

## **Press Release**

The Pakistan Institute of International Affairs hosted a Seminar/Webinar titled, “Emerging Geostrategic Contestation in Asia-Pacific: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan” on Wednesday, 3 February 2021. The event was inaugurated by Lt. General (R) Tariq Waseem Ghazi.

The speakers at the Seminar included Ambassador Salman Bashir, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan and High Commissioner of Pakistan to India; Rear Admiral (R) Pervaiz Asghar, Adviser and Honorary Fellow, National Centre for Maritime Policy Research, Bahria University; Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General, Institute of Strategic Studies and former Foreign Secretary; and Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

The two sessions of the Seminar were chaired by Dr Masuma Hasan, Chairman, The Pakistan Institute of International Affairs and Ambassador Syed Hasan Habib, Senior Fellow, Centre for Area and Policy Studies, Institute of Business Management, Karachi.

In her welcome address, Dr Masuma Hasan mentioned that the focus of the Seminar would be upon how Pakistan can promote its interests, the challenges it faces, and the opportunities available for Pakistan in the emerging dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region.

In his inaugural address, Lt. General (R) Tariq Waseem Ghazi stated that the world was shifting from unipolarity to multipolarity, with recession in the power of the US and an erosion in its hegemony. He recommended that our focus should be to engage with partnerships that may take Pakistan and its interests forward and not with those who had let us down in the past.

The first session of the Seminar focused on ‘Challenges for Pakistan’. Ambassador Salman Bashir spoke on ‘Challenges for Pakistan in the Vortex of Geostrategic Flux’. He stated that world politics was shifting from geopolitics to geoeconomics and the centre of gravity had shifted to the Asia Pacific. He asserted that for centuries maritime powers had dominated, but with the rise China, we see the emergence of a land power.

In his presentation on ‘Towards a Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Challenges for Pakistan’, Rear Admiral (R) Pervaiz Asghar stated that all states of the region, including Pakistan, must play their part in lowering the temperature of the region, rather than becoming a part of the problem. The challenges that Pakistan faces in a rapidly evolving environment are multipronged, therefore Pakistan needs to keep its guard up.

The second session of the Seminar focused on ‘Opportunities for Pakistan’. Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry spoke on ‘Major Power Competition: Opportunities for Pakistan’. He stated that the strategic approach and alignments

adopted by the US regarding Asia will not change with Joe Biden's administration. He recommended that Pakistan needed to bilateralize and desecuritize its relationship with the United States.

Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal talked on 'The South Asian Landscape: Options for Pakistan'. He argued that today, South Asia is the least economically integrated region in the world due to India's hegemonic designs. He said that Pakistan has no other option other than solidifying its offensive-defence because two of its borders are unsettled.

Prof. Dr Khalid M. Iraqi, Vice-Chancellor, University of Karachi was the Chief Guest in the concluding session of the Seminar. In his remarks, he said that China does not pose an immediate military threat to the US, but its growing economic clout has been taken as an immediate threat by policymakers in the US.

The Seminar was attended in-person by former ambassadors, members of the armed forces of Pakistan, members of the judiciary, academicians, eminent scholars, and members of the PIIA. The event was live-streamed on Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook.