



Institute of Regional Studies

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Webinar

Dynamics of Bilateral Relations amongst South Asian States: A New Order in the Making?

Experts at the webinar called for better use of the evolving situation to uplift the region out of poverty and reinvigorate the regional forum, the SAARC.

The webinar was organized by the Institute of Regional Studies on 'Dynamics of Bilateral Relations amongst the South Asian States: A New Order in the Making?' to discuss the emerging geopolitical and geostrategic scenarios in the South Asian region to envisage future conflict and cooperation.



The discussion was honored by renowned scholars from the whole South Asian countries. The panel of experts included Dr. Hu Shisheng from China, Prof. Shahab Enam Khan, Bangladesh, Mr. Shakti De Silva, Sri Lanka, Dr. Khadga KC, Nepal, Rabibal Dhakal, Bhutan, and Dr. Shaheen Akhtar from Pakistan. The session was moderated by Mr. Aarish Ullah Khan.

Speaking to the occasion, Dr. Hu Shisheng said that the US has waged a cold war against China in which India has been playing a proxy role. All efforts are towards isolating Beijing from the rest of the world, he added. Even, the Trump administration is conniving to alienate the Communist Party from the Chinese citizens through propaganda, he stressed. The existing scenario, followed by the Sino-Indian border clash, epitomizes the two striking strategic order in making in the region where China is at the one side, and the US and its allies on the other hand. Dr. Hu went to add that the future of bilateral relations with the New Delhi will remain unstable as both China and India failed to deal with the border issue in a mutually agreed manner.

Dr. K.C while explaining Nepal's foreign policy said that his country has always followed 'one-China policy'. Being a landlocked country, Nepal had to rely on India for trade and transit and faced terrible blockades at the hands of New Delhi. He further continued saying that Nepal always tried to downsize its asymmetric interdependence with the New Delhi. Now, with the transit treaty with China in 2016, we have access to four seaports and three dry ports, he said. In the evolving regional order, Nepal aspires to be more open up and have enhanced cooperation with all South Asian states, he said.



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Prof. Shahab called for the resumption of CBMs between Pakistan and India. He was of the view that the normalization between the two countries is the key to enable the SAARC to perform its due function, he added. Dhaka is equally concerned with the emerging security challenges followed by the Sino-Indian rivalry and the US's maneuverings in the region. Whatever the situation emerges out of the existing regional dynamics, the hard reality is that the South Asian region remains the impoverished and least-connected region in the world, and will remain so if countries do not make the good use of foreseeable opportunities, he emphasized.

Mr. Rabibal while explaining Bhutan's take on the current debate said that his country aspires to have good relationships with China and other South Asian countries. In the past, Bhutan could not have a vibrant foreign policy because of fears of expansionist policies of both China and India, he added.

Dr. Shaheen was of the view that the region is indeed witnessing an Indian-centric to Sino-centric shift, which is equally challenging and advantageous. The backlash from New Delhi was obvious as India has long been enjoying hegemony over the neighboring states in the region. The unilateral approach especially in the matter of Kashmir speaks New Delhi's frustration of this emerging geostrategic order, she added.



Ambassador Dr. Aman Rashid, acting president of the institute, stressed that the negotiation is the only way forward to end the decades-long outstanding issues between Indian and Pakistan. Amid a changing geo-economic environment, the India-Pakistan conflict will largely affect the overall development and cooperation in the poverty-stricken region, he said.

The webinar was attended, besides Pakistani Ambassadors, scholars, students, by scholars, and think tank representatives from China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan.