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Seminar Report

Pakistan's Foreign Policy Role of the Parliament

February 2, 2016

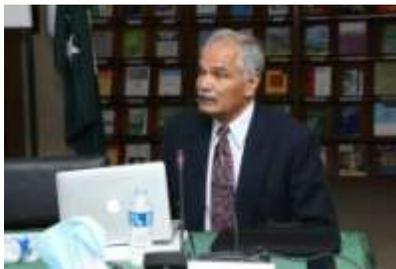


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Pictures of the Event







Programme

- 11:00** **Recitation from the Holy Quran**
- 11:05** **Welcome Remarks**
Ambassador Masood Khan, Director General, ISSI
- 11:15** **Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari**
Chairman, Standing Committee on Foreign
Affairs, National Assembly
- 11:30** **Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Hussain Qureshi**
Member of National Assembly and Former Federal Minister
- 11:45** **Senator Farhatullah Babar**
Senator and Former Spokesperson of Presidential Office
- 12:00** **Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob**
President, PILDAT
- 12:15** **Ambassador Fauzia Nasreen**
Head of Department, Center for Policy Studies, COMSATS
- 12:30** **Mr. Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka,**
Acting Executive Director, PIPS
- 12:45** **Professor Dr. Rifaat Hussain**
HoD, Government & Public Policy, NUST
- 13:00** **Ms. Marvi Memon**
Member of National Assembly and Chairperson
Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)
- 13:15** **Q&A**
Moderator: Ambassador Masood Khan, DG, ISSI
- 13:40** **Concluding Remarks**
Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman Board of Governors, ISSI

Vote of Thanks by DG, ISSI

Lunch

Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Role of the Parliament

The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) organised a Seminar on "*Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Role of the Parliament*" on February 2, 2016. The Chief Guest on the occasion was H.E. Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Chairperson of the Standing Committee of National Assembly on Foreign Affairs. Other distinguished parliamentarians and speakers at the seminar included, Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Hussain Qureshi, Member of the National Assembly and former Foreign Minister; Ms. Marvi Memon, Member of the National Assembly and Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Programme; Mr. Farhatullah Babar, Senator and former spokesperson of the Presidential Office; Ambassador Fauzia Nasreen, HOD Centre for Policy Studies, COMSATS; Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, President, Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT), Mr. Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka, Acting Executive Director, Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS), and Professor Dr. Rifaat Hussain; HOD Government and Policy Department, National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST).



Welcome Remarks, Ambassador Masood Khan, Director General, ISSI

*Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

In recent years, the interaction between Parliament and Foreign Office has become more intense and productive. Parliament and Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs are monitoring the implementation of foreign policy; and agreements and treaties are being subjected to closer scrutiny.

The effort of the executive has been to enable Pakistan to meet its international obligations effectively and to create greater awareness about broader national policy parameters within which foreign policy can be formulated and implemented. Parliaments, through their questions, motions, debates, speeches, resolutions and general interaction have been providing valuable inputs to the executive.

There are voices which emphasise that Parliament should have more say on foreign policy decisions, especially those related to war and peace and participation of Pakistani forces in foreign conflicts or to undertake new treaty or alliance obligations.

Pakistan today is facing myriad challenges in the realm of foreign policy. Pakistan has taken a series of initiatives to make our neighbourhood peaceful, to promote regional connectivity, and to create conditions for economic development in Pakistan that benefits the people of Pakistan. Major efforts have been made to revive dialogue with India, although a cloud of uncertainty still hangs over the process because of Pathankot. Our firm faith in the restoration of Afghan peace and reconciliation has been endorsed by Afghanistan, the US and China. The greatest challenge for all of us is to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table.

We want to help the international community create a multilateral order based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and anchored in the values of fair play, equity, and security for all.

We are seeking an ever stronger relationship with China, stable ties with the United States, and better economic linkages with Europe. We are also pursuing *Vision East Asia*. In the Middle East, we are walking a thin line to ensure equilibrium and conciliation. We have counseled resort to more diplomacy to douse the flames of war which are ruining Muslim nations in the broader Middle East region. To reduce tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, we have taken the path of good offices and mediation.

Pakistan's priority today is well-being and prosperity of its people. And we are poised to deliver on this promise in the years to come. In this context, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a keystone mega-project that would transform the political, strategic and economic landscape. Pakistan is the axis around which this revolution will take place.

On all these issues, the state of Pakistan needs the guidance and inputs of Parliament, which has its ears to the ground and its finger on the pulse of the people of Pakistan.

