



Africa AN EMERGING ARENA OF MAJOR **POWER** COMPETITION

**INTERNATIONAL
SEMINAR**

26 SEPTEMBER 2023

**INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, RESEARCH & ANALYSIS (ISSRA)
NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY**



POST SEMINAR REPORT SPONSOR

Ambassador (R) Fauzia M. Sana
Director, Global & Regional Studies Branch

POST SEMINAR REPORT

by

Ms. Ayesha Afgun
Research Associate G&RS Branch

Disclaimer

The discussions and report are obligatory to 'Chatham House Rules', therefore, cannot be quoted. The statements, facts and opinions by speakers do not imply the official policy of National Defence University.

“AFRICA: AN EMERGING ARENA OF MAJOR POWER COMPETITION”

POST SEMINAR REPORT

CONTENTS

Concept Note

Prelude

Programme

Key Takeaways of the Proceedings

Session I

Session II

Picture Gallery



CONCEPT NOTE

The Continent of the Future – Africa: boasting a combined GDP of over \$ 3 trillion and hosting almost 25% of the natural global biodiversity and 30% of world mineral resources, has been the focus of world powers for years. Global powers such US, and China, and regional powers Russia and India have been cementing their footprints in the Continent, thus making it a major theatre of power competition. Africa's potential as a growing region of economic activity is self-evident by the African Development Bank projecting GDP growth for the Continent at 4% average in 2023 and 2024, higher than the global averages of 2.7 % and 3.2 %, respectively.

Major power competition for influence on the African Continent is an undeniable geopolitical reality. Of late, there have been unrest and coups in Chad, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon, and next may be Cameroon. The current wave of instability in Western and Central Africa has far-reaching economic implications not only for the Continent but also for the World at large. One can, therefore, infer that the volatility in Africa is bound to impact the global alliance structure, making it difficult for African nations to pick sides. Pakistan does not wish to be part of this competition, but it must not miss the opportunities being generated in Africa.

Pakistan's relations with African countries have remained selective and, at best, cursory. Africa has never been high in Pakistan's foreign policy conversation despite having a long history of bilateral engagement. Africa is a multicultural continent, and Pakistan's engagement with Africa varies from country to country. The Ministry of Commerce's "Look Africa Policy" of 2017 and MoFA's "Engage Africa Initiative, 2019" have given some impetus to Pakistan's footprint beyond just a few major African countries. Africa is a non-traditional, diverse, and complex market. A lot more is required to reap the benefits of connectivity and engagement with Africa.

Against this background, ISSRA, NDU plans to hold an International Seminar and a roundtable on 26 September 2023 wherein relevant stakeholders and practitioners will discuss the contemporary geostrategic environment in Africa, analyse the state of Pakistan's relations with Africa, reasons for Pakistan's disinterest in Africa and suggest a way forward for active implementation of the existing Africa Policy/Initiative to expand Pakistan's footprint, especially of economic and trade in Africa.

The Seminar will focus discussion on the following questions:

1. How does the World look at Africa's emerging role in the contemporary International Geopolitical Environment?
2. How does Africa look at the unfolding Major Power Competition and its emerging role in the current Geopolitical Environment?
3. What are the dynamics of Pakistan-Africa Bilateral Relations: Past, Present and Future?



PRELUDE

The Institute for Strategic Studies Research and Analysis (ISSRA) at the National Defence University organized an International Seminar on “Africa: An Emerging Arena of Major Power Competition” on 26 September 2023. H.E. Rashid Ally Soobadar, the High Commissioner of Mauritius in Pakistan and the Acting Dean of the Africa Group, was the Chief Guest at the International Seminar. Several Ambassadors and High Commissioners of African countries in Pakistan and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the event. Pakistan's Ambassadors and High Commissioners posted in central African countries joined the seminar via Zoom. Session - I focused on the geo-strategic environment in Africa imbued with significant power competition and perspectives from Africa and Pakistan vis-a-vis the current and evolving geopolitical dynamics in the Continent. Session - II was held as a Roundtable to encourage a policy-level discussion concerning Pakistan's current state of relations with major African countries and prospects for a more robust economic engagement with them, with a particular emphasis on enhancing trade and commerce linkages.

The International Seminar delved into multifaceted considerations and substantive debates strategically. Many academicians, practitioners, diplomats, business people, and students participated in the academic activity. The input from the relevant stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners led to an informed discussion. This report encapsulates the erudition, discussions, and recommendations during the International Seminar.

PROGRAMME

0930-1030hrs (60 mins)	Registration & Reception
1030-1035hrs (05 mins)	Tilawat
1035-1040hrs (05 mins)	Welcome Remarks by Lieutenant General Rahat Naseem Ahmed Khan, HI (M) President NDU
1040-1050 hrs (10 mins)	Keynote speech by the Chief Guest H.E. Rashid Ally Soobadar High Commissioner Mauritius, Acting Dean Africa Group
1050-1055 hrs (05 mins)	Group Photo in front of Collaboration Wall
Session I	
Understanding Africa in the Contemporary Geostrategic Environment	
1055-1100hrs (05 mins)	Introduction by the Moderator Ambassador @ Naghmana Hashmi Former Ambassador
1100-1105 hrs (05 Mins)	An Insight on, “ Africa: An Emerging Continent ” by Research Associate Ayesha Afgun
How Does the World Look at Africa’s Emerging Role in the Contemporary International Geopolitical Environment?	
1105-1115 hrs (10 mins)	Ambassador @ Najmus Saqib Former Ambassador of Pakistan to South Africa
1115-1125 hrs (10 mins)	H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula Ambassador Federal Democratic of Ethiopia
How does Africa look at the unfolding Major Power Competition in Africa and its emerging role in the Current Geopolitical Environment?	
1125-1135 hrs 10 mins (On Zoom)	Prof Everisto Benyera, Professor of African Politics, African Politics Division, Department of Political Science, University of South Africa
How Does Pakistan View Current Major Power Competition in Africa?	
1135-1145 hrs (10 mins) On Zoom	H.E. Dr. Manzoor A. Chaudhry Ambassador of Pakistan to Ivory Coast
1145-1245 hrs (60 mins)	Interactive session
1245-1250 hrs (05 mins)	Wrap up by the Moderator

Session – II Roundtable Pakistan-Africa Bilateral Relations: Past, Present & Future 26 Sept 2023	
1400-1405hrs (05 mins)	Introductory remarks by the Moderator Mr.Nadeem Bashir Director General, Board of Investment (BOI)
Analysis of Pakistan’s Look Africa Policy/Engage Africa Initiative	
1405-1415 hrs (10 mins)	Mr. Bilal Khan Pasha Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Islamabad
1415-1425 hrs (10 mins) (On Zoom)	Dr.Usama Ehsan Khan Head of Policy Research Unit, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI)
Future Prospects &Way Forward for Pakistan’s Engagement with African countries	
1425-1435 hrs (10 mins)	Mr.Haroon Sharif Former Chairman Board of Investment
1435-1445 hrs (10 mins)	Dr.Najimdeen Bakare Associate Professor, Department at the Centre for International Peace & Stability (CIPS), NUST
1445-1455 hrs (10 mins) (On Zoom)	Mr.Zubair Imam Malik Pakistan’s Honorary Investment Counsel in Angola
1455-1555 (60 mins)	Interactive session
1555-1600 hrs (05 mins)	Wrap up by the Moderator
1600-1605 hrs (05 mins)	Vote of Thanks by DG ISSRA
1605 hrs	Dispersal

Inaugural Session

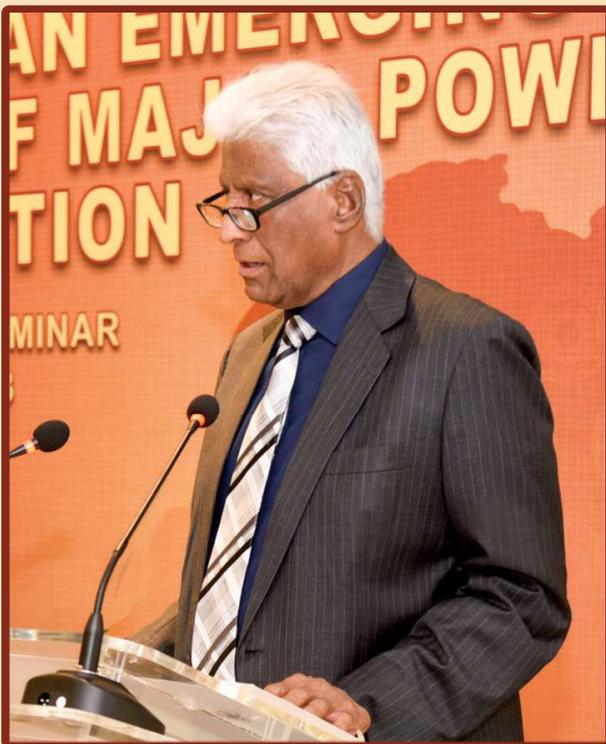
Welcome Remarks by President NDU Lt. Gen Rahat Naseem HI(M)

In the opening remarks, the President highlighted Africa, often referred to as the Continent of the Future, boasts abundant human resources and has played a significant role in contributing to human civilization and intelligence. The Ministry of Commerce introduced Look Africa Policy 2017, a government-level effort, aimed at fostering strong ties with Africa. Before this initiative, Pakistan's engagement with Africa was primarily at the strategic level, lacking significant government participation. The timing of this seminar is opportune, and the results will be instrumental in shaping the future interactions between Pakistan and Africa.



Keynote Address by Chief Guest H.E. Rashid Ally Soobadar High Commissioner of Mauritius & Acting Dean of the Africa Corp

The Chief Guest indicated that Africa, the second-largest Continent in the world and home to a vast and diverse population, has long been recognized for its untapped potential. However, for much of its history, it has often been considered a "frontier" continent due to low levels of human development and various challenges it faced. Despite its size and population, Africa struggled with issues such as poverty, disease, political instability, and limited access to education and healthcare. In recent times, Africa has undergone a remarkable transformation. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA), a landmark agreement aimed at creating a single market for goods and services in Africa, was signed to eradicate the challenges facing the Continent. It is one of the most significant initiatives in the Continent's history, potentially transforming African economies and boosting intra-African connectivity and integration. Moreover, Africa, an emerging continent abundant in natural resources and fertile land, should collaborate closely with Pakistan to forge a brighter future.



SESSION I

International Seminar

Understanding Africa in the Contemporary Geostrategic Environment



Moderator
Amb @ Naghmana Hashmi



H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula
Ambassador of Ethiopia



Amb @ Najmus Saqib



H.E. Dr. Manzoor A. Chaudhry
Ambassador of Pakistan to
Ivory Coast



Prof Everisto Benyera
University of South Africa

SESSION I

Key Takeaways

How does the World look at Africa's emerging role in the contemporary International Geo-political Environment?

- Africa has rightly been labelled as the 'Continent of the Future' owing to its promising economic potential, lucrative investment opportunities, abundant natural resources, and a notably high percentage of the youth population.
- Historically, Africa has often been treated by multiple powers positioning their military forces to exploit its resources. Due to low levels of human development and numerous governance problems, Africa has often been called the 'Frontier Continent.'
- The stereotype of Africa as a homogenous entity is pervasive, but in reality, the Continent is way too diverse in terms of culture, languages, and economic and business environment. Africa's diversity and vastness are astonishing, dividing it into Northern, Western, Central, Eastern and Southern regions. The countries of these regions are members of Africa's select political and economic organisations.
- The politico-economic landscape is so diverse that as many as eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) make up the building blocks of the African Union (AU) including Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Southern African Development Community (SADC).



- The world's perspectives on Africa are diverse, encompassing various dimensions ranging from geopolitical moves, geo-economic pursuits, and tall claims about its emerging prosperity to the so-called pronouncements that the Continent's welfare is the world's welfare.
- The ground reality in Africa is somewhat bleak given its embroilment in war, concurrent coups, and corruption; 60 % of the population living in extreme poverty with a GDP of only \$ 3 trillion, while terrorism in Sahel countries is further deteriorating the issues.
- The world knows that Africa holds 30% of the world's natural resources - cobalt, coal, diamonds, and uranium. Thus, global powers are involved in one way or the other to serve their vested interests.
- The Continent is experiencing geopolitical maturity following the African Union's admittance into G-20 while South Africa aspires to secure a permanent seat at the UNSC.
- There is finally a realisation at the global level that Africa has been made poor by slavery, terrorism, internal armed conflicts, colonisation, and Western imperialism by the world powers.
- The contemporary geostrategic landscape in Africa is shifting towards a more geo-economic orientation, emphasising mutual respect and sovereignty in international relations in line with the core principles of the United Nations (UN) Charter.

How does Africa look at the unfolding major power competition in Africa and its emerging role in the current geopolitical environment?

- Africa, the storehouse of resources, stands at the crossroads of geopolitical and geo-economic competition. It is witnessing structural changes in the East, West and South. The Continent is emerging as another battleground for global powers' competition for influence and resources.
- The current global landscape is transforming, marked by the emergence of multiple power centres.



Established powers such as the United States, France, and Russia must adapt to the evolving dynamics in Africa.

- The ongoing process of decolonisation in the Continent indicates a gradual shift from a politico-economic empire to achieving politico-economic independence.
- The geopolitical environment of the Continent features the absence of democratic dividends to a larger population, the prevalence of a colonial mindset and poverty, especially in West Africa. Consequently, many African countries are being sucked into debt traps, coups and unconstitutional changes and dictatorships whereby inviting selective involvement by the West.
- Currently, the re-colonisation of Africa through economic means is underway, and the debt trap is one of many ways African countries are being controlled.
- To be able to withstand, it is of utmost importance that African countries become economically independent.
- The UN Charter emphasises relations based on mutual respect between nations. All African countries have unanimously voiced their concerns, demanding that the world respect their sovereignty.
- Following the decision of fifty-five African nations to work together for the collective development of Africa via (AU), the Continent is transitioning towards primary political, economic, and security evolution, which the global powers must respect.
- African countries frequently engage with extra-regional players, as evidenced by their participation at the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, the US-Africa Business Forum, the Russia-Africa Summit and the India-Africa Forum Summit.
- The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) will help increase socioeconomic development, reduce poverty, and make Africa more competitive globally.

What are the dynamics of Pakistan-Africa Bilateral Relations: Past, Present and Future?

- Pakistan's geostrategic location provides a win-win paradigm of connectivity to African countries and access to each other's markets to reap more significant economic security and prosperity benefits for the people of Africa and South Asia.
- Africa and Pakistan can forge a relationship that is symbiotic and proactive in nature. The two must focus on developing their relationship on shared interests rather than Western-centric premises and perspectives.
- The Ministry of Commerce's "Look Africa Policy - 2017" primarily focused on engagement with African countries at diplomatic and strategic levels.
- Under the "Engage Africa Initiative - 2019" by (MOFA), Pakistan has adopted a proactive policy leading to

the opening of five new resident missions in Africa, Djibouti, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Rwanda and Uganda, thereby raising the number to nineteen missions in the African Continent to be able to play an active role for robust economic and trade linkages.

- Pakistan must engage with Africa effectively and understand its unique characteristics and regional dynamics. There is a need for enhanced political engagement with Africa by taking the lead from the best practices of countries like the US, Russia, India, China, Turkey, and Malaysia.
- Parliamentary cooperation with African countries is essential as it can lead to unified positions on international issues. Hence, leveraging historical and cultural connections can be an asset for Pakistan-Africa relations.
- Pakistan can offer its expertise in capacity building, professional/vocational training, and technology transfer.
- Strengthening people-to-people contacts through education and cultural exchanges can foster closer ties between Pakistan and Africa.



Session II

Roundtable

Pakistan-Africa Bilateral Relations: Past, Present & Future



Moderator
Mr. Nadeem Bashir
DG BOI



Mr. Bilal Khan Pasha
Joint Secretary, M/oC



Mr. Haroon Sharif
Former Chairman BOI



Mr. Zubair Imam Malik
Pakistan's Honorary Investment
Counsel in Angola



Dr. Usama Ehsan Khan
Head of Policy Research Unit



Dr. Najimdeen Bakare
Associate Professor, NUST

Session II

Roundtable

Key Takeaways

- Pakistan's foreign policy has yet to unlock the hidden potential of the country's relations with major African countries despite close historical and cultural bonds.
- Promoting effective economic diplomacy involves establishing tangible policy objectives, such as establishing Pak-Africa Councils in cities like Karachi and Lahore, to enhance mutual understanding.
- Regarding trade and investment, Pakistan-Africa trade volume reached a historic \$ 6 Billion in 2021, but these numbers still need to support the untapped colossal potential.
- Pakistan's import from Africa stands at \$ 4.6 billion, while it exports \$ 1.48 billion of goods to Africa, resulting in a huge trade deficit.
- Lack of political engagement is the core challenge in Pakistan-Africa relations. The focus is more on engaging US and European markets than African ones. There have been few high-level visits by Pakistani leadership to Africa in many years. The last high-ranking official visit to Africa was made in 2003, after which no such visit happened.
- Africa must be addressed in terms of its regional trading blocs, not as a monolith, and for that purpose, understanding its economic geography is very important as countries accessible to the continent will always have opportunities to draw more investments and generate more revenue.
- Pakistan needs to maximise its share in African markets by understanding the demands of the African market and prioritising export commodities accordingly.
- The primary hindrance to trade relations between Pakistan and Africa is the high tariffs on various commodities. To illustrate, Kenya imposes tariffs exceeding 35% on Pakistani basmati rice, while Pakistan levies an 11% tariff on imports of Kenyan tea.
- Pakistan and Africa lack sector-specific trade agreements, particularly in the pharmaceutical and IT industries, as these sectors are in higher demand in Africa, offering opportunities for capitalisation.
- To maximise Pakistan's refinery capacity, Pakistan can import crude oil from South Sudan and Angola under free trade agreements.
- Recognising rice as a staple food in Africa, Pakistan could profitably export rice to Africa.
- The importance of incentivising agribusiness, especially mango pulp, to the African market is spot on as it would earn Pakistani businesses a huge return given the demand there.
- Engage with the African private sector via sovereign wealth funds for joint ventures/ partnerships in IT, nursing, and hospitality, as margins in these sectors are higher. Hence, it is imperative to collaborate with the

African private sector for trade and investment.

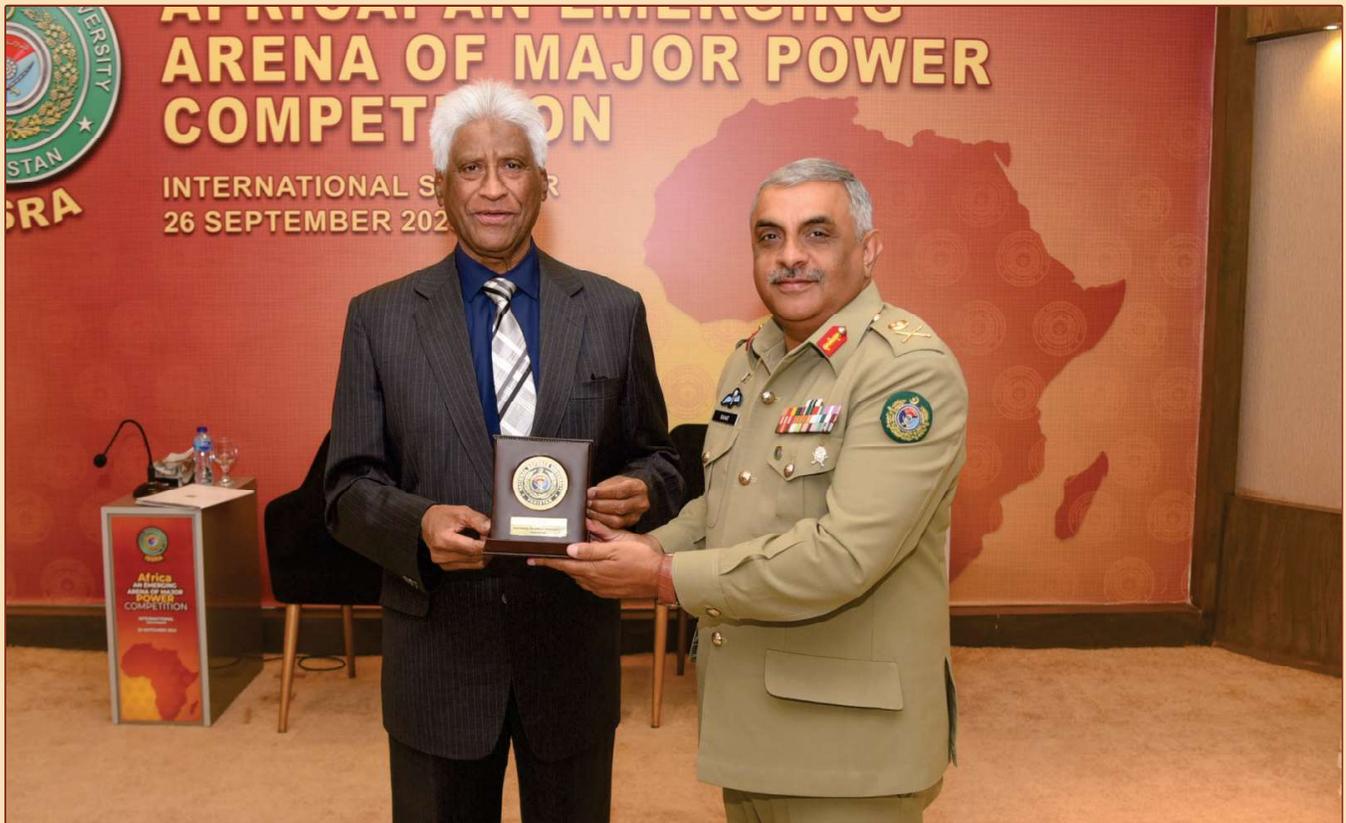
- Invite select African Countries' (i.e., South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, Algiers, Senegal) senior Ministers and Officials to visit Pakistan for both business-to-business (B2B) and People-to-people (P2P) interactions and events.
- The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) should encourage and facilitate the opening of overseas branches of Pakistan commercial banks and their African counterparts in Pakistan.
- MoFA and BOI may appoint prominent African nationals as Honorary Investment Counselors (HICs) in African countries to bolster Pakistan's trade and investment prospects in African business circles.
- Engage with Pakistan/African banking/financial and logistics service providers to facilitate working out cost-effective freight expenditure modalities to Africa.
- Strategically, Pakistan needs to partner with China, which is keen to have Pakistani managers run its companies in Africa, as many Chinese senior and mid-level managers are reluctant to go there for a variety of reasons.
- Media coverage of Africa is usually biased, depicting stereotypes, misunderstandings, and partial coverage of occurrences or disease outbreaks on the Continent. Such a prejudiced approach overlooks and downplays the Continent's immense economic potential, political awakening, and diversity of culture and heritage.
- Nevertheless, Pakistan boasts of a substantial presence through the UN Peacekeeping forces in Africa. However, it has not been able to reap the fruits of closer cultural, historical and economic dividends that the Continent offers.
- For strategic engagement with the Continent, it is essential to integrate African studies into university curricula and incorporate them into the discussions of various forums and think tanks.



PICTURE GALLERY













**INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, RESEARCH & ANALYSIS (ISSRA)
NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY**