

Report: Roundtable on “Pak-Saudi Arabia Relations” with Mr. Abdullah Khurram of the University of Chicago on June 09, 2014.

## **Pakistan and Saudi Arabia do not have a deal on nuclear cooperation**

**Aarish U. Khan**

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Abdullah Khurram of the University of Chicago at a roundtable here on Monday argued that there is no concrete evidence that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have a deal on nuclear cooperation. He was speaking at a roundtable organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) on Pak-Saudi Arabia relations. Mr. Khurram shared that although Pakistan’s trade with Saudi Arabia is around \$ 3.3 billion, most of it is composed of oil imports from Saudi Arabia. He added that India’s trade with Saudi Arabia is not only greater than that of Pakistan, it is also more diversified.

Mr. Khurram argued that Saudi Arabia is one of Pakistan’s closest allies, but it also wants to have good relations with India. He shared that Saudi Arabia has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with India on defense cooperation. Mr. Khurram maintained that it would really help Pakistan in improving its international standing if it could reduce its dependence on foreign assistance. He added that Pakistan receives international assistance regularly but it does not seem to have a sustainability plan by virtue of which it could gradually reduce its dependence on foreign economic assistance.

Mr. Khurram shared that the nature of U.S.-Saudi Arabia relations is evolving but likely to remain stable because of other developments in the greater Middle East. He was of the view that if relations between Iran and the U.S. would improve in future, it would enhance Pakistan’s importance in its regional policy for Saudi Arabia. Mr. Khurram said that both Iran and Saudi Arabia are popular among Pakistani public according to opinion polls, adding that Saudi-Iran competition does not even factor into people’s minds in Pakistan in that context.