

JANUARY-FEBRUARY

DISCOURSE

GOVERNANCE REFORM

LAW ♦ POLITICS ♦ INSTITUTIONS



PIDE

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics



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Discourse is PIDE's flagship magazine that offers insight into social and economic issues on local and international levels. The bi-monthly publication provides a general insight into the Pakistani economy, identifies key areas of concern for policymakers, and suggests policy action.

The publication offers a quick orbit of the country's economy and is a hands-on and precise go-to document for the policymaker, businessperson, academic, researcher, or student who seeks to remain updated and informed.

Discourse has recently been enhanced in scope, with various new sections added to the publication in order to broaden its subject matter and encourage rigorous, creative, and interdisciplinary analyses that cover a more expansive range of topics and appeal to lay audiences. In this vein, we have a) opened up submissions from the general public, and b) added several new sections to the bimonthly magazine, including: opinion, business, sport, history, arts and culture, and more!

In light of the ongoing socioeconomic and political crises the country is currently engulfed by, this issue is themed around Governance Reform. In particular, the overarching objective of the Jan-Feb edition of Discourse is to assess how law, politics and institutions may be rethought, restructured and revived to move towards inclusive and sustainable economic growth that can allow Pakistan to become competitive in the region and, over the long haul, globally.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Discourse!

Wishing you a wonderful year ahead.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER PIECE

GOVERNANCE REFORMS: LAW, POLITICS AND INSTITUTIONS

Intertwining of Institutional and Economic Reforms - Ishrat Husain	06
Making the Elephant Dance: Negotiating Power Dynamics with the Establishment - Ayesha Siddiq	09
Re-orienting Pakistan's Economy - Kaiser Bengali	11
Why Institutions Matter- Amber Darr	14
Reforms in Pakistan: Where to Start? - Karim Khan	16
Discontent with Governance, not Democracy - Afiya Shehrbano Zia	18

CURRENT AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A Joyless Land ? - Shehzad Ghias Shaikh	22
Safeguarding Pakistan's Core interests among Global Power Contestation - Zia Malik	24
The Propaganda Game - Saddam Hussein	26
The International Politics of Climate Change and Lessons for Pakistan - Kinza Fatima	29

DEBATE

Should Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) be Incorporated into the Electoral Process of Pakistan?	32
Electronic Voting Machines: The Shockingly Secure Solution to Election Fraud - Waqas Ahmed	34
EVMs: An Expensive Proposition Without Any Substantive Benefits - Ahmed Bilal Mehboob	36

OPINION

Pakistan Needs More Urbanization - Babar Khan Mumtaz	41
The Qatar Squabble FIFA World Cup 2022 - Saddam Hussein and Aimen Shakeel Abbasi	43
Meaning 3.0: Hope for a Conscious World - Tahreem Amin	45
Political Economy of Religious Elites - Waqas Ahmed	48

HISTORY

Political Masculinities: The Rise of 'Strongmen' - Nadeem F. Paracha	51
China Before Jiang Zemin - Naazir Mahmood	53

BUSINESS

Falling Textile Exports - Shahid Sattar	57
High Percentage of Currency in Circulation: What Explains It? - Shahid Mehmood	60

SPORTS

Absence of Women in Pakistani Sports: lack of a Policy Framework? - Sara Illahi Panhwer	63
The Sleeping Pines - Meekal Jamil	65

ARTS AND CULTURE

The Tilism of Dastaan behind Dastaan Goi - Waqas Manzoor	68
Divide and Rule - IQBAL	71

PIDE BI-MONTHLY ROUND UP

	75
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36TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PAKISTAN SOCIETY OF DEVELOPMENT ECONOMISTS

76

COVER PIECE

GOVERNANCE REFORM:
LAW, POLITICS AND INSTITUTIONS



Since independence, Pakistan seems to have established itself as primarily a rentier state, attracting resources from the world economy – particularly global powers – by leveraging its ‘geostrategic’ location. Within this modality, governance takes the shape of signalling to other states – along with the multilateral donor agencies and international financial institutions they are the major stakeholders of – and inviting them to initiate ‘development’ projects. These primarily come in the form of loan agreements, and since the neoliberal turn in the 1980s have been accompanied by certain conditionalities which define the overarching policy direction of key sectors of the economy.

Following the death of Liaquat Ali Khan, democracy took a backseat in Pakistan and the corridors of power were relocated: away from the ordinary citizenry and concentrated within certain circles, including the security apparatus, landed elites, industrial bigwigs, international financial institutions, hyper-conservative political groupings, and the extractive bureaucracy that has experienced little to no reform since the colonial era. Over the years, these power centres have established themselves as gatekeepers for political parties that wish to contest for elections – leading to an elaborate system of clientelism that has virtually eliminated competition from the arena and fostered rampant elite capture of resources. According to the UNDP, approximately Rs. 2.7 trillion – or USD 12 billion – is extracted from Pakistan by elites via various means, including but not limited to preferential access, lower taxation, and favourable prices.

During the proverbial ‘Decade of Development’ of the 1960s under the military regime of General Ayub Khan, massive sums of money flowed into the agricultural sector of Pakistan – primarily from the Ford Foundation in the United States – to fund the Green Revolution. This particular period is cited to this day as the ‘golden age’ of economic growth, which triggered the first wide ranging wave of urbanisation into city centres.

What is generally left out of such discourse, however, is the fact that it was – by and large – the largest landowners that benefitted from this initiative, who received tractors, fertilizers and irrigation systems that granted them massive leverage and the ability to impose their will on the vulnerable communities who worked for them. These included the smallholders, landless peasantry and larger labouring classes – who experienced such high levels of abuse and exploitation that a significant proportion of them were forced to abandon their deep roots in the countryside in favour of urban centres, the elites of which have always been hostile in their reception. This was despite the fact that these were (and are) quite enterprising poor people who took up trades in construction, domestic duties, street vending, arts and culture, and more – thus enhancing the development of urban centres. Nevertheless, they faced oppression at every

turn: with city development authorities, private military contractors and predatory real estate companies threatening, harassing and evacuating them at every turn in the name of ‘anti-encroachment’ drives to satisfy elite interests.

Juxtaposing this with Nehru’s India of the time, which was undergoing rapid industrialization and the establishment of several higher education institutes – mostly prominently the Indian Institute of Technology – tells a revealing tale. India’s diverse and rapidly expanding exports to the world market, particularly in services – which are dominated by IT based transactions – can in large part be credited to the governance arrangements and orientations of that particular decade. This involved a proactive and central state presence which made heavy investments in key sectors including education, healthcare, manufacturing, and more, thus expanding human capital, raising productivity levels and fostering the growth of entrepreneurship through innovation.

Pakistan unfortunately did not experience this due to the perverse incentive structures that the state has always been mired by. One reason for the security apparatus’ rapid formalization and expansion in the years following independence was the national identity that was assumed in initial stages – in which the primary facet was negation of everything India, the mortal enemy, stood for. This naturally fed the narrative of perpetual threat from the Eastern border, allowing the armed forces higher budgetary allocations, arms deals with global powers, and the gradual extension of its tentacles into the economic sphere.

Fast forward to the ‘80s, in which another military dictatorship – this time under General Zia ul Haq – jumped headfirst into the Afghan conflict as a hired gun for the United States, once again renting out Pakistan’s geographic position in exchange for economic and military assistance. A culture of terrorism, narcotics and hyper-securitization soon blossomed – causing businesses, particularly multinationals, to withdraw their investments from Pakistan. This set of a chain reaction of political instability and reduced the activities of political parties to largely symbolic ones, where they experienced a dwindling ability to assert control and pursue meaningful policy. Not only did this period set in motion a hyper-conservative and generally reactionary culture that resisted notions of progress, openness, tolerance and vibrancy, it also kick-started the neoliberal turn in terms of socioeconomic policy.

Following the Washington Consensus of 1989, assistance from international financial institutions – particularly the International Monetary Fund and World Bank – came in the form of conditional agreements, in which loan disbursement were contingent upon the extent to which ruling elites were willing to push the troika of privatise-liberalise-deregulate in every sector of the economy as a panacea with hardly any regard to contextual details. The consequences of this

cannot be overstated, and indeed have functioned to reduce key institutions to facilitators for big capital. Pakistan's Energy Policy of 1994 is a case in point, which guaranteed rates of return of 15-18% to big multinational companies in the form of International Power Producers (IPPs) – which were to be paid from taxpayer money based on kilowatts produced. This naturally led to overproduction, inability to ensure guaranteed rates, increased levels of government debt, and a rapidly expanding dependence on oil-producers around the globe. In sum, policy making in Pakistan was essentially forfeited to big donors who patronized ruling elites in exchange for the opportunity to push the narrow geopolitical agendas of the states they were dominated by – thus chipping away at the country's sovereignty.

The post-Cold War order effectively put countries such as Pakistan in what is commonly referred to as the 'neoliberal straitjacket' – trapping them in debt via policies that were geared to weaken the fundamental structure of their respective economies. This is also one of the reasons why the decade of the '90s, in which the PPP and PMLN alternated between themselves for the federal government, was largely unsuccessful: particularly when it came to deep structural reforms. 9/11 soon took place, in which the 'chickens had come home to roost' from the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan – and another military dictatorship under General Pervez Musharraf was leveraged to push the US agenda in the region, top down. The cycle of malgovernance continued throughout the following two decades, even after 2008 when a certain continuity in terms of 'democratic' norms prevailed: national assemblies were able

to complete their terms three times in a row – but as is common knowledge, there were hybrid regimes in which actual power was controlled behind the scenes from men in uniform.

The January issue of Discourse is an attempt to take a critical look at governance arrangements in Pakistan, particularly in terms of the nature and functioning of law, politics and institutions. Perpetual economic crises, rampant political instability, and a state effectively divided into two groups, the 1% and everybody else, can all be traced – in the final analysis – to governance, which is upstream all social ills. The fundamental question we are attempting to ask with this edition is how we can rethink the structure of the state apparatus in a manner that works for all citizens, regardless of class or identity, and which can hope to become competitive with the rest of the globe – starting with the South Asian region – over time?

We hope you find the articles insightful and would love to hear your thoughts on social media, where you can Tweet us at @PIDEPk.

Happy new year. Keep the Discourse alive!

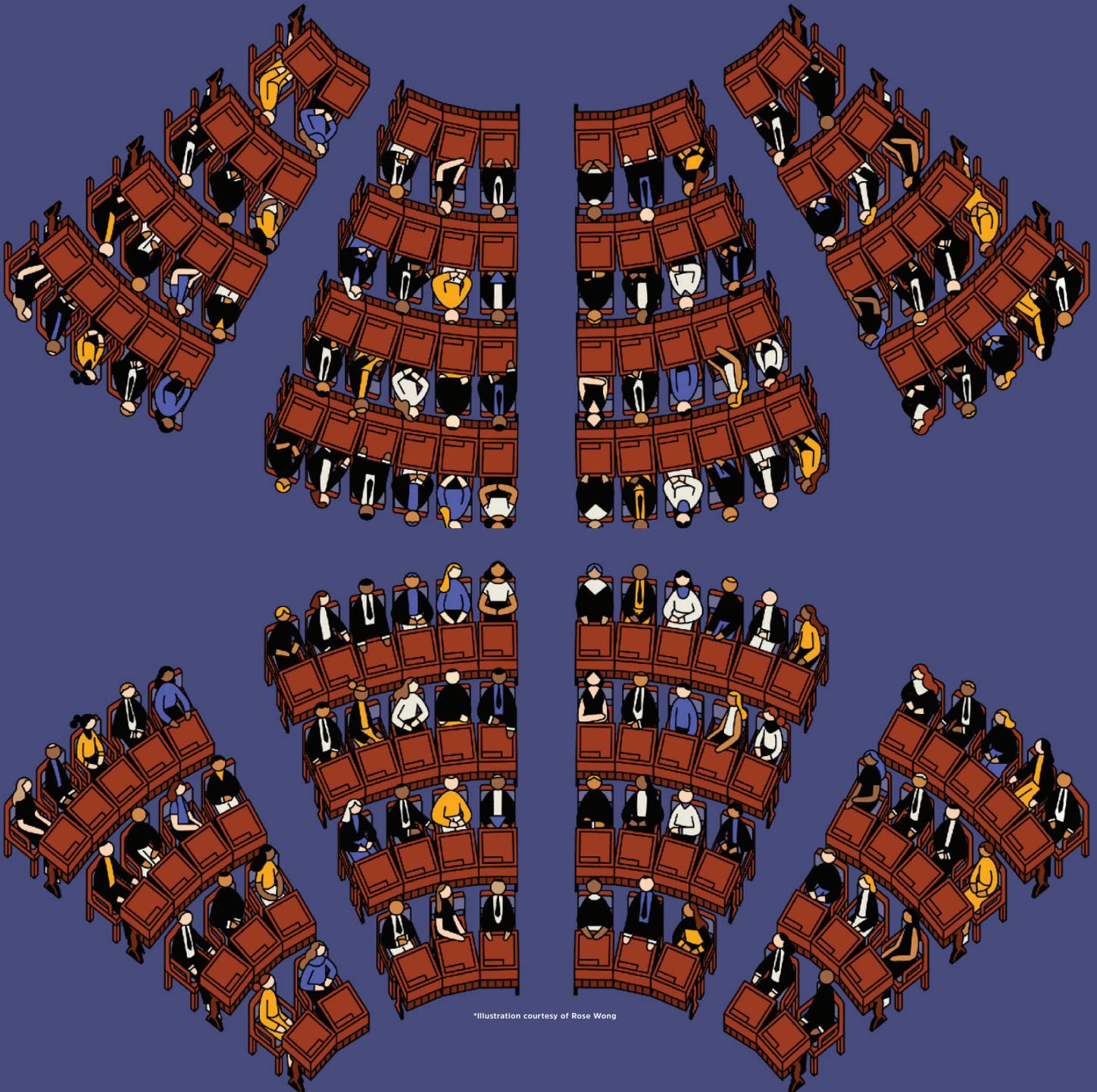
Sincerely,

Editorial Board
Discourse Magazine
Pakistan Institute of
Development Economics



Ö GOVERNANCE REFORM:

LAW, POLITICS AND INSTITUTIONS



*Illustration courtesy of Rose Wong

INTERTWINING OF INSTITUTIONAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS

Ishrat Husain

Empirical studies of determinants of growth and development carried out over the past seventy years have now clearly demonstrated that broad based socioeconomic development is determined, inter alia, by the quality of governance and institutions. An empirical study by the International Monetary Fund in 2003 found that governance has a statistically significant impact on GDP per capita across ninety-three countries and governance explains nearly 75 per cent of the cross country variations in income per head. An Asian Bank empirical study (2010) shows that developing Asian economies with government effectiveness, regulatory quality, and rule of law scoring above the global mean (after controlling for per capita income) grew faster on average during 1998-2008 than economies scoring below the global mean. The authors conclude that good governance is associated with both a higher level of per capita GDP as well as higher rates of GDP growth over time.

Numerous other studies have demonstrated the linkages between good governance and healthy economic growth. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson in their book, *Why Nations Fail*, demonstrate that it is the institutions that determine the fate of nations. Success comes when political and economic institutions are 'inclusive' and pluralistic, creating incentives for everyone to invest in the future. Nations fail when institutions are 'extractive', protecting the political and economic power of only a small elite that takes income from everyone else. Institutions that promote good governance and facilitate broad based and inclusive growth have come to occupy the current consensus on development strategy. According to Acemoglu and Johnson (2003), good institutions ensure two desirable outcomes: relatively

equal access to economic opportunity, i.e. a level playing field, and the likelihood that those who provide labour or capital are appropriately rewarded and their property rights are protected.

Rashida Haq and Uzma Zia have explored linkages between governance and pro-poor growth in Pakistan for the period 1996 to 2005. The analysis demonstrates that governance indicators have low scores and rank at the lowest possible percentile as compared to other countries. The results of their study show a strong link between governance indicators and pro-poor growth. In addition, their econometric analysis shows a strong relationship between good governance and reduction in poverty and income inequality.

Economic policies, however, sound or benign, can produce the desired outcomes only if the institutions intermediating those policies are strong, efficient and effective. It is the quality, robustness and responsiveness of these institutions that can transmit social and economic policies. In addition to the findings linking institutions with aggregate growth there is some association between the distribution of income and institutional quality with very unequal distribution of income being associated with a lower quality of institutional development.

The channel through which governance affects development is the quality of civil servants, the incentives facing them and the accountability for results. The key to quality and high performance lies in attracting, retaining and motivating civil servants of high professional calibre enjoying integrity. They should be allowed the authority and powers to act in the

larger interests of the public while being held accountable if things go wrong such as nepotism, favouritism, corruption etc. This can be accomplished by introducing a merit-based recruitment system, continuous training and skill up-gradation, equality of opportunity in career progression, adequate compensation, proper performance evaluation, financial accountability and rule-based compliance.

In my book, *Governing the Ungovernable*, my research has led me to conclude that the impressive record of Pakistan's economy between 1950-90 could be ascribed to the well-functioning strong institutions of governance. Pakistan was one of the top ten economic performers among the developing countries in the world during the first forty years of its existence. These forty years were tumultuous in the history of the nation but the record of achievements was impressive. Starting with a very weak economic base at the time of independence in 1947, followed by building a new nation from zero point, continuing political instability in the aftermath of the death of its founder. It successfully absorbed and rehabilitated 8 million refugees or one fourth of the total population, fought a war with a much larger and powerful neighbour India in 1965, and went through a painful and traumatic dismemberment of the country in 1971. The emergence of a populist political regime that indulged in massive nationalization of private assets in the 1970s accompanied by an external shock of major oil price increases gave a big blow to business confidence and dislocation of the economy. Close involvement with the US in the Afghan War to oust the Soviet Union in the 1980s and the associated fall out in the form of sectarian violence, drugs and Kalashnikovs shook the social fabric of the country. Despite these and many other challenges, internal and external, the country was able to register 6 percent average annual growth rate during the first forty years of its existence. Pakistan was ahead of India and Bangladesh in all economic and social indicators. Civil servants who manned the institutions of governance in this period were committed, competent and possessing impeccable integrity.

Since 1990, the country has fallen behind its neighbouring countries and has had a decline in the growth rate from 6.5 percent to 4 percent with booms and busts. The booms were short lived and could not be sustained over extended periods of time. Political instability and frequent changes in governments in the 1990s may have created uncertainty for investors thus slowing down the pace of economic activity. While there has been smooth and orderly transitions of power from one elected government to another twice since 2008, economic and social indicators have not shown much improvement. Pakistan's lingering problem since the 1990s in ensuring macroeconomic stability, sustaining economic growth and delivering public services to ordinary citizens is primarily due to weak governance and perceptible decline in institutional capacity and state capture by a small elite. Chronic political instability and frequent changes

in political regimes have also caused disastrous consequences for economic governance. Alesina et. al (2011) found that political instability and government fragility have a negative effect on growth.

An objective analysis of the multiple crises Pakistan is facing today – anaemic growth combined with high inflation, energy shortages and leakages, low tax revenues, losses of public enterprises, corruption, poor law and order, arms, drug smuggling, non-availability of land, housing and transport, 20 million children out of school, mafias controlling land, water transport, etc. – would reveal that the root cause can be found in governance deficit and institutional decay. Pakistan is full of well drafted plans, vision statements, strategy documents, diagnostic studies, solid prescriptions but most of them have never been implemented. The end result is gradual deterioration in the state of affairs and dissatisfaction of public at large with the delivery of essential public goods and services. The rising numbers of educated middle class and growing urbanisation, the intrusion of electronic and social media in daily life, the demonstration effect emanating from a globalised economy have raised the expectations of the society.

The capacity of the state to meet these expectations is becoming weaker every day. Implementation record is dismal. The elite capture of the state, excessive centralisation of power by both the elected and military rulers, chronic political instability, politicisation of the civil services and until recently collusion between the power structures – the politicians, the Army and the judiciary in addition to the widespread acceptance of patron-client culture in the society have been the main stumbling blocks in the implementation of policy. The conflicts that took place at times between these power structures were not rooted in benign balancing act for the larger collective good of the society but assertion of the authority by different actors for advancing their own parochial interests. Unlike other societies, the cost Pakistan is paying for poor governance and institutional decay is relatively very high and poses an existential threat.

Civil services have lost their dynamism, vigour and sense of mission. Parliament is not properly exercising vigilance over the Executive and holding them accountable for results, the court system is overloaded and congested with millions of cases that have been lingering for long periods of time. Institutions of restraint such as the Election Commission, Auditor General of Pakistan, Public Services Commissions etc. have become controversial.

The interaction between public policy, social norms and politics takes primacy as these are intertwined and determine the economic outcomes in a significant way. We tend to blame politicians particularly those in the Government but hardly realize what we ourselves are doing as members of this society. The political system in Pakistan has evolved around feudal, biradri and kinships, tribal affiliations, and ethnic groupings. Nepotism, favouritism and corruption have become entrenched social norms. Trust and social capital, on the other hand which play a positive role, are rapidly eroding. Social polarisation of 'US' versus 'THEY' has become part of our norms - reinforcing tendencies of adversity, confrontation and hostility.

These societal norms have become ingrained in the voters' psyche. As most of them do not have direct access to government services they deploy their elected representatives as their intermediaries for interface with the government departments for their daily chores and survival. They expect these MNAs, MPAs and party leaders to provide maximum benefits to them and their kith and kin in the form of jobs, livelihoods, admission to schools, healthcare, land and water. It does not matter to them whether the applicants are qualified for the jobs or not. Constituency politics forces the candidates to go out of the way to oblige their voters. This pressure rather than prudence results in unqualified and incompetent persons entering public services and public enterprises. Election manifestos of the political parties become subservient to the realities of constituency politics. The consequences of such behaviour on the part of the electorate are disastrous for the economy. The public sector expands in numbers with unproductive people on pay rolls and the budgetary ceilings are breached leading to increases in deficit financing. Public at large suffers at the hands of these functionaries in terms of low quality of delivery of goods and services. Absentee teachers and health workers, corrupt Revenues and Police Officials make lives miserable for a common citizen. Anatol Lieven aptly summarizes this phenomenon in his book, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*. He asserts that, "in so far as the political system runs on patronage and kinship and corruption is intertwined with patronage and kinship it would mean gutting Pakistan's society like a fish. Kinship plays a vital part in maintaining the dominance of the 'feudal elites and many of the urban bosses'".¹

Why have these reforms aimed at improving governance and strengthening institutions failed to take off when their net benefits to the economy are so obvious? The unwillingness or resistance to implement these reforms stems from the fact that the proposed reforms attack the existing system based on patronage, loyalty, connections, mutually benefiting bargains and deals and promotion of narrow personal and parochial interests. The new system cannot replace the existing system overnight or even when it takes root after a few years lays down merit, hard work, ethical behaviour and reward for performance as the underlying principles. The

benefits of this system will not accrue to the party in power during its tenure but the costs are upfront and would have to be borne by the party that initiates the reforms process. Under the reformed system the ordinary politician who has to face his constituency would not be able to place his supporters in lucrative government jobs, award juicy contracts to them, get officers loyal to him appointed as DC, SP, Tehsildar and SHO. From his viewpoint these reforms are an anathema because he loses all the levers of control which he exercises through this patronage system. This disconnect between the costs to be incurred by elected politicians in the form of losing their privileges, power and pelf immediately as a result of these reforms and the benefits that are invisible, diffused and uncertain occurring sometime in the distant future is the primary reason as to why no government has bitten the bullet and implemented the long term institutional reforms agenda.

The author was until recently Advisor to the Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms and Austerity with the status of Federal Minister. In this capacity he also served as the member of National Economic Council, ECNEC, Economic coordination Committee of the Cabinet and several other Cabinet Committees. During 2016-17 he was Public Policy Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington DC. During this tenure he produced his latest book, "Governing the Ungovernable". He is HEC National Distinguished Professor, Professor Emeritus and Chairman Centre for Excellence in Islamic Finance at the Institute of Business Administration, (IBA) Karachi. He had earlier served as Dean and Director IBA - the oldest graduate business school in Pakistan (established in 1955) between 2008 and 2016. He served as the Chairman, National Commission for Government Reforms for two years from 2006 to 2008 with the status of Federal Minister reporting directly to the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan. He was appointed the Governor of Pakistan's Central Bank in December 1999. In recognition of his meritorious services he was conferred the prestigious award of "Hilal-e-Imtiaz" by the President of Pakistan in 2003. The President of Pakistan conferred upon him the highest civilian award of Nishan e Imtiaz in 2016 for his outstanding public service.

¹Lieven, A. (2012). *Pakistan: A hard country*. PublicAffairs.

MAKING THE ELEPHANT DANCE:

NEGOTIATING POWER DYNAMICS WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT

Ayesha Siddiqi

9

November 26th brought an emotional relief to Pakistan as the government appointed the new army chief, General Asim Munir. The anxiety over the choice was due to the perception that the selection would determine the future direction of politics in the country. Successive governments have pinned their hopes with the army chief as someone who would ensure longevity and health of their government. Though the history of the relationship between the head of the largest service of the armed forces and the prime minister's office is rife with disappointment and often utter failure, lessons were never learned to change the approach. The continued pursuance of dependence on the army chief by political governments, especially the politically significant Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PMLN) group is not just a matter of odd choice but peculiar political strategizing and the manner in which the relationship between the two core power centres of the country have evolved.

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RIVALRY

To understand the peculiar obsession with appointment of the army chief it is necessary to look back at the evolution of inter-institutional relationship dating back to General Ziaul Haq's third military coup that not just overthrew a popular government but also decimated the institution of a powerful prime minister. In 1985, the Zia regime with the help of a selected parliament and prime minister brought the notorious amendment to the 1973 Constitution. The article 58(2)(b) gave the power of removal of the government to the president who was also made the supreme commander of the armed forces in place of the prime minister. The objective was to disempower the head of the government.

The constitutional change was then used repeatedly to remove successive political governments, and in the process, keep political stakeholders unstable. Though the amendment was revoked later in 1997, the power balance did not tilt in favour of the civilian government, which led to the struggle by the political class to find a method to dominate the army. Despite that the PMLN government appointed army chiefs even earlier (1991 and 1993), a conscious effort towards finding a favourable army chief begun to be made in 1998 and after. General Pervez Musharraf was selected to replace General Jahangir Karamat, who resigned that year over an altercation with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif regarding the former's suggesting during his speech at the Naval War College advising the government to establish a National Security Council and make military commanders partners in decision-making. Interestingly, the Nawaz Sharif government adopted this suggestion much later in 2013. Sources suggest not only that Musharraf sought to ensure the Sharif family of his allegiance, the PMLN leadership made the choice thinking that the general being from an ethnic minority would remain subservient.

Although the formula did not work, it was tried repeatedly - 2013 and 2018. The intention remained the search for a friendly army chief. Despite that Nawaz Sharif and his party drew a lot of criticism for using the same approach, the formula was not abandoned and, in fact, seems to have guided the selection of the latest service chief, General Asim Munir. Interestingly, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf did not learn from the PMLN's past failures and used a similar approach of wanting an army chief of its choice that could guarantee the party's power. This obsession with investing in a particular personality indicates three aspects. First, the army chief is central to the political strategy of a party due

to the role he plays in ensuring survival of a government, thus, the desire to build a relationship of allegiance between the office bearer and the government. Second, the political strategy is very personality oriented. Third, the inability of political players to negotiate power through institutional means.

Apart from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) that tends to vacillate between personalized versus institutionalized approach to power negotiation, most political players have demonstrated little capacity to adopt latter kind of approach in checking the military's power. The 18th amendment to the 1973 Constitution passed in April 2010 by the then PPP government financially empowered federating units of the country. In the process it was viewed as a push back to the armed forces as the federal government no longer had resources to feed the military sufficiently as it did in the past. The army's annoyance with the constitutional change echoed through the media as General Bajwa often spoke against the amendment. The establishment's discomfort is probably what resulted in the PPP abandoning this approach and returning to the traditional way of dealing with the armed forces.

The PMLN and PTI, on the other hand, have remained tied to the traditional formula – targeting selective members of the establishment by building personal ties but also keeping relationship with the non-civilian power centre intact through providing financial sweeteners or enhancing its power. Resultantly, the 2013 – 2022 period is a journey of both vertical and horizontal expansion of the establishment's power. The PMLN government elected in 2013 was, for example, quick in abandoning the agreement signed between Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif called the 'Charter of Democracy' in May 2006 that endorsed the idea of empowering the parliament by bringing back the old system of the Cabinet Committee for Defence (DCC) for national security decision-making and removing General Musharraf's National Security Council. While the 2008 – 2013 PPP government implemented the agreement, the PMLN government, which followed, changed the method of engagement with the establishment. The DCC was replaced with a Cabinet Committee for National Security and that too without any debate in the Parliament. Later the nomenclature was changed to National Security Committee (NSC) and its role also revised from advisory to decision-making. Unlike the DCC, the new NSC gave membership to the four-star generals and made them partners in national strategic decision-making. The National Security Division (NSD) that was created to assist the NSC did not empower the parliament but was meant as one of the many bureaucratic institutions that brought the establishment centre-stage rather than pushing it back. The Imran Khan government brought to power in 2018 further enhanced the establishment's participation in decision-making taking it beyond military security to economic planning.

EMPOWERING DEMOCRACY

Thus far, the political process is geared towards stability of the electoral process. This is a departure from the era of instability of the 1990s and a matter of relative improvement. However, the political system remains unstable due to the electoral process remaining unreliable, as demonstrated by the 2018 elections, and its dependence on commitment from the establishment not to intervene. There is little evidence that the political players are ready to meet the challenge to the political system by reducing the establishment's interference in overall governance of the state and strengthening the parliament and political institutions so that any external interference becomes difficult. In fact, the establishment's presence in civilian institutions grew rapidly after 2013, which was commensurate with its shift from establishing control over government to a more constant intrusion in everyday governance of the state. The formula of political instability also seems to have changed whereby while parliaments were able to complete their terms the same could not be said of prime ministers. Every electoral term saw two prime ministers to ensure that respective parliaments completed their time.

There is a definite need for the political stakeholders to move upwards from stabilizing the electoral process to political process. It will be an incremental journey that starts with ensuring that prime ministers do not fall victim to contestation with the establishment and can complete term to gradually reducing its role in governance. Taking this route itself is very complex and its efficacy will depend on the level of investment in building institutional mechanisms, which, while pushing back the establishment, does not make it excessively nervous. Unfortunately, there is little thought given to beefing up the parliament's capacity to engage with the national security establishment. Unless civilian control over the Ministry of Defence is strengthened and parliamentary committees on national security are taken more seriously by political actors the change in relationship is not likely to happen. The formula is not as simple as it sounds because it also requires strengthening of the political party system. The building of political party cadres and changing the entire mechanism of political debate within the parties including reducing patronage would probably require a new generation of politicians. Until then, the political process will continue to flirt with the establishment. The political future will remain dependent on the personality of the army chief and his intent to stay out of politics rather than shifting of gear by the political actors.

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RE-ORIENTING PAKISTAN'S ECONOMY

Kaiser Bengali

11

National and international economic and political crises – aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war induced return to cold war era ‘ghettoization’ into blocs – offers an opportunity to reorient the economy towards more sustainable bases. Essentially, the two events have upended the neo-liberal globalization-market economy template.

Herewith, a shift is envisaged for Pakistan; whereby, the economy is less open and powered more in terms of domestic production and consumption. While complete autarky is never an option, Pakistan’s resource base is large enough to sustain the alternative economic architecture. Export income is always indispensable to finance essential imports; however, ‘export-oriented growth’ is proposed to be less of a basis of economic development and ‘import-substitution’ to govern certain sectors deemed strategic for public welfare.

The defining characteristic of Pakistan’s economy is its narrow base, across the board as well as sector-wise. Crop agriculture is dominated by one food crop and three cash crops. The one food crop is wheat and cash crops include cotton, rice and sugarcane. The former two of the cash crops cater largely to exports and the latter to import substitution. Manufacturing and exports are dominated by textiles. Revenues are dominated by general sales tax (GST), accrued largely from the textile-dominated manufacturing sector. Imports is dominated by petroleum, oils and lubricants (POL).

The economic management model has been driven over the last three decades by two parameters: globalization and market-orientation. It has been assumed that open trade will benefit consumers in terms of price and quality and

exports will pay for imports: a globalization postulate. Efficient management has been delegated to the market; the

assumption being that the market is best placed to determine what and how much will be produced and what and where the produce will be sold. Neither assumptions have delivered promised results.¹

The economy has performed well only in spurts, with each spurt lasting not more than one or two years. That the economy has come to be repeatedly on the verge of default and increasingly dependent on bailouts is a telling comment on the growth model being followed.

The case for reduced reliance on exports as the primary engine for development is as follows. Pakistan has been developed essentially as a cotton economy. Textiles comprise two-thirds of exports and major markets are USA and Europe. Recessionary conditions in the two regions, now on the horizon, can see a decline in Pakistan’s already stagnant exports.

The decline in textile exports can lead to closure of textile mills – some permanently – and consequent reduction in demand for raw cotton; extending the impact of global recession to the agriculture sector. The reverse chain of textile exports, textile manufacturing and cotton cultivation appears be weakening and is unlikely to remain the mainstay of the economy². The golden age of the cotton economy appears to be over and the ‘globalization’ model of generating growth is passé.

¹The assumption that economic activity generated by the neo-liberal “globalization-market economy” model will generate jobs, raise incomes and reduce poverty has also not been borne out. The economy has served the interests of particular sections of society and state and inequality has increased, with the rich becoming richer and the middle class getting poorer. Luxury housing schemes have proliferated and quality education and health care has become a preserve of the rich. A new genre of middle class poverty has emerged and hunger among the poor has now begun to surface in household surveys. While inter-personal inequality is generating social pressures, regional inequality is contributing to political tensions.

²The combined impact of a slowdown in manufacturing and agriculture can result in increased unemployment and social unrest.

Pakistan will need to re-orient its economy to revolve around domestic supply (output) catering to domestic demand (consumption). Reduced export receipts will need to be balanced with reduction in non-essential imports. The luxury of meeting consumer needs through imports is no longer available. Faced with the decline of foreign exchange inflows, Pakistan will have to produce what it essentially needs, irrespective of world price differentials. For essential and strategic commodities, considerations of comparative advantage will need to give way to autarky or self-sufficiency models.

The State will have to re-assert responsibility for directing the economy and for provision of employment and social services and for meeting the basic needs of the people. That is the only rationale for the State to exist. The primary and singular objective of the State will have to be food security, housing and utilities, education, health, and public transport enabled via employment and social security support. The real sector production structure will have to be re-engineered to meet the above objectives. Correspondingly, the public finance (taxation and expenditure) regime will also have to be re-engineered accordingly.

In agriculture, survival will have to take priority over comparative advantage. Food crops will need to take priority over cash crops. The objective will have to be self-sufficiency in essential food commodities: wheat, pulses, sunflower oil, onions, potatoes, vegetables, milk, meats, eggs, etc. Part of acreage will have to be reallocated administratively towards producing the above crops. Agro-ecological zones will have to be designated for specific crops and appropriate fiscal incentive (subsidy) regimes put in place.

The manufacturing sector will have to be re-based on local (agricultural and mineral) raw materials and developed for value addition. For example, cotton and rice in Punjab and Sindh, minerals in Balochistan, and fruits in Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. Industrial revival and promotion will require reduction of GST rate on manufacturing to single digit, even as low as 5 percent – with the resultant revenue reduction balanced by reduction of non-development expenditure.

The State will need to return to the economic arena and lead the industrial development process. A major plank, herewith, has to be revival of the Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) – but with a nuance. Earlier, PIDC's mandate was to set up industries with government finance and government management. It then carried the unit to the commercial production stage and privatized it. The new PIDC mandate will require units to be set up in Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) mode: government finance and private management. The latter party or another private party may have the option of

buying out the unit upon reaching commercial production.

The hypothesis here is that the food crops and domestic raw material based manufactures will be largely consumed domestically. Thus, what is produced domestically will largely be consumed domestically.

However, the implicit assumption here is that the purchasing power to clear the market is available, which is clearly not the reality.

As such, the gap will need to be addressed. Part of the purchasing power will emerge from employment in the farms and factories that are producing for the domestic market. The balance will have to be generated by a universal social security regime. Social security payments to low income families will enable them to purchase their needs; thus, creating the aggregate demand for output – and completing *the circular flow of income*.

The above model opens wide a window for rupee and dollar financing needs for subsidies for agriculture and social security and for essential imports; with both creating unsustainable budget and trade deficits. Thus the imperative for an overhaul of the fiscal and tariff structures.

The avenues for raising revenues in the short run are limited; given that the economy has become structurally weak, on account of decades of inattention to infrastructure development. Thus, the onus for bridging the budget deficit will have to fall on reducing non-development expenditure, including non-combat defence expenditure. Significant scope exists for both.

The avenues for raising exports in the short run are also limited; thus, the onus for bridging the trade deficit will have to fall on reducing the foreign exchange intensity of the economy, i.e., reducing imports. There are three major avenues whereby foreign exchange drain can be reduced.

1. Ban on import of all non-essential consumer imports: food, clothing, cosmetics, building materials, home furnishings, and so on; including pet food and shampoos! The foreign exchange savings in absolute amounts is not likely to be large, but important to signal to the country's elite that they cannot continue to live first world lives, while the mass of the people face varying degrees of malnutrition, hunger and homelessness.

2. Phasing out power generating plants using imported fuels – furnace oil, coal, gas – and greater reliance on hydel, domestic coal and solar. Additionally, major efforts towards conservation by enhancing energy efficiency of farms, factories, offices and homes will be called for.

3. Shifting long-distance goods transportation from road to

to rail. Rail uses one-third less fuel per kilometer/tonne compared to road transport; thus, saving on oil imports and foreign exchange. The Railway network will need to be rehabilitated and upgraded technically as well as institutionally.

The growth and development model outlined above amounts to a major restructuring of the economy, but is deemed urgent and imperative to rescue it from the perpetual state of crises and debt-dependency and to ensure sustainable growth and development that caters to the needs of the people.

A three-fold strategy is needed in order to combat the current situation as well as to prevent such calamities in future. First, relief to the affectees is of utmost importance by providing them with the food, shelter, and social protection. Second, as a medium-term strategy, we have to restrict encroachments in river waterways by enforcing the River Act and making necessary legislation with regard to “Shamlat Deh” in the country. Finally, as a long-term strategy, we need to adapt ourselves to climate change and control deforestation. Only these measures could enhance our resilience to climate-led catastrophes and could be productive in reducing the losses to the public and private properties and precious human lives from the likely floods in future.

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WHY INSTITUTIONS MATTER

Amber Darr

The word ‘institution’ conjures an image of a grand, imposing and aloof brick and mortar structure, behind whose calm and stately façade, safe from the prying eyes of the public, persons of authority engage in lofty deliberations over important and complex matters. However, this view of institutions reflects only one side of the picture. While it is correct that the term ‘institution’ is used interchangeably with an ‘organisation’, particularly one that is long-standing and performs a public function, it equally and perhaps more importantly, refers to a custom or practice that has existed for a long time in a country and is accepted as an important part of a society.

‘Institutions’ as understood in this second sense, form the foundations of New Institutional Economics which argues that economic activity is not only shaped by economic principles but also by the social and legal norms prevalent in the society. In the words of the Nobel prize winning economist, Douglass C. North these social and legal norms are in fact ‘institutions’ in that they are the ‘rules of the game’ which form the framework within which all human interaction—including economic interaction—takes place and which therefore constrain and shape this interaction. These institutions may be further organised into several overlapping categories: as market or non-market institutions, explicit or implicit institutions, and organically developed or borrowed institutions.

So, how do these institutions affect economic development? North argues that these “institutions affect the performance of the economy by their effect on the costs of exchange and production”. This important observation recognises that the ‘cost’ of a transaction is not merely the monetary price paid for it. For instance, in simple terms it means that the cost of doing business in a country not only includes the investment required to set it up, but also the ease (or lack thereof) with which licenses or approvals for conducting the business may be obtained and disputes relating to the business may be resolved. The computation of the cost of business is therefore a complex exercise which requires knowledge not only of express rules but also or implied traditions and practices—and arguably the higher the overall cost of doing business or the greater the difficulty in computing it, the lower the possibility of business.

Institutions impact economic development at both the macro and the micro level. The most significant macro institution in this regard is the constitution of a country which in addition to being a primary institution in itself, establishes other legal and political institutions necessary for its governance. Some scholars (Tony Prosser, for instance) argue that constitutions establish the institutional infrastructure for the ‘management of the economy’ therefore implying that they are superior to it. However, those from

the neoliberal school (such as Friedrich Hayek) are of the view that constitutional institutions simply provide an enabling framework for the operation of free markets and are therefore subordinated to economic exigencies.

In practice this means that a country may have to make difficult choices between its social priorities and its economic reality. The direction in which it resolves these choices is determined by its underlying economic philosophy as well as the capacity of its domestic institutions to strike an appropriate balance between these competing concerns. This capacity, in turn, is determined by the level of domestic knowledge and capability as well as the historic depth, strength and experience of these institutions which in turn is linked to how the country has acquired its institutions. Arguably, a country that has organically developed its institutions or adapted these through bottom-up, participatory and inclusive deliberations is more likely to negotiate its social and economic needs for the well-being of its citizens. Even leaving aside the repeated interruptions to Pakistan's democratic process, the ability of its constitutional institutions to realise their social justice agenda is compromised by the fact that these institutions are borrowed rather than having developed organically from the Pakistani context: the legal and political institutions largely replicate those of the Government of India Act 1935, the fundamental rights echo the UN Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 8-28), whilst the economic principles align with the values of free market economy (Articles 18 and 23-24). It may be argued that General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation of the Pakistani constitution in the '80s was perhaps born out of the need to indigenise its institutions, however, this attempt was largely superficial and semantic and left the institutional structure almost entirely intact.

Very like its constitutional institutions, Pakistani economic institutions are not fully grounded in its context. In a bid to integrate into the global economy Pakistan had become a member of the IMF and the World Bank in 1950 and of the WTO in 1995. In time Pakistan carried out the first-generation macro-economic reforms by liberalising exchange and interest rates and the second-generation micro-economic reforms by establishing a range of authorities such as the SECP, CCP and NEPRA to regulate activities throughout the country. Most of these reforms were decided between the executive and multilateral agencies behind closed-doors without any consultation with stakeholders and were often introduced in the country through temporary ordinances and later ratified by extra constitutional orders or parliaments not inclined towards meaningful engagement with the legislative process.

However, Pakistan's large scale borrowing of legal, political, and economic institutions was not entirely thoughtless and perhaps was even a necessity given the unusual circumstances of Pakistan's creation. By adopting institutions that declared its liberal values and aligned it with international

best practices, Pakistan derived much needed international legitimacy and gained an entry into the ranks of progressive nations. However, in super-imposing borrowed institutions on institutions pre-existing in the Pakistani context, without any meaningful effort to engage, aggregate or even to inform public opinion, this large scale borrowing also drove a wedge in the legal fabric of the country, creating in effect two legal systems: one stated in the explicit rules, and the other impliedly understood by all who operated within it.

While North reminds us that these sub-conscious institutions or informal constraints are resistant to change, Rodolfo Sacco, in his seminal work on legal formants, in which he refers to these as 'cryptotypes' argues that these implicit patterns of behaviour have considerable outward effects and must be included in any analysis which aims to understand why the same explicit rules result in different outcomes in different contexts. Examples of cryptotypes operating in the Pakistan include the preference of both civil and military-led governments to make laws through ordinances rather parliamentary legislative procedures or the penchant for adjournments in the Pakistani legal system. Although the explicit rules provide for both these practices, the manner in which these are practiced in the country are beyond the limits provided for in the law hinting at another, more sub-conscious rationale.

Therefore, to understand reasons for which Pakistan has remained unable to realise its economic aspirations it is important not only to study the institutions it claims to be governed by but also the institutions that operate almost entirely at an implicit level where they may neither be detected nor reformed, and yet are powerful enough to render the country's explicit rules superfluous to the functioning of its legal, political, and economic life. The aim of this exercise would not be to eliminate these implicit rules or informal constraints but to relate them to the explicit rules so that there may be congruity rather than clash between the two. This, in turn, is only possible through bottom-up, participatory, and inclusive institutions, whether explicit and implicit, that have the capacity to aggregate local knowledge and the incentive either to adapt borrowed institutions to reflect this knowledge or to educate the public of reasons for not doing so.

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Reforms in Pakistan: WHERE TO START?

Karim Khan

“Good governance is the art of putting wise thought into prudent action in a way that advances the well-being of those governed.”

Diane Kalen-Sukra

As is pointed out in Diane Kalen-Sukra’s quote, governance is a synthesis of laws and regulations and their effective enforcement, both arising from ideas and a well thought out debate. This, in other words, implies that, in good governance, the affairs of state are structured honestly, with every system in place, where merit is never ignored, rules are meticulously followed and where everyone is equal before the law. Pakistan has been confronted with a deepening crisis of governance since its inception. The symptoms of the crisis are starkly reflected in terms of lapses in service delivery, prevalence of corruption, administrative complexities, and a sense of uncertainty or despair amongst the majority of the general public. Before digging deeper into its causes or suggesting some pragmatic reforms henceforth, let me take

an academic input from what governance means to economists.

To Friedrich A. Hayek (1899-1992), market economy is an information processing system characterized by spontaneous order – the emergence of coherence through the independent actions of large numbers of individuals, each with limited and local knowledge, coordinated by price messages that arise from a decentralized process of competition. Though Hayek was not clearly elaborative on the role of government but his thoughts reflect that the central concern of formal order should be to reduce uncertainty or ensure information in case of any incompleteness or asymmetry of information that might arise from the decentralized decision making. Likewise, Ronald H. Coase (1910-2013) argues, in his famous Coase Theorem, that in the absence of transaction costs, an efficient solution to any economic conflict arising from an externality could be arrived at regardless of the initial distribution of property rights. Alternatively, as long as the transactions are costless, there is no need for

government's direct regulation. However, once the transactions are costly, then government needs to reduce transaction costs or impose a solution through regulation, taxation or subsidy. Further, to Douglas C. North (1920-2015), institutions, including both informal (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct) and formal (constitutions, laws, property rights), and the effectiveness of enforcement (together with the technology employed) determine transaction and production costs and hence the profitability and feasibility of engaging in economic activities. By combining these three thoughts, we come to the point that the major functions of institutional framework are to reduce uncertainty and transaction costs, on one hand, and incentivize partaking in economic activities, on the other.

Given this framework, governance in Pakistan has been eliciting uncertainty, inefficiency, exclusiveness, and non-responsiveness of institutions. A bunch of factors can be attributed to bad governance in Pakistan but, amongst these, socio-economic structure in the country, lack of democratic norms, inefficient civil service, absence of accountability, nonexistence of public participation, and dearth of transparency are the most obvious ones. This, alternatively, calls for substantial institutional reforms, ranging from broad-based constitutional reforms to electoral reforms, from market-friendly legislations to day-to-day procedural reforms, and from administrative simplicities to effective enforcement of rules.

However, bringing reforms in abrupt manner has always been challenging as they usually entail some losers along with a wide cross-section of beneficiaries. In other words, it would be long-lasting to bring in reforms in an incremental way. Where to start from then? I would like to propose beginning from the basics of inclusivity. Inclusive institutions maintain an open access order whereby the majority of the populace have a participatory role in the political and economic affairs of society, guided largely by principles like transparency, accountability, and simplicity of the procedures. In this regard, the first and foremost step would be the provision of access to government data for debate and research. Open data would not only ensure public oversight of governments but it would also highlight or control frictions or leakages in the governance. Alternatively, by opening ways for accountability and ensuring transparency, open data would augment public awareness and participation in the affairs of the state.

Similarly, research or debate on government data would encourage thought-provoking policy making in the country by highlighting deficiencies in policies and their implementations. A corollary to these points is that it would determine the cost effectiveness of any particular policy by comparing its net benefits or accruals with its total costs. For instance, analysing the data of Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) would not only highlight the priorities of incumbent governments, but it would also make them accountable before the public in their future election cycles. Likewise, digging deeper into the data of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) would pave the way to determining the cost effectiveness of the process of accountability. Similar would be the case with other departments where open data would make it easier to evaluate various government programs or policy packages and, thereby, would give us policy prescriptions for future endeavours.

Second, why are we still stuck with paper for record keeping despite the huge digital transformation across the globe? Electronic record keeping is more secure than paper record keeping because there is always the risk of a paper document being lost, misplaced, or destroyed by accident or disasters like fires etc. Likewise, electronic record keeping, along with ensuring administrative comfort, guarantees easiness in audit trail, especially in tracking those who have accessed them. In addition to electronic record keeping, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) warrants efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency by providing high-quality services to citizens, businesses, and governmental personnel. Though hurdles like lack of awareness, low literacy rates, poverty, heterogeneity in languages and culture are perturbing the efforts towards digitalization, but the hurdles in any way don't infer that improvements should not be made in this regard. In other words, computerization of government records and e-governance is the second essential reform that can be initiated with low costs.

