



Centre for Pakistan and Gulf Studies

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Internship Report



American War on Iran and Diplomacy in the Region



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Introduction

The seminar on “American War on Iran and Diplomacy in the Region” was delivered by **Ambassador (Retd.) Naela Chohan** and focused on the complex geopolitical and strategic dynamics surrounding Iran, Israel, and the United States. The session examined the historical evolution of tensions among these actors and highlighted the interconnected dimensions of military confrontation, diplomacy, regime change, nuclear proliferation, missile development, and regional security. The speaker emphasized that the contemporary confrontation involving Iran cannot be understood solely in terms of nuclear weapons or military capabilities. It is embedded within a broader historical and geopolitical context involving competing national interests, regional power struggles, strategic alliances, and differing perceptions of security. Particular attention was given to the evolution of U.S. policy toward Iran, Iran-Israel relations, the Iranian nuclear program, the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the historical developments that shaped the establishment of Israel. The seminar further demonstrated that the possibility of military confrontation and the pursuit of diplomacy operate simultaneously within the regional security environment. While military pressure and deterrence remain significant components of state strategy, diplomatic engagement and international mechanisms remain essential for preventing escalation and addressing disputes through negotiation and verification.



U.S. Policy Toward Iran

Ambassador Chohan discussed the evolution of U.S. policy toward Iran and the different political, economic, and strategic instruments employed by Washington to influence Iranian behavior. Relations between the United States and Iran have remained characterized by substantial tensions, particularly since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Over time, issues such as Iran's political system, nuclear activities, missile capabilities, regional influence, and relations with non-state actors have become important elements of the bilateral confrontation. One of the significant concepts addressed during the seminar was regime change. In the context of international politics, regime change refers to efforts aimed at altering the political leadership or political structure of another state. The speaker discussed this concept in relation to the broader history of American policy toward Iran and the Iranian perception of external interference. Such policies can influence not only bilateral relations but also the broader security calculations of the affected state.

The discussion also considered democracy and political reform as components of Western discourse concerning Iran. At the same time, the United States has employed economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure, military deterrence, and other instruments in response to concerns regarding Iran's nuclear and missile programs and its regional activities. These policies demonstrate that U.S. policy toward Iran involves multiple objectives rather than being confined to a single issue.

The possibility of military action was also considered within the wider context of regional tensions. Military confrontation, however, carries consequences beyond the immediate parties because of Iran's strategic position, its regional relationships, and the interconnected nature of Middle Eastern security.

Iran and Israel

A major component of the seminar was the examination of the longstanding strategic confrontation between Iran and Israel. Relations between the two states have been characterized by profound political hostility and competing strategic interests. Israel regards Iran's nuclear and missile capabilities as significant security concerns, whereas Iran has consistently opposed Israeli policies and maintained relationships with groups that are hostile toward Israel. Ambassador Chohan explained that the Iran-Israel confrontation should be examined within the broader regional balance of power. The rivalry is not restricted to direct political disagreements but extends to military deterrence, intelligence operations, missile capabilities, nuclear concerns, and the activities of regional partners and non-state actors.

The speaker also highlighted the importance of understanding the different security perceptions of the two states. Israel's concerns regarding Iran are largely associated with Iran's nuclear potential, missile capabilities, and regional influence. From Iran's perspective, Israeli military capabilities, its relationship with the United States, and its regional policies constitute significant elements of

its own security calculations. Consequently, the Iran-Israel confrontation represents a complex security competition in which actions intended by one side to enhance its security may be interpreted by the other as threatening. Such dynamics contribute to mistrust and increase the possibility of escalation.



Iran's Nuclear Program

The Iranian nuclear program was another central subject of the seminar. Ambassador Chohan discussed the international concerns surrounding Iran's nuclear activities and the importance of distinguishing between the peaceful use of nuclear technology and the potential development of nuclear weapons capabilities. Iran has maintained that its nuclear program serves peaceful purposes, including energy production and scientific research. However, several states have expressed concerns regarding Iran's enrichment activities and the possibility that its technological capabilities could eventually contribute to a nuclear weapons program. This disagreement has made the Iranian nuclear issue one of the most significant sources of tension between Iran and Western states. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has an important role in this context. Through its safeguards and verification mechanisms, the organization monitors nuclear activities and assesses whether declared nuclear material is being used for peaceful purposes. International inspections and verification are therefore important for reducing uncertainty and building confidence regarding Iran's nuclear activities.

The speaker emphasized that the nuclear question is not merely a technical matter. It has significant political and strategic implications because perceptions regarding Iran's nuclear capabilities

influence the security calculations of Israel, the United States, and other regional states. Consequently, the nuclear issue has become closely connected with diplomacy, sanctions, deterrence, and the possibility of military action.

Historical Background of Israel

The seminar also examined the historical background of Israel in order to provide context for contemporary Middle Eastern geopolitical conflicts. Particular attention was given to the **Balfour Declaration of 1917**, through which the British government expressed support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration represented an important development in the political history of Palestine and subsequently became part of the broader historical process that contributed to the establishment of Israel in 1948. The political circumstances following the First World War, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the British Mandate in Palestine, Jewish immigration, competing national aspirations, and the consequences of the Second World War all contributed to the transformation of the region.

