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Regional Security and Foreign Policy in South, Central, and West Asia



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Session I: Inaugural Session

Ms. Maimuna Ashraf, Research Associate, Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), gave an overview about the SVI, its aims, functions, and various academic and research activities it has been carrying out since 2013.



President/Executive Director SVI, Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema welcomed and thanked the Chief Guest Dr. Jens Jokish, Chargé D'affaires of German Embassy in Pakistan, Dr. Lutz Viehweger, Resident Representative, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), Pakistan, Chairperson SVI, Mr. Ross Masood Hussain, and respected speakers and participants. Dr. Cheema said the theme of this conference has looked into profound changes that took place in Central, South, and West Asia. He added that these three regions had to be addressed together in one conference because these regions are connected with each other. Pakistan is at the crossroads of South, Central and West Asia. He said Afghanistan quagmire was one of the important developments. Unfortunately, India-Pakistan relations are in the state of stalemate. The new power configurations are taking place not only within the countries and regions but at the larger Asian and global level as well. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), one of the six corridors that are part of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative by People's Republic of China, will prove to be an important development. West Asia is in a kind of turmoil due to the involvement of various outside actors. In the wake of such rapid transformation happening in these regions, eminent scholars through this conference have been invited to discuss the current events and their future outcomes as well as implications. At the end of his welcome address, Dr. Cheema thanked KAS for its collaboration for organizing the conference.

Dr. Lutz Viehweger, Resident Representative, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), Pakistan, welcomed the honorable Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, Dr. Jens Jokish, Excellencies, and participants of the conference. He observed that recent developments on global canvas have urged countries to align and realign their relations and interests. Central Asian countries once again are in the limelight because of their strategic placement on the world



map and natural resources they possess. Great powers such as the US, Russia, and China were trying to exert the influence in the region. He said Afghanistan remains the pivotal subject for Central Asian and South Asian nations. The stability in Afghanistan is the key to development of all stakeholders involved. China's OBOR initiative has presented so many opportunities for both regional and extra regional countries. However, this initiative is faced with its own set of challenges where the biggest are terrorism and instability in Afghanistan.

Dr. Jens Jokish, Chargé D'affaires of Federal Republic of Germany in Pakistan, thanked President/Executive Director SVI, Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema and Dr. Lutz Viehweger, Resident Representative KAS, Pakistan, for inviting him as the Chief Guest for this conference. He said the subject of this conference is most pertinent of all times. He said the subject of water was not being covered by this conference. Water was big issue in Central and South Asia. He said learning from German experience, Asia should have CBMs to overcome zero sum logic of Cold War politics to create win-win situation. He said that the natural resources exports and regional economic cooperation plans like CASA-1000 and TAPI show the importance of these regions. He said that due to close geographical proximity, Gwadar and Chabahar ports should be complimentary rather than competitive towards each other. He added that the big economic development projects could only work in secure and stable political environment.



Session II: Emerging Security Landscape of Central, South, and West Asia



This session was chaired by Ambassador (R) Ali Sarwar Naqvi, Executive Director, Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Islamabad. Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Associate Professor, School of Politics & International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, presented his paper titled "International Strategic and Security Environment: Asian Perspectives". He said that for making sense of international strategic environment, it was important to analyze different constructs of strategic environment. He opined that the events that were outcome of this strategic environment were also influencing this strategic environment as well, and how different



states were making sense of this strategic environment, is of paramount importance. The great powers strategic competition is ongoing while United States is trying to maintain its hegemony in the international system, especially in terms of military dominance. The US has strategic partnership with India while Pakistan was expecting relative autonomy from the US pressure through CPEC. Dr. Jaspal stated that countries have been spending heavily on conventional and nuclear military modernization around the world. Negative Non-state actors like Islamic State (IS), Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, East Turkistan Islamic Movement, Libyan Islamic fighting groups, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, have further complicated the security environment of the region. The strategic environment of global politics has become very complex, ambiguous and more volatile, that is why once again the nations will be compelled to focus on their security keeping in mind the traditional conceptualization of the security is the military security.

