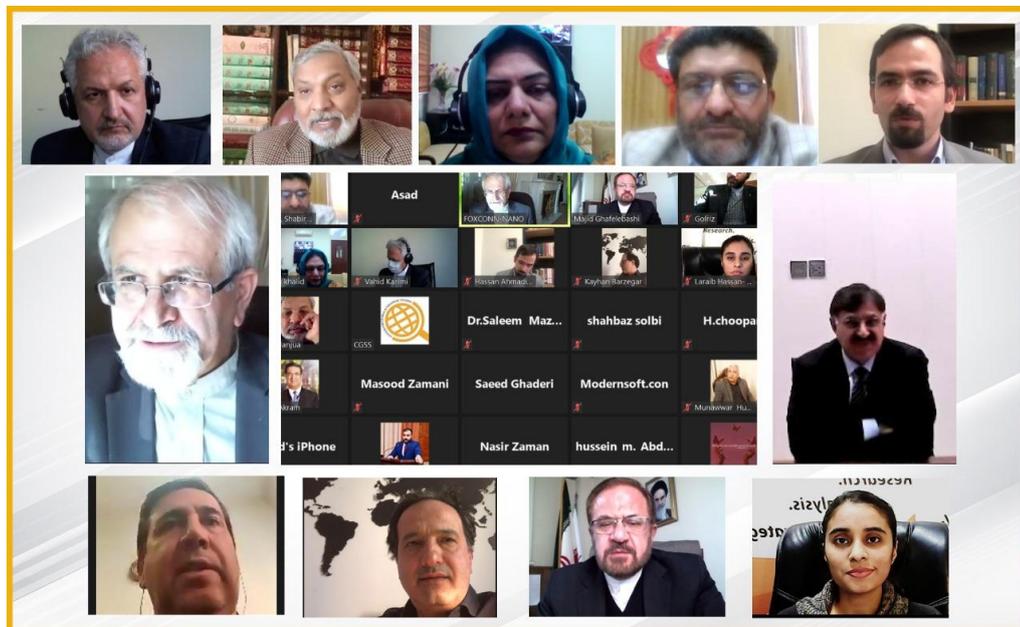




Online International Conference Report

“A Review of the Most Important Developments in the World and the Region in 2020”



Organized by
Institute for Political Studies (IPIS), Tehran, Iran &
Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan on
11th January 2021

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CGSS
Center for Global & Strategic Studies

5th Floor Khyber 4 Plaza, G-15 Markaz, Islamabad, Pakistan

Tel: +92-51-2328615

Email: infocgss@yahoo.com Web: www.cgss.com.pk



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Brief of the Event

On 11th January 2021, Institute for Political Studies (IPIS), Tehran, Iran, and Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad, Pakistan jointly organized an Online International Conference on, “A Review of the Most Important Developments in the World and the Region in 2020”.

The conference was commenced with the opening remarks of, Seyed Kazem Sajjadpour, President, Institute for Political and International Studies, Tehran, Iran.

The conference was conducted in two sessions. Theme of the first session was, Regional Issues, the West and South Asia. It was moderated by Mr. Majid Ghafelebashi, Vice-President for Research, Institute for Political and International Studies, Tehran, Iran. The Speakers of the first session included:

- a. Mr. Hassan Ahmadian, Professor, University of Tehran, Iran
- b. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
- c. Mr. Saeed Ghaderi, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Political and International Studies, Tehran, Iran
- d. Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan, Director, of Area Study Center, (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar, Pakistan

The second session of the conference was based on the theme, International Issues, the new administration of the United States, and COVID-19. It was moderated by Ms. Laraib Fatima Hassan, Communication & Coordination Manager, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad, Pakistan. The Speakers of the second session included:

- a. Mr. Kayhan Barzegar, Director, Center for Middle East Strategic Studies, Tehran, Iran
- b. Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua, (Retd), Senior Member Advisory Board, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad, Pakistan.
- c. Mr. Vahid Karimi, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Political and International Studies, Tehran, Iran
- d. Prof. Dr. Iram Khalid, Chairperson, Political Science Department, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

The conference was attended by 30 expert analysts and students from Pakistan and Iran.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY\KEY TAKEAWAYS

Executive Summary\Key Takeaways

1. **The Most Important Developments in the World and the Region in 2020 with focus on Afghanistan, Persian Gulf and South Asia:**
 - a. **Regional Outlook:** In a regional security complex, security of the states is closely interlinked. There are two significant concepts to this. First, regional imbalances, that have impacted on all sort of regional aspects like economic and political development, energy supplies, mutual relations etc. These regional imbalances among different nations have profoundly impacted the security dimension of the region, mainly, in Persian Gulf, Pakistan and Iran.
 - b. The second important dimension to regional development is witnessed as strategical asymmetric, which is essentially about the strategically independent regional players or actors. This plays into the imbalance in the region and a vicious circle. These two main dimensions are entangled and strengthen each other.
 - c. **Impact of Extra Regional Powers in the Region:** Russia, China and USA mainly determines and shape the world affairs and also impact geo-politics of almost all the regions for the last so many decades. The presence of extra regional players in South Asia, Middle East and Persian Gulf has escalated the regional crisis from certain decades.
 - d. Afghanistan has been used by major powers to supervise rivals from this strategic point which has always aided to the escalation of conflict. It is also worth mentioning that regionalism or regional integration is almost always antagonistic to the interests of extra-regional major powers and therefore impeded or selectively encouraged.
 - e. American involvement in the regional politics have resulted in leaving many negative imprints. The essence of USA policy in the region deals with encouragement and punishment. Punishment as for the independent nuclear states to have their own liberal security choices.
 - f. In recent decades, due to USA stern approach, it has faced much regional resistance. As to exclude any regional country i.e., Iran or Pakistan, from peace process of the region would result in huge repercussions.
 - g. Moreover, the increasing involvement of Israel in Persian Gulf and regional politics would not be tolerated by Iran and Pakistan. It has created many issues for the regional security. Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan have serious concerns regarding this, if not tackled properly then the situation may seem to deteriorate further.

