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In-House Discussion Building a Structural Framework for Pakistan's Public Diplomacy Initiatives



Ambassador (R) Abdul Basit and IPRI scholars during an In-House Discussion

"Public Diplomacy (PD) covers a framework of activities by which a government seeks to influence public attitudes in a manner that they become supportive of foreign policy and national interests," said Umar Farooq Khan, Assistant Research Officer, in his presentation on "Building a Structural Framework for Pakistan's Public Diplomacy Initiatives" on 20 March 2018.



With the spread of democracy, protest movements around the world, media expansion, and proliferation of international NGOs, the nature of power has changed, constraining the freedom of action of national governments. Therefore, in order to achieve our foreign policy objectives, it is imperative for Pakistan to invest in communicating strategic, well-thought out messages to the foreign publics in addition to their governments, he stressed.

Pakistan's Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is a relatively new discipline in Pakistan. It has not received due importance within the government.

In May 2010, after the devolution of the Ministry of Culture, the Fund for Projection of Pakistani Culture Abroad was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).

The country's PD objectives, as outlined by the Public Diplomacy Division, include: promoting a vision of peace and harmony with all countries, building relationships with leaders and opinion makers, using credible messaging in support of national policy on key issues, utilizing modern technology and communication networks to reach "more" and "fast" and promoting Pakistan as a tolerant society, stable economy and prospering democracy.

Dimensions of Public Diplomacy

There are three dimensions of public diplomacy: reactive, proactive, and relationship building.

Reactive news takes place in hours and days, proactive news management takes place over weeks and months, and long-term relationship building takes place over years before it generates a return.

A framework for Pakistan's public diplomacy activities is outlined in Table 1. On one axis are the spheres on which public diplomacy is carried out: political/military, economic and

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External Engagements



Ambassador (R) Abdul Basit and the Panelists at ISSRA Roundtable

President IPRI, Ambassador (R) Abdul Basit's various engagements during the month of March included:

- Presentation at a Roundtable on "Geopolitical Fault Lines in the Muslim World: Impact on the Global Power Politics" organized by the Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA), National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad, on 1 March 2018.
- Presentation at a Conference on "Kashmir: Roots of

Conflict, Paths to Peace" organized by the Riphah International University, Islamabad, on 8 March 2018.

- Speech at a One-Day Seminar on "United States' South Asia Policy: Challenges for Pakistan" organized by the



R-L: Dr Shireen Mazari, Ambassador (R) Abdul Basit, Maj. Gen. (R) Hafiz Masroor Ahmed during SDPI seminar on 'US' South Asia Policy'

Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, on 19 March 2018.

- Speech at a Seminar on "Ballistic Missile Capability and Deterrence Equilibrium in South Asia" organized by the Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), Islamabad, on 20 March 2018.

Building a Structural Framework for Pakistan's Public Diplomacy Initiatives

Purpose	Reactive (hours and days)	Proactive (weeks and months)	Relationship building (years)
Political/Military			
Economic			
Social/Cultural			

Continued from p. 1

societal/cultural. In each of these spheres, the three dimensions of public diplomacy activities can be characterized.

The Case of Norway

Norway has used PD very effectively and has gained a voice and presence on the international stage which is unique for a country given its modest position and assets.

Norway has been able to achieve its PD goals by pursuing aggressive public diplomacy, and ruthless prioritization of its target audience. This includes concentration of public diplomacy resources viz-à-viz six countries having immense bilateral importance to Norway, i.e. the US, UK, France, Germany, Japan and Russia. It has also successfully positioned itself as a contributor to

world peace.

Recommendations

- It is evident that at present, understanding of the scope and potential of effective public diplomacy in Pakistan is somewhat nebulous. It also does not feature in any academic curriculum at the university level.
- PD can no longer be seen as an add-on to conventional diplomacy – it has to be seen as a central activity which is carried out across various dimensions and with many partners. The Government should allocate sufficient resources towards this domain.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and other relevant government departments should collaborate to develop a clear strategy for Pakistan in the world. This should include focused short-term

and long-term goals. This can, then, act as a framework for the other organisations in their planning. The PD strategy should include: list of priority countries; clear strategic messages; target audiences; framework for explaining the roles of different organizations; strategy for working with other actors beyond government.

- Public Diplomacy Committees should be established in Pakistani missions of countries with the greatest bilateral importance. They should be chaired by the Ambassador.
- The Government should ensure that the PD, carried out in a given country is suitable for that country, rather than simply being a repetition of its strategy in other states.
- There must be a central body in Islamabad which is charged with ensuring strategic co-ordination. News management, too, needs to focus much more effectively on foreign correspondents based in Islamabad to ensure that they get the context of news events from the Government itself, rather than local news publications which resort to sensationalism.

Syrian Crisis: Major Players and Likely End State

Iqra Mobeen Akram, Assistant Research Officer, discussed "Syrian Crisis: Major Players and Likely End State" in an in-house discussion held on 6 March 2018. She underscored the multifaceted nature of the crisis due to the involvement of a myriad actors at the domestic, regional and international levels. Ms Akram concluded that cooperation at all three levels is essential to accelerate the peace process in Syria.

The Genesis of the Syrian Crisis

While economic grievances and lack of freedoms drove resentment for the Syrian government, the crackdown on protesters fueled public anger.

In 2011, successful uprisings - that became known as the Arab Spring - gave hope to pro-democracy activists, which led to peaceful protests in Syria as well, after 15 teenage boys were arrested and tortured for scribbling graffiti in support of the Arab Spring. One of the boys was killed after having been brutally tortured.

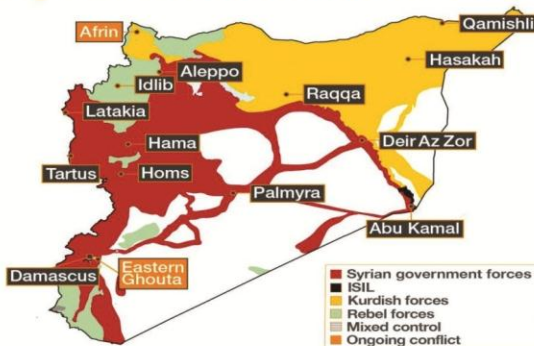
In response, the Syrian government, led by President Bashar al-Assad, killed hundreds of demonstrators and detained many more.

In July 2011, military renegades announced the formation of the Free Syrian Army, a rebel group aiming to topple the government, and Syria began to slide into civil war.

The Role of Domestic and Regional Players

Domestically, groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Jabhat Fateh al-Sham or al-Qaeda-Eastern

Syria: Who controls what?



Ghouta, and Jaish al-Islam are significant players among other internal actors.

Regionally, politics of sectarianism between Saudi Arabia and Iran have contributed in complicating the Syrian conflict.

The Hezbollah and the governments of Iran and Iraq have supported al-Assad, while anti-Assad rebels have the support of countries like Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Turkish troops have launched several operations against the ISIL, near its borders, as well as against Kurdish groups armed by the US, since 2016.

The Role of International Players

The active involvement of the United States on the one hand, and Russia and Iran on the other, has turned the seemingly civil war in Syria into a proxy war between the international actors. There are primarily two broad camps: Al-Assad is backed by Russia; and the rebels are backed by US allies. The air campaign launched by Russia in September 2015 is dubbed as the watershed moment which boosted al-Assad's standing in Syrian polity.

For the US, ensuring sustainable regional stability in the Middle East is the primary objective of their involvement as outlined in its foreign policy. The second is to destroy the safe havens of terrorists in Syria. Nevertheless, some of the analysts view the struggle between the US and Russia in Syria as an extension of the Cold War in the Middle East. This implies that Syria is an arena for the US and Russia to contest with each other over influence.

