

CONFERENCE REPORT

International Seminar

Organized by

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS), Kolkata

In collaboration with

Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (NMPCR), Jamia Millia Islamia University (JMIU), New Delhi

“BONN ’01 to BONN ’11: Debating Afghanistan’s Political Future”

Date: 8 – 9 February 2012

Venue: Tagore Hall, Dayar-e-Mir- Taqi Mir, Jamia Milia Islamia University (New Delhi)

Inaugural Session

Welcome Address:

Prof. Tasneem Meenai, *Offs. Director, NMPCR, JMI*, inaugurated the seminar by welcoming all the participants from India and abroad on behalf of Nelson Mandela Centre (NMPCR), JMI and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS), Kolkata.

- She gave a brief description of work NMPCR has been doing and especially emphasized the Center’s interest and commitment towards Afghanistan.
- Prof. Meenai acknowledged that NMPCR’s interest in Afghanistan’s affairs got a boost after its collaboration with MAKAIAS and thanked the Director, MAKAIAS for the same.
- Finally she thanked all the guests for accepting the invitation to come and present their well researched works at this conference before inviting the Director, MAKAIAS to give her welcome address.

Dr. Sreeradha Datta, *Director, MAKAIAS, Kolkata*, began her address by welcoming all the delegates from abroad and India to the third consecutive Annual Conference on Afghanistan that MAKAIAS has initiated. She expressed her thankfulness to the NMPCR, JMIU for the collaboration.

- Dr. Datta highlighted that BONN 2011, marked ten years of a process that encouraged national reconciliation and rebuilding of Afghanistan. Highlighting at the transfer of security responsibility from NATO to AFSF, she recognized the convergences of many factors in the landscape of contemporary Afghanistan.
- She raised many pertinent questions like whether the past decade under consideration has seen more setbacks or achievement. What meaning did it have for the region and the efforts.
- Before concluding her speech she added that she would be looking forward to the deliberations of the coming two days and announced that a book will be released with papers presented in this conference shortly.

Inaugural Address:

Mr. Najeeb Jung, Vice-Chancellor, JMI, congratulated MAKAIAS and NMC, JMI for organizing a two day conference devoted to look at the decade starting from Bonn '01 to Bonn'11. He mentioned his close association with Afghanistan being one of the participants at Bonn 01 on behalf of Asian Development Bank.

- He expressed his disappointment with regard to the Afghan attitude during Bonn '01, he felt was their interest was limited to financial assistance and were unwilling to accept ideas and advice from them and a result of which there was a 'lock jam' for the initial 5/6 years which gave Taliban the required opportunity to strengthen their grip all over again.
- He felt because of several mistakes a decade has been wasted and things are unfortunately back to 'square one'. With America desperate to leave the land and negotiation with Taliban on track he was unsure of the role Karzai Govt can play in Afghanistan's emergence as a nation of meaning.
- He expressed the need and importance for Afghanistan to listen to ideas and advices of international community who are investing in the country.
- Before closing his speech, he briefed about the programmes JMI, especially in respect to Afghanistan which included the *Afghan Studies Progamme* at the Academy of International Studies.

Keynote Address:

Mr. Shamlal Bhatija, Senior Advisor for Economic Affairs to the President of Afghanistan began his address by conveying warm greetings of President Hamid Karzai. He also expressed his warm appreciation for MAKAIAS and NMC, JMI for organizing this thematic dialog in New Delhi.

- He mentioned that unlike Bonn1, Bonn2 was led by Afghanistan and co-chaired by Germany. He added that three decades of war has left Afghanistan with deep challenges and vulnerabilities. In spite of that the past 10 years have seen remarkable growth and improvement of situation which has also been reflected by President Karzai's speech.
- He specifically mentioned about the remarkable improvement in the sphere of health, education, economy and women's position and participation.
- He was particularly appreciative of the support given by International and regional players and admitted this would not have been feasible without them.
- Currently Afghanistan is in transition and is determined to take full responsibility by 2014.
- He especially acknowledged the constructive role played by India in Afghanistan and is hopeful that this bond will continue which will take Afghanistan from insecurity to stability and poverty to prosperity.
- Highlighting at the geostrategic position of Afghanistan, he mentioned that stability of the country is essential for every country.
- Afghanistan is in the process of building Strategic Partnership with many countries including India, Italy, France and others as he feels Afghanistan needs support of international community beyond 2014.
- He agreed with Honorable Vice Chancellor in certain points but disagreed with the view that Afghanistan is going back to 'square one', as an insider he feels things are finally moving towards the right direction now.
- He concluded by saying that he hopes that the Qatar and Jeddah Process will have some positive outcome for Afghanistan.

Mr. Y.K. Sinha, Joint Secretary (PAI), Ministry of External Affairs began by congratulating MAKAIAS and NMC,JMI for organizing this topical and relevant seminar on future of Afghanistan.

- According to him, the period between Bonn1 to Bonn2 has been momentous. The world did change for better since 9/11 with international community finally realizing the importance of looking into the Af-Pak region, where situation had turned 'lamentable' in the post Soviet withdrawal period when the seeds of the current problem were actually planted.
- He added, it took years for America to understand what they are up against. He also mentioned about incidents like Kunduz evacuation while mentioning how Taliban got so many opportunities to get away.
- Unfortunately, in the crucial last decade neither the international community nor Afghan Government could take on the fundamental problem- terrorism and mentioned of two specific issues in this regard; which needed to be tackled to ensure security and stability in Afghanistan and the region at large:

- Safe haven of terrorist beyond Afghanistan border
- Capacity Building of Afghan Army
- He mentioned, that Pakistan has to decide which role it wants to play in Afghanistan—that of a ‘spoiler? Facilitator? or a Friend?’. He added that International community has tried to convince Pakistan to cooperate but there hasn’t been much progress.
- Processes such as Istanbul Conference and other such ministerial level meetings must continue as these have initiated the development of a ‘Concept Paper’ and he sees this as an important step as a solution can only come in the regional powers and international community work together.
- He added that the West cannot abdicate Afghanistan when it is in mess. International community established a regional process that needs to be followed up. Afghanistan needs resources and technical assistance beyond 2014.
- Shri. Y.K Sinha also mentioned about the non-intrusive nature of India’s assistance programme where India do not dictate priorities, do not give unsolicited advice. He summed up India’s attitude by saying ‘*whatever we have we would like to share with our friend*’.
- He congratulated Afghanistan on the progress it has made and added that people are optimistic and added that issues such as ‘federalism’, ‘neutrality’ and ‘role of resurgent groups like Taleban’ needs to be dealt with carefully especially since the definition of Taleban is loose and which include all armed opposition group in Afghanistan.
- He added India believed that war is not a solution but political process is but it has to be Afghan led and implemented by Afghans, unfortunately that is missing in Qatar.
- Raised an important question in respect to Taliban-‘Is Taliban serious about negotiation or are they simply buying time?’
- US has to define what it wants to do post 2014 and how do they see that scenario. It is following contradictory policies of strategic partnership with the Afghan Government on one hand and wants to negotiate with Taliban on the other.
- India feels US withdrawal should be condition bound and not time bound and international community must remain engaged in Afghanistan beyond 2014. However it has to be seen that their mentoring role should not turn into dictating role.

Vote of Thanks:

Dr. Arpita Basu Roy, Fellow, MAKAIAS and Coordinator of the Seminar offered Vote of Thanks on behalf of MAKAIS and NMCPDR, JMIU to all who have gathered to discuss critical matters on political future of Afghanistan.

- She summed up the central thoughts of all the key note speakers before thanking the Director, MAKAIAS for the encouragement and support for all the endeavors MAKAIAS takes on including this International Seminar.
- She recognized the support forwarded by JMIU, particularly acknowledging the support of Vice Chancellor, Mr. Najeeb Jung and Prof. Tasneem Meenai, Officiating Director, NMCPDR, JMIU. She thanked the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. She also thanked Indian High Commissions and embassies in Kabul, Iran and Islamabad, Dushanbe and Moscow for their cooperation.
- She acknowledged the support of Executive Council of MAKAIAS, Kolkata and the administrative body of NMCPDR, JMIU particularly Mr. Arif Haider.
- Finally she thanked the student volunteers of NMCPDR, JMIU for all their help and cooperation before breaking for the Tea.

Discussions of the two-day deliberation centered around the following issues.

Bonn '01 To Bonn '11- Evaluating Ten Years of International Intervention

The first session of the International conference evaluated ten years of international intervention in Afghanistan and was chaired by Prof Tasneem Meenai, Officiating Director, NMCPDR, JMIU.

The first speaker for the session was Dr Zubair Popalzai from BBC Monitoring, London, who spoke on his paper, “Re-understanding International state building- the hollowing out of sovereignty”. He mainly dealt with the concept of sovereignty and its attribute to the concept of statehood. He stated that international state building in the contemporary environment is a projection of selfless power and deals with empowering the state. He also stated that sovereignty in today’s world is highly entwined with responsibilities and thereby deals with partnership, institutionalism and capacity building. He calls state building as a post representational framework and also questions the concept of defining states as failures while involving in so called state building. He concluded by highlighting on revising the international state building norms and policies and allowing more of a shared vision for collective responsibility.

The second speaker Dr Ambrish Dhaka, Associate Professor, School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi, highlighted on the theme “Afghanistan post Bonn-2, missed opportunities and elusive objectives”, where he spoke on Bonn -2, its successes and failures,

while comparing to Bonn-1. He termed Bonn-2 as a landmark change for Afghanistan as it was chaired by President Karzai and reiterated commitments of Bonn-1. He also highlighted the need for regional partners in the stabilisation process. As a conclusion, Dr Dhaka stated that educated Afghans must be part of the security apparatus in the country and regional players are essential to help Afghanistan re emerge.

Prof. Syed Ali Mujtaba, Shri Shankarlal Sundarbai Shasun Jain College, Chennai and journalist, debated on “Political Future of Afghanistan- Bonn 2001 to Bonn 2011”. He gave an overview of the various conferences and summits that have taken place over the years on the stabilisation process of Afghanistan from 2001 to 2011. He stated that during all the conferences that have been conducted, a number of issues continue to be ignored such as the expenses after the withdrawal of International aid from Afghanistan and its impact on the revenue. He also said that establishing democracy is not the only solution but needs a legitimate Afghan government with citizen participation.

The session concluded with Prof. Vladimir Boyko, Professor, Altai State Pedagogical Academy, Russia, spoke on “Afghanistan between Asia and Eurasia in 2001-2010s: Domestic Conundrums and External factors of development”. He attributed conflicts in Afghanistan as outcomes of radical experiments, civil war and intra elite tensions, in the region. He stated that Taliban should be incorporated into Afghanistan now as a political movement. He spoke on the role of external players in the region such as Iran and EU, while US should not pursue politics from a distance. Concluding he highlighted that the solution to the Afghan problem must be a Eurasian framework, that is inclusive and multilateral, and that helps Afghanistan maintain its sovereignty.

Political Institutions and Problems of Accommodation

The discussions of the second session of the seminar were on the political institutions of Afghanistan. The session was chaired by Dr. Ved Pratap Vaidik, a senior political analyst and columnist.

The first speaker of the session was Mr. Mohammed Ashraf Rasooli, the Minister Advisor to the President of Afghanistan. He spoke on “Parliamentary System for Afghanistan: Advantages and Disadvantages”. He held that a Parliamentary system, based on the principle of partial, if not complete separation of powers, should be the way forward for the domestic political structure of Afghanistan. This would, according to him, mean that sovereignty would be largely held by people. He then gave historical instances of how Afghans have been familiar

with such a system of governance. However, he highlighted that there are both advantages as well as disadvantages with such a system. It is the best way available for avoiding centralization of power. At the same time, the government will not be having the same amount of stability as in a Presidential system due to the dynamic nature of the Parliament. He then elaborated on how the current government is a combination of both Presidential as well as Parliamentary systems.

The next speaker of the session was Mr. Mir Ahmad Joyenda, former MP and Deputy Director (Communication and Advocacy) of Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit, Kabul. He spoke on “the Afghan Situation and the Role of the Parliament”. He noted that in the absence of the position of Prime Minister in the executive body of Afghanistan, those functions are vested in the President. The current state of affairs in the Afghan political system, according to Mr. Joyenda is that the President Hamid Karzai is seeking to set up a “democracy without any political parties”. There are a group of powerful war-lords backed by foreign powers within the Karzai administration who are highly influential in the decision making of the government. This, along with the practice of focusing on compromises rather than institution building was highlighted as the key reasons why the current Parliament is unable to elect a speaker for the last six months. Therefore, Mr. Joyenda accused that the current administration is merely “acting” as a democracy because of the presence of the US, rather than being a real one. He concluded that developing political parties and proper election laws are essential for Afghanistan’s transition to real democracy.

Mr. Raghav Sharma, who is a research analyst at the Kabul Centre for Strategic Studies and also a doctoral candidate at the Willy Brandt School of Public Policy (University of Erfurt), spoke next on the topic “Federalism: an Institutional Framework for Managing Afghanistan’s Ethno-political Challenges”. He highlighted that decentralization and local autonomy had been a historical feature of Afghanistan’s political system until the recent past. The current trend of centralization was envisioned to consolidate the nation and to fight against insurgency. In such a system, the administration effectiveness at the local levels is too low. An important fault line which has emerged since the fall of the Najibullah government in 1992 is the phenomenon of ethnicity gaining prominence in Afghan politics. This has led to the legitimacy of central governance being questioned in the current context, where decisions have to be imposed without proper consensus. Local actors have become far too important to ignore in this milieu. Hence, Mr. Sharma recommended that a federal system is a necessity to enable proper governance at the local level as well as to reduce the administrative load off the centre. It would also help in managing conflicts and demands which emanate from the grassroots more effectively.

The final speaker of the session was Prof. Iskandarov Kosimsho, who is the director of the Centre for the Study of Afghanistan and Adjacent Region in Dushanbe. He spoke in Persian on the topic “Problems of Federalism: History and Contemporaneity”. He highlighted mostly on the different aspects of federalism in the Afghan scenario. He gave a historical perspective on how federalism was introduced at different instances in the contemporary history of Afghanistan. He highlighted on some of the Soviet sources which proposed to introduce ethnically oriented federalism in the country. The debate resurfaced during the rule of Najibullah when negotiations were done with Ahmed Shah Masood on giving self-governance to the Tajik majority Northern provinces of Afghanistan and further linking with the republic of Tajikistan. Currently, there is only one party in the nation which supports federalist ideas – the National Congress. The major concerns arising from federalism is the fear of division of the Afghan nation along ethnic lines. Therefore, he concluded that the debate should be purely domestic and should not be influenced by foreign powers.

During the discussions which followed the presentation of topics, Mr. Joyenda firmly opposed any return to the centrifugal tendencies of the early nineties. However, he stressed that decentralization is a necessity to enable effective governance. Mr. Sharma responded to Mr. Joyenda’s concerns on federalism that the concept need not be equated with ethnic separatism. There was unanimity in the session on favouring a parliamentary system, but the same was not the case of federalism which was very much divisive.

Securing Afghanistan: Issues of Governance

The third session of the seminar focussed on the above theme and it was chaired by Mr Sham L Bathija, Senior Advisor for Economic Affairs to the President of Afghanistan. The first speaker was Dr Waliullah Rahmani, Director, Kabul center for Strategic studies, Afghanistan. His paper was on “Issues of governance and security in contemporary Afghanistan”. He started his presentation by highlighting on the sustainability factor in Afghanistan post the US withdrawal in 2014. He provided two perspectives on the domestic situation after 2014, one which focused on the political aspect and the other on socio economic aspects. He provided certain solutions to enable political sustainability and involvement of a strong Afghan national army in the stabilisation process. He stated that strategic partnership with US will continue to be a vital tool for the country. He emphasized on how Afghanistan must transform from an aid dependent to production and agro based economy. He also highlighted the role of regional players and stated that Afghanistan cannot afford to be neutral in its stabilisation process as it’s not a time bound procedure.

The second speaker was Dr Sheela Reddy, Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi. Her paper was on “Women and the political future of Afghanistan”. She highlighted on Afghan women and their conditions in the health, education, employment, legal and judiciary sector in the country. Though political participation in the region is increasing, women in Afghanistan continue to face problems in society to a large extent. However she also emphasized that procedures are being developed in the region and it is a slow process. Also the women involved in emancipation process want to use their Islamic knowledge as a tool for development of women in Afghanistan.

General Abdul Hadi Khalid, who is the Former Deputy Minister of Interior, Afghanistan spoke on “Withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and preparation of security forces and the Government to assume security responsibility”. He highlighted on the process of civilisation in modern life in Afghanistan and stated that 80% terrorism is being propagated by illegal organisations. Also he stated that the Qatar office of the Taliban has dissolved its jihadi agenda and added a political force to it. However he stated that the country will continue to face risks in terms of governance, foreign intervention, multiple identity and national unity.

The last speaker for the session was Prof A N Medvedev, Director, Center of political technophiles, “Polit Contact”, Moscow. His paper was themed “Neutrality as institution of international law as applied to Afghanistan”. He spoke on the concept of neutrality in Afghanistan’s foreign policy as is being debated inetrationally. He gave a brief idea of the neutrality in international relations and countries which have pursued such a policy over the years such as Sweden, Switzerland and Ireland. He also commented that neutrality gives a base for protection against confrontation and must be interpreted by states as positive for its correct implementation.

Role of Resurgent Groups/Talibs: National and Transnational Context

The fourth academic session of the seminar was on the role of resurgent groups. The session was chaired by Mr. R. Banerji, who is a Senior Political Analyst.

The first speaker of the session was Prof. Bahram Amirahmadian, from the Faculty of World Studies, Tehran University in Iran. He spoke on the topic “A New Approach to Afghanistan Problem”. In his presentation, he proposed an Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) model for resolving the Afghanistan crisis. According to this proposal, a peacekeeping force led by the OIC nations and devoid of any neighbouring countries needed to be deployed in Afghanistan. This, according to him will be most acceptable for the nation as the incoming

forces will be fully Islamic. Such an action would also undermine the growth of the Taliban. He also proposed using Islamic tools to bring about stability in the nation, for instance issuing “Fatwa” against the cultivation and trade of drugs. He concluded his presentation by highlighting on the need to intensify the war on drugs from Afghanistan as it is a grave national security threat for Iran.

Prof. Harmeet Singh, from the Department of Political Science at Guru Nanak Dev University spoke next in the session. His topic was “US Withdrawal from Afghanistan – 2012: Boon or Bane. He evaluated the probable regional security scenario arising from the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. There is a high probability of armed militias overrunning Afghanistan post US withdrawal, which would threaten the security of not only the nation, but also the surrounding regions. In a bid to prevent this, the major powers like Russia would have to intervene in Afghanistan which the US would not favour. In this context, he foresaw a “new great game” emerging in Afghanistan. He concluded by stressing that the US should be reasonable enough to settle the Afghan issue before withdrawal and that a multilateral force under the aegis of the UN should be deployed in Afghanistan.

Dr. Maqsoodul Hasan Nuri, who is President of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute in Pakistan, was the final speaker of the session. He spoke on the topic “NATO’s Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Likely Post-2014 Scenarios”. He highlighted a few probable optimistic as well as pessimistic scenarios post withdrawal of the US forces in 2014. Among the optimistic scenarios included Pakistan ensuring the safety of Afghanistan, the OIC backed mission and political neutralization of Afghanistan. According to him, a phased withdrawal of the US forces leaving behind a minimum assistance force would be the most practical and likely scenario. Among the pessimistic scenarios included a Taliban takeover, a civil war and a de-facto partitioning of the nation. He concluded by reiterating the interest as well as the vital role of Pakistan in solving the Afghan crisis.

The presentations in the session were followed by intense debates about the role of Taliban and its probability of a comeback. The Afghan speakers in the seminar were in unison in dismissing the scenario of Taliban’s resurgence. They also stressed on the improvements in the current conditions in Afghanistan which cannot and should not be reversed. They were also dismissive of the OIC peacekeeping proposal as well as criticized the Pakistani role in supporting the Taliban.

The Role of the Region in Afghanistan’s Political Future

The fifth session of the seminar was on the topic “The Role of the Regional and Extra-Regional Actors in Afghanistan’s Political Future”. The session was chaired by Dr. Radha Kumar, who is the Director of the Delhi Policy Group.

The first speaker of the session was Mr. Ajay Bisaria, who is Joint Secretary (Eurasia) at Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India. His topic was on “Central Asia and India”. He started his presentation by stressing that the destinies of India, Central Asia and Afghanistan are locked together in terms of civilisation, history and contemporary politics. India looks at Central Asia as an extended neighbourhood. Besides, Afghanistan’s strategic location, he emphasized on the existing political bonds at the highest level, strong developmental partnership, capacity building, South-South cooperation and cooperation in the spheres of health and education. Central Asia is also crucial to peace-building in Afghanistan as three of the countries in the region share borders with Afghanistan – Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. There are many people of Central Asian origin in Kashmir. Afghanistan is the bridge between Central Asia and South Asia. In the post-2014 situation, India would have to tackle fundamentalism and in this endeavour, multilateralism through an alternative regional platform, which is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) could play a big role. In the SCO, India is an observer and it could become a full member in future. Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai has been a special invitee to every SCO summit, which implies that SCO is taken seriously by the Karzai Government and is very important for Afghanistan. After touching upon the alternative routes to Afghanistan for India through Iran and the collateral benefits of Western presence in the country, he went on to talk about the energy corridors such as the TAPI pipeline in length. If a consortium is created and there is negotiations on prices, Afghanistan could earn half a billion dollars. He ended by saying that great deal of synergy is possible between India and Afghanistan with Central Asia as a significant player.

The second speaker was Dr. P. Krishna Mohan Reddy, Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati. He presented on “Afghanistan, Political Future and Shanghai Cooperation Organization”. Dr. Reddy began by pointing out that the role of SCO is gaining salience as far as Afghanistan is concerned just as other multilateral organizations such as the EU, ASEAN and the UN. In October, 2007, the Collective Security Treaty Organization was formed by the SCO. They are working together not only on transport and energy but also joint military exercises and intelligence sharing. In 2008, Russian President Vladimir Putin asserted that there was a need for a new global order and a regional architecture in order to counter-balance NATO. The US’ application for an observer’s status in the SCO was rejected. During the Astana Summit, the member countries of the SCO urged the US to present a timetable for withdrawal. In June 2011, Russia supported Afghanistan as an observer. Russia supported the cause of operations of international forces but added a

condition that they have to be carried out through the United Nations Security Council mandate. Dr. Reddy drew a comparison between the interests of Russia and China in Afghanistan. Russia would like to counter-balance the US and NATO in Afghanistan while China places economic interests above everything else. It seems that China has very little interest in reconstruction in Afghanistan. China could forge ties with respect to economic cooperation, business ties, technical training and even military training. Security and trade are China's major concerns as well as interests. The Islamic militancy in the Xinjiang province is one of them. At the same time American scholars claim that the SCO is very weak. According to him, SCO is very effective for China to fulfill its interests. For Afghanistan, it has to depend on the SCO and China specifically for its energy sector and infrastructure. It can tackle *jihadi* elements with Chinese support. It could also strategically balance Pakistan. Therefore, it is a win-win situation for China, the SCO and Afghanistan.

Dr. Sreemati Ganguli, who is a Fellow at MAKAIAS, spoke next on the topic "Silk Road Comes to Afghanistan Again". Dr. Ganguli spoke in length about the revival of Silk Route. The US would like to make Afghanistan a hub for transport and trade, thus following a transformative transport based strategy. The promotion of the Silk Route is being used a geostrategic tool to promote economic and military links. The move is to link the markets in the region with Afghanistan at the centre for better stability and security in the region. The US wants a long-term enduring economic engagement with Afghanistan and the region after its withdrawal from the country. South Asian and Central Asia are emerging markets. Past memories of partition and present environment of mistrust are the biggest impediments. The countries need to get rid of the historical baggage. She threw light on the trade and transport corridors as well as economic infrastructure and political stabilization plus the relevance of exchange of trade, values and civilization. The balancing of regional global rivalries also becomes crucial. Afghanistan could become a hub for trans-regional cooperation and not a centre of geopolitical rivalry.

The next speaker of the session was Prof. Sanjay K. Pandey, who is Professor at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His topic for presentation was "Russia and Afghanistan: From Involvement to Engagement". Prof. Pandey began by saying that Afghanistan has been a graveyard of imperial and colonial ambitions. During the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan, 14,000-15,000 Soviet soldiers died and more than one million Afghans were killed. Soviet prestige was heavily affected. Post-Soviet Russia couldn't give much attention to Afghanistan due to internal problems that entailed more attention. Some of the problems were linked to Afghanistan; one of them was Chechnya as the Chechen separatists received support from the Taliban. The flow of narcotics also posed threat to the domestic environment in Russia. Radicalization of Afghanistan was a dangerous

consequence of Soviet occupation. In 1999 and 2000, the attempt of Afghans to come to Russia via the Fergana Valley alarmed the Russians. He continued by stating that Putin did not oppose George W. Bush's decision to place soldiers in Afghanistan. However, since then he has been stressing on the removal and withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan and Central Asia. At the same time, Russia wants the US to neutralize the tendencies and forces of radicalization. Initially it was reluctant to get overtly involved in Afghanistan. Off late, they have been rebuilding infrastructure created by the Soviets during their occupation. It is keen on tapping Afghanistan's natural resources worth \$3 trillion and is also keen on TAPI pipeline and Central Asia-South Asia Power Project. He ended by saying that Russia would be involved in Afghanistan after 2014.

Dr. Diloram Karomat, who is a Fellow at MAKAIAS, was the last speaker of the session. She presented on "Music as a Factor in the Political Stabilisation of Afghanistan". She drew the cultural linkages between Central Asian and Afghan musical tradition and highlighted on its importance of music as a key element in bringing stability to the war torn country.

INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN

The sixth and last session of the seminar was on the topic "India and Afghanistan". The session was chaired by Amb. I.P. Khosla, who was the former Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan.

The first speaker of the session was Ms. Anwesha Ghosh, who is Fellow at the Institute of Foreign Policy Studies, Calcutta University. She spoke on the topic "Conflicting Imperatives of India and Pakistan in Afghanistan". She spoke about how there is a competition between India and Pakistan to create its own sphere of influence in Afghanistan as the withdrawal of US forces draws close. India has been doing significant developmental assistance in Afghanistan which would enhance its stability in the post 2014 scenario. India's interest lies in the prevention of an anti-India government coming into power, as it would be harmful for its national security. At the same time, Pakistan's interest lies in promoting such a government. It has been waiting for the US to leave so as to putting a favourable government in Kabul. This is the major reason behind Islamabad backing the Taliban. Thus, he emphasized that India and Pakistan are involved in a situation of security dilemma in Afghanistan. However, the most encouraging sign for India is that public opinion is predominantly in favour of India rather than Pakistan. She concluded that the progress of stability in Afghanistan will be heavily dependent on India-Pakistan rivalry.

Dr. Venkat Lokanathan, who is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, Manipal University spoke next on the topic "US policy towards

Afghanistan: India's options". He started by highlighting his view that the US venturing into Afghanistan was an extreme response to a terrorist attack, a decision in which anger blurred judgement. According to him, the US will not withdraw completely from Afghanistan because of three reasons. Firstly, as it would not like to repeat its mistake of 1989, secondly because of its economic interests in Afghanistan as seen by the Military Industrial Complex and thirdly because of Afghanistan being a strategic base close to Iran, Iraq and China. He highlighted on the policy inertia being created due to leadership change on both sides during the later part of the last decade, which brought back instability into Afghanistan. He concluded on an optimistic note on the role of India's soft power which could complementing Western hard power in building a stable post 2014 scenario.

The third speaker was Mr. Yow Peter Raiphea, who presented on the topic "India in Afghanistan: The Saga of India's Role in Afghanistan's Politics". He spoke about how India has been involving itself in Afghanistan since 2001. He argued that India had the national capacity as well as the status of an emerging great power to bring benefits to Afghanistan as well as the region as a whole. India has been helping in the field of infrastructure, humanitarian assistance, developmental projects and education and capacity building. He emphasized the importance to bring out new ways to increase India's role in Afghanistan's nation building as well as creating stability.

The final speaker of the session was Dr. Ved Pratap Vaidik, who is a senior Political Analyst and Columnist. He spoke on the topic "Indo-Afghan Relations: Then and Now". According to him, India must actively involve in Afghanistan and should also open its conduits of negotiations with the Taliban. He stressed that the best option left for India and Pakistan is to work with each other in Afghanistan. This would lead to agreements like the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipelines seeing the light of the day. He concluded by highlighting the significance of Afghanistan as the crux of progress of the entire Asian continent.

The Valedictory session was chaired by Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Director, MAKAIAS. She involved all the participants and asked them to share their views on the two –day seminar and also requested them to suggest ways to improve upon such future endeavours. All participants expressed satisfaction about the topic and range of issues discussed. Most speakers wanted more time for discussions. It was agreed that it was a well-represented seminar in terms of involvement of scholars and practitioners from the India, Afghanistan and the region.

The final vote of thanks was delivered by Dr. Binoda Kr Mishra, coordinator and Fellow, MAKAIAS. He thanked all distinguished participants, both national and international; chairpersons; Prof. Tasneem Meenai and her team at NMCPCR, JMIU including Mr. Arif Haidar

and the student volunteers; Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Director, MAKAIAS, Dr. Sreemati Ganguli for her cooperation and Dr. Arpita Basu Roy, coordinator of the Seminar for her effort.

(This report was compiled by Dr. Arpita Basu Roy, Dr. BK Mishra, Ms. Anwesha Ghosh, Ms. Dhanasree Jayram, Ms. Rhea Abraham and Mr. Anand V.)