

**TWO-DAY  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**Regional Dynamics and  
Strategic Concerns in  
South Asia**

**organized by**

**Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI)**



**in collaboration with**

**Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), Germany (Pakistan Office)**



**November 14-15, 2017**

**Serena Hotel, Islamabad**

# Concept Note

## The Institute

Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) is an autonomous think tank. It is dedicated to undertaking research, analyses and evaluations of important national and international politico-strategic issues and developments affecting Pakistan and the region. One of the prominent areas of activity of the institute is organizing national and international seminars/conferences. To know more about IPRI, you may visit our website, [www.ipripak.org](http://www.ipripak.org)

## Concept Outline

Geographically, South Asia comprises of the states of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. It is located contiguously to the Middle East, Central Asia, China and the Indian Ocean. Apart from geography and shared history, there is little that encourages or compels the South Asia region to cohere. Quite on the contrary, South Asia today is counted as one of the least integrated regions of the world as the intra-regional trade merely accounts for 5 per cent as compared to 58 per cent of the European Union (EU), 52 per cent of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) region and 26 per cent of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) zone. These challenges over the years have been compounded by harsh natural calamities, human and food insecurity, mounting economic crunches, changing security paradigms and above all, the birth of transnational terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11.

Socially, the region is diverse and unique as it holds people from different backgrounds and ethnicities together. However, the region's political dimension is cluttered as a spirit of nationalism among states prevails stronger, which more often than not overshadows the prospects of regionalism. The ambitions of economic interaction and interdependence have largely remained unaddressed due to polarization among regional states. The assessment of socio-political trends in South Asia reflects that the region is facing multi-dimensional challenges of socio-economic and politico-military nature. The 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, comprising of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is especially relevant for South Asian countries as the region accounts for 37 per cent of the world's poor, nearly half of the world's malnourished children, and suffers from a number of development and infrastructure gaps.

In spite of having geographical contiguity, many believe that South Asia will continue to be a major conflict prone area on the globe. It has mainly suffered as a region due to its geographical Indo-centricity and egoistic behavior of India. The two major countries of South Asia, i.e. Pakistan and India have mostly inherited their core issues from the times of partition. Geographically, Pakistan only shares borders with India and Afghanistan, while India shares borders with other states of the region, resulting in a number of disputes and policy

differences with smaller neighbours. In such geographical asymmetry, and taking into account the high number of politico-security concerns, there are limited opportunities for Pakistan and other smaller neighbours of India to maintain cordial and dynamic relations with each other.

In the given environment, the region cannot capitalize upon the economic benefits related to regional integration of South Asia and its connectivity with neighboring regions. Moreover, India uses bilateral issues as a pretext for straining the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The postponing of the 19<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit scheduled in Pakistan last year is a case in point. In May 2014, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party came to power under the leadership of Narendra Modi. Since his coming into power, secular Indian outlook has been facing severe setbacks. Religious extremism and intolerance towards minorities in India have been on the rise encompassing drastic domestic and regional implications.

The situation is further compounded by the persistence of longstanding conflicts, especially the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and instability in Afghanistan and related issues of terrorism. Any dangerous outcome of this situation can further impact the regional stability. Despite the presence of a unity government in Afghanistan, the security situation has further deteriorated. In order to build peace in Afghanistan, various consultation groups have been established to facilitate negotiations between the Afghan government and all ethnic groups but so far no success. Countering terrorism and formulating a sound strategy to settle the Afghan issue largely remain major US concerns in the region. The situation is further complicated by the rising presence of Daesh in the region. President Donald Trump in his speech on South Asia on August 21, 2017 has committed the US engagement in Afghanistan by sending more troops. He announced to further develop US strategic partnership with India and giving it a bigger role in Afghanistan. Many believe that US' India-driven South Asia policy is a recipe to destabilize the region and it would not help in resolving Afghan problem. In fact, the US policy on Afghanistan has been inconsistent. At times, it talked about political reconciliation and withdrawal of troops however, time and again it pursued the military option.

The deteriorating security and increasingly unclear situation in Afghanistan may undermine the prospects of inter-regional connectivity of Central Asia with South Asia and West Asia upto Europe. In this context, it is important that the Afghan territory is not used for fomenting instability in Pakistan and other regional countries.

The long and persistent influence of external powers in decision making in South Asia has impacted the political evolution of these states. Since the end of the Cold War, the US is aiming to maintain its influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean for strategic reasons. This strategic interest of the US is visible from its strategic partnership agreements with India and Afghanistan. In this context, the tilt of the US towards India in South Asia, to the exclusion of Pakistan, is a matter of concern for the latter. With the arrival of Donald Trump in the White House, the US foreign policy towards South Asia is based on enhancing its strategic and economic cooperation with India while ignoring Pakistan's interests in the region. This trend was quite evident from President Trump's statements during Indian Prime Minister Narendra

Modi's visit to US in June 2017 and about two month later in his deliberated US Strategy for South Asia.

Contrary to the US, the engagement of Russia in South Asia is more balanced and pragmatic in the context of its relations with India and Pakistan and its efforts towards bringing peace in Afghanistan. Besides maintaining good relations with India, Russia is also reaching out to Pakistan. Furthermore, Russia is positively engaged in Afghanistan to fight Daesh and resolve the Afghan issue through reconciliation. In another development, the SCO has extended its membership to Pakistan and India in June 2017. SCO, with its commitment to principles of conflict resolution may help both the rival countries to resolve their political issues peacefully. It can also play a positive role towards the regional integration.

The rise of China as an economic power is an opportunity for South Asia to reap economic benefits from its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in general and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in particular. With the exception of India, South Asian countries view China as a reliable partner that helps countries in their economic development in a tangible manner while respecting the countries' sovereignty. On the other hand, Washington's tilt towards New Delhi and the Indo-US Strategic Partnership seems to be largely driven by China's growing economic engagement in South Asia, West Asia and Asia Pacific. In this context, India is expected to serve the purpose of acting as a strategic hedge in the region to contain China's influence. As the inter-regional realignments continue to evolve, the regional dynamics and aspects of strategic stability in South Asia would remain to be a matter of concern. The scholars' community believes that given the emergence of China as a global economic power, the US is assisting India in balancing the influence of China in Asia. It is therefore perceived that this geo-political alignment would make India more hegemonic in South Asia.

Balance of power in South Asia revolves around the maintenance of the nuclear and conventional military equation between India and Pakistan on one hand and interplay of politics among the United States, China and Russia in the region, on the other. The Indo-US strategic partnership in the context of their defence and nuclear cooperation is clearly undermining strategic stability in the region. The situation is further complicated due to India's missile development and upgradation and defence deals with Israel, France and the US. These developments are definitely disturbing the existing conventional and strategic balance in the region. Pakistan under no circumstances would allow the credibility of its deterrence to be compromised.

The above discussed complex politico-strategic situation in South Asia gets further aggravated because of the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute. The ongoing struggle by Kashmiris for their right to self-determination and rampant atrocities committed by the Indian security forces to suppress by force the voice of Kashmiris is making South Asia unstable. Moreover, the lack of resolution of the Afghan conflict and other outstanding issues between Pakistan and India add to the complexities. It is disgusting that heavy expenditure on defence in South Asia is being made at the cost of South Asia's economic progress and regional integration. Major Powers must help to maintain South Asian strategic stability and also help South Asia in resolving the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and the Afghanistan

conflict. The South Asian countries, too, need to work seriously in resolving their disputes to avoid an arms race and focus on the CPEC related regional connectivity and their economic development.

The regional and global political landscape in recent years since the announcement of China's One Belt-One Road initiative in 2014 has been transformed rapidly. The recent years have seen several developments ranging from Donald Trump's assumption of power, Britain's slow exit from the EU and resulting policy shifts, the possible end of ISIS self-styled caliphate in the Middle East, Saudi-Qatar rift, deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India's inclusion in SCO, Indo-US strategic partnership to Modi's regional and global diplomatic endeavors to isolate Pakistan. All these developments will have implications for emerging dynamics and strategic concerns in South Asia.

