SVI In-House Seminar/Panel Discussion March 7, 2017: Report
“Pakistan-US Relations: Potentials & Future Prospects”

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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) organized a monthly In-House Seminar titled “Pakistan-US Relations: Potentials & Future Prospects” held on March 7, 2017. Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, President/Executive Director SVI chaired the event. The guest speakers included Ambassador (R) Akram Zaki, former ambassador of Pakistan, and Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Associate Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad. Dr. Cheema in his opening remarks welcomed and introduced the honorable guest speakers. He highlighted the importance of Pakistan-US relations that have been in critical condition ever since the beginning of the bilateral relations, however recently with the economic rise of China and Russian resurgence in South Asia especially in Afghanistan, makes this relationship quite significant.

Ambassador (R) Akram Zaki talked briefly about Pakistan-US Dialogue Process specifically since 2010, finding it ironic that Pak-US bilateral dialogue was termed as “Strategic Dialogue”. He maintained that there cannot be any strategic dialogue between a great power and a client state, where the strategic dialogue could only be a misnomer. He stated that such a misnomer was being used to impose one-sided views on the weaker party. Highlighting the realist nature of international politics, he quoted the Greek historian Thucydides: “justice prevailed only when compulsion of necessity was equal on both sides. The powerful exact what they can and week grant what they must”. He described Pak-US relations as a sentenced prisoner occasionally released on bail when the prisoner was to be used. Throughout history of Pak-US bilateral relations, the former looked upon Pakistan adversely, occasionally given reprieve while the sanctions were never withdrawn. The sanctions were only waived or suspended whenever the US needed Pakistan to be used as a policy instrument, and reimposed them once the task was accomplished. He presented the chronology of sanctions that the US imposed on Pakistan since its independence. From 1947-51, Pakistan was under a trade embargo by the US for having trade with Czechoslovakia. Despite the fact that Pakistan was made to join the US led military alliances, the sanctions were reimposed in 1965 for Pakistan’s alleged attempt at snatching Kashmir from India by force. While Pakistan was negotiating a deal with France for nuclear fuel
reprocessing plant, Pakistan faced another spell of sanctions during 1978-79. However, after Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the sanctions were somewhat relaxed but not completely withdrawn and as the USSR pulled out, the sanctions were reimposed. During 1989-2001, once again Pakistan was under the US sanctions. After September 11 attacks in 2001, Pakistan was needed again for cooperation in war against terrorism, resultantly the sanctions were relaxed. Pakistan was obliged to launch a military operation under US pressure, in Waziristan; a peaceful area. He further added that Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was actually created by the outside forces.

While Pakistan and the US had reasonable working relations during the first term of George W. Bush in White House, mutual suspicions marred this bilateral relation in his second term. Both states agreed to recommence strategic dialogue in 2010 spanning working groups: 1) Energy; 2) Security, Strategic Stability, and Nonproliferation; 3) the Defense Consultative Group; 4) Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism; 5) Economics and Finance; and 6) Education, Science, and Technology. The worst year in Pak-US bilateral relations was 2011 that was marred by the Raymond Davis incident, Osama bin Laden episode, and Salala check post attack. Both countries had another rough session of strategic dialogue in 2013 when the US made a number of demands insisting Pakistan to “do more” against the Haqqani network, improve relations with India on India’s terms, and to restrict its nuclear program. The relations slightly improved after Pakistan launched operation Zarb-e-Azb against the terrorists. After three years hiatus, the strategic dialogue resumed in 2016 with similar demands about restricting expansion of nuclear program, improvement of relations with India while never asking Indians to improve relations with Pakistan, and demand for action against Haqqani network. Overview of Pak-US relations showed that this bilateral relationship was about sanctions imposed, relaxed and reimposed. He characterized this bilateral relation with unilateral advantage for the US and disadvantage for Pakistan. Pakistan had put too much faith and often sacrificed many other relations especially with USSR at the beginning, and recently with Russia and Iran for saving relationship with the US. The political structure of the US has mostly been dominated by strong institutions, very well entrenched ruling class, and establishment of two political parties, the Military Industrial Complex, Wall Street and powerful media. Since WWII, the US has been
clearly an imperialistic power constantly waging wars. The last five living Presidents of the US have been involved in wars around the world, using the pretext of promotion and maintenance of international peace. He mentioned that the US’ foreign policy has been dominated by two doctrines: one used by “neocons” who use military force for dominating and establishing hegemony in the world through preemptive strikes and regime change; while the other doctrine dominated by “neoliberals” the so called humanitarian interventionists. Neocons derive their military centric doctrine from “Wolfowitz Doctrine” that later took the shape of “Project for the New American Century” in 1997. Wolfowitz Doctrine gave the concept of waging and winning war on simultaneously three fronts while keeping troops permanently in Europe, Middle East and Far East. Both doctrines were used for removing only those regimes that did not follow or stopped following the US dictation. Neocon and Neoliberal doctrines of US foreign policy are both interventionist where one uses military force in the name of military objectives, while the other uses force in the name of human rights and democracy.

He opined that terrorism was actually created and promoted by the US as foreign policy instrument while Pakistan was partner with the US on its Afghan Jihad project against the Soviets that led to the creation of Al-Qaeda. This Al-Qaeda organization was later transformed to Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) then to Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which eventually became the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Donald Trump also accepted that ISIS was creation of the US’ policies. Ambassador Zaki said there must be no ambiguity that war on terror was actually designed to spread and promote terror. With the failure of New American Century doctrine in Afghanistan and Iraq, a new concept called ‘project for new Middle East’ was given by the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in June 2006. The philosophy behind this project was creation and promotion of chaos and confusion in Middle East, Pakistan and Afghanistan with the basic aim of redrawing the map of the whole region to suit interests of the US, UK and Israel. This project envisioned destabilization of Middle East as a policy principle. Use of military force has been preferred over diplomacy by the US for promoting its interest. Within the US, President Donald Trump is facing the threat of regime change from the same US establishment that brought regime changes abroad. Through the statements during the election campaign, President Trump showed
intentions for having good relations with Russia. After being elected this is where he has been hit the most. Establishment in the US has been trying hard to stifle President Trump’s Russia initiative. By imposing preconditions like return of Crimea to Ukraine for starting engagement process with Russia, the prospects for improved US-Russia relations under Donald Trump have been made difficult by the establishment in the US. Practical cooperation between the US and Russia for elimination of ISIS seems very difficult under the prevailing circumstances. Ambassador Zaki showed his concerns about the possibility of Kurds being used for destabilization of Middle East in future, which could not be ruled out.

Claims made by Donald Trump during the election campaign regarding strong position against China are also relevant to Pakistan. Despite his statements for giving tough response to China, there could be no doubt about Chinese firm position on Taiwan and South China Sea. China was very clear for not having soft policy on Taiwan, South China Sea and East China Sea for defending its interests. One Belt One Road (OBOR) that has philosophy of shared development, and peace was Chinese response to interventionist policies of the US. There was opposition by India and the US to the CPEC whereas Chinese have shown firm commitment towards timely completion of CPEC. Russia and China while they are not making alliance, have made it clear, they are maximizing their cooperation. Both these countries are now working with Pakistan for stabilization of Afghanistan. Tripartite diplomatic initiative involving Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China with inclusion of the US became quadruple. Such diplomatic initiatives for bringing stability to war torn Afghanistan show that China has moved from noninterference to constructive engagement in Afghanistan. Important thing to notice for Pakistan is that as long as Pakistan was unilaterally dependent on the US, it was mistreated. However Pakistan has always been treated with more respect by the US whenever it used the approach of multilateralism. Hence, if Pakistan focuses on developing strong relations with China and Russia, the US is going to treat Pakistan differently. Talking about the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit held recently in Islamabad, he said that it has substantially strengthened the regional perspective of Pakistan. Formulation of minimum position was necessary to have serious dialogue with the US. He further suggested that if the US delayed the strategic dialogue meeting this year, Pakistan should not show any desperation. Issues like
nuclear program, nuclear triad under full spectrum deterrence, and compromise with India on India’s term should not be negotiable. Talking about terrorism, he said Pakistan is the greatest victim of terrorism and has been doing whatever it could to fight terrorism. Hence the US demands for Pakistan to ‘do more’ on terrorism are not realistic. Sponsoring and promoting negative non-state actors is not in the long term interest of Pakistan. He suggested that Pakistan must do everything to restrict activities of terrorists but in its own interest and not under the foreign pressure. Pakistan could only negotiate the nuclear program under the framework of global nuclear disarmament; the possibility of that happening doesn’t seem likely.

Dr. Cheema thanked Ambassador Akram Zaki for his detailed and futuristic remakes about Pakistan and the US relations. He then requested Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal for his remarks on the same subject.

Dr. Jaspal shared that since there was no clear cut policy, statement or document from Trump administration vis a vis Afghanistan, Pakistan and South Asia, it was difficult to predict his policy towards these areas. The most one could do was make assessments based on his statements made during and after the elections. There were certain realities that were going to shadow Pak-US relations no matter who sits in the White House. Due to continued US interest in Central Asia and West Asia, it cannot ignore South Asia in its foreign and strategic calculations. Talking about the US objectives in Central and West Asia when looked together, he said first objective that linked Pakistan with the Trump administration was making sure that democratic system installed by the US does not collapse while at the same time desiring continued combating of terror syndicate in Afghanistan. US cannot afford a free for all intervention in Afghanistan by its neighbors especially Pakistan. In order to check Pakistan’s influence in Afghanistan, the US encouraged and played a key role for India-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement signed on October 4, 2011. Simultaneously by sending Afghan bureaucracy for training in India, the US organized a balanced strategy to contain Pakistan’s influence in Afghanistan. Through its presence in Afghanistan, the US has the opportunity to monitor China and Russia.
In the aftermath of Salala check post attack, on one hand Pakistan and the US grew apart but on the other hand it inadvertently gave confidence to Pakistan that it could survive without the US assistance, especially in the military sector. With the closure of Ground Lines of Communication (GLOC), even in the worst situation, Pakistan was able to assert itself. He stated that the Pak-US Strategic Dialogue is comprised of six working groups: 1) Energy; 2) Security, Strategic Stability, and Nonproliferation; 3) the Defense Consultative Group; 4) Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism; 5) Economics and Finance; and 6) Education, Science, and Technology.

Sharing details on these areas, he stated that in the “Energy” sector, the major projects in Pakistan were not coming from the US despite some assistance by the USAID in this regard. Instead the nuclear and coal power plants were coming from China. Similarly the construction of dams in Pakistan had no significant investment from the US.

In area of “Security, Strategic Stability, and Nonproliferation” Pakistan and the US have divergent views. US’ security preference regarding India to have a leading role in South Asia is in direct collusion with Pakistan’s security interests. US looks at India as a local leviathan for strategic stability in South Asia. Unlike typical ordered political anarchy, the US has been looking for hierarchal vertical order within South Asia that is not acceptable to Pakistan. When it comes to strategic stability in South Asian region, the most important element of the US policy is non-proliferation. Recent trends show that all nuclear states are investing for improving the quality of nuclear weapons. Whereas while the nuclear program of Pakistan is on a positive trajectory, it is in direct conflict with non-proliferation agenda of the US. Apart from safety and security of strategic assets, there is nothing much that Pakistan and the US can discuss. US funded institutions and South Asian experts came with a report on “A Normal Nuclear Pakistan”. He specifically shared that the Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) gave an academic and timely response to such efforts by publishing articles and holding conferences on the subject. After realizing the failure of this effort, second move that the US made was bracketing Pakistan and putting pressure for restricting the range of Pakistani missiles, which again did not work. In October 2015, the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan in the statement to the UN, mentioned that Pakistan had tactical nuclear weapons to check Indian Cold Start Doctrine.
By categorically giving statement about tactical nuclear weapons, Pakistan sent across a message that it was not accepting any kind of dictation on its nuclear program.

