Minister/Counsellor, US Embassy Islamabad, Mr. Michael Pelletier, Public Affairs Officer, US Embassy Islamabad and Ms. Katherine Fernandez, an official of State Department. From the Pakistani side, the guests included Lt. Gen Talat Masood, Mr. Riaz Khokhar, Former Foreign Secretary, Dr. Humayun Khan, Former Foreign Secretary, Mr. Inam-ul-Haque, Former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, analysts Dr. Shireen M. Mazari and Ms. Naseem Zehra, Mr. Asif Ezdi, former member of the Pakistan Foreign Service, Mr. Aziz Khan, former Pakistan's Ambassador to India, Mr. Ayaz Amir, member of National Assembly and Ms. Ayesha Faruqi, Director South Asia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Director General ISSI, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi welcomed the guests and hoped that the deliberations would go a long way in bringing peace to this region.

The American guests while expressing their desire to know different shades of opinion that exist in Pakistan regarding relations with its Eastern neighbour, also informed that they visited India couple of months back to know their views as well. To this, the Director General inquired whether there was any change of mood in Delhi.

Mr. Michael Pelletier replied that Indians today are more aware and concerned on a vast range of issues like the international financial situation or

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the future of Afghanistan that have direct bearing on India. He reaffirmed his government's commitment of support to both India and Pakistan but also insisted that both the countries will have to take the lead and find solutions to the problems bedevilling this relationship.

Dr. Humayun Khan, briefly touching upon the history, divided Indian foreign policy into three distinctive phases i.e. Nehru era that was based on the ideals of “Panchsheel” whereas, the second phase saw a desire of regional hegemony culminating in the third phase where now India aspires for global power. He said that Indo-Pak dialogue has been fragile and years of mistrust and animosity serve as the main hurdle in resolution of problems

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between the two countries. He was of the view that being a larger and a stronger country, India needs to go out of its way to remove this mistrust and has to show massive gestures towards Pakistan to obliterate this mistrust. He emphasised that the routine approach in the Indo-Pak dialogue is not going to stabilise relations.

Dr. Shireen Mazari argued that the growing relationship between India and the United States has further complicated the situation as today; India is more aggressive towards Pakistan. Citing the recent anti-Pakistan campaign that was launched by the Indian media prior to the cricket match between India and Pakistan in Mohali, Dr. Mazari said that the desire for peace seems to be one-sided. She insisted that Pakistan realises that war is not an option but on the other side of the border, a new war doctrine by the name of “Cold Start” is being formulated against Pakistan. She was critical of the civil nuclear agreement signed between the United States and India as this agreement has upset the balance of power in the South Asian region. She stressed the need to resolve Siachen and Sir Creek issue before the two countries could move on to more contentious issues.

The Director General, ISSI, commented that in order to improve

relations with India, a realistic look at the issues is needed. Pakistan’s primary obligation is to its people. He was of the opinion that for economic growth, a stable environment is required and for that environment, good relation with all neighbours is imperative.

Mr. Ayaz Amir informed the American guests that in Pakistan, a vast majority of people believe that there is some kind of conspiracy against Pakistan. This conspiracy is being hatched not only in Delhi, but Washington and Tel Aviv are equally involved in a plot to undermine Pakistan. He asked his foreign guests to look at the map of the world carefully and think whether Pakistan was a country to be pushed around or be dictated. He said that India detonated five nuclear devices in 1998 and soon after the tests, Mr. Advani started issuing statements and threatening Pakistan. As a result, Pakistan was left with no option but to go for a tit for tat reply. He emphasised the need for both the countries to learn to co-exist and suggested that as a step towards such co-existence, Pakistan must demobilise the “army of Jihad” that it raised during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Lt. Gen. Talat Masood was of the view that there is a lot of false sense of nationalism in both the countries. Both the parties are responsible for the fragile relations. Another incident like Mumbai may lead to a holocaust in this region. He stressed that there is an urgent need to take some concrete steps to avoid such incidents in the

future. He emphasised that Pakistan today is facing an existential threat in terms of terrorism and the groups that Pakistan once nurtured, now need to be contained.

Mr. Riaz Khokhar while appreciating the Indian Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh for inviting his Pakistani counterpart to Mohali said that the current governments in both the countries are weak and are going through rough time in their respective countries. Therefore, one should not be too hopeful of these meetings as both India and Pakistan have conducted a number of meetings in the last six decades but unfortunately, things have not changed. He was of the view that the recent meetings between the Home Secretaries and the Foreign Secretaries were more to impress the international community. Today, India aspires for a permanent seat of the United Nations Security Council, but the world community should not ignore the fact that Indian record of honouring the commitments it made to the Security Council is not good.

Ms. Naseem Zehra said that both India and Pakistan have tried wars and covert actions which have proved to be counter productive. But, on the other hand, negotiations have also not bore any fruit. She pointed out that the list of problems between India and Pakistan seems to be growing day by day, already laboured by a long list of issues, both the countries now also have to deal with water issue as well as the Afghan situation. She said that war was not an

option and CBMs as well as active cooperation were the need of the hour.

Mr. Asif Ezdi said that one cannot ignore the fact that India wants to see a weak and divided Pakistan. Referring to a comment made by Dr. Humayun that Indian hegemonic designs in region are not in vogue any more, Mr. Ezdi said that the reason behind this change was Pakistan's nuclear capability. He said that the main reason for this latest initiative was that India wanted to engage the moderate Kashmiri leaders in talks. For this, they had to engage Pakistan because the Kashmiri leadership would not enter into any negotiations without taking Pakistan on board.

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Mr. Aziz Khan was of the view that both India and Pakistan made considerable achievements during 2004-2008. Both the countries need to revisit those successes as a number of CBMs including Sir Creek were agreed upon and need to be implemented.

Towards the end of the meeting, the American guests opined that perhaps the latest round of talks

between the two countries were just on the surface, and could not be termed as genuine negotiations, however atmospherics have their own importance. They agreed that the relationship between the two countries was fragile but at the same time expressed their hope that the dialogue continue.

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