In the light of the foregoing, IPRI is organizing a Two-Day International Conference in collaboration with Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), with a view to analyze the regional dynamics and strategic stability concerns in South Asia affecting the overall strategic outlook for Pakistan. Eminent scholars from Afghanistan, China, Germany, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka and the US will be invited to the conference to present their papers. The objective of this conference is to find plausible recommendations for policy makers.

### **Suggested Themes and Sub-themes:**

1. Regional Dynamics of South Asia
  - a) Assessment of Socio-Political Trends in South Asia
  - b) Pakistan and India's SCO Membership and its Impact on their Future Relations
  - c) Non-Traditional Security Challenges in South Asia
  - d) The rise of China - Shift from Geo-strategic to Geo-economics: Impact on South Asia
2. Strategic Concerns in South Asia
  - a) US-China Relations: Prospects and Challenges
  - b) US Strategic Interests and Priorities in South Asia
  - c) Strategic Stability in South Asia: Disturbing Factors
  - d) Russian Engagement in South Asia-Policy Options for Pakistan
3. Strategic Situation in Afghanistan and its Regional Implications
  - a) Pakistan's Concerns on India's Influence in Afghanistan
  - b) Countering Ingress of Daesh in Afghanistan: Regional and Global Perspectives
  - c) Reconciliation Process in Afghanistan and the Role of SCO
4. Addressing Security Concerns in South Asia: A Way Forward
  - a) Resolving the Jammu and Kashmir Dispute: An Imperative for Regional Peace
  - b) Strategic Competition vs. Economic Interdependence: Impact of CPEC
  - c) The Role of Global Powers in Building Cooperative Security Order in South Asia

# Inaugural Session

Tuesday, November 14, 2017

0915-1000 hrs	<b>Registration</b>
1000-1005 hrs	<b>Recitation from the Holy Quran</b>
1005-1015 hrs	<b>Welcome Address,</b> <i>Ambassador (R) Abdul Basit,</i> <i>President, IPRI</i>
1015-1025 hrs	<b>Opening Remarks,</b> <i>Mr. Kristof Duwaerts,</i> <i>Resident Representative, (HSF), Islamabad</i>
1025-1045 hrs	<b>Inaugural Address by the Chief Guest</b> <i>H. E. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq (to be Confirmed)</i> <i>Speaker, National Assembly</i>
1045-1050 hrs	<b>Presentation of Mementos</b>
1050-1100 hrs	<b>Group Photo</b>
1100-1130 hrs	<b>Refreshments</b>

# Session I

## Regional Dynamics of South Asia

Chairperson	<b>Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed</b> <b>Chairman, Senate Committee on Defence,</b> <b>Parliamentary Committee on CPEC and</b> <b>Pakistan-China Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan</b>
<b>Paper I</b> 1130-1145 hrs	<b>Assessment of Socio-Political Trends in South Asia</b> <i>Admiral Dr. Jayanath Colomabge,</i> <i>Former Chief of Sri Lankan Navy and</i> <i>Director, Pathfinder Foundation, Sri Lanka.</i>
<b>Paper II</b> 1145-1200 hrs	<b>Pakistan and India's SCO Membership and its Impact on their Future Relations</b> <i>Dr. Boris Volkhonsky,</i> <i>Associate Professor, Institute of Asian and African Studies</i> <i>Moscow State University, Russia</i>
<b>Paper III</b> 1200-1215 hrs	<b>Non-Traditional Security Challenges in South Asia</b> <i>Mr. Biswas Baral,</i> <i>Op-Ed Editor, Republica National Daily,</i> <i>Kathmandu, Nepal</i>
<b>Paper IV</b> 1215-1230 hrs	<b>The Rise of China - Shift from Geo-strategic to Geo-economics: Impact on South Asia</b> <i>Mr. Didier Chaudet,</i> <i>Independent Consultant on Eurasia and South Asia,</i> <i>Non-Resident Scholar, IPRI and Editing Director, Center</i> <i>For the Analysis on Foreign Policy, France</i>
1230-1300 hrs	<b>Discussion and Remarks by the Chair</b>
1300-1310 hrs	<b>Presentation of Mementos</b>

## **Session II**

### **Strategic Concerns in South Asia**

<b>Chairperson</b>	<b>Ambassador (R) Zamir Akram, Former Ambassador of Pakistan and Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva</b>
<b>Paper I</b> 1310-1325 hrs	<b>US-China Relations: Prospects and Challenges</b> <i>Dr. Wei Zongyou, Professor, Center for American Studies, Fudan University, China</i>
<b>Paper II</b> 1325-1340 hrs	<b>US Strategic Interests and Priorities in South Asia</b> <i>Mr. Andrew Joseph William Small, Senior Transatlantic Fellow, Graham Marshall Fund of the United States (Asia Program), Washington, DC, United States</i>
<b>Paper III</b> 1340-1355 hrs	<b>Strategic Stability in South Asia: Disturbing Factors</b> <i>Professor Dr. Syed Rifaat Hussain, Head, Government &amp; Public Policy, National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan</i>
<b>Paper IV</b> 1355-1410 hrs	<b>Russian Engagement in South Asia-Policy Options for Pakistan</b> <i>Dr. Shabir Ahmed Khan, Associate Professor, Area Study Center, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan</i>
1410-1440 hrs	<b>Discussion and Remarks by the Chair</b>
1440-1450 hrs	<b>Presentation of Mementos</b>
1450 hrs	<b>Lunch</b>



# **Session III**

## **Strategic Situation in Afghanistan and its Regional Implications**

Wednesday, November 15, 2017

0915-1000 hrs

*Registration*

**Chairperson**

**Ambassador (R) Mohammad Sadiq,  
Former National Security Secretary and  
Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan,  
Government of Pakistan**

**Paper I**

**Pakistan's Concerns on India's Influence in  
Afghanistan**

1000-1015 hrs

*Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand,  
Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan,  
Government of Pakistan*

**Paper II**

**Countering Ingress of Daesh in Afghanistan:  
Regional and Global Perspectives**

1015-1030 hrs

*Dr. Attaullah Wahidyar,  
Senior Policy Programme Advisor and General Director,  
Communication and Publications, Ministry of Education,  
Government of Afghanistan*

**Paper III**

**Reconciliation Process in Afghanistan and the Role  
of SCO**

1030-1045 hrs

*Mr. Vladimir Potapenko,  
Deputy Secretary-General, Shanghai Cooperation  
Organization, China*

1045-1115 hrs

**Discussion and Remarks by the Chair**

1115-1125 hrs

**Presentation of Mementos**

1125-1155 hrs

**Refreshments**

## **Session IV**

# **Addressing Security Concerns in South Asia: A Way Forward**

Chairperson	<b>Ambassador (R) Ashraf Jehangir Qazi,</b> Former Ambassador of Pakistan to US, India, China and Russia
<b>Paper I</b>	<b>Resolving the Jammu and Kashmir Dispute: An Imperative for Regional Peace</b>
1155-1210 hrs	<i>Professor Dr. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema,</i> <i>Dean, Faculty of Contemporary Sciences, National Defence University, Islamabad, Pakistan</i>
<b>Paper II</b>	<b>Strategic Competition vs. Economic Interdependence: Impact of CPEC</b>
1210-1225 hrs	<i>Dr. Kamal Monnoo,</i> <i>Member, Board of Governors (BoGs), IPRI and Leading Industrialist &amp; Economic Analyst, Pakistan</i>
<b>Paper III</b>	<b>The Role of Global Powers in Building Cooperative Security Order in South Asia</b>
1225-1240 hrs	<i>Dr. Christian Wagner,</i> <i>Senior Fellow, Asia Division, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), Germany</i>
1240-1310 hrs	<b>Discussion and Remarks by the Chair</b>
1310-1320 hrs	<b>Presentation of Mementos</b>

## Concluding Session

1320-1340 hrs	<b>Concluding Address by the Chief Guest</b> <i>General Zubair Mahmood Hayat</i> <i>Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC),</i> <i>Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi, Pakistan</i>
1340-1350 hrs	<b>Vote of Thanks</b> <i>Ambassador (R) Abdul Basit,</i> <i>President, IPRI</i>
1350-1400 hrs	<b>Presentation of Mementos</b>
1400-1410 hrs	<b>Group Photo</b>
1410 hrs	<b>Lunch</b>

# Notes

**For Further Details, Contact:**

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