Honorable Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari has made the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs most dynamic and active. What is more, he has tried to improve the standards of the debate within the Committee by learning from parliamentary best practices. Despite resource constraints, he has tried to improve the quality of the input that is provided to parliamentarians for their deliberations. He is also trying to benefit from independent perspectives to give more informed counsel and guidance to the government. He is reaching out to academia and think tanks.

We are honored to have in our midst other distinguished parliamentarians dealing with various facets of foreign affairs. They include Honorable Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, one of the finest foreign ministers we had; Ms. Marvi Memon, Chairperson of BISP who has a strong penchant for foreign policy; and Senator Farhatullah Babar who is one of the most meticulous and diligent legislators one knows.

We have four other distinguished speakers - Ambassador Fauzia Nasreen, who has observed many Parliaments around the world; Mr. Ahmad Bilal Mahmood, who has done seminal and pioneering work on propagation of parliamentary norms and practices in Pakistan; Dr. Mafzool Zaka, who is heading PIPS at the moment and, in that capacity, has taken several initiatives in the recent past to enhance exposure of national and provincial lawmakers to learning experiences; and last but not least, Dr. Rifaat Hussain, who is in an enviable position to give us a conceptual perspective of how Parliament is dealing with foreign policy and how it ought to conduct its foreign policy debates in future.

So, we have an impressive cast of speakers today.

Without further ado, I invite Honorable Sardar Awais Ahmad Leghari to kick off today's seminar.



Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari

Sardar Leghari, in his remarks said that the Standing Committee of National Assembly on Foreign Affairs is currently looking at five clusters: the evolving US-China relations; the Gulf and the developing situation in the Middle East; Pakistan's role in regional integration; workings of the Foreign Office; and relations with India, and the working on these are being forwarded to the parliament for further deliberations.

Furthermore, work is also being done on environmental issues and on Pakistan moving towards a green economy. The Committee invites researchers and former Ambassadors to give their feedback on all these issues. The Parliament is becoming more professional and playing a significant role in foreign policy matters, but it all depends on how much the parliament is active and willing to work, as Pakistan is improving both politically and economically.

On India, he said that there is a need for selected engagement based on result-oriented approach, and all peaceful means should be used when dealing with Kashmir in accordance with UN resolutions. Water issue is an important issue and needs to be looked at in further detail and in-depth studies need to be carried out. Trade with India is another important issue, but it needs to be carried out on balanced terms which are beneficial to both countries, and its volume needs to increase drastically. Cultural exchanges are also important and should be worked on further, and there was a signed agreement between both countries on increasing these exchanges which has expired now but needs to be revived.

Terrorists should be rooted out everywhere and Pakistan wants peace in the region and dispel the negative image of a state sponsoring terrorism. This needs a lot of work so that the image of Pakistan can be improved globally. He concluded by saying that without solution to the issue of Kashmir, having peace is impossible in the region.



Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Hussain Qureshi

Mr. Qureshi acknowledged the work being done by Mr. Leghari on the Foreign Affairs Committee since his appointment as Chairman. He said that there were constraints for the parliament before, but they are trying to be overcome through increased involvement of the Parliament and the positive role being played by the opposition in raising foreign policy issues in the Parliament. He said that more debate is required in the Committee, as some issues have been rushed without consultation of all the members, but on the whole, good effort is being made. He said that the world over, the Parliament plays a major role in foreign policy and also oversees its workings, but the role of the Parliament in Pakistan has been limited, and so

has been the role of the Foreign Office which has been exclusive on some issues and the inputs of the Parliament have not been into consideration.

He also said that the Executive should not be restricted by the Parliament, as the world view has changed and the impact of foreign policy on people should not be overlooked, and in that respect, the Parliament has a significant role to play because it shapes public policy. He added that a democratic Parliament's role should be flexible, but this has not been the case and after the end of the Cold War, foreign policy is no longer constrained by defence and security only, it also has to deal with issues of development and environment. Therefore, the role of the Parliament needs to be widened. The Executive needs support of the Parliament and its role should not be overlooked and there needs to be a balance between the two institutions.

