INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPMENT AND STABILITY

iPDS 2026

POST EVENT REPORT

14 - 16 SEPTEMBER 2026

ISSRA
INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, RESEARCH & ANALYSIS



WORKSHOP SPONSOR

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International Programme for Development & Stability (IPDS) - 2026

Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA), National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad, organised the International Programme for Development and Stability (IPDS) 2026 from 14 to 16 September 2026, under the theme "Navigating the Great Transformation: Power, Technology, Security, and Resilience."

Launched in 2023, IPDS was conceived as a platform for engaging the diplomatic community based in Pakistan and promoting informed dialogue on Pakistan's strategic perspectives. Building on the success of earlier editions, the 2026 programme broadened its scope by bringing eminent international experts to Pakistan to examine the transformations shaping the global environment. The programme brought together foreign security advisers (FSA's), diplomatic staff of embassies, representatives of international agencies, along with senior government and military officials, leading research institutions, think tanks, scholars from Pakistan's foremost universities, and members of civil society.

IPDS 2026 aimed to provide a multidisciplinary platform for examining the drivers, dynamics and implications of geopolitical, geo-economic, technological, informational and regional transformations. Its core objectives were to:

- *Examine the transforming global order through power transitions, United Nations reform, strategic autonomy and economic statecraft.*
- *Analyse the impact of artificial intelligence, cyber technologies, semiconductor competition and cognitive warfare on state power and global affairs.*
- *Understand the changing character of security and warfare, with particular attention to deterrence, AI-enabled military capabilities and their implications for strategic stability.*
- *Assess how middle powers navigate great-power rivalry and promote strategic balance through diplomacy and cooperation.*

This year, the programme's visual identity featured the jasmine flower and the colour green. Green reflects hope, growth and renewal, while jasmine symbolises peace, purity and resilience. Together, they reflect Pakistan's national identity and its commitment to a peaceful and prosperous world. They embody the spirit of IPDS: dialogue, cooperation and shared action for global peace, development and stability.




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DAY 1

Monday, 14 September, 2026

Opening Plenary






OPENING PLENARY
MONDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER 2026
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@Foothills
Talking: Mr Victor Gao
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DAY 1

Monday, 14 September, 2026

Strategic Plenary I

The Transforming Global Order: Power, Governance and Strategic Autonomy





SPEAKERS



Ambassador Nicholas Hopton



Prof. Zhou Jianren



Mr Christian Caryl



Amb Munir Akram



CHAIR
Dr Huma Baqai

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The transformation of the global order involves changes in the distribution of power, international governance and the meaning of sovereignty. It also concerns who defines international rules, how power is exercised and what gives institutions legitimacy.
- The current global transition has developed over several decades. The end of the Cold War, the September 11 attacks, the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent global crises progressively weakened confidence in a stable, US-led international order.
- International institutions face a growing gap between their inherited structures and the actual distribution of power. Their continued relevance depends on accommodating a wider range of interests and restoring confidence in how decisions are made.
- The emerging global order could take the form of multipolarity, a more diverse "multiplex" world or US-China bipolarity. These possibilities reflect uncertainty over how widely power is spreading and where decisive capabilities remain concentrated.
- Emerging US-China bipolarity rests on their substantial economic, military and technological advantages over other states. This concentration of capabilities positions their bilateral relationship at the centre of the global order.
- US-China competition could become more manageable through strategic communication and a shared interest in stability. Trade, technology and Taiwan remain the principal areas of friction, with neither a comprehensive settlement nor full confrontation inevitable.
- BRICS, the SCO and other regional arrangements are additional platforms for cooperation rather than necessarily as rigid rival blocs. Their appeal lies partly in offering states more choices without requiring acceptance of one dominant political hierarchy.
- China's rise, Russia's renewed assertiveness and the growing influence of the Global South have challenged established international hierarchies. Countries previously treated as peripheral increasingly seek a role in shaping global rules and institutions.
- Pakistan needs clear strategic priorities to address economic weakness, tensions with India and terrorism linked to insecurity in Afghanistan. Economic recovery requires affordable energy, digital and AI expertise, and commercially viable investment projects.
- Pakistan must maintain credible deterrence against India while remaining ready for dialogue on unresolved disputes. Political barriers to rapprochement require patience, while lasting counterterrorism gains depend on public trust and community participation, particularly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