Third group formed under strategic dialogue is “Defense Consultative Group” for the purpose of purchase of armaments, and communication along Pakistan- Afghanistan border for taking action against terrorists. It is important to mention here that today Pakistan is not getting any military equipment from the US, which means that Pakistan now has lesser military dependency on the US.

Fourth group about “Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism” carries potentials but with certain limitations. Both the US and Pakistan have consensus on the rule of law but have divergence of views and interests when it comes to counterterrorism. Pakistan regards Afghan Taliban as a political reality whereas the US sees them as challenger. Similarly Pakistan views Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as threat to its security, and US was not doing enough to eliminate TTP safe heavens on Afghan soil.

The fifth group under strategic dialogue deals with “Economics and Finance”. In terms of economy, Pakistan is largely focused on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), where again the US has no contribution to make other than opposing it.

The last working group of this strategic dialogue deals with “Education Science and Technology”. Despite changing trends of regional politics moving away from the US, the minds and hearts of ruling elite are still centered on the West. Fulbright scholarship is a very important tool being used by the US for a long term “people to people” connectivity and projection of the US’ soft power.

Last ministerial level meetings for strategic dialogue were held in February 2016 and the next follow-on meeting was expected in February 2017 which did not take place and is not scheduled in the near future. Dr. Jaspal pointed out that there are two interlinked questions that have been haunting Pakistan with regards to the Trump administration: one is about how the Trump administration was going to respond towards Pakistan; and secondly how this relationship could be shaped further. Dr. Jaspal identified seven areas that were going to dictate Pak-US relations in the future:
I. Washington’s inclination towards New Delhi and the US possibility/likeliness for Indian role in the containment of China makes Pakistan a lesser attraction for the US. With Indo-US bilateral relationship, it is the first time that the US is dealing with an ally that is not dependent on the US for its survival. All the other allies of the US in Europe and Asia were dependent on the supply chain in terms of military and political sovereign existence during the Cold War. India not being such a country, its behavior and the US reactions to Indian behavior needs to be analyzed in detail. While ‘Shining India’ is an attraction for the US, the big question that arises is whether India is ready to play a front line role in containment of China.

II. Donald Trump will continue with the policy used by Obama for pressing Pakistan for cooperation on Afghanistan and terrorism.

III. Trump’s Islamophobia is another factor which one cannot be certain about if it will determine Pak-US relationship at the administrative level or not but within Pakistan at societal level it is going to create lot of anti-Americanism.

IV. Pakistan and the US have divergence of opinion on Afghanistan. Pakistan was going to be more comfortable with trilateral, quadrilateral or six party talks in Moscow than in a setting where the US would be leading a diplomatic initiative.

V. For membership of cartels that control nuclear trade and missile delivery system namely Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG), Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangements, the US is not going to explicitly support Pakistani bids for membership in any of these groups. Furthermore both Pakistan and the US have difference of opinions on Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty negotiated at the Conference of Disarmament forum, Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and Prevention of Armed Race in Outer Space.

VI. Resurgence of Russian Federation in the South Asian region is also an important factor that will effect Pakistan-US relations.

VII. Pakistan’s strategic relationship with China will have a negative impact on Pak-US relations because the US needs some kind of front line state against China and Pakistan is not ready and willing to be one.

At the same time Pakistan’s efforts for cementing strategic partnership with China and closeness with Russia is not going to be acceptable to Trump administration. This US will
continue chanting its mantra for elimination of menace of terrorism but there will be no real cooperation on that front from the US. Pakistan is not going to entertain the US demand to limit its nuclear and missile program. Simultaneously if Pakistan continues to bid for its membership into NSG, the US is going to support India’s entry while giving false impression that it was neutral in this case.

Once Dr. Jaspal finished his talk, Dr. Cheema requested Ambassador (R) Ashraf Jehangir Qazi to present his views on Pakistan-USA bilateral relations and the way forward. He talked about challenges that Pakistan faced on external and domestic front ranging from weak economy, joblessness, youth bulge, sorry state of education, terrorism, security threats, and the foreign pressures. He mentioned that Pakistan, which has a population of 200 million people, is going to have 400 million people by the year 2050. It was not just our priorities but decisions made today that will have immense impact on the situation that policy makers are going to be confronted in the face of challenges in 2050. Pakistan has performed miserably on Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Now that the world has adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), again Pakistan’s performance has not been even close to encouraging. With reference to Afghanistan and India, even though Pakistan is strategically located but such geographic gift has been more of a challenge so far than an asset especially when seen from the viewpoint of a country that has to make achievements about its own objectives. He stressed upon the fact that the strategic location itself is not automatically going to convert to advantage unless the domestic problems of Pakistan are sorted out. Being strategically important for regional peace does not make Pakistan important unless it demonstrates qualitative and quantitative expansion of its economy.

Talking about Donald Trump, he argued that Trump lacked political competence to deal with the foreign policy challenges. His policy towards Russia has largely been a power play between intelligence and military on one hand and Trumps radical outsider approach on the other hand. Donald Trump’s policy towards Pakistan will remain uncertain, while differences between Pakistan and the US will also remain. Pakistan needs to focus on technology and knowledge based economy that it has not begun yet. He said that the Prime Minster of Pakistan
is in a perpetual survival mode, which makes it difficult to identify the fundamental priorities both at the domestic and external front, which will put Pakistan on right course. Organization and mobilization of Pakistani people is required for making structured demands on state for improving economy and foreign policy of Pakistan.

Dr. Cheema thanked the speakers for presenting a detailed overview and diverse perspectives on Pak-US bilateral relations and for highlighting the role of China and Russia in this equation. He opened the floor for brief comments and questions by participants for the worthy speakers.

Ms. Anum Khan, a PhD scholar from Quaid-i-Azam University commented that Pakistan-US Strategic Dialogue is important even if no concrete outcome could be expected at the moment. It is needed in order to know each other’s position and concerns. She mentioned growing Indo-US military cooperation and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), which is a reason for a major concern for China. She suggested that Pakistan should have shown reservation on that agreement because Nuclearization of Indian Ocean is going to have direct implications for external security of Pakistan. Development of sufficient, effective and robust capabilities is needed to counter that challenge. About CPEC, she said it is very important project but dependent on the ruling elite as to how efficiently they will utilize this opportunity to develop Pakistan. Materialization and realization of CPEC potential could make Pakistan an economic power.

Dr. Cheema asked if anyone had official information about strategic dialogue that was supposed to take place on 8 February but did not convene. Ambassador (R) Ali Sawar Naqvi said that the US department of State did postpone strategic dialogue many times before. From the working of US Department of State, one could assume that it is not on their agenda for now. The Department of State has lately been in a flux and everything has been on hold. Going by Trump’s campaign speeches, his Islamophobic stance, and friendly relations with India, Pakistan’s close friendly relations with China, and tough stance that Donald Trump pledged to take with China, security situation in Afghanistan and terrorism, all meant that he will have an unfavorable disposition towards Pakistan. However one recent positive development was
Trump’s address at the joint session of US Congress in which he followed a mellower tone, which might prompt expectation of some changes in his stance on China. Despite his maverick views, the strong US institutions will instill pragmatism in his approach gradually. If Trump goes too much out of line, there is a possibility that the CIA and Pentagon could assert their pressure and hold him. Strategic importance of Pakistan is a factor that US will have to adjust accordingly, but underlying all that Pakistan needs to have an internal strength as bulwark against a world in flux.