The Syria-Russia alliance is viewed as a counterweight, by analysts, to US presence in the region. Russia through Syria exercises its influence in the politics of the Middle East by opposing policies of the US. Russian assistance in terms of arms is important for Syria, as al-Assad regime relies heavily on its advance weapon systems. The main factor that contributed to Iran and Russian closer military and intelligence ties with Syria was opposition from the Sunni bloc. Additionally, having a naval base in the Mediterranean Sea is seen as important given the new Russian Maritime Doctrine (2017).

Hopes for Peace

The backing of the al-Assad government for Kurds in Afrin is likely to reach a power sharing formula which may contain the Syrian Crisis. Likewise, the direct involvement of Turkey may facilitate the process of restricting Syrian Kurds within Syria.

Three parallel rounds of peace talks at Geneva, Astana and Sochi are going on to achieve armistice and political transition in Syria, however, no substantial progress has been made so far.

Take-Away for Pakistan

This crisis has displaced a large population of the country. According to a 2017 UNICEF report, there are 5.4 million Syrian refugees registered in the region. While Pakistan has maintained a neutral stance over the geopolitical dynamics of the Syrian crisis, it does not imply that the interventions by the extra-regional and regional powers have not been condemned.

Diplomatically, Pakistan can play a role in not only underlining the humanitarian crisis but it can help to bring the attention of the international community towards ending the violence and misery of the Syrians.



Asghar Ali Shad,
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(Urdu Articles)



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Muhammad Munir
Research Fellow



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Muhammad Nawaz Khan
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Amna Ejaz Rafi
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Gulshan Bibi
Assistant Research Officer



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Khurram Abbas
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Maryam Nazir
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Iqra Mobeen Akram
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Sajjad Haider
Assistant Research Officer



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Sajid Aziz
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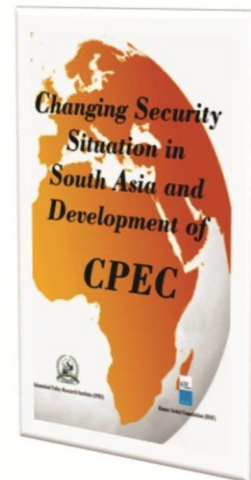
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Changing Security Situation in South Asia and Development of CPEC

Security has now become *sine qua non* for development. This is especially true for South Asia where significant forces are at play with complex dependent and independent variables. China's growing economic footprint across the globe, including in South Asia, adds to the existing complexities, creating both challenges and opportunities. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its flagship project - the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) - have unnerved some nations and come under scrutiny. This book endeavors to understand these new unfolding dynamics in South Asia.

Dr Farhan Hanif Siddiqi discusses how amid seemingly intensifying geopolitics, CPEC presents a radical break and opportunity to steer South Asia in the direction of cooperation through economic interlinkages. *Professor Dr Syed Rifaat Hussain* argues that because of its nuclearization, demographic weight, diffusion of modern technology, and high economic growth, South Asia has become more assertive and autonomous, and is no longer a subordinate system. He reviews the significance of Pakistan in this regard through the CPEC lens. With Gwadar, on its way to becoming a critical nodal hub, *Adm (R) Asaf Humayun, HI(M)* discusses the Indian Ocean Region and the factors that can strengthen or weaken its relative stability in light of Pakistan's vision of maritime security.

An analysis of CPEC cannot be complete without consideration of its regional geopolitical dynamics and Pakistan's domestic challenges, particularly human development, insecurity and violence that can affect its implementation. *Professor Dr Muhammad Masoom Yasinzai* stresses the need for strengthening the country's human resources. *Professor Dr Moonis Ahmar* examines how the ambitious Corridor project can help deal with extremism in Pakistan through youth engagement and capacity development. *Dr Khurram Iqbal* provides an overview of Indian efforts to counter CPEC and the policy options available to Beijing and Islamabad to engage New Delhi on the project; while *Dr Muhammad Alam Khan* focuses on Pakistan-Iran security and trade relations.



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