

# INTRODUCING DEBATES

ABBAS MOOSVI

As we gear up to transition from 'Policy and Research' to 'Discourse', one of the key additions to our catalogue is the Debates series! A culture of intellectual vibrancy and exchange is what

fuelled the Renaissance in Europe, whereby novel, profound, and provocative ideas were painstakingly introduced to the mix – inviting communities to reflect and to challenge established norms and structures. This was true even in the Muslim world during the Golden Ages, when scholars were constantly churning out new perspectives to enhance their understanding of the world around them and pursue progress – seeing it as a religious duty to do so. If that were the case then, why not now?

In Pakistan, this phenomenon has systematically been clamped down upon due to the insecurities of those occupying the corridors of power, whether that be civilian governments or military dictatorships. The beauty of insightful thought, however, is that it only gains momentum with every subsequent attempt at squashing it: particularly in the age of the interwebs!

In lieu of this, we intend on kick-starting a series of debates in these pages over the coming months – engaging a diverse range of perspectives from everyone including but not limited to academics, activists, politicians, bureaucrats, policy analysts, development practitioners, and corporate sector professionals. One pressing issue – based on emergent socio-political and economic developments – will be selected for each edition, along with a proposition and opposition stance. Two experts will then be nominated to present the strongest possible argument for each side, and you – the audience – will be free to decide which comes out on top!

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In the next issue, we intend on covering electoral reform – a talking point that has dominated public discourse since the ouster of Imran Khan as Prime Minister. The two primary hot topics of this debate are, of course, electronic voting machines and the participation of overseas Pakistanis – and while those two will certainly form the central theme, we will encourage critical takes on the framing of the debate question itself for an added dose of flavour and nuance to the discussion. In other words, a subtheme animating the exchange will be whether technical interventions into the manner in which the electoral system functions can suffice to address the larger pathologies of governance that characterize Pakistan's political landscape.

But that's not all! In addition, we intend on bringing our material to you on social media – where each debate will be followed by a Twitter Space on the same topic, where we will welcome your opinions on the two viewpoints presented. We are a think-tank, but we don't like the way our 'sector' is structured. We wish to democratize rather than preach from pulpits, and credentials – while important – should have no influence in determining access to platforms. Policy can never be a one-way street, and an organic, bottom-up, decentralized approach to progress and development is what we ultimately believe in and promote: because no 'expert' can ever truly know what the intricate dynamics on the ground are. Only the people living that reality can. And we will amplify their voices.

We look forward to your support and interest in this ambitious new venture, hoping that it sparks a much needed dose of inquisitiveness and critical thinking among the general public – by far the most important stakeholder in all things relating to policy decisions.