Questioning the decisions on issues like 9/11 and other major issues affecting the country, he said that the Parliament has not been consulted on these issues, and the decisions were made by the Executive. If the Committee makes a decision, the Executive needs to take it on board, as it is not aware of many international obligations the country is signatory to. Today, there is a consensus that democracy is the way forward, but there needs to be parliamentary oversight on foreign policy issues. The

Committee makes many reports but they are not made public and there is lack of sharing of information and also dearth of debate on foreign policy issues in the Parliament. Debates and resolutions are important and they should be conducted by the Parliament, not by outside forces. Budgetary discussion should also be made part of parliamentary workings, like is the case in India, as collective wisdom makes a positive difference. The role of the Parliament is that of overseers and there are various committees for this purpose, but more effort needs to be put in. The institutions are important, but they need to be used effectively by creating a balance between the Executive and the Legislature.



Senator Farhatullah Babar

Mr. Babar commended the Institute for bringing foreign policy issues to the forefront and having a discussion on it. He further said that the Parliament has a big role to play, and it is through consultation and discussion that decisions have to be made. Policy needs to be owned and supported by majority of the Parliament, as foreign policy is a national policy which continues even after a change of governments. Therefore, it needs to be made for the long run. He said that the Foreign Office has played a great role in formulating the policies, and Mr. Sartaj Aziz has also played a notable role in the workings of the Committee. Historically however, the Parliament and civil government have been restricted and veered away from the Constitution, and all the important state policy is governed by national security issues and has become a slave to it.

He said that all the major foreign policy decisions are taken by the Security Establishment rather than the Parliament, and it is the Parliament's prerogative to bring the decision-making back into the civilian domain. Foreign policy will suffer if governed only by the Security Establishment, which has an important role to play in supporting the Parliament not usurping it. Parliamentary presence is necessary in security meetings with outside dignitaries, but this issue has been ignored time and again like during the recent visit of Afghan President to the GHQ.

He further stated that dealing with non-state actors is of utmost importance and should be looked into. Security challenges define foreign policy and non-state actors need to be dealt with accordingly and Parliament needs to play a big role in it. The Prime Minister made a bold statement regarding the recent Pathankot incident in India, which has all the indications of turning into another Mumbai for Pak-India relations. The balance between the Security Establishment and the Parliament is changing, but it is slow and a balance needs to be established between the two institutions, and the role of each needs to be defined. Parliament is now exerting itself more and should continue to do so. Challenges need to be recognised and dealt with the help of the Parliament through more oversight, but more needs to be done in this regard. The Parliament has to be more active and it all depends on how active the Committee is on foreign policy issues.



Mr. Ahmad Bilal Mehboob

Mr. Mehboob spoke specifically from the point of view of an organisation that looks at the parliament from a citizen's perspective. He presented an analysis of what role Parliament should play, and what role, in fact, it is playing in Pakistan.

He said that Pakistani Parliament and members have a very weak role in policy formation. Most of the time parliamentarians are serving their constituencies and are left with little time to look into policy matters. He gave the example of Shah Mahmood Qureshi that when he became the Foreign Minister, he used to be one of the most regular and meticulous member who used to attend PILAT briefings and take notes. He used to say that this does not make any contribution towards his voter constituency; it was his interest and time that he invested as a Member of Parliament.

Elaborating on his argument, he said that our top leadership discourages active role of parliamentarians in policy issues, maybe due to their own insecurities. Secondly, the factor of pleasing and displeasing the security establishment also hinder proactive engagement. The Pakistani Parliament is also under-resourced in terms of staff and policy analysts, mainly because there is no demand and will from the parliamentarians for such kind of resources. But he was of the opinion that it is the lack of political will, not resource restraint. Foreign policy, he said, is a very specialised subject. It requires research, backed by scientific methods and people who have expertise in this subject. Unfortunately, the Parliament lacks it.

Another observation he shared is that the selection of committee is not based on aptitude or expertise of members. It is the play of odd politics which many a times pushes members into committees with no interest. And this is not only in Pakistan. William Rogers, he said, was made secretary of the foreign affairs committee, primarily because he knew the least about foreign affairs, as they wanted to give a greater role to Henry Kissinger at that time.

What should be the role of Parliament in Foreign Policy?

All over the world, in a parliamentary democracy, parliaments have a marginal role in policy formation. Basically it is considered to be the preserve of the executive to do policy formulation. We should not be overtly critical of the Parliament for its little role in formulation of the policy. Generally it is the cabinet and the council of ministers who play a major role. The Pakistan's Constitution assigns this policy formulation role to the Prime Minister, not his Cabinet. There are many factors for why security establishment assert disproportionate influence. Sometimes democracy is lopsided, and there are other groups who balance it by exerting their pressure.

He quoted the Rules of Business as in the Constitution:

- Rule 5/1- No major foreign policy decision can be taken without the consent of Prime Minister
- Rule 16 – All proposals involving negotiations with foreign countries shall be brought before the Cabinet
- Rule 13 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall be consulted on all matters which affect the foreign policy

There is no mention of the Parliament in the formulation of foreign policy, and the legitimate role of Parliament should be as follows:

- Regularly demand to be informed by the cabinet members.
- Debate on foreign policy in parliament to represent the aspiration of people
- Oversight and dissection of policy is missing, on whose basis you give proposals
- Scrutiny of budget by the Standing Committees

Lastly, parliamentary diplomacy is the new emerging discipline, and Pakistan is proactively pursuing this path to diplomatic manoeuvring. He gave some statistics comparing the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs of United Kingdom, India and Pakistan (2007 – 2011) duration: In terms of Reports, UK issued 32, India issued 12, Pakistan issued 0. In terms of Meetings, UK held 82, India held 52, and Pakistan held 17. With regard to Attendance, UK meetings had 80 per cent attendance, India had 46 per cent, and Pakistan had 38 per cent.

He suggested the following as a way forward:

- Investment in resources with research teams and staff of expertise – parliamentarians should demand this.
- Separate budget for committees should be allocated like it is done for Public Accounts Committee

- Inter-Parliamentary diplomacy should be streamlined and coordinated with Senate and Standing Committees. Pakistan is very active in this form of diplomacy but needs direction and a synchronised approach.
- Parliamentary committee should be holding public hearings, as it will enhance public trust and confidence.



Ambassador Fauzia Nasreen

Ambassador Nasreen spoke about how the foreign policy of Pakistan has encountered many challenges during its history of over six and a half decades. But because of the resilience of Pakistani nation and the sagacity of its leaders and institutions, Pakistan has been able to weather several difficult situations time and again the nation has been able to reinvent itself with new vigor and commitment. The democratisation process that has seen two elections in the recent past is still in the transition phase and is well on course. Since the subject of foreign policy is directly the domain of the Center, National Assembly's role as defined in the constitution and the rules of business assume significance in overseeing the foreign policy and related budgetary matters.

The Parliament of Pakistan has progressively demonstrated proactive interest in external affairs, which is testimony to the effective and meaningful interaction between the Executive and the Legislature. Generally speaking, in terms of foreign policy formulation and implementation, the prevailing environment and structure of the international system plays an overarching role. In the perspective of the levels of analysis: strategic, regional and domestic dimensions, foreign policy has become more complex and multilayered. Since the end of the Cold War, globalisation, trans-nationalism, the role of the diaspora, migrants or refugees and communication revolution have broken barriers exerting influence on foreign policy issues. As a consequence of these changes, as well as consolidation of democratic process, parliaments have emerged as important stakeholders in matters related to foreign policy.

In the transformed environment, the Executive-Legislature interaction has an intrinsic value. Careful calibration of the discussions and debates within the confines of the Constitution and the Rules of Business are healthy for the democratic process. The continued constructive engagement of Parliament on foreign affairs is not only imperative, but also augers well for the consolidation of the political structure. At the same time, regular interaction and contacts between the parliament and the government institutions would result in promoting better coordination and cooperation that would ensure well-deliberated foreign policy outcomes.



Mr. Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka

Foreign policy is the manifestation of country's internal policy, and it is a matter of pride that after the birth of Pakistan, the first institution to be formed was the Parliament. Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his first address to the Parliament said, "You are the sovereign, legislative body with all powers. But it puts on you a great responsibility." So he set the ball rolling, giving sovereign status to the Parliament. In the same address, the Quaid, defining government's duty said, "Your first duty would be to maintain law and order, protection of life, property and religious belief of citizens is the primary responsibility of the state."

He paid tribute to the parliamentarians present at the podium, saying that they have worked very hard to consolidate the state. This Parliament, through the 18th amendment, has reiterated the welfare state concept. And as a result of devolution, we have three different parties leading three different provinces. Moreover, devolution has led to the transfer of basic education, health and other constituents of welfare from the federation to the provinces. As a result of this positive intra-party competition, there has been 14-15 per cent increase in the allocation of budget on education and health.

Secondly, world over, the formulation of foreign policy has been the mandate of the executive. But once again, the 1973 constitution says that the Prime Minister and his whole Cabinet is accountable to the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan. Thereby, the Senate of Pakistan, which is the house of federation, is also now involved in oversight of the policy formulation.

What we need to do?