Ambassador Chohan connected these historical developments with the contemporary geopolitical environment of the Middle East. The establishment of Israel and the subsequent Arab-Israeli conflicts fundamentally altered regional political and security relations. Over time, the question of Palestine became closely linked with wider regional rivalries and the foreign policies of major international powers. The seminar also referred to the **Rothschild family** in the context of the historical discussion surrounding the Balfour Declaration. This aspect of the discussion requires careful historical interpretation. The Balfour Declaration was an official British government statement, and its formulation and implementation should primarily be examined through British policy, the circumstances of the period, and the wider political developments in Palestine rather than attributing the policy to a particular private family.

Regime Change, Democracy, and Regional Security

The concept of regime change was further discussed in relation to broader questions of sovereignty and international intervention. Ambassador Chohan explained that attempts by external powers to influence the political structure of another state can have significant consequences for regional stability. In the Iranian context, external political and military pressure has contributed to perceptions of insecurity and foreign interference. At the same time, the United States and its allies have identified Iran's nuclear activities, missile capabilities, and regional policies as significant security concerns. These contrasting perceptions illustrate the importance of understanding international conflicts from the perspectives of the different actors involved.

The relationship between regime change and regional security is particularly significant because political instability in one state can produce consequences for neighboring countries. In the Middle Eastern context, changes in the political or security environment of one country can influence

alliances, military deployments, economic relations, and regional power balances. The discussion therefore demonstrated that political intervention and military pressure may generate broader strategic consequences beyond their immediate objectives. This makes the question of sovereignty, external intervention, and regional stability an important component of the Iran-related security debate.



Missile Development and Strategic Deterrence

The seminar also addressed Iran's missile development as an important component of the regional security environment. Iran's missile capabilities contribute to its strategic deterrence and constitute an important element of its defense posture. From the perspective of Israel and the United States, Iranian missile development represents a significant security concern because of the potential range and destructive capacity of such systems. Conversely, Iran considers military capabilities essential for maintaining deterrence in an environment in which it faces stronger military powers. The speaker highlighted how the same military capability can be interpreted differently by competing states. A state may regard its military capabilities as necessary for defense and deterrence, while an adversary may interpret those same capabilities as evidence of offensive intentions. This difference in perception can contribute to an arms competition and increase regional insecurity.

The Role of the United States in the Middle East

Ambassador Chohan also examined the broader role of the United States in Middle Eastern politics. The United States maintains extensive political, economic, and security relationships with several states in the region and has historically played an important role in regional strategic affairs. American support for Israel, relationships with Arab and Gulf states, military deployments, sanctions against Iran, and diplomatic initiatives have all contributed to the existing regional balance of power. From the American perspective, these policies are associated with security, deterrence, protection of allies, and the prevention of threats to regional stability. From the Iranian perspective, the presence and policies of the United States can be perceived as forms of strategic pressure and containment. The speaker therefore emphasized that American involvement cannot be examined independently from the broader regional balance of power. U.S. policies affect not only Washington and Tehran but also Israel, Gulf states, and other regional actors.

Diplomacy and Conflict Management

An important theme of the seminar was the continuing significance of diplomacy in preventing and managing conflict. Although military power and deterrence play important roles in international relations, diplomatic engagement provides mechanisms through which states can communicate, negotiate, establish agreements, and manage crises. The Iranian nuclear issue provides an important example of the interaction between diplomacy and security. International negotiations have sought to establish restrictions and verification mechanisms concerning Iran's nuclear activities. The involvement of international organizations such as the IAEA further demonstrates the importance of independent monitoring and verification in reducing uncertainty.

Diplomacy is particularly important in the Middle East because military escalation between major regional and external actors can generate wider consequences. A conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States could affect neighboring states, energy security, trade routes, and regional political stability. Therefore, diplomatic channels can serve as mechanisms for communication, confidence-building, crisis management, and the reduction of miscalculation.

Main Issues Discussed

The seminar addressed several interconnected issues that contribute to the contemporary security environment surrounding Iran and the wider Middle East. These included regime change, democracy, missile development, nuclear activities, nuclear inspections, U.S. foreign policy, Iran-Israel tensions, and the historical development of Israel. Rather than functioning as isolated issues, these factors interact with one another. Iran's nuclear program influences U.S. and Israeli security perceptions; military pressure affects Iran's strategic calculations; missile development contributes to deterrence and threat perceptions; and historical grievances continue to influence contemporary

political relationships. Diplomacy and international institutions therefore remain important mechanisms for managing these interconnected challenges.

Closing Remarks

The seminar on “American War on Iran and Diplomacy in the Region,” delivered by Ambassador (Retd.) Naela Chohan, provided a comprehensive analysis of the political and strategic factors shaping the contemporary Middle Eastern security environment. The session demonstrated that the tensions surrounding Iran are the result of multiple interconnected historical, political, military, and diplomatic factors. Similarly, the discussion of Iran's nuclear program emphasized the importance of international verification and the role of the IAEA in monitoring nuclear activities. The historical discussion concerning the Balfour Declaration and the establishment of Israel further demonstrated that contemporary Middle Eastern conflicts have deep historical dimensions. Understanding these historical developments is essential for comprehending the political and strategic relationships that characterize the region today. Overall, the seminar highlighted the interconnected nature of war, diplomacy, nuclear politics, military deterrence, historical developments, and regional security. It demonstrated that sustainable regional stability requires attention not only to military capabilities but also to diplomatic engagement, international institutions, political negotiations, and the differing security perceptions of regional and international actors.



President of CPGS Mr. Nasir presenting shield of honour to Ambassador (Retd.) Naela Chohan