

International Webinar

Americas

within the Transforming Global Order & Trends

Thursday, 30th April 2026



Conversations



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Americas within the Transforming Global Order & Trends

ISSRA International Webinar

30th April 2026

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Disclaimer: The discussion and report have followed Chatham House rule. The statements, facts and opinions by speakers do not constitute the official policy of ISSRA/NDU.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

USMCA/CUSMA	United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (Free trade agreement between Canada, the United States (US), and Mexico that came into effect as of July 1st, 2020, as a revision of NAFTA.)
Mercosur	Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market) (Customs union aimed at free movement of goods, services, and factors of production in South America.)
Caricom	Caribbean Community (Economic and political community promoting integration, coordination of foreign policy, and functional cooperation in the Caribbean.)
ALDI	Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración (Latin American Integration Association) (Intergovernmental organization promoting the expansion of regional trade and economic integration to eventually establish a common market.)
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement (The goal is to eliminate barriers to trade and investment between Canada, Mexico and the United States.)

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS



Dr. Benjamin N. Gedan
Director Latin America Programme
at Stimson Centre (USA)



Amb @ Pedro Luiz Rodrigues
Former Diplomat
(Brazil)



Dr. Fen Osler Hampson
Chancellor's Professor,
Carleton University (Canada)



Dr. Carlos Alzugaray Treto
Former Diplomat
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Dr. Monica Laborda
International Geo-political and
Security Analyst (Mexico)



Mr. Federico Bauckhage
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Amb @ Najm Us Saqib
Former Diplomat
(Pakistan)



Dr. Usman W. Chohan
Research Fellow IRS
(Moderator)

Introduction

The contemporary global order is undergoing a structural transformation marked by intensifying great-power competition, the reassertion of regional spheres of influence, and the growing centrality of geo-economic instruments in shaping state behaviour. Strategic priorities are increasingly defined by access to critical resources, control over supply chains, and the securitisation of trade and energy networks, reflecting a deeper fusion of economic interdependence and national security.

Within this evolving landscape, the Americas have emerged as a central theatre of geopolitical and geo-economic contestation, shaped by renewed US primacy, China's expanding footprint, concentrated critical resources, and rising Latin American agency. These dynamics make the region a key arena for understanding how influence, dependency, and autonomy are being renegotiated.

Against this backdrop, the Institute for Strategic Studies and Research Analysis (ISSRA), National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad, held an international webinar titled “Americas within the Transforming Global Order and Trends” on 30 April 2026. Speakers from the United States (US), Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and Pakistan presented their perspectives. The session brought together academics, diplomats, and security experts as participants. The detailed programme is attached as Annex.



Key Takeaways

- US strategy in the western hemisphere has shifted back to assertive containment. The 2025 US National Security Strategy effectively reactivates the Monroe Doctrine, prioritizing exclusion of external powers from strategic assets in the Americas. This is now operationalized through military presence, economic leverage, and political influence, marking the most forceful US posture in the region in decades.
- Great-Power competition in the Americas is now structurally embedded. China is the central but often implicit competitor, with deep involvement in ports, energy, telecom, and industrial supply chains across Latin America. The US is actively working to constrain this footprint, especially in critical infrastructure, but China remains a preferred economic partner for many regional states.
- Critical minerals and energy resources are the core geopolitical battlegrounds. Lithium (Andean region), copper (Chile, Peru), rare earths (Brazil), and hydrocarbons (Venezuela, Argentina) are now central to global competition. These resources underpin EVs, defense systems, and energy transitions, making resource access a primary driver of external engagement in the hemisphere.
- Energy security is expanding as a strategic frontier. Beyond minerals, long-term energy assets, including shale in Argentina, Venezuelan reserves, and even Antarctica's potential, are increasingly viewed through a national security lens. Energy access is becoming both a geopolitical objective for Washington and a bargaining lever for regional producers.



