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Conference Report

Visit of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence & Security of the Senate of the Czech Republic to Pakistan

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The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an in-house meeting with a six-member delegation from the Czech Republic's Parliamentary Committee on Defence, Foreign Relations and Security.

The Committee was headed by Hon. Frantisk Bublan, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Defence and Security, accompanied by Hon. Hassan Mezian, Hon. Tomas Kladviko, Hon. Jozef Regec, Mr. Petr Fleischmann (Advisor to the Committee) and Mr. Tomas Opoceny (Interpreter). The meeting was also attended by Dr. Noor-ul- Haq (Chairman IPRI), Mr. Khalid Rahman (IPS), Ambassador (Retd.) Ali Sarwar Naqvi (CISS), Mr. Fazal-ur-Rehman (SSII) and Mr. Zafar Ahmed.

Chairman ISSI, Ambassador(Retd.) Khalid Mahmood, welcomed the meeting as an encouraging interactive measure to deliberate on wider perspectives of prevalent international security issues. Participants from both the sides agreed that the security of the world is not confined to military strength but that the socio-political and socio-economic security of the nations is equally important. Through the use of inclusive politics, more emphasis must be placed on conflict resolution rather than on conflict management.

Chairman Mahmood recounted that the presence of 1.7 million registered Afghan refugees is not only an economic burden for Pakistan but that Pakistan has also borne the socio-political and strategic impact of the situation. At the time of Soviet withdrawal, a six plus two mechanism was designed with the help of neighbouring countries and the UN to counter any misgivings. This strategy is non-existent now. Neither the regional nor the international mechanism is evolved to counter the aftermath of the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014. The US seems to be in a hurry. The internal situation in Afghanistan is also portraying marginal improvement in its economic, political and capacity building sectors, albeit heavy dependence on foreign assistance. Although Pakistan is vigilantly observing the situation and has prepared contingency plans, sharing the largest border with Afghanistan insinuates that enhanced terrorist activities are likely to generate from an unstable Afghanistan.

Mr. Khalid Rahman from IPS highlighted the social ramifications that have emerged due to the minimized and discriminatory role played by the UN in international crises. Real security threats in this region fail to attract enough global attention thus resulting in the severe polarization of the global community.

Ambassador (Retd.) Ali Sarwar Naqvi commented on the strategic instability created by the US-India Civil Nuclear Deal that has hurt the cause of Arms Control and Disarmament and Nuclear Non-Proliferation in the region. He reminded the participants of President Obama's famous speech of 2009 in Prague with a proposal of Global Zero: total disarmament. He suggested that any policy made by the international community should particularly envision uneasy relations between Pakistan and India. Consequently, the entry to NSG must be non-discriminatory and should be criteria based rather than country based.

Hon. Frantisk Bublan, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Defence and Security, while replying to the concerns of his Pakistani counterparts abandoned the parallel drawn between the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the US occupation of Afghanistan. He claimed that the objective was more to rebuild Afghanistan with planned services where every soldier would have an assistance of at least five civilians to uplift the civil life of Afghanistan. He shielded the role played by NATO in Afghanistan and the participation of six hundred Czech soldiers.

Chairman Bublan also expressed his concerns on the decrease of internationalization. He repented for Pakistan's nut cracking situation with Al-Qaida on the one hand and international troops fighting Al-Qaida on the other. He also discussed China's increasing presence in Afghanistan and termed its aggressive economic activity in Afghanistan as intriguing for the European Union. Hon. Hassan Mezian, a representative of a small Muslim community living in Czech, realized that the issues of terrorism and extremism were the derivation of unresolved chronic issues and therefore require a long-term and collective strategy to counter.

Hon. Jozef Regec remarks provided a complete account of the EU stance on Ukraine. He admitted that the assessment made by the EU on the Ukrainian crisis was initially very poor. They could never envision the aggravation till there was an abuse of international law by Putin. However, there still is a leaning towards Europe in Ukraine, which might take thirty years to surface. Rogec also regretted the pain and misery that refugees experience during wars. He stressed on the need for political will to address the sufferings of the people collectively. He urged that the newly elected parliament of the EU also has to take the responsibility of adopting a positive role in that regard.

The meeting ended on consent for mutual cooperation in the field of economy and education and a realization for the crucial role Pakistan can play in bringing stability in the South Asian region.