Islamabad Conclave-2025

Thematic Focus:

"Reimagining South Asia: Security, Economy, Climate, Connectivity"

(The Concept, Session Themes, Speakers, and Programme)

December 3-4, 2025

ISSI

Hosted by

Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI)

About the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI)

The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, established in 1973, is an autonomous, non-profit organization that seeks to provide quality policy inputs through informed research, objective analyses, and dialogue on global and regional issues affecting peace, security, and development of Pakistan and our region.

The Institute is governed by a Board of Governors headed by the Chairman.

The Director General is the chief executive officer of the organization.

The Institute houses five Centres of Excellence:

- China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC)
- Arms Control & Disarmament Centre (ACDC)
- India Study Centre (ISC)
- Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA)
- Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP)

The outcomes of the ISSI's research are disseminated via a number of online and print publications.

Participants at the ISSI events include government officials, military experts, academics, diplomats, parliamentarians, and activists.

The Institute maintains close contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other stakeholders to identify themes on which the Institute provides action-oriented policy inputs.

The Institute is guided by four priorities: quality of the research work; synergy between what we research on and what we dialogue on; relevance of the research work in terms of its importance for Pakistan; and assisting the government in building up narratives around government policies on key foreign and security policies of the country.

The Institute is connected to dozens of national and international think tanks. It is also linked up to several indexing agencies and databases.

The library offers a blend of printed and electronic resources. The Institute maintains a dynamic website, and is present on most social media platforms.

The Concept
Islamabad Conclave-2025
Thematic Focus: "Reimagining South Asia: Security, Economy, Climate, Connectivity"

The post-Cold War unipolar world order is receding and the dominant trend is in the direction of multipolarity. The evolving multipolarity is reshaping existing geopolitical realities -- manifest most prominently in intensified major-power competition, resulting in polarization and fragmentation. At regional levels, too, flux and fragmentation are evident, with the existing security and economic orders becoming increasingly fragile – from Europe to the Middle East to Southeast Asia. South Asia is not immune to these strategic trends, both in the negative and positive connotations. A multi-polar order is discernible in this region as well. Notably, South Asia suffers from three distinct deficits – security, development, and regional architecture – and remains ill-equipped to tackle the myriads of old and emerging threats and challenges. For building a safe, secure and prosperous South Asia, there is no alternative to thinking afresh and reimagining fundamental issues such as security, economy, climate, connectivity, and regional integration.

Home to almost 25 percent of the world's population, South Asia has limited potential for shared prosperity. The region has the largest concentration of the poor in the world, nearly 26 percent, and the regional countries remain at uneven levels of development. Low literacy, food insecurity, income inequalities, and adverse effects of climate change mark the landscape and, unsurprisingly, the region ranks fairly low on most of the human development indices. South Asia is also the least economically integrated; with intra-regional trade just around 5 percent. Owing to the intransigence of its largest member, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) -- the only region-wide platform for economic cooperation -- remains dysfunctional since 2016. While landmark projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are serving to improve the infrastructure, regional connectivity thus far is sub-optimal and more a matter of contention, rather than collaboration.

In the traditional security domain, South Asia has a complex environment. Long-standing unresolved disputes like Jammu and Kashmir, presence of 3 geographically contiguous nuclear powers, fragile strategic stability, and intensified major-power competition have a profound impact on the overall security landscape. Simultaneously, the region is facing growing military spending, including headlong conventional and nuclear arms build-up by the largest state. The militarization of the Indian Ocean by extra-regional powers and, particularly its nuclearization by India, are directly impacting the maritime security of littoral states.

Rapid proliferation of Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDTs), including advancements in AI, hypersonic missiles, and cyber warfare, is challenging established notions of strategic stability and deterrence in the region. In addition, the security environment is increasingly affected by the complex and evolving threat of transnational terrorism. Groups such as the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), Al-Qaeda, and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) continue to exploit porous borders, ideological linkages, and local grievances to operate across multiple states, destabilizing already fragile security architectures. Extremist ideologies such as 'Hindutva' and pernicious phenomena like Islamophobia are not only compounding the levels of polarisation but also accentuating security challenges.

