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## Two-Day National Conference Irritants in Pakistan-US Relations: Way Forward



Amb. (R) Inam-ul-Haq and Brig. (R) Sohail Tirmizi SI(M)

A two-day national conference on “Irritants in Pakistan-US Relations: Way Forward” was organized by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) on 9-10 October 2018 in Islamabad. Ambassador (R) Inam-ul-Haq, Former Foreign Minister and Chairman, Board of Governors (BOGs), IPRI was the Chief Guest.

The Conference aimed at identifying and discussing the major irritants that impede the normalization of Pakistan-US ties and suggest a future course of action for a sustainable relationship.

**Brig (R) Sohail Tirmizi SI(M)**, Acting President, IPRI, in his welcome address said that the present Pakistan-US relationship suffers from mutual mistrust and suspicion due to divergent approaches and interests in the region. To further put pressure, the US administration has resorted to the use of diplomatically harsh language and exercised its influence in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). He pointed out that the US’ relations with India and Afghanistan have been instrumental in formulating its policy towards Pakistan.

**Ambassador (R) Inam-ul-Haq**, Former Foreign Minister and Chairman, BOG, IPRI, on the issue of recent Pakistan-US meetings

said that ‘we should note that the discussions have so far primarily been about the endgame in Afghanistan. Bilateral relations were not discussed at length. Bilateral ties will improve only if Pakistan is seen to be helping the United States (US) achieve its objectives in Afghanistan.’

He was of the opinion that the strategic dialogue between Pakistan and the US, initiated during the Obama Administration, is unlikely to be resumed in its original form. ‘We must find alternative ways to move forward on the issues that are of interest to us, such as energy, security, strategic stability, education, science and technology,’ he stressed. A

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US has no intention of allowing a challenge to its primacy in the world by any country, including China. It will use all the means at its disposal to remain the undisputed and sole super power of the world. Full spectrum domination is its primary objective.”

reset or rebuild of the bilateral relationship is essential, but it will be a slow process of rebuilding trust between the two countries by actions on the ground.

### **Pakistan-US Relations: An Overview**

#### **Session Chair: Ambassador (R) Inam-ul-Haq**

Ambassador (R) Shamshad Ahmed, Former Foreign Secretary giving an overview of Pakistan-US relations and their strengths and weaknesses said that Pakistan and the US have remained allies despite having differences. The US’ interest in the region largely stemmed from defeating Communism during the Cold War. In later years, terrorism was seen as a potent security challenge. Due to Afghanistan, Pakistan holds significance for the US. ‘Pakistan has not disappeared from the US’ radar screen rather looms large for US stakes in Asia,’ he opined.

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## Irritants in Pakistan-US Relations: Way Forward

*Continued from p. 2*

However, there is a gradual downward trend in bilateral relations. Pakistan, once looked upon as a 'staunch ally' of the US, is now being viewed as a 'troublesome friend'. The post-9/11 political construct is reflective of this trend.

He held that no relationship is without problems, and Pakistan-US relationship is no exception. 'The time has come for focusing on a state-to-state relationship based on sovereign equality, rather than one which is transactional or based on expediency of personal interests and agendas,' he recommended.

Ambassador (R) Riaz Hussain Khokhar, Former Foreign Secretary, spoke on "Understanding the Making of US Foreign Policy and Pakistan." He said that the think tanks play a major role in building perceptions and biases in the US policymaking elite. Besides, there are many lobbies working in the country, which impact the foreign policy formulation.

On the other hand, Pakistan lacks voice and representation in the US policy quarters. The vacuum left is being filled by India and other similar voices. Pakistan's portrayal as a terrorist country is being propagated.

He recommended that Pakistan should adopt an



L-R: Amb. (R) Riaz Hussain Khokhar, Amb. (R) Inam-ul-Haq and Amb. (R) Shamshad Ahmed

assertive message that it is sincere and committed to having a sustainable relationship with the US; activate Pakistani diaspora in the US and strengthen its embassy in Washington.

