



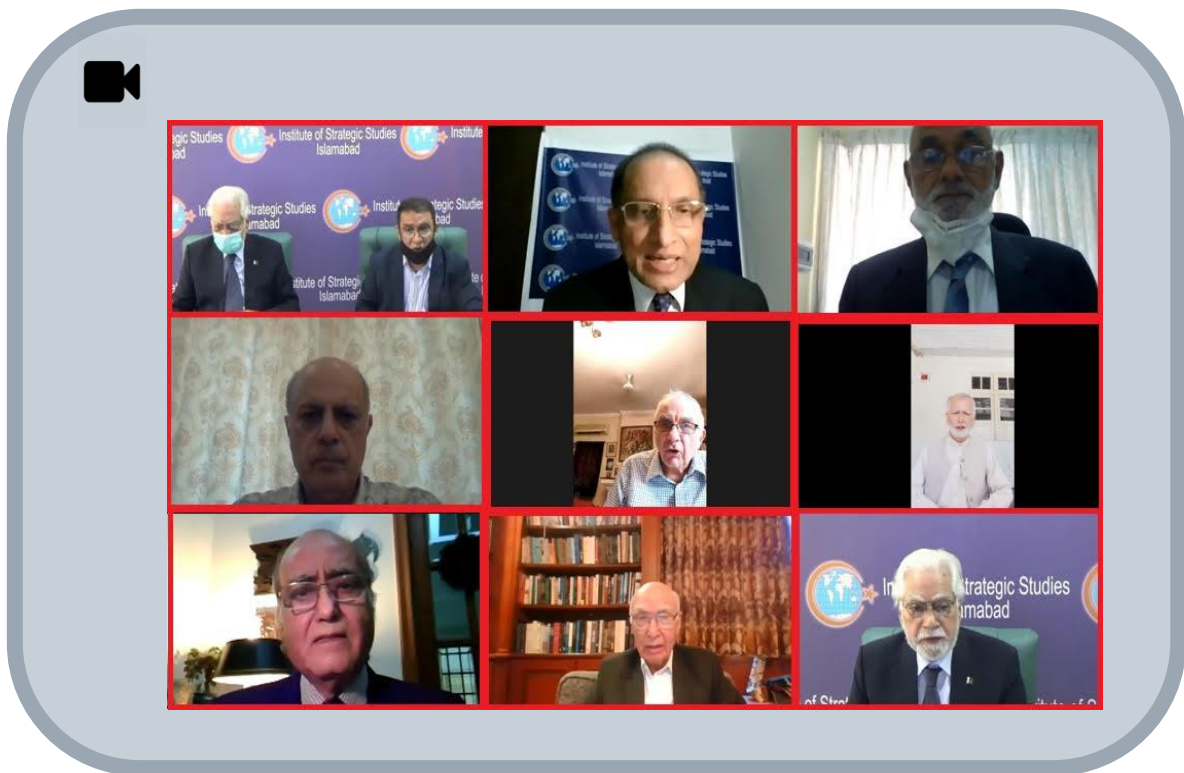
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## *Report – Webinar*

# **“47th Anniversary of the Founding of ISSI”**

**June 16, 2020**



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The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) organized a webinar to celebrate the 47<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its founding on June 16, 2020. The participants of the webinar included: Mr. Qasim Niaz, who had been Research Associate in the late 1970s, Mr. Changez Abbasi, Library Assistant from 1973-2019, as well as some of the former Director Generals and Chairmen BOG, including Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the 13th Director General from 2011-2013, and Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, the longest serving Chairman BOG since 2013 till date. The guests of honor on the occasion included former Foreign Ministers, Mr. Sartaj Aziz and Ambassador Inam ul Haq who served at ISSI as Chairmen BOG. Although invited, Mr. Ross Masood Hussain, the first Director General of ISSI and Ambassador Masood Khan could not join because of urgent commitment.

The webinar was moderated by Mr. Najam Rafique, Director Research. Introducing the webinar, he said that the four pillars of ISSI that have formed the framework in its journey over the last 47 years comprised: support by the parent ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; guidance by the executive heads including the Director Generals and Chairmen; perseverance and dedication of the research officers; and devotion of the administrative staff. He said that ISSI has flourished in its achievements, increased the expanse of its research and also grown in the frequency of its events as well as its outreach to policy makers. In all this while, ISSI has maintained a close liaison with MOFA. These achievements have been the combined efforts, dedication, hard work and trying of new ideas by people who have given their best in making sure that ISSI maintains its standards of performance and commitment to excellence through research and dialogue. He said that Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry has made us aware about the worth of celebrating and preserving the institutional memory, and ISSI will be making its anniversary celebration an annual affair.

In his welcome remarks, Director General ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry stated that we need to honor our predecessors who worked tirelessly to make ISSI what it is today. He said that the present strategy is to synergize research work and dialogue on pertinent issues. He also shed light on the new developments taking place at ISSI including the establishment of four dedicated Centers of excellence working on China, India, Middle East & Africa, and Arms Control and Disarmament. The Director General said that in the last two years, we have come a long way by establishing the above mentioned Centres at the Institute. Moreover, he said that the

ISSI has the privilege that other institutes do not have, which includes having our own building and guidance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is of great value. He further stated that the Institute has increased its connection with the Ministry and has been focusing on themes that are agitating the Ministry. Therefore, researching on the themes relevant to the government of Pakistan helps us serve better.

The Director Administration, Mr. Khurshid Anwar gave a presentation showcasing the past and present of ISSI. He gave a brief history of its evolution through its initial years and highlighted the present activities of the Institute. Mr. Anwar gave a detailed overview of how the present premises was built with personal interest taken by the then Director General, Brig. Noor A. Hussain. He also shed light on the important visits to the Institute, including President General Zia ul Haq, Mr. Nelson Mandela, President General Pervez Musharraf, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and President Arif Alvi.

The guest of honor, Mr. Sartaj Aziz, stated that as evidenced in its work, ISSI has made very good progress in projecting Pakistan's foreign policy. He attributed its success to three factors which has made for world class research: a steady budget, a good pool of workers and respect for autonomy. He recommended that ISSI should evaluate whether it is producing quality research, path breaking publications and landmark international conferences. If the Institute works on these three areas, then it will break new ground and be even more successful. ISSI, he said, is very capable of doing this. He said that we have very few world class institutes and the ISSI is playing a very important role and is a notable exception as Pakistan has not been too successful when it comes to the establishment of research institutions. It may be noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a very enviable pool of resources, comparable to no other ministry, which have been of great help to the ISSI. He further stated that the Foreign Ministry has made merit-based appointments and in doing that, has chosen the best people to lead the Institute. Moreover, he said that the autonomy and professional character of ISSI needs to be respected, which has been the case. Apart from this, quality research which can create ripples is a must for the ISSI to stand out, for which the momentum has already been built.

Guest of honor, Ambassador Inam ul Haq, said that over the years, ISSI has made an international standing for itself. He applauded how ISSI is making briefs for the Foreign Office

and said that its research has been well-received. Ambassador Haq also said that the ISSI has become the premier think tank because of its work on strategic and foreign policy issues. He also recalled being guided by one of his predecessors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as at the Institute, Mr. Agha Shahi, who was an icon of the Foreign Ministry. He congratulated the entire ISSI team for their achievements and wished the Institute success in all future endeavors.

Earlier, Mr. Ross Masood Hussain, in his message, congratulated the Institute on achieving milestones and emphasized on the importance of the existence of think tanks and how they act as ancillary bodies to governments and as soft power tools. He said that think tanks help states make spaces in the international arena. He shed light on the importance of think tanks in formulating and giving advisory support to decision makers and leaders. Furthermore, he stated that think tanks provide an open environment for creative policy analysis and the collective advice from a network of think tanks is often more enriching and guarantees a sustainable plan of action. He also called think tanks a plausible diplomatic machine, which help in putting a country's message across.

Mr. Qasim Niaz, shared his experiences during his days at the ISSI and how he was a part of a small team of researchers who mainly worked on the then Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq war. He also stated that those were the days when there was no internet and ISSI was also a transitioning platform for many researchers. He expressed his happiness at how the Institute has grown in scope and purpose. He also said that the Institute started its journey towards growth and the library sources in those days were being enhanced. Presently, the internet is a major multiplier for researchers nowadays. He also recalled the time when the research team comprised of only three members and expressed his happiness at how people are pursuing careers at the institute presently.

In a video message, Mr. Changez Abbasi, who served ISSI for 46 years, praised all the successive Director Generals for their dedication and commitment in raising the stature of the institute to become one of the finest in Pakistan, with one of the best libraries in the country. He recalled the early days and said that while it is difficult to sum up the progress and developments that have taken place in the last few decades, it is important to acknowledge the services of those

who laid the foundations in the initial years and worked hard to make the Institute what it is today.

Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi in his remarks, stated that the Institute started from very modest beginnings and has come a long way to become what it is, to its present enviable status which it enjoys today. He said that it is arguably Pakistan's foremost foreign policy institute which is associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He said that ISSI is exploring new possibilities to deal with the challenges of the new era which is dawning upon us. He said that Pakistan is entering a new era while existing in a challenging neighborhood. He also suggested that while living in challenging times, we need to focus on newer issues like climate change, which pose a very grave challenge to Pakistan as well. He commented that we have entered an era of the new Cold War between China and the United States and there are countries which want to drive a wedge between China and Pakistan.

As the longest serving Chairman BOG, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood spoke about his association with ISSI which dates back to the early 90s when he was ambassador to Iran. Ambassador Mahmood further said that he has worked with several Director Generals and each one has built upon the legacy of their predecessors and in doing that, enhanced the relevance of the Institute and also improved its image. In all this time, he stated that the linkage with the parent ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has been further enhanced. He further said that an important contribution of the present Director General, Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry has been the introduction of the confidential briefs, which are done in a very succinct manner. He mentioned two significant improvements which he has personally seen over the last two years. The first is the establishment of four Centers of excellence within ISSI. The second is that the linkage with the parent organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has been further deepened which is a very positive development since it shows ISSI does not work in a void, but focuses on those issues that are of concern to the Pakistan government at large.

Rounding up the webinar, DG ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry acknowledged the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and especially the Foreign Minister who has been personally visiting the ISSI on a number of occasions and has been very supportive. He also acknowledged the support of the Foreign Secretary, who has been equally forthcoming and

because of this support, every directorate within the Foreign Ministry has been very supportive and participatory in the efforts by ISSI. He reiterated that ISSI has now also started focusing on non-traditional security threats, as suggested by Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi. Ambassador Chaudhry also welcomed the recommendations made by Mr. Sartaj Aziz for further improvements and said that the Institute is well on its way to improving research standards and outreach. He thanked all the speakers for their valuable inputs.