Dr. Mujeeb Afzal, Assistant Professor, School of Politics & International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, presented his Paper titled “Significance of Geostrategic Environment of Central Asia”. Dr. Mujeeb Afzal argued that when we make an assessment of geostrategic environment of any region, essentially, we look into two broader factors:



geographical factors which are physical factor, and the other strategic objectives that are cognitive. During the Post-Cold War era, a new reality was created in Central Asia based on ethno-national factors. Based on these new identities new elite structure was created and people were socialized in line with these structures. It was the shared interest of major powers that this region should be kept open for all. Major Powers like Russia, China and the US are competing for influence in this region. For reviving Old Silk Road through One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, Central Asian Republics (CARs) are of immense important to China. The US role in this region is perceived to be that of a balancer against Russia and China. He concluded that in current great game, the Central Asia is not passive actor anymore, and the great powers will have to work with CARs.

Air Cdre (R) Ghulam Mujaddid, Acting Dean Faculty of Aerospace Sciences and Strategic Studies, Air University, presented his paper on “Contemporary Regional Security Environment of South Asia”. He was of the view that the region has been in the limelight due to a combination of positive and negative factors including rise of economic growth and the middle class, upsurge in religious extremism, militancy and terrorism, geostrategic rivalries through regional proxies, and great power politics. He opined that the nuclearization of South Asia seems to have added to instability and security risks in the region. He provided an analysis of the region with the lens of Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), which posits that RSC (Regional Security Complex) is “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another”. He added that there is a great deal of ethno-religious diversity within the states, which in combination with political divisions, tends to generate high levels of internal political violence. Whereas, contemporary security agenda in South Asia is largely traditional, the non-traditional security issues including environmental/climate change issues, rivers water sharing, poverty, energy and food insecurity, disease and state fragility- characterized by mis-governance, corruption and break down of social contract, are becoming much more pronounced. Resolution of core issues, strengthening of strategic stability, integration of economics and the people, and creating a regional approach to combat the non-traditional threats to boost South Asian security situation is needed.



Dr. Shabana Fayyaz, Assistant Professor, Defence and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, presented her paper on “Regional Security Order in West Asia”. She



opined that the region of West Asia signifies an immensely important area given its political standing, economic resonance, and geo- strategic position as the junction of three (Asian, African and European) continents. This region has very diverse economies, ranging from socialist to free market one. Primarily economies of this region revolve around crude oil and its refined forms, although tourism and industrial ventures also contribute to economy. With the strategic position and abundance of petrochemical resources, West Asia has remained under greater attention of major powers. The region is

increasingly dominated by growing insecurity and political stability. For explaining the security dynamics of the region, Dr. Shabana applied the Regional Security Complex Theory by Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver. She added that given its resources and developments, the international community is concerned about West Asia's fragile condition of security regarding the issues of religious extremism, democratization, WMD proliferation, international terrorism, external intervention in the region, and energy security. The main issues to the stability and security of region are: Israel-Palestine issue, Iran's nuclear program, ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Syrian crisis, and Saudi-Iran tensions. Moscow's re-entry into the Middle East was to re-establish a foothold in this region. She said, the external interferences and continued conflicts could lead to buttressing the ethnic\religious sensitivities in the countries of the West Asia, setting in a chain reaction – widening the door of further exploitation at the hands of foreign powers. In this scenario, she said, there will be no regional balance, it will negatively impact the economic and development dynamics of the region and thus provide a staging ground for the terrorist organizations.

In the Q & A session by the end of presentations, Dost Muhammad Barech from National Defence University, asked Dr. Jaspal about China's containment by the US and India. Keeping in view that the US and India have huge volumes of bilateral trade with China, he asked don't you think any containment strategy of China will hurt India and the US? Dr. Jaspal said that in his presentation he tried to highlight this puzzle. On one side there was economic cooperation and Chinese were trying to establish there was no strategic competition, but on the other side going by trends in South East Asia or in Asian environment, there is possibility of strategic competition. China has launched second air craft carrier, India has tested Agni V missile and announced Indo-Pacific Strategy, so the strategic competition cannot be ignored under these conditions. Russia is not ready to give up its near abroad, China is not going to compromise on East China Sea, South China Sea, the US will resist every move by other major powers to reduce its sphere of influence. All these factors indicate that strategic competition is natural.

Mr. Javed Hafeez, a former Ambassador of Pakistan, remarked that we had very romantic view of CARs after their independence. Being Pakistan's first Ambassador to Tajikistan, he said that they too had very romantic view of Pakistan. But, both sides failed to live up to each other's expectations. H.E Mr. Jononov Sherali, Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan, thanked the SVI and KAS for organizing conference on such

important subject. Talking about bilateral relationship, he said that increasing people to people contacts was needed. He said if one were to trace the history of Pakistani culture and spread of Islam in this region, we will find that Pakistan was connected with Central Asia.

Session III: Regional Politics and Foreign /Security Policy Challenges in Central, South, and West Asia

This session was chaired by Dr. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Dean, Faculty of Contemporary Studies, National Defence University, Islamabad. First paper, in this session, was presented by Dr. Shabbir Ahmad Khan, Associate Professor, Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar. He talked on the “Foreign Policy and Security Challenges in



Central Asia”. Dr. Shabbir argued that Central Asia is the only region where all the great powers converge due to its economic and geographical importance. In contemporary era driven by trade concerns, there is intensive competition for markets at regional and global level. The grand strategies of major powers, particularly the troika, i.e. Russia, USA, and China revolve around access to markets and likewise competing interests and approaches are to deny access to the rivals. The struggle, involving major regional powers, is about winning spheres of influence for transcontinental trade corridors, energy pipelines, and military bases. The idea of integration is central in contemporary geostrategic environment of Central Asia. The cooperative/competitive great powers structural frameworks include the US New Silk Road Initiative announced in 2011, Russian Eurasian Union announced in 2012, and Chinese OBOR initiative declared in 2013. The regional orientation will be mainly determined by these integration plans. The US made efforts to use Afghanistan as a springboard to enter Central Asia and ultimately establish its influence over Eurasian landmass. The operational policy of the US towards this region seems to minimize Russian influence and to pursue a policy of non-Russian, non- Chinese and non-Iranian routes for energy supply. He further added that CARs are pursuing policy of balancing and playing the great powers off one another to maximize their own national interest as well as extra benefits for the ruling class. He concluded that the operational polices of the major powers carry divergent



and competing interests, which could become impeding factors in regional integration plans. CARs are more comfortable in their relations with Russia and China because these two major powers support regime security.

Dr. Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, Associate Professor, University of Peshawar presented his paper “Dynamics of India-Pakistan Relations with Special Reference to the US”. He said, India started looking outward by initiating cooperative arrangements with countries situated in East Asia, Central Asia, Middle East and Western world. New Delhi followed “Look East and Act East Policy” to counter



Chinese influence in East Asia. India is following “Connect Central Asia Policy” to gain access to energy resources of the region. India improved its relations with Persian Gulf countries to fulfill its increasing energy demand. This shows transformation of Indian aspiration in international politics from leader of Third World to great power of geostrategic significance. Its membership of BRICS, G20, and other organizations of great importance increased India’s standing in world politics. The dilemma of Pak-India relations is their growing trust-deficit embedded in history since partition. The presence of nearly 200 nuclear warheads has merely driven their conflict underground, with each side testing the patience of the other and the limits of deterrence. Much foreign policy in South Asia is actually trans-border interference in another state, with intelligence agencies or willing ethnic, religious or linguistic assets being the preferred instrument of policy. Given the complexity of domestic politics and the history of almost seventy years, much of India’s Pakistan policy begins at home while Pakistan has usually sought the role of third parties in dealing with India. Countries like the US, China and Russia are in a position to create a security and political paradigm in South Asia that can promote sustainable peace and improve prospects of prosperity. For a constructive and stable South Asia, India and Pakistan must have a genuine and fruitful dialogue on Kashmir. A South Asian free



trade zone, between sibling rivals, is need of the moment for alleviation of poverty from the region.

Dr. Qandeel Abbas, Assistant Professor, School of Politics & International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, gave presentation of his paper titled “Politics and Foreign Policy in West Asia: Iran vs. Gulf States”. He said Persian Gulf is a sub region of West Asia which is also

known as Middle East or Near East. The geo-political significance of the Persian Gulf has given the region a prominent economic and strategic position but regional security issues have always dominated politics and foreign policy of this region especially during last two decades. Following the historic “Arab and Ajam” differences, Iran and Arab countries have serious dispute about naming of Gulf region that weather it is “Persian Gulf” or “Arabian Gulf”. Islamic revolution in Iran (1979) based on particular religio-political ideology has much more instigated rivalry among Iran and Arab states of the Persian Gulf led by Saudi Arabia. This regional rivalry became more and more complex when Saudi claim for the leadership of the Muslim World was challenged by the post-revolution Iran and subsequent multifaceted interference of foreign powers made regional scenario more complicated. Eight years’ war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988), invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, and subsequent Persian Gulf war (1991), incident of 9/11, the fall of Saddam Hussein following the 2003 invasion on Iraq led by the US, the establishment of a Shi’ite Iraq, and the 2011 Arab Uprisings have further inflamed tensions in West Asia including Persian Gulf states and created strategic instability in the region. Persian Gulf states have been concerned about Iranian capabilities, behavior and intentions. The competing powers of Saudi Arabia and Iran are continuously trying to shift the balance of Persian Gulf’s regional politics in their own favor. Although Iran and Saudi Arabia have not yet directly challenged each other militarily, however their rival policies have divided the region into two armed camps on the basis of political and religious ideology in seeking regional allies and propagating religious extremism as they continue to exploit the region’s weak states in a series of proxy wars ranging from conflicts in Iraq to Syria and from Bahrain to Yemen as well as from Palestine to Lebanon. The tensions between the competing powers of the region have been further strained by the events of the Arab Spring, rise of ISIS brutal terrorism, and Iran nuclear deal. An Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities could spark a wider regional war with dramatic consequences for the Persian Gulf region, leading to skyrocketing oil prices, and potential conflict between Iran and America's key Gulf Arab allies.

Dr. Talat Farooq, Senior Research Fellow, SVI delivered keynote address titled “An Overview of Foreign Policy Challenges in Central, South and West Asia”. She said, the speed of change has never been as rapid as we see it today against the backdrop of globalization. Globalization has spawned the opposite trends of both integration and



fragmentation. The world has moved from the Cold War bipolar order and the post Cold War uni-polar illusion to an increasingly multi-polar international system. What happens inside one country can impact another more intensely than before. Central Asia occupies a pivotal position within the Silk Road Economic Belt of trade and transportation corridors which will potentially connect China to markets in Europe. At the inter-state level, relations between several of the Central Asian republics are relatively poor with unresolved territorial claims, disputes over water-sharing, and rivalries between leaders. Domestically, there is a need for improved governance and curtailment of corruption. Interestingly, the instability in the Middle East and the growing terrorism threat has created opportunities for Central Asia to play a greater role on the geopolitical stage, especially as an intermediary trying to broker peace in the region. Exacerbated regional rivalries are transforming the landscape in West Asia, as is particularly evident in the competition between Iran and the Persian Gulf countries for influence in the Middle East. South Asia despite its diversity and resources remains hostage to Indo-Pakistan rivalry. China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) vision promises cooperation and constructive engagement and could become the harbinger of peace and prosperity through economic interdependence and a pooling of shared interests overseen by institutional norms. The main threats to CPEC emerge from great power politics manifested in shifting alignments at the global and regional levels. The growing US-India economic and military ties underscore the American foreign policy objective of building India as a counterweight to China. India and Pakistan need to show maturity and make the 21st century a century for the uplift of the common man suffering at the hands of poverty and violence. A more proactive approach is thus required of Pakistan, China, Russia and the US to settle Afghanistan quagmire. Negotiated settlement of disputes and a peaceful conflict resolution will not only bring long overdue relief to war-torn Afghanistan but will play a huge role in securing CPEC and allow it to fully develop lucrative linkages.

Dr. Pervez Iqbal Cheema thanked the speakers for their well-prepared papers and opened the floor for question and answer session. Colonel(R) Said Rasool asked Dr. Shabbir whether Russia will be able to influence India to change its behaviors towards CPEC and OBOR. Dr. Shabbir said that Pakistan and India will become full members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in June this year and that will be the only forum where Russia may influence India to change its behavior. He said as for as connectivity was concerned, Pakistan is

very important for opening Central Asia to the world through CPEC and connecting it with Gwadar port. The success of any possible mediation initiative by Russia or China will depend on whether India will accept such efforts. Captain Asim from Pakistan Navy asked Dr. Shabbir whether some linkages existed between OBOR and expansion of naval power of China. Dr. Shabbir said, the operational policy of the US in Central Asia was containing Chinese influence. The US has declared policy of promotion of democracy, protection of human rights in CARs. In his analysis, the operational policy of China should be access to market but at the same time denying such access to its competitor. Keeping in view the Malacca Dilemma for China and strategic presence of the US Navy around China and Indian Ocean, the protection of SLOCs will be very important for China hence it needed naval presence to protect its interest. The six corridors proposed under OBOR, every single one of them leads towards some port. Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema made the observation that he respects the view of two honorable speakers but he disagrees with that. The OBOR project leaves the security responsibility to the respective host country. China will not be taking care of security of CPEC or any other corridor under OBOR. There was no plan that China would send its forces for the security of CPEC. In the end, Chair of the session, Dr. Pervez Iqbal Cheema thanked the speakers for giving provocative points for such productive debate, and concluded the session.

Day-2

Session IV: Great Powers Politics in Central, South and West Asia: Retrospect and Prospect



Lt. Gen. (R) Naeem Khalid Lodhi chaired this session. Session started with the presentation of Dr. Muhammad Nadeem Mirza, Assistant Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University. He presented his paper titled

“Contending Interests of Big Powers in Central Asia: China’s Perspective”. He observed that the Western discourse states that China is rising, or China has already risen. Chinese official discourse in 2004 changed and from that moment on China is not ‘rising’, it is simply

‘developing’ and that too peacefully. From 1947-76, China essentially followed the survival tactics during the Cold War and ensured that by early 1970s there was no external or internal



existential threat. The era of sustainability consists of a period from 1976-2008. Currently, China is undergoing the third phase of its rise: the partnership phase. The final and fourth phase would be the 'leadership' of the international system – if that time ever arrives. He said the starkest factor that we find from comparing rise of the US and China is that dominantly the rise of China has been peaceful. The strategy that China has been pursuing overall and its relationship with Central Asia is based on non-intervention in domestic affairs of other states, non-confrontational way of thinking but showing military muscle wherever necessary, democratization of international system and rejection of dictation from other great powers, cooperation and competition at the same time by freezing the conflicts to be resolved at later time, win-win policy in economic domain while avoiding entangling alliances, avoiding taking sides in domestic issues of foreign countries, not binding states by any restrictive trade agreements, not using trade as tool to affect the domestic political outcomes, and last but not least, Chinese assistance is not sanctions prone. China is expanding its influence in Central Asia and different parts of the world through cooperative arrangements. Russian strategy, towards Central Asia especially, is based on no isolation and no neutrality, unification of Eurasian region under Russian leadership through offering different economic and security arrangements, total rejection of uni-polarity and maintaining multi-polar world, protecting ethnic Russians in and use force where necessary for this purpose, recreating Russian sphere of influence, and looking for cooperative arrangements with South Asian countries. The US has the policy of democracy promotion, ensuring energy supply, and war against terrorism in this region. India's interest in CARs has been access to energy resources and containment of Pakistan's influence. India has invested heavily in Afghanistan to contain the influence of Pakistan. Dr. Nadeem concluded that great powers while maintaining cooperative arrangements were developing military muscle as priority not only to protect their security but other interests around the world. This was exactly what great powers were doing in Central Asia.

Dr. Syed Shahid Hussain Bukhari Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Bahauddin Zakriya University (BZU), gave presentation of his paper titled "US-India Strategic Partnership: Impact on Pakistan and China". He started his presentation with a review of international politics that he said has always been in process of transformation. The US became the hegemon of the world in uni-polar era that started with the



