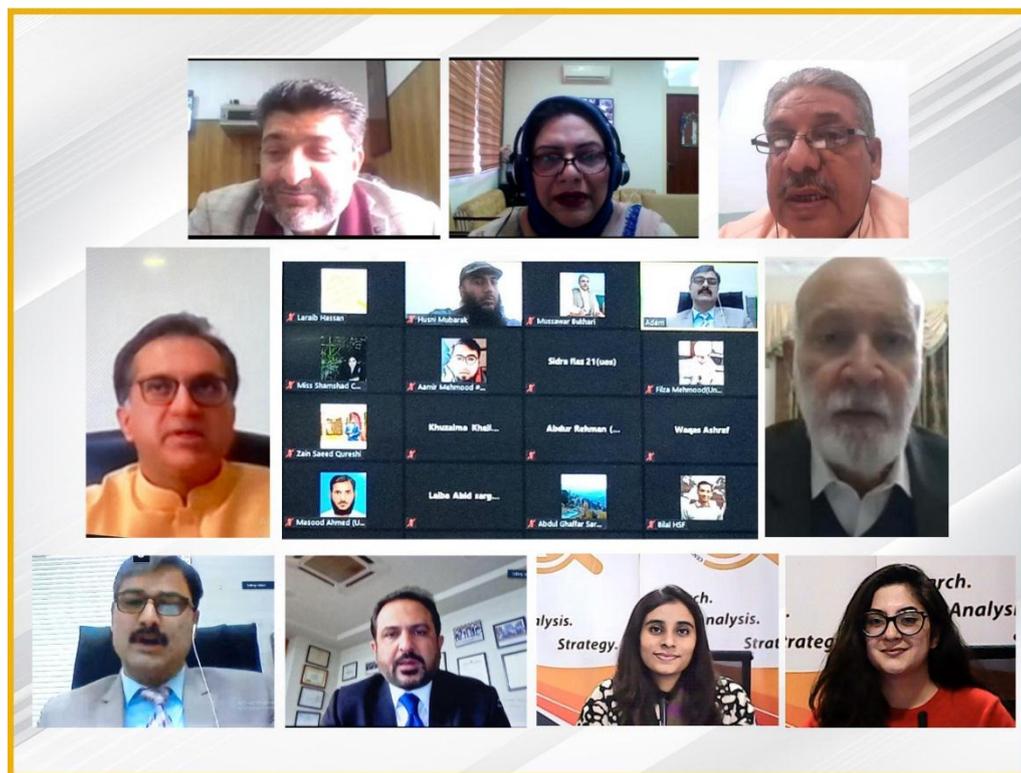




Online Conference Report

“Changing Dimensions of International & Regional Discourse, A Critical Analysis and Policy Options for Pakistan”



Organized by
Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad on
8th February, 2021



“CGSS is a Public Policy Institute with a mission to help improve policy and decision-making through analysis and research”

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CONCEPT NOTE

The social, political, strategic and economic discourse of the states are transforming globally. The conventional focus of foreign policy principles have become obsolete and is thus being replaced by modern trends and approaches. Now, the states are upgrading and revising their policies by focusing on the notion of regionalism. Likewise, the global structural reforms have paved the way for the states to modernize their economies, expand their markets and promote multilateral integration in various aspects. In this regard, it is pertinent to examine the role of powerful international as well as regional players particularly China and the U.S., their approach towards enduring global developments and the implications for South Asia.

COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as a key threat to the national security paradigm of every state. The consequences of this global challenge are devastating and pervasive, thereby, calling for a cohesive response. In this aspect, a transformed, more inclusive and integrated approach characterized by mutual cooperation can help the nations across the globe to combat this crisis and counter the threats associated with it.

A major development in the international political system is the recent appointment of the new US administration. The dynamics of the future role of Mr. Joe Biden has initiated a speculative debate regarding the new policy frameworks and outcomes, all over the world. In regional policy perspective, President Biden has already made it clear that India would remain as a top priority, which can imply great challenges to Pakistan, China, Russia and Afghanistan. In this aspect, policy response from China and Pakistan and other important regional states is intrinsic to be analyzed.



BRIEF OF THE CONFERENCE

On 8th February 2021, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Conference on, “Changing Dimensions of International & Regional Discourse: A Critical Analysis and Policy Options for Pakistan”.

The aim of this conference was to highlight the transforming dynamics of the international and regional politico-economic as well as strategic discourse in the post COVID-19 era and the evolving policy perspectives of the new U.S administration towards the regions, particularly South Asia and China. The Conference focused on the future strategies that can be adopted by Pakistan and China under these transforming dimensions of the international system.

The conference was moderated by Ms. Laraib Fatima Hassan, Communication & Coordination Manager, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad, and was attended by 80 participants. It was also viewed live by 300 viewers on social media platforms.



BIOGRAPHIES OF THE SPEAKERS

Mr. Muhammad Mudassar Tipu, DG, China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan



Mr. Mudassar Tipu is Director-General China, he operates all matters related to China in the Foreign Ministry of Pakistan. He overlooks the complete desk of China and its various departments.

Mr. Rahimullah Yousafzai – Senior Journalist



Mr. Rahimullah Yusufzai is a Pakistani journalist and political and security analyst, best known for having interviewed Osama bin Laden, and Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar. He was among the first journalists to report on the Taliban and visited Kandahar, Afghanistan in 1995. He is one of the few bona fide experts on Afghanistan, having reported on the country since the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by the former Soviet Union. He is the current editor of the Jang Group's The News International at the Peshawar Bureau and is an op-ed writer for the monthly Newslines. He is also a correspondent of BBC's Pashto and Urdu services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.



Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan, Director of Area Study Centre, (Russia, China & Central Asia) University of Peshawar



Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan is the Director of Area Study Centre, (Russia, China & Central Asia) University of Peshawar, Pakistan. He has various research publications in HEC recognized Journals to his credit. He also translated Noor Sultan Nazarbayov, Kazakh President's Book "V Patok-e- Istoriie" Almaati 1999, from Russian into Urdu. He has taught various courses to M.Phil and Ph.D students. He has participated and organized several national and international Conference and Seminars. He is also Member Board of Experts of Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad.

Dr. Iram Khalid, Chairperson, Political Science Department, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan



Prof. Dr. Iram Khalid is Professor of Political Science at the University of the Punjab, Lahore from where she also obtained her Ph.D. on "Crisis Decision Making: A Case Study of Pakistan-India Conflicts (1950-1999)" with having an experience 23 years. She did M.Phil in International Relations (Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad, 1994) and an M.A. in Political Science (University of the Punjab, Lahore, 1989). She has published almost 70 research papers in reputed national and international journals. She is the author of 3 books, and 4 edited books. Her area of interest include National Security, Water Politics in South Asia, Nuclear Politics, Pakistan's Diplomatic Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics of Pakistan.



Dr. Musavir Hussain Bukhari, Associate Professor, Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB)



Dr. Musavir Hussain Bukhari completed his PhD Degree from Monash University, Australia. Currently, he is Associate Professor/Chairman/Director (CPCR)/ Coordinator (Public Admin.) at, Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB). His research interests include Ethnicity & South Asia, Foreign Policy of Major Powers, HRM, Comparative Public Administration, Theory of Public Administration, Pakistan Politics. He also has various national and international publications to his credit.

Dr. Adam Saud, Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad



Dr. Adam Saud is Dean of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad. He has done his PHD in International Relations from Quaid e Azam University, Islamabad. His research areas include Central Asia and Foreign Policy. He has 20 national and international publications in renowned journals.

Mr. Jawad Majid, Director, Silk Bank



Mr. Jawad Majid Khan is a seasoned financial sector professional. He is Director, Silk Bank Limited. He is a Graduate in Economics with Specialization in Development Economics and International Monetary Policy, from Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad; An alumnus of the Harvard Business School (HBS), Boston USA and National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad He has the distinction of being the youngest Country/Group Head of a Bank in Pakistan's Banking and Industry. He has many milestones to his name in the banking industry in a span of about 20 years in banking.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY TAKEAWAYS



Executive Summary

1. Changing Dimensions of International and Regional Discourse:

- a. The political, strategic and economic discourse of the countries is transforming globally. The conventional focus of the foreign policy principles has become obsolete, thereby, being replaced with modern trends and narratives.
- b. The states are upgrading and revising their policies by focusing on the notion of cooperation. Likewise, the global structural reforms have paved the way for the states to modernize their economies, expand their markets and promote multilateral integration in various dimensions.
- c. The Covid-19 pandemic has emerged as a key threat to the security paradigm states. The repercussions are pervasive, thereby, calling for a cohesive response.
- d. Moreover, a major development in the international political system is the new US administration under Joe Biden. The transformative policies of Joe Biden in regional political discourse are going to take a major shift in the future.

• The Transforming US Foreign Policy Approaches towards the Regions:

- a. It is anticipated that President Joe Biden will start with low hanging fruits. For example, returning to the Paris Climate Accord, revising policies on Iran nuclear deal & immigration policies, and restoring membership in the World Health Organization (W.H.O).
- b. However, the incumbent US administration is likely to face a lot of challenges internally. Unemployment, social disorder and economic instability would impose constraints for Joe Biden's regime.
- c. Regionally, the chaos in the Middle East, crisis in Yemen, and Afghanistan war would remain serious hurdles for the US administration. President Joe Biden seems a seasoned Politian. In this regard, he will opt for a mild posture to buy some time to resolve the conflicts. However, the practical manifestation of his vows is yet to be seen.
- d. The rise of China is one of the serious concerns for the US and its regional allies, particularly India. Both states are trying to tackle rising Chinese influence. However, in the present scenario, the new US administration cannot afford any conflict with China.



- e. Pakistan holds a key position as a stakeholder in the Afghan peace process. The world is well aware of the efforts of Pakistan in facilitating the negotiations and meetings between Taliban and US diplomats. In this aspect, Biden must devise its policies effectively towards Pakistan.

2. New World Order with Significant Transforming Realities:

- a. The international political system is anarchic. However, the anarchic nature is mitigated by some fundamental transforming realities in today's world. This transition is leading towards multipolarity in the international system.
- b. The first important transforming reality is the balance of power by some regional and international institutions. The regional blocs are now stronger, in which the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are the clear examples.
- c. The second transforming reality is the new alternative international and regional financial systems. The traditional international financial institutions like IMF and the World Bank have been replaced by new networks. In this aspect, the project of the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) has become clear manifestations of the new international financial system.
- d. The third important aspect is that the old notion of deterrence is outdated. In present times, the states are more inclined towards cooperation and stability. In this regard, China is becoming the rising power through its policies of constructive engagement and global activism.
- e. The fourth pertinent changing aspect is the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digitalization. Digital media has brought the international community to a single forum. It has also impacted the foreign policy behaviors of the states.
- f. The fifth substantial transforming factor is the ecological threats or non-traditional security threats. No state is immune from the adverse impacts of climate change or other non-traditional security perils.
- g. The COVID-19 has wreaked havoc across the globe. This has also caused the economy of the world to nose dive in an unprecedented manner. Therefore, it is a dire need of time to integrate and cooperate internationally to tackle common global issues.



3. Post COVID-19 Era: Role of Socio-Economic Institutions & Organizations for Sustainable Development

- a. The Coronavirus has impacted the global economies in a very drastic manner. The countries have devised and implemented different strategies to control the spread of the virus. The global and regional organizations are implementing various policies and strategies to rehabilitate the countries to combat the pandemic while reviving their economies.
- b. The World Bank has anticipated that the global economy might contract by 5.2% while per capita incomes could face the largest contraction since the year 1870. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also estimates global shrinkage by 4.4%.
- c. IMF is giving financial support, policy advice, and debt relief to poor countries. It has also financially assisted around 85 countries in the pandemic.
- d. The World Bank is also playing an intrinsic role in assisting developing countries to strengthen their pandemic response and health care systems.
- e. Furthermore, the World Bank's crisis response comprises three stages – relief, restructuring, and recovery. In this aspect, it is making up to \$ 160 billion available, in financing capacity through June 2021.
- f. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs is also supporting the world to contain the calamity and emerge from it more resilient and united.
- g. In the context of Pakistan, its ability to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 depends on how quickly and efficiently social safety net programs can respond to the crisis.
- h. The program supports alignment efforts between all the stakeholders to ensure that the most vulnerable and affected populations are identified and receive assistance.
- i. Moreover, the Government of Pakistan announced a stimulus package of Rs. 1.2 trillion in March 2020. This helped more than 6 million daily wagers and 12 million low-income families.



Key Takeaways

- a. Pakistan has a key position in the international and regional political system. The world is well aware of the effective role of Pakistan in the Afghan peace process. Once peace prevails in Afghanistan, it would enhance the economic/trade activity in the region.
- b. Furthermore, at a broader level, the regional policies should be based on the principles of open regionalism, which should be project or sector-specific i.e., bilateral, trilateral, or multilateral integration arrangements.
- c. Pakistan as multi-regional state has enormous potential and vast opportunities for connectivity. In this aspect, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) gives a great opportunity for economic cooperation and regional prosperity.
- d. In recent times, the prominent regional integration arrangement includes CPEC, Quadrilateral transact trade agreement (QTTA), Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program (CAREC), Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline (TAPI), the Central Asia-South Asia power project (CASA1000), Railway line from Termez to Peshawar, and Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline.
- e. The strategic objective of connectivity must be the expansion of Pakistan trade with Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs) to develop a transportation network and smooth border crossings.
- f. Pakistan should move very carefully while keeping in view its national interest. It should be focusing on strengthening relations not only with China but also with Russia, Gulf States and the Central Asian Republics.
- g. To combat the crisis of Covid-19, the institutions of Pakistan have played an important role and have emerged successful in containing the socio-economic disaster to some extent.
- h. Presently, the world is moving towards more inclusive ideas of cooperation like the dialogue of civilizations, community with a shared future, and making a regional alliance to achieve common goals. In this regard, the new US administration must accept today's transforming realities and move along with an integrated approach towards cooperation.



ANNEXURES



ANNEXURE 1: TRANSCRIPT'S OF THE SPEECHES

Speaker 1

Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmed Khan, Director, Area Study Centre (Russia, China, Central Asia), University of Peshawar

**Topic: Devising and implementing regional integration policies by Pakistan:
Means and the way forward**

My talk would be on devising and implementing regional integration policies by Pakistan: means and the way forward. It is very obvious that all developed countries of the world are well integrated within their respective regions. A country has to be integrated first in its own region, if it has to efficiently integrate globally. Nothing compromises security as much as a weak economy. One of the main reasons of economic weakness of Pakistan is lack of its integration within the region. Pakistan has natural resources and significant geographical location. However, due to the imperial legacies, it could not capitalize the advantage of its geographical location. Pakistan as multi-regional state has enormous potential and vast opportunities to integrate through and provide connectivity to various countries and regions.

Pakistan has to base its regional integration policies on two objectives. First, to serve as a regional transit hub between Central Asia, South Asia, China and Middle East. Second, to enhance its own trade within the region surrounding it. Pakistan's views on integration need to prioritize geo-economics and geo-politics but should not be based on European way of integration, as it is had been based on the principles of close regionalism. Pakistan's regional integration shall be based on the principles of open regionalism, which is the project or sector specific bilateral, trilateral or multilateral integration arrangements. These groupings and arrangements should be open to other regional and extra regional state to join. This kind of integration does not impose any restrictions or protectionist measures on non-member or non-regional states like a custom union, nor does it need any supra-nation institutions.

Promotion of region's insertion into global markets with flexible relations between regional states is the focal point of open regionalisms with the core objective to address



the weakness of closed regionalism. Most of the regional integration arrangements are in place, which will be expedited with peace in Afghanistan. If CPEC is the game changer, peace in Afghanistan will be the game changer plus. The process of integration will gain momentum by prioritizing economic interests over the regional geo-politics shaped by the extra regional states. The regional integration arrangement includes CPEC, Quadrilateral Transact Trade Agreement (QTTA), TAPI, CASA1000, Uzbek-Pakistan railway line from Termez to Peshawar, Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit trade agreement (APTA) and Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline.

CPEC provides best opportunity to fill the infrastructure gap nationally. It is important that sea ports are well connected within all parts of the country through highways and railways. The regional geo-economic and geo-political circumstances are right for regional integration and demands practical measures to enhance regional integration through its, both, soft and hard components. Soft components include harmonization and coordination of cross border policies, that is, legal and regulation framework, custom and tariff policies, border clearance, transit fees etc. While hard component includes the development of cross-border physical infrastructure that is roads, highways, railways, highways, pipelines, sea/air/dry ports etc.

Pakistan is a Central Asian country and naturally faced towards Central Asia because South Asia offers almost nothing to Pakistan, in terms of regional integration. Until or unless Kashmir dispute is resolved according to the UN resolutions. The Sino-Pakistan strategic and economic partnership under BRI and CPEC, and the Russian-Pakistan growing strategic and economic cooperation reinforce Central Asia-Pakistan integration via Afghanistan. The north-south corridor can be developed and connected via Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan to Iran, Arabian Sea and beyond. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is also surrounded by Russia and China. So, both can be instrumental in developing cross-border infrastructure, in general, and particularly China through the BRI. Therefore, Economic cooperation organization (ECO) also needs to cooperate with China and Russia and link ECO-CPEC-CAREC and trans- Caspian corridors with each other and with Eurasian northern and central corridors effecting transregional integration. ECO needs the enhanced cooperation with China for developing physical connectivity infrastructure. No other regional or extra regional states can make the financial capacity and opportunities that China offers. The strategic objective of connectivity must be the



expansion of Pakistan's trade with Afghanistan and CARs to develop transportation network and smooth border crossings. A limited and small-scale trade is being carried too and from CARs mostly, on small trucks.

Pakistani goods are transported on Afghan trucks, offloaded in Afghanistan and then transported to CARs. Uzbekistan has recently allowed Pakistani trucks to enter their territory. It shall be complemented with formal trilateral agreements between Pakistan, Afghanistan and each of the CARs bordering Afghanistan through smooth border crossings. In this regard, harmonization and coordination of policies must be developed with all stakeholders including the business people on board. The Southern-bypass which connects Indus highway to Afghanistan via Torkhum by passing Peshawar city and Northern Bypass connecting motorway and GT road to Torkhum by passing Peshawar city, shall be completed as priority as peace in Afghanistan is on the horizon and Pakistan has to connect and develop transportation first with Afghanistan and then with CARs.

These highways within the country will substantially increase efficiency of Asian Highway-7. Starting from Yekaterinburg in Russian via Central Asia and Afghanistan via Karachi and Gwadar. Asian Highway-7 crosses through Kabul and reaches Chamman via Kandahar. However, Torkham is also linked through highway to Kabul via Jalalabad. Asian Highway-7 can be a backbone in connecting Russia, Pakistan and Central Asia, and can also take a shape of North-South corridor. Railways are important mode for heavy transportation of goods. Gwadar must be linked through rail to Quetta-Zahedan through Iran and onwards to trans-Caspian railway line of Central republics. Similarly, ML 1 can be linked to Torkham to further link it with Uzbek proposed railway line from Termez via Kabul, Jalalabad to Torkham. China is a true friend of Pakistan and has been assisting to develop physical infrastructure under CPEC, which is mutually beneficial for both the states and entire regions of Central Asia and Middle East. It will ultimately translate Pakistan's dream of becoming a regional transit hub into reality. CAREC funded by Asian development bank also provides opportunity for regional integration. It has invested 1.47 billion dollars in transport and trade projects with Pakistan. At the 16th ministerial conference 2017, new strategic framework has been announced in titled CAREC 2030 connecting the region for shared and sustainable development by 2030. By 2030, CPEC will also be matured and presenting great opportunities to harness connectivity and advantage further as a transit hub.



Speaker 2

Mr. Muhammad Mudassar Tipu, Director General (China), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan

Topic: Role of China in Addressing Key Regional Issues

Prof. Shabbir has reached some very insightful points of connectivity. If we look at the reach of China, it is about 50 trillion dollar economy and it is only country among G-7, which has recovered from Covid-19 scourge. It is on the road of economic development. The financial capacity of China is really tremendous. One of its manifestation, particularly in context of Pakistan, is China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In short period of 6-7 years, we have completed some excellent mega projects of energy, infrastructure and transit projects. CPEC has long term projects that spans 2030 and beyond 2030 we will keep picking up some more projects. The financial capacity of China is really enormous particularly when the global economy is confronting huge amount of crisis in case of Covid-19.

We are in the second phase of CPEC which is going to focus on agriculture, science, technology and socio-economic development. These are the projects where a lot of economic growth can take place in Pakistan. Looking at only the agriculture sector and the production of meat-beef and dairy products, we are trying to start export our meat and beef to China. We believe that within couple of months, the Chinese and Pakistani custom authorities would define a framework where the trade can take place. The potential is huge, it is into billions of dollars. Agriculture sector is a huge sector and China has a lot of expertise in terms of technology, pesticides, intellectual experience, and food security. So, if we look at the whole range of economic, financial and trade areas, China has a great deal of expertise. It is very important to Pakistan to build on the expertise of China.

People say that China-Pakistan friendship is taller than mountain, deeper than oceans and sweeter than honey. Once I went to China and served their and came back to Pakistan, serving the foreign ministry for several years, I truly believe that it is very exceptional relationship. It is really taller than mountain, deeper than oceans and sweeter than honey because over the past 70 years, across the political range of the leaders, both Pakistan and China have one constant and one sort of necessity that their relations need to



continue and further expand and solidified. 10 years ago, there were very few Pakistanis in China but right now about 28 thousand of students are working in China. Due to Covid-19 there is some interruption in flights but before COVID-19 a large number of flights have started between China and Pakistan. Hundreds and Thousands of people are traveling to each other's' countries every year. In the midst of Covid19, Pakistan is engaged with China.

China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement's second phase has been put into operation. China has granted us so much concession so we can export our commodities to China. This is again a huge benefit for Pakistan. Another area of cooperation is the IT sector. Pakistan's IT sector is doing extremely well in past few years and of course China's IT sector has a global name and recognition. So, within IT sector we can do a lot of things. We have recently constituted two joint working groups. One group is on agriculture and second is on science and technology. As time progresses, we are going to identify more areas and sector and the priorities, where both countries can advance their common interests. Under the regional integration, China is critical. It has investment hundreds of billions of dollars in the regions across Asia, Africa and Europe. China's investment in Africa has changed the landscape of Africa.

Regionally Central Asia and Afghanistan offers huge potential. Moreover, CPEC is going to play critical role in enhancing and promotion of the regional connectivity. We are working hard on Gwadar international airport, which will be completed soon. The transshipment from Gwadar to Afghanistan has already started. The development of Gwadar will take some time because infrastructure building is not easy. It is extremely sophisticated work, which involve multiple stakeholder's input. Nevertheless we are confident that once the Gwadar development is completed, it has huge potential to connect Central Asia, China, West Asia, Africa or Europe. Now these things may look a little bit a distant dream but after 10-15 years this will become reality. Pakistan and China are going to play a very critical role in this process. CPEC is the testimony to Pakistan-China's success. In a very short while, it has become a transformational project.



