



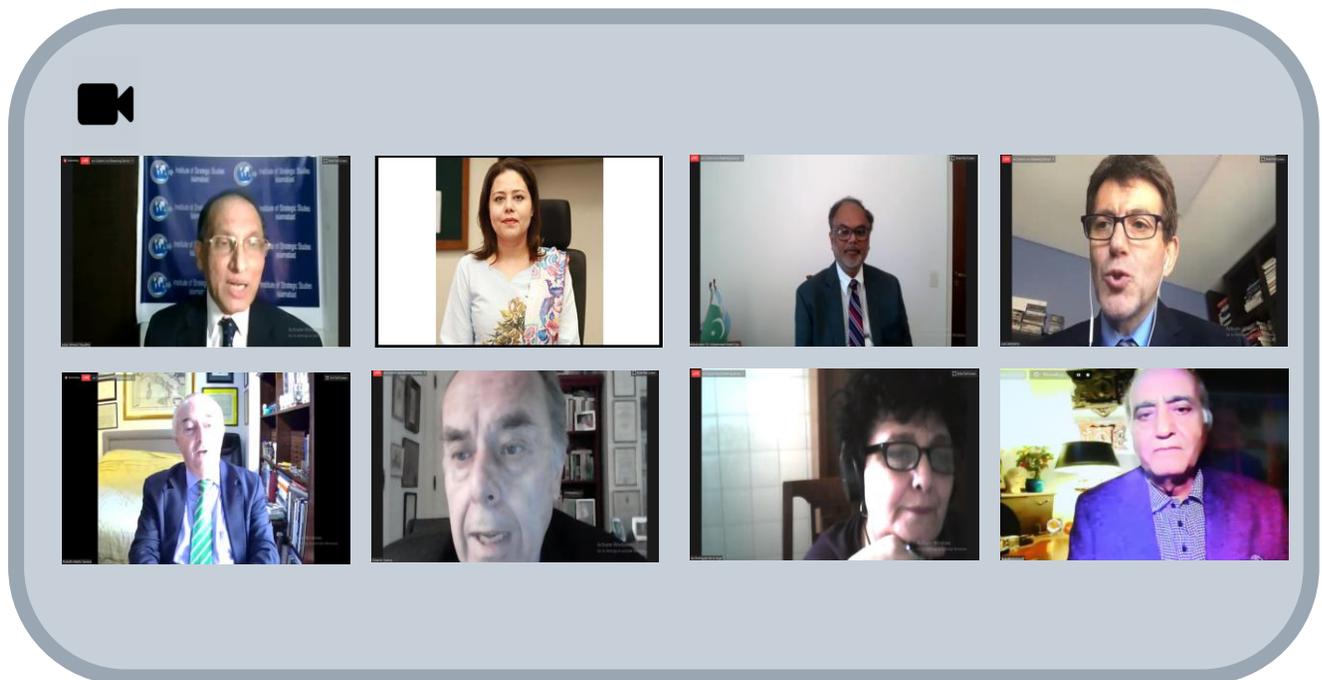
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Report – Webinar

“Pakistan’s Perspectives”

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***Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, the Asian Affairs Committee-Argentine Council for
International Relations (CARI) & Pakistan Embassy in Argentina***

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The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) took part in a webinar organized jointly by the Asia Committee, CARI and the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Argentine titled “*Pakistan’s Perspectives.*” The speakers of the webinar included Ambassador Eduardo Sadous, Director, Asia Committee at CARI; Ambassador Rodolfo Martin Saravia, former Ambassador of Argentine to Pakistan; Ambassador Dr. Muhammad Khalid Ejaz, Pakistan’s Ambassador to Argentine; Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General, ISSI, Ora. Ua Rodriguez de la Vega, Coordinator CARI, Ms. Nazish Afraz, Member Adjunct Faculty, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, LUMS; Juan Miguel Massot from CARI; and Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG, ISSI.

In his opening remarks, **Ambassador Sadous** stated that Pakistan and Argentine have a lot in common and in the complex time of today, both of the nations need to come close as distance today is not a problem. China, which is further than Pakistan, is a major trading partner of Argentine. Countries in Asia like India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam are very significant trading partners of Argentine. Argentines exports to Malaysia are more than its exports to France and stands in surplus. In order to achieve closer ties Pakistan and Argentine should build their relationship on political, economic, and academic ties.

