



Institute of Regional Studies

Pakistan needs to remain engaged with the US, Fatemi

ISLAMABAD, February 18, 2021: Former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister with a status of a federal minister Amb Tariq Fatemi urged Pakistan to remain engaged with the US while enhancing cooperation with China. He was speaking at a seminar on the subject of US foreign policy towards South Asia under Joe Biden organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) here on Thursday.



Amb Fatemi shared that Biden had a long experience of working on foreign policy issues, first, as the chairman of the Senate's

Foreign Relations Committee and then as vice president in the Obama administration. He added that given his long experience in the field of foreign policy, Biden will take an institutional approach to the US foreign policy towards South Asia. Amb Fatemi maintained that while Biden would ideally want the US to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, he would come under enormous pressure against doing so from within the administration as well as the media. Amb Fatemi argued that a hasty US withdrawal from Afghanistan might not be in the best interest of Pakistan as well because Pakistan would be among the first countries to be affected by the spillover effects of instability in Afghanistan in the shape of militancy and refugees.

“President Biden needs to re-evaluate whether the Indian government is still upholding the democratic values which, according to the US, are at the core of bilateral relations between the two countries,” said Amb Tariq Fatemi. He was of the view that since the current Indian government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi was committing human rights violations not only in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) but also against the minorities in India, the US stand about its relations with India on democratic principles had lost its credibility. He added, however, that President Biden had not expressed any intention of reviewing its relations with India. The relations between India and the US could be further improving under the Biden administration, according to Amb Fatemi. Citing several examples from recent US diplomacy with both India and Pakistan, Amb Fatemi argued that the US valued its relations with India considerably more than its relations with Pakistan. He added that containment of China was also an essential element of the US policy toward India.

Amb Fatemi maintained that balancing the Pakistan's relations with China and the US would be a difficult proposition for Pakistan but it had to diplomatically reassure the US that the country was still vital for US interests. Regarding Pakistan's relations with China, Amb Fatemi was of the view that the relations were built on a very high level of trust and would not be affected by the relations of either country with any other country.

Amb Fatemi maintained that the US would try to resurrect the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran because making all the parties agree to any new deal would be very difficult for the Biden administration.