Speaker 3

Mr. Rahimullah Yousafzai, Senior Analyst & Journalist

Topic: Afghan issue and role of Pakistan: challenges and policy framework.

Right now, there is stalemate in the Afghan peace talks in Doha but the good thing is that the talks have not stopped. From both sides, the 41 negotiators are still in Doha. But it is not unexpected that we are facing hurdles in the Afghan peace process because peacefully ending the 42 years long war is never going to be easy. The talks have now been going on for 28 months, considering the complexity of the Afghan issue. 18 months, the US-Taliban negotiated until they reached an agreement in February last year. Former US President Donald Trump once scrapped the peace talks with the Taliban. On that time, Pakistan played a very important role to revive the peace process by inviting and arranging the meetings between Zalmay Khalilzad and Mullah Brothers in Islamabad that led to resumption of the peace talks and finally the peace agreement was signed on February 29, 2020.

The intra-Afghan dialogues were about to start on 10th March after the exchange of prisoners but it did not happen. Almost five and a half months were wasted because of the dispute over the exchange of prisoners. The Afghan government was unwilling of the release and called Loya Jirga. But finally, they released the prisoners and Taliban also released more than 1 thousand prisoners of Afghan government. The intra-Afghan talks were started in September last year but then they took 20 days break after having agreed on the rules of procedure but still they have not agreed on the agenda. The break ended on 5th of January and the talks resumed but still there is a stalemate. They haven't had many meetings. They had few meetings but with long breaks. Right now, the Taliban delegations have been visiting some countries. This has invited a sarcastic comment from Kabul that they are enjoying their trips abroad. But they are not willing to talk to us in Doha and we are waiting.

Taliban delegations have gone to Iran, Russia and Turkmenistan. Some of the negotiators are still in Doha. The reason that there has been no such progress was that both sides (Afghan government and Taliban) are waiting for the Biden administration to decide the next stage of the Afghan peace process. We all know that there was the review and it is still going on and there are some statements coming out of Washington. It is the tactic to



put pressure on the Taliban to reduce violence and to agree to a ceasefire. The US and Afghan government want Taliban to engage in meaningful talks. The Taliban are also saying that Afghan government is not serious about the talks. The wait is getting long and creating uncertainty.

The Taliban are waiting for two decisions which had to be made by the US. One is, the US promised to undertake diplomatic efforts to remove the names of Taliban leaders from UNSC blacklist. Second is the release of further Taliban prisoners. According to the Taliban, these commitments were made in Doha peace agreement last year. The US has not yet started any diplomatic efforts to get Taliban name removed from the UNSC blacklist. Also, the Afghan government has refused to release more Taliban prisoners because the earlier release of the Taliban prisoners led to the rise of violence because many of the released prisoners returned to the battle field. This is becoming an irritant and without resolving this issue there could not be any breakthrough in the talks.

Both the US and Afghanistan government are using these two issues as kind of a leverage. They want to compel the Taliban to reduce the violence except the ceasefire, and engage them in meaningful talks. Taliban seems not ready to take part as they termed as the non-serious talks of Afghan government, and they want these two issues to resolved first. These issues do not concern the Afghan government. They say that these commitments were made by the US so it must resolve these issues for intra-Afghan dialogue. Concerning the withdrawal of US forces, so many months are already wasted in resolving issues. Therefore, the US can ask for further new deadline to withdraw its troops. Meanwhile, it will ensure that Taliban live up to their commitments.

Moreover, both sides continue to blame each other. Whenever there is a failure, the blame game starts. The questions have been asked that what if Taliban do not fulfil their commitments and do not reduce the violence? US does not have much leverage to pressure the Taliban. They can help in removing Taliban name from the UNSC blacklist and they can persuade the Afghan government to release more prisoners. In terms of Pakistan, its role has remained important but there are too many expectations being attached with Pakistan. The US-Pakistan relations have been somehow improved because of Pakistan's positive role in the peace process. But there are certain worrying issues like that of Daniel Pearl. In fact, the US wants him delivered as he was the US citizen. Pakistan however refused to deliver him to the US stating that it respects its courts. Nevertheless,



it will not lead to stopping the cooperation between the two countries in trying to work for the Afghan peace process.

As the stalemate prolongs so will the US demands and pressure on Pakistan to persuade Taliban to reduce violence. The new US administration has been generally positive towards Pakistan rather than being critical. It says that Pakistan's role is important and it cannot do without Pakistan's help. US will continue to seek Pakistan's support in peace process. Pakistan has its limitations, as too many expectations are being attached to but Pakistan cannot force Taliban to do something against their interests. Taliban are fighting for two decades for their interests not for Pakistan's interest. Pakistan can facilitate the peace process it can act as trouble shooter in the peace talks but Pakistan alone cannot be the peace-maker in Afghanistan. It has to be a shared responsibility.

Pakistan has a key role but there are other countries which can play a very positive role, especially, the US and then the host country Qatar, which has got lot of influence on Taliban. Also, the neighbouring countries have a role to play like China, Russia, Central Asian countries and also Iran. If US is able to resolve its nuclear dispute with Iran, maybe Iran will be asked to play a role in Afghan peace process as well. Until now the US has been regarding Iran as a spoiler. India is a major spoiler in the region so it has to be asked to not be the spoiler. The Afghan government is not very happy with Pakistan but it is holding back right now, it is not critical not at this stage, although earlier they were blaming Pakistan for everything.

Afghan government needs Pakistan help as well. There has been some improvement because of the high-level visits between both countries' leadership. But the propaganda against Pakistan will not end if peace talks do not make progress. Kabul feels that Pakistan can do a lot more and that it is not doing enough. So, Pakistan has to be ready for every kind of eventuality. We can attach hopes even with the peace talks, but this is very challenging and if durable peace is not achieved in Afghanistan then Pakistan will get blamed by default.



Speaker 4

Dr. Irum Khalid, Chairperson, Political Science Department, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Topic: The Transforming US Foreign Policy Approach: Predictive Analysis of Joe Biden's Administration

The focus of this talk is on the objectives of US foreign policy in coming years, and the implications the new US policy on some specific regions. US has always believed in action and the continuity of their policies is the main feature of their foreign policy. Under the Biden administration, there are certain questions that whether they may want to change the foreign policy options regarding China, South Asia or Middle East or there will be only change of the language? This time the internal situation of US is different, especially, the economy and the demands of the society. These are the constraints on the new US administration. The nature of challenge is different now.

We are living in a changed world, where the idea revolves around connectivity and cooperation which is the idea given by China. The Chinese are talking about dialogue of civilization and enhancement of cooperation among the states. So, what will be Biden's preferences under this new world order? If we talk about Joe Biden's personality, he is the product of mature political system. He has been in US senate, Congress and White house for more than 2 decades. He is fully aware about the power and strategic objectives of the US. However, he is also the product of 20th century and was in favour of Iraq conflict. But now, under the new prevailing circumstances and the new rising powers, preferences and challenges, the situation is different.

In 2021, economy is the biggest challenge for the US. It has huge un-employment rate and increasing social disharmony. In US society to manage all these issues and to continue the foreign policy, there are many challenges. For example, US involvement in Afghanistan, tensions with China and policy perspective on Middle East, Iran and South Asia. So, certain things have not been changed although, the tone will be different. Joe Biden's tone will remain more diplomatic as he is the seasonal leader. He will opt a mild diplomatic body language to handle the situation. For example, in his speech he stated that he will try to revise the foreign policy options and relations especially while dealing with the



situation in Yemen. But at the same time, he also stated that US will look at the offensive measures.

