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*Report – In-House Meeting*

*with*

## **Ethiopian Delegation**

**September 12, 2019**



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## PICTURES OF THE EVENT



The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an In-House Meeting on September 12, 2019, with a 9-member Ethiopian delegation headed by H.E. Ambassador Dr. Markos Tekle, State Minister of Foreign Affairs. Other members of the delegation included: H.E. Ambassador Misiganu Arega, State Minister, Ministry of Trade & Industry; Mrs. Munteha Jemal, Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Assefa Mulugeta, Director General,, Ministry of Trade & Investment; Mr. Woldehawariya Assefa, Director General, Ministry of Agriculture; Mr. Getachew Mekebo, Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Yirgalem Behireshum, Desk Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Haile Berhe, Businessman; and Mr. Tewodros Yilma, Businessman.

Welcoming the delegation, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry, Director General, ISSI said that the Government of Pakistan attaches great importance to the African continent. Pakistan, in the past, did not utilize the markets in Africa, but the time has come to work harder to reach out to Africa. Pakistan is now following a 'Look Africa' policy and in this regard the recent interaction between the Prime Ministers of both Pakistan and Ethiopia was a positive development and the beginning of Pakistan-Ethiopia ties. He also said that the visit of the Ethiopian delegation signified the importance Africa also attaches to Pakistan. He was of the view that within Africa, Ethiopia which is the seat of the African Union is an important country with whom Pakistan would like to develop ties and engage more rigorously.

Ambassador Chaudhry briefed the delegation on his assessment of the global and regional situation and how Pakistan is addressing the challenges that confront the country in the foreign and security domain. He was of the view that during the past decade, the world has changed in a remarkable manner, and at a very rapid pace. When the new century began, the US was the sole superpower after having defeated the Soviet Union, resulting in a push for globalization and a global village and the active role of the UN to build a normative framework in different areas. However, the unfortunate event of 9/11 changed the US thinking, and one saw how the US focused on the Middle East and how they deployed troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ever since then, the world has seen the Middle East go through turmoil of one kind or the other, like the Arab Spring, which turned into the Arab Autumn, and now many have reached to a conclusion that it is in fact the Arab Winter.

Speaking about Afghanistan in the aftermath of 9/11 and how the situation in Afghanistan affected Pakistan, Ambassador Chaudhry said that when the US invaded Afghanistan searching for Osama Bin Laden, many of the militants based in Afghanistan trickled into Pakistan's tribal areas. Pakistan witnessed unprecedented terrorism and bloodshed with terrorist incidents from 2004-2014 as it became the frontline state to fight terrorism alongside US-led international coalition. As a consequence, the country became a target in the eyes of the militants. However, the people of Pakistan, its leadership and the military displayed immense resilience and were able to fight back and stabilize the country by defeating the militants. Ambassador Chaudhry also pointed out that Pakistan's tribal areas, which were a no man's land for centuries, have now been completely merged with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Pakistan is very proud of this achievement. Pakistan today is much stronger with the militants and the terrorist groups defeated and disintegrated.

Reiterating the changing world order, Ambassador Chaudhry talked about how the US began to give importance to Asia and referred to Hilary Clinton's 2011 announcement of US Asia Pivot strategy, and its interest in developing deeper partnership with India. This also gave the impression that maybe the US was attempting to contain China by building a containment arch - which many felt coincided with the economic rise of China - starting with Japan, and including Australia and India. This became evident as US recognized China and Russia as its competitor in its strategic documents, and were later termed as rivals by President Trump.

Ambassador Chaudhry was of the view that the world is witnessing a new kind of 'Cold War' germinating between US and China. He said that US policy towards China is of importance and concern for Pakistan considering its close ties with China that are old and deep-rooted. At the same time, Pakistan also has a good relationship with US, and therefore does not want to spoil this relationship. Hence, Pakistan likes to strike a balance by having good ties with both China and US. However, US partnership with India is a matter of concern for Pakistan due to the hostile nature of ties between both states since 1947. He highlighted that India has never really accepted Pakistan and has shown immense hostility towards it. In this regard, Ambassador Chaudhry spoke about the issue of Kashmir and was of the view that the hostility became ever more intense after India decided to annex a part of Kashmir (Srinagar), and since then relations have been hostile to say the least.

