

"Bismillah Irrakhman Nirraheem"

JIHADISM AFTER THE CALIPHATE

Respected Panel Members, Excellences', Ladies & Gentlemen!

Good Evening

- It is my proud privilege today to be addressing this august gathering, on a subject of critical importance to all of us. Let me first offer my sincere thanks and gratitude for this opportunity Ladies and Gentleman, I will make no pretence about my intellectual credentials. But may I humbly say that I have the honour of commanding an Army, which has achieved great successes, against violent extremism and terrorism, of course at a huge cost and sacrifice. My perspective would therefore be, that of a soldier and not of an intellectual
- Let me say from the outset, that, the present Jihadism is a misnomer. Jihad is a highly evolved concept that underlines myriad struggles against tyranny of all types. Muslims are taught that control of self is the most elevated form of Jihad. There is also a saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) that 'the best of Jihad is a word of truth in the face of a tyrant ruler'. On the other hand, 'Qitaal', or aspect of 'armed jihad' comes at the lowest end of the spectrum of actions and beliefs that comprise the concept of jihad and can only be sanctioned by a State authority and nobody else.

- However, there is no denying the fact, that a powerful concept such as jihad, can easily be misused for propagating extremism or terrorism. Particularly, as many Muslims, world over, are not only feeling alienated, but disowned, targeted and devoid of positive expression. Same is true for the concept of caliphate which is more of a nostalgic response rather than actual possibility for most Muslims.

Ladies & Gentlemen!

- In Pakistan, the notion of caliphate has not found any traction, but jihad has definitely been used to radicalize fairly large tracts of population. However, this phenomenon is not a recent creation or started after 9/11. The Frankenstein was actually created by the liberal free world, with willing, but myopic cooperation from our side after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Therefore, we all are responsible for making the world population in general and Muslim population in particular, hostage to this extremist ideology.
- Times have surely changed since the noon of March 10, 1982, when, President Ronald Reagan, dedicated the March 22nd launch of the Columbia Space Shuttle to the valiant Afghan Mujahedeens or Jihadis and termed their struggle against the Soviet occupation forces as a representation of 'man's highest aspirations for freedom'

- When I was young, Pakistan was as normal a country as any other on the earth. Jacqueline Kennedy flew to Karachi, the Beatles visited us, Queen Elizabeth went to the Khyber pass to chat with the tribesmen. We were a favourite tourism destination for many. We were hosting world cups of hockey and cricket, besides many other multi-national events. World Bank termed Pakistan in 1963 as one of the most progressive and dynamic developing country in Asia
- The seventies were nothing less than a disaster for us, but even the separation of the Eastern part of our country and the political upheavals thereafter, did not change the society as deeply as the events of 1979, the year the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution happened, next door. It was only then that we started learning that we were not only Muslims, but were Sunnis and Shias. It was also the time that we were drawn to conviction of fighting Soviet invasion and also challenging communist ideology
- With the able intellectual assistance of free world, a syllabus was designed in one of the Western University for Madrassahs wherein jihad was fed to young minds in a concentrated dose without context or explanation. An exception was created, using a 'self defence' clause to justify declaration of jihad by Non State Actors. Young men were recruited from all over the world, radicalized and then left and disowned after they had delivered us, the success.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

- I apologize for a long lesson on history, **but while it is history for you, it is still very much a live issue for us back home**, as fairly large no of people are radicalized, armed and empowered politically and ideologically. They cannot be wished away, just because we don't like them any more. We are harvesting what we sowed 40 years back. So it will be a while before this scourge is eliminated in totality – but first, let's stop calling it Jihadism as it is nothing else but terrorism.

With this rather long context, let me now come to the story of Pakistan's struggle against extremism, terrorism and so called Jihadism

- Pakistan Army has waged a relentless and bloody fight against terrorism and violent extremism, at a monumental human and material cost:-
 - Over 35,000 Pakistanis have lost their lives
 - Over 48,000 are critically wounded or disabled
 - Financial cost exceeding US \$ 250 Billion – only a fraction of which is actually shared by our global partners
- Today, I can say with pride and conviction that there are no organized terrorist camps on our side of the border. However, presence of terrorists of various hues and colours cannot be ruled out. We still have their active and sleeper cells, who are hiding in mountains, border towns and 54 refugee camps, besides some major towns and cities.