We have to be ready to listen about new terminologies given by the US administration but with the same parameters in their mindset. Biden also opted the policy to go for the low hanging fruits. This implies that initially, he will follow things that are easy to change. For example, the Paris Climate Accord, Iran Nuclear Deal and the immigration policies. So, he gave the impression that being a seasoned diplomat and politician, he will try to make such efforts to make over the things that were troubled under the Trump administration. The confused American policies of Trump have done damage to US interests in many areas of the world. There are some troubling points for the US in which, Middle East is on the top than Afghanistan, China and South Asia.

Biden will face many challenges with some regions as well as countries of the world that were ignored and mis-treated by Trump office. Although there were some efforts done by the Trump administration regarding the Afghan peace process and its policies that he has not initiated practical war in any part of the world. However, Middle East is the region where US administration have vital strategic interest. Every administration in White House Put emphasize on its allies in the Middle East to strengthen its footprints in the region. The new US administration will face challenges that how they will tackle Iran, the civil war in Yemen and Syria, Iraq conflict, chaos in Libya and traditional conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Biden will wait till Iranian elections because he will try to borrow some time and not get to engage in harsh situation. He will also try to engage Iranian leadership to revise the Iran nuclear deal. Moreover, regarding Yemen, Biden has advised to end support for all offensive operations. However, there are constraints behind the conflict escalation. US cannot afford any humanitarian crisis.

America under Biden will take a slow start based on damaged control. Biden's assumption of power has initiated a series of reversing actions that were taken by Donald Trump. US administration cannot take any action without the prior consent of the Pentagon. The appointment of Antony Blinken as secretary of the state, implies Biden's administration to replicate regional democratic regime style of creating some specific lines in the conflicting regions through active engagement. So, whether they want to



activate the role of sanctions by using the traditional stick and carrot policy is yet to be seen.

The appointments of experienced diplomats is raising big concerns and creating gap in the Biden's words. Another example is of the appointment of Linda Thomas as an ambassador of the UN. Now coming to the Biden's preferences regarding India, there are two observations. In previous month, the world has witnessed the protest in India. For Americans the protest does not matter. The thing which matters is how Indian leadership is treating those people who are asking for their rights. The BJP government treatment of its citizens is raising questions in the US. The US diplomats have stated that they want to see a reasonable human rights policy within India. So, human rights violation can be a challenge for the US.

Lastly, the US policy regarding China. In last two years, when the whole world is facing economic crisis, China has a positive growth rate. The US and other rising powers have to learn to live with China. The world is getting connected with China and getting more and more benefits from its partnership with China. But US administration and their people are not accepting this reality. Now, the world is ready to live with the dialogue of civilization (President Xi Jinping's Concept) rather than clash of civilization.



Speaker 5

Dr. Musavir Hussain Bukhari, Chairman, Political Science Department, Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Topic: US foreign policy towards South Asia: Objectives and Implementations.

When we study the foreign policy of the super powers, they are based on three levels i.e., global, regional and bilateral relations. The American policy towards South Asia is based on these three pillars. We have seen that, the super powers stand on three pillars i.e., economy, soft image and military might. Under the Trump regime, America has lost its soft image and moral status. The example is that, the US had left the environmental protocols and institutions like WHO. So, because of that US has damaged its image. Hence, it is the duty of new regime to rebuild US soft image again. The top most priority of Biden administration at global level, will be to rebuild its moral image.

On regional perspective, US is trying to rebuild the SAARC infrastructure but ultimately, they have failed because the South Asian region is a complex one. It is not like ASEAN, EU or NAFTA. There are many issues and problems. There is also an arms race in this region. The region comprises of three major nuclear powers, two from South Asia and one relating from South Asia. Moreover, it is a conflicting zone experiencing so many issues like Afghanistan issue, Kashmir conflict and so many others. The super powers in regional policies, deals with regional states/groups with its major regional partner. After the cold war, US tried to rebuild its regional partner i.e. India.

The policies of India are not acceptable to the other states, especially for Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and as well as Nepal and Bhutan. The emerging global power, China, is also a neighbouring state of South Asia.. It is economically as well as strategically expanding. The USA with its allies, India, Australia and Japan, is trying to block China in Pacific and Indian Ocean. China has developed its new opportunity with the Belt and Road Initiative, particularly the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in South Asia. It is an emerging economic and strategic activity in South Asian region. In regional perspective US strong to block the expansion of China.

In bilateral relations, US has strong relations with the India and Pakistan. Pakistan in past remained the Non-NATO ally and also remained the member of SEATO and CENTO.



However, after the cold war, India is the major collaborative partner of the US. From the last 15 years, the USA and its allies are supporting Indian policies in every domain like nuclear strategies, economic opportunities, strategic strength, civilian cooperation and so forth. Regarding US' policy towards Pakistan, there have been hard and soft time periods.

During Trump's regime, the US policy was shifted and Afghanistan issue became important because of the peace efforts and facilitation of Pakistan. Out of the eight South Asian countries, five share border with China; Pakistan, Nepal, India, Bhutan and Afghanistan. China has expanded itself towards other South Asian states through bilateral agreements like Myanmar, Sri Lanka etc. Due to increasing partnership of Pakistan and China and their emerging role in the Indian Ocean Region, it might be possible that a different perspective may create in Biden's regime concerning Pakistan.

It is the time for the policy makers of Pakistan to re-think their policies. They should try to rebuild their relations with not only China but also with Russia, Iran, Middle East and the Central Asian republics. Although we have some issues with Arab states but Pakistan has a lot of opportunities with reference to their military position. So, we can be able to strengthen the military stand of Arab states as well. There is a clash of interests between the Arab states and Iran but there are some economic interests, which we can be facilitated by Pakistan. CPEC can ultimately built the economic opportunities.

The US is also trying to rebuild the confidence building measures between India and Pakistan. But it is difficult as of now because of the extreme policies of Narendra Modi. If we develop a window of cooperation it will be an opportunity for South Asia for peace. The USA and China, both have their strong interests in South Asia because of its huge market and as both nations are business nations. It is the time for South Asia to embrace co-existence. So, the policy makers should consider this as a window of peace.



Speaker 6

Dr. Adam Saud, Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Social Science, Bahria University, Islamabad

Topic: Emerging realities in the international political system: Focusing shift of the states' foreign policies.

The international political system is anarchic in nature. The anarchy is clearly explained by the structural realism that how the international political structure forces the states to chart out a particular kind of foreign policy. The anarchic nature is mitigated by three fundamental factors. One is the rightfulness of balance of power. Second is the international structures and international institutions at global and regional level. Third is the hierarchical nature of the system. There are different types of powers like super power, great power and regional power in the international political system. The most important thing is that the international political system is continuously in transition.

Once upon a time, it was the globalization, which was the cry of the time and everyone was talking about the globalization and its impacts on international political system. But now we have seen that there is a gradual shift and there is a constant creation of well-integrated regional blocks. Some of them are very successful like ASEAN, EU, SCO and BRICS. The transition is taking us to multi-polarity in international system. Second important reality is the international financial institutions like IMF and the World Bank, they have been monitoring the international economies for more than 6-7 decades. Now, these financial institutions are becoming redundant.

We have also seen the creation of virtual currencies and the rise of alternative financial institutions like Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank. The BRI project of China is also one of the manifestations of the new international financial system. Out of all these transitions, the world has witnessed the rise of powers. More importantly, these emerging powers belong to the East like China, Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa. All these are considered as rise of the East. The relative decline of the US in the form of the supremacy has been challenged. This is not only challenged with regional disputes but also at international and global level.



The third important reality is that the old notion of deterrence is being outdated. We have seen emergence of Non-state actors. These non-state actors have hit the core of the societies. Many of the problems as well as solutions have non-state actors at their core. The fourth important reality is the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital media. The machines have taken so many important fronts not only in industries but also in other fields of societies. The digital media has brought the international community to a single forum. It has also impacted the foreign policy behaviours of the states. It has created so many security risks like cyber security threats to the states and international political system.