Third, administrative procedures in Pakistan are cumbersome. Why can't we make it one-window for applications, processing, and approvals? According to PIDE Sludge Audit Volume I, which highlights excessive and unjustified frictions that make it difficult for people to achieve what they want to or to do as they wish, there are 46 steps to obtain a trade license, with a monetary cost of Rs. 80,185 and a time cost of around 160 days. Likewise, setting up a petrol pump requires 58 steps, with a monetary cost of 8.2% of the investment and a time cost of around 14 months. Further, obtaining permission for a high-rise building from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) requires four years, with procedures comprising 104 steps and a monetary cost of 77 percent of the project value. All these sum up to a regulatory cost of around 39 percent of GDP in Pakistan, as is estimated in the Report. If we add the costs of bargaining and information to it, it surges the total transactions cost to above 50 percent of GDP. Thus, simplification of the procedures would be a significant factor in reducing the overall cost of transactions in the country.

Fourth, records of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) provides an ample opportunity for digitalization and documentation of the economy. Almost one third of the economy is still undocumented. Informal economy, though an important contributor to employment in the country, has been creating hurdles with respect to competition in the market, availability of credits to businesses, and revenue collection. Around 13% of the companies in Pakistan have been complaining about unfair competition from informal competitors. Likewise, unregistered firms are unable to access the formal credit market, causing them to remain small indefinitely. Revenue losses is yet another concern which, largely caused by lower levels of registration of businesses. Here, using NADRA records would not only help in documentation of the economy but also boost domestic revenue mobilization. All of these reforms would serve as a preamble to the larger institutional reforms in the country.

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DISCONTENT WITH GOVERNANCE NOT DEMOCRACY

Afiya Shehrbano Zia

A Household Survey¹ conducted by the Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability (TDEA), 'State of Governance in Pakistan 2022; Household Survey Report' (SSGP), collected citizens' 'views from the ground up' about democracy and governance in Pakistan. The SSGP is based on a sampled survey of heads of 6,400 households² across 111 districts from the four provinces and the federal capital. It is representative of all but 20 of the country's 131 districts. Some select empirical findings are analysed below;

The first is that, a majority of Pakistanis (57%) prefer parliamentary representative democracy as the appropriate form of governance while a disturbing 16% still feel dictatorship is preferable and some 11% favour a theocratic

leadership. This consensus should put to rest repeat proposals for a presidential system or faith in some individual cult-like leadership.

Neither is this some academic preference, since the second important finding is that respondents are clear about the pragmatic goals of the political apparatus, with nearly 50% respondents recognizing democracy as the rule of elected officials who are responsible for the management of public services and resources. Another 30% expect democracy to deliver basic services like food and shelter, and 9% consider it responsible for economic growth.

However, overwhelmingly, respondents report that they are

¹www.tdea.pk

²The caveat with most HH surveys is that they collect data from respondents who are self-appointed 'heads of households' and who are inevitably men. This results in gender biased data. This notion and praxis needs to officially end.

completely and largely dissatisfied with the performance and service delivery of governments at all tiers - the highest mistrust is reserved for the federal (67%) and provincial governments (65%), followed by half the respondents lacking trust in local governments (52%). The largest percentage of respondents (81%) that reported frustration with the performance of their government representatives reside in the province of Sindh, with Punjab featuring 52% dissatisfaction with their legislators.

Neither is the discontent limited to elected representatives - the trust deficit extends to the state institutions. The lack of confidence in the ability of 6 listed institutions (parliament, judiciary, Election Commission Pakistan (ECP), the federal, provincial and local governments) to deliver public goods is concerning. Some 27% of respondents reported full distrust in Parliament (26% trusted it to some extent and only 12% completely); 26% distrust the judiciary (34% trusted it and only 14% completely); 30% do not trust in the ECP (21% trust it, only 8% completely); 33% are mistrustful of the federal (15% trust it, only 4% completely) and provincial governments (13% trust these and only 3% completely), and 32% do not trust their local governments.

The notion of kinship as the driver of voting decisions also requires closer study. The Survey shows variation across provinces but overall, that the manifestos and party affiliation of candidates is the main factor for voters; 66% of respondents vote for candidates on the basis of the political party they represent and 56% on the basis of personal affiliation/-clientalism. A competitive percentage (46%) say they vote on the basis of the personality of the candidate, while a high 35% say they vote based on the religious identity of the candidate; 23% vote according to kinship (baradari); 10% were predisposed to vote according to the sect or gender of the candidate.

WHO SHOULD DELIVER?

The expectations of service delivery are clearly hinged not on local municipal officials but parliamentarians. Clearly, constituents know power lies with funds. It is not surprising that 87% never contact their local government but then, 94% don't even contact parliamentarians to resolve their service issues - sewerage, water, garbage, etc. In other words, even misplaced expectations do not convert into civic relationships.

This makes sense, since, in times of crisis (financial, humanitarian, security/conflict) most respondents (37%) report that people turn to elders in the family or tribal/community leaders for assistance or resolution³, and only 4% contact their representatives for either routine issues or in emergencies.

The SSGP reveals that respondents' suggestion for improving representative governance was fairly equally divided in that, 27% felt that more 'commoners' or the average (wo)man should serve as representatives in Parliament, while 24% identified the need to improve local government structures/administration, and 23% felt strict accountability of all representatives was imperative, while 19% felt improvement was possible if serving representatives were to conscientiously fulfil their responsibilities.

The SSGP was conducted prior to the climate-induced devastating floods of August 2022, and at the time, 99% of the respondents reported that the biggest challenge in their lives was inflation in prices, while 88% considered inflation combined with lack of income opportunity as the most critical issue in their contexts. Only 10% associated the current inflation with the Covid-19 pandemic and only 2% thought the reason was low yield/production.

Asked about their understanding of the reason for inflation, a high majority (87%) identified governance failures as the cause (in particular, 64% specified this to be due to the government's incompetence, 14% reasoned that this was due to corruption, while 9% held profiteers/market manipulators as responsible). This finding contravenes the political rhetoric weaponized about corruption rather than incompetence, as the source of failed governance.

ON CONSTITUTIONALISM

Specifics about checks and balance of power between institutions - the military and constitutional courts - are vague in the Constitution (there is no specific curtailment of the military's power enshrined in it) and many observers feel that only formal incremental reforms will allow for the military to stay out of governance.

The constitution is an important shield against regressive turns in Pakistan's political history - but political crises have been managed by the adventurous judicial interpretations of the constitution and recently, use of contempt powers. This means that two unelected institutions - the armed forces and the constitutional courts - continue to jostle for tutelary roles in governance.

One example of a direct destabilizing effect rising from institutional collisions is with reference to the Islamic piety clause set by Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution by military ruler, General Zia ul Haq, which has been termed a "draconian law" since it carries the penalty of a lifetime disqualification if a parliamentarian is found to not meet its subjective and abstract standards - of righteousness, sagacity and honesty.

Legal experts point out that the penalty's duration is not part of the constitutional article but was read into its meaning by a Supreme Court bench when some politicians, including [former Prime Minister] Nawaz Sharif, faced Article 62(1)(f) in 2018. That judgement is now being tested as the former PM, Imran Khan, faces cases that could possibly invoke the same clause and risk disqualification.

³Nationally, only 5% reported approaching the formal courts for dispute resolution (the majority of these was for purposes of family disputes and then criminal cases).

GENDER

A gendered lens is critical for understanding the opportunity cost of gender-blind governance. Disaggregated data yields important political information such as voting patterns in the last general election (of 2018) revealed increasing deviation in the way women vote compared to male voters in several constituencies. An analysis of the evidence shows that neglecting women's electoral agency is a direct and consequential disadvantage for political parties. It also suggests that undervaluing rather than expanding women's electoral concerns is a losing strategy.

Regarding gender dynamics, one survey⁵ finds that women prioritize service provision issues differently from men. This was the case for electricity (8% higher), sanitation (6% higher) and gas (12% higher) in the top three issues, compared to male family members. Women vote in lower numbers as they feel politicians are not targeting them, and politicians are not targeting them because they do not see women as visible constituents.

KEY OBSTACLES IN THE REFORM OF REPRESENTATIVE POLITICS

Rather than strengthening democratic levers, policy reform tends to gravitate towards militarisation and policing voting behaviour, and judicial overreach undermines representative credibility.

The notion of a corrupt political class dominates the narrative and is common currency used by political opponents which enables and justifies interventions and interruptions by other state institutions, and the vicious cycle spins on.

The collective interests of the rural poor are not projected upwards in national politics. While negotiations between voters, local leaders and politicians do meet voter demands on an ad hoc basis, voter interests never become the subject of public policy that can respond to their needs as a whole. So, policy is not being derived bottom-up.

The current model forces Pakistan's political parties to compete by attracting "electable" politicians – who are pliant to non-elected institutions and come together not to strengthen their parties but to win elections. Some 200 families get elected to Parliament (often, multiple ones from just one extended family/dan) making it impossible for new entrants. Candidates are eligible to stand from multiple constituencies. Further, parties are not well-defined in law and there are over 150 registered with the ECP; almost none of them hold internal elections – and the ECP overlooks this. Imran Khan is not the first populist leader in Pakistan; the efficacy and legitimacy of parties are limited to the personality and resources of the leader/founder. Parties are preoccupied with surviving mil-juridical pressures, rather than building core support amongst their own voters.

Another important finding is the reliance on media as the main source for information (for 72% respondents) is television, followed by social media/internet (47%), but this

means that government representatives are preoccupied with performing politics rather than delivering governance.

Reform in governance would require purging some of the amendments introduced by military rulers; expanding democratic freedoms and gender equality within state institutions and policies and specifying check and balance mechanisms while limiting the role of the military and judiciary and regulating their powers, perks and privileges. Shifting generational modes of praxis should encourage more digitization of executive functions - for the delivery of economic and fundamental rights of citizens, particularly the working classes, women, marginalized genders and ethnic groups, religious minorities and the marginalized.



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⁴Ali Cheema, Sarah Khan, Shandana Khan Mohmand and Asad Liaqat (February 2019), 'Invisible Citizens: Why More Women in Pakistan Do Not Vote,' IDS working paper, Volume 2019, No 524, Institute of Development Studies, UK.

⁵Ali Cheema, Sarah Khan, Shandana Khan Mohmand and Asad Liaqat (February 2019), 'Invisible Citizens: Why More Women in Pakistan Do Not Vote,' IDS working paper, Volume 2019, No 524, Institute of Development Studies, UK.

CURRENT AFFAIRS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



A JOYLESS LAND?

Shehzad Ghias Shaikh

Pakistan doesn't really do 'joy' - every moment of joy felt by a Pakistani comes with pangs of guilt; the nagging feeling that you are doing something wrong. Every action by a Pakistani must be in service of God, or the country, or the family. Joy itself has been colonised out of us.

It, then, comes as no surprise that Joyland was banned in Pakistan. A film depicting that joyless feeling. A film for Pakistanis made by Pakistanis showing Pakistan. A film made by a talented group of individuals looking to express themselves. It is futile to even discuss what is it in the movie that the censor board found offensive because it is pointless, as it was in the case of Zindagi Tamasha. Both films cleared the censor board only to be banned because somebody on the internet found something offensive and threatened violence.

If that is to be the criteria for banning art then we might as well ban art, joy, and expression altogether. Good art is meant to placate the grieved and rattle the comfortable. There is no expression that manages to offend no one in the world, especially in the increasingly 'offended' world that we live in. How does any artist make sense of the censor board policy when the entire state apparatus collapses in the face of online backlash?

Joyland is being celebrated around the world, winning awards and hearts everywhere it is shown yet the audience that it has been made for is being denied a chance to watch it. Even the censorship is arbitrary and senseless; in Karachi a scene of a husband and wife hugging was censored but as you walk out of the cinema you see a giant poster of an upcoming movie with two couples hugging each other. We regularly have movies with scantily clad women doing item numbers - one such movie was not only not banned but also sponsored by the state.

The religious feelings of the masses are never hurt seeing women being objectified on screen. They are not even hurt

watching women being physically abused by their husbands in almost every single drama on TV yet Zindagi Tamasha was banned because people were offended watching a man with a beard dance in the trailer. I doubt movies like Khuda Kay Liye and Bol would even be allowed to launch in the current climate.

An alleged wife beater and a western fashion designer led online protests to ban Joyland. It is impossible to make sense of it all as an outsider but as a theatre historian none of it is surprising to me. When theatre groups like Ajoka were not being allowed to perform during Zia's tenure we still had stage shows with mujras on at places like Al-Hamra in Lahore. Zia-ul-Haq, under the guise of Islamization, made a big show of clamping down on the Shahi Mohalla behind the Badshahi Masjid but mujras were still routinely held during that era.

The key to solving these apparent contradictions is to understand how fear, control and patriarchy intersect in Pakistan. Mujras can be held during the Islamization era and Neelum Muneer can be shown during an item number in a state sponsored film directed by Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar because they depict the 'other' woman - these are women who need to be put up to society to show what happens when you go outside the prescribed circle. It doesn't undermine the piousness of Pakistan because it shows the Madonna-Whore Complex at play; if women want to be respected then they must act in a certain way otherwise they will be seen as objects that only exist for the male gaze. This is why people like Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar see no irony in sermonising about religion and women on TV before going on to direct a movie like 'Kaaf Kangna'.

'Islamic', 'cultural', and 'national' values are just euphemisms the state uses to ban anything that they see as a challenge to the status quo. An item number may be against the Islamic, cultural and national values of Pakistan but if it furthers the interest of the state then those values will never be invoked to

get that film banned - and a central tenet of our state is patriarchy. The entire apparatus of the state was used to crush the Aurat March - the self proclaimed vanguards of these undefined cultural values were out in full force against it. It was the same thing when legislation was proposed against domestic violence and the same recently when the Trans protection bill was tabled.

An autocratic state will always be misogynistic and transphobic. It cannot allow the subjects to fully express themselves. A film that seeks to do that might teach others to do the same; to feel joy, to be themselves and to express themselves. This cannot be allowed. The colonial legacy of Pakistan has ingrained this fear of the people in the state. The Government and the Bureaucracy is taught how to control the people rather than to build an environment where they can be free: free expression is something to be feared, not encouraged.

It is this patriarchal nature of the state, fear of expression and the presumed need to control the people which is why a film like Joyland is banned. Everything else is noise. YouTubers who have made a career out of exploiting religion will never speak up against the actions of the status quo that go against the religion - it is much easier to create fear around a movie like Joyland to bring in views to make millions on YouTube.

The ban on Joyland has nothing to do with Islam or Pakistani culture. It comes from those afraid of joy; afraid of those looking to express themselves in this joyless land that we call Pakistan, where trans people can be depicted in a movie if they are being mocked but cannot be genuinely represented, where women can dance to satiate the male gaze but cannot control the narratives - and any expression that challenges these notions becomes a threat to the status quo. This is why Joyland was banned.

The author is a comedian, Fulbright scholar, and host of The Pakistan Experience, one of the fastest growing podcasts in the country.



SAFEGUARDING PAKISTAN'S CORE INTERESTS AMONG GLOBAL POWER CONTESTATION

Zia Malik



24

The Russia-Ukraine Conflict is a key development across the geo-political spectrum showcasing how competing interests profoundly influence the balance of power between nations. China's unprecedented rise challenging US hegemony adds another layer of complexity to global power dynamics, and its increasing influence in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond is reflective of its vigorous push to broaden its strategic objectives.

This growing quest for greater domination involve camp/-block politics whereby global powers invariably influence the developing countries. Indeed, history is witness to perpetual stress playing a dominant role in redefining the world order. Confrontation between established and rising powers in history is a sobering reminder how the interplay of insecurities and miscalculations results in standoffs.

The 'Thucydides Trap' can be selected as a suitable prism to view developments in past cases of rivalry between major powers. This is a tendency towards war when an emerging power threatens to displace an existing great power. It is pertinent to mention research work of Belfer Center, Harvard University which found that among sixteen historical instances of an emerging power rivaling a ruling power, twelve ended in war.

As the US and China dominate the geo-political landscape, it would be safe to assume that these two world powers are on a possible collision course, unless effectively and timely managed. With Russia and Ukraine (along with NATO allies) at loggerheads, it is important to scan the prevailing environment and assess how this may influence Pakistan's strategic calculus.

Given the conduct of this war, the formulation of new alliances, economic models, and accelerated development in military industries is foreseeable. Increased levels of proxy warfare could also be a suitable choice for nations to pursue their politico-military objectives.

On the other hand, the unfolding situation in the South China Sea, power politics in the Korean Peninsula and Indo-China border skirmishes may turn out to be future hotspots for a possible Sino-US standoff. The underlying tensions of China having overtaken the USA as the leading global trading partner further complicates the uneasy peace between the two juggernauts. A situation seems to be developing wherein any 'strategic miscalculation(s)' could spiral into a large scale conflict.

In South Asia, India's rise as Washington's 'preferred partner' has increased Pakistan's insecurities. No mention of Pakistan in the recently published National Security Strategy of the US aptly highlights Islamabad's sense of virtual insignificance. The omnipresent suspicions by the US and West more generally have their reasons, a primary one being the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its associated debt. In the recent past, Ambassador Alice Wells criticized CPEC, maintaining that its "lack of transparency can increase CPEC costs and foster corruption resulting in an even heavier debt burden for Pakistan". This growing perception has naturally dented Pakistan's prospects of pacifying the China Factor in terms of maintaining relations with the US and Europe.

The recent floods have highlight Pakistan's extreme vulnerability to climate change, resulting in approximate losses exceeding USD 30 billion – making an already volatile

volatile economic situation much worse. The overhung of financial mismanagement and political bickering also limits Pakistan's choices as it undertakes foreign policy ventures amidst this distinctive juncture in global power competition. As Pakistan scrambles to rehabilitate the victims of the calamity, a comprehensive 'Charter of Economy' may be necessary for its economic revival: a plan that is geared around debt management, reinvigorating foreign direct investments, broadening the tax base and enhancing public-private partnerships in key sectors.

Pakistan should focus on Realpolitik to align itself with the evolving geopolitical environment, at the heart of which will be its core economic interests. Maintaining balanced foreign relations, policy makers in Islamabad need to be cognizant of the fact that its bilateral trade with the U.S. and China volumes around USD 7 billion and USD 16 billion respectively.

Pakistan must make concerted efforts to dispel speculations around CPEC, demonstrating to the world that Chinese investments that are coming in are purely for development and economic endeavors. By ensuring more scrutiny of CPEC projects and involvement of the private sector in special economic zones (SEZs), a heightened sense of transparency may prevail in these undertakings.

Pakistan may also focus on enhancing regional connectivity under the purview of CPEC. While belt and road (BRI) projects are already expanding in other South Asian nations around the Indian periphery, exploring possible options in Afghanistan would enable Pakistan to placate US apprehensions about CPEC.

Basing connectivity with Central Asian Republics (CARs) as a pretext, Pakistan can help project the CPEC as a regional connectivity corridor. After all, basing connectivity as part of the North South Transit Corridor (NSTC) was how India avoided U.S. sanctions and developed Chahbahar port and associated infrastructure in the Iranian hinterland – something Pakistan can learn from.

In the regional economic domain, increasing trade with Afghanistan, accelerated progress on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline and the Central Asia-South Asia (CASA-1000) power project, and finalizing modalities on potential barter trade with Iran are some major areas where a multipronged effort can significantly benefit Pakistan in the long run.

A synergized effort to pursue national interests naturally demands vigorous strategic communication. An effective and measured response in the information domain is earnestly required as a critical strand in Pakistani statecraft. This calls for narrative building through via an increased presence in foreign media for preempting and quelling all hostile perspectives unleashed by our principle adversary.

To summarize, the rapidly evolving global political milieu represents a critical moment as the balance of power morphs towards a bloc centric multipolar world. Latest developments across the Ukrainian battlefield and the deepening Sino-US rivalry points towards gathering storms, underscoring the need for Pakistan to develop a well thought-out response.

An emphasis on economic revival, combined with a balanced and independent foreign policy (in terms of conception and execution) can greatly help Pakistan overcome the intricacies of this ongoing global power contestation.

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Propaganda GAME

26

Saddam Hussein

Propaganda has been an old school technique in war games, and its significance in the age of social media has only grown – in a massive way. Today, it occupies centre stage within the war front.

Propaganda is the dissemination of information — facts, arguments, rumours, half-truths, or lies – to influence public opinion. Deliberateness and a relatively heavy emphasis on manipulation distinguish propaganda from casual conversation or the free and easy exchange of ideas.

Among all the countries, US convincingly comes at the top of the table in terms of the propaganda game. The most effective tool it uses is media; and within media, it gels in with Hollywood to ascertain its objectives on a global front.

Have you ever observed the manner in which certain Hollywood films are obsessed with war-mongering and threats emanating from Iran, China, Middle East and 'Islamic Jihadists'? And the manner in which Hollywood movies that are based on Mexico always seem to depict drugs, crimes, gangs, etc.? Is that really all Mexico has to offer? And why are Russians always portrayed as gangsters?

After watching these sorts of movies, Americans naturally develop an apprehension towards going out on the street, especially in fear of being shot by a Muslim Jihadist, Arab conservative or a terrorist from a South Asian country. Likewise, a feeling of danger in workplaces is born: Americans using their fancy computer systems now fear Chinese

hackers infiltrating these and stealing data or compromising confidentiality.

This is undoubtedly a sensitivity that the US establishment intends to create in the minds of the people, in order to play with their emotions and churn out justifications for waging wars across the world. This, in turn, also keeps their defence and arms industry operational which keeps generating ever increasing profits.

Previously, this perception was created tacitly, using subliminal techniques, especially through the medium of movies. However, in the year 2019, the American propaganda machine established a proper office in the form of the Global Engagement Center (GEC) – and huge funds were allocated for the purpose.

Apparently, the GEC had been set-up to 'counter propaganda'. But supervises the supervision body? Who would ascertain if the Center itself was instigating propaganda? Who is to define propaganda?

Would this Center also look inwards and counter its own propaganda instruments that are undermining the interests of the American people?

Only time will tell!

To remind our readers, the US' Global Engagement Center was originally created to counter Russian and ISIS

disinformation and propaganda. Yet, it now seems to be syphoning money off to further the propaganda against Tehran, the US-Iran nuclear deal and China for the obvious reasons, especially because Beijing's rise has many in Washington unsettled.

In February 2019, the GEC hired Lea Gabrielle – former navy intelligence officer and Fox News journalist – to head the organisation. Gabrielle views China, Russia, Iran and prominent global terrorist organizations as 'top threats' that use propaganda to undercut US interests.

After taking over, Gabrielle enunciated that she will prioritize ensuring the Center was properly staffed and funded. The GEC back then requested USD 55 million in funding for fiscal year 2019, with legislation introduced to eventually raise that amount to USD 115 million. These numbers suggest why 'propaganda' centres like the GEC play a key role in Washington's foreign policy and global media narrative building.

It is pertinent to note that information warfare has taken top priority for many administrations around the world, and the Trump administration in Washington was no exception. The GEC, therefore, was treated as an important instrument by the Trump administration for political ventures. This face of propaganda might seem new but the mechanism is time tested.

Recall Iraq, when the United States launched a propaganda assault on Saddam Hussein? Weapons of mass destruction in Iraq were ultimately never found. Although US war propagandists projected the attack on Iraq as an extension of the war on terror, it is quite well known that the Bush administration had drawn up plans to use military force with the intention of overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime long before the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. September 11 simply presented an opportunity for stampeding public opinion to accept US military intervention.

The same was the case with Libya, with the Obama administration claiming it was just trying to 'protect civilians'. Nevertheless, the actions of the US revealed it was looking for regime change. In fact, the US and NATO intervention actually functioned to fuel unrest across Libya by employing propaganda to exaggerate Gaddafi's crackdown against protesters. However, the American objective was achieved; they eliminated the leader who defied them and left Libya in a mess.

Regarding war, there are two good options for the United States.

The first is regime change with a viable plan to win the peace.

The second is not to go to war at all.

There is no point in toppling a tyrant if the result is anarchy. But who cares?

The objective was not to save the people and the region but rather safeguard American interests which could not be materialized in the absence of the wars. For waging wars, the need for propaganda was paramount in order to legitimize the actions of the US leadership in the eyes of its people.

A similar situation has been transpiring between Iran and the US since 2019. America accused Iran of conducting the attack on Japanese oil-tankers in the Gulf of Oman, a claim that Tehran refused to accept and labelled as yet another Irano-phobic tactic to escalate tensions by the Trump administration.

The US was also quick to send a thousand or so troops to the Middle East to counter the Iranian threat; clearly showing who was 'excited for war'. Looking for details, one wonders why Tehran would attack Japanese oil tankers around the time when they were hosting the Japanese Prime Minister to negotiate trade and sanctions.

In the most recent move, Time Magazine – based in New York – named Volodymyr Zelenskyy 'Person of the Year'. The magazine hailed Ukraine's president for his courage in leading his country's resistance against Moscow's brutal aggression. Zelenskyy also got a spotlight on Vogue's cover page with the first lady, Olena Zelenska. This may be a good strategy in war time, but it also undermines the severity of war – creating a void between the leadership and its people, where people are suffering on the ground yet the President and the first lady are occupied in glamorous photo-ops.

What's more important is that US in general, and West in particular, seems to have supported such ventures to garner sentiments and harness international support. This was all to heat things up, setting up another stage of war for the military-industrial complex of the US to thrive on. After all, there are always some winners in war.

In order to understand global propaganda, one needs to study the American modus operandi on how global opinions are shaped. It is the best in the world at it: much smarter and shrewder than any other country.

American propaganda relies entirely on emotional appeals. It does not depend on a rational theory that can be disproved: it appeals to things no one can object to. This also helps the US in fulfilling its Messiah or 'Global Policeman' complex, where the western audience is told that only the US and US-led alliances can make the world a safer place.

This brings us to the latest recapitulation of masterful American Propaganda: The War on Terror. Any attempt to explain why the terrorists (irrational as they visibly were) felt motivated to attack the Twin Towers is instantly put down and argued as 'siding with the terrorists'. Indeed, American leadership has enunciated, on several occasions, that if you are not with them, you are against them – i.e. with the terrorists).

Hence, before criticizing other states for disseminating propaganda, the US government needs to first put its own house in order and abandon its global propaganda campaigns. Information warfare is a dangerous game and it is time we developed updated rules of the game.

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THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND LESSONS FOR PAKISTAN

Kinza Fatima

Out of imagining utopian worlds, we have created so many dystopias. The global climate disasters in a nexus with political turmoils seems to be recalibrating our moral compass – although for many politicians, stakeholders and policymakers, there was one silencing lining. The 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference or more commonly referred to as COP27, i.e. Conference of the Parties, was held from 6th November to 20th November 2022 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

The COP is the supreme decision-making body of the convention, and all the states are parties to the convention and represented. COP is also the largest conference of the United Nations, held annually in different countries and with around 25,000 representatives of different governments in participation.

This year, COP27 seems to have made a breakthrough of sorts in the form of a proposed 'loss and damage fund' for the countries that are vulnerable to climate extremities – prompting many commentators to deem it a milestone. Unfortunately, the agreement is devoid of an empirical understanding of climate change. Some critics see this as the need for vulnerable countries to find their own nature-based solutions, financial resources, and better mode of governance. The delegation of Pakistan played a key role in COP27 in tabling a loss and damage agenda, but a lot of uncertainty remains around what this will specifically mean for countries. Climate catastrophes, after all, cause ripple effects that go beyond borders.

The nations decided to pool funds for the damage but they concluded the marathon climate talks without contemplating the root causes of climate disasters – in terms of their structural origins. The funds are unfortunately not cause for hope in the Global South, as they are an effort to address symptoms rather than the underlying disease. Funding of this sort is unlikely to be effective for countries such as Pakistan anyway, where elite capture of the state apparatus is so pervasive – meaning that these resources will ultimately end up with the corrupt government or private contractors rather than the masses in dire need. Jason Hickel in his book, *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*, reveals that 70% of the 588 billion tons of global carbon emission in 2010 came from developed and industrial economies but ironically 83% of deaths and disasters related to climate change occurred in the developing countries with the lowest carbon emissions. An example of this is Pakistan.

Climate change itself isn't the problem, the structure of the global political economy – with its insistence on unrelenting growth – is what has made climate annihilation a real possibility. International climate conferences may pay lip service to the severity of the climate crisis but have failed to address the structural problems that are responsible for it. Western economies and corporations have contributed more than 90% of excess emissions that are accelerating climate disasters, which the Global South is disproportionately impacted by in the form of heatwaves, flash floods, droughts, crop failures, and human displacements. It is not that the policymakers and social movements are oblivious to this fact in the global south but that their pleas fall on deaf ears.

According to the World Bank, the recent climate disaster in Pakistan has caused more than 1,700 deaths and displaced more than 8 million people. The disaster also wreaked havoc on infrastructure, crops, and livestock. Pakistan's urban population is highly exposed to hazard, risk, and vulnerability (HRV), which would increase from 37% in 2020 to 60% in 2050. The change in the rate of urbanization in Afghanistan and Bangladesh has been attributed to the significant change in the GDP structure of the respective countries – which naturally create pressures to migrate from rural areas to cities in search of livelihoods.

According to Michael Kugelman, the pace of urbanisation in Pakistan is reported at an annual rate of 3% which is the fastest in South Asia. The ecological richness in Pakistan is threatened due to the over-extraction of resources, high pollution, and alteration in ecosystems. This has destructive effects on economic growth, poverty reduction, and social and economic stability. The energy sector is a powerful catalyst of economic development and poverty reduction. It is a huge drain on public finances and foreign exchange reserves and a major contributor to Green House Gas emissions. Prioritizing technical and collection losses in transmission and distribution, Pakistan must lower the cost of generation, including through energy efficiency, cost-reflective tariffs, and improved subsidies. The investment in public transportation could also help transition out of highly polluting modes of transport. Despite having a minimal (0.8% relative to other countries) contribution to GHG emissions, Pakistan is one of the world's most severely impacted by climate change.

It would be a logical fallacy to perceive Global North and Global South from a reductionist perspective. In the Global South, countries as such China and India account for 60% of the Global South's overall emissions followed by other countries, averaging 2 to 3% each. The Global South's emissions are also heavily concentrated.



Developing countries do not pursue joint interests when it comes to international climate negotiations. The climate strategy is not homogenous for the Global South due to inevitable differences between political orientations of governments in various countries. These rarely consider themselves as having joint objectives in the international climate negotiations as these countries belong to more than a dozen groups—including regional groups with different concerns and strategies related to climate technology transfer, energy issues, agriculture, deforestation, loss, and damage. Climate conferences aren't just enough; but also require the mobilization of stakeholders, and people at the grassroots level need to advocate for strategies to overcome climate disasters. It should also take into account the opinions and capabilities of the marginalized people who are most affected by climate change and be receptive to non-western methods of adaptation. Indigenous communities who are the safeguards of the natural world could also offer first-hand knowledge on climate adaptation techniques and must be included in any path set forward.

Martin Kaiser, the head of Greenpeace Germany, described the agreement on a loss and damage as, “a small plaster on a huge, gaping wound”.

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DEBATĒ



The debate segment of Discourse seeks to initiate open, good-faith exchanges on 'big picture' questions of policy: in particular, ones that involve two consolidated 'schools of thought' that have each evolved in apparent isolation and become the antitheses of one another over time. This is due, of course, to ideology and the incentive structures of both media and academia – which are structured to foster the growth of echo chambers. Through this section of the magazine, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics is attempting to lay out the two salience perspectives of a particular topic in a manner that centres our audience, allowing them to engage with both sides and arrive at their own conclusions.

SHOULD ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES (EVMs) BE INCORPORATED INTO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS OF PAKISTAN?

With the country embroiled in socio-political and economic strife going into 2023, one of the questions that has propped up time and again in popular discourse is the question of elections. The Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) is firm in its demand to head towards elections as soon as possible, whereas the Pakistan Democratic Movement's (PDM) coalition is of the opinion that the national assembly should be allowed to complete its 5-year term in order to uphold the continuity of the democratic process – a feat that, if achieved, would signify three successive terms of civilian leadership for the first time in the country's history.

Whether or not early elections ought to take place, there is – and has been – largely unanimous agreement among all major political parties that the electoral process in Pakistan is faulty. These concerns are not restricted to the procedural considerations of election day activities, but also have to do with 'external meddling' by a certain institution that has always played a central role in 'guiding' the overarching policy directions of subsequent governments from behind the scenes – regardless of the leadership in power.

In order to counteract this, several ideas have been put forth: most importantly the Elections Act, 2017 which functions – at least on paper – to streamline the process in various areas including but not limited to the jurisdiction of the Election

Commission, delimitation of constituencies, electoral rolls, conduct of election, requirements for political parties, and inclusivity considerations particularly for women. More recently, the question of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) has come up numerous times: a proposition largely pushed by the PTI both during and following its time in office.

The claim here is that these will help move towards efficiency, both in terms of time and effort, as well as mitigate the chances of foul play via digitalized records and the absence of an internet connection – which will render 'hacking' an apparent impossibility. These security benefits can also, in some cases, be enhanced further via the use of encryption software and other additions in order to maximize trust and transparency. India, the eastern neighbour with quite a lot of similarities with Pakistan along historical, demographic, and socioeconomic lines, is stated as a salient example of a country that has managed to successfully incorporate EVMs in their electoral process and have experienced stronger democratic norms as a result.

On the other hand, critics point out that only a handful of countries currently use EVMs at a large scale – and indeed, quite a significant number have experimented in the developed world and chosen against it, suggesting that the concerns around security may be important. Furthermore, in the case of Pakistan – which is currently going through a severe economic crunch and with the International Monetary Fund constantly emphasizing strict adherence to the ongoing program's conditions and stipulations – the question of financial feasibility to procure the machines, have them installed, educate citizens and polling staff on appropriate use, etc. is a real one. In other words, the logistical aspect of the proposition, not just in terms of the amount of finances that will have to be dedicated to this but the opportunity cost of these foregone resources, will be a critical aspect to this exchange.

This issue's debate segment is thus centred around EVMs –

in which the attempt has been made to outline the strongest possible argument for and against their incorporation into the electoral process. Both authors for this segment have built significant followings over the years, largely as a result of their critical and hard-hitting analyses on the politics of Pakistan: with Waqas Ahmed taking a generally journalistic approach and Ahmed Bilal Mehboob approaching things from a more academic angle.

The decision to include or exclude EVMs in the upcoming election cycle will have important consequences for the future trajectory of the nation, particularly at this troublesome juncture in its history. As is generally the case with our debate segments, we hope you are able to appreciate both sides of this important exchange and come away with an enhanced understanding of the complexities involved.

Happy reading, and remember to keep the Discourse alive!

Sincerely,

Editorial Board
Discourse Magazine
Pakistan Institute of
Development Economics



ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES:

The Shockingly Secure Solution to Election Fraud

Waqas Ahmed

In recent years, electronic voting machines (EVMs) have been increasingly used in elections around the world, providing a quick and efficient way for citizens to cast their ballots. However, the use of EVMs has faced criticism in Pakistan, with some claiming that the machines are tamper-prone and susceptible to fraud, lack transparency and verifiability in the voting process, and have the potential for data breaches. For example, in September 2021 the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) raised 37 objections to the proposed use of EVMs by the government, including concerns about the security and reliability of the machines, the lack of consensus among stakeholders, and the feasibility of implementing the technology on a large scale in a short time frame. Despite these concerns, the evidence suggests that EVMs are a secure, reliable, and efficient way of conducting elections.

India is our neighbouring country with a shared history and many similarities with our political, socio-economic, as well as cultural conditions. Both are large, diverse democracies with multi-party systems and have faced challenges in ensuring fair and transparent elections. It is natural to compare the experiences of the two countries when it comes to the use of EVMs. EVMs were introduced in India on an experimental basis as early as 1998 in select constituencies in state assembly elections. The use of EVMs was intended to strengthen the electoral process and reduce the cost of conducting elections. After initial success, the technology was gradually introduced in subsequent assembly elections and replaced paper ballots throughout the country from 2001 onwards.

A 2017 study examined the impact of EVMs on electoral fraud, democracy, and development in India. The research found that the introduction of EVMs led to a significant reduction in electoral fraud, particularly in politically sensitive states that had been prone to repeat polls due to electoral rigging. The use of EVMs also empowered weaker and vulnerable groups, such as women and marginalized communities, who were more likely to cast their votes due to EVMs. In addition, the study found evidence that EVMs contributed to an increase in the provision of electricity and a decline in crimes such as murder and rape. Prior to the introduction

of EVMs, women in India often faced obstacles to voting, such as lack of access to polling stations and harassment by male voters. EVMs made it easier for women to cast their votes, and as a result, their participation in elections increased. This, in turn, led to a greater focus on issues affecting women and a stronger stance against sexual violence.

EVMs also allowed for faster and more efficient voting, which is particularly important in a country with a large and complex multi-party system like India. The use of EVMs has given Indian voters confidence in the integrity of the electoral process and has helped improve the overall strength of democratic institutions in the country. Electoral fraud and frequent allegations of rigging has had a destabilizing effect on Pakistan. When elections are rigged, it can lead to a lack of trust in the government and a breakdown of the rule of law. This can create a climate of impunity, where crimes are more likely to go unpunished. By making elections freer and fairer, EVMs can help restore trust in the government and improve the rule of law, which leads to a better functioning society.

The objections raised by many in Pakistan, including the ECP, are based on a misunderstanding of how EVMs work and the assumption that they are easier to tamper compared to traditional paper-based balloting. EVMs are not necessarily susceptible to tampering or fraud, as they can be designed with multiple security measures to prevent unauthorized access. For example, EVMs can use encrypted software that cannot be altered, and each machine can have a unique identification number that is recorded in the system. In addition, EVMs are not connected to the internet, so they cannot be hacked remotely. Opponents of EVMs have also argued that the machines do not provide a paper trail, making it difficult to verify the accuracy of the vote count. This concern is also unfounded, as many EVMs can produce a paper trail that can be used for auditing purposes. In fact, several countries, including India, Brazil, and the United States, have implemented EVMs with a paper trail to provide an additional layer of security.

The term 'hacking' is also often misunderstood and used to

refer to any kind of unauthorized access or tampering with a computer system. However, the reality is that any kind of voting system, whether it is electronic or paper-based, is vulnerable to tampering or 'hacking' in order to alter the results unfairly. In fact, paper-based voting systems are often more susceptible to tampering than EVMs, as they do not have the same security measures in place to prevent unauthorized access. Therefore, while 'hacking' is always a concern in any voting system, EVMs are less prone to tampering than the traditional system that we have seen 'hacked' again and again during the 75-year-old roller-coaster ride of democracy in Pakistan.

The use of EVMs is not only secure, but it also has the potential to improve the overall quality of elections in Pakistan. EVMs can reduce the risk of human error and fraud, which are common problems with traditional paper-based voting systems. They can also speed up the vote count, which is particularly important in a country like Pakistan where elections are held over the course of a single day. Additionally, EVMs can make the voting process more accessible for disabled and elderly voters, who may have difficulty using a paper ballot.

Research from India suggests that EVMs may also have significant political effects. A study published in the European Political Science Association in 2016 looked at the introduction of EVMs in India and found that their use was associated with dramatic declines in the incidence of invalid votes. Invalid votes are ballots that are not counted because they do not meet certain criteria, such as having a clear mark for a candidate or being marked for more than one candidate. In many cases, invalid votes are seen as unintentional errors, and reducing their incidence is often seen as a positive development. However, some scholars argue that invalid votes can also be a form of conscious protest, with voters using them to signal their dissatisfaction with the electoral system or the choices on offer. The study used a difference-in-differences methodology, comparing the effects of EVMs on elections before and after their introduction. They found that the use of EVMs was associated with a significant decrease in invalid votes, and a corresponding increase in votes for minor candidates. This suggests that voters who would have previously used invalid ballots as a form of protest were now casting their votes for minor parties instead.

The study also found that there was ambiguous evidence for EVMs decreasing turnout, but no evidence for increases in voter error or fraud. Additionally, there was no difference in the effects of EVMs with and without an auditable paper trail. This is an important finding, as auditable paper trails are often seen as a way to address concerns about the security and transparency of electronic voting systems. Overall, the study gives strong evidence that the introduction of EVMs in a democracy can have significant political effects, with voters using them to express their dissatisfaction with the electoral system in different ways.

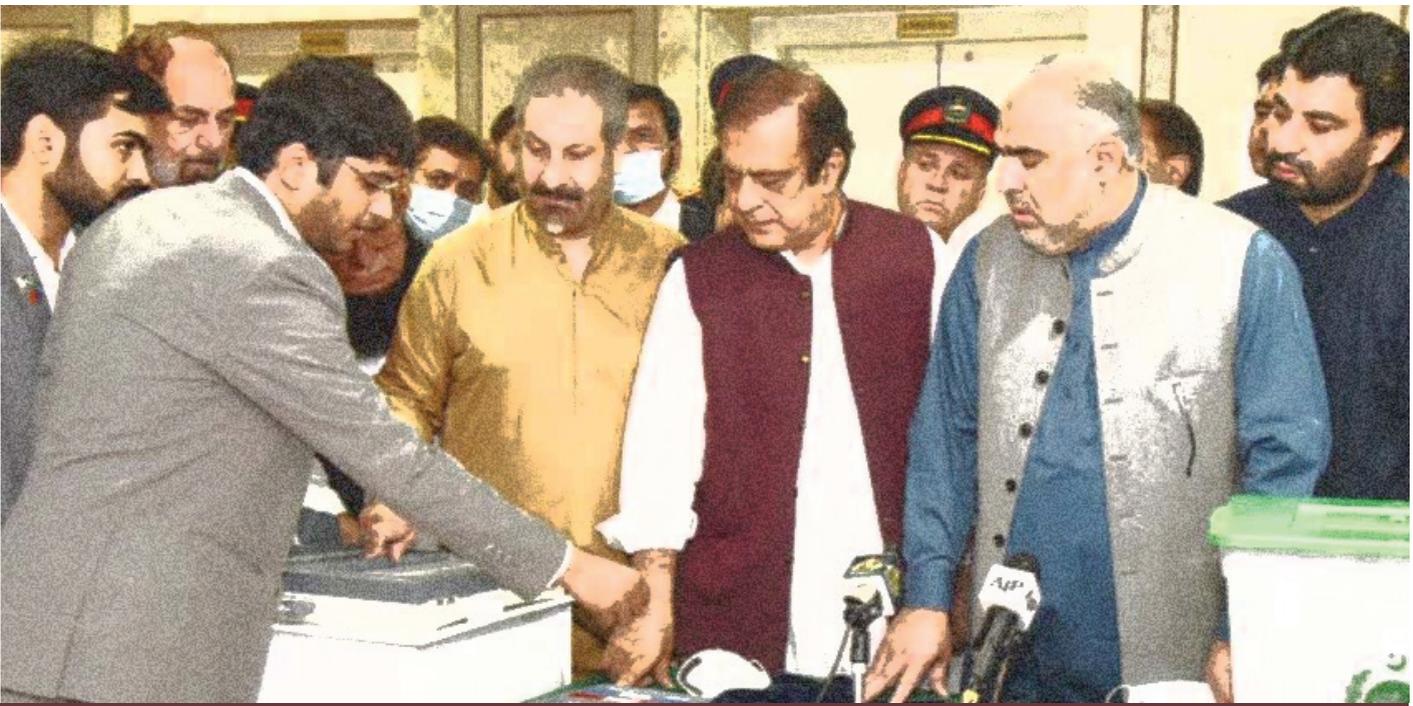
Pakistan has had many elections marred with allegations of rigging. Most recently, both 2013 and 2018 elections became highly politicized due to this – so much so that the ensuing instability for both the PMLN and PTI governments was primarily caused by the allegations of rigging and consequent questioning of the legitimacy of both

both governments. One can argue that the dire situation Pakistan finds itself in today, economically, socially, and politically, is due to a lack of faith in the electoral process and governments because of these allegations. This can be significantly reduced by the use of EVMs.

There is ample evidence that shows that EVMs are a secure and reliable way to conduct elections, increase public trust in the electoral process, and improve the perceived legitimacy of the government. They have been successfully used in countries around the world and have been shown to reduce the risk of fraud and human error. Despite the objections raised by the ECP and many in Pakistan, EVMs have the potential to improve the quality of elections in Pakistan and should be adopted as a means of strengthening the country's democratic institutions.

The author is the former Senior Head of Digital Content for Business Recorder in Karachi, Pakistan and has held digital strategy and editorial roles at the Daily Pakistan and Aaj TV. Most recently, he has developed a social listening tool for the Boston Globe and has provided digital strategy consultancy to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). He recently completed his Master's degree in Digital Media Innovation from New York University.





EVMs • An Expensive Proposition Without Any Substantive Benefits

Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

In order to answer the above question of whether electronic voting machines (EVMs) should be incorporated into the electoral process of Pakistan, we should first make some basic queries and then based on the answers to these try to analyse the larger question. Some of these basic questions are as follows. What is an EVM and what can it do? What can it not do? What is our objective in deploying EVMs? How many countries in the world are using or have used EVMs and what has their experience been like?

WHAT IS AN EVM?

There are different variations of EVMs available in the market or in use in different countries.

The kind of EVM which we in Pakistan had been considering for some time is basically a simple electronic gadget, almost like a calculator, to eliminate manual stamping of ballot paper and move towards automating the process of casting votes through the simple push of a button that would allow for immediate (or almost immediate) vote-count at polling booth level at the end of the polling. Such an EVM is based on 'Direct Reading Electronic Voting Technology'. Another EVM which some countries use is based on the principle of Electronic Scanning and Counting of Paper Ballots. There can be various add-ons to this basic unit such as the voter's biometric verification unit, printer to provide paper-trail, feature to generate a QR code which can then be used to send vote-count to a remote location, for example, the Returning Officer's (RO's) office.

HISTORY OF EFFORTS TO DEPLOY EVMs IN PAKISTAN:

A prototype EVM on almost the above lines was designed and produced by Islamabad-based COMSATS Institute of Information Technology in 2011 at the request of the Election Commission of Pakistan and its working was demonstrated to a select group including politicians, government officials and diplomats under the auspices of ECP.

Probably after considering that introduction of EVMs is a policy decision which should be made by the government and a law to this effect be passed by the parliament, the ECP did not proceed further. The interest in EVMs likely developed in ECP after the Chief Election Commissioner and some other officials of ECP visited Indian Election Commission which had started using EVMs in all Lok Sabha and state assembly elections since 2004.

Another EVM prototype was produced in the second half of 2021 under the auspices of the Ministry of Science and Technology during the PTI government. ECP was apparently not happy with its design and had asked to come up with a modified version. It is not clear whether the modifications were made and where it led but the whole executive-driven process was flawed. After passing the law, it should have been the job of the ECP to finalize the specifications, invite bids, organize pilot testing and then gradually introduce EVMs if all testing and was successful and the integrity of voting was

not subjected to greater risk during the storage and transportation of EVMs.

The Elections Act of 2017, which was passed in October of the same year, included Section 103 requiring the ECP to organize pilot testing of EVMs and submit findings of the test to the federal government which, in turn, would place the report before the parliament so that a way forward may be adopted.

Although ECP conducted pilot testing in 35 polling stations of the National Assembly Constituency NA-4, Peshawar-IV by deploying 100 EVMs during a by-election on 26 October 2017 and submitting its report to the federal government on or around 14 November 2017, the report was never debated in the parliament so that a way forward could be charted. ECP also chose not to undertake further pilots to collect enough feedback on the use of EVMs in Pakistan.

Without any discussion on the result of the pilot, the PTI government promulgated an ordinance to amend Section 103 of the Elections Act, 2017 on 8th May 2021 which required ECP to procure EVMs for casting votes in general elections. Later an Act of Parliament was signed into law on 3rd December 2021 which improved the language of the amended Section 103 of the Elections Act, 2017 and made the procurement and use of EVMs incumbent upon ECP but this time subjected the use of EVMs to ‘secrecy and security’ which provided a window to the ECP to defer the use of EVM if secrecy and security cannot be ensured during the next general election.

After the PTI government was removed through a vote of no-confidence in April, 2022, the incoming PMLN-led government had Section 103 amended through an Act of Parliament on 22nd June, 2022 which again asked the ECP to conduct pilot testing and submit a report to the government.

It is understood that ECP is now making arrangements to decide EVM specifications and procure some EVMs for pilot testing.

TO WHAT EXTENT CAN EVMs MITIGATE ELECTION RIGGING?

An EVM is generally projected as an instrument capable of resolving all or most of our problems relating to fairness of elections. It is, therefore, very important to understand what an EVM can do and cannot do.

A noted Electoral Security Expert, Dr. Taha Ali, who has a post doctorate in Election Security and teaches at NUST Islamabad, has aptly noted that “... EVMs were originally designed to automate elections, not secure them.”

He went on to add that “EVMs are great at tallying of thousands of votes in minutes but...are notoriously poor at preventing fraud. In certain cases, machines are actually significantly more vulnerable to rigging than paper.”

An EVM can almost instantly give the candidate-wise vote-count at each polling booth and this may save a couple

of hours which are generally consumed in manual counting. If paper trail is introduced, then counting of printed ballots would take almost the same time as in a manual counting thus losing advantage of efficiency.