- For your information, out of the last 131 terrorist attacks in our border areas last year, 123 were conceived, planned and executed from Afghanistan. We understand their predicament therefore we do not blame them, but instability in Afghanistan is also hurting us badly – and it is happening despite the presence of the most powerful alliance in Kabul.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

- Unfortunately, Afghanistan, success of 2003 was lost when resources were pulled out prematurely for war in Iraq. Today, after spending more than 1.4 Trillion, the situation can best be described as a stalemate. But to my reckoning the cause of stalemate is not only the Haqqani Network or TTA, as they had almost been defeated 13 years ago; it was the pursuit of a wrong strategy which led to their resurrection. Let me say that the popular assertion of TTA not being defeated in totality due to presence of part of their leadership in Pakistan, is not correct or whole truth. We defeated Al-Qaeda, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and Jamat-ul-Ahrar, while their safe heavens still exist in Afghanistan at a mere fraction of resources employed on the other side of the border. Now instead of blame games, it is time for NATO and allies to conduct an audit and introspection to find out causes for this stalemate.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

- In our war against terror, military operations were not the only thing that we conducted. We realized very early that the complex problem of violent extremism could not be handled through military operations only. First and foremost, we generated public opinion to defeat the terrorists' narrative. We also formulated the National Action Plan, aimed at fighting terrorism and gradually rooting out extremism. We launched Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad in 2017, with the aim of:
- Firstly, targeted kinetic and enhanced law enforcement operations to locate and destroy the residual terrorist presence across the country
 - Second prong of our campaign, comprises supporting the National Action Plan, that involves better prosecution, policing, education reforms, along with curbing terror financing and hate speech
 - Equally important is our information prong aimed at discrediting the terrorist ideology including the misuse of the terms like Jihad and Caliphate. Most recently, 1854 eminent Pakistani religious scholars, representing all schools of thoughts within Islam, teamed up to issue a resounding fatwa against violence, extremism and terrorism in the name of religion. Called the **Message of Pakistan**, it bans suicide bombing and jihad, other than the one sanctioned by the State.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

- Our successes have been made possible by the collective resolve and resilience of our entire nation. However, we are far from done. It is my sincere belief that Pakistan's lasting domestic peace hinges on peace and stability in Afghanistan, therefore, despite our limited resources, we are trying our best to export peace to our Neighbours in the west. Please remember, at times our efforts are curtailed by capacity and not by will.
- Pakistan and Afghanistan are sovereign countries. Both countries have a right to peace and progress. However, this will only be possible if our respective soils are not used against each other. In this regard, two aspects are important:-
 - Firstly we still have nearly 2.7 Million Afghan refugees in our country, whose concentrations are routinely used by TTA and Haqqani Network to recruit, morph and melt. It is time for these refugees to be repatriated with dignity. It is the only way we can ensure that no one is misusing our hospitality and soil for mischief in Afghanistan. This is possible at a fraction of the cost of war in Afghanistan, which is currently around \$ 46 Billion per year.
 - Secondly, our border with Afghanistan is highly porous. We have unilaterally taken many steps to ensure proper management of this border. We have raised tens of new border specific units, built hundreds of new border

surveillance forts and have started the process of fencing 2300 Kilometers of the border. We are putting scanners and biometrics at border terminals to ensure that while common Afghans are facilitated, miscreants and terrorists are prevented or arrested.

- Furthermore, we are fully committed to the international consensus, that political reconciliation is the only solution to Afghan issue. While we are actively supporting the new US strategy in the region, based primarily on kinetic approach, we are not leaving any stone unturned to try and do our best in bringing the parties of the conflict on the negotiation table.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Despite the seeming frustration, very few countries have achieved as much success that we have in our war against terror. With over 1100 Al-Qaeda operatives killed and other 600 handed over to US, Pakistan is instrumental in disruption and decimation of Al-Qaeda from Afghanistan and Pakistan. But the struggle continues as the threat is morphing. Intelligence agencies of multiple countries have confirmed the on-going relocation of fleeing Daesh fighters to Afghanistan. Being worst-hit by perennial instability in Afghanistan, Pakistan has legitimate concerns about this new threat joining the roster of

Over 20 terror outfits. So far we have been successful in denying any foothold to Daesh in Pakistan, but we are very concerned about its unchecked growth in the neighborhood. We need to counter the threat much more proactively through collaboration and cooperation.

- The war against terrorism and extremism will take some time before the world is free of it, therefore we all have to be patient and remain steadfast. We need to first counter terrorist' narrative with a superior narrative before breaking their back. Unfortunately, we have not done enough in this regard. Finally, trust, cooperation and sharing will work, scapegoating won't.

To conclude,

Let me say that terrorists thrive on our divisions and feed on our inability to come together against them. I humbly call upon all of you, to deny them these chinks in our collective armour. Please realize that it's a global problem and needs a global approach. Lack of focus and commitment and individual efforts won't take us anywhere.

I thank you