- US global power is shifting from soft power to hard power instruments. Washington is deprioritising aid, multilateralism, and diplomatic persuasion in favor of tariffs, sanctions, and military tools. This reduces US normative influence while opening space for other actors, including the EU, China, and India, to expand their diplomatic footprint.
- The global order is multipolar, but US dominance persists in its near abroad. While the global system is moving toward multipolarity and the US appears overstretched, its structural dominance in the Western Hemisphere remains intact through financial institutions (e.g., IMF), military capacity, and trade dependencies. Latin America's diversification has not yet translated into strategic autonomy.
- Latin America remains politically volatile and ideologically cyclical. The region continues to swing between left-leaning and right-leaning governments, creating inconsistent foreign policy orientations. Upcoming elections in key states such as Brazil, Colombia, and Peru will further shape regional alignment and external engagement dynamics.
- Trade diversification has become a strategic imperative for all economies. Overdependence on single markets, even allies, creates structural vulnerability, as illustrated by Canada's reliance on US trade. Across regions, states are actively diversifying partners, a lesson especially relevant for smaller economies exposed to external shocks.
- Middle powers are increasingly shaping global outcomes. Countries such as Mexico, Canada, Brazil, and Pakistan demonstrate that strategic agency is not limited to great powers. Through trade positioning, regional influence, and diplomatic engagement, middle powers can shape outcomes disproportionate to their material capabilities.
- Pakistan has an underutilized opportunity in Latin America. Pakistan's ties with South America remain limited despite low political friction. Practical steps include expanding diplomatic presence (e.g., Paraguay, Peru, Chile), engaging regional blocs (Mercosur, CARICOM, ALADI), and deepening trade in textiles, agriculture, and pharmaceuticals. Pakistan's recent diplomatic visibility also provides an opening to position itself as a credible partner in a diversifying region.

Summary of Proceedings

- The Webinar examined the Americas as a critical arena of the transforming global order. The region reflects major contemporary trends, including great-power competition, the reassertion of spheres of influence, resource geopolitics, and the growing agency of middle powers. The participants observed that the developments across the Western hemisphere provide valuable insight into how power, influence, and alignment are being reshaped in an evolving international system marked by both continuity and change.
- The US has reoriented its strategic focus toward the Western Hemisphere through a revived “Monroe Doctrine 2.0,” prioritising border security, drug interdiction, migration control, and assured access to critical minerals. This shift reflects a broader preference for hard power tools, economic coercion, and transactional bilateral engagement, alongside an explicit effort to limit the influence of non-hemispheric actors in strategically vital assets.
- US' new approach to Monroe doctrine signals a clearer hemispheric-centred strategy, but it also reveals conceptual ambiguity regarding the scope of US exclusion of external powers and the extent of permissible engagement with friendly actors. This lack of clarity risks increasing Washington's strategic burden in managing regional stability while reinforcing a more contested and narrowly defined framework of hemispheric order.
- Brazil has historically pursued a foreign policy rooted in strategic autonomy, often maintaining distance from rigid bloc alignments and positioning itself as an independent actor in global affairs. However, this autonomy has come under increasing strain in recent years due to regional political realignments, the retreat of left-leaning governments across South America, and growing domestic political and institutional fragmentation. As a result, Brazil's traditional role as a regional anchor and autonomous middle power is gradually being constrained.
- Canada is undergoing one of the most consequential foreign policy shifts since World War II, driven by its deep economic integration with the US, where nearly 72% of exports are directed and bilateral trade exceeds USD 700 billion annually. However, rising tariff pressures, political uncertainty, and questions surrounding the future of USMCA/CUSMA have exposed the strategic risks of overdependence on a single partner, even within a close alliance framework.

- In response to US's tariff, Canada has accelerated efforts to diversify its trade and security relationships across Europe and the Indo-Pacific, including new partnerships with the EU and expanded defence commitments. This shift underscores a broader lesson in contemporary geopolitics: in an increasingly transactional international order, even highly institutionalised alliances carry systemic risk, making diversification of economic and security partnerships a necessity of prudent statecraft rather than a departure from it.
- Mexico has emerged as a strategically positioned middle economy, effectively converting geographic proximity to the US into long-term geoeconomic leverage. Since NAFTA and later USMCA, Mexico-US trade has expanded nearly sevenfold, making Mexico the US' largest trading partner in the region. In parallel, global supply chain restructuring and nearshoring trends have positioned Mexico as a major destination for foreign investment, with capital shifting away from Asia.
- Mexico has pursued strategic diversification through a growing trade relationship with the European Union, exceeding EUR 80 billion annually, while navigating increasing external pressures. These include US demands to restrict Chinese involvement in sensitive sectors, the externalisation of border and migration enforcement, and the need to balance domestic economic nationalism with deeper global trade integration. This experience reflects a broader global trend in which middle-income economies are gaining strategic agency amid intensifying great-power competition, even as alignment pressures from major blocs continue to grow.
- Argentina illustrates the strategic vulnerability of financially constrained states in an era where economic leverage has become a primary instrument of geopolitical influence. Repeated dependence on IMF assistance has effectively given the US significant influence over key aspects of Argentina's foreign and economic policy, while the country's domestic politics continue to oscillate between pro-US alignment under right-leaning governments and anti-imperialist, non-aligned rhetoric under Peronist administrations.
- From Argentinian perspective, its strategic autonomy remains constrained by clear US red lines. Washington has consistently opposed the establishment of foreign military bases, major external arms involvement, and expanded Chinese participation in critical infrastructure and sensitive technologies. Despite these constraints, Argentina's strategic importance is growing

due to the vast Vaca Muerta shale oil and gas reserves and its position as a gateway to Antarctica, making it increasingly relevant to future energy, logistics, and resource competition. More broadly, Argentina's experience highlights the vulnerability of financially constrained states in an era where economic leverage has become a primary instrument of geopolitical influence.

- Pakistan's engagement with the Americas has historically been concentrated in North America, particularly the US and Canada, while South America, despite its strategic and economic potential, remains relatively underexplored. Although Pakistan maintains stable diplomatic relations and presence in countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Cuba, and Argentina, but its broader political and economic outreach across the region remains limited.
- Expanding engagement with South America has therefore emerged as a strategic necessity for Pakistan's long-term diplomatic and economic diversification. This includes establishing new diplomatic missions in Paraguay, Peru, and Chile, and strengthening institutional linkages with regional blocs such as Mercosur, Caricom, and ALADI, alongside leveraging Pakistan's demonstrated diplomatic relevance in broader global mediation efforts to enhance its profile as a proactive and credible partner in a diversifying international order.
- Emerging regional trends point toward a growing acceptance of informal spheres of influence within the evolving international order. Cuba's worsening economic crisis, marked by severe energy shortages, food insecurity, and increasing pressure to seek limited accommodation with the US, reflects the shrinking strategic space available to smaller states in the Western Hemisphere.
- The muted response from Russia and China following US actions in Venezuela was widely interpreted as evidence that Latin America continues to be treated as a primary US sphere of influence. The broader implications, where dominant powers quietly acquiesce to each other's spheres of action, suggests that the emerging multipolar order may not mean genuine multipolarity in practice, but rather a compartmentalized redistribution of unchallenged regional dominance.

TRANSFORMING KEY TRENDS FROM THE

→ ★ *A snapshot of how countries in the Americas*

1

RETURN OF SPHERES OF INFLUENCE



The U.S. is reasserting primacy in the Western Hemisphere. Latin America is widely seen as a de facto U.S. domain, with limited external contest from other powers.

Examples from the Americas

-  **US:** Monroe Doctrine 2.0 and homeland security focus
-  **Canada:** Aligning with U.S. on China and critical infrastructure
-  **Cuba/Venezuela case:** Limited reaction from Russia and China seen as tacit acceptance of U.S. dominance

2

ECONOMIC LEVERAGE OVER MILITARY POWER



Economic tools — debt, trade, investment rules and supply chain control — are now the primary instruments of geopolitical influence.

Examples from the Americas

-  **Argentina:** IMF dependence gives the U.S. effective veto power
-  **Mexico:** Nearshoring driven by U.S. economic leverage and market access
-  **Canada:** Concern over U.S. protectionism and economic coercion

3

STRATEGIC AUTONOMY UNDER PRESSURE



Middle powers seek strategic independence but face intensifying pressures from major power competition and economic constraints.

Examples from the Americas

-  **Brazil:** Balancing between U.S., China and Global South while facing pressure on non-alignment
-  **Argentina:** Policy space shaped by financial vulnerability
-  **Mexico:** Pursuing autonomy through diversified economic partnerships

THE BIG PICTURE



The emerging global order is not truly multipolar in practice. It is evolving into a compartmentalized world where major powers exercise dominant influence in their regions, while countries in the Americas navigate economic leverage, strategic pressures and the search for greater agency.



In a transforming world order, agility, diversification and strategic

GLOBAL ORDER: AMERICAS PERSPECTIVE

Americas perceive the evolving world order ★ ←

4

DIVERSIFICATION AS STRATEGIC SURVIVAL



Countries are diversifying trade, partners and supply chains to reduce over-dependence and build resilience in an uncertain world.

Examples from the Americas

-  **Canada:** Diversifying beyond the U.S. in trade, energy and critical minerals
-  **Mexico:** Leveraging USMCA while expanding ties with Europe, Asia, Latin America
-  **Pakistan:** Seeks deeper engagement with South America (Mercosur, CARICOM, ALADI)

5

GEOPOLITICS OF RESOURCES & GEOGRAPHY



Energy, critical minerals, maritime routes and gateway locations are central to geostrategic relevance in the new global order.

Examples from the Americas

-  **Brazil:** Critical minerals and energy potential
-  **Argentina:** Vaca Muerta energy reserves and Antarctica gateway
-  **Mexico:** Geographic proximity to the U.S. and control of key routes

6

TRANSACTIONAL & FRAGMENTED WORLD



Multilateralism is weakening. The global order is becoming more transactional, issue-based and regionally compartmentalized.

Examples from the Americas

-  Retreat of the Latin American "pink tide" reflects domestic and global realignments
-  Selective alignments based on national interest, not ideology

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE AMERICAS



Protect sovereignty and manage external pressures



Strengthen economic resilience and competitiveness



Diversify partnerships and deepen regional cooperation



Invest in strategic resources, innovation and human capital

Strategic clarity will define influence and security in the Americas.

Conclusion

The discussion underscored that the Americas are becoming a central arena for the reassertion of US strategic primacy in an evolving global order. The revival of a modernized Monroe Doctrine reflects Washington's intent to secure its near abroad through a mix of military, economic, and technological instruments, particularly in response to intensifying competition with China and the rising strategic value of critical minerals and energy resources.

At the same time, the discussions highlighted that while the global system is moving toward multipolarity, the Western Hemisphere remains structurally anchored in US influence. Latin American states are actively diversifying partnerships and asserting greater autonomy, yet persistent financial dependencies, institutional linkages, and security asymmetries continue to limit a fully independent strategic posture. The result is a constrained form of multipolarity, where competition exists but operates within enduring US-set parameters.

Overall, the proceedings pointed to a transforming but uneven global order in which middle powers are gaining relative agency, even as regional hierarchies persist. The Americas illustrate this duality clearly: increasing geopolitical contestation, rising importance of resources, and expanding external actors, but within a system still largely shaped by US dominance.