### Identifying Factors of Trust Deficit in Pakistan-US Relations

**Session Chair: Lt. General (R) Asif Yasin Malik, HI (M), Former Defense Secretary, Government of Pakistan (GoP)**

Dr Salma Malik, Assistant Professor, Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad discussed "Relationship between Regional Actors (especially India-Pakistan) and Role of US." Over seven decades, there have been many ups and downs in Pakistan-India bilateral ties with the US playing a proactive role of moderator during crises much to India's displeasure. 'However', she said that 'the last two decades have seen this balance tilting in India's favor with the landmark strategic partnership, US support to a nuclear normalization attempt by India and shift in the "Asia Pivot"



L-R: Prof. Dr Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, Lt. Gen. (R) Asif Yasin Malik and Dr Salma Malik

which has taken the India-Pakistan rivalry into a very different direction.'

India has made diplomatic inroads in Western circles and its narrative on regional security, Afghanistan, and Pakistan has widespread acceptance. To allay such negativity, Pakistan needs to use multi-track diplomacy to win over the international audience.

Dr Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Peshawar, Peshawar spoke on "Promoting Pakistan-US Cooperation in Countering Extremism."

He said that since Pakistan has been at the forefront in the war against terrorism, using it as scapegoat in the Afghanistan imbroglio is not the solution. More economic and financial assistance to the country will contribute to the emergence of a more tolerant society. Putting Pakistan in the FATF grey list will be counterproductive, he stated.

The US policy towards Pakistan should not revolve around Afghanistan and the Indian perspective, rather, Washington should look at Pakistan in the larger regional context, he concluded.

### Approaches to Overcome Trust Deficit

**Session Chair: Ambassador (R) Shahid M.G. Kiani**

Dr Tughral Yamin, Associate Dean, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, National University of Sciences and



L-R: Dr Tughral Yamin, Amb. (R) Shahid M. G. Kiani and Prof. Dr Rasul Baksh Rais

Technology (NUST), Islamabad delivered a presentation on "Afghanistan Crisis and Pakistan-US Disagreements on Operational Aspects of Countering Terrorism".

He said that the relations between the US and Pakistan have deteriorated and been 'downgraded' since US President Donald Trump's administration began taking a hard line on Pakistan. He opined that this is because the US wants a face-saving exit from Afghanistan, and Pakistan wants a stable and friendly government in Kabul, and the Afghan government wants to survive at all costs. He said that while Pakistan's new government is trying to reset relations with the US, they also need to build trust with the Afghan government by offering credible cooperation in security matters; revive economic activity; increase people-to-people contacts, while at the same time secure the Western borders.

In his presentation on "Pakistan-US Relations under Trump Administration: Continuity or Change", Dr Rasul Baksh Rais, Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Lahore pointed out that on the Pakistan side, there is both a feeling of stalemate and desperation in its relations with the US due to the withdrawal of security assistance, President Trump's tweet on Pakistan, denial of funds, FATF grey list and the US pressure on International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, according to him, since the US administration is directly engaging the Taliban and has appointed a Special Envoy to help Taliban-Kabul negotiations, there may be positive changes.

#### **Pakistan-US Relations: Way Forward**

**Session Chair: Lt. General (R) Naeem Khalid Lodhi, Former Minister for Defense, GoP**

Author and journalist Ms Nasim Zehra spoke on "Accommodating Mutual Concerns: Prospects (US Perspective)". She held that the 'bolstering and belligerence coming out of Washington is its new language and the new world disease', and is not likely to change any time soon.

'Downturn in relations with Pakistan is largely due to the US' self-




L-R: Dr Farhan Hanif Siddiqi, Lt. Gen. (R) Naeem Khalid Lodhi and Ms. Nasim Zehra

serving narrative in Washington to justify its failures in Afghanistan and blaming them on Pakistan. The paradox of Afghanistan continues to haunt Pakistan-US relationship,' she opined.

According to him, the fundamental recalibration in the Pakistan-US relationship really lies in Pakistan's hands and not with the US. Pakistan needs to reduce its expectations from Washington in a substantive and consistent way; and work to improve its relations with its neighborhood, she offered.


Dr Farhan Hanif Siddiqi, Associate Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

## Upcoming Event



Islamabad Policy  
Research Institute

**IPRI-SAM  
ONE-DAY SEMINAR**



STRATEJII  
ARASDIRMALAR  
MERKAZI  
Center for Strategic  
Studies

### Current Geopolitical Trends in the Region and Prospects for Deeper Relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan

**Date: November 22, 2018**  
**Venue: IPRI Hall, Islamabad**

speaking on "Accommodating Mutual Concerns: Prospects (Pakistan Perspective)" stressed the need for improvements in Pakistan's foreign policy, and acknowledged that the Foreign Office has successfully navigated its relationship with the US and China simultaneously which is an important success of the country's foreign policy. The government needs to continue this navigation instead of choosing one side or the other. Pakistan-US have only focused on interests rather than on an ideational framework like with China. To consolidate their bilateral relationship, both need to move beyond a historically transactional relationship and adopt an ideational paradigm.

#### **Major Recommendations**

Following recommendations were brought forth during the two-day conference:

- To remove the mutual mistrust between Pakistan and the US, it is important to holistically debate key irritants that mar bilateral ties, understand each other's security concerns, acknowledge contributions made in achieving peace in the region and work on commonalities, without compromising on core interests.
- The key challenge for both Pakistan and the US is to build a relationship that transcends the security-centric approach and focus on areas of economics, trade, development and culture.
- It is important for Pakistan to look inwards because only economic autonomy can give the country an independent foreign policy and a sustainable future.
- Pakistan needs friendly and close relations with the US and China. Pakistan's relations with each cannot be at the expense of one over the other.
- Stability and order in Afghanistan is a primary interest of both Pakistan and the US. However, relations between the three countries should also develop independent of each other.

ARTICLES BY IPRI SCHOLARS/  
CALL FOR PAPERS/UPCOMING EVENT

**Asghar Ali Shad,  
Research Fellow  
(Urdu Articles)**

“Sushma Swaraj-Kon?”  
*Roznama Pakistan*  
“Thos Pak Moaqaf aur Aqwam e  
Mutahidda”  
*Roznama Pakistan*  
“Keemiyai Hathyaar, Jangi Juraim aur...”  
*Nawa-i-Waqt*  
“Bharti Chunao ka Semi Final”  
*Nawa-i-Waqt*  
“Yom e Siyah, Bharti Darindgi aur...”  
*Roznama Pakistan*



**Khalid Chandio  
Research Fellow**

“CPEC and Saudi Arabia”  
*Daily Times*



**Muhammad Nawaz Khan  
Research Officer**

“Afghanistan, No Peace  
Constituency”  
*Pakistan Observer*



**Khurram Abbas  
Assistant Research Officer**

“A New Trajectory of Pak-Saudi  
Relations?”  
*Daily Times*



**Adeel Mukhtar  
Assistant Research Officer**  
“Apprising IPCC Climate Warnings”  
*Daily Times*



**Sajjad Haider  
Assistant Research Officer**  
“New Delhi’s U-Turn”  
*The Nation*



**Usama Nizamani  
Consultant**  
“Converting Ebbs into Continuous  
Flows”  
*The Nation*  
“From Free Speech to Hate Speech”  
*The Nation*



## Call for Papers IPRI Journal 2019-2020

**IPRI  
JOURNAL**  
ISSN:1684-9787  
eISSN: 1684-9809

HEC Recognised X-category Journal  
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International Bibliography of Social Sciences;  
Worldwide Political Science Abstracts; Asianet-Pakistan; &  
International Political Science Abstracts.

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as reported by academics, researchers,  
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- International Affairs
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- Diplomacy
- Conflict
- Terrorism

### Submission Procedure

Articles submitted for publication are subject to three double blind peer-reviews  
(one national and two international). Authors of published articles are paid a  
generous honorarium. The *IPRI Journal* has zero-tolerance for plagiarism.  
Potential authors can access submission guidelines at:  
[http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Guidelines-Contributors-  
IPRI-Journal-1-August-2018.pdf](http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Guidelines-Contributors-IPRI-Journal-1-August-2018.pdf).

- Word Length of Articles: 5000-8000 words
- Word Length of Book Reviews: 1000 words
- Referencing Style: The Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition (Full Note)

### Important Dates

- For the Summer issue: End of March
- For the Winter issue: End of September

**Submission Email:**  
Editor IPRI Journal  
[ipri.editor@gmail.com](mailto:ipri.editor@gmail.com)

## Upcoming Event International Conference Conflict and Cooperation in South Asia: Role of Major Powers

Date: December 11-12, 2018

Venue: Marriott Hotel, Islamabad



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