DAY 1

Monday, 14 September, 2026

Strategic Plenary II

Technology, AI, Information and Society:
Redefining National Power





SPEAKERS



Ms Asmae Ben Bahida



Mr Nan Zhong



Dr June Park



Ms Oksana Boyko



CHAIR
Mr Fasi Zaka

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Technology, AI and information increasingly shape national power alongside economic and military strength. Their importance extends to how states organise production, govern societies, influence opinion and preserve independent decision-making.
- US-China technology competition concerns more than commercial leadership. It involves control over the infrastructure, standards and systems through which billions of people may work, communicate, access services and receive information.
- Export controls, investment restrictions and industrial policy have become instruments of strategic competition. Decisions about chips, AI infrastructure and technology partnerships increasingly carry consequences for national security and foreign policy.
- Human welfare and agency must remain central to technological development. AI should expand people's capabilities while preserving their ability to make choices, exercise rights and retain meaningful control over decisions affecting their lives.
- Technology investments should serve a clear national development plan. Decisions about data centres, AI systems and cybersecurity need to address defined priorities in areas such as education, healthcare, energy, industry and infrastructure.
- Information sovereignty includes protecting domestic political processes from unwanted external influence. Foreign financing, concentrated private power and digitally amplified narratives can affect public debate and weaken independent political choice.
- The demand for caution in AI development also applies to security and governance more broadly. Major decisions require examination of likely consequences, intended beneficiaries and longer-term costs before harmful processes become difficult to reverse.
- AI is becoming a general capability across the economy rather than remaining confined to the technology sector. Its applications increasingly span finance, medicine, transport, logistics, education, public administration and defence.
- Pakistan should develop domestic capacity to evaluate AI safety before systems enter sensitive or consequential uses. A dedicated AI safety institute or specialist evaluation team could provide a foundation for sustained testing and technical oversight.
- Pakistan's AI priorities should centre on stronger institutions, useful public services and greater control over essential capabilities. The practical test of national AI power is whether the country can choose its systems, retain critical assets and develop the people needed to run them.

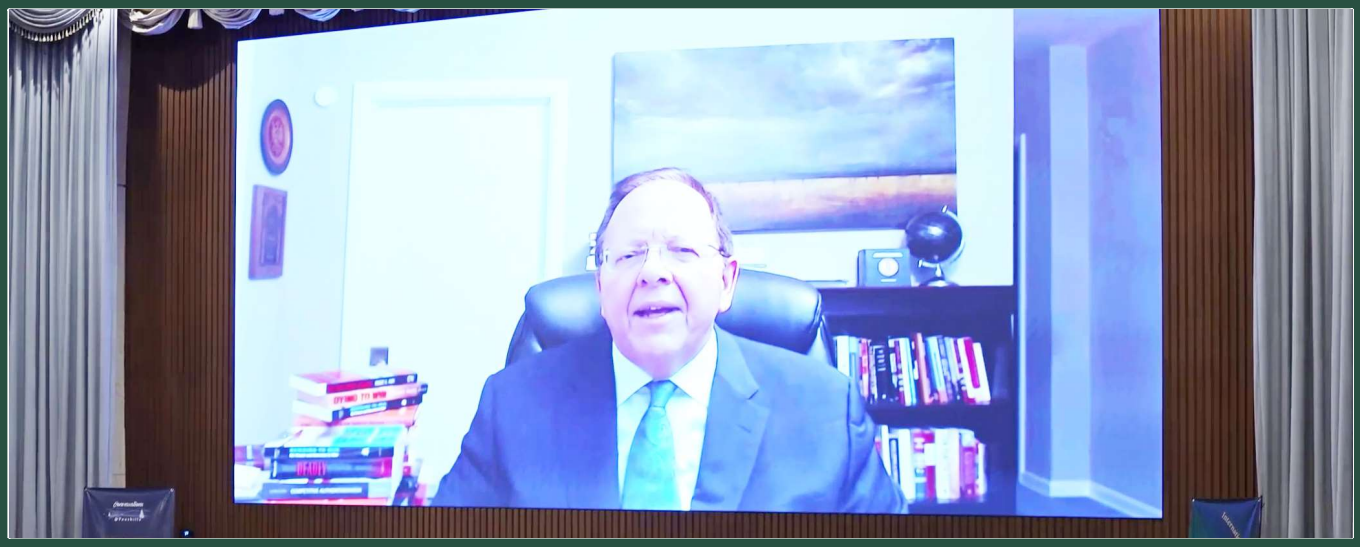
DAY 2

Tuesday, 15 September, 2026

Strategic Plenary III

The Changing Character of Warfare: Strategic Stability and Security Beyond Borders





SPEAKERS



Brig Gen Mark Kimmitt (Retd)



Dr Alexey Kupriyanov



Rear Adm Syed Faisal Ali Shah (Retd)



CHAIR
Mr Ejaz Haider

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- As warfare evolves, political objectives, military strategy and available capabilities must remain aligned. New technology offers strategic value only when it supports clear and achievable political goals.
- The precision advantage associated with the 1991 Gulf War has become more widely accessible. Commercial electronics, navigation systems and computing have enabled more states to field relatively affordable precision weapons.
- Rapid changes in drone technology can make existing protection inadequate. Different guidance methods and operating characteristics require continuous adjustment rather than reliance on one defensive solution.
- The spread of inexpensive drones and missiles allows weaker powers to impose significant costs on stronger adversaries. Military advantage increasingly depends on affordability, production capacity and sustained availability alongside technological sophistication.
- Counter-drone capability must become more affordable and scalable. Interceptor drones, electronic measures, sensors and other defensive systems need to keep pace with the quantity and changing characteristics of incoming threats.
- Dense drone coverage can reinforce positional stalemate rather than restore manoeuvre. When observation and precision attack are widely available, even small movements can become costly and opportunities for large offensives can narrow.
- Fundamental military principles can remain relevant even as their application changes. Concentrating effects may still be necessary, while physically concentrating troops and equipment becomes more dangerous under persistent surveillance.
- Pakistan's location may create opportunities in future discussions about alternative regional trade and energy routes. Such opportunities require careful assessment of commercial feasibility, infrastructure needs and the surrounding security environment.
- Pakistan should prepare for possible spill over from an expanded conflict near its border with Iran. Refugee movements, cross-border insecurity and disruption in Balochistan would require coordinated border management and humanitarian planning.
- Maintaining neutrality and limiting spill over would be important if fighting expanded towards areas near Pakistan. Diplomatic engagement and domestic preparedness would help reduce the risk of Pakistan becoming drawn into a wider confrontation.

DAY 2

Tuesday, 15 September, 2026

Strategic Plenary IV

Managing Competition, Preventing Conflict -
Role of Middle Powers



SPEAKERS



Mr Renan De Souza



HE Amb Mathu Joyini



Dr Moeed Yusuf



CHAIR
Ms Tanya Francis

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Middle powers do not constitute a fixed or unified bloc rather their cooperation rests on shared interests on particular issues, allowing them to collaborate in one area while differing in another and preserving independent relationships with major powers.
- Middle powers must preserve their autonomy while preventing major-power competition from turning their regions into arenas of conflict. Their influence depends on maintaining diplomatic options, managing competing relationships and supporting peaceful dispute resolution.
- Strategic hedging is an active policy of diversification. It involves building several partnerships and keeping channels open so that no single external power can exercise excessive influence over national choices.
- Middle powers cannot eliminate major-power rivalry, but they can influence how it affects them. Coordinated diplomacy can help them shape regional choices rather than simply respond to decisions made elsewhere.
- The UN faces a central dilemma; geopolitical fragmentation increases the need for its work while making agreement harder to achieve. Security Council divisions can obstruct action precisely when international coordination is most urgent.
- Security Council paralysis should not obscure the UN's wider contribution. Its role in cooperation, norm-setting, decolonisation and giving smaller states a voice remains important to countries with limited independent influence.
- Peaceful settlement requires earlier and more active use of negotiation, mediation, arbitration and judicial processes. These mechanisms should help prevent disputes from escalating rather than become options considered only after violence begins.
- Middle-power cooperation should include smaller states that actively defend international law and multilateralism. Diplomatic initiative and principled action can matter even where a country has limited economic or military weight.
- UN reform must address effectiveness, representation and public confidence together. Administrative changes alone will be insufficient if the organisation remains unable to respond credibly to major peace and security challenges.
- The next UN Secretary-General will need to make the organisation more visible and effective in peace processes. Mobilising middle powers and smaller committed states can help turn broad support for multilateralism into practical cooperation.