The number and adverse effects of new and non-traditional security threats and challenges on the region are also growing rapidly. Food, health, and livelihood security are already being threatened throughout the region by climate change, which is reflected in rising temperatures, glacial melt, floods, and water stress. Resilience is hampered by low intra-regional trade, economic fragility, and unequal access to capital and technology.

To tackle these formidable challenges, there is a need to find ways of effectively addressing the critical deficits. This is possible if regional countries were to move from the path of confrontation to cooperation; shed zero-sum mindsets, build mutual trust, and adopt win-win approaches. At this inflection point in world and South Asian history, it is imperative to craft solutions benefitting from the new opportunities presented by an emerging multipolar order, the growing role of Middle Powers, and the increasing agency of the 'Global South.' This would help enhance the

region's strategic choices, development opportunities, economic integration, and diplomatic space. Resolving bilateral differences, opening meaningful channels of communications, instituting a reliable crisis management mechanism, and nuclear risk reduction centers and conventional and nuclear CBMs could bring regional stability. Similarly, rebuilding regional cooperation architecture through a variable geometry, enhancing economic interactions and integration, promoting connectivity, and undertaking joint climate action could help reduce poverty, build sustainable and resilient communities, and promote regional prosperity.

Pakistan is situated at the nexus of these dynamics and its location at the cross-roads of South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean confers on it a pivotal place and role. Pakistan can serve as a convener and connector by leveraging a comprehensive policy to promote communication across fault-lines, capitalizing CPEC and other connectivity initiatives to stimulate regional trade, and turning transit geography into economic opportunity. Pakistan is in a position to assist in creating cooperative frameworks that integrate security, economic growth, and climate resilience because of its emphasis on diplomatic engagement, prudent handling of geo-politics, and pivot towards geo-economics.

With the foregoing in view, the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) is hosting the 5th Edition of its flagship Dialogue Forum, the **Islamabad Conclave**, on the theme of **"Reimagining South Asia: Security, Economy, Climate, Connectivity"** on December 3-4, 2025. The Islamabad Conclave is a Track 1.5 initiative that seeks to bring together the high echelons of foreign and Pakistan's leadership, policymakers, and members of the academia and research community at a single platform to find innovative solutions to complex political, security, and economic issues and non-traditional threats affecting Pakistan, the region, and the globe. The format of the Islamabad Conclave is a high-level interaction among members of the government, academia, and public and private sectors in Plenary and Working Sessions. After the Inaugural Plenary, the Conclave is divided into five Working Sessions, followed by a Concluding Plenary.

The Working Sessions will cover the following themes:

i. South Asian Regional Security Order Amid Evolving Multipolarity (ISC)

ii. Transnational Terrorism and Emerging Security Challenges in South Asia (CAMEA)

iii. Emerging Strategic Security Challenges: Crafting a Peaceful Path for Pakistan (ACDC)

iv. Economy and Climate Change (CSP)

v. Regional Connectivity in South Asia: Multilateral Pathways for Collective Growth (CPSC)

Programme Day 1
Wednesday, December 3, 2025
Venue: ISSI Library Hall

Inaugural Plenary

(0930-1100 hrs)

Theme: "Reimagining South Asia: Security, Economy, Climate, Connectivity"

0930 hrs:	Arrival of the Guests
0945 hrs:	Guests to be Seated
1000 hrs:	Arrival of Chief Guest
1005 hrs:	National Anthem & Recitation from the Holy Quran
1010 hrs:	Welcome Remarks by **Ambassador Sohail Mahmood,** Director General, ISSI
1020 hrs:	**Address by the Chief Guest**
1055 hrs:	Presentation of ISSI Memento by **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood,** Chairman BoG, ISSI/ Group Photo
1100 hrs:	Tea Break/Refreshments

Working Session-I

(1115-1245 hrs)

Session Theme: "South Asian Regional Security Order Amid Evolving Multipolarity"

1115 hrs:	Introductory Remarks by **Dr. Khurram Abbas,** Director ISC
1120 hrs:	Keynote Address by **Gen Zubair Mahmood Hayat, NI(M), HI(M),** former CJCSC
1135 hrs:	Remarks by **Dr. Shilata Pokharel,** Energy and Security Politics Expert, Nepal
1145 hrs:	Remarks by **Ambassador Zamir Akram,** Pakistan's former Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva
1155 hrs:	Remarks by **Prof. Huang Yunsong,** Associate Dean, School of International Studies, Sichuan University, China

1205 hrs: Remarks by **Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui,** Additional Foreign Secretary (Asia-Pacific), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan

1215 hrs: Discussion / Q & A Session

1235 hrs: Concluding Remarks by Moderator

1240 hrs: Presentation of ISSI Mementos by **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood,** Chairman BoG, ISSI/ Group Photo

1245-1400hrs: Lunch

Working Session-II

(1400-1530 hrs)

Session Theme: "Transnational Terrorism and Emerging Security Challenges in South Asia"

1400 hrs: Introductory Remarks by **Dr. Amina Khan,** Director CAMEA

1405 hrs: Keynote Address by **Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed,** former Chair of the Senate Defence Committee

1420 hrs: Remarks by **Ambassador Asif Durrani,** Pakistan's former Special Representative on Afghanistan

1430 hrs: Remarks by **Dr. Hu Shisheng,** Deputy Secretary-General of the Academic Committee and Senior Research Fellow, CICIR, China

1440 hrs: Remarks by **Dr. Shahab Enam Khan,** Professor in the Department of International Relations at Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh

1450 hrs: Remarks by **Dr. Shabana Fayyaz,** Professor, Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, QAU, Islamabad

1500 hrs: Discussion / Q & A Session

1520 hrs: Concluding Remarks by Moderator

1525 hrs: Presentation of ISSI Mementos by **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood,** Chairman BoG, ISSI/ Group Photo

1530 hrs: Tea Break / Refreshments

Working Session-III

(1545-1715 hrs)

Session Theme: "Emerging Strategic Security Challenges: Crafting a Peaceful Path for Pakistan"

1545 hrs: Introductory Remarks by **Malik Qasim Mustafa,** Director ACDC

1550 hrs: Keynote Address by **Ambassador Tehmina Janjua,** former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan

1605 hrs: Remarks by **Dr. Zahir Kazmi,** Advisor SPD

1615 hrs: Remarks by **Dr. Nishara Mendis,** Executive Director, Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute for International Relations and Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka

1625 hrs: Remarks by **Dr. Salma Malik,** Associate Professor, QAU, Islamabad

1635 hrs: Remarks by **Ambassador Tahir Hussain Andrabi,** Spokesperson, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan

1645 hrs: Discussion / Q & A Session

1705 hrs: Concluding Remarks by Moderator

1710 hrs: Presentation of ISSI Mementos by **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood,** Chairman BoG, ISSI/ Group Photo

1715 hrs: Tea Break/Refreshments

(End of Day 1)

Programme Day 2
Thursday, December 4, 2025
Venue: ISSI Library Hall

Working Session-IV

(1030-1200 hrs)

Session Theme: "Regional Cooperation on Economy and Climate Change"

1030 hrs:	Introductory Remarks by **Dr. Neelum Nigar,** Director CSP
1035 hrs:	Keynote Address by **Mr. Haroon Sharif,** former Minister of State and Chairman BoI
1050 hrs:	Remarks by **Dr. Safdar Sohail,** Executive Director, Social Protection Resource Centre (SPRC), Islamabad
1100 hrs:	Remarks by **Dr. Pema Gyamtsho,** Director General, ICIMOD, Nepal
1110 hrs:	Remarks by **Dr. Dilli Raj Khanal,** Founder Chairman, Institute for Policy Research and Development (IPRAD), Nepal
1120 hrs:	Remarks by **Ms. Aisha Khan**, Executive Director, Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change, Islamabad
1130 hrs:	Discussion / Q & A Session
1150 hrs:	Concluding Remarks by Moderator
1155 hrs:	Presentation of ISSI Mementos by **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood,** Chairman BoG, ISSI/ Group Photo
1200 hrs:	Tea Break/Refreshments

Working Session-V

(1215-1345 hrs)

Session Theme: "Regional Connectivity in South Asia: Multilateral Pathways for Collective Growth"

1215 hrs:	Introductory Remarks by **Dr. Talat Shabbir,** Director, CPSC
1220 hrs:	Keynote Address by **Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan,** former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Energy (Power Division)

1235 hrs: Remarks by **Ambassador Masood Khalid,** Pakistan's former Ambassador to China

1245 hrs: Remarks by **Prof. Dr. Zhang Jiadong,** Director, Centre for South Asian Studies; Dean of BRI Strategy and International Security, Fudan University, Shanghai, China

1255 hrs: Remarks by **Dr. Aminath Sudha,** Head of Department (Business and Marketing), MNU Business School, Maldives National University

1305 hrs: Remarks by **Mr. Syed Hassan Akbar,** Chairman, Strategic Policy Planning Cell (SPPC), National Security Division (NSD)

1315 hrs: Discussion / Q & A Session

1335 hrs: Concluding Remarks by Moderator

1340 hrs: Presentation of ISSI Mementos by **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood,** Chairman BoG, ISSI/ Group Photo

1345 hrs: Short Stretch Break

Concluding Plenary

(1355-1445 hrs)

1355 hrs: Arrival of Chief Guest

1400 hrs: Recitation from the Holy Quran

1405 hrs: Presentation of Key Takeaways by **Ambassador Sohail Mahmood,** Director General, ISSI

1415 hrs: **Address by the Chief Guest**

1435 hrs: Vote of Thanks by **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood,** Chairman BoG, ISSI

1440 hrs: Presentation of ISSI Mementos by **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood,** Chairman BoG, ISSI/ Group Photo

1445 hrs: Lunch

Profiles of
Keynote / Speakers

Working Session-I

Session Theme: **"South Asian Regional Security Order Amid Evolving Multipolarity"**

Gen. Zubair Mahmood Hayat, NI(M), HI(M) served as the 16th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee from late 2016 to November 2019. Before that, he held key positions including Chief of General Staff and Director-General of the Strategic Plans Division, underscoring his experience in strategic, operational and nuclear-command roles.

Dr. Shilata Pokharel who holds a PhD from the University of the Punjab, Lahore, is a Nepal-based researcher focusing on energy security, climate vulnerability, and the evolving strategic posture of South Asian states. As Visiting Faculty at Tribhuvan University, she examines how political ecology and resource governance shape national policy choices in a transforming regional environment. Her background in development research and post-disaster assessment further informs her analysis of how Nepal and its neighbours recalibrate their strategic priorities amid an emerging multipolar global order.

Ambassador Zamir Akram is a seasoned Pakistani diplomat with extensive experience in multilateral and strategic affairs. He has served as Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, where he led key negotiations on disarmament and international security. Ambassador Akram is widely recognized for his expertise on regional security, nuclear policy, and global strategic stability.

Professor Huang Yunsong is the Associate Dean at the School of International Studies at Sichuan University, China. Additionally, he also holds the portfolio of Deputy Director at the University's Institute of South Asian Studies. He is a prominent scholar specializing in South

Asian studies, particularly focusing on China-South Asia relations and topics like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui is a senior Pakistani career diplomat with over 28 years of diverse experience in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, political analysis, and crisis management. He has led initiatives in economic and science diplomacy, UN-related negotiations, and socio-economic development aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Currently serving as Pakistan's Additional Foreign Secretary (Asia Pacific), he previously served as High Commissioner to Bangladesh.