demise of USSR. Within twenty years, the dynamics of world politics transformed again and the world became multi-polar where rise of China is the major development. While Russia is resurging, European power polarization is happening at the same time. Potential world power in this transforming world politics seems to be China. Being the hegemon, containment of China by the US becomes a natural policy to sustain its leadership of the world. Since China is rising due to its economic development, containment of China by the US and India shall require halting the Chinese economic development through creating hurdles in its economic development. Since China's economic rise is based on its exports through Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs), the control over major SLOCs chokepoints can enable the US to halt China's economic interaction around the world. In this connection, India-US strategic partnership will be an instrument of the US strategy to contain China. Dr. Bukhari highlighted that the US has adequate military presence in Asia-pacific region while the Indian Ocean region is the gray area where the US needs assistance, therefore, the US is promoting India to become a great power as part of her containment of China policy. India-US Strategic Partnership entails transfer of high-tech defense equipment with dual-use technology, Nuclear Deal, Space Cooperation, Missile Defense, Indian Ocean Region Security Cooperation, Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA). Such cooperation will result into enhancement of India's nuclear arsenal. The possible co-development, co-production & transfer of technology and induction of BMD will be highly destabilizing for nuclear deterrence in South Asia. The US is propping up India to assume the role of regional hegemon that will be catastrophic for South Asia. Pakistan needs to reduce dependence on the US military assistance by developing ties with other nations, e.g. China, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey etc. Consolidation of the full Spectrum Deterrence is needed to thwart any misadventure by the adversary. In contemporary world where narrative and perception is very crucial, Pakistan must build its positive image through information dissemination to counter anti-Pakistan propaganda.

Ms. Asia Maqsood, Research Associate at the SVI presented her paper titled "Dynamics of Russian Policy in South-West Asia: Regional Impact and Future Prospects". She opined that it is becoming obvious that the region of West Asia in contemporary era, is in the throes of fundamental,



political, social and economic changes. After the Arab-Spring of 2010, the considerable instability characterized by violent civil wars, huge sectarian conflicts, spectacular rise of fundamentalist forces, and extreme uncertainty about the future have been occurred. These circumstances have long term, irreversible implications on the existing political economic and security order in the West Asian region. Because of its geographical position, the region will be significant to regional and global security. South-West is a pitch for global powers' competition and cooperation. As the historical circumstances/Arab Spring had reshaped their interests and alliances in the region, there are several challenges to great powers as well. The height of success of any policy remains uncertain. Despite the Russia's ambitions to be recognized as global power, the US will continue to be the influential actor of this region and to construct the security architecture.

In the Q & A session, Mr. Muhammad Ali, a student from National Defence University, asked Dr. Bukhari What will be response of China in case India and the US get into some misadventure against Pakistan? Dr. Bukhari said that committing such adventures was not very easy in international politics, when great powers were involved. In such competitions, States could try only to maneuver things in their favor. He said that the nuclearization of South Asia does not allow any kind of military adventurism. Only thing both India and US could do was to support each other in defense developments but not in operations. Dr. Saif asked Dr. Nadeem whether China and Russia are going to be competitors or collaborators in Central Asia in the longer term? Dr. Nadeem said, he thinks that Russia has learned very painfully that it needs allies in the region, if that is not possible then have alignments in the region to pursue its strategy. He said that we must keep in mind that we are talking about great powers and they always pursue their security and military strategies, continuously trying to strengthen themselves. Russia and China have alignment of interest in Central Asia especially in economic sphere. Going by the current trends and interests of the both states in Central Asia, it will be collaboration. Ambassador Saeed Khan commented that Trump administration is not really using the term pivot to Asia. It was Obama's strategy to build the US naval presence in Asia, to build India as counter weight to China. Modification of this strategy under new administration is expected. The economic prosperity of great powers is interlinked that means they have much more to gain from cooperation rather than undercutting each other. He said in terms of military capacity, Pakistan has effective deterrence,

Pakistan needed to improve in terms of economics, he observed that we cannot shut India forever in term of trade and economic cooperation. Brigadier(R) Abdul Rehman Bilal, ex-rector Foundation University, commented the whole world is wondering about the US strategy under new administration. Containing China at this stage is very difficult. There is so much Chinese investment in the US and Europe that it's very difficult for those states to contain China. International order has changed, now gunboat diplomacy is not going to work in straits. After OBOR initiative, China is beyond containment. Babar Khan Bozdar, research Associate SVI, asked Dr. Bukhari that there were serious security threats to CPEC related projects. He asked how China will counter India's opposition to CPEC. Dr. Bukhari said Indian opposition to CPEC was there but China will continue to offer India to be part of CPEC because it was in India's economic interest as well. Pakistan too has invited India to be part of this economic initiative that will enhance regional connectivity.

The Chair of the session remarked that America does have a grand strategy, their deep state will ensure that strategy continues. There could be some hiccups in pursuing that under Trump but they are in a position to continue their strategy. The Chair in concluding remarks said China is rising but the US is existing greatest power in the international system. The US may be stagnant, but China or Russia have not reached the level where they can be equated with the US. The US still wields very effective economic, political and military clout. Pakistan should identify different actors and their interests, rather than coloring them as enemies or friend. The focus must be on the interests of different states and how Pakistan could align its interests and take advantage of the situation. He said this world is not level playing field, morality gets subdued under the weight of national interest. Realpolitik is the undercurrent that regulates the games among states. He thanked the speakers and audience for very interactive session.

Session V: Trans-regional Conflicts and Cooperation in Central, South and West Asia



Ambassador (R) Akram Zaki chaired the last session of the conference. Dr. Saif Malik, Former Director Research & Publications, Institute of Strategic Studies, Research & Analysis (ISSRA), National Defence University, Islamabad, presented his paper titled “ Central



and South Asian Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities for CASA 1000

and TAPI". He explored the energy needs of Pakistan in foreseeable future along with available options from the neighboring Central Asia. Afghanistan and India is equally the beneficiary of the both projects. TAPI presents an opportunity for regional cooperation on an unprecedented scale, linking the economies of the four countries. The CASA-1000 transmission lines will move electricity transmission between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (the first 477km) and from Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Nonetheless, both energy projects are accruing numerous prospects yet facing daunting challenges. The two projects ever since their conception have made substantial head ways, while claiming benefits in terms of sustainable development, improved employment, accelerated economic growth, social services and massive infrastructural development. However, the projects remained victim of multiple snags both implicit and explicit risks like financing, uninterrupted supplies, and the top most security of the projects. TAPI foremost requires safety in Afghanistan prior to its materialization. Whereas, realizing the CASA-1000 project will require strategic actions and a long-term vision and public-private sector partnership. Ultimately, the materialization of these ambitious projects will deliver reliable, affordable electricity to parts of the world that desperately need it to meet their existing and future energy deficiencies. Successful completion of these projects would likely promote inter-regional cooperation, investments in social services, and encourage community contacts. Most importantly, it will strengthen the politico – economic development of the region in the long run. He concluded that the electricity projects involving Central Asia and South Asia will help develop a modern, sustainable electricity market between the two regions. CARs, endowed with large energy resources, can help South Asian countries meet their increasing demand for electricity. CARs could diversify market for their energy exports and create source of revenue for their own economic development.

Ambassador (R) Fauzia Nasreen in her paper titled "Iran-India-Afghanistan and Cooperation with Central Asia" underscored that interests of major powers are deeply embedded in West, Central and South Asia. Paradigmatic shifts in the global and regional orders since the end of Cold War have seen new alignments in different regions of the world. In the backdrop of new paradigms emerging in the region, this regional environment has immense importance for Pakistan. Pakistan's desire to enter into mutually beneficial cooperation with the CARs is decades old. The forward initiatives taken by Pakistan for tapping



the markets of these republics were frustrated by geopolitical developments in the region. Instability in Afghanistan marred the prospects of such initiatives to great extent. CPEC provides the much needed alternative outlet to Pakistan in reaching Central Asia and beyond through OBOR initiative. China has emerged as a crucial balancer in the region that has as international stature, financial power and strategic interests in the stability and development of its surrounding regions. Through development, soft power and economic diplomacy, China is aiming to combat the three evils: extremism, terrorism and separatism. West Asia's oil and gas resources, together with those of Central Asia and Caspian have determined to a large extent the power politics of global and regional players. South Asia is very important in this alignment matrix. With two nuclear power states, and sub-conventional warfare in this region, situation can potentially flare up and escalate to the level where non-conventional weapons might come into play. Dealing with major powers, India takes pride in its notion of "strategic autonomy", while within region its Hindutva ideology manifest its policy of extending its sphere of influence from Kabul to Myanmar. India by rejecting repeated offers by Pakistan and China to join CPEC, has adopted a covert policy of destabilizing Balochistan to damage CPEC. The reshuffling regional alignments in progress are subject to shaping and reshaping by regional and extra regional actors.