DAY 2

Tuesday, 15 September, 2026

Closing Plenary






MARGALLA
THOUGHT
Karl Marx
Selected
Writings
Powers of Theory
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Souvenirs Presentation














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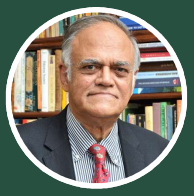
Wednesday, 16 September, 2026

Public Diplomacy: Role of Art, Culture & Heritage





SPEAKERS



DVF
Mr Javed Jabbar



Dr Najeeba Arif



Mr Shahid Nadeem



Mr Kamran Lashari



Mr Areeb Azhar



MODERATOR
Mr Adeel Hashmi

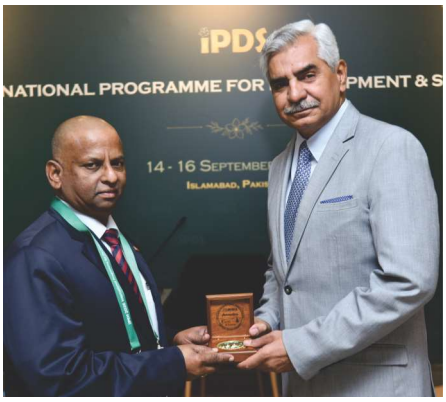
KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A country's international identity extends beyond its economy, political institutions and military capabilities. Its stories, artistic traditions, historical memory and everyday social values also shape how others understand it.
- Pakistan's cultural history extends far beyond its creation in 1947. Mehrgarh, the Indus Valley civilisation, Gandhara and subsequent historical periods form part of an inheritance that deserves recognition and preservation.
- Pakistan's musical traditions reflect centuries of cultural interaction. Indigenous practices, Persian and Central Asian influences, and later European instruments have contributed to forms that continue to evolve.
- Pakistan's natural landscapes and historical heritage are major assets for international engagement. Their value depends on conservation, accessibility and the quality of the experience offered to visitors.
- Religious tourism offers opportunities to connect international visitors with Pakistan's diverse historical inheritance. Respectful preservation and accessible visits can support relationships with communities for whom these sites hold deep significance.
- Visa difficulties and unnecessary movement restrictions can limit tourism and cultural exchange. Making visits easier is an important part of allowing Pakistan's cultural strengths to reach international audiences.
- Streaming platforms and live theatre offer different forms of cultural engagement. Digital distribution can reach large audiences, while theatre creates a distinctive shared experience through the direct relationship between performers and spectators.
- Reaching international streaming audiences requires financing, technical quality, marketing and access to distribution. State and corporate support can help Pakistani productions compete while retaining original stories and cultural character.
- Pakistan needs a coherent cultural vision supported by continuity, investment and institutional coordination. Creative talent requires dependable opportunities, resources and long-term planning to develop its full public and international value.
- Public diplomacy benefits from protecting the authenticity of creative work. Pakistan's international appeal can grow through confident, well-crafted local stories rather than imitation of established foreign entertainment industries.

Interaction with President NDU & Certificate Award Ceremony















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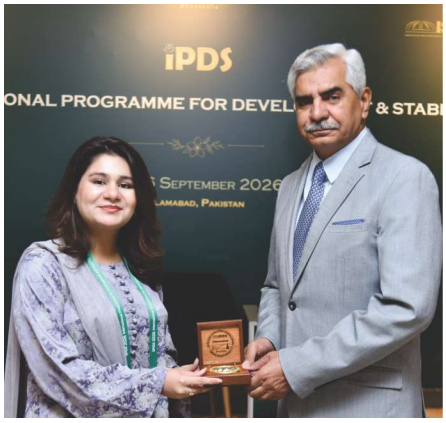
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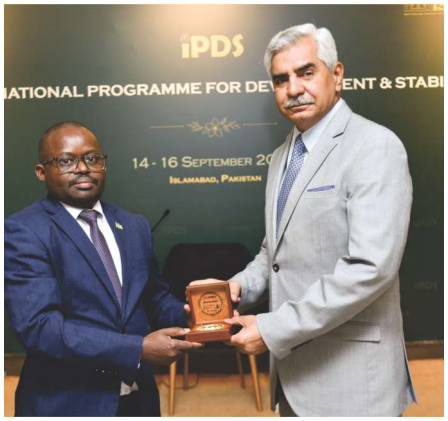
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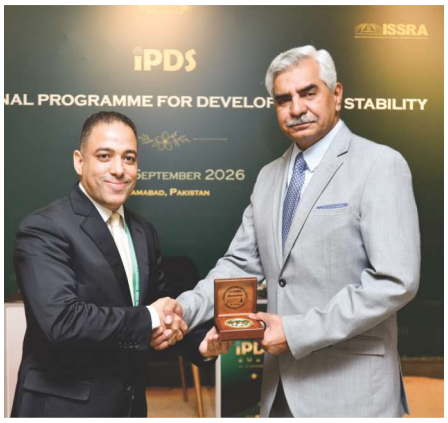

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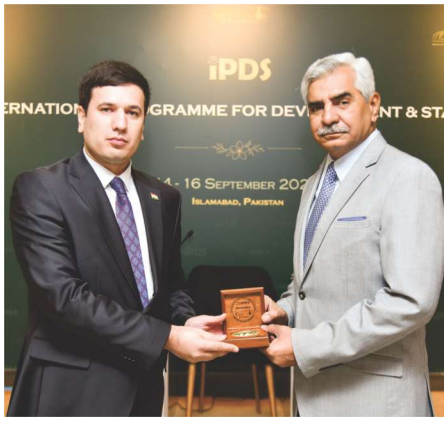
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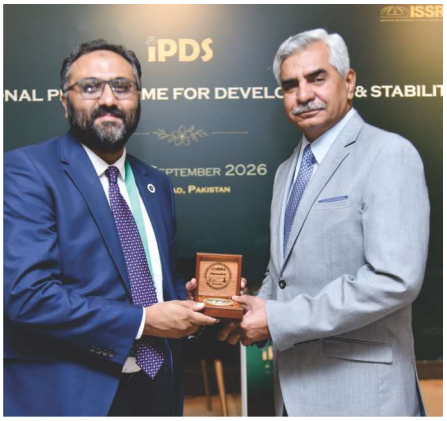
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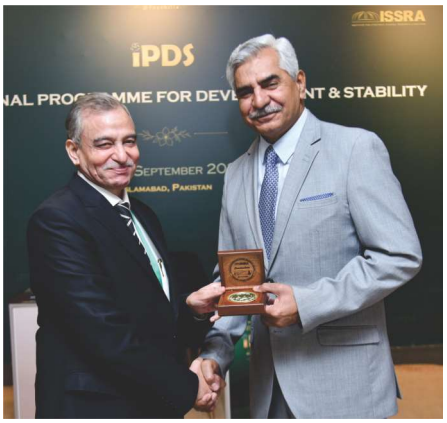
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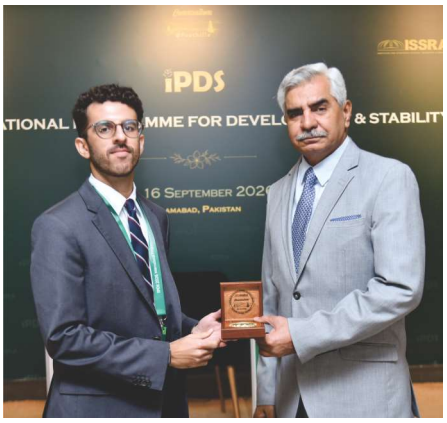
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