



Title: In-House Discussion on “How Middle Powers in the Asia Pacific are Engaging/Disengaging with Afghanistan”

Event Date: November 24, 2025

Venue: CAPES Office, Islamabad/ Online

Time: 16:00-17:00

Moderator: Yusra Sarwar, Researcher, CAPES

After the fall of Kabul in 2021, a geopolitical vacuum was created. The Taliban regime engaged pragmatically with the world. In this regard, middle powers were only left with two options of isolation or legitimization. Instead of taking one stance, the majority of the states have taken a middle approach. They are engaging with Afghanistan strategically and functionally in order to prevent state collapse. Thus, CAPES hosted an in-house discussion with Salman Javed, Director General of South Asia Times.

Salman Javed was of the opinion that through humanitarian diplomacy, multilateralism, religious diplomacy, and trade corridors, these middle powers are engaging with Afghanistan. this will establish a soft power engagement with the state.

Considering the middle powers such as Japan, whose main aim of engagement is to prevent migration and humanitarian collapse. They are mostly engaging via UNDP. Additionally, Australia is also providing humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. most of these middle powers are promoting women's rights and establishing a counter-terrorism dialogue. These countries are also investing in renewable energy resources. This will open the trade links between the states.

He highlighted that these initiatives will lead to the gradual normalization of relations between middle powers and Afghanistan. They can cooperate on the gender issues and security challenges together. The religious affinity between the nations, such as Malaysia and Afghanistan, can open avenues for girls to receive education.

He recommended that Pakistan and Afghanistan should increase their exchange of delegations both officially and unofficially, to establish their relations and move from hostility to cooperation.

