

# Report

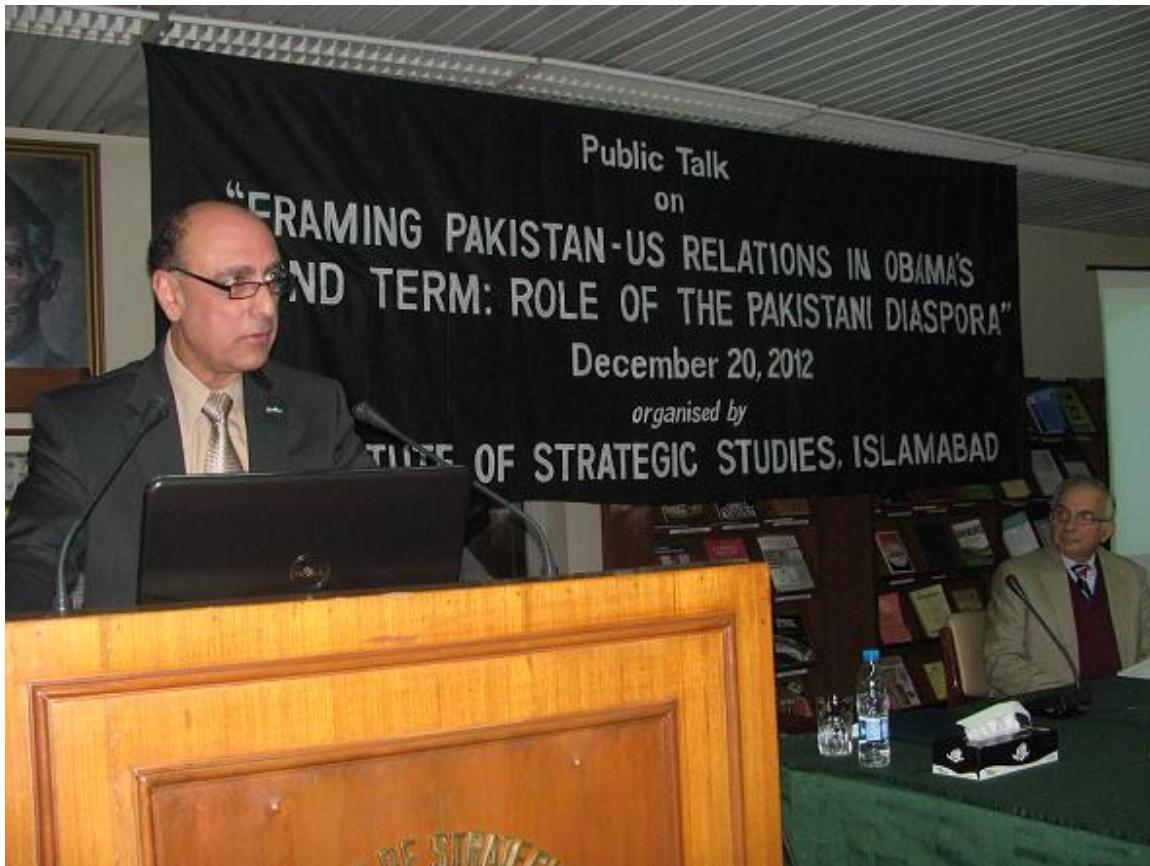
## Framing Pakistan-US Relations in Obama's Second Term: Role of the Pakistani Diaspora

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**THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES,  
ISLAMABAD**

## Framing Pakistan-US Relations in Obama's Second Term: Role of the Pakistani Diaspora



The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI), under its Distinguished Lecture Series, organized a public talk on December 20, 2012 entitled "*Framing Pakistan-US Relations in Obama's Second Term: Role of the Pakistani Diaspora*." The Director General ISSI, Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, in his welcome remarks offered a warm welcome to the guest of honor, Mr. Irfan Malik, President of USPAK Foundation, Washington D.C.

Ambassador Qazi reflected upon the memorable time spent with him a decade ago in the US. Ambassador Qazi declared the US as a considerable asset for Pakistan, with the Pakistani Diaspora community in the US remitting about \$2 billion annually to Pakistan,

and contributing positively to the image of Pakistan in the US and wider international community. He said that the Pakistani Diaspora community in the US was successful in many spheres; socially, business-wise, politically, and many of them were well-connected with top US officials. Mr. Irfan Malik, he said, was one of those success stories who had contributed positively to Pakistan's image abroad as well as dispelling negative propaganda about Pakistan in the US. Elaborating, he said that US-Pakistan relationship was overwhelmed by negativity, yet its importance has grown with time. The Americans had a poor image of Pakistan and its policies, while back in Pakistan, there was a high level of discontent with President Obama and his policies. Many in Pakistan, who had perceived him as a progressive and tremendous figure, now see him as a President pursuing the policies espoused by his predecessors. He said that the Pakistani Diaspora community faced a tough challenge of projecting Pakistan positively to the US at a time when the US was concerned about terrorist safe havens in Pakistan and the safety of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.

Introducing his organization, Mr Irfan Malik said that the USPAK Foundation envisioned empowering, guiding and training the Pakistani American youth for tomorrow's leadership roles. It offered memberships for college and high school students, organized workshops and Youth Leadership Conferences and many similar programs to encourage youth participation. Deliberating upon President Obama's second term, Mr. Malik talked at length about Obama's second term as President and the policies he is likely to pursue. Throwing light on the various power centers in the US; the Administration, Congress and Think Tanks, he talked of the Congress as the most vital power center, without whose mandate it was impossible for any policy framed by the Administration to see daylight. Think Tanks, though an unofficial power center, impacted the decisions of the Administration and Congress through influential discussions. According to Mr. Malik, President Obama's focus over his second term would be on developing his legacy, with a greater focus on domestic issues like Hillary Clinton's reelection in 2016.

According to Mr Malik, the foreign policy issues that could most probably be on Obama's agenda over his second term may include nuclear proliferation, policy on the use of drones, AFPAK policy, and an ever-increasing focus on China. He reiterated the need to overcome the image deficit in the US-Pakistan relationship, as both countries viewed each other with suspicion and negativity. The Pakistani Diaspora community had an important role to play in this regard. Talking about the present status of US-Pakistan relations, he said that the relationship could be likened to a forced marriage where both the parties have their hands tied, not out of choice but because of necessity. The trust deficit was widening and US economic assistance to Pakistan was non-existent primarily due to diminishing US interest in Pakistan and lack of bargaining power on the Pakistan side. He said that Obama's reelection was not welcomed in Pakistan as many in Pakistan were fooled to believe that Mr. Romney's statement "Pakistan is important to us" was a compliment and a positive remark. Analyzing US-Pakistan relations between the years 2012-16, he observed that the 'War on Terror' was the only area where the two could cooperate and work together, with trade, economic assistance and FDI going downhill.

He stressed on the important role the media of both countries could play in dispelling negativity and promoting a better image of each other. He said that the Pakistani Diaspora community in the US was the second fastest growing community in the US and had an essential role to play in improving the US-Pakistan relationship. Through effective lobbying, increasing citizenship responsibilities, assimilation and working and engaging with other Diaspora communities, the Pakistani Diaspora community could make a difference and positively impact on Pakistan's image in the US and the wider international community. In conclusion, Mr. Malik spoke about the need for both the countries to avoid the blame game, increase people to people exchange, and for the Pakistani Diaspora community to engage more in conversations related to commerce and increased interaction with the private sector.

*Prepared by*

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