

**Visit to IPRI by a Delegation of Scholars lead by Dr. Joshua T. White, (Associate Professor of the Practice of South Asia Studies) from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), USA**



A delegation of students from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), USA, visited IPRI on January 16, 2019. Issues of mutual interest including Afghan peace process, Pak-US bilateral relations, Pakistan's energy security amongst others were discussed.



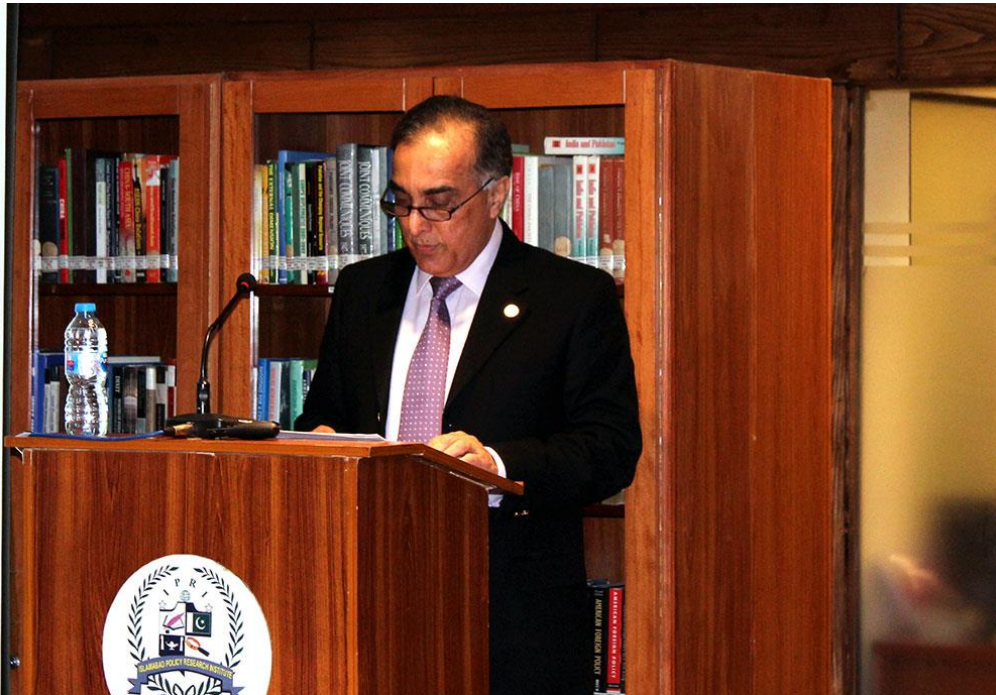
The following transpired:-

1. Post-Obama Administration, the US views Asia holistically as an integrated region, rather than as a divided region. Therefore, the US has configured the Indo-Pacific into a single broader region. The Indo-Pacific region includes areas from East of Asia to the West of India. However, according to US delegates, the region should be from East of Asia to the Horn of Africa.

2. There is revision to great power rivalry between China and US as was witnessed during Cold War between former Soviet Union and the US.
3. A renewed economic statecraft by China in the form of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) took the US by surprise. As a result, there is a heated debate in Washington DC regarding how China can take advantage of the BRI by spread its influence within the Eurasian heartland, and how the US can express its reservations over critical components of China's BRI strategy.
4. Trend about South Asia has changed due to dramatic reduction of terror threat emerging from South Asia to the US. For the most part, the US views Pakistan to have shouldered its responsibilities in the Global War on Terror. There is a change and less emphasis on counter terrorism in the United States. The threat perception has decreased which as a result has changed the dynamics of Pak-US Relations.
5. There is an existing profound uncertainty about Afghanistan with respect to President Trump's erratic decisions as well as inherent problems within Afghanistan. In the short term, bilateral relations between Pakistan and US will mainly revolve around the Afghan question. However, in the medium and long term, more productive and wider areas of cooperation will direct the bilateral relation between Pakistan and the US. Currently, Pakistan can help the US in facilitating the Afghan peace process, particularly during negotiations with the Afghan Taliban.
6. Pakistan indeed does not exercise perceived control over the Taliban however it has some degree of leverage over Taliban. One consequence of this engagement was apparent in US decision to directly negotiate with Taliban as Pakistan had traditionally maintained.
7. Pakistan's perception that the US wants to strengthen India to contain China is misplaced. The premise within the US is a lot subtler and nuanced. India will not do US's bidding. The US appreciates India as a democratic and secular state. It believes that a strong and capable India will automatically balance power in South Asia. Alluding to an existing general perception in Washington concerning India that it can be raised as a balance vis-a-vis China. Despite differences between Delhi and Washington on India's domestic and international objectives, India is largely viewed as a potential balancer; therefore, India needs to be made stronger.
8. President Trump's domestic agenda is dead so he has moved to areas where he has expansive authority, i.e the foreign policy domain. This explains the hasty decisions to withdraw troops from Syria and Afghanistan.



Brig. (Retd) Mehboob Qadir, Acting President IPRI said that Pakistan does not condition its relations with any country through the lens of any third country. It treats its engagements in a sovereign manner.



With reference to Afghan peace process and its chances of success, the following were enunciated by President IPRI as thumb rules of approach and conduct:-

- a) Road to Kabul passes through Khyber, therefore, accord Pakistan its due weight.
- b) Throne in Kabul is a Pashtoon right, in that, of blue blood Pashtoon.
- c) No Proxy can rule Afghanistan
- d) Peace in Afghanistan is never absolute, it is relative.
- e) Afghans have their own conflict resolution mechanism, which is free of time constraints.
- f) Any amount of financial aid is not enough for Afghanistan



Group Photo of a delegation of Scholars from Johns Hopkins University, USA, with IPRI Scholars.