The fifth reality is ecological issues and human insecurity. The climate change has deep impacted the whole intentional community. When there are issues like hunger, no access to clean water and un-employment so people will stand up against their own regimes. The Covid-19 or any other pandemic that may come in future will reveal the ineffectiveness of the current system.

If we look at the shift of the states' policies, there is a rise of neo-nationalism. The US foreign policy and President Trump is a very good example. We can see that how Trump has brought America in semi-isolation and kind of a disaster to international political system. Similarly, the whole notion of Modi's government and policies revolves around Hindutva. This notion is used against Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The rise of President Xi Jinping of China has brought new changing in their policies. There are two school of thoughts in Chinese foreign policy circles. One is that China is a developing country. On the other hand, the neo-nationalist school of thought says that China has attained certain level of power and influence, hereby, they are going to enter into international political system in order to achieve own objectives and interests. We have also seen Mr. Putin in Russia that how he has formed the foreign policy of the country.

Another important outcome of the foreign policies is the entrenchment of the authoritarian. The pandemic of Covid-19 has also intensified the competition in the major powers. Within the regional blocs, there have been certain fractions that complained against each other about non-cooperative behaviour in the pandemic.



Moreover, the fifth-generation warfare is another tactic that has been used by the states to achieve their foreign policy objectives. This has been used by the regional and major powers. There is another shift towards the regional integration and development. The core principle of capitalist system is being hit by the western states themselves because of the check and balances. The recent trade war between China and America is a good example of these check and balances and limitations.

Another important shift is the rise of power politics. Understating of these realities, Pakistan should move very carefully while keeping in view its own national interest. It should be focusing in strengthening relations not only with China but also with Russia, Iran and Central Asian states. Once the situation in Afghanistan is stabilized, Pakistan would have more chances to enhance international trade with not only with Central Asian states but beyond. Pakistan got best opportunity in CPEC and Gwadar port. These two endeavours must be game changer for Pakistan in this regard. Pakistan has a key position in international and regional political system. All the states whether Russia, China or US will be in need of Pakistan in future.



Speaker 7

Mr. Jawad Majid, Director, Silk Bank

Topic: Role of Socio-Economic Institutions & Organizations for Sustainable Development in Post COVID-19 era

The COVID-19 has wreaked havoc across the globe. Different strategies have been devised and implemented to tackle the pandemic in order to control the spread. This has also caused the economy of the world to nose dive in an unprecedented manner. The World Bank has anticipated that the global economy might contract by 5.2% while per capita incomes could face the largest contraction since the year 1870. IMF also estimates shrinkage of 4.4%. Global economy. The international organizations are implementing various policies and strategies in order to rehabilitate the countries in a holistic way to combat the pandemic while reviving their economies.

IMF in this regard is giving financial support, policy advice and debt relief to the poor countries by nearly doubling the access to Rapid Credit Facility and Rapid Financing Instrument. IMF has financially assisted around 85 countries. To strengthen the global financial stability, a revolving and renewable, short-term Liquidity Line is being introduced to the member countries. World Bank is also playing an important role in providing assistance to developing countries to strengthen their pandemic response and health care systems. It is supporting countries to respond to health, economic and social shocks. The World Bank's crisis response comprises three stages – relief, restructuring and recovery by focusing on four main areas – saving lives, protecting poor, ensuring sustainable business growth and job creation, and thereby, strengthening policies along with institutions.

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs is supporting the world to contain the calamity and emerge from it more resilient and united. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs stands in solidarity with the World Health Organization and other global, national and regional bodies to stop the spread of this virus and usher in a rapid and sustainable recovery. The global employment market has seen a massive shift as well. With social distancing and other measures, online Industry has seen a surge during the pandemic. Online revenue growth as of April 2020 was nearly 68%. Previously, online platforms were not utilized for day to day purchasing; however,



businesses around the world have used this platform to reach to the consumers during lockdowns.

Following online business are emerging post COVID-19, both globally and locally: 1. Telemedicine 2. Pharmaceutical Industry (Cloud-Computing for Secure Vaccine Development) 3. Education Industry (AI Empowered Online Education) 4. Manufacturing Industries (Flexible Solutions to Meet the Supply Chain Demand) 5. E-Commerce 6. Online Payment Platform 7. Delivery Industry 8. Insurance Industry 9. Market Industry 10. Gaming Industry 11. In local arena, Pakistan's GDP contracted by 0.4% during FY2020 against pre-Covid expectations of 2.4% growth. This comparatively better performance is attributable to smart lockdowns, government support and central bank incentives. Industrial activity plunged by 2.6%, services sector shrank by 0.6% while agriculture grew by 2.7%.

The global COVID-19 pandemic is impacting day-to-day life in Pakistan – not solely from economic disruptions but also additional stress on public services that jeopardize human capital accumulation. The Securing Human Investments to Foster Transformation (SHIFT) program proposed and approved by the World Bank supports three policy reforms aimed at building Pakistan's workforce and improving social safety-net programs, which are: (i) increase the quality of essential services, especially primary health care and equitable access to basic education, and civil registration and vital statistics, (ii) recognize women's economic contributions and support participation in the labour force through appropriate working conditions, and (iii) improve efficiencies in safety nets for COVID-19 response, and strengthen the effectiveness national and federal safety net programs in the short to medium term.

Pakistan's ability to mitigate socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 depends on how quickly and efficiently social safety net programs can reach those most in need. The program supports alignment efforts between Ehsaas, safety nets provincial programs to ensure that the most vulnerable and affected populations are identified and receive assistance. The fiscal and monetary support provided within Pakistan is well documented, although the timing couldn't have been worse from the perspective of the country's economic health. Within a span of a little over three months, SBP reduced the policy rate from 13.25% (March, 2020) to 7% (June, 2020). While monetary easing had become widely discussed around the world, Pakistan's monetary easing spree was timely.



Moreover, SBP extended support to existing borrowers under Debt Relief Scheme offering deferral in payments along with loan restructuring. Banking sector has accepted more than 95% of the applications under the scheme which amounts to Rs. 875 billion (nearly 11% of the sector's loans). Under Temporary Economic Refinance Facility (TERF), where Greenfield projects, Balancing, Modernization & Replacement (BMR) and expansion on existing projects would be offered refinance at a concessionary rate of 5%. So far, more than Rs. 250 billion worth of loans has been approved under TERF through various banks. Meanwhile Rozgar Scheme enables businesses to finance salaries at a cost of 3% to 5%, saving approximately 1.8 million jobs.

SBP also introduced measures to provide flexibility to importers and exporters by giving time leniency and reducing rates further under Long Term Financing Facility. SBP implemented another scheme for healthcare sector that included refinancing facility for procurement of protective gear, kits, beds and ventilators. The Government of Pakistan announced a stimulus package of Rs. 1.2 trillion in March 2020. Rs. 225 billion in cash was disbursed to low-income families and daily wage workers. This helped more than 6 million daily wagers and 12 million low-income families. Rs. 50 billion was earmarked by Utility Store Corporation while Rs. 280 billion was dedicated for wheat procurement to ensure availability of groceries.

Tax refund of Rs. 100 billion was released to exporters to support working capital, SMEs were offered relief in electricity bills and import duties on a number of health equipment were abolished. The government also made COVID relief measures a part of budget FY2021. Going forward, Pakistan still has many challenges to go through amidst already weakened economy made worse by COVID. The government institutions have played an important role and have emerged successful in containing the socio-economic disaster to some extent. Although more efforts are needed for implementation of measures that not only tackle the pandemic but also put Pakistan on track towards socio-economic recovery in sustainable manner.



ANNEXURE 2: PRESS RELEASE

On 8th February 2021, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Conference on, “Changing Dimensions of International & Regional Discourse, A Critical Analysis and Policy Options for Pakistan”.

