

**Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh
In Collaboration with DHA Suffa University**

**Book Launch of Professor Dr Huma Baqai's Book:
"Collected Works on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy"**

**12 September 2023 (1130 – 1330 Hours), Auditorium, DHA Suffa
University**

Chair's Opening Remarks

**Ambassador Qazi M. Khalilullah (R), Executive Director Center for
International Strategic Studies Sindh**

Honorable Chief Guest Lt Gen Khalid Ahmed Kidwai (R), Advisor Development National
Command Authority,

Vice Chancellor DHA Suffa University Engineer Professor Dr Muhammad Afzal Haque,

Professor Dr Huma Baqai, Author of the book and Rector Millennium Institute of
Technology and Entrepreneurship,

Distinguished Discussants,

Honorable Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalam o Alaikum,

It is a matter of great honor and pleasure for me to Chair the Book Launch Ceremony
of Professor Dr Huma Baqai's book *Collected Works on Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy*.

At the outset, on behalf of Faculty of the Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh as well as on my own behalf, I am delighted to convey our heartiest felicitations to Dr Huma Baqai on her book launch.

Dr Huma Baqai is a well known scholar and writer and a highly successful professional. She is respected nationally and internationally for her accomplishments.

Collected Works on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is a vast treasure trove of information and valuable source of knowledge about geopolitical seismic events that took place from 2018 to 2022, mostly in our region. She has been forthcoming in expressing her candid views and presenting incisive analysis of the developments in her book.

While reading Dr Baqai's book, one gets an unmistakable sense of being walked-through the geopolitical labyrinth. It gives an admirably succinct account and analyses of the regional and international developments which not only had implications for Pakistan's national security but also posed challenges and presented opportunities.

Collected Works on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy comprises 46 carefully selected pieces of Dr Huma Baqai's Op-eds published in print media from 2018 to 2022. The title of the book bears testimony to her deep understanding of foreign and security policies and how they influence each other's formulation.

As elaborated by Dr Huma Baqai in her book, the period from 2018 to 2022 was, inter alia, marked by chaotic withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, Pakistan's resolute response to Indian attack on Balakot, intensification of global power contestation, enlisting of India to contain China, abortive US attempts to browbeat Iran, consolidation of the US-India Strategic Partnership, enhancing of Pakistan-Russia relations, devastation caused by the Pandemic, emergence of Saudi Arabia as a peacemaker in the Middle East with China's support, and opportunities for regional connectivity with Central Asian States through Afghanistan.

This period also saw assignment of the role of "Net Security Provider" to India under the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, designed to contain China. However, humiliation faced by India during the Balakot incident in February 2019 and Galvan Valley incident in June 2020 proved that India was incapable of performing this role.

Dr Baqai's book includes pieces on Pakistan-Russia relations as well as Moscow Format of Consultations on Afghanistan. Having served as Ambassador of Pakistan to Russia from 2016 to 2019, these pieces naturally attracted my attention. I can therefore vouch for every word that Dr Huma Baqai has written about the upward trajectory of Pakistan-Russia relations.

Over the last two decades, the Governments of Pakistan and Russia have worked closely at all levels to forge a relationship that is respectful, trustworthy and mutually beneficial. The enabling environment that both sides have succeeded in creating has opened up new vistas for bilateral cooperation in many fields of mutual interest.

Pakistan-Russia relations have successfully enhanced in various fields including exchange of high-level visits, military to military contacts and trade with priority accorded to import of oil and wheat. Pakistan and Russia also come together as partners in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Interestingly, Afghanistan, which divided Islamabad and Moscow during the Soviet invasion was helpful in bringing the two countries closer due to shared concerns and approaches to the peace process, and orderly exit of foreign forces from Afghanistan.

Dr Huma Baqai has rightly mentioned in her book that Russia valued Pakistan's ability to contribute to Afghan peace process and therefore decided to cooperate closely with Islamabad by establishing the Moscow Format of Consultations in December 2016. China was the third founding member of this Format, which was later expanded to include Afghanistan, Iran, India and five Central Asian States.

Russia was also instrumental in bringing Pakistan into the Troika on Afghanistan comprising three big powers - Russia, China and the US. This Format thus became Troika Plus. It was a unique honour for Pakistan as many other countries including our eastern neighbour made unsuccessful attempts to become a part of this exclusive quadrilateral grouping.

The Troika Plus format was helpful in pushing the Afghan peace process forward, extending support for a negotiated settlement and stressing that the post-withdrawal government in Afghanistan should be inclusive, respect women's rights and should not allow Afghan territory to be used for terrorism against any country. Unfortunately, these concerns remain valid to date.

Improvement in Pakistan-Russia relations paid dividends in many other areas of concern to Pakistan. Let me briefly recall some of them:

- i. Until 2017, Russia-India joint statement issued after their annual summit included two paragraphs against Pakistan in the context of terrorism. Russia refused to accept them from 2018 onwards.
- ii. In February 2019, immediately after Pakistan Air Force shot down two Indian Air Force aircraft and Wing Commander Abhinandan was captured, Russia offered to host talks between Pakistan and India. Pakistan accepted the offer. India declined.
- iii. Russia did not endorse annexation of illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir by India on 5 August 2019 and its incorporation as Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Subsequently, despite Indian request, Russia did not block two UN Security Council meetings held on this issue in August 2019 and January 2020.

Despite the Ukraine war, Pakistan-Russia relations have continued to develop at their own pace. Pakistan is also maintaining good relations with Ukraine. Pakistan has maintained its neutrality and advocacy of resolution of all conflicts peacefully through dialogue.

What is happening closer to home in the context of global power contestation is of greater concern to Pakistan because of its security implications for us. Unconditional Western support to India in pursuance of their mission to contain China, India's relentless pursuit of advanced military hardware from its strategic partners, exceptionalism in South Asia, groupings like QUAD and Indo-Pacific Strategy have adversely affected South Asian strategic stability. However, Pakistan has, time and again, demonstrated its will as well as the capability to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity and restore strategic stability in South Asia. All these issues have been very ably covered by Dr Huma Baqai in her book.

Thank You.