



Institute of Regional Studies

Emerging Alliances are an Opportunity and a Challenge

ISLAMABAD December 2, 2020: Speakers at a panel discussion here on Wednesday were of the view that emerging geopolitical alliances in South Asia were presenting challenges as well as opportunities for regional states at the same time. The panel discussion titled “emerging geopolitical alliances and prospects of regional peace” was organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS).



Former diplomat Amb Asif Durrani was of the opinion that there was a need for greater appreciation in Pakistan with regard to the new global reality of an emergent China. Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal from Quaid-i-Azam University agreed with him and stated that the high ground had already shifted from underneath the US towards China. Dr Shabana Fayyaz from Quaid-i-Azam University added that Russia was also showing signs of tilt towards Pakistan because it was losing its arms market in India to the US very fast owing to a strategic partnership between India and the US.

Former diplomat Amb Sohail Khan was of the view that Pak-US relations could at best be described as a technical partnership. Amb Asif Durrani added that there was no alliance between China and Pakistan either because Chinese government as a matter of policy did not enter into alliances with any other state. Dr Fayyaz was of the view that although China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was a win-win economic cooperation model, it was being maligned by the West. She emphasized improving Pakistan’s internal strengths for improving its position in the region as well as internationally.

Amb Khan urged the governments of India and Pakistan to explore possibilities of a dialogue on the side-lines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). He expressed his apprehensions that India might not be very forthcoming in accepting an invitation for a dialogue. Dr Jaspal and Amb Durrani seconded his views. Both of them were of the opinion that the majoritarian Hindutva nationalism of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was getting in the way of Pakistan’s peace overtures towards India. Dr Jaspal added that Pakistan still featured high in the domestic political agenda of the BJP: a reason for which it could not pursue peace with India.

All the panellists agreed that keeping in view the current reality of South Asia, the possibility of a regional dialogue remained very slim.

Summing up, Mr Aarish U Khan from IRS stated that the dilemma of all South Asian nations was to be able to accurately decipher the emergent global reality. He added that while the Indian



government might not be receptive to a dialogue with Pakistan, if the downward spiral in its relations with China continued it could find reasons for negotiating with Pakistan on all issues including Kashmir. In this way, he suggested, China would not be a facilitator but a pusher of India for a dialogue with Pakistan.

The President of IRS Amb Nadeem Riyaz thanked all the panellists for their candid remarks and open discussion.