The conference commenced with the opening remarks of **Ms. Palwasha Nawaz, Project Executive, Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad**. She highlighted the importance of the conference and explained that it is of utmost importance to understand the transforming dynamics of international as a strategic discourse in the post-Covid-19 era. Moreover, she stated that the conference aims to analyze the policy perspectives of the incumbent US administration.

Mr. Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, Director General (China), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan comprehensively discussed the role of China in addressing the key regional issues. He explained the role of China in regional connectivity. He highlighted that in a short period of six to seven years, we have completed excellent mega projects related to infrastructure, energy, agriculture, etc. Moreover, the second phase of CPEC will focus on agriculture, science, and technology, and socio-economic development, these are the projects that promise development in Pakistan.

He also stated that China’s financial and technological industry is enormous particularly when the global economy is in crisis due to COVID-19, which provides a lot of opportunities for other states to collaborate. He also explained that China has granted a lot of concessions through which Pakistan can export commodities to China. Moreover, he also highlighted the prospects of cooperation in the IT sector of both the states. He also suggested that over time, both nations should identify the sectors to enhance cooperation. He further highlighted the aspects of the development of the Gwadar port that has huge potential to connect many regions in the future.

Mr. Rahimullah Yousafzai, Senior Analyst & Journalist discussed the Afghan issue and the role of Pakistan. He also explained the regional policy framework vis-à-vis the current dynamics of the region. He highlighted the role of Pakistan in the Afghan peacemaking process and described the round of talks held between the US-Taliban and peace deal in detail. He also stated that both Taliban and Afghanistan were waiting for President Biden



to decide the future policy discourse. The Taliban wanted the US to keep its promise of release of the Taliban prisoners. However, the release led to violence as they go back to their training camps. He also highlighted that the United States can ask for new deadlines but it is vital to ensure that the Taliban fulfill their commitment. He concluded that Pakistan is an important stakeholder in the Afghan peace process and the US also considers it as a core partner in negotiating with the Taliban. Mr. Rahimullah also said that the US can resolve its conflicts with Iran, hereby, it can play a significant role in the Afghan peace process. Likewise, India can shed its traditional notion of reluctance and play a positive role in resolving Afghan Crises.

Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan, Director of Area Study Centre, (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar shared his thoughts on “Devising and implementing regional integration policies by Pakistan: Means and way forward”. He stated that China and Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a game-changer, likewise, peace in Afghanistan will also prove to be a game-changer for Pakistan. He briefly explained the contours of CPEC and highlighted that this flagship project provides an opportunity for other regional states to integrate. He further stated that Pakistan is more inclined towards Central Asia for regional cooperation, as India’s reluctance provides a little opportunity for cooperation in South Asia. Moreover, Prof. Dr. Shabir stated that China is a friendly neighbor and is assisting Pakistan to build a greater infrastructure. In this regard, regional countries should integrate to harness connectivity and regional collaboration via CPEC projects.

Dr. Irum Khalid, Chairperson, Political Science Department, University of Punjab, Lahore briefly discussed the transforming US foreign policy approaches and analysis on Joe Biden’s Administration. She stated that Biden has made the targets clear in his first speech. He was more inclined towards revising the policies. In this regard, she also stated that there are certain constraints in new foreign policy options for the US regarding the regional political and economic discourse. The regional politics includes the Iran conflict, Yemen Crises, Middle East, Afghanistan, China, and South Asia. She concluded that in present times, the US cannot afford any other humanitarian crises. So, it should move slowly towards reconciling the damage. She also stated that the world is now more inclined towards a dialogue of civilization rather than the clash of civilizations.



Dr. Mussawar Hussain Bukhari, Chairman, Political Science Department, Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB) discussed the US foreign policy towards Asia, Objectives, and Implications. He described that mostly the policies of superpowers are based on three levels i.e., state, regional, and international. However, during the Trump regime, the policies were based on other three elements: military, economy, and soft image. He stated that the United States has lost its soft image at the international level in Trump's tenure. He also highlighted the complexities of the region caused due to reluctant policies by India. Dr. Mussawar also explained briefly the important contours of China's connectivity through CPEC. Furthermore, he highlighted the regional policies and dynamics of Beijing and projects of cooperation with other South Asian nations.

Dr. Adam Saud, Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad explained the emerging realities in the international political system. The main focus was on the shift of foreign policies in recent times. He stated that soft power is the key to international stability. He briefly discussed the important transforming realities of today's political system that have impacted the foreign policy and behavior of the countries. For example, digitalization, Artificial intelligence, fifth-generation warfare, ecological system, environment degradation, and Covid-19 pandemic. He concluded by suggesting that Pakistan should move prudently while keeping a view of its national interest. Moreover, he said that Pakistan should have good relations with other states as well to achieve stability in Afghanistan. He suggested that Pakistan has a key position in the region and international political system because of CPEC, which is a game-changer.

Mr. Jawad Majid, Director, Silk Bank discussed the role of socio-economic institutions and organizations for sustainable development in the post-Covid-19 era. He explained that in this crucial time of the pandemic, we have seen development and growth in different industries. This transformation also made the dynamics of the global environment shift. He explained that in the post-pandemic era, the economy of Pakistan has gradually improved specifically in the agriculture sector. Mr. Jawad also discussed that international organizations have assisted Pakistan in overcoming challenges caused due to COVID-19, he also highlighted the important role played by China. He also highlighted three dimensions that witnessed growth in an efficient manner including quality, positive economic construction in the women labor force, and improving the efficiency at the national level in the short and medium-term. He concluded that all



institutions of Pakistan have played an efficient role in combating the pandemic. However, there should be more improvement in the policies to go along with the changing dynamics of regional and international affairs.

The conference was moderated by Ms. Laraib Fatima Hassan, Communication & Coordination Manager, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad, and was attended by 80 participants. It was also viewed live by 300 viewers on social media platforms.



ANNEXURE 3: MEDIA COVERAGE

1. Diplomatic News Agency

<https://dnanews.com.pk/experts-highlight-chinese-role-regional-connectivity/>



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Experts highlight Chinese role in regional connectivity

DNA News | February 8, 2021



Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Conference on, “Changing Dimensions of International & Regional Discourse, A Critical Analysis and Policy Options for Pakistan”

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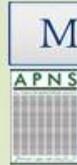
2. Centreline

<https://centreline.com.pk/2021/02/08/experts-highlight-chinese-role-in-regional-connectivity/>

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3. Daily Islamabad Post

<https://islamabadpost.com.pk/experts-highlight-chinese-role-in-regional-connectivity/>



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4. Diplomatic News Desk

<https://dnd.com.pk/cgss-organizes-online-conference-on-changing-dimensions-of-international-regional-discourse/212105>

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5. Pakistan Economic Net

<https://pakistaneconomicnet.com/story/16718/>



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6. **Gwadar Pro**

<https://gwadarpro.pk/1358750051640709122/cpec-a-pivot-for-regional-connectivity-dg-china>

CPEC a pivot for regional connectivity: DG (China)

By Gwadar Pro

18 hours ago

by Mariam Raheem

ISLAMABAD, Jan.8 (Gwadar Pro) - "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a transformational project, is a pivot for regional connectivity and is rejuvenating Pakistan's economy. In a short span of seven years, CPEC has achieved remarkable results as some major infrastructure, energy, and developmental projects have been completed through Pakistan and China's mutual and tireless efforts," said Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, Director General (China), at a webinar today.

Themed "Changing Dimension of International & Regional Discourse: A Critical Analysis and Policy Options for Pakistan", the webinar was organized by the Center for Global and Strategic Studies (CGSS).

The DG said that Pakistan was supporting China-led efforts at a regional level aimed at containing the pandemic, resuming the supply chain, and pushing forward the process of economic development.

"In a world beset with Covid-19 and severe economic repercussions, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) would be a catalyst for growth and economic development. Pakistan is committed to making CPEC a high-quality demonstration project of BRI," he stressed particularly.

