

Input from intelligentsia needs to be incorporated into foreign policy decision-making

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ISLAMABAD: Participants of a roundtable discussion organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) on the subject, “New Engagement Parameters with the U.S.,” here on Tuesday were of the opinion that there is a need for inclusion of the input from the intelligentsia in the decision-making process. They maintained that a two-way flow of information and analysis between the decision-makers and intelligentsia was a need of the hour for aligning national aspirations with domestic and international realities.

Prof. Sajjad Naseer of the Lahore School of Economics, who was the main speaker of the discussion argued that the U.S. was shifting its focus from Europe to the Asia-Pacific region, which was creating new challenges and opportunities for the states in the Asia-Pacific as well as the regions straddling it. He termed the U.S. engagement with India as part of its strategic reorientation. Prof. Naseer called for a China-Pakistan alliance in response to the Indo-U.S. nexus.

Prof. Naseer was of the opinion that Pakistan was unable to capitalize on the opportunities being thrown up by the transformation in the international strategic scenario because of its internal economic problems and political instability.

Defense Analyst, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Saleem Haider, argued that there was a need for a serious self-assessment in Pakistan before embarking on a quest for establishing new engagement parameters with the U.S. Foreign policy analyst, Amb. B.A. Malik, maintained that since Pakistan had become overly dependent on the U.S. out of fear of India, there was a serious need for addressing the fear factor with respect to India in Pakistan. Amb. Malik called for a rethink of Pakistan’s India policy and worried that if Pakistan would not take peace with India seriously, a time might come that India might not be interested in talking to Pakistan on the latter’s terms. Amb. Qurban argued that water issues between India and Pakistan needed to be resolved on priority basis.

Other participants of the roundtable included: Mr. Ashraf Azim, President of IRS; Brig. (Retd.) Bashir Ahmed, Senior Fellow at IRS; and Ms. Salma Malik and Ms. Shabana Fayyaz of the Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University.