It should be understood that an EVM does not have a provision to consolidate the results of various polling booths in a polling station to give the consolidated result of the entire polling station. This consolidation will need to be done manually. The EVM also does not have a system to consolidate the result of all polling stations in a constituency and this part will also need to be done manually. Transmissions of results from a polling booth or polling station to the RO’s office, which is considered the most vulnerable link within the chain of electoral process on polling day, is also not covered as a standard feature of the EVM and either a separate technology-based arrangement will have to be devised or we would need to rely on the old manual system under which Presiding Officers manually carried result of each polling station on Form-45 to the RO’s office and handed to him/her personally. Biometric Identification of a voter is also not an integral feature of the EVM and a separate Biometric Verification Machine (BVM) will need to be provided at each polling booth, if such identification is desired. It is, therefore, unrealistic to believe that EVMs are a panacea for electoral fraud.

A DISTINCT ADVANTAGE OF EVMs: ELIMINATION OF INVALID VOTES

About 3% of the casted ballots on the average go to waste in every election because the ballot paper is not correctly stamped. Instead of affixing the stamp within the space provided against each candidate’s name and symbol, many voters stamp in a way that the mark is partially placed on two adjacent spaces making it almost impossible to correctly read the voter’s intention. Some voters stamp in more than one space and that also renders the ballot invalid. An EVM will obviate all these actions which render ballot papers invalid. The 3% invalid votes could impact results in as many as 49 National Assembly and 120 Provincial Assemblies’ constituencies in 2018 General Election – making this an important point of consideration.

Besides EVMs, however, a concerted voter education campaign can considerably reduce, if not completely eliminate, invalid votes.

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY OF EVMs:

It is important to discuss the cost-effectiveness of EVMs. We are considering an EVM with basic features and consisting of Balloting Unit, Printing Unit (for Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail - VVPAT), Control Unit, Rechargeable Battery, cabling and a suitable carrying case. An EVM Control Unit is meant to control two Balloting Units. After voters prove their bonafide identity at the Control Unit desk, the control desk allows them to operate the EVM for one time after

which the balloting unit would auto-lock itself. Separate balloting units would be required for National and Provincial Assembly elections. Using the statistics of 2018 General Election, it is estimated that about 400,000 EVM balloting units, 200,000 EVM Control Units and 200,000 Printer Units would be required, if EVMs are used in all the constituencies of the National Assembly and four provincial assemblies. Total preliminary estimated cost for all this Hardware would be around USD 370 million, or Rs. 83 billion.

The costs associated with provision of warehouses suitable for storage of EVMs, transportation of EVMs from warehouses to polling stations, training of staff for use and trouble-shooting of EVMs etc. would add approximately Rs. 27 billion to the cost. A total budget of Rs. 110 billion (USD 490 million) would, therefore, be required based on prices in December, 2022. Some media reports have quoted this total cost to be over Rs. 400 billion. To put these figures in perspective, the total cost of introducing EVMs for simultaneous election on all constituencies of National and Provincial Assemblies would correspond to about 2.3 times the forecasted ECP spending of Rs. 47 billion in General Election 2023.

EVMs can be either imported or a local manufacturing facility can be established. In either case, a considerable proportion of components will be imported. With the current economic conditions and restrictions on imports, it is not difficult to figure out the feasibility of introducing EVMs in Pakistan.

EXPERIENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES WITH EVMs – WHAT CAN BE LEARNED?

A quick net-search indicates that only eight countries in the world are using EVMs at present which corresponds to less than 5% of the 167 countries which claim to be democracies and hold elections. Another six countries are experimenting with the possible use of EVMs, meaning a total of 14 countries (8% of the total democratic countries) using or considering the use of EVMs. The countries that are using EVMs include Estonia, Namibia, India, Philippines, Brazil, Mongolia, US (90% of voters) and Kyrgyzstan (a different kind of EVM is here used which optically reads/counts the ballots manually marked by voters).

The most important fact, to be considered while studying the feasibility or desirability of introducing EVMs in Pakistan, is that about nine countries including Ireland, Paraguay, Netherlands, Norway, Germany, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, France and Argentina, abandoned the use of EVMs for diverse reasons after adopting them in their electoral systems.

INDIA'S USE OF EVMs

India is probably the country most comparable to Pakistan in terms of social conditions. It should be remembered that India took 22 years from the date (May 1982) of introducing EVMs in some constituencies in Kerala state to universal

application of EVMs in all elections in May 2004. Another aspect of Indian elections which is distinctly apart from our electoral system is that elections to Lok Sabha and state assemblies in India are not held simultaneously. Even elections to all state assemblies are not held on the same date. This staggered mode of elections greatly reduces the demand for number of EVMs and associated support services unlike Pakistan where election to National and all provincial assemblies are held on the same day.

WHY DO WE NEED EVMs?

The question arises that what exactly is the need or justification of introducing EVMs in Pakistan. An obvious answer is that EVMs are proposed to be introduced to eliminate or greatly limit manipulation in identification and counting of voters and secondly to speed up process of vote counting to quickly get the result.

UTILITY OF EVMs TO ADDRESS THE POPULAR MODE OF RIGGING IN PAKISTAN

The fact is that EVM will not help in either of the two desired objectives. Rigging in election in Pakistan has now evolved into a sophisticated science and is not focused on election day activities. Most of the rigging takes place in pre-poll phase like was the case in 1970 (Gen. Yahya Khan's military government provided funds to PML-Qayyum and some other parties), 1985 (party-less elections), 1988 (formation of alliances such as IJI at the behest of military establishment to defeat PPP as admitted by the then DG ISI, Lt. Gen. Hameed Gul), 1990 (distribution of cash among favourite parties as admitted by the then DG-ISI, Lt. Gen. Asad Durrani in an affidavit produced before the Supreme Court), 2002 (patronization of the favourite 'King's Party' – PML-Q), 2008 (according to various accounts of Pakistani and international analysts, including that of Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, former Prime Minister and President of PML-Q who wrote in his book that their party was conveyed the message that they would not win the election and instead the establishment had agreed to give a chance to PPP), 2018 (military establishment developed differences with PM Nawaz Sharif and efforts were made to remove him and not to allow him or his party to win the election, paving the way for Imran Khan's PTI to win).

1977 was the only general election in which election day rigging was used in a big way but it led to violent protests and subsequent Martial Law. Unlike India, where most of the rigging tends to take place at polling station level by local strongmen which EVMs are quite effective in checking, the most popular mode of rigging in Pakistan is by heavily influencing polls through pre-poll manipulations by strong forces at the national level. EVM is unable to curtail such centralized rigging. In fact, the chips in EVMs can be compromised during storage, something that would make the job of rigging by powerful elements at the centre more efficient and almost undetectable.

PAKISTAN SHOULD EXERCISE EXTREME CAUTION IN INTRODUCING EVMs THE WAY FORWARD:

Pakistan should be extremely careful in inducting EVMs in its electoral system. EVMs are an expensive proposition without any substantive benefits and are vulnerable to manipulation by powerful forces controlling the federal government during the election phase. A populist narrative has created the impression that without EVMs, Pakistan will be left behind in the race for technological development and that the EVMs will solve the perennial problem of election rigging in Pakistan.

Unfortunately, both the propositions are flawed and propelled by either faulty understanding of the EVMs and their functions or by design aimed at manipulating the next election through the efficient manipulation of EVMs. In case the decision is made to introduce EVMs, the process of introduction should be gradual and not rushed.

Based on the latest amendments in Elections Act, 2017, the ECP should carry out pilot-testing of EVMs after considering all aspects such as technical efficacy, secrecy, security and financial feasibility. The Parliament should have the ECP publicly report on pilot testing so that open discussions may take place both in and out of Parliament. Ultimately, Parliament should carefully make the final decision to incorporate EVMs in our electoral system after a thorough debate on the report is conducted and only after having studied all aspects of the proposition.

Parliament should not remain fixated on EVMs alone. New technologies are emerging which may be able to make Internet-based voting (I-Voting) secure and simple. ECP research wing should work on the possibility of using I-Voting inside the country obviating voters' travel to the polling stations. Use of cellular phones for casting votes will be a real game-changer and must be thoroughly investigated and pilot-tested.

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OPINIOŃ



PAKISTAN NEEDS MORE URBANISATION

Babar Khan Mumtaz

41

The commonly held view in Pakistan is that urbanisation, and large and growing cities are problems that need controlling¹.

What and for whom is urbanisation ‘a problem’ that must be solved? The problems are for those who are living in cities and are as follows:

- Cities are becoming too large, creating problems of housing, traffic, pollution, infrastructure and services. Often, crime and lawlessness are added as is anti-social behaviour;
- Cities are expanding spatially, building over productive agricultural land and developing it for housing and other urban purposes.

The root cause of urban growth is said to be the influx of large numbers of people from rural areas and smaller cities: rural-urban migration, which must be stopped or at least controlled. As a result, proposals to regularise or upgrade low-income housing areas or the provision of low-cost housing are seen as invitations for further rural-urban migration and encouraging squatting and the construction of katchi abadis (unofficial informal settlements).

Countering such arguments does not require rocket science. Pakistani cities have problems of housing and infrastructure shortages, yet the availability of employment and opportunity is far greater than in rural areas. Indeed, whatever the measure or the definition, ‘urban’ living conditions are ‘better’ than rural. Housing, education, health, infrastructure and transport are all ‘better’ in urban areas than in rural.

For someone living in the rural areas wanting to improve their lives, there are three possible strategies:

1. Develop urban infrastructure in their settlement – this cannot be done by individual effort
2. Commute to an urban area – this depends on location and needs affordable transport
3. Move to an urban area - this has risks, is possibly expensive but likely to work with assistance

Therefore, it makes eminent sense for people to move from rural to urban areas in the hope of a better life, and it is not just cussedness, illogical or the attraction of the ‘bright lights of the city’ that prompt rural populations to move to cities. It is not surprising that Karachi and then Lahore, Islamabad and the other provincial capitals attract the most in-migrants, resulting in the rapid growth of these cities. However, to blame the problems of these cities on rural-urban migration is to miss the point.

Official figures state that “Average annual population growth rate (1998-2017) at national level is 2.4 percent whereas growth in urban areas is 2.70 percent which is higher than the population growth rate in rural areas which is 2.23 percent”¹. This means that during that period, urban growth was 0.3% higher than the national population growth. In other words, that rural-urban migration was responsible for 20% of the growth of urban areas², the rest being natural growth.

¹At the same time, the fact that Pakistan has the highest rate of urbanisation in Asia is seen as something to be proud about

²A significant proportion of migrants were propelled by natural and man-made conflicts and calamities.

So, while migration has added to urban growth, it is not the major problem. The problem is not urbanisation but rather urban management. The small towns of Pakistan have the same problems of overcrowding, traffic, and poor infrastructure that the largest cities have. For instance, at the time of partition, Shikarpur was the third most important town in Sindh and had a fully reticulated sewerage system. Some 50 years later, its population had doubled, but the sewerage system had not been added to at all. Despite a loan being available from the Asian Development Bank, the system still has not been extended or replaced - 75 years later.

The same is true of most of the towns: size does not matter, nor the speed at which they grow. Urbanisation is not the problem. If anything, it is the answer. If we don't want people to migrate to the big cities, let us take urbanisation to the small towns. What would it take to increase urbanisation – the proportion of Pakistanis living in urban settlements?

There are two essential ways of making a place 'urban'. The first is by designation, i.e. a government can call any place 'urban' for administrative reasons or based on population size, for example. There is no universally agreed definition. The second is by its structure – physical (density of development) or economic (preponderance of non-agricultural employment and activities).

The designation and administrative hierarchy that the government uses is mainly for its own purposes, although this has implications for resource allocation and hence influences politics and power. The more important criterion for livelihoods is the economic structure: to have most of the population employed in non-agricultural activities. Despite the huge bias towards agriculture in the taxation structure which has supported large landholdings and neo-feudal social structures, agriculture is no longer the mainstay of the national economy nor of the local, especially if we discount daily wage labourers. If Pakistan is to retain any credibility as an agricultural producer, it will have to change its mode of production and make it more efficient, probably through more mechanisation. In any case, the increasing rural population cannot be absorbed into agriculture without making it even less efficient and thus less competitive globally.

At the very least, this will require the introduction of processes that add value to crops by finishing, polishing, and packaging if not through the production of table-ready foods, end-user consumer goods and manufactured goods and components. This movement up the production chain will inevitably require denser settlements and/or more efficient transportation as well as machine and equipment operators (and eventually manufacturers) as well as packaging, marketing, and trading activities. The introduction and operation of enhanced non-agricultural activity could form the basis for an increasingly urbanised countryside. For this, better social and support services as well as urban infrastructure will be needed. To the extent possible these should be locally manned and managed rather than the inefficient centrally controlled education, health, and utility systems we now have.

We must introduce distance learning, community-managed utility systems and a more gender-inclusive approach to living and livelihoods. Local self-management of settlements and cities should be supported by a professional cadre of

settlement and city-managers acting as advisers to local self-government instead of the current top-down bureaucracy.

Taking urbanisation to the country requires a change of mind-set, but it will conserve agricultural land – not only by curbing urban sprawl but also by better utilisation of rural waste land. It will improve the national economy, raise the standard of living, especially for the rural poor and by extension, of the urban poor. It can also reduce the impact of climate change and calamities through more effective planning and management of settlements.

The time to do this is now. Many people have already moved temporarily to nearby cities and settlements because of the recent floods. Many of them do not own any land and providing housing will require land acquisition or a continuation of the old zamindari system.

They don't have a house, and one would have to be built, which might as well be in the settlement they have moved to, using the compensation and relief funds.

Many of them were jobless, doing casual manual labour or sharecropping. They could just as easily do this where they have moved to.

The financial and technical support going into rehabilitation could be used for resettlement and the development of small-scale manufacturing, construction, and trading.

For those who had land and housing, creating more 'urbanised' settlements would not only be more productive but also lead to faster recovery. The relief, recovery and climate-impact funds could bring about more permanent, more effective change through more and faster urbanisation.

The author is the former Senior Head of Digital Content for Business Recorder in Karachi, Pakistan and has held digital strategy and editorial roles at the Daily Pakistan and Aaj TV. Most recently, he has developed a social listening tool for the Boston Globe and has provided digital strategy consultancy to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). He recently completed his Master's degree in Digital Media Innovation from New York University.



43

THE QATAR SQUABBLE

FIFA WORLD CUP 2022

Saddam Hussein & Aimen Shakeel Abbasi

“O, people! We created you from a male and a female, and We made you races and tribes: so that you may come to know one another. The best among you before Allah is the most righteous.” This is a verse from Noble Quran, delivered by the young Qatari Ghanem Al-Muftah, accompanied by the American artist Morgan Freeman, on the eve of FIFA World Cup opening ceremony in Doha. Known as the shining jewel of Qatar, the city sits on the east coast lapped by the warm waters of the Persian Gulf.

This was a unique beginning with the message of peace, love and co-existence. Unfortunately, a smoke screen of controversy was created to conceal the positives Qatar offered to the passionate fans pouring in to witness the FIFA World Cup for the first ever time in the Arabian Peninsula – hosted by a Muslim country. A sea of criticism was unleashed upon Qatar, the severity which can be gauged by the fact that the British media outlet BBC chose against broadcasting the opening ceremony – something that invited a fair bit of backlash to the publication. This was the first time BBC did not broadcast an international event of this magnitude.

The brutal opprobrium was not recent. It started in 2010 when Qatar was officially declared to host the World Cup, picking pace and intensity as the event drew closer. Bans on alcohol, LGBTQ+ symbols/slogans, and public display of

intimacy within stadiums were a few of the issues deliberately granted media spotlight. Even more severe, however, was the humanitarian issue of migrant labourers in Qatar – commonly known to live a precarious life in the country, laden with racism and exploitation.

These issues, however, were blown out of proportion in Western media. Qatari measures against PDA are not against individuals belong to the LGBTQ+ community, but are rather universal and applicable to everyone regardless of their sexual orientations. Within Arab Culture in particular and Muslim Culture in general, expressions of love are an exceedingly private phenomenon and considered indecent to be displayed publicly. The values, beliefs, and cultures of particular societies naturally ought to be respected – something Western countries are also firm on in their dealings with immigrants.

It is worth pointing out here that Western media, while criticizing Qatar, forgets that in many developed Western states, things like nudity, kissing, etc. are also prohibited in public spaces – rules that are defended on the basis of ‘values, civilization and culture’. When a Muslim country imposes restrictions, however, it is immediately deemed backward, conservative and orthodox. These double standards cannot be missed: and indeed ought to be highlighted.

Rather than imposing European on Western values in an Arab nation, purely for the purpose of easing the tensions of their traveling supporters, the Western media would do well to shed light on the various things that had to come together – in terms of planning and execution – for the World Cup to be made possible in Qatar within such short period of time. It is not even just Arab nations being victims of the Western gaze: back in 2008 during the Beijing Olympics, similar controversies were observed i.e. sharp criticism due to certain restrictions and the death of construction workers.

These are generally the same voices that considered the Hijab (headscarf) as a threat to French culture, a culture generally perceived as tremendously open, accepting, and tolerant. Except, of course, when it comes to the free expression of Muslim women. These same people call for universal values and global space when in Doha, however. This selective criticism of state policies is lethal for a pluralistic world where all can hope to strive for a shared future.

Following Morocco's win over Portugal in the World Cup, which legions of people around the world celebrated, a Syrian woman was attacked by Spanish police in Ceuta while expressing her elation. No news of this was seen in Western media, however – unfortunately it was not deemed particularly barbaric. No human rights were exploited here!

The humanitarian agenda to demoralize Qatar does not stop there. Western media stated time and again that somewhere between 6,500 to 15,000 migrant labour workers died while preparing for the World Cup. These are not legally documented figures: the actual number is 40 - in which 3 are work-related¹. Here Arabs are criticized by the very people who capitalized on slave trade and colonialism and built empires from the blood of African slaves. Orientalism “as a western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over orient”² was once again at play, with Arabs being depicted as exotic, suppressed and inferior creatures who can only be governed by (problematic) Western knowledge.

The hypocrisy was captured by Gianni Infantino (president of FIFA) beautifully saying, “I think for what we Europeans have been doing in the last 3,000 years, around the world, we should be apologizing for the next 3,000 years before starting to give moral lessons to people.”

Was not the FIFA World Cup in 1934 hosted by Italy during the reign of Mussolini problematic? Was it not an eyebrow raiser when the Olympics of 1936 took place under Hitler's regime? No one said that they exerted power through their unjust, fascist ideologies through gaming events back then. The FIFA World Cup is being hosted by North America in 2026: does it merit a similar reaction to 2022's? One of the countries in question, after all, is the United States of America. Would Western nations boycott the USA for waging scores of wars across the globe, destabilizing the Middle East, casually bombing and droning as if it were a sport, decimating generations of Afghans who have been forced to quite literally sell their children due to hunger and disease, and for the brutal slave trade of yesteryears?

For the West, events of this magnitude have become platforms to push outmoded imperial ideologies and set a standard of superiority for the rest of the world.

The Western media did not highlight how an Arab nation was capable of spending \$220 billion to host the event or how fans/visitors from around the globe had plenty of options in terms of comfortable and safe accommodation – which included specific fan villages and over-the-top transparency, cooperation and guidance from stadium management. The cumulative stadium attendance surpassed 2.45 million spectators. That equals an average of 96% occupancy and is higher than the corresponding 2.17 million figure for the 2018 edition. This means it was the highest attendance in the history of the FIFA World Cup since 1994.

The number of visitors, smoothness of operations, fans enjoying Arab songs and culture with people from other parts of the world, minimum harassment cases if at all, no hooliganism, Japanese fans cleaning stadiums after matches, etc. are just some of the many positives seen at this World Cup.

History was also made by Stéphanie Frappart, who not only became the first woman to officiate a FIFA World Cup match, but also, together with Neuza Back and Karen Díaz Medina, formed the first all-female trio to take charge. Qatar should be embraced as an emerging competitive economy enriched with religious and cultural inclusivity, not as an inhumane and marginalized society. This Western propaganda is nothing but stereotypical generalizations through various political, social and economic tools.

For Pakistani fans, let it be known that Pakistan had a fair share of offerings to this mega event. Although it did qualify, it made two significant contributions. The country was responsible for roughly one-third of the overall quantity of footballs (named Al Rihla) used in matches – which a company by the name of Forward Sports, located in Sialkot, had manufactured. Moreover, Pakistan sent 4,500 troops to Doha for purposed of security. The deployment was made on the special request of the Qatari government in the context of cordial relations of trust, brotherhood and friendship between the two countries.

Islamabad and Doha joining hands for the FIFA World Cup of 2022 also had an intrinsic message that the world of competition has to leave and a new world of cooperation has to emerge. As Russian philosopher, historian and revolutionary by the name of Peter Kropotkin said, “Competition is the law of the jungle, but cooperation is the law of civilization”.

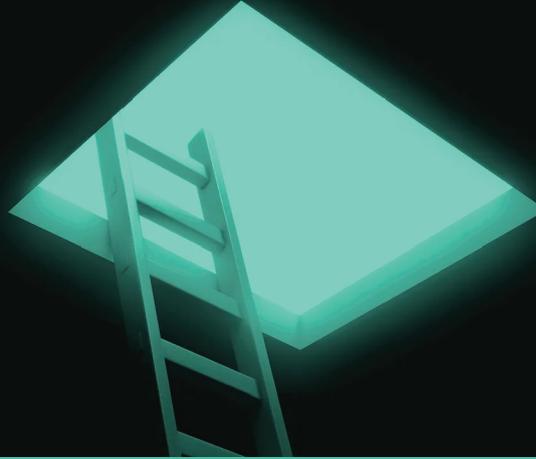
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¹Fact check: How many people died for the Qatar World Cup? <https://www.worldw.com/en/fact-check-how-many-people-have-died-for-the-qatar-world-cup/a-63763713>

²Burney, S. (2012). CHAPTER ONE: Orientalism: The Making of the Other. Counterpoints, 417, 23–39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42981698>

MEANING 3.0: HOPE FOR A CONSCIOUS WORLD

Tahreem Amin



PURE CONSCIOUSNESS

45

The Washington Post defines Pure Consciousness as our spiritual essence, free of limits and bounds because our essential nature is of pure potentiality. Other associated attributes include infinite peace, abundance of knowledge, and alert awareness.

I came across the term when I was first introduced to the Consciousness Map in therapy as a self-help tool. It is a well-researched framework about human consciousness and related energy fields from Dr. David R. Hawkins's best-selling book: *Power vs. Force*. The highest level on the chart is Enlightenment, and the corresponding process is pure consciousness.

MAP OF CONSCIOUSNESS			
Level	Process	Emotion	Life-view
Enlightenment	Pure Consciousness	Ineffable	Is
Peace	Illumination	Bliss	Perfect
Joy	Transfiguration	Serenity	Complete
Love	Revelation	Reverence	Benign
Reason	Abstraction	Understanding	Meaningful
Acceptance	Transcendence	Forgiveness	Harmonious
Willingness	Intention	Optimism	Hopeful
Neutrality	Release	Trust	Satisfactory
Courage	Empowerment	Affirmation	Feasible
Pride	Inflation	Scorn	Demanding
Anger	Aggression	Hate	Antagonistic
Desire	Enslavement	Craving	Disappointing
Fear	Withdrawal	Anxiety	Frightening
Grief	Despondency	Regret	Tragic
Apathy	Abdication	Despair	Hopeless
Guilt	Destruction	Blame	Evil
Shame	Elimination	Humiliation	Miserable

Chart: Author's Own

Dr. Hawkins used a unique muscle-testing method and conducted over 250,000 calibrations in a research span of 20 years to define a variety of attitudes, emotions, and values relating to levels of consciousness.

The higher levels (courage and above) are carriers of immense energy and can lead to meaningful outcomes.

FINDING MEANING

"So the question then is, how do we create liberating structures so that a lot of people all around the world can experiment, innovate and adapt their own approaches to finding and restoring meaning without it coming tops down?" asks Jamie Wheal in an interview with BigThink titled, 'How to find meaning as modern humans'.

We are experiencing a collapse in meaning because of exponential change, which is breaking our brains. The said collapse is the collapse of extremes in meaning 1.0: Organized Religion and meaning 2.0: Modern Liberalism.

With a surge in misinformation campaigns and conspiracy theories, people are overwhelmed with grief and feelings of helplessness on a collective level. Heartbroken but willing to go to any extent for the alleged promise of a better tomorrow. Jamie refers to these promises as rapture ideologies, and they all share a similar structure:

1. The world as we know it, is a horrible place
2. There's an inflection point coming soon: me and mine are going to score the golden tickets
3. So let's get there as soon as possible, and don't worry about the collateral damage we're causing to the world

MEANING 3.0

Recapture the Rapture is the name of Jamie's book and the solution he proposes to restore peace minus the apathy. Creating meaning 3.0: a holistic blend of meaning 1.0 and 2.0. It combines the salvation promised by religion and inclusion from the modern liberal side.