2. The Impacts of New U.S Administration on International Issues:

- a. **From Donald Trump to Joe Biden:** The Previous Trump administration took America from being a sole global power to an isolated state in the global political environment. As many important events took place in 2020 and at every instant, Trump's "Make America Great Again" policy has resulted in U.S standing alone on more key global issues than ever before.
- b. The most defining chapter of President Trump's presidential tenure, is the COVID-19 Pandemic. A nation sitting atop what appeared to be a sophisticated public health apparatus and economic juggernaut has been unspooled.
- c. The world witnessed the fall of Donald Trump as Joe Biden won the Presidential Elections. In this regard, it is important to analyze that what changes are being expected in America in the new Biden Administration.
- d. As Trump isolated America, Biden will be able to redeem the lost glory of United States or not, it is yet to be seen. Biden's foreign policy options can be seen as retrenchment, restoration, and reinvention. He might immediately recommit to the W.H.O. and support the international vaccine consortium that Trump has rejected.
- e. Biden will make significant changes to US foreign policy and would immediately reverse Trump policies on Iran, Afghanistan, climate change and the World Health Organization.
- f. Biden has preferred working through diplomacy, alliances and international institutions. It can be expected that his administration will be more vocal in its criticism of India's oppressive policies in Indian-administered Kashmir. This will give Pakistan an opportunity to more efficiently highlight India's human rights abuses and international law violations.
- g. Joe Biden's victory might be a good news for the contemporary international problems and the current geo-political arena. But to see his practical approach towards these issues as the President of United States will bring more clarity to his views and vows.

3. Internal Challenges to New US Administration:

- a. **Social Legitimacy:** In the presence of aggressive Trump supporters, to gain the favor for policy implementation is a big challenge. The new administration can face the challenge of social disorder, which will pose great threat to national security and integrity.

b. Economic Security: Most serious and immediate threat is of Virus, Vaccine and Vacancy.

Other challenges can be amid by these aspects:

- i. Increasing Jobless
 - ii. Struggling individuals
 - iii. Small businesses
 - iv. Shortage of funding to local governments
 - v. High prices
- c. Human Security:** Racial tensions now demands for reconciliation after simmering for decades. Also, a deep political divide that flared into violence rocked the country's assumptions about its traditions of peaceful transfers of power. It can impose future fierce impacts on the human security.
- d. Potential Implications for the Congress as an Institution:** The issue for the Congress is what impact a changed role of USA in the world, it might have for Congress as an institution. Mainly, regarding the preservation and use of congressional powers and prerogatives relating to foreign policy, national security, international economic policy, and more generally, its role with relevance to the executive branch in U.S. foreign policymaking.

4. Key Takeaways: Future Prospects for Cooperation

- a. Pakistan and Iran are two brotherly neighboring states. Both states should work together in enhancing their security dynamics mutually and positively participate in regional political scenario.
- b. Iran and Pakistan hold almost same narrative in Afghanistan peace making process and in this regard holds a substantial place as a stakeholder. In this context, both need to cooperate closely on the border security and coordinate their policies regarding Afghanistan as the direct neighbors and stakeholders in peace process.
- c. The extra regional powers may desire to give ethnic and sectarian shape to the Afghan imbroglio, deepen the fault lines and perpetuate the conflict which will be almost catastrophic for the neighbors of Afghanistan. So, it is in the best interests of the neighbors of Afghanistan that extra regional forces leave the region.
- d. The regional fault lines have been ethnic and sectarian divide unfortunately being fanned and exploited by the extra regional powers to sow seeds of suspicions and distrust between regional countries and impede regional cooperation and development.

- e. In this context, regional cooperation and development mean real independence from extra regional powers to pursue independent foreign policies in search of inclusive regional development. Pakistan and Iran have to be vigilant to avoid use of these fault lines by third party to impede their bilateral cooperation and cooperation at multilateral forums.
- f. Moreover, the educational institutions, think tanks, intellectuals, cultural exchange programs and joint research projects can help in developing more strong mutual ties. In this aspect, Pakistan, Iran and other regional powers can facilitate educational projects in a longer term to project soft image, enhance people to people contacts and broader the area of cooperation and collaboration.
- g. China's rise, Iran's natural resources, Turkey's assistance and Pakistan's important geo strategic location, all have the potential to bring peace and prosperity in this region through multilateral cooperation and to build resilience to fight against COVID-19 pandemic. Regional cooperation is the only way to overcome the challenge of regional security and socio-economic under development.