Dr. Tughral Yamin, Associate Dean, Department of Peace & Conflict Studies, National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, presented his paper titled "Indian Regional Role and Interest in West Asia: Challenges for Pakistan". He said, India has long aspired to be the dominant regional power. In its quest for regional dominance, India has developed a strategic partnership with the US. The US conflated with the India to prop it as a counterweight to China. With regards to Pakistan, India has a policy of isolating it so that it faces no hurdles in expanding towards West Asia. Towards that end India has invested heavily in Afghanistan. It is also improving relations with Iran and has promised to turn Chahbahar into an important port in the Gulf. India also has ambitions to extend its footprint in hydrocarbon rich Central Asia. India is covertly trying to disrupt CPEC, and it is openly maligning Pakistan as a sponsor of terrorism and a country unfit to be entrusted with nuclear weapons. If Pakistan is able to substantially improve relations with both Iran and Afghanistan, it should be able to counter the Indian

ambitions of westward expansion. However, Pakistan should yet adopt a policy of connectivity with India, whereby it should be encouraged to become part of the OBOR initiative.

H.E. Sherali Saidamir Jononov, Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan, delivered his keynote address. He said that Central Asia is endowed with vast energy potential. The proposed CASA-1000 electricity transmission facilities will provide 1,300 MW electricity from existing hydropower plants in Central Asia (Tajikistan & Kyrgyzstan) to consumers in electricity deficient South Asia (Afghanistan & Pakistan). The project consists of investment in transmission lines and related facilities linking four countries. He said that even without installing new power generation capacity, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have sufficient electricity surplus during summers when Afghanistan and Pakistan face severe electricity shortages. While concluding he added that project is significant because it will ensure a steady source of revenue for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and facilitate the economic integration of Central and South Asia.



In the Q & A session, Colonel (R) Said Rasool commented that Pakistan was suffering due to energy shortage. Tajikistan has over 1000 rivers and energy potential, which was not being exploited. He asked Ambassador Sherali what factors were inhibiting the cooperation in energy sector between the two countries. Ambassador Sherali said that first agreement that Tajikistan signed with any country for energy project was with Pakistan in 1991. Pakistan was to invest 500 million dollars for construction of electricity generation house but unfortunately that did not happen and later Tajikistan got embroiled in domestic civil war. It took us 10 years to start CASA-1000 project due to finding investors. Tajikistan remains committed to timely completion of this project. He said with the completion of this project positive message will be sent to the financial institutions of the world. Ahmad Mukhtar from SPIR, QAU asked Dr. Saif why Pakistan was so reluctant to exploit domestic energy resources especially Thar coal reserves and waiting for projects like CASA-1000 and TAPI? Dr. Saif said that the concept of energy security postulates diversification of energy supply sources at affordable prices. Thar coal project was massive, though so many snags were going on; government was making efforts for utilization of these coal reserves. This does not mean that Pakistan should restrict itself to

domestic energy sources. He said Pakistan should follow China and diversify its energy supply by tapping all available domestic and foreign energy reserves.



Mr. Ross Masood Husain, Chairman SVI concluded the conference by summarizing three lessons for Pakistan with respect to its foreign and security policy towards South, Central, and West Asia. He said Pakistan cannot under any circumstances afford a hostile Afghanistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan have to work for the removal of cobwebs of suspicion and distrust. Pakistan's relationship with Gulf States including Saudi Arabia and Iran is equally important and it needs to play balancing role. Pakistan should make efforts to bring these two countries together. He said that Kashmir issue has to be resolved for better India Pakistan relations and regional connectivity. At the end he recognized outstanding services of Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema and moved vote of confidence for recognizing his services that he has rendered for building up the Strategic Vision Institute.

At the end, Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema thanked the distinguished speakers, and audience. He expressed his profound gratitude to the SVI team that played its part in organization of the conference. He also acknowledged and thanked KAS for their collaboration in organizing the conference.



Press Coverage

Day 1

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