

## Clear-cut policy urged after Afghan pullout

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By Our Correspondent

### Lahore

PAKISTAN needs a clear-cut policy regarding Afghanistan after withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan and the policy should be devised by the parliament instead of military.

This was the consensus at a policy dialogue “US Withdrawal from Afghanistan and Pakistan’s Strategy” at the FC College University here on Thursday.

The speakers at the dialogue, organised by the varsity’s Centre for Public Policy and Governance (CPPG), were also of the view parliament needed to assert itself and demonstrate commitment and vision.

The policy dialogue, divided into three sessions, was aimed to explore and propose policy options for Pakistan in the light of US withdrawal from Afghanistan besides discussing strategies to combat terrorism to establish regional peace, and to propose a way forward.

MNA Ms Bushra Gohar, chairperson of the Standing Committee on Women’s Development, chaired the dialogue.

The session-I “Pakistan’s Afghan Policy in light on American exit strategy” explored possible scenarios for Pakistan within the framework of the American Afghan exit plan while discussing Pakistan’s policy options based on its strategic interest in the region.

Noted analyst Ahmed Rashid said Pakistan needed to facilitate a regional solution to the Afghan issue and to follow a minimalist approach to peace process in Afghanistan.

According to him Pakistan needs to facilitate rather than monopolise the peace process.

Ambassador (retd) Iqbal Ahmed Khan said foreign policy must reflect the domestic situation of the country while emphasising the objective of Pakistan should be promoting peace in Afghanistan by giving the Afghanistan government the required space.

Dr Sarfaraz Khan argued that Afghan policy had previously focused on a complete distrust of Pakhtoons which needed to be changed. He added Pakistan’s foreign policy should denounce all types of extremism and terrorism.

The session-II “Pakistan’s counter terrorism and extremism strategy” discussed the principles and guidelines for a comprehensive counter terrorism and extremism strategy.

Speaking on the occasion, Kahled Ahmed emphasised that the writ of the state needed to be established and that having a good intelligence network was necessary in this regard.

Sarmad Saeed Khan talked of police reforms and said that the reforms meant capacity building and not militarizing the police.

Imtiaz Gul emphasised that the political will of parliament needed to increase for effective counter-terrorism strategy.

The session-III explored a way forward and presented policy options. There was a consensus among the participants the Pakistan follows a minimalist approach for regional peace and the foreign policy should be devised by the parliament instead of the military.

US Consul General in Lahore Carmella Conroy also spoke at the policy dialogue. In her brief comments, she said poor law and order situation in any country was weakness of the state.

Jl central leader Fareed Piracha and religious scholar Tahir Ashrafi also addressed the event, attended by a large number of people from different walks of life.