Mr. Mudassir Tipu asserted that Gwadar Port has a huge potential and can connect South Asia, West Asia, Africa and parts of Europe. "The port has already started transshipment operations. In the coming years, it will reach its full capacity and become a leading port in the region, thus changing the region's economic landscape."



7. Gwadaria

<https://gwadaria.com/cgss-organizes-online-conference-on-changing-dimensions-of-international-regional-discourse/>



CPEC

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8. China Economic Net

http://en.ce.cn/main/latest/202102/09/t20210209_36305971.shtml



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CPEC a pivot for regional connectivity: DG (China)

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by Mariam Raheem

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"Pakistan is closely engaged with China to modernize Pakistan's agricultural field, and it also has a huge market for agricultural products. Pakistan and China have established two Working Groups on Agriculture and Science & Technology under CPEC to accelerate Pakistan's progress in the fields of both agriculture and ST," he further stated.

Drawing on his experience of working in China, he highlighted that Pakistan and China's leadership always focus on deepening, broadening, and solidifying bilateral ties. The famous proverb that China-Pakistan friendship is higher than mountains, deeper than oceans, and sweeter than honey epitomizes the essence of Pak-China relationship.

(Editor:Fu Bo)



9. National Herald Tribune

<https://www.dailynht.com/epaper/main>

6 INTERNATIONAL National Herald Tribune

ONLINE CONFERENCE ON "CHANGING DIMENSIONS OF INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL DISCOURSE, A CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND POLICY OPTIONS FOR PAKISTAN" ORGANIZED BY CGSS, ISLAMABAD

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SAYS SECOND PHASE OF CPEC WILL FOCUS ON AGRICULTURE, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BOTH TALIBAN AND AFGHANISTAN WERE WAITING FOR PRESIDENT BIDEN TO DECIDE THE FUTURE POLICY DISCOURSE: RAHMULLAH YOUSAFZAI

SALEEM RAIS

ISLAMABAD, February 8. Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Conference on "Changing Dimensions of International & Regional Discourse, A Critical Analysis and Policy Options for Pakistan" on Monday. The conference commenced with the opening remarks of Ms. Fatmasha Nawaz, Project Executive, Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad. She highlighted the importance of the conference and explained that it is of utmost importance to understand the transforming dynamics of international as a strategic discourse in the post-Covid-19 era. Moreover, she stated that the conference aims to analyze the policy perspectives of the incumbent US administration.

Mr. Muhammad Mudassar Tipu, Director General (China), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan comprehensively discussed the role of China in addressing the key regional issues. He explained the role of China in regional connectivity. He highlighted that in a short period of six to seven years, we have completed excellent mega projects related to infrastructure, energy, agriculture, etc. Moreover, the second phase of CPEC will focus on agriculture, science, and technology, and socio-economic development, these are the projects that promise development in Pakistan.

He also stated that China's financial and technological industry is enormous particularly when the global economy is in crisis due to COVID-19, which provides a lot of opportunities for other states to collaborate. He also explained that China has granted a lot of concessions through which Pakistan can export commodities to China. Moreover, he also highlighted the prospects of cooperation in the IT sector of both the states. He also suggested that over time, both nations should identify the sectors to enhance cooperation. He further highlighted the aspects of the development of the Gwadar port that has huge potential to connect many regions in the future.

Mr. Rahmullah Yousafzai, Senior Analyst & Journalist discussed the Afghan issue and the role of Pakistan. He also explained the regional policy framework vis-à-vis the current dynamics of the region. He highlighted the role of Pakistan in the Afghan peacemaking process and described the round of talks held between the US-Taliban and peace deal in detail. He also stated that both Taliban and Afghanistan were waiting for President Biden to decide the future policy discourse. The Taliban wanted the US to keep its promise of release of the Taliban prisoners. However, the release led to violence as they go back to their training camps. He also highlighted that the United States can ask for new deadlines but it is vital to ensure that the Taliban fulfill their commitment. He concluded that Pakistan is an important stakeholder in the Afghan peace process and the US also considers it as a core partner in negotiating with the Taliban. Mr. Rahmullah also said that the US can resolve its conflicts with Iran, hereby, it can play a significant role in the Afghan peace process. Likewise,

India can shed its traditional notion of reluctance and play a positive role in resolving Afghan Crisis. Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan, Director of Area Study Centre, (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar shared his thoughts on "Decoding and implementing regional integration policies by Pakistan: Means and way forward". He stated that China and Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a game-changer, likewise, peace in Afghanistan will also prove to be a game-changer for Pakistan. He briefly explained the contours of CPEC and highlighted that this flagship project provides an opportunity for other regional states to integrate. He further stated that Pakistan is more inclined towards Central Asia for regional cooperation, as India's reluctance provides a little opportunity for cooperation in South Asia. Moreover, Prof. Dr. Shabir stated that China is a friendly neighbor and is assisting Pakistan to build a greater infrastructure. In this regard, regional countries should integrate to harness connectivity and regional collaboration via CPEC projects.

Dr. Irum Khalid, Chairperson, Political Science Department, University of Punjab, Lahore briefly discussed the transforming US foreign policy approaches and analysis on Joe Biden's Administration. She stated that Biden has made the targets clear in his first speech. He was more inclined towards revising the policies. In this regard, she also stated that there are certain constraints in new foreign policy options for the US regarding the regional political and economic discourse. The regional politics includes the Iran conflict, Yemen Crisis, Middle East, Afghanistan, China, and South Asia. She concluded that in present times, the US cannot afford any other humanitarian crisis. So, it should move slowly towards reconciling the damage. She also stated that the world is now more inclined towards a dialogue of civilization rather than the clash of civilizations.

Dr. Moazzam Hussain Bukhari, Chairman, Political Science Department, Islamia University of Bahawalpur (UIB) discussed the US foreign policy towards Asia, Objectives, and Implications. He described that mostly the policies of superpowers are based on three levels i.e., state, regional, and international. However, during the Trump regime, the policies were based on other three elements: military, economy, and soft image. He stated that the United States has lost its soft image at the international level in Trump's tenure. He also highlighted the complexities of the region caused due to reluctant policies by India. Dr. Moazzam also explained briefly the important contours of China's connectivity through CPEC. Furthermore, he highlighted the regional policies and dynamics of Beijing and projects of cooperation with other South Asian nations.

Dr. Adnan Sohal, Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahau University, Islamabad explained the emerging realities in the international political system. The main focus was on the shift of foreign policies in recent times. He stated that soft power is the key to international stability. He briefly discussed the important transforming realities of today's political system that have impacted the foreign policy and behavior of the countries. For example, digitalization, Artificial intelligence, fifth-generation warfare, ecological system, environment degradation, and Covid-19 pandemic. He concluded by suggesting that Pakistan should move prudently while keeping a view of its national interest. Moreover, he said that Pakistan should have good relations with other states as well to achieve stability in Afghanistan. He suggested that Pakistan has a low position in the region and international political system because of CPEC, which is a game-changer.

Mr. Jawad Majid, Director, Silk Bank discussed the role of socio-economic institutions and organizations for sustainable development in the post-Covid-19 era. He explained that in this crucial time of the pandemic, we have seen development and growth in different industries. This transformation also made the dynamics of the global environment shift. He explained that in the post-pandemic era, the economy of Pakistan has gradually improved specifically in the agriculture sector. Mr. Jawad also discussed that international organizations have assisted Pakistan in cooperation with other South Asian nations.

The conference was moderated by Ms. Larish Fatima Inayat, Communication & Coordination Manager, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad, and was attended by 80 participants. It was also viewed live by 300 viewers on social media platforms.



ANNEXURE 4: VIDEO COVERAGE

CGSS Youtube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNPQTfjwE-8>

