The roundtable with Mr. Alexander Evans took place in the backdrop of Asia Society Report on the U.S. interface with South Asia, following drawdowns from Afghanistan. This occasioned a re-union of policy-relevant experts and scholars from within the NDU and various think tanks, under the chair of President NDU. Mr. Evan’s presentation was followed by inputs by two discussants namely: Ambassador Najamuddin Sheikh and Dr. Maria Sultan and a full house interactive session.

Mr. Evans has been well known for this twin track achievements of high distinction: first, as a diplomat in the service of Her Majesty the Queen of Britain and second, as a scholar with focus on geo-politics and history. In recent years, he served on scondement from his foreign ministry to Late Mr. Holbrooke’s office on Afghanistan in the U.S. State Department. 

The Guest Speaker spoke of the diminishing U.S. engagement in South Asia in comparison with its newly emerging priorities in the South East Asian arena. In this context, he cautioned against uncertainties regarding the scale and quality of US interaction with most South Asian countries except India. Hence, the importance of indentifying elements that enhance interest, attention and connectivity. In this backdrop, he introduced main elements of the Asia Society report, while dwelling upon five-fold recommendations: improve the capacity for U.S. strategy towards South Asia, better connect East Asia and South Asia policy through cross-postings and establishing a mechanism for cross-bureau, coordination, continuing to enhance bilateral relations with India, develop a realistic, medium-term Pakistan strategy, integrate counter terrorism and regional policy through cross-posting officials, establish a formal ‘South-Asia cadre’ of Foreign Service Officers and create a South Asia specific Presidential Management Fellowship.

The ensuing interactive session generated discussion mainly focusing on the potency of the South Asian role inspite of the U.S. disengagement and the overriding geo strategic considerations that make Pakistan a pivot in building cross-regional economic and trade linkages and building structures of peace and progress.