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Report- IN-HOUSE MEETING

with

**Mr. Ian Dudgeon, former President, Australian Institute of
International Affairs (AIIA)**

October 13, 2016



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Pictures of the Event



In-House Meeting

A three-member Australian Delegation visited the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) on October 13, 2016. Members of the delegation included Mr. Ian Dudgeon, former president of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA), Col. David Burke, Defence Advisor, Australian High Commission and Ms. Emma Leahey, First Secretary, Australian High Commission.

The agenda of the meeting was “The internal security threat to Pakistan: TTP, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Baluchistan”.

Acting Director General and Director Research, Najam Rafique welcomed the. He emphasised that in the global context of fighting terrorism, Pakistan has been attempting to eradicate this relentless menace for many years now. Pakistan, along with the entire region, faces internal threats from non-state actors such as TTP, ISIS and Al-Qaeda. More than ever, non-state actors are active in the region where they have been attempting to enforce their ideology, mostly as proxies, on behalf of foreign elements. The glaring example of which is evident in the anti-state activities being carried out in Baluchistan instigated by India. The Director also highlighted the issue of Afghan Taliban and how their cross border retreats result in disrupting peace in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Enlightening the delegates on Pakistan’s efforts to combat terrorism, the Director emphasised on the National Action Plan (NAP) introduced by the government of Pakistan and the steps taken by the government in the implementation of the Plan. He said that while the plan has made considerable difference in securing the country against terrorism, there is certainly room for further refinement and improvement.

In an interactive session with the researchers, Mr. Ian Dudgeon intimated the participants of the meeting regarding his expertise on issues of cyber warfare, foreign affairs and the regional dynamics of South Asia. He requested the Director to elaborate the immediate threats to Pakistan regarding Afghanistan. The Director reiterated that relations with Afghanistan have always been tricky. He said that Pakistan has always advocated an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process which has been rather elusive to date. There are elements within the Afghan establishment which are not in favour of any foreign involvement in the dialogue process with the Afghan Taliban. On the other hand, all efforts to bring the Taliban to the table have failed abjectly.

On a question regarding the TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan), the Director clarified that several local criminal groups have been franchising on TTP by carrying out petty acts of terrorism. Such groups, as well as the TTP, are open to Indian exploitation. India wishes to disrupt peaceful governance and existence of Pakistan by opening a second front on Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. India’s underhanded overtures are also a source of nuisance in Baluchistan, where it periodically instigates and favours separatist elements against the sovereign existence of Pakistan. A few examples are the planting of an Indian intelligence agent, Kulbhushan Yadav for disturbing peace in the province of Baluchistan and offering political asylum to Brahmdagh

Bugti (Baluch separatist leader) in India. Even the Uri attack was a manufactured act to divert attention from the human rights violations by India in Kashmir.

Senior Research Fellow, Shamsa Nawaz, reflected that the society of Pakistan is moderate and tolerant towards people of diverse faiths, while the rampant abuse of human rights in India has been all over the news. She invited the delegates to ponder why only Pakistan is dubbed as the 'terrorist' state, when on the other the other hand, Indian state behaviour in Kashmir and Baluchistan is self-explanatory as an example of state-sponsored terrorism.

Mr. Dudgeon talked about the latest atmosphere of tensions between Pakistan and India. He suggested that both countries must put their differences aside and conduct a comprehensive dialogue to improve relations. His suggestion was to put a pin in the Kashmir issue and to not make it a pre-requisite to all other issues which are faced by these two countries at the moment. His comments were well-received around the table, however, the Director made Pakistan's stance, quite clear, i.e. Kashmir is an issue of pivotal importance and no dialogue process can be beneficial in the long run if this issue is not resolved first. Mr. Dudgeon lauded the supremacy of Pakistan's military muscle by emphasising that India cannot engage Pakistan's army in any kind of physical confrontation.

The discussion of the internal threats to Pakistan brought to light a few questions from the delegation about the foreign funded Madressas in the country that perpetuate violent mindsets. Director Administration, Mr. Khurshid Anwar put their concerns at ease by explaining how all methods of money transfer in Pakistan have been narrowed down and are closely monitored to ensure that it was not used in any illegal activity in the country. To a query on the National Action Plan by Ms. Leahey, Asadullah Khan, Research Fellow explained all 20 points of the Plan (NAP).

On a question regarding Pakistan-Iran relations, the Director said that following the lifting of sanctions, the Iranian government has been showing its interest in joining the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), alongside Pakistan which would not only be a "game changer", but a "life changer" for a vast multitude of people in the region and beyond. China has also agreed to fund the IP gas pipeline on the Pakistan side, and eventually link it to CPEC. There are a few concerns regarding secure border management on both sides, which will be resolved by the states only through comprehensive cooperation. Pakistan, for the sake of Muslim brotherhood, has also played a significant role for the reconciliation of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). To ensure peace for the entire region of the Middle East and the Muslim Ummah, mutual relations between Iran and KSA must be immediately improved.

Upon the question of the futility of a mutual war between the two, the Director reflected that although war would be a massive mistake, India has reasons to malign Pakistan such as sabotaging the prosperous prospects of CPEC, and disrupt its economic development. Propping up Chahbahar Port next to Gawadar, India means to compete for resources and routes in the larger region. It has also periodically perpetrated violence in Baluchistan to destabilise it so that Pakistan-China interests in the resource-laden province are sabotaged. If Indian interference was not such a potent threat, then Pakistan would not have raised forces solely for the protection of CPEC.

The Director built upon his remarks to further explain to the delegates how India's current hostility towards Pakistan was not anything new. He said that India has been against the very existence of Pakistan in the first place. He further went on to say that nothing short of entirely undoing Pakistan would satisfy India. He explained how the region in the larger geostrategic context, is a pawn in the 'New Great Game.' The Great Game has also now become the 'Game of Corridors', where China has taken the initiative by laying down a number of economic corridors, six in fact, including one through Myanmar-Bangladesh-India (BCIM), and India, for the time being, is playing hard to get. With strong US support at its back, India refuses to engage in any economic collaboration with China.

In the conclusion, Mr. Dudgeon summarised his understanding of the entire discussion and he admitted that CPEC was a win-win project for all regional countries and a lifeline for Pakistan's economy. He informed the participants that Australia heavily depended on China for coal and even the slightest of fluctuations in that regard affects them adversely. Being a NATO ally, he also expressed frustration at the prevalent troubles in Afghanistan's political situation. He also reiterated that the Afghan establishment must be taught and urged to handle its affairs on its own now. He showed his warm gratitude upon being invited and hosted at ISSI.

The Director thanked Mr. Dudgeon and his team for visiting ISSI and interacting with the researchers.