Mr. Abdullah Khan, Managing Director, Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICS) asked the speakers to comment on the news reported in the Express Tribune that a Pakistani General had warned the US that if ISIS was not contained in Afghanistan, Russia might be obliged to intervene militarily. Many fighters from Central Asian states had joined Daesh to fight in Iraq and Syria. Russia is worried about their return and destabilization effect it will generate in Russian neighborhood. He asked if it was possible under Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) between the US and Afghanistan that Russia could intervene militarily? How Pakistan would react to such a Russian military intervention in Afghanistan because last time when it did so, both Russia and Pakistan were on the opposite sides. Could Pakistan and Russia fight the common enemy i.e. Daesh together in the present scenario? Dr. Jaspal responded that the application of structural realism theory was required to understand the dynamics of international politics. At the time of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, India and Soviet Union were allies on one side and Pakistan and the US were allies on the other side. Today Pakistan and Russia feel equally threatened by Daesh. During a speech to Afghan parliament, Russian Ambassador while talking about Russian contacts with Taliban said that the Americans were swapping prisoners with Taliban and had started political contact through Qatar. But he explained that Russia could do the same, primarily because Russia may have connections with Taliban but it is against the concept of Caliphate of Daesh, as it is against Russian security interests in Central Asia. Dr. Jaspal said that the possibility of connection among Central Asian terrorist organizations under the banner of Daesh is real. If Russia intervened to counter the Daesh threat, Pakistan will be relatively supportive to Russian intervention in Afghanistan this
time. Talking about Pakistan-Russia relations, he said going by the economic trends, Pakistan will welcome Russian participation in CPEC. Last time Pakistan opposed Soviet intervention in Afghanistan primarily because it wanted to maintain a buffer zone. Now Pakistan will be less uncomfortable in opposing Russia. Though such an intervention will be serious concern for the US, since Russia in such a case will not be coming alone. It will instead be coming along with China. Such moves will make Pakistan, China and Russia an influential block in the emerging politics of the region.

Ambassador (R) Zaki added that the US attacked Afghanistan in 2001 under the pretext of hunting the terrorists who attacked Twin Towers on September 11. He said his understanding is that the decision to attack Afghanistan was taken on 15 June 2001 when Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) formally came into being. US invaded Afghanistan not just for Taliban, but to acquire an easy reach to the Central Asia and SCO countries as American geopolitical experts have attached great importance to the US presence in Central Asia. Other objectives included, being in close proximity of Iran, to act militarily whenever necessary, and ultimate denuclearization of Pakistan. Completely rolling back Pakistan’s nuclear program has been and will continue to be the US top priority. However, now the USA is trying to limit nuclear program of Pakistan, but grand objective that US has been pursuing is a non-nuclear Muslim world. He further stated that the US is not going to exit Afghanistan under one pretext or the other. Americans have the history of staying in countries that they invaded second time, they have not exited Germany and France despite the fact both these countries do not need US troops. If Russia were to intervene militarily in Afghanistan, it was going to have serious reaction from the US.

Ambassador (R) Qazi remarked that President Putin was relying on Trump becoming president especially after the so-called reset by Obama betrayed Putin. Trump offered and Putin welcomed the possibility of having normal relations, while the US establishment was determined to defeat Trump’s Russian policy. US policy has been quick victory over small defenceless countries, gaining and leverage and for controlling resources, while never taking on major countries that may not be stronger than the US but have sufficient capacity to inflict serious damage on the US. Once Russia and China assert themselves, the US will back down. He
stated that there is no possibility of war between these countries and the supposition of Russians coming into Afghanistan is a farfetched idea.

Mr. Muhammad Imran, student from International Islamic University asked Ambassador Zaki as India was constant factor in Pakistan-US relations, what would be the policy of current US administration towards Kashmir issue as it was highlighted again because of massive human rights violations in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) by Indian forces? Ambassador (R) Zaki replied that on the Kashmir issue, US does not seem too keen on changing the status quo. The primary US interest in South Asia is preventing confrontation between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan. The US is not interested in justice of the Kashmir cause. Since India is now the US ally, it will not work in any manner against Indian interest on Kashmir. Therefore, Pakistan should not expect any positive role by the US on Kashmir.

Ms Reema Shaukat, Research Fellow from Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), asked the speakers if the government of Pakistan and foreign office are ready to send strong message to the US in case of any incident like Salala check post happens again. Ambassador (R) Zaki said that back then there were so many provocations by the US, but Pakistan only reacted to Salala attack. It may be used as a precedent in case of any similar future provocation by the US. The real deciding factor will be the person at the top of government. That person may take wisdom in swallowing the insult or take calculated risk. Dr. Jaspal remarked that the response to Salala attack was neither from armed forces nor from foreign office. The response Pakistan gave was rather situational. Pakistan went for severing Ground Lines of Communication (GLOC) and then couldn’t come out of it. With Pakistan’s government in survival mode, expectation to have effective foreign and strategic policies was not plausible.

Mr. Khalid Chandio, Research Fellow from Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), commented that Pakistan-US relations can be categorized as senior-junior, master-client, on again-off again relationship, and would continue to be a bumpy relation no matter who holds
the White House. Huge power difference makes it difficult to maintain relations with the US on the lines that India has maintained based on its emerging economy. He asked whether with the coming of Donald Trump in power, will there be any visible changes in the US policy of regime change as a tool of foreign policy since he criticized Barack Obama for bringing regime change in the Middle East. Ambassador (R) Zaki said that the regime change policy is being favored by both political parties of the US. Democrats and Republicans have no tolerance for non-cooperative regimes. Regimes that occasionally differed with the US despite having good relations with it, had to face sharp reversal in relations by the US.

Mr. Lokhaze Ali, Senior Environment Specialist said the influence that the US enjoys in Afghanistan is because of support that Pakistan provided for American attack on Afghanistan. He asked Dr. Jaspal if Afghan soil was used by India against Pakistan, and if Pakistan blocked GLOC for NATO and US troops, would NATO and the US be able to survive and what other options they have. After Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between P5+1, how Iran will respond to such a situation? Dr. Jaspal said that the critical examination of the dependency that NATO and the US have on Pakistan for supplies reveals that it was not same as it used to be in 2011, with only 13,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan. America does have some cooperation with Central Asian states. It was Iran and the US that installed Hamid Karzai and Northern Alliance in power after dislodging Taliban from power. US and Iran have worked pragmatically. Unlike Pakistan, Iranians don’t allow one irritating issue to spillover into other areas. If we block the supply, the US could get it from the Iranian side. They could also use Shatt al-Arab. If America were to deliver supplies to its troops in Afghanistan by using air corridor, chances were very less that Pakistan would take the risk of blocking that as well.

Dr. Cheema asked Dr. Jaspal regarding uncertainties under Trump administration and Trump’s Islamophobia disposition, could having an Indian Prime Minster who also suffers from Islam phobia and Pakistan phobia, create a comfort zone for the US and Indian leadership to work against Pakistan and China at the same time? Dr. Jaspal said Islam phobia would bring both leaders closer. Though Modi went on to several foreign visits, nothing much tangible in
terms of NSG membership was achieved. Despite Indo-Pacific Strategy and conclusion of recent Logistical Support Agreement between India and the US, Modi’s bid for India to secure NSG membership failed. Dr. Jaspal stated that for the remainder of his tenure, Modi will be more focused on domestic rather than external politics. Donald trump will be more focused domestically than creating problems abroad. If Trump gets elected for second term then he will act differently but individual level of analysis is not applicable in this case. Both India and the US being democratic states, it will be the internal dynamics more than individual personality traits that will be dominating their foreign policies.

Dr. Cheema mentioned different military and strategic agreements that Modi government had signed with foreign countries, will have far reaching implications for conventional military asymmetry and strategic stability in South Asia.

Ambassador (R) Zaki commented that despite India being Pakistan’s enemy, it should be given a credit for maintaining its autonomy in foreign policy. India keeps foreign policy options flexible while not compromising on its national interest. Talking about Pakistan’s approach, he said it first took protection from the US and now China is being its caretaker. He pointed out that both approaches are wrong. With China, Pakistan should have respectable relation. He also mentioned that so far China has been very kind for not taking undue advantage of our reliance on it.

Ambassador (R) Qazi said that the elections in Bihar show that the foreign policy achievements of Modi have not translated into domestic political strength. Modi’s focus on domestic politics and winning United Provinces (UP) elections are critical for him as his power base will severely be affected by losing elections there. Elections in UP will not be fought over his external achievements but on law and order situation, Hindutva and economic development.