Working Session-II

Session Theme: **"Transnational Terrorism and Emerging Security Challenges in South Asia"**

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed is a prominent Pakistani journalist, politician, and academic who has held numerous high-profile positions, including serving as a Federal Minister, Chair of the Senate Defence Committee, and editor of The Muslim newspaper. He is currently a Senator and has a long career in politics, diplomacy, and media, with degrees from Georgetown University and an early career as a journalist and academic.

Ambassador Asif Durrani is an accomplished Pakistani diplomat with a distinguished career spanning over 32 years in the Foreign Service. Most recently, he served as Pakistan's Special Representative on Afghanistan, demonstrating his expertise in regional affairs. His prominent assignments include serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in Kabul and as Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, he has also held important positions in places like New Delhi, New York, Kabul, and London. Early in his career, he also served at the United Nations in New York as well. Ambassador Durrani's

extensive experience has established him as a respected authority in diplomacy and foreign policy.

Dr. Hu Shisheng is Deputy Secretary-General of the Academic Committee and Senior Research Fellow at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR). He specializes in South Asian political and security affairs, with extensive research on Pakistan, India, and regional stability. Dr. Hu has authored several works on South Asian geopolitics, ethnic relations, and counterterrorism.

Dr. Shabana Fayyaz is a professor at the Defense & Strategic Studies Department, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Holds a PhD from the University of Birmingham, UK. Prof Fayyaz's expertise covers the themes of non-traditional security; online violent extremism; countering violent extremism (CVE); online and offline policy analysis; Pakistan's security policy, and South Asian politics. She has authored a book, 'Pakistan's Response Towards Terrorism: A Case Study of Musharraf Regime' in 2020.

Dr. Shahab Enam Khan is a Professor in the Department of International Relations at Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh. He holds a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India, and has completed fellowships at the University of Delaware (USA) and the University of Birmingham (UK). His research focuses on security, foreign affairs, and public policy, with a regional emphasis on South and Southeast Asia. Dr. Khan has served as a consultant for UNDP, UNODC, UN Women, and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and is a Senior Fellow at the Hainan Institute of World Watch, China.

Working Session-III

Session Theme: **"Emerging Strategic Security Challenges: Crafting a Peaceful Path for Pakistan"**

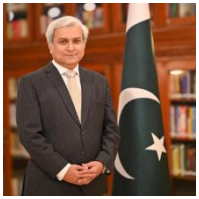
Ambassador Tehmina Janjua was Foreign Secretary of Pakistan from 2017-2019. As Ambassador to UN Geneva, DG Strategic Planning at MOFA and MOFA Spokesperson she dealt with security-related, arms control and disarmament issues. She chaired the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. She participated in meetings of the Composite Dialogue with India and in High level Security related meetings with a number of countries. She continues to participate in national and international events. She is on the Board of Governors of ISSI, IPRI, FSA. She was awarded the Hilal-e-Imtiaz.

Dr. Zahir Kazmi is Arms Control Advisor at the Strategic Plans Division (SPD), where he has also served as the Director General of the Arms Control & Disarmament Affairs Branch. He is a former Brigadier.

Dr. Nishara Mendis is currently serving as Executive Director of the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute for International Relations and Strategic Studies. She has done LL.B (Hons, First Class) from the University of Colombo and LL.M from Yale Law School and PhD from Maastricht University, The Netherlands. She was a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, and served as Director/Research at the Bandaranaike Center for International Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Dr. Salma Malik, an Associate Professor at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, specializing in Conflict and Security Studies and South Asian Affairs. With a PhD in International Relations, she is an alumna of Uppsala University, Sweden & the Asia Pacific Center for Strategic Studies APCSS, Hawaii. Dr. Malik actively contributes to strategic and research organizations, including the Regional Center for

Strategic Studies, and her publications include policy studies, co-authored research, and articles in research journals.



Ambassador Tahir Andrabi is presently working as Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Additional Foreign Secretary for Arms Control, Disarmament & International Security (ACDIS) and Strategic Communication, Policy Planning & Public Diplomacy (SC, PP & PD) Divisions. He also heads Pakistan National Authority under Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Prior to this, he served as Pakistan's Ambassador to the Republic of Tunisia, concurrently accredited to the Republic of Malta (2021 to 2023). He was Ambassador/Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland from 2017-2021.

Working Session-IV

Session Theme: **"Regional Cooperation on Economy and Climate Change"**

Mr. Haroon Sharif is a leading global expert in international development, economic diplomacy, regional cooperation and development finance. He is the founder and Chairman of the Pakistan Regional Economic Forum (PREF) and has advised governments, international organizations and the private sector worldwide. He served as Minister of State and Chairman of Pakistan's Board of Investment (2018–19), where he advanced major reforms, led CPEC industrial cooperation and helped improve Pakistan's Ease of Doing Business ranking by 28 places. A former Senior Regional Advisor at the World Bank Group and Head of Economic Growth at the UK's DFID, he has also held senior roles at SECP and international financial institutions, and served on global boards such as CGAP and FIRST. Educated at LSE and the University of Hawaii, he is a prominent public policy speaker, widely published and regularly featured in leading forums and media.

Dr. Safdar Sohail is Executive Director of Social Protection Resource Centre (SPRC). He is also the Director of SPRC initiative for Studies in Globalization and Development (SIGAD). He served as Special Secretary to Cabinet Division, GOP (June 2019 – May 2020) dealing with matters of accountability, parliamentary affairs and development. Belonging to the Commerce and Trade Services, he has supported and contributed policy formulation and research while also leading diplomatic efforts in trade.

Dr. Pema Gyamtsho is the Director General of International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). He had served the Royal Government of Bhutan for over three decades in natural resources management and planning; rural development; agriculture; forestry; livestock and food production; rangeland management; livestock development; participatory approaches; research and extension institutional building; climate change and environmental protection; biodiversity conservation; and organic farming. Dr. Gyamtsho holds a PhD in Natural Science from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich.

Dr. Dilli Raj Khanal, is the founder Chairman of the Institute for Policy Research and Development (IPRAD), and a former Member of the Parliament and National Planning Commission. He has been continuously engaged in research, teaching and social works after earning his PhD in 1986. He teaches International Political Economy to PhD students at the Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, TU. He has published several books, policy papers and reports individually and jointly to his credit.

Ms. Aisha Khan is the Executive Director of Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change and chief executive officer of Mountain and Glacier Organization. She is a founding member of both the organizations and regularly contributes articles to newspapers and magazines on issues related to

environment and climate change. She has over 18 years of experience in development sector having worked in collaboration with multiple donors, national and sub-national authorities and communities. She has attended many national and international conferences and is a member of the board of directors of Energy Conservation Fund. She is also a part of the certification panel of Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP) and the steering committee of Pakistan Glacier Monitoring Network.

Working Session-V

Session Theme: **"Regional Connectivity in South Asia: Multilateral Pathways for Collective Growth"**

Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan is a senior Pakistani parliamentarian and former Federal Minister who has served as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Defence, and Minister for Commerce. He has played a key role in shaping Pakistan's foreign policy, regional security outlook, and strategic economic frameworks. His extensive experience in diplomacy, governance, and parliamentary affairs makes him a leading voice on national and regional security issues.

Ambassador Masood Khalid is Pakistan's former Ambassador to China and a senior diplomat. During his distinguished diplomatic career, he served in key positions including High Commissioner to Malaysia and Ambassador to South Korea. As Pakistan's longest-serving Ambassador to China (2013–2019), he was instrumental in advancing the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and strengthening the All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership between Pakistan and China.

Prof. Dr. Zhang Jiadong is a leading Chinese academic specializing in South Asian security, regional geopolitics, and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) strategy. He serves as Director of the Centre for South Asian Studies and Dean of BRI Strategy and International Security at Fudan University. His research and policy insights are widely

recognized across China and internationally, making him a prominent scholar on South Asian affairs.

Dr. Aminath Sudha is an experienced academic with over 13 years in higher education, currently leading the Business & Marketing Department at Maldives National University. Her work focuses on business innovation, economic development, and regional cooperation, and she has contributed to multiple research and policy initiatives in the Maldives and Indian Ocean region. Dr. Sudha holds a PhD in Business/Management from Management & Science University, Malaysia, and a Master's in International Development and Public Policy from the University of Manchester.

Mr. Syed Hassan Akbar is presently serving as the Chairman of the Strategic Policy Planning Cell at National Security Division. He was a Pakistan Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars (2024–2025), where his research focused on Pakistan's geoeconomic challenges. With over 20 years of experience in policy and research, he has advised on national security, economic connectivity, and regional security issues, and led the drafting of Pakistan's first comprehensive National Security Policy (NSP) in 2022. He holds a Master's degree in International Affairs from Columbia University, New York.

Profiles of Moderators

Working Session-I

Session Theme: **"South Asian Regional Security Order Amid Evolving Multipolarity"**

Dr. Khurram Abbas is serving as the Director of the India Study Centre (ISC) and Editor at the ISSI. Over a decade, he has extensively worked on the Foreign and Defence Policies of the six GCC states, with particular emphasis on Pakistan-Arab relations, China-Arab relations, and India-Arab relations. Dr. Abbas has authored over twenty research publications including book chapters, research articles, and more than two hundred newspaper articles. He earned his PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies from the Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS) at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Pakistan

Working Session-II

Session Theme: **"Transnational Terrorism and Emerging Security Challenges in South Asia"**

Dr. Amina Khan is the Director of the Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the ISSI, where she oversees research and advocacy-related work on all facets of CAMEA. Prior to this, she served as a Research Fellow and a Senior Research Fellow at the ISSI, focusing on Afghanistan and FATA. Over a period of more than 15 years, she has published extensively on Afghanistan and has presented her research at multiple national and international forums. She is also the author of three edited books, The Covid Challenge and its Impact on the Middle East and Africa (2021), The Evolving Situation in Afghanistan: International and Regional Perspectives (2022), and Pakistan's Strategic Frontiers (2023).

A recipient of OSI/FCO/Chevening Scholarship 2009-2010, Amina has a Master's degree in Democracy, Politics and Governance (DPG) from Royal Holloway University of London. She also has a Master's degree in Defence and Strategic Studies (DSS) from the Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad (2005). She has been a Visiting Fellow at the SWP Stiftung Wissenschaft

und Politik – German Institute for International and Security Affairs (2011). Dr. Khan has a PhD from the Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University on the Afghan Taliban.

Working Session-III

Session Theme: **"Emerging Strategic Security Challenges: Crafting a Peaceful Path for Pakistan"**

Malik Qasim Mustafa is the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the ISSI. He is a PhD candidate in the DSS department of QAU Islamabad. He holds M. Phil (2001) & M.Sc. (1998) degrees in Defence and Strategic Studies, from QAU, Islamabad. He is a Graduate of an Executive Course (2006) from the Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, U.S. He is an International Law Fellow from the Research Society of International Law (2004), Lahore, Pakistan (RSIL). He has done courses on International law (2004) and International Humanitarian Law (2005) from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Islamabad, and from the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and National Law School of India University (NLSIU) Bangalore, India. He has completed many other certificate courses and workshops on issues related to his area of research. He has more than 50 national and international publications including edited books, book chapters, research articles, monographs, Issue Briefs, and special reports. His areas of expertise include Arms Control & Disarmament, Nuclear Issues, Emerging Technologies, and National and Maritime security issues.

Working Session-IV

Session Theme: **"Regional Cooperation on Economy and Climate Change"**

Dr. Neelum Nigar is the Director, Centre for Strategic Perspective (CSP) at the ISSI where she oversees research and advocacy on Pakistan's non-traditional security challenges including climate change, poverty, and food insecurity among others. Dr. Nigar holds a PhD in Economics from the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad. She

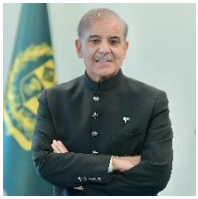
has an M.Phil degree in Economics from PIDE and M.Sc. Economics and Finance from the International Islamic University Islamabad. Her research focuses on poverty, social protection programs, impact evaluation, and issues of sustainable development in Pakistan. Before joining as Director, CSP, Dr. Nigar was working as Research Fellow at China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the ISSI, where she was responsible to carry out research on Pakistan-China economic relations, Belt & Road Initiatives, and CPEC. She has also been on the faculty of the National University of Modern Languages Islamabad (NUML), where she taught economics to graduate and undergraduate students. Dr. Nigar has written several research papers and book chapters.

Working Session-V

Session Theme: **"Regional Connectivity in South Asia: Multilateral Pathways for Collective Growth"**

Dr. Talat Shabbir is the Director China-Pakistan Study Centre at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, where he oversees research and advocacy on all facets of Pakistan-China relations. He holds PhD in International Relations from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. He has an MPhil in International Relations from the University of Karachi, a Masters in International Relations from the University of Balochistan, and a Masters in Political Science from the University of Punjab. His research areas are Pakistan, South Asia, the Belt and Road Initiative, CPEC, and Pakistan-China relations. Dr. Talat has been a visiting scholar at Sigur Centre for Asian Studies, George Washington University, USA. He has been on the faculty of the Institute of Strategic Studies Research and Analysis (ISSRA), National Defence University (NDU) where he was assigned to conduct national security workshops and national media workshops. He is the Chief Editor of the Quarterly PIVOT Magazine of the Institute. He regularly contributes to national as well as international newspapers on issues of domestic, regional, and global political issues and participates in panel discussions on various TV channels focusing on issues impacting Pakistan. Dr. Talat Shabbir has authored a book titled "Creating Shared Futures, Pakistan-China: A Journey of Trust and Friendship" and has edited a book titled "Higher than Karakoram: Seven Decades of Pakistan-China Partnership".

Profiles of ISSI Leadership



Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is Patron-in-chief, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took oath of the office on 4 March 2024. Previously, he served as the Prime Minister of Pakistan from April 2022 to August 2023. Earlier, he served as Chief Minster of the Punjab province.

Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is Patron, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. He is also Leader of the House in the Senate of Pakistan. Senator Dar also serves on a number of Constitutional and Cabinet committees. Senator Dar previously served four times as Finance Minister of Pakistan: 1998-1999, 2008, 2013-2017, and 2002-2023.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman of BoG ISSI is a former Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran, Iraq, China, Saudi Arabia, and Mongolia. He has served as First Secretary and later as Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, New York. He has worked as Director General (UN), Additional Secretary (United Nations, Asia-Pacific and Africa), and former Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO).

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood is the Director General of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI). In his 37-year diplomatic career, he held key positions like Pakistan's 30th Foreign Secretary (April 2019-September 2022); High Commissioner to India (2017-2019); Ambassador to Turkiye (2015-2017); and Ambassador to Thailand/Permanent Representative to UNECSAP in Bangkok (2009-2013). He also held senior positions in Pakistan Missions in Washington and New York and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood has a Master's degree in International Affairs from Columbia University (New York) and a Master's in History from Quaid-e-Azam University (Islamabad).

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Acknowledgment: The photograph of the Pakistan Monument used in the Islamabad Conclave logo was taken by ZILL NIAZI (www.instagram.com/zill.niazi) and painted by IRFAN MURTAZA (www.irfanmurtaza.net)

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