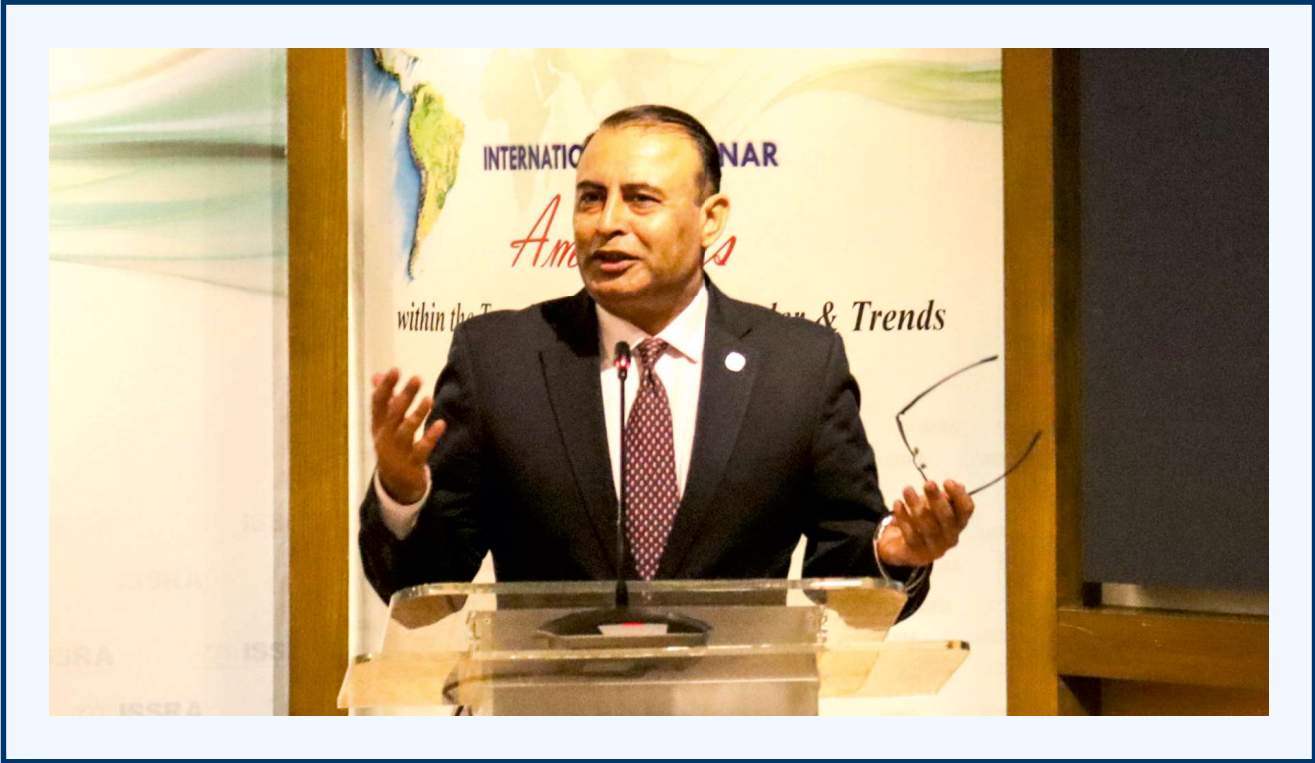
ANNEX



Programme

1830-1900 hrs	Registration / Online Assembling
1900-1905 hrs	Recitation from Holy Quran
1035-1040 hrs	Welcome Remarks by Brig Riaz Ahmed (Retd), Director G&RS, ISSRA-NDU
1905-1910 hrs	Experts' talk on:
	<p>“Americas within the Transforming Global Order and Trends”</p> <p>USA Dr. Benjaman Gedan, Director Latin America Programme at Stimson Centre</p>
	<p>Brazil Amb ® Pedro Luiz Rodrigues, Former Ambassador</p>
	<p>Canada Dr. Fen Osler Hampson, Chancellor's Professor, Carleton University, Canada</p>
	<p>Cuba Dr. Carlos Alzugaray Treto, Former Ambassador</p>
	<p>Mexico Dr. Monica Laborda, International Geo-political and Security Analyst</p>
	<p>Argentina Prof. Bauckhage Federico, Professor Argentinean Council for Intl Affairs</p>
	<p>Pakistan Amb ® Najm Us Saqib, Former Ambassador to Brazil, Cuba & Canada</p>
	<p>Moderator: Dr. Usman W. Chohan, Research Fellow IRS</p>
	<p>(Total of 7x Speakers. Each speaker has presented views on the subject for 8 - 10 minutes)</p>
2020-2055 hrs	Interactive Session
2055-2100 hrs	Vote of Thanks by Major General Muhammad Raza Aizad, HI (M), DG ISSRA
2100 hrs onwards	Dinner Dispersal

Picture Gallery







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