

PRESS RELEASE

SVI-KAS Roundtable Discussion on “Contemporary Relations between Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia”

Pakistan should deal with Iran, KSA on case to case basis recommends SVI

ISLAMABAD, March 31: Pakistan should pursue an issue based approach in its ties with Iran and Saudi Arabia and avoid over-committing with either of the parties, recommends Strategic Vision Institute (SVI).

SVI, which is an Islamabad based think tank specializing in foreign affairs and strategic issues, issued these recommendations at the conclusion of a seminar on ‘Contemporary relations between Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia’.

The think tank has suggested that national interest should be the deciding element in Pakistan’s strategy for ties with these two regional arch rivals, both of whom are important to it for different reasons. It noted that while Iran could not be ignored for peace and stability in Balochistan and dealing with Afghanistan issue, Saudi Arabia was important for economic, strategic and military reasons.

Executive Director of the German Orient Institute in Berlin Dr Gunter Mulack, who previously served in Pakistan as Germany’s ambassador, said: “Trying to help Iran with whom the world can have good economic ties is the right way for Pakistan”.

He, however, advised Pakistan to be cautious in reaching out to Iran and not to expect major changes in its policies and governance structures. at least in the near future.

Noting that “Iran could not be excluded from playing a role in the region”, Dr Mulack pointed out that Iran was a resurgent power backed by not only its rich oil and gas reserves, but also by its important geo-strategic position connecting Western Asia with South and Central Asia; a strong industrial base; very high level of literacy; and strong history and civilization.

In contrast Dr Mulack observed that Saudi Arabia, which was heavily reliant on its oil wealth, was facing problems due to falling oil prices, and demands of its young population that wants to live in a more liberal and open society. But, more importantly, he said, US, which for long remained Saudi Arabia’s backer, is seen turning away from it.

Former Defense Secretary Lt Gen (retd) Asif Yasin Malik said that neither Iran nor Saudi Arabia were Pakistan’s friends in the true sense. “Their leaders could have been friends of our rulers,” he said adding that both countries caused ‘unforgiveable’ harm to Pakistan.

He said unfortunately Pakistan considers both countries as important, but they never saw Pakistan in the same spirit rather looked at it from the perspective of their own interests. Relations with these two countries can only develop once they too give equal importance to Pakistan.

Chairman Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) Amb (retd) Khalid Mehmood pointed out the impediments in developing relations with Iran, which, he said, included the sectarian signatures on Iran's policies, border security issues, and Tehran's close relationship with India.

He believed that the relief Iran has got from nuclear related sanctions would be 'brief' because of its aggressive Middle East policy and the missile program.

President SVI Dr Zafar Iqbal Cheema said that it should not be overlooked that Pakistan is a Sunni-majority state with the second-largest Shiite population in the world after Iran. Besides, Pakistan shares historical, cultural and ideological affinity with both the countries but has geographic proximity with Iran that is not interchangeable, he further said.

"Islamabad should avoid over committing itself especially not at the expense of its own national security interests. It is also important to note that Pakistan should not be expected to deal with KSA and Iran in a holistic manner rather it should pursue an issue-based policy on case to case basis," he said.

Dr Cheema said Pakistan should avoid being tagged either internationally or by these two states based on its demographic and sectarian orientations.

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Express Tribune:

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Nation:

[Pakistan asked to avoid overcommitting to KSA, Iran](#)

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