Most recently, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir has taken a dangerous turn. Modi's government has changed the status of the disputed area by revoking Article 370 on August 5, 2019, ending the special status of the area, making it a part of the union territory whereby it will be controlled from New Delhi. In doing so, India not only betrayed the people of Kashmir, but also went against 13 UN resolutions that have been passed from 1947-1965, which regard Kashmir as a disputed territory. Since then, India has increased the number of its military forces in IOK and the area is under a curfew. Ambassador Chaudhry emphasized that the international community has woken up and there are voices in the UN, European Union, and the OIC in favor of the people of Kashmir. He highlighted that a US presidential candidate gave a very strong statement and even President Donald Trump has offered mediation to help solve the dispute. He expressed his hope that someday the African Union will also speak in favor of Kashmir.

Despite the hostility emanating from India, Pakistan recognizes the need to have good ties with India considering the fact that not only both countries share a joint history, India is an important player in the neighborhood. Pakistan has always maintained that it would like to have peaceful, good neighborly relationship with India. Unfortunately, India has begun to avoid engaging with Pakistan, on the pretext that Pakistan supports terrorists, while the fact remains that no other country has suffered more than Pakistan due to the menace of terrorism and that no country has fought terrorist the way Pakistan has. Ambassador Chaudhry highlighted that Pakistan is a strong nation of 210 million, with immense resources and a great resolve that does not believe in dictation but rather in principles of the United Nations Charter that believes in sovereignty and equality.

On the situation in Afghanistan, Ambassador Chaudhry pointed out that Afghanistan has been in a state of war for the past 40 years. He talked about the Soviet invasion and withdrawal, as well as the US invasion of Afghanistan that has cost hundreds of lives and according to some estimates, some \$975 billion in a war that is showing no signs of winning. He then spoke about President Trump's policy on Afghanistan regarding the reduction of US troops, as well as engaging with the Taliban in a peace process.

Explaining the peace process in Afghanistan, Ambassador Chaudhry said that although certain positive developments did take place regarding the peace process, rekindling hope for a peaceful

settlement, the talks have been called off by President Trump due to ongoing violence on the part of the Taliban. He also highlighted that while Pakistan has played a positive role in putting pressure on the Taliban to engage in talks and abandon their violence, it cannot fight Afghanistan's war, the latter will have to take ownership and fight its own war. Although the peace process appears to be 'dead', the situation in Afghanistan is a matter of grave concern for Pakistan considering the fact that Pakistan has suffered greatly due to instability in the country. Ambassador Chaudhry brought attention to the fact that Pakistan had hosted up to 5 million refugees and is currently hosting 3 million. He said that Pakistan supports peace and stability in Afghanistan as it faces direct consequences of the situation in Afghanistan, more so now with the growing threat of the Islamic State of Khorasan or Daesh.

Pakistan's close relationship with China was also discussed, which Ambassador Chaudhry termed as a close relationship based on mutual respect. He also talked about the importance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the prospects this mega energy and connectivity corridor will bring with it.

Ambassador Chaudhry also talked about Pakistan's ties with Iran and said that it enjoys good relations based on historical and religious affiliations. He further said that Iran may well be a good source of energy for Pakistan. However, US sanctions on Iran due to Tehran's daunting relations with Washington, have affected Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project and its ability to take off. He further added that another complication that Pakistan has had to deal with is balancing ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia, as they do not enjoy good ties. Pakistan has always believed in a balance of ties and has therefore not only tried to have a balanced relationship with both countries, but has even offered to mediate in the hope of improving ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

H.E. Ambassador Dr. Markos Tekle expressed his gratitude to ISSI and said that Ethiopia has much to learn from Pakistan's experience, particularly the manner in which Pakistan has been able to cope in such a difficult neighborhood. He said that Ethiopia has had similar experiences such as the failed state in Somali, South Sudan and issues in Eritrea. Many countries wanted to set up a naval base in Djibouti. Ethiopia believes in a stable Africa, and does not have vested interests as it believes in the principle of neutrality and promoting peaceful ties within the

African region. He concluded by saying that Pakistan should not merely have a 'Look Africa' policy, but should revise it to a 'Go to Africa' policy.