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Report - In-House Meeting
with
“Egyptian Media Delegation”

December 3, 2018



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Pictures of the Event



The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an In-House Meeting with a 2-member media delegation from Egypt on December 3, 2018.

The delegation included Mr. El Sayed Hany, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Al Gomhuria and Dr. Hanna Abdul Fattah, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Urdu, Al-Azhar University.

The meeting was attended by Director General ISSI, Ambassador (Retd) Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Mr. Najam Rafique, Director Research, Mr. Ahmad Saffee, Research Fellow, Ms. Arhama Siddiq, Research Fellow and Mr. Taimur Khan, Research Associate and Media Officer.

Welcoming the guests, Director General ISSI, Ambassador (Retd) Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry spoke about Pakistan's role in the contemporary world order. He said that the world around us is changing. At the international level, it can be seen that the United States, which is still considered the most powerful country in the world, is now viewing its relations with China and Russia as the highest priority. New centers of powers have come up, thus challenging the US hegemony. Sideways, a lot of other changes can also be seen: immigrants are no more welcomed and are perceived as a security threat; narrow nationalism is rising in countries; and free trade is under protectionist threat. Conflicts around the world have increased. The Middle East alone is a prime example of this: the Palestinian issue has not settled, Libya is still struggling and Syria and Yemen are immersed in civil wars. In the Asia-Pacific region, the North Korean problem still exists and there are tension in the South China Sea. In the South Asia region, Afghanistan is still at war - more than 40 percent of the country is not under government control. The Daesh has also moved into eastern Afghanistan. Pakistan believes that in this case negotiated peace must be sought.

The Ambassador went on to talk about how the US has changed its approach and policy towards Iran and the JCPOA nuclear deal which has left the future of the whole programme not very clear. The overall trend of the US pivoting its policy towards Asia trying to contain China has resulted in the US choosing India as its main partner - more so to counter Chinese expansion. This matters to Pakistan because of its close relations with China. It is important to note that conflicts can emerge in such scenarios. China has always respected Pakistan's sovereignty. With the US, Pakistan has had a good relationship in the past, but we are passing through a low period at the moment. Pakistan does not want to enter a situation where it becomes a victim to a conflict

between China and the US. Despite being our neighbor, India does not want any dialogue with Pakistan because it feels that Pakistan is supporting anti-India terrorists. Islamabad also feels that any suspension of dialogue between the two is actually serving the terrorist's interests.

Within India itself, a lot is happening he said. There is a movement for 'Hindutva' which essentially strives to make India a Hindu state. As a result, life for minorities in India has become very difficult. Moreover, the Kashmir issue is something for which no solution as yet has been found. Kashmiris have not been given their right to determine their destiny. With Iran, Pakistan shares cordial relations even though tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran are a major cause for concern since Pakistan has friendly relations with the latter. Again, in this case, Islamabad advocates peace through mediation.

While briefing the delegation on Egypt-Pakistan relations, Mr. Saffee gave a brief historical perspective and then went on to highlight the areas of cooperation between the two countries. The 1950s and 60s were crucial decades in terms of anti-colonial movements. This era saw, among other things, Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, the tripartite attack on Egypt, the anti-monarchy coups in Iraq and Yemen, and guerilla wars in many Afro-Asian countries. Two events marked the beginning of the change in Egypt-Pakistan relations: the 1965 war in which the Egyptian people's sympathies were with Pakistan; and Egypt's defeat in the 1967 Israeli blitz. The apogee of Pakistan-Arab relations came in 1974 with the holding of the Islamic Conference at Lahore. The Arab leadership responded with warmth, and the summit saw the presence of such giants as Arafat, Assad, Boumedienne, Faisal, Qadaafi and Saadat.