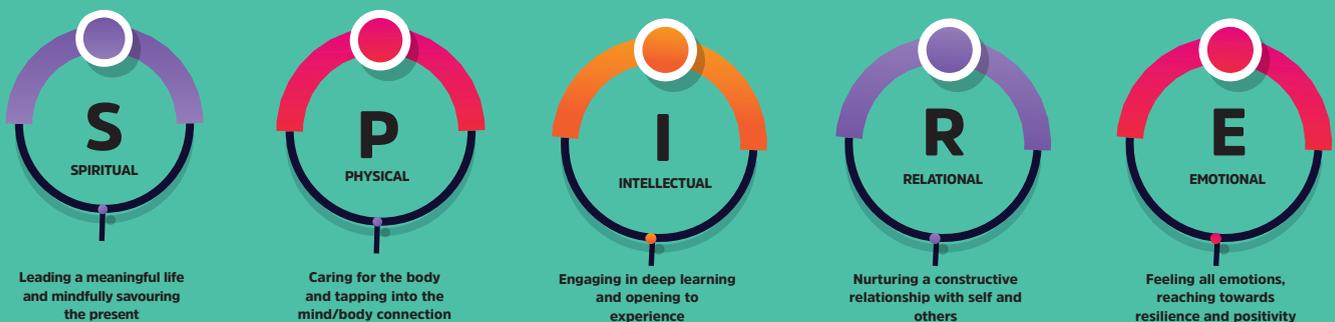
We need healing, inspiration, and connection from traditional religion. And modern liberalism because we want it to be open source: anybody anywhere can access it, scalable: very cheap or outright free, and antifragile.

The term anti-fragile was coined by Nassim Taleb and is widely used for its definition from his book *Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder*. The concept of anti-fragility can be best described by the phrase: what doesn't kill you makes you stronger and/or systems that thrive under pressure.

The goal is to identify necessary factors for probable growth in chaotic circumstances. Tal Ben-Shahar, a teacher and student in the field of happiness studies, sheds light on the paradox of happiness.

Just like sunlight, the pursuit of happiness should also be indirect. Looking at the sun directly can hurt our eyes but when white light is passed through a prism, it breaks down into seven component colours: violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. In nature, this display of colours is called a rainbow.

We can indirectly raise our overall happiness levels by triggering antifragility within us through the SPIRE model co-created by Tal. The letters are a metaphorical representation of the rainbow and an acronym for Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Relational and Emotional well-being.





47

Jamie suggests starting with evolutionary drivers that are effective and accessible to everyone: breathing, which is primary. We breathe in and out approximately 20-22,000 times in one day. Even a few minutes of conscious breathing can regulate our nervous systems.

Practicing meditation can increase mindfulness by directing focus to an object, activity, or thought. Other drivers include music, sexuality, substances and embodiment. When our bodies are regulated, they can discharge trauma and prompt peak states of consciousness, inspiration, and creativity in potent ways.

Furthermore, adopting a design thinking approach can lead to intentional problem-solving. The designers typically observe their environments to devise structures that are strategic, practical, and cognitive. And offer innovative solutions by referring to a pool of knowledge about how people (stakeholders) reason when engaging with design problems.

Trio is an inventive business that ethically sources and produces handmade goods (and joy) in Pakistan. The product range comprises dog toys and leashes made from 85% waste material: 60% are used fish nets rescued from the ocean.

They've created a chain of kindness and sustainability by empowering fisherfolk and creating employment in impoverished communities. 50% of the proceeds go back to facilitating and saving the lives of vulnerable animals at the ACF Animal Rescue shelter, Trio's sister foundation in Karachi.

HOPE

That's the hope for meaning 3.0. It doesn't promise an escape, nor a happily ever after which is structurally different from where we are today.

It is a chance to recapture the rapture using vital tools for connection and commitment to the outcome: enlightenment. Pursuing our passions with love, narratives with authenticity, and channelling the resulting energy for collective good. Yes to more brands like Trio and the world humming Pasoori on Google search, making it the top hum to search song of the year.

In conclusion, increased awareness is knowing who we are and where we're headed; and being open to embracing change because the antagonist to progress is not chaos but entrapment.

Thank you for reading!

The author is a Marketing graduate from the Institute of Business Management (IoBM), Karachi and a digital creator. Her work can be found at @tahreemamin on Instagram.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RELIGIOUS ELITES

Waqas Ahmed



48

The hard question in economics is why some countries are rich and others are poor. Economists from Adam Smith to Daron Acemoglu have tried to answer this elusive question. They have investigated drivers of economic prosperity, looking at factors such as resources, geography, demography, and colonization, among others. The role of culture, which is usually confined to sociologists, has relatively recently come under scrutiny by economists as a possible driver of economic transformation.

Culture is a vague term as Robert Slow once remarked that all attempts to explain economic differences among countries using culture “end up in a blaze of amateur sociology”. (Krugman 1991) Despite the extreme popularity of culture in social sciences and humanities, a mind-boggling number of definitions are employed. The definition used here is proposed by Boyd and Richerson (1985): “Culture is a set of

beliefs, values, and preferences, capable of affecting behaviour, that are socially (not genetically) transmitted and that are shared by some subset of society.”

In the case of Pakistan, religious beliefs, values, and practices constitute a dominant part of the culture. The role of religion and the political economy of religious elites can play a significant role in the socio-economic outcome of the country. The academic literature on religion and economic transformation is extensive. It looks at the role of belief, religiously sanctioned rules, and religious elites on the economic outcome of countries. Religion can also affect economic development by building trust, incentivizing education, family formation, and shaping political institutions. The economics of religion is influenced by the pioneering work of Max Weber, he proposed that the Protestant work ethic was an important factor in the early stage of

of European capitalism because worldly success could be treated as a sign of eternal salvation. Subsequently, different aspects of religious belief, practices, and interaction with political institutions have been analysed. In this short piece, we will look at the political economy of religious elites in Pakistan.

The power of religious elites is primarily derived from land. British rule solidified this by providing secure property rights. The Land Alienation Act of 1900 expanded elite control over land. It created an 'agrarian tribe' category, which one needed to be part of to easily buy and sell agricultural land. The shrine leaders took advantage of this and accumulated a huge parcel of land. Large tracts of land were given by the British to these shrine leaders for preserving social order and to support British rule in India. Anaton Lieven (2012) said that in Pakistan, "it is not wealth alone, but wealth plus either kinship or spiritual prestige, or both, that gives political power". Jared Rubin also made the case that historically Muslim rulers have used religious elites as low-cost "legitimizing agents" undermining the relative power of commercial and business classes resulting in the subsequent economic and cultural downfall of the Muslim world.

Religious elites and their interplay with political elites is the subject of recent work by Ahmet Kuru (2019). The Islamic world was far ahead of others based on every conceivable metric of civilization, science, technology, and urbanization for centuries. Then a continuous downfall came, Kuru's thesis explains this fall by focusing on the "ulema (religious jurist)-state alliance". He said that starting in the eleventh century, the alliance between the ulema and military state has resulted in marginalizing intellectuals and bourgeoisie thus resulting in economic divergence between the Islamic world and the rest.

Elites, whether religious or not, can shape institutions that can either promote growth or hinder growth and development (Robinson 2012). Islam in South Asia is primarily spread by the Sufis, the religious elite associated with these shrines has the soft power to shape institutions and development in their area.

The impact of religious elites on development in Pakistan is recently investigated in an interesting study by Adeel Malk and Rinchan Ali Mirza (2022). They focus on religious elites associated with shrines, as shrines are "considered cultural outposts of the power of Islam". Shrines are informal institutions providing food, helping the sick, and resolving disputes. Shrine leaders enjoy obedience from their followers due to their sacred lineage and religious authority. They also become intermediaries between the ruler and the ruled with their political and economic power. They have been enjoying this power from pre-colonial times to the present as rulers courted them for support and religious legitimacy. The present political economy structure gives them the power to allocate state resources and affect development.

The power of shrine leaders can be substantially reduced by access to literacy. The voluntary obedience required by them is facilitated by a lack of literacy. There is a huge incentive for them to hinder access to literacy. Religious elites, unlike other elites, have the power to shape cognition, moral perception, and the beliefs of their followers, in this way exerting deeper control over them.

The empirical strategies applied in the study is based on a novel dataset created from colonial-era district gazetteers about historically significant shrines in various region of Punjab and long panel data on literacy covered over a century (1901 - 2011).

Social scientists like economists do not have the liberty of conducting natural experiments like their fellow scientists in natural science. But sometimes a policy change or an event creates something close to a natural experiment. In this study on shrines leaders, the military coup by Zia ul Haq in 1977 has created a setting for a natural experiment. To buy their loyalties, funds are spent through politicians in their respective constituencies. The authors look at this change in policy to investigate its impact on literacy in areas dominated by shrines elites.

The results show that shrines leaders used their political power to suppress literacy in their constituencies. They show that without the influences of shrines leaders the literacy rate would have been higher by 13 percent in these areas. The study systematically accounts for other reasons for low literacy in these areas, such as location and land inequality. The strategy used by shrines leaders in this regard is not to oppose the construction of schools but rather to reduce the quality of education by placing them further from the target population and the absence of other facilities like electricity and boundary walls.

The study has implications for both policymaking and execution. It shows how elites, in this case shrines leaders, used their religious, cultural, and political power to negatively affect the literacy rate in their respective areas. This supports the hypothesis that the elite would try to create hindrance in access to literacy to perpetuate their power and dominance – which also has to do with the political economy of education. Finally, the importance of local context and the interplay of religion, culture, and politics need to be considered before embarking on any policy intervention.

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HISTORÿ





POLITICAL MASCULINITIES: THE RISE OF 'STRONGMEN'

Nadeem F. Paracha

During a 2011 international media conference organised by the British Council in London, I was approached by a group of Indian journalists who were curious to know my views on Pakistan's former dictator and 'strongman' General Pervez Musharraf.

I must clarify that the term 'strongman' was used by them. This wasn't the first time I had come across Indians praising Musharraf as a strongman. So on the last day of the conference, I asked one of them to explain to me their fascination with Musharraf.

"They want their own strongman, which they never had," he chuckled.

"But why would they want a 'strongman' when elected men and women in your country have done rather well compared to all the strongmen that have ruled Pakistan?" I asked. He replied by saying that India's new middle-classes feel that their country's political system is corrupt and weak and unable to defend its Hindu majority from brazen attacks from Pakistan.

This left me scratching my head: "But India's economy has been outperforming that of Pakistan's for years now, and

India has a much better image abroad," I smiled.

"No, boss," he replied, "what is the use of a good economy or image if they can't stop attacks on our pride and people." He almost sounded melancholic.

Three years later, India elected the unabashed Hindu nationalist, Narendra Modi as PM. India's own 'strongman.'

The term 'strongmen' (in politics) is rooted in the largely mythical exploits of ancient monarchs who 'ruled like benevolent kings but with an iron fist.' It's an expression of a political masculinity driven by fearlessness, fairness, ambition and mental and physical strength. However, the more immediate roots of the term lie in the ways certain authoritarian rulers and dictators came to power and conducted matters of the state and government during the Cold War (1945-1990). The size of authoritarian regimes peaked in the 1970s, when 75 percent of the governments in the world were authoritarian. They were said to be ruled by 'strongmen.' The term had a negative connotation when used by political scientists, but it was actually celebrated by those for whom it was being used. Some of these 'strongmen' were romanticised through state propaganda as men who were boldly protecting their societies from malevolent forces that were out to usurp a country's

resources, progress, pride, and existence. After the collapse of the Cold War in 1990, it was widely believed that in the defeat and absence of the Soviet Union and because of the triumph of capitalism, liberal democracy would rapidly proliferate in former dictatorships. The era of ‘strongmen’ was understood to be over.

Nevertheless, after 1990, the term ‘strongmen’ did recede, and many countries adopted democracy, in one form or the other. But the term returned with a bang after 2010, mainly on the wings of two democracies gradually sliding into autocracies. Russia was a ‘hybrid democracy’ and, like most post-Cold War hybrid regimes, never fully developed into the kind of liberal democracy that most analysts believed it would evolve into. More striking was the case of Turkey which, after decades of military interventions, did manage to make a successful transition with the 2003 election of Recep Erdoğan as PM and the rapid erosion of the political influence of Turkey’s military.

However, Russia’s Vladimir Putin and Turkey’s Erdoğan soon discovered that an authoritarian set-up can last longer behind a facade of liberal democracy, compared to the bygone nature of dictatorship, which was openly antagonistic towards democracy. Their ‘success’ in this respect did not go unnoticed. After 2014, a wave began to sweep across various regions in which democratically elected men started to use similar tactics, putting themselves at the centre of an authoritarian set-up but giving it a veneer of democracy. They all became the new ‘strongmen.’

More alarmingly, this not only happened in hybrid set-ups in former dictatorships (such as Pakistan, for example) but also in developed democracies in various European countries, and in India and the US.

According to a detailed study on the ‘new strongmen’ published in the journal, *Political Research Exchange* (Vol: 2, Issue I, 2020), the current breed of ‘strongmen’ share similar characteristics with the ‘strongmen’ of the Cold War. The only difference is, unlike their Cold War contemporaries, the new ones come to power through a democratic process. But they mould, turn and twist democratic institutions and tools to formulate an authoritarian set-up.

The study defines the personalities of strongmen as ‘dark traits’ which include, ‘narcissism (grandiosity, ego-reinforcement behaviours, tendency to seek attention and admiration), subclinical psychopathy (lack of remorse, insensitivity, impulsivity); and Machiavellianism (tendency to use manipulation and strategic behaviours).’ They embody a push for a centralisation of executive power, hierarchical governance, muscular treatment of opponents and the media, and the promotion of nationalism.

The study further states that the electoral attraction for the new strongmen is because of disillusionment with established democratic models. However, a May 10, 2018 report by the International Association for Political Science Studies (IAPSS) posits that ‘a combination of uncertainty with the false perception of an escalating threat has led to an increase in calls for strong leaders.’ It adds that societies are now more vulnerable and under the influence of personalist authoritarian strongmen that provide simple answers —

often fallacies — to the complex issues of today’s world.

The report argues that, psychologically, new strongmen regimes use old authoritarian tactics of inducing anxiety in the polity about fears that may be exaggerated, or non-existent. For example, returning to my conversation with the Indian journalist in London — someone who I am sure rejoiced at Modi’s election — the Modi regime’s ‘manly’ anti-Muslim/ anti-Pakistan bent and actions against ideas such as ‘love jihad’ may be a carryover from a decades-old Hindu middle-class anxiety.

According to the German historian Markus Daechsel, in the early 20th century, there was a feeling among Hindu nationalists that the Hindus (as opposed to India’s Muslims) lacked militant virtues. Daechsel writes that it was widely believed (by the Hindu middle-classes) that ‘Muslims had a higher birth rate than Hindus because of their unrestrained sexuality.’ Is it possible then that those middle-class Indians who were looking for a ‘strongman’ also had this embedded in their psyches? Perhaps.

The author is a Pakistani journalist, author, cultural critic, satirist and historian. He is a columnist for Dawn, Pakistan's largest English-language daily newspaper.



CHINA BEFORE JIANG ZEMIN

Naazir Mahmood



53

The recent death of Jiang Zemin – the former general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and president of the People’s Republic of China – provides an excuse to look at this amazing country which has transformed itself in the past 40 years or so.

Jiang Zemin was not one of the old guards of the CCP to assume the top office in 1989. His elevation to power owed a lot to the prevailing conditions in China in the 1980s. Perhaps a look at some background would be helpful here. The two top leaders of Communist China died in quick succession in 1976. Zhou Enlai – the first prime minister of the People’s Republic of China since 1949 died in January 1976 at the age of 78. Chairman Mao Zedong – the supreme leader of CCP died in September at the age of 83. To understand the politics of Communist China it is worth clarifying certain nomenclatures. After the Communist revolution succeeded in October 1949, there were two top office holders: the Party Chairman, Mao Zedong, and

Premier, Zhou Enlai. In 1954 some significant changes in the nomenclature took place when the Chairman Mao also became Chairman of the People’s Republic (head of state) and the head of the Military Commission. In 1959 Mao appointed his close friend and party ideologue Liu Shaoqi as the new chairman of PRC with Dong Biwu as the Vice Chairman of the country.

Liu Shaoqi held his office until his removal in disgrace by Mao in 1968 at the height of the Cultural Revolution. Then the position of Chairman of the PRC or head of state remained vacant for four years, though Party Chairman Mao remained the supreme leader of the country and the party. In 1972, Mao promoted Dong Biwu as acting chairman or head of state – a largely ceremonial post. Biwu died in 1975 at the age of almost 90 and the office was abolished. The next year, both premier and party chairman died and a new leadership had to assume office.

In 1974, Zhou Enlai had brought in 70-year-old Deng Xiaoping as his deputy and was grooming him to be his successor. But when Zhou died in January 1976, Mao appointed 55-year-old Hua Guofeng as the new prime minister and in April also elevated him to be the Party Vice Chairman. Thus it became clear that Mao wanted Hua Guofeng to replace him as the next leader of the country and the party as well. After Mao's death in September 1976, Hua succeeded him as Chairman of the Military Commission and the Party while he was also holding the office of the Prime Minister.

This was the first time that one person held the three most powerful offices. He targeted the notorious Gang of Four loyalists to Mao, and also brought back Deng Xiaoping to the highest inner circle of the leadership as Vice Chairman of both the Military Commission and the Party. That was the beginning of Hua's undoing. While he was also initiating his own personality cult, his fortunes started turning against him. Deng Xiaoping who was now also Chairman of the People Consultative Conference – an advisory body of the party – emerged as the most dominant leader of the party.

Deng and some other party elders such as Chen Yun attempted to prevent the new personality cult and managed to convince Hua Guofeng to relinquish the office of Prime Minister in 1980. A 60-year-old Zhao Zhiyang assumed the office of the Prime Minister. The elders of the Party were also not happy at the economic and political policies that Hua Guofeng was introducing. Hua was in his 50s but his outlook was conservative and not in accordance with the changing times. Deng was 17 years older than Hua but was much more intelligent and sharp in his observations and outlook.

Gradually Deng established his position as a senior leader and in June 1981 – after just five years in power – Hua Guofeng had to give up both his positions as the Chairman of the Military Commission and of the Party. The new Party Chairman was 65-year-old Hu Yaobang and new head of the Military Commission was 76-year-old Deng Xiaoping. Now a group of Eight Elders emerged who supported Deng as the supreme leader and supervised relatively younger party head Hu Yaobang and Premier Zhao Ziyang. Of the eight, four were more powerful: Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, Li Xiannian, and Yang Shangkun.

This group of septuagenarian elders encouraged open criticism of the Cultural Revolution and its excesses during the last decade of Mao's rule. Boluan Fancheng Period – translated as 'Eliminating Chaos and Returning to Normal' -- had been launched in the late 1970s by the party elders. It was a far-reaching programme that attempted to correct the mistakes of the Cultural Revolution, gradually dismantling the Maoist policies by rehabilitating millions of victims of persecution. Now various economic, political, and social reforms were initiated that were the brainchild of Deng Xiaoping supported by the Elders.

In the early 1980s the Party Chairman played a less significant role and the nomenclature was changed from Chairman to General Secretary in 1982 when Hu Yaobang transitioned from chairmanship to secretary. That was a period of transition in the early 1980s that became the

bedrock of the historic reform and opening-up programme. Now the primary focus of the Chinese government changed from class struggle to economic construction and modernization. The 1982 Constitution provided a legal basis for the broad changes taking place in China's economic, political, and social institutions and outlook.

The posts of President and Vice President once again emerged in the nomenclature and term limits on key leadership posts restricted the top offices to two-terms. Compared to the Constitution of the Soviet Union which contained an explicit right of secession, the Chinese constitution explicitly forbids secession. The Soviet constitution had created a federal system while the Chinese formally creates a unitary multi-national state – whatever that means. Per the new constitution, in 1983 one of the elders, 74-year-old Li Xiannian, assumed the office of the head of state as the President of China.

By the mid-1980s, the senior Chinese leadership – especially Deng Xiaoping and Li Xiannian – also embarked on improving relations with the United States. As the US President Ronald Reagan was putting pressure on the Soviet Union through his announcement of the Star Wars programme and financing military dictator General Zia ul Haq to support the Afghan resistance to the Soviet Union, America was also approaching China. In 1984, Reagan visited China and in response Chinese President Li Xiannian visited the US in 1985. That was the period when Jiang Zemin in his mid-50s became a member of the party central committee and the minister of the electronics industry in 1983.

His turning point was to become Mayor of Shanghai in 1985. Deng and Li spotted Jiang Zemin as a potential leader for future and nominated him to the Politburo in 1987. By that time Party Secretary Hu Yaobang was losing favour of the elders who were unhappy with his more liberal policies in dealing with student unrests across China. The elders relieved Hu Yaobang of his position and appointed Prime Minister Zhao Zhiyang as the new party chief.

Zhao had been instrumental in introducing the stock market and futures trading in China. With his support Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou became experimental cities of a joint stock system, though in most companies the system only issued stock to their workers. In 1985, the first share-issuing enterprise came into being in Shanghai. By 1986, the joint stock system was about to take off nationwide. Now the Chinese economic reforms were energizing enterprises. Zhao had also played a role in the coastal development strategy that played a significant role later on.

After assuming the office of the Party Secretary, Zhao relinquished the office of Prime Minister and Vice-Premier Li Peng assumed charged as the new PM in 1988. Deng Xiaoping remained the supreme leader as the head of the Military Commission. He was in favour of term limits and persuaded President Li Xiannian to give up his office in 1988 after serving one five-year term. Another Elder, 81-year-old Yang Shangkun, became the new head of state. By the late 1980s, China's accelerated reforms had also caused inflation and unrest with demands for political changes too.

Hundreds of thousands of students gathered and remained there for months expecting the Chinese Communist party to accept their demands of political reforms and relaxation on freedom of expression. The Supreme Leader Deng Xiaoping denounced these protests as anti-Party and anti-Socialism and called for a crackdown on demonstrators. While Prime Minister Li Peng strictly refused to negotiate with the protesters, Party Chief Zhao Zhiyang adopted a milder approach. On the instructions of the Elders, Prime Minister Li Peng imposed martial law and brutally crushed the protesters, marking the end of the protests and of the Party Chief Zhao Zhiyang who had opposed the crackdown.

Now that created a golden opportunity for Jiang Zemin who had endeared the Elders as a dynamic Mayor of Shanghai transforming the city to its modern status. The Elders selected Zemin to be the next Party Secretary in June 1989 and three months later he also became the Chairman of the Military Commission when Deng Xiaoping relinquished his office. In 1993, Jiang Zemin also became President of China. The 1990s were the decade of development under President Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Li Peng who transformed China.

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BUSINESS

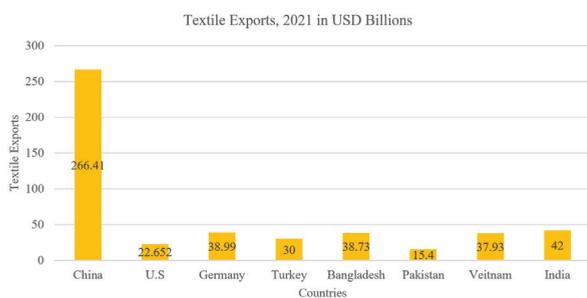


FALLING TEXTILE EXPORTS

Shahid Sattar

57

In 2020 textiles were the world's 7th most traded product, with a total trade of US\$ 774B. Trade in textiles represent 4.62 per cent of total world trade. Even in the age of slow world economic growth, the export market has always been an opportunity, and textile is one of the well-established industries in the competitive marketplace. Textile and apparel exports boost market competitiveness and diversification, strengthen the local and national economies and gain global market dominance.



As the rest of the world is moving steadily towards more systematic, innovative, inclusive and sustainable growth, we have decided to ignore the World Bank's advice – again - and somehow managed to make our economic environment more hostile for businesses than ever before. We have pushed our exporters into the deep waters with their hands tied and without a lifeboat or life jacket in sight.

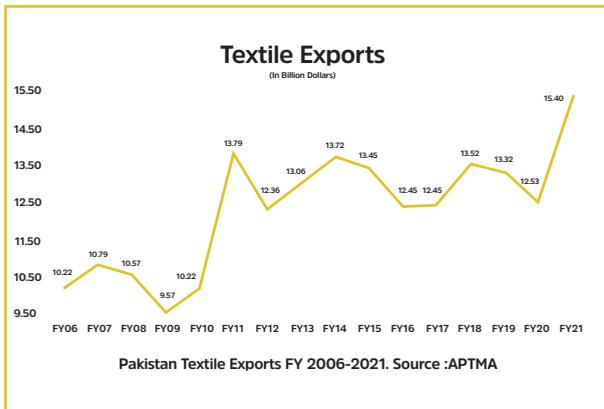
The textile and clothing industry is the backbone of Pakistan's economy, and Pakistan's role as one of the world's leading cotton producers has provided the basis for the textile

and clothing industry's development. The textile industry is today based almost entirely on the private sector, and the textiles and clothing industry has grown to be Pakistan's largest manufacturing sector. The sector employs over 38 per cent of the manufacturing labour force. Over US\$ 5 billion of textile and garment machinery has been imported into Pakistan in the last few years.

