



CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

CASS International Webinar Press Release

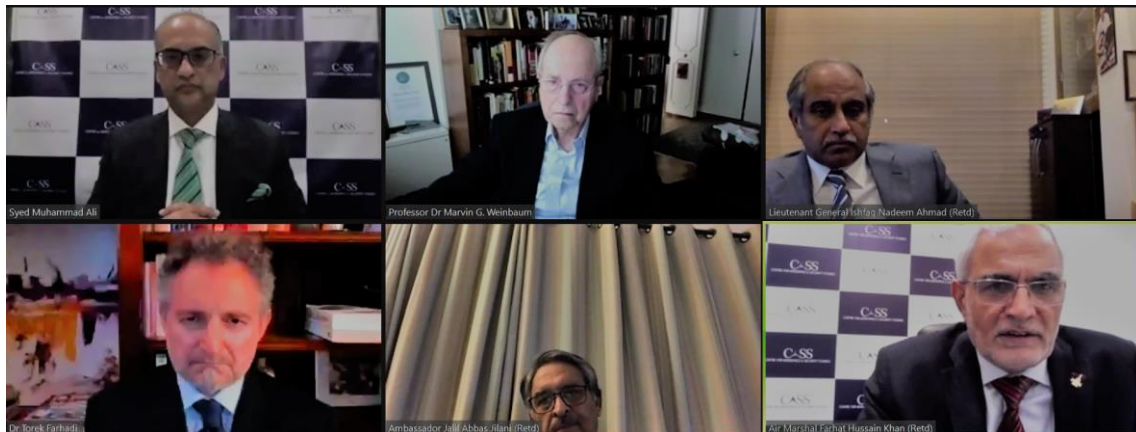
“FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN: IMPLICATIONS AND OPTIONS FOR PAKISTAN”

Neighboring countries must help Afghanistan reach an “Afghan-led” power-sharing arrangement and become “partners in peace.”

There should be a financial commitment to support Afghanistan by the US and its allies as it struggles to stand on its own feet.

Pak-Afghan cooperation can turn the region into a zone of opportunity, trade, commerce, and transit.

26 May 2021



These were some of major conclusions of the international webinar on **“Future of Afghanistan: Implications and Options for Pakistan”**, organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS) here in Islamabad.

Speakers from the United States (US), Afghanistan and Pakistan critically evaluated the emerging complex dynamics within Afghanistan and their likely impact on Pakistan’s politics, security, and economy. They helped identify timely policy measures that need to be considered by the relevant stakeholders to deal with the evolving situation on Pakistan’s western borders.



In his Introductory Remarks, **Syed Muhammad Ali, Director, Nuclear and Strategic Affairs at CASS and webinar moderator**, said that the international community, regional powers, and Afghan stakeholders would have to learn from the bitter and costly conflict history and in the shared interest of regional peace and security, work together to prevent continuation or further escalation and expansion of conflict in Afghanistan and its adverse consequences for South, West and Central Asia.

Offering his insight on the US' withdrawal plan, **Prof. Dr Marvin G. Weinbaum, Director at the Afghanistan and Pakistan Studies, Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C**, observed that there was no longer any possibility of a negotiated peace in Afghanistan following the US announcement. He warned that it was likely that now there would be even greater violence than ever before setting the stage for an open-ended, proxy-driven civil war that would create millions of refugees and destabilize the region. The Taliban, according to him, appeared to be eyeing a military victory, but their campaign to dislodge the Kabul government, along with its constitutional foundations, was both political and psychological. Neighboring countries were critical for the success of the Afghan state, but whether they would be supportive or act as spoilers remained to be seen, he said.



On Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, **Dr Torek Farhadi, former Advisor to the President of Afghanistan**, highlighted that there were four areas where there was great potential for the two sides to work together - trade, trade potential and complementarities; cultural engagement; tourism; environment and climate change. Dr Farhadi appealed that the Taliban need to understand that once foreign troops left and there was civil war, it would not benefit anyone, not the Afghans, not Pakistan, everyone would lose.

Lieutenant General (Retd) Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmad, former Chief of General Staff, Pakistan Army, pointed out that a Pakistan-Afghanistan agreement needed to be put in place along with an agreement by supporting states (friends of Afghanistan) willing to support Kabul post-US departure. He stressed the urgency of a financial commitment by the US, its allies, and other developed countries to support Afghanistan as it struggles to get back on its feet. "A civil war-like situation can only be avoided or mitigated if there is delay in the departure of US troops, general elections are held and a new transitional government put in place in Kabul," he remarked.



Ambassador (Retd) Jalil Abbas Jilani, Director at CASS and former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, was of the view that the ongoing peace process had stalemated. Despite that, whatever the outcome of the peace process, it was imperative for Islamabad to continue to display the same level of commitment towards Afghanistan's peace and stability. He also stressed that contingency planning would be needed on Pakistan's part to deal with the massive inflow of refugees and prevent the infiltration of anti-state elements into the country in case of a civil war.



In his Concluding Remarks, **Deputy President CASS and former Vice Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal (Retd) Farhat Hussain Khan** emphasized that peace in Afghanistan was the key to regional peace. Regional stability would provide access to trade routes and energy corridors between Pakistan, Central Asian Republics and beyond and could be a catapult to economic prosperity. However, he cautioned that any internal fighting amongst various factions, particularly between the Taliban and the Kabul government, would pose a serious challenge to regional peace. The Deputy President stressed that failure to achieve stability in Afghanistan would have serious implications on Pakistan's economic and internal security emerging out of influx of refugees and terror activities. According to him, CPEC was likely to come under serious pressure. "Pakistan needs to pre-empt and endeavour to garner support of all stakeholders, particularly China, Iran and Turkey in support of a stable Afghanistan through a common regional objective of 'partners in peace'", he concluded.