According to Ahmed Fadel Yakoub, Ambassador of Egypt to Pakistan, (February 2018), keeping in view the size of economies of both countries, bilateral trade which reached \$231 million in 2017 was not reflective of their actual potential and serious efforts from both sides were needed to improve trade volume. Egyptian investors considered Pakistan's construction sector a promising area for investment. Also, that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor would have positive implications for Egypt as it would lead to easy movement in Suez Canal. Tourism was another potential area of cooperation between Egypt and Pakistan. Establishing direct contacts between the entrepreneurs of both countries was a way forward to realize these objectives. Pakistan could also get better market access to African market by developing strong cooperation

with Egypt. Many Pakistani products including pharmaceuticals, fruits and vegetables, textiles, sports goods, surgical instruments, IT and others could find good market in Egypt. Direct air links should also be established that are important to promote trade relations and strengthen people-to-people contacts.

Detailing cooperative arrangements between Pakistan and Egypt, Mr. Saffee added that Pakistan has signed eight MoUs with Egypt. These include MoUs for cooperation in the field of Money Orders and International Postal Services; Cooperation in the field of Merchant Shipping; MoU between Board of Investment of Pakistan and General Authority of Free Zones and Investment of Egypt; cooperation between Middle East News Agency and Associated Press of Pakistan, the 3rd Executive Programme for Scientific and Technological Cooperation between Pakistan and Egypt for 2013 to 2015; and MoU between Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority of Pakistan and Special Fund for Development of Egypt.

He emphasized that there is a need to revitalize the existing MoUs and build upon networks of cooperation between stakeholders from both countries. In the sphere of defense and security cooperation an MoU was signed during the 11th round of Pakistan-Egypt Military Cooperation Committee meeting held on March 2018 in Cairo. This explored new avenues to further strengthen cooperation in defense production, military training and exercises. Both countries have also shown interest in defense deals on JF17 Thunder aircraft. Moreover, Pakistan has entered into maritime cooperation with Egypt - Pakistan Naval Submarines and frigates have been making port calls at the Egyptian port, and this cooperation needs to enter into tactical and strategic cooperation. Egyptian leaders have also expressed special interest in benefiting from Pakistan Army's experience in all facets of fighting terrorism.

The Egyptian delegation raised a number of questions and comments following the briefing.

On Kashmir they stated that the groups protesting in Kashmir cannot be labeled as terrorist since they are fighting for their freedom and liberty of the state under the umbrella of UN resolutions. The ones who die in the process are martyrs. This right of self-determination was given to them by Nehru and Gandhi.

They said that India wishes to establish a war between Iran and Pakistan because if these two

strong Islamic countries are at loggerheads, the region will be free for India to dominate. The delegation also pointed out to the growing closeness between the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Modi, and the Israeli Prime Minister Mr. Netanyahu. They pointed out that the Muslim World need to make and strengthen inroads with each other and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is ideal for this.

Regarding Afghanistan, the delegates stated that India has long supported the Afghan Government in its endeavors. There can be no military solution in Afghanistan.

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry responded by stating that the US has not been able to succeed in Afghanistan, but do not want to leave like the Soviets did before them. Hence, they are putting pressure on Pakistan because they know that any dialogue with the Taliban will not succeed without Pakistan. The latter, he said, does not want a war on its territory. Prime Minister Imran Khan has been very clear on that front. The Afghan National Security Forces are weak and incompetent. The Taliban want a timetable for American withdrawal before they agree to come to the negotiating table. He went on to point out how proliferation of drugs and weapons have become a problem in Afghanistan, with drug production increasing by 67 per cent in 2016-2017 alone.

On Kashmir, he agreed that the Kashmir cause in essence is a freedom struggle. Despite there being 700,000 Indian troops stationed in Kashmir, the younger generation of Kashmiris keeps rising in rebellion. Pakistan supports the Kashmiris; both diplomatically and politically, because it believes the future of the two people are entwined. India has not responded to the United Nations' request for a plebiscite in Kashmir and instead, now has Israeli advisors helping them understand how to further suppress the Kashmiris. India's plan to turn Iran and Pakistan against each other will fail because the two sides have always been in talks, In fact, the Iranian Foreign Minister has been the only foreign minister to visit the new Pakistani Government since it began its tenure in August 2018. In order to curb terrorists from crossing in from Afghanistan, Pakistan is now also building a fence along the border. This will only allow students and traders to pass through he said.