

**SUMMARY OF ‘COMMENTS MADE BY  
ABDULLAHI BABOOD’  
FROM A SESSION ENTITLED “THE EMERGING SECURITY  
ARCHITECTURE IN THE MIDDLE EAST”  
DAY-1 OF AN IPD WEBINAR ENTITLED  
‘MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY FORUM 2022’  
OTTAWA, CANADA  
11-12 MAY 2022**



**OVERVIEW**

The Institute for Peace & Diplomacy (IPD), “a non-profit and ‘non-partisan’ North American international affairs think tank operating in the United States and Canada dedicated to promoting dialogue, diplomacy, prudent realism, and military restraint”<sup>1</sup>, sponsored a conference on 11 and 12 May in which a number of well-known and knowledgeable personalities, discussed some of the critical issues that pertain to the Middle East at this time.

The thrust of the discussions that took place in the course of the two days were balanced and of high standard given the calibre of the speakers.

However, despite a variety of credible invited speakers across the board, it needs to be pointed out that the centre, itself, which is headed by a number of Iranian dual nationals, is generally soft if not sympathetic to the views of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI).

**SUMMARY OF COMMENTS BY ABDULLAH BABOOD**

- Despite everything that is said or all that is going on, the US still continues to be looked upon as the main guarantor of security in the region.
- However, what has been different in recent times is the perception that has come to exist of the American role..
- It is this perception – whether right or wrong – that the US is for a variety of reasons abandoning its friends in the region that is gaining ground and making a difference.
- Also, the fact that the US did not respond in any meaningful way to recent challenges and attacks perpetrated against countries like Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the UAE has reinforced the view that perhaps the US might not be a reliable partner.

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<sup>1</sup> According to its website: <https://peacediplomacy.org/about-us/>

- As a consequence of these perceptions, some of the regional leaders have not responded positively as they might have done in the past to certain American overtures on issues such as increasing their oil production and the like – something that is indicative of the reality concerning existing tensions between Saudi Arabia and the Biden Administration at this time.
- However, it is also a fact that not all Gulf states are united in such views – e.g., Qatar enjoys good ties with the US at a time when the same cannot be said of UAE or KSA.
- Countries like UAE and KSA are of the view that while the threat from Iran is real, they are not able to count on the support of their ‘strategic partner’.
- Nonetheless, it is a fact that these perceptions exist in a scenario where the US and its forces are still very much in position in the region.
- The fear is that if a vacuum should be created as a consequence of the realization of such perceptions, then there is a possibility that ‘global powers’ such as Russia and China may have an opportunity for exploiting things for their advantage.
- While Russia may have its plate full at this time, China, on the other hand, which has a base nearby and its ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (BRI) may want to take advantage.
- So, resort to diplomacy at the regional level and between regional states assumes a key role in such circumstances.
- KSA rapprochement with Turkey and Iran (through the Baghdad Dialogues) and moving away from building blocks against one another (e.g., Sunni vs Shia, and the like) offers the best way for all parties to move forward in the region.