Talking about changing dynamics of regional politics, Dr. Japsal said that earlier India used to dictate Russian policy towards Pakistan but that has changed now. India asked Russia not to send its military personnel for joint anti terrorism exercise with Pakistan but Russians went ahead. Simultaneously India is improving its relations with Middle Eastern countries, as can be
seen from the fact that Saudi Arabia welcomed the 'butcher of Gujrat, and bestowed upon him the highest Saudi honor. It was eye opener at least for people in Pakistan who use ideological factor in the foreign and strategic policies.

Ms. Anum Khan asked why Pakistan was so fixated with NSG and did not consider applying for MTCR. She suggested that Pakistan should not always rely on the China card. She asked what were the compromises that Pakistan can make for NSG membership? Should Pakistan for now not just focus on other export regimes rather than making all out efforts for NSG membership? Ambassador (R) Naqvi said that the NSG is an overarching cartel dealing with nuclear nonproliferation. Pakistan needs its membership for peaceful use of nuclear energy. Within NSG, India has found it difficult to make its case for membership independent of Pakistan, because Pakistan is equally eligible for NSG membership. Similarly, MTCR is very specialized and Pakistan is not engaged in arms race with India and is not going to replicate whatever India is doing in missile development. After getting NSG membership, Pakistan can pursue case for MTCR membership.

Dr. Cheema asked the speakers to make their concluding remarks. Dr. Jaspal was of the view that in case of NSG, Pakistan committed big mistake by not lobbying and bidding for NSG waiver in 2010. Pakistan has made very calculated move now by filing application for NSG membership. Accepting Pakistan as a member is in the interest of cartels regulating nuclear and missile technology. MTCR is important for Pakistan but since same technology could be used for missile development, Pakistan should be careful about that. In future when Pakistan will have a focus on space program it will have to rely on MTCR supply chain for guidance and propeller system for rockets. Pakistan conducted test for Ababeel missile, it was technology demonstration, and for proper functioning of that system, Pakistan needs MTCR assistance especially the guidance and propeller system.

Ambassador (R) Zaki concluded that in today’s world, age of alliances was over. Any two given countries have some convergence and divergence of interest. The function of policy makers should be expanding the areas of convergence with each country while maintaining divergence to the minimum level possible. Such a path will require economic development and
slightly lower posture in foreign policy. Risk reduction and opportunity maximization should be guiding principle in foreign policy. Pakistan had three opportunities for maximizing its interest. CPEC being first opportunity, it is more in China’s interest than in Pakistan to reach Arabian Sea. SCO and ECO countries had shown interest for joining CPEC that will increase foreign investment opportunities for Pakistan. If Pakistan used these three opportunities efficiently, Pakistan can develop its economy greatly. If Pakistan wanted to compete with India, its target should be having growth rate higher than India, only then Pakistan is going to be in a better negotiating position with Afghanistan and India. On Afghanistan, he said Pakistan needs to realize that tribal links that Pakistan has with Afghanistan cannot be broken. Pakistan needs to demonstrate more patience with Afghanistan especially with border closing rather than reacting to provocation. Pakistan should follow a policy that would protect its long term interest. In Afghan psychology, hurts are not forgotten easily. Pakistan should adopt a lower foreign policy posture towards Afghanistan. By putting domestic affairs in order, it should maintain good relations with Afghanistan and establish the same with other major powers as well. Pakistan could also expect a good deal from the US. However an exclusive dependence on the US while ignoring other major power has only given hard deals to Pakistan from the US in the past. Pakistan needs to have a balanced approach guided by a long term vision.

Dr. Cheema concluded that South Asian politics was going through profound changes. While the US was getting closer to India, signing long term strategic agreements, Pakistan and China were making strides in the right direction. He said maintaining good working bilateral relation with the US is necessary, but that must be done without compromising Pakistan’s strategic interests. He thanked the distinguished guest speakers and participants. Since this In-House was conducted on Chatham House rules, there is no press coverage of the seminar.