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Report-German Media Delegation

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Pictures of the Event



German Media Delegation Visit

On September 20 2015, a five-member German Media Delegation visited the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI). Members of the delegation included: Daniel Dylan Peter Bohmer, Foreign Policy and Security Correspondent at '*Die Welt*' and '*Welt am Sonntag*', Alexandra Katharina von Nahmen, Senior Security Correspondent, at *Deutsche Welle*, Sabina Mathay, Editor & Presenter at "*Zwölfzweiundzwanzig*", Inforadio, RBB, Berlin (Weekly Radio Show), Naomi Conrad, Political Correspondent Berlin Bureau, *Deutsche Welle* and Ingrid Muller, Managing Editor at *Der Tagesspiegel*. The in-house meeting had an open agenda, and the session was interactive in nature with a candid exchange of views between the member of the delegation and the research staff. Being an issue of regional security, Pakistan-Afghan relations were discussed at length. The delegates raised questions about the relationship, the border dispute and recent actions taken by the government of Pakistan for border management. Responding to the queries, Amina Khan, Research Fellow, explained the several initiatives taken by the government of Pakistan in order to resolve the border dispute between the two countries. She said that in order to closely monitor the movement of people at the border, Pakistan has suggested several solutions over the years. From 2006 to date, Pakistan has built fences, installed a biometric system at the Chaman Border, and recently constructed a gate at the Torkham border. All these efforts have been met with an icy response from Afghanistan which has refused to cooperate time and again, over the years.

The negative role that is being played by India in this regard was highlighted by Najam Rafique, Director Research. He went on to say that India had been planning to open a second front against Pakistan on its western border with Afghanistan, and has been working to sabotage the Pak-Afghan relations. India has already earned a rather notorious reputation for itself by attempting to antagonise Pakistan by its subversive activities in Balochistan and other provinces. When the delegation inquired about the ineffectiveness in controlling cross-border activity from Afghanistan, they were told that the rugged terrain made it difficult to scrutinise each and every movement from one side to the other. Ancient smuggling routes, caves and hideouts exist in this region which is familiar territory for the local populace, but an unknown piece of land for newcomers.

The next issue raised by the German delegation was the peace dialogue between Taliban and the Afghan government. They were informed that the peace process has been sabotaged by the elements from within Afghanistan itself. The Murree peace talks failed miserably due to the announcement of the death of Mullah Omar right before the dialogue process was initiated. Mullah Mansour's recent killing was also an obstacle in the peace talks as the Taliban refused to be a part of the negotiations after their leader was killed. It was mentioned that Mullah Mansour had shown interest in engaging in peace talks, right after which he was killed. The new

leadership has gathered the Taliban under one umbrella by Mullah Haibatullah once again and they must be wooed by offering them substantive reasons to become a part of the peace process.

The delegation showed profound interest in understanding the ideology of the different terrorist elements in Pakistan and their ties with the Afghan Taliban. Their misperceptions were cleared as they were told that the TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan) and the Afghan Taliban are not the names of interchangeable groups. They are separate entities, with the former being a group of criminals with no particular ideology, while the latter was a group with an ideology and an aim to get the international forces out of Afghanistan. It was also discussed that the Afghans need to think about their own people by giving them their due rights and must not be exploited by any stakeholders or third parties.

Regarding the questions on how the government of Pakistan has tackled the threat of terrorism in the country and the establishment of military courts, the delegation was informed that the military courts have been established under the onus of the Supreme Court and in collaboration with the governmental institutes so that dealing with terrorists are not prolonged in civil courts procedures. The government in Pakistan has also formulated a National Action Plan (NAP) to be followed, but which still has a few legislative wrinkles that need to be smoothed out. However, it is being implemented in several sectors of the civil society.

The delegation also raised questions regarding the constitutional status of FATA. They were told that efforts were being made to come up with proposals well-suited to the situation and people in FATA. There has been much talk about making it a separate province or to merge it with KPK, either collectively or agency wise. It was mentioned that merging FATA with KPK seemed to be the most logical solution due to common ethnic roots and language of the people from both these areas. The German delegates also asked about the imposition of the Frontier Crimes regulation law (FCR) which has been in place since partition. The law is infamously known for stripping the FATA citizens of their three rights, *appeal, wakeel, daleel* (right to appeal their detention, right to legal representation, right to present reasoned evidence). This law is in the process of being amended.