



## CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

### Consensus on Strategic Diplomacy, Robust Military Preparedness, and an Empowered Media Landscape to counter BJP's Electoral Tactics

#### *Press Release*

The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, successfully concluded a seminar on '**Indian Electoral Politics: Unpacking India's Pre-Poll Dynamics & Implications for the Region.**' Distinguished speakers included Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Pakistan's Former High Commissioner to India; Air Marshal Waseem ud Din, HI(M), SBt (Retd), Former Director, Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad; and Dr Muhammad Mujeeb Afzal, Assistant Professor at Quaid-i-Azam University. Air Marshal Ashfaq Arain (Retd), Advisor to CAS on CASS Affairs, delivered the *Concluding Remarks*; while Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan, Advisor on Aviation to Caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan & President CASS, delivered the *Vote of Thanks*.



The speakers examined India's political climate, Modi's re-election bid and its impact on regional stability. The discussions emphasised the importance of a multifaceted approach for Pakistan, highlighting the need for strategic diplomacy, robust military preparedness, and an empowered media landscape. Panellists converged on the view that given India's potential for leveraging security issues for domestic electoral gains, Pakistan must remain vigilant and proactive to safeguard its national interests. It was pointed out that while a military provocation by India might bolster the BJP's re-election bid, it would spell disaster for ordinary Indians as Pakistan would respond with impunity.

**Air Marshal Farooq Habib (Retd)**, Senior Director at CASS and the seminar's moderator, set the stage for the proceedings and highlighted the challenges Pakistan historically faced due to its proximity to India, accentuated by her hegemonic aspirations. He cited past incidents, including the Mumbai attack and the Pulwama incident, as examples where such strategies provoked anti-Pakistan sentiments benefiting incumbent Indian governments. Furthermore, he commented on recent belligerent remarks from Indian leaders and warned of potential escalatory measures in diplomatic and military spheres. He also pointed to the role of the Indian media in stoking these tensions, suggesting that it fit the BJP's electoral narrative.



Speaking on '*Indian Electoral Politics: Implications for Diplomacy and Options for Pakistan*', **Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi** discussed Prime Minister Modi's anticipated approach towards the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, while agreeing that he would certainly leverage the security narrative against Pakistan. Ambassador Qazi noted past instances where Pakistan was blamed for attacks in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJ&K) region, predicting that such tactics were likely to be amplified in the run-up to the elections. He further predicted attempts by India to exploit internal issues in regions like Gilgit-Baltistan. Reflecting on global reactions, he highlighted the lack of support from the Western

political and security community for Pakistan, particularly post-Pulwama, Balakot, and the annexation of IIOJ&K, attributing it to India's burgeoning reputation as an ascending global power. Delineating Pakistan's strategic options, Ambassador Qazi argued that proactive diplomacy alone would not be sufficient to counter Indian escalations. He contended that international apathy to India's alleged exploitation of the security narrative for electoral mileage would persist unless Pakistan focused on internal governance reforms.

**Air Marshal Waseem ud Din (Retd)** discussed the complex dynamics of the India-Pakistan relationship, emphasising the potential risks and outcomes of a false flag operation by India. Drawing lessons from the past and considering India's strategic outlook, he warned that it may undertake a false flag operation such as a terrorist attack on a military installation to a violent act targeting civilians. In the wake of such an incident, he anticipated an Indian media onslaught and a coercive diplomatic campaign. He firmly stated that non-retaliation was not an option for Pakistan. Highlighting the role of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), he expressed confidence in its capabilities and readiness to counter any aggressive move. He further underscored the importance of a combined tri-service approach for an effective response. At the



national level, he called for a proactive strategy reiterating political unity, economic revival, and national cohesion.



**Dr Muhammad Mujeeb Afzal** shed light on the proliferation of Hindu nationalist themes via television, Bollywood, and diverse media outlets. Furthermore, the recurring theme of anti-Pakistan sentiment had become a prominent tool for mobilisation in India, according to Dr Afzal. He presented insights into the strategic use of war hysteria against Pakistan around major electoral periods. Dr Afzal proposed that Pakistan adopt a proactive stance, while asserting its non-negotiable position as a sovereign nation, not merely an ‘electoral pawn.’ He emphasised the imperative role of the Pakistani media in unveiling the

electoral stratagems of India to the global community.

In his *Concluding Remarks*, **Air Marshal Ashfaq Arain (Retd)** was of the view that India’s economic strength and international support contrasted sharply with Pakistan’s current economic and political vulnerabilities. This disparity benefitted the BJP’s agenda, leading to state-managed incidents, punitive actions, and misinformation campaigns. He concluded that the best strategy for Pakistan was ‘to avert, respond, and put our house in order.’



Delivering the *Vote of Thanks*, **Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan (Retd)** expressed satisfaction that CASS, through such seminars, continued to foster informed discussions on pressing issues, equipping stakeholders with the knowledge and strategies needed for a peaceful and prosperous future for Pakistan and its neighbours.

The seminar was attended by a diverse group of individuals, including academics, retired Armed Forces officers, policymakers, researchers, and media professionals; and concluded with an interactive Q&A session.