Firstly, build a knowledge base, working group and research support, which can lead towards information and knowledge sharing. The committee under the leadership of Mr. Leghari has been running after the speaker that he wants research support. As a result of his efforts, the National Assembly signed MoU with some universities. He said that the workload of PIPS has increased manifolds in the last three years. The Institute held public hearing on several issues, including cyber security, panel discussions on civil-military relations and also signed MoU with ISSI, and jointly held consultation with provincial and National Assembly members on issues like CPEC. In KPK assembly, PIPS has also done capacity-building exercise on strategic issues.

Before delving into hardcore strategic matters, the National Assembly has effectively dealt with National Action Plan, GSP plus status to European markets and CPEC. Four parliamentary committees have participated in these discussions. This shows that parliamentarians across the board have the will to share knowledge. Our responsibility as civil society, think tanks is to provide support to these parliamentarians and we should be making working group of knowledge sharing which will empower both the Standing Committees and the parliament.

He said the request for increased the research has increased, especially from the Senate. Pakistan is going to be the first country to have a task force on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with representation from across the board.



Dr. Rifaat Hussain

Dr. Hussain said that he had been working for the past 3-4 months with the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs for research work, and based on his experience, the current leadership and team is really a breath of fresh air in the realm of foreign policy. The committee members and its leadership is giving NUST confidence for doing research and has assured that it will be fully utilised. Giving details of the working relationship, he said that this is a 6 month long research project, and on its completion it will become a part of National Assembly record. He also commended the National Assembly for expediting the MoU process. He said that the recommendation presented earlier for budgetary allocation is critical and essential for effective functioning.

He said that the world is changing and it becomes imperative for parliamentarians and citizenry to be informed on all matters of domestic and foreign policy issues, and also to undertake new initiatives matching the need and demands of the circumstances. In the new model of democracy, the parliament that we are looking at, has to be proactive, has to take charge of its destiny and it must draw upon existing knowledge that exist in academia and think tanks. There is a critical mass of scholarship that should be utilised. He recommended that all the Standing Committees of the Parliament utilise universities and their expertise and develop this kind of knowledge sharing relationship.

He said that there is a tension between constituency politics of parliamentary members and their role assigned in various Standing Committees. He believed that constituency politics should not be allowed to take precedence over their critical role in policy formulation. Moreover, there has always been an issue of member attendance and engagement, and most importantly their interest in the work of Standing Committees. This habit needs to be discouraged. In this regard, the parliament also has to play its role in overcoming these issues and developing good working ethics. Unless there is a session on budget or some other important proceeding, you will never see parliamentarians attending Assembly sessions. With such lackluster performance, it is very hard for us to ask the committees to perform. It is public expectation that the Prime Minister along with his cabinet members should be present in the parliamentary proceedings.

Based on work his work with the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, he made the following recommendations:

- Intellectual assets, policy analysis and evidence based research should be provided to the committee
- We should widen our scope and rope in academia in policy formulation



Ms. Marvi Memon

Ms Marvi Memon stated that given the current security situation, Pakistan needed to decide quickly which direction it is going to adopt. The Parliament has to make this decision in such a way that the entire world looks at Pakistan's view as one of consensus and unity. There should be one voice going out of Parliament that represents the entire spectrum of parties in the country. She said that some decisions take place on the floor of the house and this can be a very 'loud activity'. This is fine where political activity is concerned, but when it comes to foreign policy, there has to be careful calibration because whatever comes out of parliament represents the country. Hence, it has to be a collaborated effort that begs the need to look at the whole process.

She made the distinction between guidelines versus policy and stated that a very thin line exists. It cannot be on a minute-to-minute play of approved decisions. It has to be in fact, a broad sense of guidelines, which are given by the Parliament. The Parliament is acting as the watchdog and the custodian of the people of Pakistan and hence, a very responsible approach needs to be taken. She appreciated the efforts made by the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Awias Ahmed Khan Leghari. She added that the committee system should try to create its own brand rather than follow the UK or the US systems blindly.

The committee system also needs to look at its membership. The entire team needs to be extremely strong. Members need to be taken from each political party and this will result in team effort of the highest quality. She applauded the infusion of academia as a great initiative taken by Chairman Leghari. Furthermore, she said that the choice of diplomatic words needed to be very careful and added that it was vital that the Parliament has to work hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs because the Ministry is the authority on diplomatic conversations and worldview. Any wrong usage of words can have detrimental effects.

She stated that there was a need to create sensitivity where choice of diplomatic words is concerned. There needs to be perception management within the house and the committees. Parliament needs to play a positive role in the foreign policy of the country and it can contribute through perception management. She stated that more interaction between the committees creates a better input. However, there is a limitation because certain things need to be discussed behind closed doors. Towards the end, she talked about how very little light has been shed on the friendship groups within the parliament and said that the better these groups work, the better it is for the workings of the Parliament.

Q&A

Q: What tools and instruments do the committees use to study future? How do you make foreign policy decisions?

Shah Mahmood Qureshi: I used to take advice from former diplomats.

Farhatullah Babar: The decision making process of the government needs to be revisited. We have a National Security Committee that worked on futuristic trends, but that is disbanded now. I propose formation of similar committees.

Marvi Memon: I endorse the suggestion on joint parliamentary forum on matters of foreign policy and its outcome will be smart. As far as who speaks on foreign policy, the advisor is called the advisor, but he has the complete confidence of the entire Parliament and Cabinet, and he speaks pretty much as a Minister. So, while he is not a minister because he is not a Member of Parliament, but other than that he has the same approach and the same authority and function. And whether he's lost half his portfolio, there are specific reasons for that, and I would not call it that the civilian government has failed, I think that the civil government has taken cognizance of the realities of 2016 war on terror and has produced an approach which is a consensus approach, where civil government is on the same page as the military side of the equation. And there is a joint responsibility of the Cabinet. So yes, while everyone should stick to their original roles, and as to who speaks on what, but since there is a joint responsibility of Cabinet, you do have other responsible senior members of Cabinet discussing foreign affairs.

Sardar Leghari: Unfortunately, our Foreign policy is based on adhocism and reactionary approach. We should shift towards economic diplomacy and green diplomacy. We have also lost contact with the information connectivity with the outside world.

Q: Do we have a clause in our Constitution relating to who declares war?

Marvi Memon: I am not aware, but it will help us. Under our Constitution it is not clear who declares war, and what is the role of Parliament?

Shah Mahmood Qureshi: The Parliament certainly does not take decision to go on war.

Marvi Memon: Regarding the war on terror we have collectively taken decision to combat this on-going war.

Q: What is the expectation of Pakistan, post Iran sanction on major projects and economic issues?

Shah Mahmood Qureshi: Previously, it was IPI and India was reluctant to deal with Iran. Now it is up to the current government to take opportunity of the deal signed with Iran, as India is no more part of the project.

Farhatullah Babar: We believe and hope the gas pipeline materialises.

Sardar Leghari: We are excited about Iran opening up and so should be Iran. Pakistan's mediating role between Saudi Arabia and Iran will be fruitful?

Farhatullah Babar: This is a test for Pakistan for bringing the two dear countries together, without tilting towards anyone.

Sardar Leghari: Both are treasured countries and we hold them close. It is a delicate balance and by the grace of God, we have maintained balance. Now, a lot depend on both these countries to be flexible.

Ambassador Masood Khan, Director General, ISSI made the following recommendation with regard to strengthening the role of the Parliament in making foreign policy decisions:

- More synergy and collaboration between Parliament and the Executive - it's a collective effort.
- A stronger state have stronger security establishment and stronger nation would have stronger Parliament. Managing and co-relating these two is important.
- Foreign Policy is not all about defence and security, SDGs is an important dimension of foreign policy.
- Guidance from parliamentary committees to the Executive has to be knowledge-based.
- Pakistan's Parliament will not replicate other parliaments but evolve its own distinct brand.



Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman, Board of Governors, ISSI

We have to see constitutional context when looking at the Parliament's role in foreign policy. In democratic system, there are two models (USA and UK). The USA model is a tug and pull model where President has to take the Congress along on policy matters. It depends upon the skill of the President how he takes the Congress along. The task becomes difficult if different parties are represented in Congress. But in the case of parliamentary form of government there is no such inherent competition, because the majority forms the government. Whatever system, every policy that comes out of parliament should have national consensus.

In this regard, the role of Committees is vital. For Committees to be effective, they need to be representative of all political parties and have a guiding and supporting role. This is possible only if it has all the expertise. I am glad this Committee under the present Chairman is working well. But still, this is not a one-time affair and Committees should be institutionalised, and constantly evolving.

Parliament cannot micro manage, and to the extent, make foreign policy. It can guide and provide oversight to the foreign policy. Executive is not a rival to the Parliament; rather, they work in a coordinated manner. Also, sometimes there is need for in-camera sessions, as some issues are very sensitive. However, transparency should be ensured. We are all on an optimistic page and things are improving. Parliament is the only institution where all these issues should be sorted.