



**INSTITUTE OF
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

web: www.issi.org.pk
phone: +92-51-9204423, 24
fax: +92-51-9204658

Report – Public Talk

“41st Anniversary of Victory of Islamic Revolution and Pakistan-Iran Relations”

February 4, 2020



Rapporteur: Fatima Raza

Edited by: Najam Rafique

The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, organized a Public Talk on February 4, 2020 under its Ambassador's Platform 2020 titled, "*41st Anniversary of Victory of Islamic Revolution and Pakistan-Iran Relations.*" The distinguished speaker at the event was H.E. Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini, Ambassador, Islamic Republic of Iran.

In his introductory remarks, Director General ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry reflected that Iran and Pakistan are not just two neighbours but two nations tied by history, faith, art, culture and literature. He pointed out that Iran is held in high esteem in Pakistan and that its rich culture distinguishes it from other countries. Ambassador Chaudhry said that Iran had come a long way since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, braving several challenges with great resilience without compromising on its core values and principles. Iran is a country that has proven time and again that it can withstand pressure while standing up to what it believes is right.

He further went on to say that geopolitics in the region has created many new challenges for Iran and other countries. Pakistan has noted with great concern the unilateral US withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal, the re-imposition of sanctions against Iran, and the rising US-Iran tension following the recent killing of General Soleimani. Ambassador Chaudhry praised Iran's Hormuz Peace Endeavour (HOPE) initiative and its unifying spirit for collective energy security in the region and to bring states together for security of the Strait of Hormuz, especially in the backdrop of several worrisome trends prevailing in the overall Middle Eastern region; from Yemen to Iraq and from Syria to Libya. All these developments are a matter of deep concern for Pakistan, he said.

Ambassador Chaudhry said that in this context of regional tensions; Prime Minister Imran Khan has initiated mediation efforts as an attempt to reduce some of these tensions that could have overarching repercussions for the entire region. He also reiterated that while Pakistan values its ties with Iran; it also attaches prime importance to its close relationship with Saudi Arabia. And hence, Pakistan's mediation efforts in this context have been for the larger interest of the Muslim *Ummah* and greater regional stability. He said that on the bilateral plane, Pakistan and Iran have always enjoyed cordial ties including border cooperation. Pakistan has fought and reversed the tide of terrorism and both countries can learn from their respective experiences. There is great scope for economic cooperation, and while the US sanctions remain a major

impediment to this cooperation; there is a need for finding creative solutions to resume bilateral trade. Ambassador Chaudhry offered the platform of the Institute of Strategic Studies for a constructive dialogue between the two countries.

Ambassador Mohammad Ali Hosseini stated that the Islamic Revolution of Iran under the leadership of the religious scholar well-known for his command on philosophy, mysticism, spirituality and ethics, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini remains at the zenith of Islamic history. This revolution has not only penetrated into the hearts of Muslims, but has attracted oppressed and deprived people from all over the globe. The Iranian revolution has eliminated discrimination and has become the harbinger of human solidarity, protection of human dignity and justice for all. Meanwhile, these days coincide with the anniversary of the 72 years of Iran-Pakistan friendship. Pakistan and Iran share ties that are unique, peaceful and have the potential to spread their goodwill to the entire neighbourhood.

Ambassador Hosseini said that Iran and Pakistan are passing through a crucial time in their bilateral relationship where Asia is the centre of global political power. He went on to say that a wider bilateral relationship and more active role in the region would help both countries in playing a bigger role in shaping the future. Pakistan and Iran share common views on most issues of regional importance and enjoy rich cultural and religious affinity. Ambassador Hosseini pointed out that both Iran and Pakistan are opposed to foreign occupation and interference. He reiterated complete Iranian support to Pakistan on its developmental goals and targets.

Ambassador Hosseini acknowledged that Pakistan has always stood with Iran through thick and thin. He also highlighted that the harsh act of 'terrorism' committed by United States in form of the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani had endangered the entire region and that Iran had suffered the great loss of a brave commander of Islam. He also condemned American President's threats to attack Iranian cultural heritage. Pointing out the possible repercussions of Soleimani's killing, he said that Iranian efforts to eradicate threats like ISIS and narcotics trade across borders had been reversed by this ill-advised step taken by the United States. Talking about Trump's 'peace' plan for Palestine; Ambassador Hosseini called it an utterly 'despicable' plan.

Ambassador Hosseini listed several potential areas of cooperation between Iran and Pakistan including: OIC, ECO, D-8 Group, Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, establishment of border

markets, Gwadar and Chabahar ports and bilateral political cooperation on regional irritants, especially in Afghanistan. He said that Iran welcomes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects and has announced its willingness to participate in these projects. He further emphasised that cooperation among countries like Iran, Pakistan, China, Russia and Turkey would be highly fruitful for peaceful resolution of regional issues. He welcomed Pakistan's mediation efforts with Saudi Arabia and announced Iran's readiness to engage in direct or indirect talks with Saudi Arabia in Tehran, Riyadh or Islamabad. On the Kashmir issue, he assured that the Iranian Supreme Leader's support has always been unwavering. Regarding the Iranian nuclear deal; he stated that Iran has not abandoned the multilateral framework and that the US sanctions have been equivalent to harsh 'economic terrorism.'

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG ISSI, described the Iran-Pakistan relations as an enduring reality which can only be realised through robust economic and commercial cooperation on all levels. There have been some difficult phases in Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations, but even during those times both sides remained committed to keeping the mutual relationship intact which augurs well for the future of the entire region.

Q &A Session:

Q.1. How can Iran allay Pakistan's concerns regarding the use of Chabahar port with respect to India's involvement in the port project?

A: Pakistan is an important neighbour with whom Iran values its relationship greatly. Iran will never let its soil be used against any of its neighbours, especially Pakistan. The Chabahar port project is not in competition with Gwadar but is complementary.

Q.2. What is the future of the JCPOA agreement?

A: Iran has been the only party most committed to the JCPOA agreement among all signatories. If US sanctions are lifted; Iran would return to full compliance of the nuclear deal.

Q.3. What is Iran's stance on the Kashmir issue?

A: When the highest official in the Islamic Republic of Iran speaks out in favour of the oppressed people in Kashmir; it is indubitably a source of confidence for Pakistani brethren that the issue of Kashmir cannot be ignored in Iran.

Q.4. How does Iran view Pakistan's efforts of mediation between Iran and US and Iran and Saudi Arabia?

A: Iran appreciates Pakistan's mediation efforts and welcomes the prospects of talks with Saudi Arabia in Tehran, Riyadh or Islamabad, wherever they may be held. As far as the state of relations with United States is concerned; Iran is not interested in holding talks as the former has committed a heinous act of 'terrorism' against Iran by assassinating General Qasem Soleimani.

PICTURES OF THE EVENT

