

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SEMINAR

A day-long seminar titled “The Contemporary Environment: Is a neo- Cold War in the Making?” was held at NDU on 28th May, 2009. The seminar was aimed at generating intellectual debate on global transformations and the challenges and opportunities which these changing patterns may unfold for Pakistan. It was part of a series of deliberative exercises which NDU undertakes periodically in fulfillment of its role as a national think tank.

The discussion on the overarching theme was carried out in two working sessions with six sub-themes besides the inaugural. The first working session was dedicated to the study of emerging trends in the contemporary environment while the second dealt with the challenges and opportunities likely to emerge in a post-uni polar world.

THEMATIC FOCUS

The academic exercise was built on the premise that the world order is dominated by US supremacy which is mainly manifested in unilateralism and pre-emption. Other nations are obligated to assess the probable direction of American policy while finding space for their survival strategies. However, there are perceptible indicators for a dynamic change in the world order; already manifested in phenomenal rise of China as economic and political heavy weight, consolidation of EU and financial crisis on the Western horizons. These may well be seen as a catalyst for change, beyond uni-polarity. The emerging change in the world order would be critically important for Pakistan in view of its geopolitical disposition at the crossroads of three regions. This poses a challenge for the scholars to study and identify likely impact relevant to evolving national strategies.

PARTICIPATION AND PROFILE

Seminar was distinct as an impressive reunion of the academia and practitioners towards an intellectual discourse of significance in the contemporary arena and for Pakistan in particular. The session chairs and six presenters were an impressive blend of academia and practitioners. Concurrently, the audience

represented a broad spectrum from policy relevant circles, think tanks, academia, NDU faculty and course participants/students on the campus. The interaction amongst presenters and the audience provided a stimulant for discussion on the occasion. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Nawabzada Malik Amad Khan was Chief Guest at the inauguration session.

A SUMMARY RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

At the inaugural, President NDU while welcoming the participants, underscored importance of the seminar from the standpoint of assessing global transformations from uni-polarity to a multi polar order and identifying possible variants that are likely to emerge in the decades ahead. The change though not imminent tomorrow, is the fore-warner of the erosion of uni-polarity, and of new challenges and opportunities that may be in store for Pakistan.

The chief guest delivered a key note address on Pakistan's national interests and objectives in the wake of global transformations, identifying essentials in the national agenda namely; promoting and ensuring national security, political stability and national integration. In this context, he flagged the importance of having a multi dimensional foreign policy, matching with the demand of evolving world order. The policy must, therefore, rest upon a full appreciation of the evolving political and economic environment in order to protect and promote national objectives.

Session –One

Re-visiting the Environment: Emerging Trends

The first working session was chaired by Dr. Pervez Iqbal Cheema with three speakers Dr. Tahir Amin, Dr. Nazir Hussain and Dr. Aftab Kazi respectively. The session evolved around the emerging trends of the contemporary environment with particular reference to a theoretical overview, sustainability of *Pax Americana* in the context of case studies of Afghanistan and Iraq, and competing interests of the major economies.

Following are the highlights of the first session:-

- The contemporary environment is fraught with US dominance since the end of the Cold War. The uni-polarity has been expressed in unilateralism and pre-emption over a decade, the ongoing Global War on Terror (GWOT) being its last manifestation.
- The two American invasions on Afghanistan and Iraq have unfolded questions about the limits of American supremacy and put series constraints on the doctrine of *Pax Americana*.
- In addition, the emergence of major economies with multiplicity of interests is appearing to be one of the major catalyst for change in the upcoming political system.
- The emerging patterns seem to be turning the voyage of uni polarity to multi polarity as number of events and entities are appearing at the surface for transformations in the contemporary environment. This calls for a closer study of the processes of dynamic change.

In the moderator's concluding remarks, it was emphasized that a framework is required to interpret the international realities and to address the challenges through a body of theoretically embedded ideas. In order to understand and analyze the contemporary world environment, there is a need to have an in-depth access to various orders existing in the international politics.

Session –Two **A Post Unilateral World: Challenges and Opportunities**

The second session was chaired by Ambassador Najmmudin A. Sheikh with three speakers Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad and Dr. Shireen M. Mazari respectively. The session unfolded discussion on possible variants of a post uni-lateral world, necessity to redraw rules of engagement amongst the international community, and challenges and opportunities in the way of recasting Pakistan's strategy.

Following are the highlights of the second session:-

- The emerging patterns are already indicative of a significant shift in the international political system, now headed towards a post-unilateral world.
- The change in power structure continues dramatically: uni-polar power of US facing limits on its very status and relatively declining due to the rise of the rest which means a rise of new economic realities as well as non-state actors.
- The configuration of the post unilateral world provides a window on the upcoming challenges and opportunities that are in the making for the next decade or so.
- There is a need of redrawing the rules of engagement in the multi-polar environment and also, the perspective on new approaches for international entities.
- In this context, it is a necessity for Pakistan to recast strategy concurrent with changes in the contemporary strategic environment. Pakistan has its inclination towards US in many ways but a post-unilateral environment will have its own demands.
- Pakistan should revisit its policy in the changing environment and formulate foreign and domestic policies with national consensus and cohesion, while taking the domestic dynamics into account.

In the moderator's concluding remarks, it was underlined that US would no more be able to maintain the qualities of a superpower as per Huntington's definition in the coming decades. Therefore, Pakistan in order to pursue its national interests, must embrace the degree of realism characterized by proper information and analysis of the facts of a dynamic situation.

FINDINGS

- Uni polarity is already declining. The future picture is imprecise to-date and can varyingly be described as multi polar or non polar. The US may still be a dominant

military power but with reduced muscle in the wake of emerging new entities.

- There is an unprecedented transfer of economic power and wealth from West to rest of the emerging influential blocs (EU, Russia and China). Consequently, this flow of wealth also brings a major change in their military prowess. These transformations are directed towards a big shift in the international political system.
- The direction of Pakistan's policy must be in consonance with the evolving global realities in the coming decade. It would be unwise to continue putting 'all eggs in one basket'.
- A much needed diversification in Pakistan's posture should be adequately reflected in the quality and depth of relationships with EU, Russia and China. The policy direction should keep all options open to establish tracks of cooperation and collaboration with these region or countries.

What Next?

The organizers while reviewing the findings of the seminar, felt that the outcome in as much as it relates to policy options for Pakistan needs to be kept up for an extended dialogue process. It is, therefore, projected that the seminar should be followed up with a round table for a more focused discussion among resource persons: session chairs and paper presenters of the just concluded seminar, together with participation of NDU faculty.