

"Bismillah IrRahman NirRaheem"

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalam-o-Alaikum,

I am really honoured to be here today amongst the most learned and vibrant community of Pakistan.

I commend efforts of the organizers for organizing this seminar on such an important topic. I must appreciate the quality of papers presented here and hope that their conclusions will resonate through all the concerned quarters in both economic as well as in security domains.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

As I often tell my friends that the first page I see in a newspaper after the headlines; is that of "business and economy" as economy touches almost all aspects of our life.

Rather, it would not be wrong to say that economy is reflection of quality of our life. It reflects the wealth of a nation, but in doing so, it also indicates the nation's health, including the strength of its institutions and the trust of its people.

There was a time at the end of the cold war, when it became fashionable to say that human civilization had come to a point where the cold logic of economic interests alone would dictate national security.

Unfortunately, that is no more relevant now, as in the last two decades or so, we have seen re-appearance of age old fault lines and reassertion of ancient parochial passions of race, language, religion and identity, hence security has once again, become the foremost business and task of the state.

Today, security and economy are interlinked. Erstwhile, USSR had no dearth of armoured divisions but it broke up due to weak economic base. Similarly, rich countries without corresponding security apparatus, may invite aggression from others, Kuwait is a good example.

All nations today are reviewing the old dilemma of "Guns versus Butter", that is; how to achieve a balance between economic viability and national security. Countries like Pakistan never had the luxury of such a review. We live in one of the most volatile regions of the world, dealing with multiple crises since inception, but increasingly so during the last four decades.

Therefore, we must be able to evolve on the way. We have to continuously ensure a viable balance between economy and security. Only then will we arrive at a future that ensures sustained peace and happiness for our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first talk on security – National security today, is a wide ranging subject. Leaders across the world understand clearly that security is the product of an interplay of factors that encompass the political, economic, military, social, human and environmental facets. That makes security a very complex issue. As the Army Chief, I am primarily responsible for the military security including its external and internal dimensions. However, it would be naive of me to talk of uni-dimensional security without first understanding the effects of all the aforementioned factors.

Today, Alhamdullilah, we have a much improved security situation on the internal front. The challenges to the state's writ have been defeated, though residual threat still resides. The situation is stable but there is apparent fragility at places.

Therefore, we need a comprehensive effort to pursue National Action Plan and remove vulnerabilities well before they turn into threats. Many of the planned measures, if implemented timely, will contribute directly to the economic & even political stability of the country. Police and judicial reforms are obvious examples. Madrassah reforms are also vital - We cannot afford to leave a large segment of our youth with limited options - Madrassahs must enable their students to become useful members of the society who are not left behind in any field of life.

Now few words about our external front which continues to remain in a flux. With a belligerent India on our East and an unstable Afghansitan on our West, the region remains captive due to historical baggage and negative competition. But on our part, we are making a deliberate and concerted effort to pacify the western border through a multitude of diplomatic, military and economic initiative, not to mention the phenomenal boost to human security that we have provided in FATA and surrounding areas. In fact, what we have done in FATA and started in Balochistan could easily be termed as the best example of a holistic approach to security. We have also expressed and demonstrated our genuine desire to have normal and peaceful relations with India, however, it takes two to tango.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Due to dedication and sustained hard work of Army and other LEAs, slowly and gradually, the improvements in security environment have started to pay off. We have had mega events in the country in the fields of sports and culture this year. Recently, we not only had the most peaceful Muharram in years but the Bohra community validated our claim of

improved security by selecting Pakistan for their annual gathering. Similarly, early harvest projects, both CPEC and non CPEC, are nearing completion; with Pakistan Army providing security to our Chinese friends.

But there's still a long way to go. The economy is showing mixed indicators. Growth has picked up but the debts are sky high. Infrastructure and energy have improved considerably but the current account balance is not in our favour. Our tax to GDP ratio is abysmally low and this needs to change if we are to break the begging bowl. At the same time, the common man across Pakistan needs reassurance of benevolent and equal treatment from the State in return.

If I were a statesman or an economist, I would say that this is high time for us to place economic growth and sustainability at the highest priority. Let me share with you that during National Security Council meetings, economy remains one of our highest concerns. But in order to secure our future, we must be ready to take difficult decisions. We have to increase our tax base, bring in fiscal discipline and ensure continuity of economic policies.

Ladies &Gentlemen!

At the micro level, nothing exemplifies the linkage between economy and security better than the city of Karachi itself:

§ Karachi, the economic capital of Pakistan generates a significant part of our revenue.

§ When our enemies want to choke Pakistan, they try to destabilize Karachi because when Karachi bleeds, Pakistan bleeds.

§ It is because of this sensitivity, that peace in Karachi has been our top priority. We have worked very hard to restore peace and now hope that economic activity would return at a fast pace, Insha Allah.

§ However, in order to maintain sustainable growth and progress, we must ensure law and order in the entire country.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

At the macro level, this relationship between security and economy is intricate, and therefore solutions are more complex. Today, Pakistan is a strategically challenged state. External actors are attempting to assert control and dictate our security priorities that have strong linkages with our economic future. The centerpiece of this effort is China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

This corridor is not just a collection of infrastructure and power projects – it is in fact a complete development platform that has the potential to act as a powerful springboard for shared development in the entire CASA (Central Asia-South Asia) region.

However, the completion of the project and, more importantly, optimization of its socio-economic dividend for Pakistan and the region hinges on one word: "security".

This is the future of our people, a vital national interest on which we will never compromise, regardless of the loudness of opposing voices. It is also an example of regional cooperation and a break from politics of confrontation – we want all to benefit from this project.

Ladies & Gentleman,

Our region in general and the immediate neighbourhood in particular has failed to take off due to peculiar security challenges.

I sincerely believe that the region will sink or sail together – that is how it has played out across the world.

I want to use this opportunity to earnestly convey to our neighbours to the East and to the West that our destinies are inextricably linked.

However, unfortunately, until the current environment of mutual distrust is eliminated, we cannot possibly imagine our nations rising together into enduring peace and socio-economic development. Peace and stability is in the interest of all and we must strive for it.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Pakistan is capable of creating sufficient fiscal space to address underlying structural problems through tax reforms, documenting economy, diversifying the export base, and encouraging savings to finance a level of investment that could sustain growth rate higher than the rise of population.

But this is not all, we have to rise together. We have to ensure that Bln, Interior Sindh, FATA, Southern Punjab and GB also join us on the trajectory of growth and then move forward. It is with this integrated approach, that we will fulfill the vision of Quaid.

This vision of integrated economic growth across Pakistan and across the region is noble, but it also needs to be secured.

In today's world, security does not come cheap. It is dependent upon economic prowess. It is here that our entrepreneurs must contribute by producing and exporting more.

We have done our part on the security front, now it's up to you to take initiative and turn the economy around.

To conclude, ladies and gentlemen,

The task at hand is difficult, but we have done it before. In the 60s, we were among the economic leaders in Asia. The seventies brought trouble that tested the very fibre of our nationhood. We have fought hard to stay afloat ever since. We are just finding our feet with improved security. We need to start afresh on the economic front as well.

If any nation can survive what we went through, it can also make its mark when the going is relatively easier. Pakistan will go ahead, ladies and gentlemen! Question is; will you be contributors or bystanders to this great nation's march to glory?

Karachi, InShaAllah will remain safe and sound, I assure you, so the ball is in your court now.

In the end, I would like to once again thank the organizers for holding this seminar on such an important topic.

I hope the debate generated today will not end here and will instead become part of the wider national and regional discourse.

The need for realization of and respect for this security-economic connect was never as great as it is today.

Thank you all!