Pakistan exported textile products worth US\$ 19.33 billion during the fiscal year 2021, making a record high annually. The country exported textile products worth US\$ 19.33 billion during the fiscal year 2021, showing an increase of 25.53 per cent compared with US\$ 15.4 billion in the preceding fiscal year, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Rebound in textile exports since last year resulted from a series of incentives to support exporters to meet the challenges in the wake of COVID-19 and supply disruption. Moreover, the government's decision to keep businesses open during the lockdown provided an opportunity to secure orders diverted from economies under strict lockdown. The textile export data for the last five years showed that volumetric textile exports are the primary driver, with a double-digit increase in value-added items.

However, the country's merchandise exports entered a negative growth in July 2022 after 22 months when the economy recovered from the impact of Covid-19. According to data by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the export proceeds fell 5.17 per cent to US\$ 2.21 billion in the first month of the current fiscal year from US\$ 2.34bn in the corresponding month last year. On a month-on-month basis, the export proceeds tumbled by 23.95 per cent, indicating a

downward trend in the export sector, just as the increase before the current drop in exports is entirely volumetric.



The World Bank's Pakistan Development Update, 2021, suggests that to sustain robust economic growth, Pakistan needs to increase private investment and export more. A key factor driving the trade imbalance is the declining export competitiveness. Its share of exports in GDP has been declining since the turn of the century, from 16 per cent in 1999 to 10 per cent in 2020.

According to Derek Chen, Senior Economist World Bank, the long-term decline in exports as a share of GDP has implications for the country's foreign exchange, jobs, and productivity growth. Therefore, confronting the core challenges necessary for Pakistan to compete in global markets is imperative for sustainable growth.

In examining the country's persistent trade imbalance, the report identifies critical factors hindering exports: high effective import tariff rates, limited availability of long-term financing for firms to expand export capacity, inadequate provision of market intelligence services for exporters, and low productivity of Pakistani firms. This falling export share affects foreign exchange, jobs, and productivity growth. At the firm level, the decline is consistent with low entry rates into exporting and exporters that struggle to expand over their life cycle. At the economic level, the lack of sustained robust growth in exports has resulted in negligible diversification or sophistication gains for the export bundle.

According to the latest World Bank annual ratings, Pakistan is already ranked 108 among 190 economies in the ease of doing business. With the increase in working capital levels

and interest rates, business costs have increased to unsustainable levels, while the withdrawal of zero-rating sales tax (SRO1125) and the implementation of a seventeen per cent general sales tax on the export-oriented sector add to the injury. Inefficient tax policies inflate inventory and capital costs and encourage the trade volume to increase outside the tax system, resulting in fraud, smuggling and import of clothing.

For a country like Pakistan, going through energy crises with high costs and scarce resources, to increase productivity and ensure sustainable supply, resource allocation should be such that the priority of gas supplied to different sectors of the economy should be such that productive. Sectors of the economy that add more value to GDP should be given preferential priority as such policy measures enhance exports, boost competitiveness, encourage job creation and have a multiplier effect on value chains. However, Pakistan's favouring domestic over industrial consumption is a classic case of prioritising short-term consumer satisfaction over long-term economic stability.

There is a dire need for pricing policy reforms for the inputs such as fertiliser, gas electricity. The export sector in Punjab is provided gas at 9 US\$/MMBtu even under the Regionally Competitive Energy Tariff (RCET) in late 2018, while the basic household tariff is \$1 and about US\$ 2 on average per MMBtu. Similarly, gas prices for fertiliser start from 1 US\$/MMBtu, signalling a non-transparent and inefficient subsidy to the agriculture sector. In addition, some mills eligible for EOU power rates since 2019 are still denied concessional power tariffs even after cabinet and ECC approval despite a multitude of meetings, letters and commitments.

Due to the high price of inputs, the industry has already purchased raw materials at higher rates; at the same time, banks are not clearing import documents due to a lack of dollars in the country, with many mills having imports pending at various stages. Due to delay, the businesses are not only incurring exorbitant demurrage and detention charges, which the collector customs is refusing to waive, rendering textile exports uncompetitive in the process. A significant number of textile mills have also started to shut down due to non-maintenance and, consequently, a lack of spare parts. The issue of raw material clearance from the ports remains unresolved owing to the unavailability of forex. Therefore, mills are currently unable to obtain cash against documentation and are closing down owing to the shortage of raw materials. Many mills are waiting for technology upgradation funds.

Though the textile industry maintains its ranking as the single largest manufacturing sector in Pakistan, unfortunately, indigenous manufacturing of its machinery could not develop along with the industry's growth. Resultantly, demand for textile machinery is almost entirely met through global imports. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) announced a Long Term Finance Facility (LTFF) in 2016 to promote export-led industrial growth by providing subsidised financing for setting up export-oriented projects and modernising plants and machinery. However, the SBP has not yet approved the limit for long-term financing facilities, forcing manufacturers to retire their Letters of Credit for machinery at prohibitively expensive rates, as the

markup allowed may render projects unfeasible. Textile machinery imports in Pakistan increased from around US\$ 435 Million in 2020 to US\$ 792 Million in 2021, reflecting around an 82 per cent increase from the previous year. It was reported at 5,615.000 PKR mn in October 2018, indicating capacity expansion and technological upgradation in the Pakistan Textile Industry.

With an investment of such sheer volume, Pakistan cannot afford to lose its principal industry. It contributes more than 67 per cent to the country's total export earnings and accounts for about 46 per cent of total manufacturing. Its export capacity, if fully utilised, can produce an export of 26 to 30 billion US\$ annually.

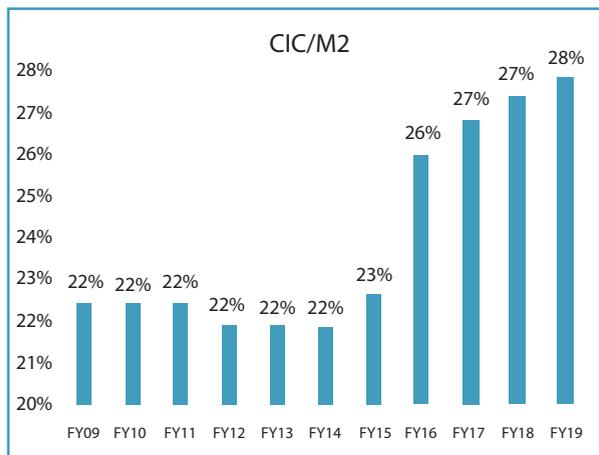
The author is a Former Member, Energy, at the Planning Commission and currently serving as Executive Director of the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA).



HIGH PERCENTAGE OF CURRENCY IN CIRCULATION: WHAT EXPLAINS IT?

Shahid Mehmood

One of the peculiar features of the Pakistani economy is a high percentage of Cash in Circulation (CIC) of the total amount of Money Supply (M2). Over time, as the accompanying chart depicts¹, this percentage has increased, eliciting worries from analysts and experts who have long favored the documentation of the informal sector² in an effort to bring down this percentage! Moreover, it is higher than even regional peers, let alone industrialized nations.



Since the informal economy mostly operates on a cash basis, analysts believe that documenting the informal economy would bring down the CIC, paving the way for positive spillovers like increased revenue for the federal and provincial governments. Put another way, most observers (especially taxation experts) view the issue as that of tax avoidance.

Granted that tax avoidance, informality, and corrupt practices are a part of the explanation, but deeper introspection and query reveal that there are several issues at play and that the matter cannot simply be put down to the tendency of tax theft/avoidance! Thus, a wider and more plausible explanation in the offing covers other important aspects of this debate. This piece attempts to fill this void³.

We start with the realization that the kinds of economic and financial risks that beset Pakistan's economy and its population are far greater than one would find in a developed nation. These risks arise not only from the external front (COVID-19 and Russia-Ukraine war's spillovers are recent examples) but also from the domestic governance apparatus that has historically resulted in low levels of trust between the government and the citizenry. Cash is the most sought-after

asset in risky environments, primarily due to its liquidity and easy conversion/acceptance.

This factor is at play in the aftermath of COVID-19's onslaught. Goodhart and Ashworth (2020) noted that CIC in industrialized nations had increased considerably in the wake of COVID-19 (depicted in the graphs below, with the U.S. on the left and E.U. on the right). While questioning the repeated assertion of 'death of cash,' they note the considerable rise in CIC, putting it down to panic-driven hoarding of bank notes. Similarly, Shirai and Sugandi (2019) analyzed rising CIC from 2000 to 2018, concluding that the opportunity cost of holding money and age-related variables were major factors explaining the rise of CIC.



¹Chart courtesy of Business Recorder.

²Estimates of the size of the informal economy vary by source, but there is general agreement amongst researchers that the size is quite significant. PIDE, for example, reported the size to be 56 percent of the GDP in 2019 ('Pakistan's Shadow Economy,' 2022).

³The conundrum of rising demand for currency in Pakistan' by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is also recommended to be read in this regard. Though a bit technical, it also delves into various factors that affect CIC.

⁴Ashworth, J., & Goodhart, C. A. (2020). The surprising recovery of currency usage. 62nd issue (June 2020) of the International Journal of Central Banking.

Carrying the argument about low levels of trust between the government and the citizenry forward, Pakistan's governance mode, historically speaking, has been extractive. An economy that persistently runs on SROs, and where indirect taxes constitute the bulk of taxation, does not instill much confidence in the government. Administrative distinctions like differentiating between filers and non-filers create further complications. For example, last year, the personal account of an opposition politician in a private commercial bank was frozen on government orders despite there being no provision for such an arbitrary, capricious administrative measure. One implication is that many people become weary of putting their cash in formal banking channels.

Closely related to the above are perverse incentives provided by the government policies that encourage cash transactions, especially cash that falls in the 'black or illegal cash' category. Nothing reflects this better than the real estate sector and the persistent 'amnesty' schemes offered by one government after the other (aside from the regular incentives to this sector). For example, the last government of PTI furnished yet another amnesty scheme. Research upon these schemes has pointed out the flow of whitened money to the real estate sector, where most transactions are cash-based⁵.

From a purely cost-benefit and socio-economic perspective, there is little incentive for parking cash in formal accounts. Aside from the poor service levels and various costs associated with opening and maintaining bank accounts, a major portion of Pakistan's population remains either poor or lower middle-class. It is either little or no savings from income, or meeting socio-economic obligations ensures that cash at hand remains a much-sought-after resource. Put another way, the benefits of distancing oneself from cash (by keeping it in a bank account or investing in a savings scheme, for example) are considerably outweighed by the requirement to meet socio-economic obligations at hand, requiring disposal through a liquid asset (like cash).

Similarly, poor services by financial institutions imply failure to keep up with the requirements of businesses with high turnover, which makes them prefer keeping cash at hand rather than parking it in formal accounts⁶. Add to this the considerable 'spread' between what banks earn on investing deposits in investments like government treasuries and what the depositor gets (very little). There is little incentive to park cash in banks compared to using it or investing in community savings schemes ('committee' in common parlance). Put another way, the holding cost of cash is insignificant, thereby incentivizing keeping cash at hand.

Finally, inflation tends to be on the higher side except for brief periods in Pakistan. Coupled with the low savings rate offered by financial institutions that could prove to be a good inflationary anchor, cash in hand is always a preferable option in an economic transaction mostly taking place in cash.

In conclusion, the large percentage of CIC in Pakistan cannot be merely attributed to aversion by various economic actors to documentation efforts! This lazy explanation obviates the need for deeper, careful analysis that brings forth other subtle factors at play in this story.

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⁵Amnesty scheme- which way will the money flow? and 'Real estate attraction'.
⁶Cash is cash for business.





ŠPORTS



ABSENCE OF WOMEN IN PAKISTANI SPORTS: LACK OF A POLICY FRAMEWORK?

Sara Illahi Panhwer

We live in a confused world. A product of rich histories, cultures, famines, wars, pandemics, diseases, scientific and technological breakthroughs, it is insane to think that this home to eight billion people hasn't been able to reach a consensus on something as central as allowing a woman to engage in sporting activities. Some might not find this unpalatable because it engenders debate and dialogue but I would simply call this folly. Maria Toorpakai Wazir, a brilliant squash player who has represented Pakistan internationally, had to disguise herself as a boy for almost two decades simply to be able to play squash. To think of the sort of hostility and opposition she must have received from her community that she had to resort to that, and the sheer passion to push on regardless, is nothing short of breathtaking.

As an observer and perpetual learner, I find this amusing because this is pretty much how things have always been in Pakistan. For comprehensive policy on topic like sports to emerge, you need people to spearhead it – otherwise, it remains limited to elite circles who are more than content to simply enjoy the privilege without having to push for broader access. The process of policymaking is difficult, after all: and requires time, patience, political activism, the navigating power brokers, and more.

In our part of the world, policies do not change if people can't adapt to them. The people, in other words, must be open to having their 'traditional' modes of being challenged. In Pakistan, there seems to be little incentive for stakeholders in the policymaking arena to do their jobs effectively. This is particularly the case when it comes to pushing policy to promote female sports in the country. A learned policymaker

sees flaws in the formulation and implementation of such a policy (i.e. not letting women out of their homes to play), a politician may not worry because they never finished college, while a journalist/motivational speaker might add sentiment and emotion to it and end up trivializing it. It's rare for the struggles of the person in question to be discussed: in this scenario, the women of Pakistan with an undying love for sports.

It is important to ask ourselves: how long we are going to keep romanticizing women defying the odds and breaking the shackles of patriarchy? While it is important to recognize the contribution of women in sports, every sports-related story of a Pakistani woman has the same old narrative. Why should a woman playing a sport be odd? There used to be a time when it was considered odd for women to get education. Even the most renowned of institutions refused to allow women access. The most privileged of these women were home-schooled while the others missed out on education entirely.

The change we see today, where the stations of Mumbai have women jostling for seats in an 8:30 am local and rickshaws steer through the densely populated streets of Karachi for the female passenger to arrive at work on time, definitely did not happen overnight. Education was prioritized. The social mediatization of the plight of women and their struggle for fair and equal wages, benefits and security led to initiatives like the World Bank's Securing Human Investments to Foster Transformation (SHIFT) program to improve the conditions of home-based workers and women working in the private sector of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Not only that, the push from media and activists alike also led to big companies like Engro and Habib Bank introducing policies allowing women to take sabbaticals and resume working after long breaks.

When things are prioritized, results are seen. Take India's Khelo India Youth Games, for example. The annual national level multidisciplinary grassroot games in India are government funded. Khelo India has been marketed brilliantly and the results? Women indulged in almost every sport: tennis, badminton, gymnastics, shooting, archery, track and field, to name a few.

According to the World Economic Forum, an increasing number of women are participating in the Olympic Games every passing year. In 1996, the ratio of women in the Olympics was only 34% - a figure that rose to 44% in 2012. In 2021, almost 49% of the participants were women. This is promising, but a bit like saying extreme poverty has declined globally. Things look quite different and a lot bleaker, frankly, when a regional - rather than global - perspective is adopted.

Such is the case with Pakistan. The last revised sports policy of Pakistan came in 2005. The former government was to announce a national sports policy, but it was never released given the chaotic political scenario of the country. It has been almost two decades since. The education curriculum on sports has, to be sure, been developed: but a holistic policy that addresses the discrepancies at hand, fills the gaps, presents a grassroot level framework for execution, and effectively publicizes sports in general and for women in

particular, is the need of the hour.

The objection may be raised that women are still deprived of more basic rights - a large chunk of them are either uneducated or facing issues like lack of mobility, poor access to healthcare, financial dependencies on spouses or other family members, etc. Some might claim these ought to be addressed first. This may or may not be true. A whole host of ministries, not-for-profit and corporate organizations exist can join hands to increase women's mobility, provide better healthcare, and offer livelihood trainings to improve employment prospects. There is no reason for the two, therefore, to be mutually exclusive. Various countries in Africa, for instance, perform superbly in a variety of highly competitive sporting events around the world on a regular basis despite the fact that they are poor in terms of social development indicators.

The lack of women's presence in Pakistani mainstream sports is a policy issue: and must be addressed accordingly.

The author is a final year undergraduate student at Habib University, Karachi.

¹Fact check: How many people died for the Qatar World Cup? <https://www.w.d.w.com/en/fact-check-how-many-people-have-died-for-the-qatar-world-cup/a-63763713>
²Burney, S. (2012). CHAPTER ONE: Orientalism: The Making of the Other. Counterpoints, 417, 23-39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42981698>



THE SLEEPING PINES

Meekal Jamil

Islamabad sits nestled below a ridgeline in the western foothills of the Himalayas known as the Margallas. The city's residents have varying relationships with the flanking hills, most simply admiring them from the comforts of their overlooking balconies and flooding multiple social media platforms with clichéd captions under pictures of its' steep green faces on a rainy day. In contrast, my experiences have been a little more visceral.

The sport of rock climbing is a strange endeavour, but to some, its' allure is irresistible. At first glance, it looks like a dangerous and pointless pass time, but upon closer inspection, it provides experiences like no other sport or hobby. A deep connection with nature, an endless pursuit for self-improvement, resilience to the elements and character building come part and parcel. Then there is the most crucial element of trust: rock climbing is done in pairs, with the utmost dependency on your partner. Friendship and camaraderie become the by-products of climbing with a partner. You have your life in someone else's hands.

One experience that left a lasting impression was in the summer of 2020. The story starts with my friend Aadil, and me tied to the ends of a climbing rope on a 'small' north-facing slab. The exposed piece of limestone, referred to as 'Music Lounge' by the initiated, is aptly named if one gives a lot of leeway to the word 'lounge'. The rock is perched about two-thirds up the hills, surrounded by pine forests at higher elevations. Access is via a small game trail starting from an inconspicuous turning on the road to Pir Sohawa. The trail is narrow and steeply climbs the ridge cutting through overgrown thickets. It becomes imperceptible at various points, where the forest reclaims its lost territory, only to reappear a few meters down. After winding up and over the

After winding up and over the ridge, the trail descends into a valley, and the crag soon appears on the right. It is evident from its state that the narrow pathway is only frequented by nearby residents, climbers, and the local wild boar.

As the sun dips below the western mountains, the evening light illuminates the surrounding vista. A minor, almost invisible, increase in the wind makes us aware of the shifting scenario. A simple nod of acknowledgement, and we start our descent rituals. Abseil down - remove gear - coil rope - stuff rucksack - put on rain shell. We had been here before; by now, it is a standard procedure.

'No gear on the wall.'
'No gear.'

It shouldn't take more than a few minutes, and it doesn't. But by the time we reach the trail, the breeze has turned into a howling gust as the valley funnelled the surge into tight corners. The clouds are in a hurry to empty their contents as fast as possible, and the dying light that lingered in the valley is pushed aside to make room for the encompassing darkness. The entire forest around us fights the occasional buffeting of the wind. The gale scoops the falling rain and slams it against the swaying flora, even the large pines prostrate before the sudden force of the stream.

We keep moving—no need to panic.

As navigation difficulties increased, thunder and lightning cracks joined the fray. The booming sound of the colliding clouds continually resonates in the valley. We stay true to our course until we reach our first impasse. The steep ridge that was a descent on approach now towers before us in the dark.

The wind quickly swallows up the few words of communication, and we decide to find shelter, hoping to wait out the storm before attempting the ridge. A wise decision, but for the lack of shelter anywhere. Surrounded by unending forest, straying too far from the already faint trail would be folly.

We crouch under a large pine tree. It hardly provides any respite, as the severity of the storm only increases with each passing moment. The otherwise seemingly static woods are jostling to the whims and directions dictated by the turbulent air. It is wetter under the tree. The excess water falls from the canopy, flooding the already saturated ground. Our headlamps struggle to pierce the downpour and darkened evening. It isn't long before we are reassessing our available options. My attempt to collect my thoughts and communicate with Adil is suddenly interrupted by an impact squarely aimed at the top of my head.

Now time to panic. The object was light enough to bounce off my head but heavy enough to shake my confidence in our current 'shelter'. I am not staying any longer—time to brave the ridge. We start moving and begin the short but steep ascent. As we emerge over the ridge, we are met head-on by another forceful gust constricted by features on the other side. We keep moving. Even at arm's length, the trail is hard to discern, but we have trodden this path before, and we know where we're heading. The process is simple. You look down, identify the trail for a few meters, look up, move, and repeat.

However, the storm is not done with us just yet.

We come to a grinding halt. In front of us lies a dead end. A colossal pine has been felled by the rising winds and lies where there was once a path. The branches spike out like sharp battlements pointing to the sky, taking the trunk's former posture. The bulk of the pine spreads infinitely to our sides, blocking all hopes of circumventing the obstacle. More decision-making amid the storm; our headlamps cannot illuminate anything other than the surrounding thicket.

'The trail must continue on the other side of the tree'.

Trying to traverse the tree feels akin to squeezing through barbed wire; the storm shows no signs of abating.

We emerge on the other side after an immense struggle. There is no trail. Instead, we find ourselves in a gully funneling the flooding stormwater.

We must go back. 'Hop' over the obstructing pine again, and we return to square one.

Silver lining? Our orientation is still fairly accurate, and we determine that our salvation is close. We start breaking the trail along the tree, hoping to meet the lost trail. We struggle through the encircling shadows and shrubs to find the trail again. Stepping on the small path on this occasion gives us a welcome dose of endorphins. We are almost there. With a few quick strides powered by adrenaline, the barely audible sounds of cars breaking through the storm provide the motivation for the remaining stretch.

Driving back into the city, the carnage inflicted by the storm

is evident. The proud Islamabadi landmark Centaurus has lost some roofing. Many trees that line the streets of Islamabad have found new resting places on the roofs of cars and the trending topic of those who experienced it on flatter terrain is the severity and sudden onset of the storm. The Pine Tree still sleeps there, serving as a new landmark to the seldom-visited trail. Locals have harvested its branches for firewood.



Figure 1. Abseiling a route in the Margalla

You may ask why we keep returning to the rocks. Some may view being forced to battle a storm as traumatic, but to me, it speaks to our place in the world. How small we are when we are measured against the might of nature. A climber's relationship with the wild is not antagonistic and competitive but aims to develop a symbiosis. Learning the language of the mountains comes with experience, and you set out not to conquer nature but to participate in its great dance.



Figure 2. Climbing steep terrain

Meekal is an energy and environmental engineer, having worked on river restoration and development national energy performance standards. Currently pursuing a Master's in Energy Systems Engineering, he is also a keen outdoorsman and climber, teaching rock climbing and outdoor skills in the Margalla Hills National Park.

ARTS & CULTURE





THE TILSM OF DASTAAN BEHIND DASTAAN GOI

Waqas Manzoor

Humans are surrounded by many stories; whatever we do or confront in our lives, we share in story form. Historically, humanity's response to myriad challenges has been deeply informed by the stories they tell – no matter what stood in their way, whether in the form of natural catastrophes or in terms of facing their own fellow beings as opponents in war. The telling and retelling of these unique incidents might have birthed the storytelling tradition. Therefore, storytelling is inextricably tied to history by counteracting the deliberate authoritarian impulse of a Grand History – which has functioned to inform us, top-down, about what is (and has always been) beautiful. Storytelling is also pop, because it is constantly in evolution – it's an ally to everyone because we are also created by the stories we tell and the stories we grow up listening to.

Storytelling pervades each part of the human experience – from meeting a friend at a coffee place or engaging in a class discussion or conversations with an acquaintance on the cusp of a romantic friendship. Storytelling does not necessarily have a fixed timeline; it contains the scope for the immensity of the human experience, which makes storytelling as much about the 'telling' of the story as the story itself. The two are virtually inseparable. And when one is frail and old, looking for their socks under the bed and finding them on their feet after an hour's quest, that is also a storyteller's experience. In their humming while searching, cursing, and bemoaning, and finally rejoicing at the end of the experience, they are telling a story beyond words – the story of a life being lived and lives left behind. They are telling their story. And witnessing their story, the audience's own dismal problems and wonderful stories come to the fore in their mind.

So all the stories we listen to in our daily lives are a way of understanding and connecting to each other. Stories are some kind of celebrating a sense of supremacy over circumstances, situations and challenges. On the other hand, stories are time-traveling machines where people set on a chariot of romantic imagination, leaving logic behind. For example, people used to get together in open spaces in the evenings and listen to these stories, a recreational activity to relish their imaginative journeys. In the Hindustani tradition, storytelling has achieved the form of the Dastan. We find Dastans like Panjtantar, Jatak Kathaye, Baital Pachisi, mainly folk legends from palaces to chopaals.