Academic relations are extremely important to understand better the realities of both countries. He talked about his visit to Pakistan, where he visited Islamabad and Lahore and was impressed by the infrastructure especially of the motorway that joins Islamabad with Lahore. He was of the view that economic relations are extremely important for both the countries and in this regard Pakistan can prove to be a great gate way for Argentine to the region through its road infrastructure as well as the Gwadar port that can be an important tool through which Argentinean exports can reach out to West China, and Central Asia. It will be a golden way for Argentine exports to that part of the region. The port is not well-known in Argentine however, Pakistan’s ambassador in Argentine has been very active to promote the port in the Argentine Chamber of Asia at CARI. He reiterated that Pakistan can become a good gateway for Argentine market in Central Asia and China as it will provide easy access. He stated that Asia has become a very important partner to Argentine. Unlike before, today Asia is very present in Argentine not only because of trade, but also because of the substantial amount of the Chinese community that is thriving in Argentine.

Ambassador Sadous emphasized that work should be done to bring both countries closer from various aspects, bearing in mind that distance is not currently a problematic element, mentioning as an example the fact that some Asian countries are among Argentina's largest trading partners. After emphasizing the need to strengthen academic ties between the two countries, he floated the idea of signing an agreement of cooperation between CARI and ISSI and proposed holding talks and seminars regularly on bilateral and regional developments.

Ambassador Rodolfo started his remarks by expressing his love for Pakistan and called it his second home. He was of the view that Pakistan needs to put Argentine on its map and Argentine needs to put Pakistan on its map. Both the countries need to be introduced to each other as they have different landscape, different culture and many other differing features. Both the nations should plan to encourage easy access and traveling which includes regular flight service between the two nations. Similarly, better understanding can be created by exchange and interaction of people, as well as through cooperation and collaboration between different institutions.

Furthermore, there is a need to rejuvenate agreements between the two on science and technology as well as agriculture which are important areas for both. He reiterated the importance of Gwadar port for Argentina as it provide it better connectivity to China and the region. Ambassador Rodolfo pointed out some of the achievements of his management in that country for the bilateral relationship. He celebrated the signing of the current agreement between CARI and ISSI and looked forward to exchange trips after its signing. He recalled the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline project, the visit of Argentine businessman Carlos Bulgheroni to the region and the creation of Friendship Group on the Malvinas Conflict in Pakistan (made up of personalities from almost all areas of the Pakistani society. Finally, he advocated for the continuation of the CARI-ISSI agreement already signed and its further substantiation.

Ambassador Khalid Ejaz was of view that the world is changing fast and the technological advancements have transformed the geo-political landscape. Use of technologies have brought countries across the globe together and have provided ease of interaction through multiple means. He highlighted that in the past few months, Pakistan-Argentine bilateral relations have progressed significantly. CARI and the Embassy have recently held a meeting and agreed that

the way to move forward bilaterally was the main thrust through trade and other arenas. As a result both agreed to hold a joint trade commission meeting that was lying stagnant for the past many years. He highlighted the cordial relations and mutual support of both countries in multilateral settings throughout their common history.

He noted that in the last six months, there has been significant progress in the bilateral relationship, overcoming the material distance. In this context, he detailed that the previous week, authorities from both countries had a political consultation meeting which had been delayed for several years, agreeing to a high-level meeting of the Joint Commission on the Economy for March 2021 and discussing the challenges facing Argentina. He was of the view that Pakistan and other developing countries during the course of the pandemic, are also planning a meeting for technical consultation and to address a number of pharmaceutical issues. He acknowledged the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in the field of agriculture.

Ambassador Ejaz noted that in 2021, Pakistan will mark 70 years of bilateral relations with Argentine and they will be celebrated in the activities that have been planned for the event. He mentioned his recent contacts with academics in Argentine in pursuit of the dissemination of Pakistani history and society. Noting that researchers currently influence the design of policies, he highlighted the importance of this meeting to deepen the link between both countries and the role of both CARI and ISSI in this regard. He agreed with Ambassador Sadous' proposal to hold regular meetings between both institutions suggesting that they also address environmental issues.

Ambassador Aizaz in his remarks noted that for the past couple of years, the world has been changing at a rapid pace and highlighted the geopolitical trends throughout the globe. He was of the view that the world order that was created after World War II is crumbling. US may not remain a unipolar superpower as there are other centres of power emerging and the world is heading towards a multipolar world with China taking a prominent place as a global player. Multilateralism is on a retreat giving rise to unilateralism first and foremost in the US, where Donald Trump's administration embarked on 'America First' approach, a trend adopted by others as well. This change in geopolitics is accompanied by other changes in the world.

He was of the view that the free international trade is no longer free. While the world is seeing an increase in protectionism and nationalism, and attitudes towards immigrants have also changed. Nationalism is on a rise in every major country giving rise to the issue of identity. However, the most defining feature of the changing world order is the major power competition between the US and China which is intensifying at a rapid pace and could turn into a rivalry. The idea of US and China entangling in a Cold War is also being circulated, and if that happens, it will be a very serious development.

Another change that he highlighted was that power centers are also shifting towards Asia. Asia has become the epicenter of this power projection. It started with US announcing its Asia Pivot policy which later transformed into Indo-Pacific Strategy. In Asia, it was perceived as China containment policy of the US. He further said that US has chosen certain partners in Asia-Pacific region to work with it in its China containment policy. One is India in South Asia, as a result of which US-India partnership has increased manifold. The other partners being Japan and Australia and all of them together form the QUAD. Furthermore, China has also embarked upon using its economic clout to develop relations far and wide through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which now touches upon more than 60 countries. Ambassador Aizaz highlighted that with Pakistan, China has also entered into the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that connects the western part of China with Gwadar port in Pakistan. Russia, he pointed out appears to be also resurging under President Putin, and seems to be teaming up in stratagem with China. Europe on the other hand is at the moment on the sides as it is dealing with internal issues of nationalism, migration and economics.

Talking about South Asia in particular, Ambassador Aizaz was of the view that the most worrisome issue in the region is the deepening cooperation between US and India. While US used to be a good partner of Pakistan, it has now shifted towards India as it thinks India fits well in the US competition with China and as a counterbalance to China. In the West of Pakistan, Afghanistan is still occupied with the internal war which US has been fighting with the Taliban for the past 18 years. While earlier the US followed the military approach, now under Donald Trump, they have shifted towards a political route. He stressed that Pakistan has suffered from lack of peace in Afghanistan, and Pakistan is facilitating the process of talks between the US and Afghanistan. Pakistan believes that if Afghanistan is peaceful, the whole region is peaceful and if

it's not that the whole region suffers. Hence, peace in Afghanistan is extremely important. On the Iranian front, Ambassador Aizaz said that the Iran-US tensions have been continuing for some time especially after Donald Trump pulled out of the JCPOA, the Iranian Nuclear Deal. Similarly, Middle East is also not settled after the Arab Spring of 2011, and ever since, tensions and conflict has continued in various countries of the Middle East.

Pointing out how Pakistan is handling the changing world order, Ambassador Aizaz said that Pakistan's first concern is the competition between US and China. China has been a good friend of Pakistan since independence and it has always respected Pakistan's core interests and vice versa. Both the countries are cooperating closely in infrastructure, industry, and many other areas. On the other hand, US has also been a friend of Pakistan for many sustained periods of engagement. Hence, for Pakistan its relations with China and its relations with the US should not be a zero sum game. He stressed that Pakistan wants to maintain a balance in its relations with China and the US. However, it is not going to be easy as both are in a competition. He highlighted that forty years ago, Pakistan was a bridge to China, and it can still play that role of becoming a bridge between the US and China as Pakistan wants the relationship between the two to be productive and not detrimental for the region.

Another challenge for Pakistan is to deal with India with which Pakistan has many differences. These differences have grown manifold ever since Prime Minister Modi took over. Ambassador Aizaz was of the view that India is going through two major trends: one, an internal convulsion through which India is passing. PM Modi wants to create India into what is called a 'Hindu Rashtra' or a 'Hindu State', the ideological basis on which India should revive the glory of Hinduism and therefore the minorities are deeply scared in India. And two, India is also receiving a lot of criticism from within India as well as from the US, Europe and the UN because of the human rights aspect of this policy. This policy is also manifesting in Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir which Pakistan recognize as an internationally disputed territory. He highlighted that PM Modi annexed the disputed territory and abrogated its special status, an action that was opposed by Pakistan as well as by people in Kashmir. Moreover, because of the growing US tilt towards India, India is acting like a regional hegemon, which has landed India in trouble with all its neighbors.

Another challenge that Ambassador Aizaz highlighted was the tensions between Iran and Saudi Arab. Any tension between these two affects Pakistan as it shares deep cultural ties with the two. Pakistan wants these two countries to resolve their issues and for that, Pakistan is trying to play the role of a mediator. Pakistan also wants to see a stable Afghanistan which is the heart of Asia. He was of the view that the stability of the region depends on stability of Afghanistan. An unstable Afghanistan will be a breeding ground for terrorist and a civil war and a new wave of refugees which will directly impact Pakistan. In order to achieve that peace, Pakistan wants a responsible US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Furthermore, he added the aspect of non-traditional threats, especially climate change. Pakistan is one of the top ten countries to be impacted by changing climate patterns. Highlighting Pakistan's economic potential, he said that Pakistan is a young country and it is working towards improving its economy. In this respect, China is an important economic partner of Pakistan. Pakistan also welcomes economic cooperation with the US, Europe, as well as Argentine which like Pakistan is also agro-based. He said that through the functioning of the Gwadar port, Pakistan will become a gateway to many countries.

Ms. Rodriguez talked about the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Argentine and the nature of geopolitics. The formal relations between the two were established in 1951 and have developed ever since through official and business delegations and numerous agreements. The first significant agreement signed between the two countries was in May of 1983, and since then, high level meetings have been carried out. She highlighted that the first visit by the Pakistan head of state was by President Pervez Musharraf which resulted in intensification of relations between the two capitals. During that visit, agreements regarding bilateral political consultations were signed establishing a mechanism of alternate meetings. The first meeting in this regard took place in 2006 and since is led by follow-up meetings.

The objective of these meetings is to deepen cooperation between the two countries and strengthen bilateral relations. The most recent consultation looked at issues of mutual interest such as the exchange of experiences in containing the Covid pandemic and the 70th anniversary of the diplomatic relations. Both the countries consulted on other issues as well such as forestry, pharmaceutical cooperation, and increased trade and investment. A review of regional and multilateral agenda was also carried out. MoU's and agreements were signed between the

Ministry of agriculture, livestock and fisheries, and the Ministry of Food Security. She highlighted that the bilateral trade between the two intensified in the 90's under the bilateral trade and cooperation framework, which gave both the countries status of most favorable nations. She reiterated that both Pakistan and Argentine have signed agreements that provide framework of alternate meetings and consultations on a number of departments including science and technology, fisheries, trade, agriculture, livestock, and economic consultation.

Ms. Afraz spoke about the bilateral trade between Pakistan and Argentine. She stated that there is very little trade between Pakistan and Argentine, and this is a trend that has not changed much in the last 15 to 20 years. Pakistan main exports to Argentine are textiles, and the mix has not changed much. Similarly, Argentine exports to Pakistan consist of agricultural produce; soya bean oil and cotton, a mix that has not changed either. This is partly due to the fact that both Pakistan and Argentine don't have diversification of trade. While talking about intra-regional trade, Ms. Afraz highlighted that Pakistan and Argentine trade more in each other's neighborhoods than bilaterally. This reflects under performance by both. This is partly due to the misunderstanding of the size of the economy and the distance of the economy, a method that predicts the amount of trade that can take place between the two countries. Brazil and Mexico have a greater share of trade with Pakistan as compared to Argentine, and India and Bangladesh have a greater share of trade with Argentine as compared to Pakistan.

She argued that Pakistan has a growing middle class which is important from the perspective of sizing the market. Pakistan's market is very attractive in terms of Foreign Direct investments (FDI) which is very important for Argentine's exports. While quoting from an IMF report, she highlighted that Pakistan has shown a great amount of resilience against the Covid pandemic as it is projected to grow in small amounts in the right direction. The balances of payment is coming out of the risk area, and reserves as well as exchange rates have stabilized. The energy shortages have been addressed and Pakistan is now at a surplus, which identifies that the pre-requisites for industrial growth are present. Similarly, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is also an important factor which is a grand vision as it connects 60 countries. BRI envisions an overland silk route and a maritime silk route and Pakistan sits right into the path of the six corridors that are planned under BRI. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in this regard is the flagship corridor of the BRI and it has improved connectivity throughout the length of Pakistan and the

region and beyond. She concluded by stating that Pakistan and Argentine have complemented each other through trade by identifying specific products, which Pakistan is exporting and Argentine is importing and vice versa.

Mr. Miguel also spoke on the bilateral trade between Pakistan and Argentine. He was of the view that there is significant difference between the overall GDP, population and GDP per capita between the two. He stressed that there is a general lack of trade presence of Pakistan with Argentine but also with the Latin American region. However, the level of trade can be increased between the two by introducing bilateral knowledge as well as business culture.

In his remarks, Chairman BoG, ISSI, **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood** stated that the day is of significance for three things; re-establishing link between the two organizations, occasion for meeting old and new friends, and exchange of views on bilateral and business relations. He also highlighted the issue of Kashmir, stating that Pakistan is not averse to resolve the dispute of Kashmir. While negotiations are one of the peaceful methods, but since bilateral dialogue has so far not been able to resolve the issue, one should consider other methods of settlement as stated in the Article 13 of the United Nations charter, including inquiry, conciliation, arbitration and judicial settlement.

He pointed out that CARI is the second Latin American think tank with which ISSI has an agreement and recalled the work of Ambassador Rodolfo Martin Saravia in Pakistan (not only as Ambassador but also as Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Pakistan). He celebrated the seminar meeting, referring to the opportunities that CPEC opens up to deepen the relationship between both countries, even being a significant opportunity for third countries. He pointed out that Argentina and Pakistan can also collaborate in the initiative to alleviate the foreign debts of the developing countries affected by the pandemic referring to the initiative on debt relief announced by Pakistani Prime Minister, Imram Khan. He opined that both think tanks can collaborate to find a road map to deepen bilateral relations.