Interestingly, in India, the Dastan Go (storyteller) was an occupation that was used to tell stories in courts. The ingredients of these Hindustani Dastans were magic, superpowers, war and love. These Dastans were told for months as they used to be lengthy and replete with intentional digressions. For example, it is said that Mir Bakir was the last legendary Dastan Go who modernized the art of storytelling as he used audio-visual aids, i.e., he used to change his voice according to the character's demand. His facial expressions and gestures were so on point that listeners would be left wondering whether or not it was the same person narrating throughout. This was as much a craft as an art – the two categories were contiguous in this discipline. Such a distinction was a later invention of oriental mixes. Once, Mir Bakir had to travel to another city due to an emergency, designating his disciple as his substitute. His instruction to the disciple was, “the bridegroom has just arrived at the gate of the bride's home.” It is told that the disciple told stories and kept the audience captivated for 22 days until Mir Bakir returned to court and resumed the story from where he left off.

Hindustan in Urdu. It is told that Emperor Akbar used to instruct Court painters to capture these Dastans through visual art. The arrival of the British Imperialists profoundly impacted the tradition of Dastan as it was stated as an act of vulgarity. This was backed up by local priests, shutting the door of this long-going tradition.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that Fort William College was set up for Britishers to learn Urdu. A form of the Dastan was also written under Fort William College's instruction from 1801 to 1804. From the period of Fort William College till the end of the 19th century, many titles were written.

The shift became prevalent due to the emergence of Fort William College when Dastans were being written extensively, not told. Interestingly, with the arrival of British Imperialism, the South Asian folk tradition, which was totally oral, took a sharp shift to written scripts. Many of these Dastans were published, and many were saved as manuscripts.

The period of Dastan was not totally finished; a new form of storytelling emerged that added real-life elements instead of fantasy, and preference was given to social and realistic aspects of life in this new genre in the form of novels. It did not totally discard elements of Dastan; some initial novelists like Abdul Haleem Sharar and Ratan Nath Sarshar continued to practice the tradition of Dastan. The reader may find the Dastan's reflection in the heroic element constituting the novels of Sarshar, in the portraiture of bravery, and most importantly, in the length of the books.

In the later period, the novels of Munshi Prem Chand are considered a landmark in the craft of Urdu novel writing – in which he quite profoundly documents the socio-political aspects of life, exposing the problems of individuals and community, depicting their sensitivities and emotional accounts, and most importantly, does this without losing the grip of storytelling which had set a standard for the Urdu Novel. The Novel kept evolving as it started focusing on the crude realities of life. But the spirit of Dastan was alive in Urdu Novel.

The birth of the Afsana took place when the Urdu novel started combining philosophy, rationality and psychology. The period of Amra-o-Jan Ada and Khawab-e-Hasti was the time of origination of Urdu Afsana. Interestingly, the spirit of Dastan can also be found in Urdu Afsana, as the reflections of Dastan were present in the short story. It is claimed that Prem Chand was a pioneer of Urdu Afsana. Apart from him his contemporaries like Sajjad Haider Yaldram, Sultan Haider Josh, and Niaz Fateh Puri, also published their collections of Urdu Afsana. The tradition of Dastan stayed alive in the works of primary Urdu Afsana writers as they borrowed imagination from Dastan. The Afsanas of 1929 and 1930 show that this form began, around this time, focusing more closely on life and its elements. The socio-political upheaval of that time touched every sensitive person of Hindustan, and Afsana writers took an active part in the leadership of Prem Chand to prompt increasing numbers of people to read about humanity. Later, the period of 1930-35 took Afsana writing to its height in understanding the struggles of human life. The works of Prem Chand, Ali Abbas Hussaini, Azam Krevi, Majnu



Figure 2. Dastan is told on Takht, A Paandaan and a Bowl of Water is kept Infront of Dastan Go. NCA 2014

The most influential Dastan of South Asia that received worldwide recognition was Dastan Amir Hamza. This single Dastan consists of 46 volumes that make 44 thousand pages and more than 20 million words. This Dastan demonstrates travels, expeditions, and other accounts of the bravery of Hazrat Amir Hamza, Hazrat Muhammad's (PBUH) uncle. This legend originated from Arabic, voyaging to Persian and was later translated to

Ghorakhpuri, Sudarshan, Ahmad Akbar Abadi, and Rashid-ul-Khairi are dominated by human sensitivity and a closer observation of life.

The years 1936-47 are considered the best in the craftsmanship of Urdu Afsana, and with the demise of Mir Bakir the last chapter of Dastaan Goi was closed. But as is dustoor, other people became light-bearers: keeping this flame of old tradition alive. Munshi Naval Chand of Lucknow collected all the Daastan Gos, listened to and compiled the Dastaans and later published several volumes: a treasure of its own kind. A Hindi version called Chitarkatha is also available. Shamasur Rahman Farooqi was one of the excellent Urdu critics who felt the need to revive the old tradition of Dastaan Goi, and he spent around 25 years finding these Dastaans.

It is claimed that he is the only person on earth who has thoroughly read all 46 volumes of this gigantic collection of Dastaan Amir Hamza. He later published a series of four books titled Sahari Shahi Sahib Qirani, in which he discussed Dastaan Amir Hamza in detail. He had a project on his mind, so he engaged Mahmood Farooqi to organize Dastaan Goi events in India. Mahmood spent 3 to 4 years researching the history of Dastaan Gos and their presentation style, and Dastaan Amir Hamza's first show took place in 2006 in Delhi. He kept working on its craft, making changes, finding traditional actors, and now they have a group of Dastaan Gos who have spread all over India. The group also adapted some Dastaans seeking help from the craft of the old tradition, of which Chouboli is a part. These Dastaan Goi Shows received attention worldwide, and some students from NAPA showed interest in extending the revival movement. They started conducting shows in Pakistan. The Pakistani group also recently started writing Dastaans, adapting the traditional style.

Musharraf Ali Farooqi is a contemporary novelist, storyteller, translator and publisher who has published a translated version of Tilism-e-Hoshruha. He recently started a new project that will publish Classical Urdu Qissas and aims to publish 5 to 6 Qissas in 1 year: which will be made available in book form, English and Urdu. A couple of months ago, he and some other literature lovers published the first volume of Tilism-e-Hoshruha; one part out of the 46 volumes of Dastaan Amir Hamza – and the group envisions publishing Tilism-e-Hoshruha in 24 volumes.



Figure 3. Nazrul Hassan and Fawad Khan telling Tilism-e-Hoshruha at NCA, Oct 2014

So the tradition of Dastaan Goi that started with the emergence of language took many turns in one way or another, but it is still happening with humans as life always has stories to tell. Why is this tradition so important? Because all of us are storytellers. From the West to the East, from the Dastaans to Dylan and the Noha to the Dirge.

There is a story about Bob Dylan, who visited Woody Guthrie and would play songs to him while the latter was lying in a hospital bed in the final days of his earthly convalescence. There was a dialogue in his songs that told a much deeper story than can ever be imparted through a written account of the interaction. On paper, it is a story of an aspiring musician singing to his mentor. But the density of the page does not capture the pauses and the embrace of the music that Dylan played to Guthrie – in the same way that a story about a song's creation cannot capture the essence of the music itself.

Words cannot represent the real situation because they are a record of where one was. Where one is, is evoked by the oral. The images become much more expressive in gesture and speech. And that exchange is never satiated by a written account. The Dastaan is unique in this because we come to the Dastaans and their performance in a way books (that are always available to us) generally fail to do so. The vibrancy of the human mind and body makes storytelling much more analogous to direct experience. Undoubtedly, with the arrival of technology, its forms have changed, but the spirit is the same – to tell stories. To conclude with Saaqi Nama that is recited before Dastaan:

مشتاقِ میرِ اہلِ بزمِ اے جاہ
سب دیکھ رہے ہیں دیر سے راہ
آغازِ بیاہ کر و یہاں سے
رونقِ دو سخن کو داستاں سے

The author is a photographer and visual/performing artist – and his works may be accessed at <https://visura.co/waqasmanzoor/about>.



DIVIDE AND RULE - IQBAL

A FIRESIDE CHAT WITH ONE OF PAKISTAN'S FIRST EXPLICITLY POLITICAL RAPPERS

IQBAL is a recent graduate from the Lahore University of Management Sciences. As a member of the university's famous music society, which has produced the likes of Ali Hamza, Natasha Noorani and Zahra Paracha, IQBAL has taken the Pakistani hip-hop scene by storm.

His first two albums, Baaghi and Jiski Lathi Uski Bhens, were huge hits – resonating with thousands across Pakistan, primarily for their political messaging. One of his better known songs are Khudday Line, in which he goes after corruption, feudalism, gangsterism, religious extremism and the general toxicity pervading across almost all facets of Pakistani society. Another is Sab Maya Hai, the music video of which is a real treat. Here, IQBAL depicts the mainstream politicians of Pakistan engaged in a tug of war battle among themselves while the ordinary citizen is left to fight for the scraps. The heavy symbolism, in terms of the satire and direct language, has created ripples across young audiences – particularly of the progressive bent.

We sat down with IQBAL to discuss his most recent album, Divide and Rule, for a deep dive into the mind of the budding star to try exploring his history and the overarching philosophy of his craft – and to get his thoughts on the music industry of Pakistan.

Talk to us about your journey as a budding artist in Pakistan – who were the artists/influences that originally appealed to you and what was it about their music that inspired you take up the craft yourself?

If I go back and think about what might've influenced the specific kind of rap music I now make, I'd have to say it began with other political underground rappers such as Immortal Technique from the US and Latin America, Lowkey from the UK, Vinnie Paz, etc. – particularly the first two.

I gravitated towards these artists at a young age, perhaps 16 or



17, because even though I'd explored the various sides of hip-hop growing up, there was something about political rap music – the aggression, and more importantly the element of relatability, that really struck a chord with me. The kind of society we come from, which I was a part of, I could see being reflected in their music. Other rappers, like Drake and Eminem for instance, are great in terms of their music – but as far as relatability goes I found them lacking. With folks like Immortal Technique, I was able to see a clear connection between their lyrics and, say, things I saw on the news. So it hit differently.

In terms of ideas and the themes my own songs take, I'd say they're heavily inspired by the texts I happen to be reading at any given point. With *Divide and Rule* in particular, I was reading a lot of Bhagat Singh prior to putting together the record – and listeners will experience that I'm sure. In today's age, the media – such as television series – that I'm consuming also naturally inspires me and finds its way into my music, which does tend to have a lot of pop culture references.

What is the overarching idea behind *Divide and Rule* and what message are you trying to deliver through the tracks?

Personally I've always been fond of consuming art that is open-ended. I say this for shows, films, any kind of art really – because it leaves room for discourse which tends to foster a movement towards a conclusion that multiple different people, sometimes from drastically divergent schools of thought, can ultimately agree on. As an artist, if you define the message at the outset then naturally it will limit the interpretations that listeners would otherwise be able to entertain. Just like I have various kinds of thoughts while producing my music, I'd like my listeners to have a similar kind of experience rather than specifically informing them what the take-home message is. That will lead to questions, discussions, exchange, etc. and function to educate and move the conversation forward on whatever the salient theme happens to be.

There's no overarching idea to my music, but I do try to maintain an element of subversion, sarcasm, and even pessimism to what I do. I wouldn't exactly call it 'revolutionary', which some circles have associated with me, but I'm very pessimistic in terms of macro level change – I think our institutions are incredibly solidified in terms of their pathologies – so there is a kind of bleakness, if you'd like to call it that, which I want my listeners to walk away with. We're consuming idealistic slogans all the time, and I like to challenge that sort of utopian thinking.

How is this record different from your previous ones - in terms of genre, inspiration, and overarching theme?

This record is much more polished, in the sense that when I look back at my previous work – *Jiski Laathi*, *Uski Bhens* and *Bhaagi* – it was much more direct. With this one, I go much deeper in terms of analysis, referencing, etc. It's much more cryptic, but also cohesive: there's a theme and atmosphere. The old ones didn't exactly have anything that tied them together, this one does – as the name suggests.

Importantly, my primary motivation is to always make music for my own consumption. I tend to produce what I like to listen to myself, and as I age I have to ensure my music reflects my own evolution over time. Naturally that'll mean every record will have its own distinct feel and flavour – and I'd like for that to continue as I progress as an artist.



73

'Fraudiye' was my personal favorite track off the record, not only in terms of the symbolism but also sonically - Eva's presence is central and adds so much depth. Talk about the song and your experience working with her.

First off, thanks a lot – Fraudiye is one of my favourites too. Yes, the symbolism is there but also the collaboration aspect – Eva and I have known each other for 3-4 years and have been meaning to collaborate for a long time. I'm not someone who collaborates for the sake of collaboration, so I wanted to wait for the right time to go through with this. I always want my collaborators to really add something to the track. Eva was perfect for Fraudiye – the minute I completed the beat and concept for the song I knew I had to share it with her, she was the first person that came to mind. So yes, my experience working with her was great and I really look forward to working with her more. She's one of my favourite rappers in the entire South Asian hip-hop scene.

Maanu, who you have a song with on the record is a Luminite like yourself. What are your thoughts on his trajectory and what was it like working with him on 'Rehn Do'? LUMS seems to have produced quite a lot of great talent over the past few years. What is it about the place?

I'm extremely proud of what Maanu has accomplished and he has a lot more in store, and I wish him the best of luck obviously. Him and I have been very closely, musically, since we met at the Music Society of LUMS. In terms of my collaboration with him on the record, he was also one of the people who I knew I had to work with at some point. It was actually a challenge for me doing this, because I knew I had to step up into a world – which is his world – which was quite new for me personally. In terms of the beat, lyrics, etc. I had to change my style a bit. And I think it was the same for him, incorporating a political dimension to his music was something new that he was doing. We found a solid middle ground with Rehn Do.

About LUMS, I think what drives the incubation of talent there – and I was recently talking to someone about this actually – is that it allows you to make mistakes. For example, even just in terms of student societies and how they're run – the kind of money that you have to manage as a student and the responsibility that comes with it – and the sort of mistakes that you inevitably make during that particular experience all prepares you for life post graduation. The skills you learn through those engagements help not just in music, but in whichever field you happen to be a part of once you're out of the place. It sounds like a trivial thing, but I think it's huge: it's what gives you the confidence and ability to avoid repeating those mistakes when the stakes are a lot higher. That is what makes LUMS so unique.

Your songs have always been political in nature - is that deliberate? If so, what is the philosophy behind the approach?

I see my art as a means through which people can have difficult conversations among themselves – which they would otherwise not be able to, or would be reluctant to. Writing a song, for me, is similar to how I'd approach a research paper at university – a lot of what I'm reading shapes what I ultimately end up writing. Some political books that have influenced me recently are Rule by Fear, by Ammar Ali Jan; Wages of Rebellion by Chris Hedges; various books by Slavoj Žižek for instance; Faiz Ahmed Faiz; and even things outside of non-fiction. So it's a mixed bag.

I think a lot of rappers in Pakistan are political. Some of them might not be overtly political, but they do touch upon various themes that can be seen as political. Is mental health, for instance, not a political issue? A lot of rappers talk about those things now. As far as colonial referencing goes I do feel like I'm on a bit of an island – which at times makes it difficult to collaborate with other artists. One of the best

things about it, though, is that political music will never be irrelevant: politics is never going to go away.

On this particular album I've focused on things like South Asian identity, domestic violence, freedom movements, colonial history, and toxic culture more generally. For instance in *Fraudiye*, when I say, 'Baher hota kuch, kartay ghar per tor por,' it is about a pervasive issue in South Asian communities where the anger and bitterness of the outside world is sort of taken out at home – which needs to be highlighted and talked about more. There have to be broad conversations about real life experiences that people are having, and I think art is a great way to achieve that.

Even in terms of the album art, if you look closely, the separation in the centre actually represents the border between

Pakistan and India – and the text is from the same page too, just transitioning from Urdu to Hindi. So there are all these political messages embedded into every aspect of what I do.

Today's era in former colonies is hardly dissimilar from what was taking place while the colonizers were still around – whereby lines were drawn between communities for purposes of control, subjugation, and exploitation. The way we treat our minorities today is a great example of that. It's a cycle of violence. And at some point I think the onus is on us to break away from the wrongs of the past and chart out a new path for ourselves.

I think we're making some progress in that direction, for instance the response to the Queen of England's passing was such that there were two camps – one mournful and the other less sentimental, to say the least. Another example is the ongoing discussions around the transgender rights bill. I'm glad we're finally having these debates and it's a start. Hopefully my work can contribute to these developments in some way.

Do you do music full time? If not, why - and what is your day job? Tell us about that!

I have two things I'm passionate about: teaching and music. Both represent the act of performing to me, when I'm on stage and when in the classroom when I'm teaching History and World Affairs – particularly South Asian history. Teaching gives me the same sort of fulfilment as music does, so I'd like to continue doing both. Maybe at some point I'll have to let it go, especially if the music grows to the point where I'm unable to grant teaching the time it deserves – but as things stand I'd want to be involved with both for sure, dividing my time equally between the two. The value I assign to both is pretty much at par and I wouldn't want to miss out on either.

Being a young artist yourself, what advice do you have for someone who might just be starting off in the music industry of Pakistan?

First of all, I'd like to say that I'm just barely starting off myself, even though it's been about 7 years doing it. I say that because I'm still figuring things out all the time, for instance in terms of marketing myself and how that is done – particularly in the age of social media. The advice I'd give someone who's just starting off is to try creating the music that you like to consume, and to not take yourself too seriously. If you try to focus on trends, especially in the Tik Tok era where a song that is 5-6 seconds long will go viral for a few days before disappearing into obscurity as the next one comes around, it will always be a failing strategy.

Sure, you should experiment – but at the end of the day there has to be a strong foundation to your music. And have something to fall back on in terms of your sound. Focus on music you want to consume – in terms of production, lyrics, etc. – and then consider what others would enjoy.

IQBAL's music may be found on Spotify and he is on Instagram as @iqbalofficial.



PIDE BI-MONTHLY ROUNDUP

WORKING PAPERS

- Establishing Grievance Redressal System in Efficient Service Delivery: A Case Study of the Sehat Sahulat Program in Pakistan – Shujaat Farooq and Nabila Kunwal
- Digitalisation and Disruption: Consequences for Business and Theory – Mariam Mohsin and Fizzah Khalid Butt

RESEARCH REPORTS/MONOGRAPHS

- Inflation Analytics – Abdul Jalil, Nasir Hamid Rao, Mukhtar Ul Hasan, Farrukh Abbas Mirza
- Parallel Education Streams in the Public Sector – Muhammad Jehangir Khan
- Regulatory Environment of the Professions in Pakistan – Umer Ijaz Gilani

KNOWLEDGE BRIEFS

- Is World Bank a Bank for Knowledge Management or Paradigm Maintenance – Fahd Zulfiqar
- Analyzing the Effects of E-Waste on Human Health and Environment: A Case Study of Pakistan – Mohammad Armughan and Sameen Zafar
- A Review of Urban Rental Housing Regulations in Pakistan and Lessons from Practices in Developed World – Abid Rehman
- Destruction of Dengue, A Vector-Borne Disease: Lack of Awareness and Knowledge – Waqar Younas and Abedullah

BASICS (BELIEFS, ATTITUDES, SOCIAL CAPITAL, INSTITUTIONS, COMMUNITY AND SELF)

- Desire to Live in Pakistan: Stay or Leave? – Durre Nayab

WEBINARS

- The Space/Place of Public Libraries in Development Discourse of Pakistan – Haroon Usmani, Sakhawar Ali, Muhammad Rafiq, Aqsa Ghazi
- Narrative Analysis and Sense Making in Development – Dave Snowden
- Road Transportation: The Unregulated Entirety – Faisal Siddiqui and Sameer Chishty
- The Psychosocial Value of Employment – Reshmaan N. Hussam

EVENTS

- 37th Annual General Meeting of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists – BUIITEMS, Quetta
- Information Session and Recruitment Drive – Teach for Pakistan
- Food Pricing Policy in Pakistan in Collaboration with FAO
- Book Launch: Pakistan's Wars, An Alternative History – Tariq Rahman
- 40 Years of Diplomatic Ties Between Pakistan and Korea – Trade, Investment and Human Resource
- Developing the Essential Skills to Make Quality Decisions: Give Yourself A Nudge – Ralph L. Keeney
- Analysis of the IMF Program – Khurram Husain and Khaqan Hassan Najeeb
- Political Islam in South Asia: Multiple Perspectives from Actors and Society – Dietrich Reetz



36TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PAKISTAN SOCIETY OF DEVELOPMENT ECONOMISTS

Pakistan Society of Development Economists (PSDE) is the only Professional Association of Economists housed at Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad. PSDE was established in 1982 and it has been conducting annual conferences on the most pressing economic and social issues of Pakistan each year since 1984. This year, PSDE conducted its 36th Annual General Meeting, titled “Charter of Economy: Investment, Productivity and Employability”, in Quetta. The event, which spanned three days, took place during November 22-24, 2022 at the Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS), Quetta.

As per the tradition, the Conference featured invited lectures by eminent international scholars, panel discussions involving relevant stakeholders, and parallel technical sessions. Important dignitaries including H.E. Riina Kionka, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan; Mir Jan Muhammad Khan Jamali, Governor Balochistan; Florence Rolle, FAO Country representative; Najy Benhassine, Country Director for Pakistan for the South Asia region, The World Bank Group, attended and contributed to the proceedings of the conference. In addition, PSDE’s conference was attended by Vice Chancellors, civil servants, technocrats, economists, development practitioners, entrepreneurs, academicians, policymakers, students, and relevant stakeholders. In total, approximately 400 participants physically attended the Conference each

day but with online streaming and Social Networks, thousands participated and took away key messages from the sessions.

Pakistan Society of Development Economists has followed the tradition of engaging eminent scholars from within Pakistan and abroad to generate debate on key development issues. In 2022, Noble Laureate and Professors from Stanford, MIT and Oxford graced the conference by joining to discuss the main themes of the conference. Similarly, business leaders delivered Special Invited Lectures and were part of panel discussions during the three day conference. Moreover, 22 technical papers were presented by academics from around Pakistan and overseas to touch upon different aspects of the conference themes. In sum, we had Six Invited Lectures, Six Panel Discussions, 2 special Session, 2 debates, 6 parallel technical sessions and an Open Mic session to discuss the said themes of the conference.

The distinguished lectures were delivered by Professor Michael Spence, Nobel Laureate and The Philip H. Knight Professor & Dean, Emeritus, Stanford University. We also had Professor David Autor, Ford Professor & Margaret Macvicar Faculty Fellow, MIT. Professor Nathan Lane also joined us for Keynote lecture from University of Oxford, UK.



Additionally, the special invited lectures to be delivered include: Lecture by Mr. Aezaz Hussain, Chairman & Founder, Visionet Systems and Chairman, Systems Limited. Lecture by Mr. Muhammad Ali Tabba, CEO Lucky Group and an invited lecture by Mr Abdul Samad Dawood, Vice Chairman, Dawood Hercules Corporation Limited.



Similarly, the six panel discussions from experts with diverse professional experience helped us decode major policy issues related to different themes of the conference. PSDE has also introduced a standalone debate segment this year, which took deliberations beyond the 'Panel of Experts' to include audiences in the conversation, whether that be online or in a physical capacity. This year more than 100 paper submissions were received, out of which 22 papers were selected for presentation at the conference.



This is the second consecutive year that PSDE has taken the conference out of Islamabad to the regional centres to add local context to our policy debates. PSDE is thankful to BUTEMS and the University of Balochistan for being wonderful hosts. Furthermore, this conference is also unique in the sense that it is not just a collaboration between two higher education institutes but in fact, we had presence of students and faculty from seven different Universities and two sub campuses from across Balochistan. These include: Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University; University of Gwadar; Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water & Marine Sciences; University of Loralai and University of Turbat along with two sub campuses of BUTEMS in Zhob and Muslim Bagh. Such efforts would help build networks, capable of harnessing long lasting relationships and much-needed academia-policy maker linkages, to put our country on the path of development.



It has been a tradition of the PSDE to finance students to attend the PSDE Conference each year in person. Despite deep financial constraints owing to extended lodging and boarding expenses, mainly due to air travel, PSDE kept this tradition alive and funded students from the Universities of Gwadar, Turbat, Loralai, Lasbaila and Zhob & Muslim Bagh campuses of BUTEMS.

Finally, PSDE is thankful for the support of the sponsors who remained collaborators in successfully organizing the conference. Sponsors' support remained instrumental in making this conference happen and PSDE extends its sincere gratitude to all the donors for their support. Fourteen local and international sponsors supported the 36th PSDE conference.

Sincerely,

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Pakistan Society of Development Economists
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