

ANNUAL REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Jinnah Institute	1
Strategic Security Initiative	2
REPORTS	3
Bracing for the Long-haul: Hopes and Challenges Defining the Intra-Afghan Talks.....	3
Pakistan's Macroeconomy And The Covid-19 Pandemic	5
POLICY BRIEFS	7
Tackling Climate Change During a Pandemic	7
Broadening Pakistan's Search for Geopolitical Stability in a Contested Neighborhood	9
Confronting Pakistan's Climate Reality: Shifting Paradigms	10
Asia's Rise to Economic Prominence: Stakes for South Asia	11
Reaping a Poor Harvest: Food Security in a Pandemic	12
Caught in the Crossfire: The Dilemma of Fisherfolk Prisoners	13
South Asia in Transition: Finding Stability in the Third Nuclear Age	15
OPINION EDITORIALS	16
After India's Skirmish with China, is Pakistan Next?.....	16
Pakistan and the New Great Game.....	17
The Forgotten People	18
Ties with Israel.....	19
How to Engage America after the Election.....	20
Shifting Regional Alliances	21
RCEP: A 'Post-Alliance' World.....	22
The Eastern Question: Part I	23
The Eastern Question: Part II.....	24
Of Signals and Compulsions	25
Terms for Peace.....	26
Recalibrating Priorities.....	27
POLICY ROUNDTABLES	28
Jinnah Institute Roundtable I: Stocktaking Prospects for Stability in South Asia	28
Jinnah Institute Roundtable II: Stocktaking Prospects for Stability in South Asia	30
Virtual Roundtable on <i>Negotiating the Endgame in Afghanistan</i>	33
Virtual Roundtable on <i>Moving Past Quagmire: Power-Share and Governance Futures in Afghanistan</i>	36
Virtual Roundtable on <i>The Future of Kashmir: A Test for Global Multilateralism and Regional Peace</i>	40
Virtual Roundtable on <i>Can technology build an architecture for democratic governance?</i>	43
Virtual Roundtable on <i>Post COVID Futures: Road to Adaptability – Has COVID Disrupted Path Dependencies for Climate Governance</i>	46

Virtual Roundtable on <i>Post COVID Futures: Road to Adaptability – Has COVID Disrupted Path Dependencies for Climate Governance</i>	49
Virtual Roundtable on <i>Post COVID Futures: How can Climate Governance be Milestoned</i>	52
Virtual Roundtable on <i>Post COVID Futures: Upgrading Social Governance – Part I</i>	55
Virtual Roundtable on <i>Post COVID Futures: Upgrading Social Governance – Part II</i>	58
Virtual Roundtable on <i>'Run of luck: Is the economy making a comeback?</i>	61
POST COVID FUTURES: ROUND TABLE - <i>Covid-19 and Public Health in South Asia: Impact and Policy Solutions</i>	62
Post-COVID Futures: <i>The Prolonged Pandemic: Can public policy be retooled for delivery?</i>	65
Post-COVID Futures: <i>Economic Recovery and Rebuilding</i>	67
When September Ends: <i>Drawdown, Spoilers, and Civil War in Afghanistan</i>	69
DIALOGUES	72
Chao Track Virtual Dialogue 2020.....	72
CONFERENCES	74
Ideas Conclave 2020	74
Open Democracy Initiative (ODI)	86
POLICY ROUNDTABLES	87
Webinar on The Ecology of Learning, Fun, and Activism	87
SPECIAL FEATURES	91
Road to 2021: Forecasting Change in Pakistan	91
Take One: The 2020 US Elections and a Biden Presidency: What Pakistan Should Expect in the Region.....	92
Flashpoint: Bracing for September	93

About Jinnah Institute

Jinnah Institute is an independent policy research and public advocacy think tank in Pakistan. The Institute advances the causes of:

- Democratic institution building and strengthening state capacity for delivery on policy goals;
- National and human security discourse with an emphasis on regional peace;
- Entitlement to fundamental rights and freedoms;
- Accountability of public bodies and government;
- Building public equity in a plural and inclusive national identity.

To meet these objectives, Jinnah Institute engages with policy-makers, government, media, civil society, state institutions and academia. The Institute actively seeks to articulate independent national security strategies for Pakistan which incorporate the country's strategic imperatives while providing room for constructive engagement with the international community, as well as policy and opinion makers.

By serving as a bridge between academia and policy-making, and focusing on capacity building for the state and other policy making institutions, the Institute creates an enabling context and public space for ideas and resources to come together through mediums such as policy briefs, reports, lectures, seminars, round-tables and caucuses.

Within this framework, the two overarching program areas under which the Institute undertakes a variety of projects and interventions are:

Open Democracy Initiative

Strategic Security Initiative

Under these operational streams, Jinnah Institute seeks to accomplish a series of different but complementary objectives that work towards achieving the Institute's overarching goal of establishing a more democratic, transparent and inclusive environment for policymaking and a more tolerant, open and peaceful Pakistan.

Strategic Security Initiative

Current geostrategic realities have not only magnified Pakistan's global relevance, but repeatedly headlined the onerous challenges it faces today. A porous border with Afghanistan, the repercussions of proxy jihad, the militarisation of foreign policy, the perception of an enhanced threat from India, the ongoing war on terrorism, and the radicalisation of society are a few of the core concerns that require immediate attention in order to achieve peace and stability in Pakistan.

In democracies, policy reviews are critical for building common ground. Without sustained policy dialogue on divisive issues, there is little room for consensus. Key national goals such as countering terrorism require supportive pluralities on crucial policy issues if the national security agenda is to be addressed coherently. Given the sustained threat from terrorists, it is vital for Pakistan's national security environment to engage in robust dialogue, develop policy frameworks, and build civil-military equilibrium. In addition, inter-agency cooperation between parliamentary, government and other institutions is needed in order to bridge critical gaps between policy-making and implementation.

The **Strategic Security Initiative** articulates independent national security strategies for Pakistan that incorporate the country's national policy imperatives, while carving out critical space for voices from civil society, media and academia. The initiative also encourages constructive engagement with the international community the local policy community to seek strategic convergences at multilateral and bilateral forums. Broadly speaking, the Strategic Security Initiative seeks to democratise the formulation of national security policy and build civil-military bridges in order to encourage a more open and inclusive security paradigm, with a particular focus on developing higher stakes in reversing the tide of religious extremism and violence.

REPORTS



Bracing for the Long-haul: Hopes and Challenges Defining the Intra-Afghan Talks

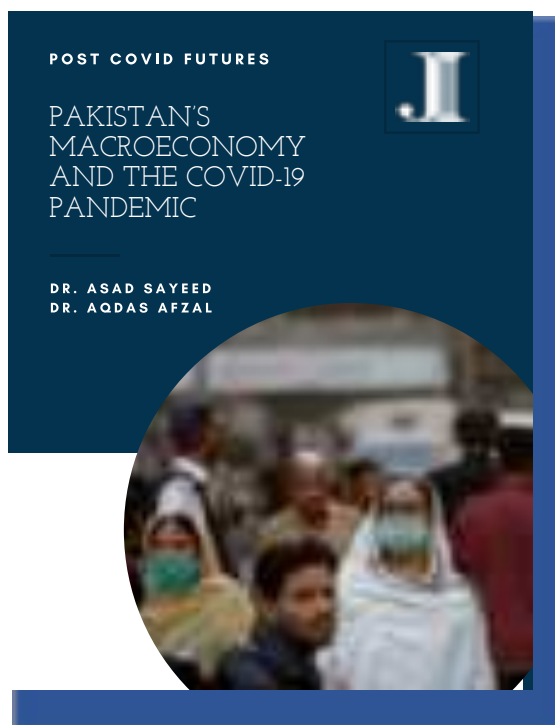
Abdulla Wasti

As the much-anticipated intra-Afghan talks take place in Doha, there is still a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the outcome of these negotiations. Is the Taliban's ideology compatible with democratic norms? What will be the nature of US and international engagement in Afghanistan going forward? More importantly, in the scenario that these negotiations result in an agreement, what does the future of the Afghan government look like in terms of its structure? This essay aims to examine three key themes; 1) what are the main hurdles faced by the two parties during the current negotiations; 2) what would be the make-up of a post-settlement Afghan government?; and 3) what are the prospects for the Taliban transitioning into a predominantly political movement.

While the commencement of talks between the concerned parties is a monumental step, the eventual success of these negotiations is contingent upon several key issues being addressed. First, the future of the Afghan constitution and deciding who would have the authority to interpret and enforce what constitutes as Islamic will continue to be a matter of contention between the two parties. Second, the structure of a post-war government and the degree of centralisation of power is a subject that has the potential of dividing the Afghan government's negotiating team, while the Taliban are yet to concretely define their views on the matter. Third, despite exhibiting

some signs of political maturity, questions remain over the ability of the Taliban to transition into a political movement and embrace democratic norms. The situation is further compounded by stressors such as the escalating level of violence, departure of US forces, an economic crisis, and potential factionalism within the Taliban. These factors could jeopardise not just the progress of these talks, but also the viability of a peace agreement. Hence, this complex inter-web of hurdles calls for cautious optimism and a great deal of patience on part of domestic, regional, and international supporters of the peace process.

Read the full report [here](#).



Pakistan's Macroeconomy And The Covid-19 Pandemic

Dr. Asad Sayeed & Dr. Aqdas Afzal

Nothing has had a more deleterious impact on the global economy in about a century since the Great Depression than COVID-19. Pakistan has by and large evaded the pandemic's worst fallout as the disease has had a varying intensity as elsewhere in the region, and our partial lockdowns allowed both industry and transport to remain functional through this period. COVID's third wave is reportedly on the decline across Pakistan, but the shocks felt through the economy over 2019-20 continue to reverberate into the current financial year. After close to 70 years, a negative GDP growth rate was recorded in 2019-20, FBR revenues were nominally below GDP growth and the budget deficit was at a historic high. The pandemic also exacerbated the rising the levels of poverty and inequality across the country.

As 2020 progressed, some indicators of Pakistan's macroeconomy improved. The current account deficit turned into a surplus for the first six months of the year – largely on the back of increasing remittances and low oil prices – and revenue growth also improved. Still, all prognoses of Pakistan's economy going into the future are far below countries that have had a much more severe impact from COVID-19 than Pakistan, and experienced longer and stricter lockdowns. According to the latest estimates by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Pakistan will keep facing anaemic economic growth numbers in the range of 1.5% as opposed to 6% for China, 11.5% for India, 6.7% for Malaysia, and 4.4% for Bangladesh.

This chapter will contextualise the weak structural foundations of Pakistan's economy, necessary to mark out a prognosis for recovery in a post-COVID future. Subsequently, we critically appraise the policy instruments used by the government in the midst of the pandemic on the benchmark of their impact on growth, stabilisation and on alleviating the stress that the poor and vulnerable have been subjected to.

Please find full text of the chapter [here](#)

POLICY BRIEFS



Tackling Climate Change During a Pandemic

Shafqat Kakakhel

The lockdowns prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic have caused massive disruptions in economic and commercial activities all over the world. The movement of individuals and goods has been curtailed by the suspension of transport within and across countries. Markets and shops have been shut down, industrial workers have either been laid off or stayed away from sealed factories, and white-collar workers have often been forced to ‘work from home.’ School and college lessons and conferences of all type have had to go online because of social distancing guidelines and the closing of educational institutions and meeting halls. Important global events such as the Olympics, the Biodiversity Convention and the annual United Nations (UN) conference on climate change have also been postponed until next year.

The responses to this suspension of all sorts of human activities have been varied, depending on the specific circumstances and experiences of individuals, groups, countries and societies. Practical measures to cope with the situation have been accompanied by multi-faceted conversations about their positive and negative impacts, including on the environment and climate.

This policy brief is divided into two parts. The first part encapsulates the debate in the world media about the positive and negative implications of the lockdowns on the environment. It also reviews the efforts of the developed countries — except the United States — to counter the adverse economic fallout of Covid-19 through environment-friendly initiatives, especially the promotion of electric cars. It refers to the efforts of the Government of Pakistan to upgrade its healthcare infrastructure in order to deal with the pandemic as well as its initiatives to assist vulnerable citizens, such as daily-wagers, meet the essential needs of life. It describes the initiatives shaped by the government’s ‘Green Stimulus’ package, aimed at protecting the country’s natural resources as well as creating new jobs for the victims of economic upheaval.

The second part takes a longer view: it recalls the significant milestones in Pakistan's climate change agenda and concludes with some suggestions for the government.

Read the full brief [here](#).



Broadening Pakistan's Search for Geopolitical Stability in a Contested Neighborhood

Fahd Humayun

As tensions both in and around South Asia rise, this policy brief maps the most salient geopolitical stressors that require Islamabad's attention as Pakistan looks to rebuild and repair a post-pandemic economy at home, while ensuring survival in a challenging neighbourhood abroad. A year since India's BJP-ruled government unilaterally abrogated the special status and constitutional autonomy of the disputed territory of Jammu & Kashmir, regional tensions have risen. While India has tried to present the move as an internal affair and therein fait accompli, this has been unacceptable to Pakistan which has since sharply re-centred the internationalisation of the Kashmir dispute as the mainstay of its foreign policy. This has been moderately successful. Turkey and Iran, along with China, have condemned India's attempts to unilaterally revise the status quo in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJK) in contravention of existing United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 38, 39, 47 and 51 that affirm the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people. India's abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019 has impacted its ties with China: a deadly Sino-Indian confrontation in Ladakh this summer left many Indian soldiers dead after China resisted Indian attempts to expand its infrastructure along stretches of the un-demarcated border between the two Asian powers.[i] India has also since enhanced public visibility around its defence procurement and military modernisation, which are not without serious implications for strategic stability in South Asia. While to Islamabad's east, a stable, cold peace between China and India is far from guaranteed, to its west, Pakistan remains committed to doing what it can to aid Kabul and Washington manage a delicate intra-Afghan reconciliation now underway in Doha. India's position, one that views the Taliban's return to power as an unfavourable outcome, is an added strain to regional peace building efforts.

Read the full brief [here](#).



Confronting Pakistan's Climate Reality: Shifting Paradigms

Hassan Sipra

Pakistan's high vulnerability to climate change necessitates an urgent response. Strategies that catalyse low-carbon and create resilient development in the near-, mid- and end-of-century scenarios must be given momentum. Building capacity at home is integral to this process. Pakistan's focus on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the prevailing need for establishing long-term expertise on climate services can shape Pakistan's climate response. Other international partners can assist the evaluation of evidence as well as leverage international climate finance for mitigation and adaptation. The recommendations provided in this brief are aimed at mainstreaming climate change in the national development agenda and across all levels of society.

Read the full brief [here](#).



Asia's Rise to Economic Prominence: Stakes for South Asia

Saad Rajput

Longer term analyses of globalisation demonstrate how historical supply chains have sustained across regions, and exerted transformative influence over geographies that aligned their production and knowledge systems with them. Many of Pakistan's modern-day metropolises were well marked on ancient trade routes, and continue to facilitate regional commerce across borders today. Cities like Peshawar, Multan and Lahore have prospered through millennia in tandem with interconnected South and West Asian communities.

Pakistan's bid for deepening economic cooperation in the region and beyond will benefit by reading where the rest of South Asia stands in comparison, as well as recognising the many opportunities available within wider Asia. While CPEC presents a sure-footed path to prosperity, Pakistan's trade policy must also leverage the phenomenal growth witnessed in so many Asian economies, and enable integration within their supply chains.

Read the full policy brief [here](#).



Reaping a Poor Harvest: Food Security in a Pandemic

Fauzia Yazdani and Shirin Gul

Among other disruptions taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic was the periodic shortage of food staples in Pakistan over 2020. Much of this was attributed to malfunctioning supply chains, poor governance or hoarding scandals. But it also exposed the dire food insecurity of a country whose traditional strengths include agricultural production and export. The pandemic placed immense strain on already weak governance structures and slowed down large segments of the economy. Like the rest of the world, Pakistan struggled to provide for its poorest cohorts who continue to experience a near permanent state of food vulnerability.

However, food shortages predate the pandemic by decades. Unchecked population growth, climate induced stress and diminishing growth in the agriculture sector are the usual factors explaining why food availability is constrained. This brief will contextualise additional stresses that have emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and review economic, political and social patterns that structure Pakistan's path to food security. It highlights national policy stances towards reducing multidimensional poverty, of which food insecurity is a primary component, and provides recommendations to course-correct policy frameworks and implementation, based on later-day evidence.

Read the full policy brief [here](#).



Caught in the Crossfire: The Dilemma of Fisherfolk Prisoners

Abdulla Wasti, Meera Nadeem and Zahaid Rehman

The arrest of fisherfolk of India and Pakistan on the maritime border between the two countries has been an issue of serious concern and engagement for almost three decades. While the conflict between the two neighbours at sea is quite different from the one on land, the two are inextricably linked since the escalation of tensions at terrestrial boundaries has resulted in aggressive action at sea. Every year, dozens of fishing boats from both countries are detained by the Indian and Pakistani governments on charges of trespassing into enemy waters, and flung into jail, often languishing there for years. Almost invariably poor and unlettered, they rarely have any documentation. These fishermen are treated as criminals, unfairly penalised and vilified for the doings of unresolved history and unmarked geography. Prison conditions for these prisoners are miserable, and their already marginalised families back home continue their struggle for survival.

The trend thus far has been that when tensions between two countries heat up, the arrests of fisherfolk by both countries increase. While there have been interventions in the past by civil society groups bringing some temporary relief, there have been no serious attempts on part of either government to seek a permanent solution to the issue of fisherfolk prisoners. Instead, the release of these prisoners now serves the purpose of a Confidence-Building Measure (CBM) that is contingent on the vicissitudes of the India- Pakistan relationship.

The issue of fisherfolk prisoners lacks a straightforward solution since it lies at the intersection of political, legal, and environmental roadblocks. From the Sir Creek Dispute to hurdles surrounding consular access, and the depletion of resources in the Gujarat Sea, it is crucial to untangle these three dimensions to the issue in order to gain a holistic understanding. This policy brief attempts to do just that and proposes policy recommendations to seek a longstanding resolution which would alleviate the miseries of innocent fisherfolk on both sides of the border who have been caught in the crossfire for far too long.

Read the full policy brief [here](#).



South Asia in Transition: Finding Stability in the Third Nuclear Age

Sitara Noor

The month of May marked 23 years since Pakistan and India tested their atomic bombs and gatecrashed the nuclear club. Commemorated as *Yaum-e-Takbeer* in Pakistan and National Technology Day in India, the anniversaries of the nuclear tests usually draw statements from political leaders reaffirming the national resolve to upgrade defence technologies and vigilance in the face of existential threats. But the force with which COVID-19 has ravaged India's populace and created a spate of socio-economic vulnerabilities in Pakistan, the order of existential priorities has been recast for both nuclear-armed neighbours. The statements issued this year were less declamatory, perhaps also to reflect the recent non-aggression pact on the Line of Control signed earlier this year, and subsequent discussions on resuming bilateral dialogue.

In the two decades since India and Pakistan conducted their nuclear tests, there have been repeat cycles of normalisation and aggression that delivered new precedents for diplomacy, as well as reappraisals for nuclear and conventional war-gaming. The more recent crises of Pulwama and Balakot in 2019 were significant for their scale of hostilities and potential risks, as both nuclear neighbours engaged in an air skirmish against one another for the first time since 1971. "A stroke of luck" deescalated the crisis, as some have argued, and highlighted the need to fasten risk reduction measures around escalation that prevent and help manage crises.

Please find full text of the policy brief [here](#).

OPINION EDITORIALS



After India's Skirmish with China, is Pakistan Next?

Fahd Humayun

The worst border skirmish between India and China in the Himalayas for decades has abated for now, but the potential for crisis still looms large over a nuclear-armed South Asia. Last week, India announced it was formally downgrading relations with Pakistan, by reducing the staff at its High Commission by 50 percent. The last time India asked for a similar reduction of embassy staff was in 2001, following an attack on the Indian Parliament. Bilateral ties between the two sides have been shunted since New Delhi unilaterally revoked the special status of the disputed territory of Jammu & Kashmir on August 5 last year and intensified a draconian crackdown in the occupied Valley.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



Pakistan and the New Great Game

Sherry Rehman

As the China-India conflict in the Himalayas blows hot and blows cold, Islamabad's studied reticence has so far only signaled quiet alarm. While both China and India try to de-escalate on the LAC via special representatives, the India-Pakistan relationship has seen no such noise reduction.

Tension in South Asia, in fact, is steadily rising because the perils of Indian expansionism have caught up with Narendra Modi. Not only did the Ladakh episode cost Modi brand-erosion as India's Hindutva strongman, but his miscalculation of China's stakes in Aksai Chin in declaring Ladakh Union territory has brought China into the Kashmir dispute. More so for Modi, rather than India, the stakes are make-or-break. The upcoming Bihar state polls in November suggest that he may continue strategic strikes on Chinese apps and imports, while seeking LAC pull-backs, but it may well be Pakistan where the projection of his diminished power could be focused.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



The Forgotten People

Sherry Rehman

August 5th 2019 is only one of them, yet it should have marked a watershed in world history, like October 27th 1947 when a despotic Dogra ruler stripped Kashmiris of their voice and their vote by acceding to India without their consent.

In the parlance of an international community that is ruled largely by self-interest and realpolitik, Kashmir has been relegated to an irksome regional problem that should be airbrushed away as a small stain on human history. Why does its story bear re-telling? Because it is not just a watershed in the realm of the unusual usurpations of a people's rights, against all law and constitutional convention, but also of the laws of the world's multilateral arbiter of lawful order among states, the United Nations. India's authoritarian PM, Narendra Modi did not just annex any territory on August 5th 2019, he used India's military force to change the status of territory that is disputed under a UN Charter. The perilous reality that this territory lies between two nuclear countries that have repeatedly gone to war with each other was not just ignored, but is also a dispute placed consciously among the 'forgotten files' by global powers that can effect change.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



Ties with Israel

Fahd Humayun

Last week's decision by the UAE and Israel to normalize ties is testament to a fast changing landscape in the Middle East. While Saudi Arabia has put speculation to rest that it has any intention of following suit, it is still possible that Oman and Bahrain still might. The UAE is now the first Gulf state and third Arab nation to have established full diplomatic relations with Israel after Egypt and Jordan. While the deal should not come as a surprise, it carries at least four implications for Pakistan.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



How to Engage America after the Election

Fahd Humayun

As the dust settles on a closely contested Presidential election in Washington, many Pakistanis are wondering what kind of engagement they can expect from a superpower in the throes of political transition.

History might serve as a useful guide. Since 2001, geopolitical constraints have limited the scope for renewal in the Pak-U.S. relationship, domestic turning points in the U.S. notwithstanding. As the curtain closes on perhaps the most bitterly fought U.S. election in recent memory, two such structural constraints stand out among the determinants behind the new administration's engagement with Pakistan and South Asia over the next four years.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



Shifting Regional Alliances

Zahaid Rehman

The recently signed Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) between the US and India is rightly being viewed as a significant change in the balance of geo-strategic stability in the region. The US has long viewed China's increasing global power with ill-concealed anxiety, and with Beijing's growing investments in the Belt and Road Initiative, Washington has preferred to position India as the regional hegemon to rival and contain the rapidly moving Chinese economic advance across Eurasia.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



RCEP: A 'Post-Alliance' World

Zahaid Rehman

Whenever regional trading blocs are under discussion, free-market proponents are quick to point out the myriad benefits free-trade zones tend to bring. A windfall of revenue is promised.

An opening of the borders with mutually beneficial terms and transit routes stands to improve the quality of goods and services available and an opportunity for each state to focus on its unique competitive advantage. But even in our wildest dreams, we can scarce picture a trading cooperative of states that covers nearly a third of the global economy. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) stands to do just that for the 15 member countries currently signatories to the agreement.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



The Eastern Question: Part I

Fahd Humayun

How do states signal credibility and believability to their allies, adversaries and neutral fence-sitters? Given Pakistan's recently prepared dossier on India's terrorist involvement in Pakistan, pausing to consider this is important. This is because in the time since the dossier was publicly revealed on November 14, Pakistan has moved swiftly to disseminate the dossier and its contents with the United Nations, the UNSC P5, and members of the OIC. In the same time India has attempted to do the same with a dossier of its own. But will either/both move the needle on the Indo-Pak conflict in the court of international public opinion? And whose side will carry more weight?

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



The Eastern Question: Part II

Fahd Humayun

Will peace with India ever be possible? Before the ascent of Narendra Modi, there were certainly a greater number of optimists in Pakistan who believed not only was peace between the two countries possible, but that it was in Pakistan's long-term interests to have better relations with its eastern neighbor. Almost seven years on, the relationship between the two countries is perhaps the worst it has been at least descriptively speaking since the dark events of 1971. This is because even in moments of acute crisis since, there had always existed, normatively at least, an elite-understanding that total rupture was diplomatically and militarily cost-prohibitive. But notably, and for reasons and events undeniably linked to the BJP's populist resurgence after the Manmohan Singh era, today both India and Pakistan find themselves at a point where that consensus no longer holds.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



Of Signals and Compulsions

Fahd Humayun

It's early days yet, but after a period of protracted turbulence, the India-Pakistan relationship seems to be steadying.

This steadying has largely been attributed to a string of conciliatory statements in recent weeks. In early February, the Chief of Army Staff said it was time to extend a hand of peace in all directions, and that India and Pakistan must resolve the longstanding issue of Jammu & Kashmir. Weeks later the DGMOs of the two countries released a joint statement following discussions that were held "in a free, frank and cordial atmosphere" regarding a mechanism for hotline contact. In their statement, both sides agreed for strict observance of all agreements and understandings, and to cease firing along the Line of Control. Almost immediately, Indian news sources claimed the agreement was the result of back-channel contact between the two sides – a suggestion that Pakistan unambiguously refuted. Last week, the Prime Minister and Army Chief reiterated to audiences in Islamabad that while Pakistan was keen to pursue peace, the onus was on India to create an enabling environment for talks. This weekend Prime Minister Modi tweeted a get-well-soon message to the Pakistani Prime Minister after he tested positive for Covid-19.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



Terms for Peace

Sherry Rehman

As Pakistan lurches through its worst wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, talk of peace with India fuels a fresh round of speculation about prospects and obstacles in the path ahead. Peace, of course, is understood to be a broad public good in Pakistan among political and policy groups that take a long view of the region, especially given the high cost of conflict for two nuclear neighbours that have been at war four times since 1948, and at strategic loggerheads most of our postcolonial history.

The first problem is that this view is not necessarily reflected beyond a point in current Indian thinking, particularly among the ranks of the hyper-nationalist Modi's BJP, which is overtly different from the Vajpayee BJP, in as much as it has gone the extra mile in aggressively alienating Kashmiris and Indian Muslims as well as its own population of the poor, dispossessed and socially excluded Indians.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).



Recalibrating Priorities

Zahaid Rehman

With a little over four months left till the US' self-imposed deadline for withdrawal in Afghanistan, the narrative has shifted, from one of finding a lasting solution to instead preserving the partnership between Washington and Kabul. In the two decades since the war first started, the stated promises of bringing peace to Afghanistan and ending control of the Taliban by successive administrations have been forgotten.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's words last week on this are a significant indicator that US interest, much like the threat of terror—at least according to the US envoy—has moved elsewhere. Washington's stated focus is now China and the pandemic. This is further evidenced by the 'Annual Threat Assessment of US Intelligence Community', released in early April by ODNI.

Read the full op-ed [here](#).

POLICY ROUNDTABLES



Jinnah Institute Roundtable I: Stocktaking Prospects for Stability in South Asia

On August 26, 2020, Jinnah Institute hosted two back-to-back policy roundtables on Stocktaking Prospects for Stability in South Asia with the Senior Strategic Group and the Emerging Leaders Group of the Chao Track Dialogue at the Serena Hotel, Islamabad. A combined press release was published in all leading national dailies, detailed below, while an extensive event report was prepared for internal reporting purposes, that can be made available on request.

Senior Strategic Group – Event Report

August 26, 2020

India and Pakistan are in no condition or shape to talk, because existing platforms for conversation do not prevail, yet the need to contain the conflict is even more intense. This was stated in the first round of the policy roundtable discussion hosted by Jinnah Institute titled, 'Stocktaking Prospects for Stability in South Asia' on Wednesday, 26th August, 2020. Prominent foreign policy experts and existing and former government functionaries gathered at Serena Hotel in Islamabad

to discuss the future of Kashmir a year after the imposed lockdown by India in Indian-Occupied Kashmir.

Participants:

1. Ambassador Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry, *Director General of Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad and former Pakistani diplomat*
2. Ambassador Ashraf Jahangir Qazi, *former Pakistani diplomat*
3. Ambassador Aziz Khan, *Consultant at the National Defence University in Islamabad and former Pakistani diplomat*
4. Ambassador Riaz Khokhar, *former Pakistani diplomat*
5. Ambassador Tariq Fatemi, *former Pakistani diplomat and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs*
6. Ambassador Tehmina Janjua, *former Pakistani diplomat*
7. Ambassador Zamir Akram, *former Pakistani diplomat*
8. Dr. Khurram Dastgir, *Member of the National Assembly and former Minister of Commerce*
9. Dr Moeed Yusuf, *Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Security Division and Strategic Policy Planning*
10. Dr. Salma Malik, *Assistant Professor at the Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad*
11. Lieutenant-General Talat Masood, *retired three-star General of Pakistan Army and political commentator*
12. Prof. Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, *Professor at the School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad*
13. Mr. Mosharraf Zaidi, *Senior fellow, Tabadlab*
14. Mr. Ali Dayan, *Key Expert on Human Rights Capacity Building in Pakistan for the European Union and former Pakistan Director, Human Rights Watch*
15. Mr. Zahid Hussain, *Journalist and weekly contributor to Dawn*



Jinnah Institute Roundtable II: Stocktaking Prospects for Stability in South Asia

Emerging Leaders Group – Event Report

August 26, 2020

At the JI *Stocktaking Prospects for Stability in South Asia Roundtable*, the Emerging Leaders group of the Chao Track Indo-Pak Track II Dialogue convened to discuss ways forward on the Kashmir impasse, a year on since India's unilateral revocation of A370 in Jammu & Kashmir, and Pakistan's policy options to pursue the Kashmiri cause of self-determination on the international stage. This report reflects key takeaways from the day's discussion, where each discussant brought their experience from law, journalism, and public policy to address perennial problems as well as emerging challenges and risks to stability in South Asia.

Participants:

1. Jamal Aziz, *Senior Lawyer, Executive Director, Research Society of International Law*
2. Ali Mustafa, *Department of Strategic Studies, Faculty of Contemporary Studies, National Defense University*

3. Amber Rahim Shamsi, *Journalist and current affairs show host on Dawn News*
4. Fahd Humayun, *PHD candidate in political science at Yale University*
5. Taimur Shamil, *Columnist and current affairs show host on PTV World*
6. Wajahat Ali, *Editor, Arab News in Pakistan*
7. Usama Khilji, *Digital Rights Lawyer, Director at Bolo Bhi*
8. Asad Hashim, *Online correspondent for Al-Jazeera in Pakistan*

PRESS RELEASE

Restructure foreign policy to resolve Kashmir issue: experts

ISLAMABAD: India and Pakistan may both be disinterested in speaking to one another, but South Asia needs its perennial challenges to be resolved, including the Kashmir issue. Pakistan needs to renew its commitment to creating options on Kashmir and overturn India's strategy of containment, stated Senator Sherry Rehman at Jinnah Institute's policy roundtable discussion titled, 'Stocktaking Prospects for Stability in South Asia' on Wednesday, 26th August, 2020. Prominent foreign policy experts and existing and former government functionaries gathered at a local hotel to discuss the future of Kashmir a year after India imposed a lockdown on August 5th.

Participants at the roundtable debated the merits of Pakistan's global narrative on Kashmir. They questioned the official approach towards resolving the Kashmir issue. While agreeing that the issue had been internationalized to a great extent, through discussions in legislatures abroad, and advertisement campaigns in western capitals, Pakistan had a limited number of options from the diplomatic toolkit. They discussed that the foreign office needs to innovate its traditional foreign policy approach, and revise its methodologies that enable greater projection of Pakistan's interests and qualitative improvement of relations. They also discussed that Pakistan needed effective economic diplomacy based on institutional reform and capacity to deliver. The persistent differential in economic growth rates of India and Pakistan for the last 20-30 years had led to such large differentials in policy vision, outlook and credibility.

Participants stated that Prime Minister Modi was driving majoritarian Hindutva policies at home and abroad, that impeded good relations with India's neighbours. Nepal and Bangladesh had revised their diplomatic ties with India soon after the conflagration on the Indo-China border. They also agreed that the international community was unwilling to take preventive action on Kashmir, as India projected economic power and profitable markets, as evidenced by companies like Google setting up investment funds there. They stated that international human rights committees undertook token discussions about Kashmir which had no subsequent bearing on policy.

As far as the US was concerned, Pakistan would have to wait and see the outcome of the 2020 Presidential Elections. A victory for presidential candidate Joe Biden could potentially open up the avenue to engage India in the future, as his running mate, Kamala Harris; her large support base in the Indian diaspora could help normalize relations back in South Asia, and especially if she were to win the election.

The policy discussion was part of Jinnah Institute's long term Track 2 efforts that seek to enable stability in South Asia, and create space for articulating Pakistan's foreign policy imperatives.



Virtual Roundtable on *Negotiating the Endgame in Afghanistan*

Date: August 22, 2020

Chair

Senator Sherry Rehman, *President, JI*

Panelists

Amb. Omar Zakhilwal, *Former Afghan Diplomat*

Amb. Riaz M. Khan, *Former Foreign Secretary*

Dr. Marwin G. Weinbaum, *Director Middle East Institute*

Barnett Rubin, *Author and Policy Expert*

Amb. Omar Samad, *Former Afghan Diplomat*

Moderator

Ammara Durrani, *Senior Research Fellow, JI*

“There is no clarity on who will guarantee the Afghan peace or if there is a guarantor at all. Clarity is also needed on what outcomes we are looking at in any timelined future,” stated Senator Sherry Rehman, at Jinnah Institute’s policy roundtable webinar titled, ‘Negotiating the Endgame in Afghanistan: A Tale of Many Peace Processes’ on August 22, 2020. State stability, political power, solvency and the fragility of vulnerable groups would have to be strengthened for the peace process to be successful. It was also important to determine who takes responsibility for what

happens in Afghanistan. Success of the talks was important for Kabul and for the US, and equally significant was the need to define 'success' for both. Senator Rehman also went on to discuss how Pakistan was assuming responsibility for restricting movement along the border by putting up a fence to be able to adjudicate peacefully.

Former Afghan ambassador Dr Omar Zakhilwal highlighted the need for a uniform definition of peace and that there was still a lack of unity with respect to peace, both in the broader political spectrum but also within the government. "Is peace a complete overhaul of the current state and government, or is it expected that the government will be running as it is and the Taliban, like previously with Hikmatyar, be part of it?" he asked. There were different positions on the national level related to the national agenda, but there were also several political ambitions, surrounding personal power in play. This is why there were instances of contradiction from various individuals. There had been public disagreements for instance, in the last two years, on how Ambassador Khalilzad handled the peace process.

Afghanistan was going through a difficult phase of trying to make sure the pieces fell in place. There were those in Afghanistan that were firm believers in the peace process with all its flaws, shortcomings and challenges, and there were those that saw it as a threat, who would undermine it any way possible, stated senior advisor to Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Afghanistan, Omar Samad. "We are going through a difficult phase of trying to put together coalitions, as well as making sure Afghans are agreeing to the steps that have to be taken towards Intra-Afghan (talks)." He went on to explain that there was more consensus in Afghanistan than there was a year or more ago, but it was not enough.

Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Marvin Weinbaum observed that it would be difficult to find a negotiated solution as long as the Afghan Taliban refused to recognise their main adversaries, the Kabul government. He expressed doubt on whether a negotiated solution could be achieved, "The Afghan situation is not a typical power struggle, which would include the bringing together of parties, building common ground, resolving differences and finding a power sharing agreement. This however, is a conflict of values." He explained that the US had determined that it would leave Afghanistan by the end of this year, regardless of what the outcome to the 2020 Presidential Elections would be.

Former advisor to the US government and UN on Afghanistan Barnett R. Rubin, stated that, "The most important thing for the US is to continue providing economic support to institutions that need it to function. That will create an environment where the groups will be given the time and space to try and work out how they will live together in the changing environment." With all actors and stakeholders in Afghanistan dependent on external aid through one source or another, and the country grappling with power, it was necessary to establish how each party in the conflict had evolved over the years, and what their motivations were, in order to find middle ground.

Former Pakistan Foreign Secretary Riaz Khan stated that the end to this conflict might not be the same as the one with the Soviet Union in the 80's as Afghanistan was no longer isolated or insular. "Even if the US withdraws today, it won't in the manner which the USSR did and will remain engaged. China and Russia will also remain engaged. Afghanistan will not be left isolated." He expressed Pakistan's motivations in the peace process, which pertained to ensuring that Afghan

soil was not used against Pakistan. Both neighbouring states were fatigued as a result of the ceaseless conflict and wanted a reduction in violence. He also identified positive developments made such as the February 29 peace agreement, but numerous challenges remained, such as the question of an Islamic Republic versus an emirate, or the issue of protecting the rights of women and minorities.



Virtual Roundtable on *Moving Past Quagmire: Power-Share and Governance Futures in Afghanistan*

Date: September 5, 2020

Chair

Senator Sherry Rehman, President Jinnah Institute

Panelists

H.E. Dr. Mustafa Mastoor, Afghanistan Minister of Economy

H.E. Ambassador Stefano Pontecorvo, NATO Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan and former Italian Ambassador to Pakistan

Ambassador Richard G. Olson, Former U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ambassador to Pakistan, Senior Adviser USIP

Ambassador Omar Samad, Former Afghan Diplomat, Senior Fellow Atlantic Council

Rahimullah Yusufzai, Senior Pakistan Journalist

Moderator

Ammara Durrani, Senior Fellow, JI

“How long will the US commit its time and resources to this peace process, and what sustainability will there be to its engagement in Afghanistan?” asked Senator Sherry Rehman, at Jinnah Institute’s policy roundtable webinar titled, ‘Moving Past Quagmire: Power-Share and Governance Futures in Afghanistan’ on September 5, 2020. The February deal between the Taliban and the US is undoubtedly a milestone agreement, and it has been met with great relief from many quarters. The commencement of the intra-Afghan dialogue is a historic occasion; however, the timing and commitment to progress will be crucial in this process as the balance of power on either side may shift, impacting the dynamic of the talks. Additionally, Senator Rehman raised concerns about a possible hasty exit on part of the US and how that could adversely impact the inclusivity of the political bargain which will define the peace process.

Public enthusiasm for the war in Afghanistan has waned in the US domestic sphere. Former US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Ambassador Richard G. Olson explained that counter-terrorism is no longer the organizing theme in US foreign policy; that has now been superseded by great power competition, primarily with regards to China and Russia. “There is no doubt that the US is looking to exit from Afghanistan. However, the key question is whether it will be a clean or dirty exit?” If a new administration comes in following the US general elections, it will then face the challenge of evaluating whether the conditions of the Doha Agreement have been met in order to proceed with the complete withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. Ambassador Olson further added that the debate in the US has primarily revolved around troop levels, and that is perhaps an unfortunate way to cast the question since it parallels very much the Taliban’s approach to US presence in Afghanistan. The crucial question would be regarding the level of US engagement in terms of assistance, and not the number of troops on the ground.

During the first round of peace talks in Doha, the two sides are expected to discuss the framework of the negotiations going forward. According to Afghanistan’s Minister of Economy Dr. Mustafa Mastoor, discussing a possible ceasefire will be a top priority for the Afghan government. Kabul has voiced legitimate concerns about the Taliban’s ability to enforce a comprehensive ceasefire over the territory it controls, since its commanders are trained to be autonomous. Mr. Mastoor further added that there is uncertainty regarding what issues the Taliban will table during the talks since Kabul has not been in direct contact with the group’s leadership thus far.

The negotiation process will not be an easy one, and the degree of compromise from both the parties will define the success or failure of these negotiations. The common denominator must be the search for a “dignified” peace for all the Afghan people, and both the sides need to exhibit flexibility and good faith, stated NATO Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan and former Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Ambassador Stefano Pontecorvo. Popular support is required for a durable outcome, and peace can only be lasting if it safeguards the gains of the last 19 years that the Afghans have worked so hard for under the security umbrella that NATO has provided. These gains made with the help of the international community have taken the form of high life expectancy, lower child mortality, more children in school including girls, freedom of expression, and significant participation of women in the public sphere. Ambassador Pontecorvo further added that, “NATO has a vested interest in sustaining the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. These institutions exemplify the unity of the Afghan nation, and will continue to be a crucial pillar for Afghanistan’s long-term stability, security, and sovereignty.” He also revealed that NATO had

been invited by President Ghani to observe the intra-Afghan negotiations, but stressed that NATO is cognizant that this is an Afghan-led process, and its involvement in the process will be contingent on the situation on the ground and if it can have a meaningful impact on the process.

The intra-Afghan dialogue marks a new chapter in the Afghan conflict; the outcome is uncertain still because the dialogue is punctuated by a number of “unknowns”. While the endgame is clearly looming, there is little anyone knows about how long or difficult this process will be, stated Former Afghan Diplomat and Senior Fellow Atlantic Council Ambassador Omar Samad. The first meeting will primarily consist of formalities and photo-ops. “For the US, there is a desire to send the message that the talks are moving along with the US general elections approaching soon.” He added that Kabul wants to project itself as representing and defending a certain set of values which sum up the popular will of the Afghan people; whereas the Taliban, emboldened by the Doha Agreement, would be coming to the table with the mindset that it is an entity that cannot be ignored considering the control it holds over its territories.

Concerns were also raised regarding the Afghan government’s ability to present a united front during the talks in light of recent disagreements between President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. “It will come down to whether there is sufficient political will to achieve durable peace”, stated Ambassador Omar Samad. Chiming in, Ambassador Olson explained that polling data in Afghanistan reveals that the republic system of governance has more public support compared to the Taliban, and that the idea of voting for a government is preferred by the Afghan people. What is important is not so much the negotiating team, but the Reconciliation Council back in Kabul. “If the Council can come together and overcome its differences, then there is hope for a strong deal.”

While there was consensus on the fact that a reduction in violence was necessary to instill confidence in the peace process, several panelists expressed a clear degree of skepticism about the possibility of a comprehensive ceasefire. Senior Pakistani journalist Rahimullah Yusufzai reiterated that a comprehensive ceasefire has been an old demand of the Afghan government, but that it was unlikely that the Taliban would agree to one at this point. “It is possible that Taliban later agree to a reduction in violence, as they did a week prior to signing the peace agreement with the US in Doha earlier this year. There could be a reduction of violence in installments as well, but that depends on a variety of factors.” Mr. Yusufzai further added that working towards a comprehensive ceasefire is expected to be a long process which will require a lot of trust building among the two negotiating parties.

Speculation over a possible ceasefire also raised the question of whether the Taliban leadership is capable of enforcing one, and if it can eventually transition into a political force. Regarding the former, Mr. Yusufzai noted that 65 percent of the Taliban negotiating team members are part of the Rahbari Shura (Leadership Council), which means that the members participating in the talks are sufficiently empowered to provide such guarantees. Transitioning into a political force will however be a significant challenge for the Taliban since fighting as a tactic has proven to be incredibly successful for them. “Since 1994, the Taliban have been operating as fighting force, and the group’s political wing has always been undermined and superseded by the military wing.” He explained that the Taliban’s stance on democratic norms such as voting continues to evolve.

Eventually, the Taliban will have to decide if they want to become a democratic power-holder in this arrangement, and if they are willing to accommodate concerns regarding human rights and women rights.

The role of regional actors was also discussed in light of reports about certain hardline Taliban commanders – who oppose the peace talks – having close links with Iran. Ambassador Olson stated that such reports should not come as a surprise as regional actors maintain such ties to guard their own interests. While the state of bilateral relations between the US and Iran makes it difficult to have any meaningful engagement on the issue of Afghanistan, it is important to remember that the two countries do not have divergent interests on the matter. He further added that there is need to “convene a regional dynamic that can draw in Iran as well.”

President of Jinnah Institute, Senator Sherry Rehman, concluded by saying that while there are concerns about the fact that violence continues to escalate in Afghanistan, all stakeholders are clear that there is no substitute for a negotiated peace on the ground. She added that Pakistan is a key stakeholder in regional stability, which is impossible without a peaceful Afghanistan. However, if conditions deteriorate, and Kabul is unable to exercise control over its territory following a reduction in US security commitments to Afghanistan, Pakistan will not be in a position to guarantee peace; the responsibility for that outcome, as well as the preservation of gains lie within Afghan terrain and its leadership. Pakistan will do everything it can to support an inclusive and broad-based peace process, but would like to see enhanced international engagement on issues like the reduction of the narcotics war economy as well as violent power-struggles that spill over into Pakistan. She hoped that more Afghan women would be meaningfully mainstreamed in the negotiations, and that Pakistan’s concerns about the growth of terrorist redoubts housing TTP and Daesh will be addressed by the international community.

“We have paid a very high price in combating terrorism in extremely challenging conditions for a decade, and have been successful to a great extent, but history has taught us to watch out for conflicts that spill over, and this time we don’t want our sacrifices against terrorists to become yet another footnote to history. The United States has crafted so far a withdrawal agreement with the Taliban, not a peace agreement with Afghanistan. We look to a better future for our war-ravaged neighbouring state, and hope that both the Afghan leadership and the international community have a long-term commitment to staying engaged in the path to a sustainable peace in Afghanistan.”



*Virtual Roundtable on **The Future of Kashmir: A Test for Global Multilateralism and Regional Peace***

Date: September 12, 2020

Chair

Senator Sherry Rehman, President Jinnah Institute

Panelists

H.E. Sardar Masood Khan, President, AJK

MP Andrew Gwynne, Chairman Labour Friends of Kashmir

Hon. Jule Ward, Former Member of European Parliament

Amb. Tariq Fatemi, Former SAPM on Foreign Affairs

James Daly, Member of the United Kingdom Parliament

Sudheendra Kulkarni, Senior Indian Politician

Iftikhar Gilani, Senior Kashmiri Journalist

Michael Gahler, Member of European Parliament

Dr. Siddiq Wahid, Former Vice Chancellor of Islamic University, Kashmir

Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) has been left alone and isolated since a lockdown imposed by the Indian government on August 5, 2019. Detentions, draconian laws, and unlawful actions of India have made the valley one of blood and martyrs. This was stated by President Jinnah Institute (JI) and Session Chair, Senator Sherry Rehman, in the latest discussion of JI's Weekend Webinar Series titled, "The Future of Kashmir: A Test for Global Multilateralism and Regional Peace" held on September 12, 2020. The versatile panel of participants included keynote speaker and President, Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) Sardar Masood Khan, UK Member of Parliament (MP) Andrew Gwynne, Senior journalist on IIOJK Iftikhar Gilani, Member of European Parliament (MEP) Michael Gahler, former Pakistan Ambassador to the U.S. and E.U. Tariq Fatemi, Indian columnist and former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) politician Sudheendra Kulkarni, former MEP Julie Ward and IIOJK-based Professor Dr. Siddiq Wahid.

"They (the Modi government) have a concerted plan to tell Kashmiris that what they want is inconceivable and that Pakistan is not in a position to help," explained Iftikhar Gilani. "Our (Kashmiri) history, language, is being erased. The economy and local industry has suffered immensely because of the lockdown and connectivity breakdown." According to him, Indian attempts to paint the indigenous freedom movement with the broad brush of militancy and terming it foreign funded was a clear deflection of responsibility. Kashmir was a tinderbox that could "go off at any time".

Ambassador Tariq Fatemi highlighted how India had reneged on U.N. resolutions and bilateral commitments with Pakistan in handling this issue. All Pakistani leaders, both civilian and military have attempted to resolve the Kashmir question, but India in response has only "unleashed terror and genocide" in the restive region. There are advantages to dialogue and economic interdependence, but this understanding must be present on both sides of the border to find a resolution.

MP Andrew Gwynne of the United Kingdom's Labour Party emphasised that Kashmir is indeed an issue that requires global attention, and that Britain has an obligation to be involved because of the manner in which it withdrew from the subcontinent in 1947. He further added, "Britain also has a moral role to play as a member of the UN Security Council. This issue threatens regional security, and the world cannot allow two nuclear states to enter into a conflict."

Participants agreed that it is imperative to take into consideration the wishes of the Kashmiri people before any solution can be reached since they are the principle stakeholders of this issue. "The final resolution must be one that has the approval of the Kashmiri people. Justice for the people of Kashmir has to be paramount for the international community," stated MP Andrew Gwynne.

MP James Daly from the U.K. Conservative Party agreed with his Labour colleague and other participants on the significance of recognising the inalienable right of self-determination for oppressed Kashmiris. "The voice of the Kashmiri people remains unheard." He detailed on his

experience in visiting AJK in February 2020 and how his delegation was granted access to interact with all sorts of sections of both the public and government in order to ascertain the situation on the ground. “We were treated with complete openness (in AJK).”

“Unfortunately, our group was not let into India. We were not able to speak with the Indian government in a free and open manner.”

Former BJP politician Sudheendra Kulkarni believed that the acrimonious relationship between Pakistan and India was a remnant of the partition and its aftermath. The abrogation of Article 370 was unconstitutional and unjust, and has transformed the Kashmir issue to one now involving three states; Pakistan, China and India. “The abrogation is a wrong, and one that has to be rectified,” he said.

Former MEP Julie Ward also detailed the importance of raising this issue at all international forums; it was currently noticeable in its absence at such meetings of international importance. MEP Michael Gahler added that it was important for international observers to gain access to IIOJK in order to truly sift fact from fiction from a neutral perspective. He went on to add, “One has to address the situation on the ground regarding violence against civilians and the impact of the lockdown on local Kashmiris through bilateral and multilateral talks.”

President AJK, Sardar Masood Khan observed that the future of Kashmir “seems very bleak if the international community does not intervene.” The on-ground situation was nothing other than a foreign occupation with the fascist Hindutva agenda as the “driving force behind the annexation”.

He detailed the attempts of the Modi government to bring about a demographic change in IIOJK, and went on to dismiss claims of terrorism and Pakistani involvement in the indigenous freedom movement. Furthermore, he put forth proposals to move towards a resolution on the Kashmir issue, which included the need to start an international human rights movement, reaching out to members of Indian civil society and politicians that are concerned about the situation in Kashmir, and appealing to E.U. and U.K. parliaments to focus more sharply on the IIOJK issue before it was too late. President Sardar Masood Khan also drew parallels between AJK and IIOJK; the former was free with all civil liberties intact, while the latter was the reason for conflict in the region and losing its own citizens at the hands of the Indian security forces. He stressed the need to continue bringing this case up in front of the U.N to spur the international peacemaking body into action.

In her closing remarks Senator Rehman stressed on the urgency of initiating a discussion on the just and conclusive resolution of the Kashmir issue. “As it stands, Kashmiris feel that the international community has forgotten about them while their lives and identities are at risk. The Modi regime’s motive behind the demographic change is also likely based on the possibility of a plebiscite being held in the future, by which time the people of Kashmir will be swamped by votaries of the ultra-national Hindutva regime. Their future and their UN mandated. rights to choose how they are governed is at stake.”



Virtual Roundtable on *Can technology build an architecture for democratic governance?*

Date: September 29, 2020

Moderator

Usama Khilji, Bolo Bhi

Panelists

Shmyla Khan, Digital Rights Foundation

Amel Ghani, Media Matters for Democracy

Salman Zaidi, Program Director Jinnah Institute (JI)

Khushal Khattak, HRCF

Jehan Ara, The Nest, P@SHA

Technology has played a transformative role during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. What does the increased reliance on technology globally really mean for democratic governance? How has technology really benefited us with regards to being engaged citizens? Ms. Jehan Ara, while acknowledging the digital divide that exists in Pakistan, stated that technology can play an instrumental in remedying the issues that currently exist in the education, health, and communication sphere. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were a lot of Ed-tech start-ups came to the fore and made online learning possible. "These tech start-ups understood that this is a new platform which requires different methods of engagement, something which

traditional educational institutions struggled to do.” At the same time, one cannot be oblivious to the fact that limited access is a serious obstacle. Regarding the role technology can play in improving governance, she stated that the government has access to a large volume of data; how that data is used to improve service delivery is ultimately up to the will of the government. She further added that both access to data and its protection is crucial for Pakistani citizens. “We need to strike a balance between access and protection of data, since the data belongs to the citizens and we need to ensure that it is not abused.”

On the subject of the intersection between technology and media, and how technology can enable the media to improve access to information, Ms. Amel Ghani, stated that there have been positive developments of note during the last few years. For instance, increasingly journalists have been submitting Right to Information (RTI) requests and have been sharing their findings online. Such interventions improve access to information and transparency. Technology has also played an important role with regards to press freedoms allowing journalists to do their job without being curtailed. This is evident as a number of journalists are now reaching out their audiences directly using websites or Youtube channels. “At the same time, there are examples of the government using technology to arbitrarily suppress speech in online spaces, which is unfortunate.”

Building on the subject of the regulation of speech in online spaces, the broader issue of human rights and its connection to technology was also raised. Mr. Khushal Khan noted that there are two sides to the issue. “We have witnessed the effective use of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook by marginalized groups in the country who otherwise struggle to find a voice in the mainstream media.” However, he added that the government is also attempting to control the narrative on social media, for instance by using PECA against journalists and activists. Ms. Shmyla Khan also chimed in on the issue by arguing that it would be a mistake to view online spaces “as an area of control.” The goal should be to ensure speech instead of controlling it. Furthermore, she opined that there is a need to make PECA more citizen friendly, and that the role of civil society is that of a watchdog. “The state should not view civil society as an obstruction, but as a partner in assisting the government where it lacks capacity at the moment.”

The participation of women in online spaces and also the quality of their participation was a key issue that was discussed by the panel. Ms. Shmyla Khan explained that when these online spaces were relatively new, there was an assumption that they would be gender neutral. “However, what we have witnessed is that the internet tends to replicate the same structures of oppression. It is connected to our political and social landscape.” She also stated that it is not enough to talk about access to technology without factoring in the social and cultural barriers that exist.

Another topic that was discussed by the panelists was how large infrastructure projects such as CPEC can impact technology, innovation and development for the youth in Pakistan. Mr. Salman Zaidi stated that Pakistan’s integration in the CPEC project has operated in a very covert space thus far, therefore there is a lack of transparency surrounding the project and what its impact might be going forward. “CPEC is primarily a strategic project for China, and is not intended to benefit the citizens of Pakistan.” He further explained that such large infrastructure projects usually disenfranchise citizens in terms of access and ownership to land, at least initially. Whether it will turn into a game changer for Pakistan, remains to be seen. There was consensus among the panelists that such projects will help with regards to job creation, but maybe not so much when it comes to furthering innovation. Ms. Jehan Ara explained that innovation will be stifled since only Chinese technology is being implemented. “When you have a partner that is much more advanced technologically, there is an imbalance of power in the partnership.” She further added that there are concerns in the Pakistani technology sector about the extent to which it will be able to benefit

from these infrastructure projects. However, she concluded on a positive note by pointing out that a number of local companies have been collaborating with Chinese counterparts as part of CPEC, so there is definitely potential for growth and innovation if Pakistan plays its cards right.



Virtual Roundtable on *Post COVID Futures: Road to Adaptability – Has COVID Disrupted Path Dependencies for Climate Governance*

Date: October 13, 2020

Moderator

Salman Zaidi, Program Director Jinnah Institute (JI)

Panelists

Nighat Dad, Digital Rights Foundation

Anoosha Shaigan, Courting the Law

Usama Khilji, Bolo Bhi

Mubariz Siddiqui, Sarmaycar

Sadaf Khan, Media Matters for Democracy

One of the big questions that we are confronted with today is the ability of technology to reinvent a South Asian future. “South Asia is considered to be one of the least integrated regions in the world”, stated Salman Zaidi, Program Director at Jinnah Institute. However there have been positive developments with regards to technology in both India and Pakistan over the past decade. These developments raise pertinent questions about the role technology can play in facilitating integration not just within Pakistan, but in South Asia as a whole. Ms. Nighat Dad

acknowledged the role technology has played in opening up a world of opportunities for the youth in South Asia, but lamented the fact that there exists a disconnect in the tech ecosystem between the users and the regulators. She pointed out that arbitrary and oftentimes repressive measures taken by the regulatory authorities act as barriers to realising the full potential within the tech landscape. “The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the ingrained inequalities that exist in our society.” The rural urban divide when it comes to the access of internet in Pakistan was once again on display regarding the issue of online classes. She concluded by adding that it is not merely an issue of access, but also the shutdown of internet and mobile services that is experienced in various parts of the country.

Mr. Mubariz Siddiqui chimed in on the topic of the digital divide that exists in Pakistan by stating that the internet is still a relatively new phenomenon for a large segment of the Pakistani population. “It will take time for it to spread, and as the adoption rate increases, it is imperative that digital rights are guarded, which is essential if Pakistan wants to be integrated through technology in the region.” He also raised the issue of privacy rights, and explained that a significant number Pakistanis lack understanding of the fundamental right of privacy. The “I’ve got nothing to hide” attitude is an indicator that people are not aware of what an individual can stand to lose if their information is not secure.

The development of e-commerce was discussed and whether Pakistan at the moment is generating online transactions both in terms of volume and substance to utilize the potential of technology as an enabler. Ms. Anoosha Shaigan pointed out that since Pakistan is a common law country, it lacks a codified book of laws and is hence reliant on judicial decisions and interpretations. As a result of this, studies show that common law countries need additional assistance in terms of setting up an infrastructure for the regulation of e-commerce and cross-border transactions, especially when it comes to consumer protection. Regarding the volume of trade, Ms. Shaigan explained that the situation is not an ideal one, and that the lack of protection and dispute resolution mechanisms for sellers is a key issue. “As far as e-commerce is concerned, there is a lot more to be desired.” She further stressed that there is a need for accountability measures to ensure that e-commerce can grow to its full potential in Pakistan. “Progress has been slow, but we are getting there.”

All the panelists agreed that the government has a key role in using technology to provide digital solutions in the areas of governance and social protections. Mr. Usama Khilji explained that the government needs to do a lot more to incentivise people to use the internet for transactions. “There exists a distrust of the state and the banking system which needs to be addressed, and addressing this will require a lot of work.” He further added that there also exists the problem of a lack of media and digital literacy that prevents people from utilizing technology to its fullest potential. This issue is further compounded by the fact that education curricula in schools are not addressing this issue. Regarding the government’s approach on this issue, he stated that “the approach thus far has focused on over-regulation. There has been a critical lack of leadership on part of the government.”

On the subject of technology facilitating greater integration and innovation for the citizens of Pakistan, Ms. Sadaf Khan stated that it is hard to reach a definitive conclusion regarding how positive the impact of technology has been. “The experience has varied for the marginalised and for the privileged in Pakistan.” This was evident in how the education sector was impacted during COVID, and how accessing online classes was impossible for a large segment of Pakistani students. She stressed that it is crucial to take these inequalities into account when evaluating the role that technology has played. Moreover, to realise its full potential, it is imperative to

address structural and cultural barriers, such as access for women, and the fear of surveillance in certain areas of the country. “Our inability to acknowledge these inequalities prevents us from understanding the issue at hand, which is something that technology on its own cannot remedy. We have to understand the power imbalances that affect people’s use of technology in ways that are different than just access.”

Regarding best practices in the region that Pakistan could emulate, Mr. Mubariz Siddiqui opined that Pakistan’s problems are unique, hence the solutions will have to be specific to its context. “When we talk about integration with South East Asia, it will be done on the basis of shared interest. Integration is cooperation, and most cooperation happens on an economic level.” He explained that there is a need to incentivize manufacturing, whether it is digital goods or technology being used to produce agricultural products. “We can only work together with other countries if we are also bringing something valuable to the table.”



Virtual Roundtable on *Post COVID Futures: Road to Adaptability – Has COVID Disrupted Path Dependencies for Climate Governance*

Date: October 13, 2020

Moderator

Salman Zaidi, Director Programs, Jinnah Institute

Panelists

Rafay Alam, Environmental Lawyer

Hassaan Sipra, COMSATS

Anam Zeb, International Rescue Committee

Seven years into the overhaul of our adaptive capacities and institutional realignment, there are still lingering questions regarding the extent to which Pakistan's adaptive capacities have improved to respond to climate disasters and pandemics. Is there evidence to suggest that the government is doing any better on the adaptability front, and that the most vulnerable communities to climate change in Pakistan are being safeguarded any better? Rafay Alam explained that there is a need for our responses to be decentralised. Earlier in March with the COVID-19 pandemic at its peak, the Federal government accused the Sindh government for acting in a manner that was hindering the state's centralised response. As the lockdown was initiated, instead of witnessing the practice of provincial writ in line with the 18th amendment, we saw a reflex action on part of the Supreme Court through the National Command and Control entity. "This is indeed worrying when one considers the scale of the climate change impact in parts across Pakistan." It should

be a matter of concern if the response to climate change is similarly centralised by the government instead of allowing provincial units to fulfil their responsibilities. It may be an attractive argument for some to suggest that the disaster management and climate change responses should be centralised from a technical standpoint, however, from a legal perspective there is a need to ensure that federative units work together and conduct federative diplomacy. This diplomacy should form the core of our climate change response, in lieu of a knee jerk centralising response that violates the spirit of the 18th amendment.

Echoing Mr. Alam's sentiments regarding decentralisation, Hassaan Sipra added that Pakistan's climate change adaptability measures will have to go down all the way to the local level. "What we have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is that the largest impact investment needs to be made at the local level to tackle future disasters." There is a need to clarify and engage in greater discussion regarding federating rights and how the 18th amendment can fully empower the provinces. When devising strategies to cope with crises such as climate change, it is imperative that federative diplomacy be facilitated amongst the provinces. However, the challenge remains building the capacities of key coordinating agencies all the way down to the district level. He further added that while there are some takeaways from the government's COVID response that could be applied in the case of climate change, the magnitude of the two crises varies significantly; therefore, the response will have to be scaled up correspondingly, both in terms of effort and financial investment.

Regarding what metrics of adaptability we should be looking out for and if any of these have been reflected over the past six months, Anam Zeb explained that mitigation measures are generally more straightforward to implement and track, such as a reduction in the level greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, adaptation and building resilience is a much more complex process and adaptation activities are a lot more difficult to pin down as they can include long term processes such as improving infrastructure and increasing educational access. She further explained that policies regarding climate change on a provincial level are essentially wish lists of what they would like to achieve, devoid of an implementation framework. There is also the token mention of gender in both federal and provincial policies, however there is not much mainstreaming of it. There is a need to realise that at this point adaptability measures need to be urgently institutionalised. Moreover, the magnitude of the challenge is such that domestic climate change financing alone will not be sufficient. However, "we have started a budget tagging system at the federal level, which some of the provinces are trying to emulate as well, where activities are categorized as either mitigation or adaptability to assist with better planning and budgeting".

On whether we can reflect on recent events to improve our understanding of the effects of climate change, Hassaan Sipra explained that the severity of our monsoons will continue to increase. Additionally, with the increasing level of rural to urban migration taking place, there is a need to update our data on a continuing basis to get an accurate assessment of the scope of the problem. This process requires an iterative public policy approach as part of which institutions need to be empowered. Pakistan needs to optimise global climate models. Currently, it lacks a climate research center to carry out modelling work, which means that the data is not optimised according to the local context.

In Pakistan's context, there is also a deficiency with regards to how the severity of the climate change crisis is communicated. "We need to change the way we are communicating climate change and devising measures to address it", Anam Zeb explained. In order to make it more appealing for the private sector to invest in green businesses, it is important to reframe the issue in a manner that highlights the benefits that could accrue from a financial and profitability

standpoint in the long run. Chiming in, Rafay Alam stated that the issue is not just about financial viability. Based on the tariffs offered by NEPRA, it is cheaper to generate renewable energy as compared to coal fired electricity; despite this, companies are tied to long term IPP contracts for the next 30 years. “Capitalism, patriarchy, consumerism, and the fossil fuel based economy; we cannot employ instruments of the very systems that have brought us to the verge of extinction. We need to resist these systems by instituting anti-capitalist measures if we are going to have half a change at fighting this crisis.”

On the question of how we can break path dependencies and devise a more holistic approach going forward, Hassaan Sipra pointed out that some initiatives such as the tree plantation drive, clean and green index for cities, and the focus on waste management and water are undoubtedly positive. Anam Zeb however was of the view that the sole focus on activities like tree plantation gives us an insight into how limited the government’s understanding is of the climate change crisis. Many of our policy makers have a very narrow understanding of what their roles and responsibilities are in this crisis. “We need unprecedented levels of commitment to deal with the climate crisis, and there are few signs of such commitment in Pakistan as of yet”, stated Rafay Alam. In 2020, one of the hottest years on record with climate awareness at an apex, Pakistan spent the majority of its stimulus package on construction and real estate. This prioritization of funds encapsulates the issue plaguing our climate change response.

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7Dxj1vs75M&feature=emb_title





Virtual Roundtable on *Post COVID Futures: How can Climate Governance be Milestoned*

Date: October 13, 2020

Moderator

Rafay Alam, Environmental Lawyer

Panelists

Dr. Imran Khalid, SDPI

Rimmel Mohyidin, Amnesty International

Sara Hayat, Environmental Lawyer

There is no denying that the COVID pandemic has exacerbated the impact of climate change in Pakistan, especially playing on the fault lines of existing social injustices across social strata, agreed climate change experts and environmental lawyers at Jinnah Institute's virtual roundtable on climate governance. Discussing Pakistan's vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities to the global healthcare crisis, it was obvious that the already hard-hitting effects of climate change have enabled the spread of the pandemic, and state machinery has remained largely unprepared. Urban flooding in Karachi is one example that alludes to effects of climate change in Pakistan.

Dr. Imran Khalid emphasized the distinction between social justices and injustices, arguing that winners and losers that have emerged from the COVID crisis in Pakistan are largely separated by their access to resources. While scientists around the world have been warning against the

irreversible effects of climate change, the pandemic should force us to rethink our approach to growth. Localized policies are crucial for the implementation of mitigation and adaptation programs. Dr. Khalid also highlighted the importance of bringing a balanced gendered perspective into policy making at a national level to bridge the gaps of Pakistan's climate change policy.

Sara Hayat questioned the dominant narrative that there is a link between the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate change crisis. "The reason the two are being linked together is because they both impact the economy and disrupt our way of life. But the similarities end there." The core difference between the two is that while the pandemic has an end in sight, that is not the case with regards to the climate crisis. On the question of adaptability measures being instituted by the government and if any lessons can be applied from the government's response to the pandemic, Sara Hayat explained that no serious measures have been taken thus far, especially at the grassroots level. She further explained that disaster relief management and climate change policy are not necessarily the same thing; therefore, it is hard to see how Pakistan's response to COVID-19 could inform its approach to tackling climate change. Climate change is impacting lives on a daily basis by disrupting agriculture and fisheries. People in rural areas are on the frontline of climate change which is why there should be a constant stream of economic relief for the people worst impacted by this crisis. "It is imperative that we invest in sustainable agriculture. If Pakistan continues to invest in steel and infrastructure, while the climate change policy is limited to planting trees, that is perhaps disingenuous on part of the Pakistani government.'

On the topic of what local data could better help shape Pakistan's climate change policy, Rimmel Mohyidin explained that local vocabulary and knowledge is extremely important for the proper implementation of any climate change measures. "Because the climate change crisis has been communicated in such a scientific manner, it has been hard to convey the severity of the issue." Moreover, the discourse surrounding climate change has been very North focused, and countries in the global South - where people are most affected by climate change - do not really have a voice in the conversation. Additionally, we need to start at the very basic level before we can start identifying the data points we need to be tracking. "We need to start by developing a local vocabulary that sufficiently conveys the urgency and severity of the crisis on our hands."

Regarding systemic issues that act as impediments in the way of formulating an effective climate change policy, Sara Hayat opined that no policy can be effective unless the issue at hand is understood properly. She further added that, "whatever policy we devise, it needs to be a bridge that takes our economy into consideration along with tackling climate change. If not, no politician will be willing to enact those policies at the expense of the economy, similar to what we witnessed during COVID-19. So, there is a need to frame the policies in a way which stresses that we are saving lives along with benefiting the economy in the process." Dr. Imran Khalid chimed in to outline the three core areas the government should focus on. First, there is a need to focus on the science of climate change and gain a better understanding of how it impacts us. For this purpose, there is a need to invest in modelers, physicists, and climatologists who can get to the heart of the matter. Second, the gender perspective needs to be incorporated by bringing in female researchers who understand the cultural barriers that exist when conducting fieldwork in rural areas. Lastly, it is important to understand and strengthen our institutions. "We need to

research our institutions and understand how these policies are perceived by people in different parts of the country who are responsible for the implementation of these policies.”

Discussing the link between climate change and human rights, Rimmel Mohyidin explained that in the climate change context, policy makers and activists have to figure a way out to convey the same level of urgency for a slow-burn issue like climate change. She concluded by stating that, “when we framed the smog issue in Lahore as a human rights issue, it actually helped personalize the issue for a lot of people. Therefore, this requires new thinking on our part, to figure out how we can manufacture the urgency that unfortunately is not organically conveyed in the case of the climate change crisis.”

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-Vldmw9z5s>



Virtual Roundtable on *Post COVID Futures: Upgrading Social Governance – Part I*

Date: October 16, 2020

Moderator

Salman Zaidi, Director Programs, Jinnah Institute

Safiya Aftab, Executive Director, Verso Consulting

Panelists

Dr. Asad Sayeed, Associate Fellow, IDEAS

Amir Goraya, Assistant Resident Rep, UNDP

Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson NCSW

While the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic have been discussed with regards to its impact on the economic, education, and health sector, there are issues that have not yet been addressed in the public domain which require our attention. Amir Goraya explained that the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 is something that has evaded discourse thus far. While schools have instituted SOP's with regards to wearing protective equipment, little attention has been paid to the psychosocial burden being placed upon students, and even teachers who have struggled to adapt to the increasingly digital educational environment. Mr. Goraya further stated that the government's response was essentially an emergency and surge one and centralised for the most part. "There was a lack of a local government response to a problem that was local in the first

place. A one policy fits all approach does not work very well when it comes to measures such as smart lockdowns as these initiatives need to be tailored according to local needs.”

Dr. Asad Sayeed echoed the sentiments of Mr. Goraya and explained that issues of mental health have been central to how behaviour has been altered since the onset of the pandemic. He further remarked that it is imperative to take into consideration the gendered impact of COVID-19. “Both vertical and horizontal inequalities have been further highlighted by this pandemic. Moreover, women have borne the brunt of the resulting fallout, therefore, it is important to factor in the gendered impact when talking about a post-COVID future and the manner in which the social sector will be impacted.” Reflecting on the health sector, he observed that since the onset of the pandemic, the uptake for non-COVID cases was reduced significantly. “it will be interesting to study how much the pandemic actually impacted health outcomes. Were we oversubscribing to health services prior to COVID, and was a false demand engineered over the years courtesy how the pharma industry operates?”, asked Dr. Sayeed. With regards to the education sector, Dr. Sayeed remarked that adjusting to the new educational landscape has been a global challenge, though it has been more pronounced in developing countries where the digital divide is widespread. He explained that more senior teachers have in particular faced issues with adapting to the requisite technology, which has caused a lot of stress and anxiety. He further added that the more important issue has been regarding testing and examination. “COVID has disrupted an age-old equilibrium. The entire purpose of testing is one where it serves as a credential and rationing device for further education and employment. The credibility of the entire process has been altered to say the least; it remains to be seen how the education system adapts to this going forward.”

On the topic of the rapid digitization drive amidst the pandemic, Amir Goraya pointed out that COVID has certainly acted as a catalyst. In the health sector, we witnessed the recruitment of doctors for tele-medicine services and even ICU’s. Additionally, there has been a significant increase in online meetings, with a focus on over-communication to compensate for the change in work dynamics. On the government’s response to the pandemic, Mr. Goraya lamented the fact that there was not a coordinated response from the government with regards to the education and health sectors. “The response was solely focused on responding to an emergency with stop gap measures without building any resilience. It is perhaps a little premature to judge the government’s response and suggest policy interventions because before we can evaluate the damage, we are already experiencing the second wave of the pandemic.”

With regards to the economic response of the government, Khawar Mumtaz opined that the Ehsaas program did provide relief to the most disadvantaged and the distribution of funds was efficiently managed thanks to the local organisations working on the ground. However, she added that the government needs to transition out of crisis management mode and work towards better managing and anticipating such crises. Dr. Asad Sayeed added that on the financing side, instead of a fiscal stimulus, the response from the government was a monetary one that has contributed to the current climbing inflation rates.

Khawar Mumtaz also raised the pressing issue of the reported rise in gender-based violence during the lockdown. In areas where they are active, groups and civil society organisations have been helpful in providing women with a support system. However, there is a need for a greater number of services that women can avail in cases where they are subjected to violence or mental stress. These services are essential since women don’t always approach the court straight away. Ms. Mumtaz further added that there needs to be a critical mass of women being part of policy making, and not being limited to just token participation. She concluded by stating that, “it is crucial

for women to be at the table. Even during the pandemic, while relief was provided to women, there are still no structural reforms in the pipeline that focus on alleviating issues that affect women disproportionately.”

Focusing on the path ahead, Dr. Asad Sayeed remarked that it is important to institutionalise a disaster management response in both spirit and the existing architecture of federalism in Pakistan. Such crises always exacerbate existing inequalities, especially from a gender lens. Going forward, Pakistan would benefit from having a comprehensive financing structure to deal with such situations. Regarding the public sector response, he added that measures cannot be sectoral in their outlook focusing on either the health or the education sector, instead we need to factor in the intersection of these spheres when devising policy.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvX8t8GxPLE&t=3993s>



Virtual Roundtable on *Post COVID Futures: Upgrading Social Governance – Part II*

Date: October 16, 2020

Moderator

Salman Zaidi, Director Programs, Jinnah Institute

Safiya Aftab, Executive Director, Verso Consulting

Panelists

Mosharraf Zaidi, Senior Fellow, Tabadlab

Zafarullah Khan, Governance and Democracy Expert

Fauzia Yazdani, Social and Public Policy Advisor

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought existing fault lines into sharper focus and has raised concerns regarding the lack of a coordinated strategy in the face of such crises, stated Safiya Aftab. However, Pakistan is not by any means the only country that faced governance issues during this unprecedented time. In the Pakistani context, the health and education sectors have posed pressing questions in particular. Another aspect that was highlighted was the gendered impact of the crisis. Fauzia Yazdani pointed out that the mortality rate for children under the age of five is determined by a mother's education, financial standing, and geographic location. She emphasised that it is important for the conversation to be anchored in looking at how the population dynamic is evolving and how the country is expanding. Furthermore, in times of such

crises, priorities pertaining to education and health are the first to be sidelined in the cases of women, especially in households facing budgetary constraints.

Building on the intersection of gender and class, Mosharraf Zaidi stated that it would be impossible to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 without factoring in its impact on the work and livelihood of millions of low-income households across the country. On gender-based violence, Mr. Zaidi posed a couple of pertinent questions that need to be examined. “How much of gender violence is rooted in political oppression? To what extent is gendered violence being furthered because of the perpetual economic crisis these households find themselves in?” He further added that the volume of data being collected by the government currently is unprecedented in Pakistan’s history; this can be instrumental in helping devise better macro and micro policies. He added a caveat that the issue of who owns the data and how it can be accessed and by whom is a concern but a different debate entirely. In addition to the data angle, he pointed out that another positive during the pandemic has perhaps been the success of social protection programs such as the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP).

Reflecting on the state of affairs, Zafarullah Khan remarked that a couple of things have changed indefinitely. Particularly, the sense of space we were used to and the traditional structures and institutions, in addition to service delivery mechanisms that are no more conducive to social distancing SOP’s. “The entire notion of supply chains has been disrupted. How can we have an alternate supply chain for essential services in the future when there is such a crisis?” Mr. Khan further remarked that authoritarianism has had a great laugh during the pandemic. “The data collection while helpful for governance, also raises pertinent questions regarding data protection and abuse.” He added that there is a need to reimagine emergency clauses because giving blanket authority to populist or authoritarian regimes can have serious repercussions.

On the topic of technology gaining increasing importance since the onset of the pandemic, Mosharraf Zaidi opined that the technology question is perhaps overstated in the context of Pakistan. He explained that Pakistan has an enormous out of school population, and also a feature phone vs smartphone divide. Platform based solutions such as Zoom or WebX can perhaps solve some problems, but not all of them. “There is a need for retraining and helping the workforce learn new skills to adapt to this changing environment. Pakistan must do this in a time dwindling fiscal capacity; this is what sets Pakistan apart from the other countries.” With regards to social protection initiatives, he stated that there is a need for continuing relief measures such as the Ehsaas grant. To have a real conversation about universal basic income seems premature at this point considering the state’s capacity at the moment. In each of these non-COVID issues, there is one thing in common, a lack of funding. “How can we then address the digital divide and ensure provision of social protection? These gaps can only be filled with competence and money. The state needs to dedicate itself to find ways to fill these gaps, and that can only be done by raising money.”

Focusing on the health care sector, Fauzia Yazdani pointed out that technology has undoubtedly helped in recent times. This was illustrated by the setting up of psychosocial support helplines to assist women facing abuse amidst the pandemic. Moreover, phone applications such as the Women’s Safety app also helped in reporting crimes pertaining to gender-based violence. On the other hand, going forward, it is expected that we will face significant challenges relating to Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (MNCH), and it is likely that we will have more complicated surgeries and unattended births because of the obstacles faced by Lady Health Workers (LHV). The fact that Basic Health Units (BHU) and Rural Health Clinics (RHC) are operating at a significantly reduced capacity further compounds the problem. She pointed out that abortion

cases in Pakistan are four times that of in the US. This statistic perhaps encapsulates the crisis our health sector is facing.

On the subject of how governance can be improved going forward, Fauzia Yazdani stated that telehealth models need to be explored further as they have been successful in parts of Africa as well. Moreover, in Pakistan's context, the issue is not limited to just the access to health services, but also the provision of commodities. She reiterated the importance of paying attention to the population dynamic and the need for instituting family planning measures. "Instead of funding initiatives such as the Tiger Force, the funds should perhaps be diverted towards the education and health sectors in areas of the country that are severely lagging behind. It is not just a matter of money, but also political will." Agreeing with Ms. Yazdani's remarks, Mosharraf Zaidi added that there is a clear case for universal basic income in Pakistan. Additionally, there is a need for a much more robust set of laws that protect citizens' data and allow for access to data for service delivery. "At some point, there should be legislation to enforce the framing of policy and decision making using available data. There is a lot of data out there that is currently not being used for policy making on issues such as where to build infrastructure, schools, how many beds a hospital should have, and whether it should be primary, secondary, or tertiary health care." He explained that these decisions are often arbitrary, based on personal or limited financial gain of the individual involved or notions of popularity as opposed to actual need. In consensus with the other panellists, Zafarullah Khan concluded by stating that the life vs livelihood narrative put forth by the government during the pandemic is problematic to say the least. "We need to reimagine our state and its priorities, and start focusing on the reallocation of our resources."



Virtual Roundtable on *'Run of luck: Is the economy making a comeback?'*

Date: February 4, 2021

Moderator

Khurram Husain, Economic Journalist

Panelists

Aisha Ghaus Pasha, Former Minister (Punjab)

Haroon Sharif, Former Chairman Board of Investment

Sakib Sherani, Senior Economist

This virtual Round table discussed contemporary trends in Pakistan's economic growth, and attempted to answer key questions like; Is there credence to recent claims that economic indicators are improving? Will they have a significant impact on economic stabilisation? Which sectors need greater attention?



POST COVID FUTURES: ROUND TABLE - *Covid-19 and Public Health in South Asia: Impact and Policy Solutions*

Date: February 17, 2021

Moderator

Salman Zaidi, Director Programs, Jinnah Institute

Panelists

Dr. Samia Altaf, M.D., MPH, Professor at LUMS Pakistan

Ms. Anjali Nayyar, Exec VP, Global Health Strategies India

Dr. Baz M. Shirzad, Advisor to the Minister of Public Health Afghanistan

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges to healthcare systems all over the globe, however, the challenges posed to developing countries, particularly in South Asia, have been of a different nature, discussed public healthcare experts from Pakistan, Afghanistan and India at Jinnah Institute's task force on Post-Covid Futures in South Asia and the Impact on Public Health. Discussing how the vaccine rollout has been progressing in Afghanistan, Dr. Shirzad pointed out that while Afghanistan has agreements in place to receive vaccines from India, China, and via the COVAX program, communication and social mobilization continue to pose serious challenges. Convincing individuals to overcome their fears surrounding vaccination is a significant

hurdle. He added that the challenges facing the Afghan government met were paralleled to the Polio vaccination drive.

Reflecting on social attitudes towards the vaccine in Pakistan's context, Dr. Samia Altaf noted that the situation is similar to Afghanistan when it comes to mistrust surrounding the vaccine. Pakistan too has faced numerous challenges with regards to its polio vaccination drive. Unless there is widespread acceptance of the vaccine amongst the population, the vaccination drive cannot be successful. This is an issue of concern as the Pakistan government has not done enough to share up-to-date and complete information regarding the vaccine and its importance. She lamented the fact that the vaccine procurement process was mis-managed and had further contributed to the confusion as it was not completely regulated by the government with private actors getting involved in the mix. Dr. Altaf also pushed back against the perception that the vaccine is a panacea. Though it certainly has an integral role to play, it is only one component of a much larger picture.

The situation in India however seems to be quite different compared to its neighbours. Ms. Anjali Nayyar explained that India has the experience of conducting one of the largest immunization drives which had proved quite successful. As a result, the health workers are very well versed with the vaccination process. The big challenge, however, is the fact that health workers have not been coming in for the second round of vaccines. This primarily has to do with the lack of information campaigns about the process. It is also important to dispel vaccine misinformation in order to instill confidence in the people.

On the coping ability of countries in the region to better equip themselves with data and gain a better understanding of their healthcare supply-chains, Dr. Altaf stated that Pakistan unfortunately fares poorly, with very poor operational systems. She explained that Pakistan lacks adequate data gathering and analysis facilities. On the Afghanistan side, it remains to be seen whether a country in the process of rebuilding itself can maintain a minimum level of emergency response during this pandemic, said Dr. Shirzad. He further added that it is imperative to focus on rural areas and not just urban centers when it comes to vaccine distribution and supply chain management. Despite India's experience with the immunization programme, a vaccine roll-out for such a vast population will be a tall task in any context, let alone during this pandemic. Ms. Nayyar however explained that India has benefited from the use of technology to monitor and ensure uninterrupted supply chains of the COVID vaccine.

Mr. Salman Zaidi, Director Programs Jinnah Institute, posed the question of whether countries have learned from the COVID experience and if there has been a shift in fundamental health indicators. Dr. Altaf was of the view that Pakistan has displayed a tendency to lurch from one health crisis to the other. Countries with established systems and the requisite infrastructure deal better with such crises. Unfortunately, Pakistan lacks those very key elements and had to reroute a significant amount of resources at the expense of other sectors. She opined that that it is crucial for Pakistan to assess where it stands and how the current infrastructure can be improved in order to cope with future challenges.

The healthcare infrastructure in India as well requires a lot of investment, stated Ms. Nayyar, and stressed that countries in South Asia need to collaborate much more going forward. A number of countries in the region are resource constrained, therefore it is important to talk to one another, share best practices, and come up with way to better support each other through such crises. While the pandemic was a health emergency, it ended up having a devastating impact on the economy and other sectors. She argued that multilateral organisations and forums could play a

role in getting technical experts to work on pandemic preparedness. Agreeing with her co-panelist, Dr. Altaf advocated for a freer exchange of people between the three countries. The exchange should not be limited to just health experts, but people from different walks of life, because so many of the challenges we face today are shared



Post-COVID Futures: *The Prolonged Pandemic: Can public policy be retooled for delivery?*

Date: February 19, 2021

Moderator

Salman Zaidi, Director Programs, Jinnah Institute

Panelists

Safiya Aftab, Executive Director, Verso Consulting

Rafay Alam, Environmental Lawyer

Usama Khilji, Director, Bolo Bhi

The Jinnah Institute is compiling a research report on Post-COVID futures which evaluates the response to the pandemic in reference to key policy sectors, and attempts to piece together a picture of what a post-pandemic world may look like. In anticipation of the launch of this report, JI brought together the authors of the report to discuss their findings and recommendations.

Focusing on how the social sectors have fared during the pandemic, Safiya Aftab's assessment was that the report card has been mixed. The response of the government during the initial stages of the pandemic was a positive one, despite there being a delay on their part in acknowledging the magnitude of the problem. However, with the NCOC being formed by March, we witnessed an effort on the government's part to bring the federal and provincial coordination on the same page. The unfortunate aspect was that this government response petered out over time, especially once the peak of the first wave passed. This attitude was reflected in the vaccine procurement process as well considering the amount of confusion and misinformation that was generated. She added that COVID has exposed faultiness in the economy and social service

sectors such as education. Particularly in the case of the health sector, Pakistan has fortunately gotten away without incurring major damage, but it remains to be seen what the long-term effects are. Ms. Aftab further lamented the government's approach of instituting stop-gap measures rather than seeking out long-term solutions to structural ailments. COVID has highlighted several opportunities as well. Telehealth services need to be further looked into, as services such as remote medical consultations have caught on even in smaller cities. Additionally, the pandemic has illustrated the benefits of updating and disseminating data, and has aided policy makers as well. Ms. Aftab recommended that this should be done on a routine basis and not just during a crisis.

On the topic of what lessons can be drawn from COVID when it comes to tackling the climate crisis, Rafay Alam put forth a bleak assessment of the government's efforts regarding both the crises. He pointed out that health was and should be a provincial matter. According to him, the friction witnessed between the federal and provincial governments at the onset of the pandemic was unfortunate, and so was the Supreme Court's role in taking suo moto action to get the center and the provinces on the same page. Mr. Alam highlighted that it makes sense for climate change to be a provincial subject because of how the impact is localised. Pakistan's climate change policy is outdated and that the science of climate crisis has moved on. He argued that the response to COVID mirrors the centralization of response to the climate crisis. In his recommendations, he stressed that federal policy making should involve more coordination and communication with provinces and political opponents.

Looking at the post-COVID future from the lens of technology, Usama Khilji examined whether tech has been able to assist young people vis-à-vis their livelihood and education. Mr. Khilji pointed out that while the penetration rate of technology among the youth continues to increase, the pandemic once again highlighted the digital divide that exists. He explained that this divide is determined by geography in some cases, as areas in Balochistan, former FATA, and Azad Kashmir remain offline. There is also a gendered aspect to this divide, as the percentage of women with access to internet is significantly lower than that of men. When it comes to evaluating the role that technology has played in delivering essential information regarding COVID, we have witnessed a lot of misinformation surrounding the vaccine, which allows us to draw parallels to the Polio vaccination drive. On the question of whether technology has enabled positive engagement with the government and politics, Mr. Khilji noted that while there have been some positive attempts on part of the government, concerns remain surrounding transparency and the privacy of data. Technology is also being used as a tool for misinformation and smear campaigns against those critical of the government. Unfortunately, the government has been a bystander and even an instigator on some occasions, added Mr. Khilji. Moreover, legislation regarding online content regulation leaves a lot to be desired. What is lacking is a multi-stakeholder collaborative process of devising policy. He recommended that the decision-making process must be transparent, consultative, and democratic rather than ad-hoc and short-term. The process should factor in the diversity that characterises Pakistan.



Post-COVID Futures: *Economic Recovery and Rebuilding*

Date: March 1, 2021

Moderator

Khurram Husain, Economic Journalist, Pakistan

Panelists

Dr. Asad Sayeed, Associate Fellow IDEAS, Pakistan

Dr. Aqdas Afzal, Program Director Economics, Habib University, Pakistan

The Jinnah Institute is compiling a research report on Post-COVID futures which evaluates the economic response to the ongoing pandemic, what the prospects are of an economic recovery, and whether the recovery will be a robust one considering Pakistan's structural constraints. In anticipation of the launch of this report, JI brought together the authors of the report to discuss their findings and recommendations.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the Pakistani economy was not faring that well as it was in the throes of an economic adjustment program. Dr. Asad Sayeed explained that for the last decade and a half, the economy has lived through a boom-bust cycle on a macroeconomic level. Even before COVID, growth was down, so was investment, inflation levels were rising, and tax revenue collection was at a historic low. It is important to underline that this has been a recurring pattern for our economy. Dr. Sayeed noted that there were several structural factors

that had not been addressed for the past decades because of which Pakistan was ill-prepared for the kind of lockdown that was mandated by the global pandemic.

Some of the recent economic indicators have been positive when considering the current account surplus and the improvement in high frequency indicators according to the State Bank of Pakistan. Despite this, Mr. Aqdas Afzal expressed skepticism regarding the prospects of a robust recovery. The primary reason for this is the general type of economic planning and thinking that has been adopted by the current government. The focus of the government has been on fiscal consolidation as a result of the IMF programme. He added that the focus on budget balancing has been misplaced considering Pakistan's current context. Unlike other countries, Pakistan has shied away from employing fiscal policy measures to alleviate the crisis. The only measures we have witnessed thus far have come from the State Bank in the shape of injecting liquidity in the market; however the impact has not been as desired.

On the subject of whether it is possible to separate the impact of COVID on the economy from the longstanding structural bottlenecks that have plagued the economy, Dr. Sayeed pointed out that the economy was slowing down even prior to the pandemic. The core problem is that Pakistan lacks levers for growth. One of the structural issues we face is the inability to incrementally formalize the economy and broaden our tax net. This leaves the government with limited avenues for achieving sustainable growth. He further added that Pakistan has struggled with allocating resources to productive sectors over the years; and to our dismay this is still not on the government's radar.

In light of these vulnerabilities, how much room does the government have to craft a policy for economic recovery? Mr. Afzal argued that as long as real incomes do not go up, subsidies are not going to bring about an economic revival. He lamented that the focus has been on going down the same failed avenues of hand-outs and relief packages. Moreover, when it comes to hard constraints, governments can borrow funds in their own currencies and repay the loans, however the real solution lies in questioning the allocation of resources and having a discussion within the confines of the political economy to determine who is going to get what.

The NCOC recently announced the withdrawal of COVID mitigation measures; moving forward, it remains to be seen what sort of political economy takes shape and how the government responds with regards to the economy. Mr. Afzal raised the pertinent question of how the State Bank will afford the incentives it offered through lower interest rates and subsidies. As it is, the government is under increasing pressure from the opposition and cannot afford any further economic deterioration. Therefore, it is likely that the government will try to maintain whatever minimum level of performance it can muster. He further lamented the fact that the private sector did not pick up the slack post-liberalisation. Going forward, with the structural bottlenecks firmly in place, it seems that the government's focus will remain on the budget deficit while keeping the economy constrained.



When September Ends: *Drawdown, Spoilers, and Civil War in Afghanistan*

Date: May 26, 2021

Moderator

Salman Zaidi, Director Programs, Jinnah Institute

Panelists

Aziz Ahmad Khan, Former Ambassador

Tehmina Janjua, Former Foreign Secretary

Zahid Hussain, Journalist and Author

With the upcoming withdrawal of US and NATO forces timed for this year, experts are concerned about a civil war ensuing in Afghanistan as violence continues to rise. The trend of violence has led some to believe that a civil war may already have started. In her opening remarks, former Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua outlined two possible scenarios that could play out once the US troops depart: an ideal one, whereby the peace process concludes with a lasting agreement that paves the way for enhancing connectivity and trade linkages in the region; and a 'dreaded' scenario with a "return of the 1990s" where violence ensues and external actors fill in power vacuums. The second outcome will exacerbate the ongoing suffering of Afghan citizens, and have an adverse spillover effect across the rest of the region. Amb. Janjua felt that the rhetoric coming from Kabul is distinctly unhelpful as it keeps placing the onus of peace on external actors, particularly Pakistan, which has maintained a steady, neutral stance. President Ghani must

acknowledge that the responsibility lies with internal actors in Afghanistan to reach a compromise, and that Pakistan can only play the role of a facilitator, if needed.

Tehmina Janjua further highlighted the threat posed by spoilers such as ISIS that continue to operate with impunity in Afghanistan. She saw that Indian strategic thinkers retain the mindset that a return to the 1990s will keep Pakistan's border areas unsettled. Additionally, key questions relating to a possible interim government, power sharing, and women's rights remain to be addressed with clarity before an agreement can be reached. Another outstanding challenge is the need for the Taliban to formulate an inclusive vision for all communities and groups in Afghanistan.

The dreaded civil war scenario must be avoided as Afghanistan cannot afford to lose another generation to violence. If the current surge of violence continues, the many gains in democratic governance and citizens rights could be reversed. Ambassador Aziz Ahmad Khan stated that a return to a 90's-like scenario is a very real possibility. He recalled that the entire international community abandoned Afghanistan after the Soviet exit, and it was only Pakistan that remained engaged with its neighbour. At one point, Afghanistan was divided between about 400 different warlords; these were conditions which enabled the rise of the Taliban. Therefore, in order to avoid a repeat of history, the entire international community needs to play its part in ensuring stability in Afghanistan. He added that the Taliban too have evolved as a group over time and have learned hard lessons.

The progress of the intra-Afghan dialogue has been "glacial" as the two sides have not even agreed on a minimum common agenda yet. While the Taliban act as a monolith, there remain many internal divisions on the government's side, explained Ambassador Khan. All regional actors including China, Iran, Russia have a role to play, whereas Pakistan must continue to persuade the Taliban that the return of an Islamic Emirate will not be possible again. He added that Islamabad must demonstrate strategic patience, and choose persuasion over belligerence in dealing with the warring factions. However, this responsibility cannot be Pakistan's alone to bear.

On the status of the peace process and extent to which the Taliban are engaging with Islamabad at the moment, senior journalist Zahid Hussain pointed to the military strength of the militant group, which allows them maximum strategic leverage at the negotiating table. The Taliban are securing whatever concessions they can before the US troops leave, possibly even the release of remaining prisoners and removing travel bans for its leaders. Playing their cards shrewdly at the negotiating table, the Taliban have so far provided no clarity on whether they will be part of a coalition government, partake in elections, or agree to an interim political arrangement.

Zahid Hussain saw that fighting will likely intensify in what seems to be an ongoing civil war. The ANSF's future is of primary concern, especially if they can remain integrated without the support of foreign forces, and secure the civilian population. He highlighted Pakistan's long-standing reminder to the US that there was no military solution to this conflict. For over two decades, Pakistan has borne the brunt of the war, and will have to respond once again as violence flares up across the border and refugees from the northwest pour in.

Zahid Hussain echoed Ambassador Khan's concerns regarding the lack of consensus that exists within the Afghan government. He noted that the government seems to be divided over whether the US should withdraw, the timing of the withdrawal, and if they should be holding talks with the Taliban in the first place.

Should a civil war unfold in Afghanistan, it will adversely impact Pakistan, added Tehmina Janjua, and recommended that Islamabad should be prepared for worst case scenarios. The Kabul government enjoys very limited control and the absence of a peace agreement can therefore become very problematic. Escalating conflict is a red flag for Pakistan as militant groups such as ISIS and the TTP may become emboldened by the withdrawal of foreign forces. With a surge in violence, Pakistan will have to explore ways to insulate itself from terror groups operating along the border. Moreover, insulating ourselves will hurt the Afghans more than the Pakistani citizens, she warned.

If Afghanistan is only ever seen as a product of international brokerage, it may be argued that the role of the US is limited to “chief financier and convener”, now ceding space to China to assume this leadership. Aziz Ahmad Khan emphasized China’s role in the region and beyond; its resources will help Afghanistan, but the manner remains to be seen. In the past, China helped Afghanistan develop a central telephone network, and may provide similar support for social infrastructure. Ambassador Khan further echoed that ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan was the responsibility of the international community as a whole. The US has spent large sums of money on the ANSF, but the Taliban have continued to go from strength to strength on the battlefield. Since the US is largely responsible for the current Afghan situation, it must continue providing financial assistance to support the country. In the absence of such assistance, desertion rates within the ANSF will increase significantly as the surge of violence continues, he warned.

Concluding the session, the panelists discussed Pakistan’s national security capacity to cope with Afghanistan’s civil war scenario. Zahid Hussain stated that spoilers will continue to sabotage the peace deal in spite of an agreement between the Taliban and the Afghan government. The TTP continues to operate in Afghanistan, and presents a serious concern that Islamabad must take up with Kabul. The restoration of an Islamic Emirate is not in the interest of Pakistan, and Islamabad must maintain ties with all other groups in Afghanistan simultaneously to demonstrate a neutral stance.

DIALOGUES



Chao Track Virtual Dialogue 2020

Date: October 3, 2020

The Chao Track Dialogue is a joint India-Pakistan Track II initiative undertaken by Jinnah Institute (JI) and Council for Strategic and Defense Research (CSDR), to facilitate informed dialogue on relations between India and Pakistan. This report presents the key arguments and discussion during a recently concluded Chao Track II dialogue between Indian and Pakistani interlocutors via a web conference on 3rd October 2020. The dialogue themes and discussions reflect the multiple vectors affecting the bilateral relationship, including escalation along Line of Control, a growing deep freeze in bilateral relations, deteriorating situation in Kashmir, rising rhetoric in India vis-à-vis Pakistan, and ongoing Afghan peace process.

These themes have been discussed previously over the Chao Track's 11-year history, making it South Asia's longest consistently running Track 2 engagement. The perspectives generated from each dialogue have been shared with respective policy establishments on both sides, and have contributed to policy reform on several occasions. The Chao Track continues to bring together the most distinguished opinion leaders, legislators and diplomats from India and Pakistan to enhance stakes in stability, and cultivate a growing cohort of peacebuilders.

In recent years it has held an Emerging Leaders forum to draw younger practitioners into bilateral dialogue, as well as expanding outreach through social media products that impact public opinion in both countries. The Chao Track is committed to the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives in all its outputs and processes.

This year's Chao Track Dialogue was held virtually with delegates participating from Islamabad and New Delhi for a day-long event. The following is a list of session themes and participants:

Panel 1: State of Play in India – Pakistan Relations: *Aziz Ahmed Khan, K.C. Singh, Jalil Abbas Jilani, D.S. Hooda, Khurram Dastgir, Siddharth Varadarajan*

Panel 2: Kashmir – The Way Forward: *Tariq Fatemi, Navnita Chadha Behera, Rabia Akhtar, Tilak Devasher, Ali Dayan Hasan, Happymon Jacob*

Panel 3: Terrorism and its shadow on India-Pakistan Relations: *Noel Khokhar, Saikat Datta, Jamal Aziz, Vinod Bhatia*

Panel 4: Afghanistan and Regional Stability: *Salman Bashir, Suhasini Haider, Ammara Durrani, Arun Sehgal, Zahid Hussain, Gautam Mukhopadhaya*

CONFERENCES



Ideas Conclave 2020

Dates: November 25-27, 2020

The Jinnah Institute convened its annual flagship event Ideas Conclave on November 25-27th, 2020, in Islamabad. Ideas Conclave is held every year by Jinnah Institute to cultivate thought leadership for South Asia, and frequently the world beyond whose political crises are strikingly similar to this part of the world. The Institute holds this Conclave to champion new ways of review and assessment, to move past blind spots, thought determinisms, academic or policy enthusiasms that have been disproven in this last year.

This year, in the backdrop of COVID-19, the annual conclave was held online over three days, and featured sessions on a range of issues. Leading policy experts participated in a series of in-depth conversations, on a wide variety of themes such as technology in governance, regional futures with the Afghan peace process, inequities in wealth and journalists reporting on conflict and foreign policy spheres.

The online format of the conclave allowed international experts to participate, as well as international audiences to partake in the fruitful discussions spurred online. All sessions of the Ideas Conclave were broadcast live on the Jinnah Institute YouTube channel, and also uploaded for later viewing. Key takeaways were tweeted on the institute's twitter account, and this allowed for real time engagement with audiences.

The event received coverage in mainstream English press, including major dailies such as [Dawn](#) and [The News](#), providing detailed event coverage alongside other newspapers.

Day 1

Session 1: Global Re-Order in the Making



The Ideas Conclave 2020 kicked off with a conversation between Senator Sherry Rehman and notable historian Peter Frankopan. COVID has transformed the way we live, think, and interact

with each other. Senator Sherry Rehman remarked how 2020 has been a year of terrible disruptions with the pandemic exposing new fault lines regarding how societies cope with crises. “Instead of fostering continental cooperation, the pandemic has reinforced new nationalisms as well as isolationist tendencies of key states around the world.”

Senator Rehman raised the pertinent question of whether the pandemic will further accelerate the trend of nations turning away from globalization. COVID has not really created new problems, but it has instead further made clear what problems already existed on a global scale, explained Dr. Frankopan. While the pandemic has had a dramatic impact in several ways, it has not been as bad from a lethality standpoint when compared to pandemics of the past. However, the real concern will be the long term social, economic, and political consequences that will come about as a result of this disease.

Senator Rehman looked to explore the potential changes in global connectivity brought about by the effects of the pandemic, and how the Belt-Road Initiative differed from the historical silk route. “Pakistan has had a connectivity dream and (has looked) to leverage its geopolitical position,” she stated. But volatility on the border between Pakistan and India, and China and India had led to an overly militarised region. As a result, the “larger dreams of cooperation and regional interlinkages have not been realised,” stated Senator Rehman.

The discussion shifted to the conflict rising between China and the Trump Administration in the US. On a question related to the ongoing trade war between the US and China and whether continued tensions could lead to a serious confrontation between the two rivals, Peter Frankopan highlighted the difficulty in attempting to predict future events. “Most of our history tends to be about difficult and touchy diplomatic relationships. And luckily, you know, those big wars are relatively far and few in between. But you can’t rule anything out.”

Dr Frankopan explained that it is important to separate the chatter and noise from what the real issues are, which can be a difficult task during the Trump era. The Cold War had seemed like an eternal conflict between two polar opposites, and yet the fall of the USSR led to the acrimony ending unceremoniously. There are legitimate reasons for both the sides to find a better working relationship. While it remains to be seen if there will be any changes with a Biden administration coming in, a lot of concerns surrounding China seem to be bipartisan in the domestic US context. However, Dr. Frankopan did express optimism about there being some kind of reset in the relationship between the two countries with a new President in the White House.

On the subject of climate change, and how it is one of the biggest trend lines to watch out for in South Asia, Senator Rehman posed a question on how this might derail growth and development in the region. China, at the moment, provides 45% of all new patents and funding into clean energy, stated Dr. Frankopan. China does this because it is a global leader, but also because it has an energy crisis of its own as it does not have much oil and gas reserves in its Western provinces. Similarly, Pakistan also faces an energy crisis which has been a hurdle in the way of economic growth. For Pakistan specifically, it is imperative that it come up with energy plan and invest more in clean energy sources considering the threat climate change poses. These challenges require long term investment and planning, and are by no means unique to Pakistan.

Day 2

Day two of Ideas Conclave 2020 featured three sessions, picking up strands of debate connected to inclusive democracy, the use of technology to improve governance and a special discussion on regional politics, potential shifts in global alliances and its resultant effect in both South Asia and beyond.

Session 2: Democracy and Inclusion



A bilateral conversation titled 'Democracy and Inclusion' kicked off the sessions, with former leader of opposition in the Senate, Chaudhry Aitzaz Ahsan, founding member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Ms. Hina Jilani and Indian journalist and economist, Prem Shankar Jha addressing the questions posed by Senior Fellow Tabadlab, Mosharraf Zaidi, who was moderating the session. With democratic ideals that were once considered sacrosanct under threat, the main thrust of the initial dialogue considered issues of pluralism and inclusion, and how majoritarian views and populism were rapidly becoming more accepted in democratic governments across the board.

Participants argued that views considered against the traditional values of democracy had existed since time immemorial; their espousal by mainstream democratic parties and groups had led to their widespread proliferation in democratic discourse and within structures of government. These prejudiced perspectives only came into the public domain if the environment for their proliferation was created by the state. This, compounded by the lack of basic checks and balances on the government, was being used to suppress the voices of civil society. One of the historical reasons for this was the subcontinent’s colonial past; the rules and laws imposed by the British before independence in 1947 were authoritarian.

Importantly, participants discussed how societies in South Asia created dichotomies based on languages; speaking and writing in English for instance was an intrinsic advantage for greater job opportunities. Those that were left out as a result of these issues were targets for populist narratives as potential recruits.

At the end, participants contemplated on how best to develop pathways to improve institutions and individuals to make for a more inclusive society. There were cleavages within society where large sections are now using majoritarian ideology to make improvements in their lives. It was important “for sections of society to oppose the exploitation of institutions.”

Session 3: Connectography: Making Technology Work for Governance



The second session, 'Connectography: Making Technology Work for Governance' featured a mix of experts working in the private, development and legal sectors with convergence on the technological aspects of these versatile fields. Director Programs Jinnah Institute, Salman Zaidi was moderating the session, which included Usama Khilji, Director, Bolo Bhi, Director, Research Society of International Law and Co-founder LAWGIC Oves Anwar, General Counsel, Sarmayacar, Mubariz Siddiqui, co-founder, Media Matters for Democracy, Sadaf Khan and Facebook employee Sehar Tariq.

2020 was a year of "historic disruptions" which made it all the more important for states to rely on technology for efficient governance. "While we rebuild our way out of this pandemic, we technology will remain the instrumental resource that we use to shine a light on how we can rebuild, repair, reduce losses, reduce vulnerabilities, sustain our ecosystems," stated Mr. Zaidi. Conversely, there was also a need to take a hard look at data as governments came to terms with how technology functions and how to control online behaviour and prepare a novel set of rules. Salman Zaidi went on to state, "we have also learned in this process that technology is no monolith. It is neither intrinsically good or bad. It's what you make of it."

One of the key points the session touched upon was the idea of "digital Pakistan" and progress the country had made on this front over the course of the last few years. Ms. Sehar Tariq argued that Pakistan was not as well-connected technologically as it was often perceived. According to the "Inclusive Internet Index" a report that assessed the rank of countries in internet readiness, affordability, connectivity and availability of online resources, Pakistan was 76th out of 100. It was ranked "24th out of 26 Asian countries." "When it comes to the numbers for Asia, we're at the very bottom of the pyramid there," stated Ms. Tariq. Even if the numbers put forth by the state were to be relied on, 60-70 million people with access to the internet in a total population was a "large gap" of those not yet online.

Ms. Sehar Tariq continued, "Pakistan ranks poorly because of its infrastructure and network...(and) actually because we have one of the biggest gender gaps in the world. Women disproportionately do not have access to the Internet in Pakistan." Beyond this, Ms. Tariq also highlighted the problem of digital literacy and its impact on digital divide in the country.

Discussing the impact of lockdowns on the use of technology for better governance, participants argued that if anything, the decision to close businesses, government offices and schools—even if temporarily—only further shed light on the growing chasm between the stated connectivity in Pakistan, versus the reality. This was particularly evident in the educational sector, where students from far-flung areas could not make the shift to online classes and were at risk of having lost out on acquiring important information. This dichotomy between regions in relation to internet access directly overlapped with the provision of rights and freedoms as well, because a lot of these liberties, such as the rights to information and education and the freedoms of speech and association were often directly connected to the internet in this day and age.

In response to this, the government could potentially resolve some core issues of access by steps such as "installing public Wi-Fi hotspots in public areas where Internet is available for free for people," explained Usama Khilji. But beyond these "stop-gaps", the government needed "to

increase access and infrastructure and there's existing mechanisms available for that," said Mr. Khilji.

Mr. Oves Anwar offered his expertise from the legal sector to assess how technology could be included in the judicial process. He stated, "When we're looking at governance through the rule of law lens, we're looking at issues of accountability. We're looking at issues of inclusiveness and how the judiciary plays a role in how the justice sector really functions." Endemic issues in Pakistan's justice system, such as "delays or lack of credibility in criminal investigations" or the capacity of prosecutors, investigations or even judges had solutions that were "very viable, very workable." Not using technology at all levels of the judicial system had "really impacted the experience that litigants, common people who have to interface with the judiciary are suffering from," said Mr. Anwar.

Mr. Mubariz Siddqui agreed with the comments of other panellists and added that there was a need for governance models to try and include technology for the improvement of service delivery. He cited the example of the current government's ongoing accountability drive, and highlighted that it was imperative that technology was used to assess discretionary powers and keep a check on them. Transparency in the procurement process and the disbursement of funds could go a long way in the government achieving its goal to clampdown on corruption. "When everything is on paper, it's very easy to forge records. It's very easy to procure items worth crores without anyone noticing."

Ms. Sadaf Khan elaborated on the regulatory mechanisms currently in play in Pakistan's internet landscape, and argued that the main objective of the state "was very limited". She elaborated, "The view for technology that's being taken is to simply create an environment which is more conducive to certain narratives... when you start thinking about the political boundaries that exist, the political red lines that exist, and then start using those to define where technology should go and who should connect and who should not, then your whole worldview regarding technology becomes limited to one particular aspect of technological use."

On the issue of banning mobile applications and platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, participants asked the stakeholders to consider this problem from both the economic and socio-political angles. Both were adversely affected by the discussion to blanket ban a platform that had a large number of domestic users.

"The development sector cannot do much unless the public stands behind them. There is a need to have a discourse on how human rights and civil liberties are not opposed to patriotism or the progress of Pakistan," stated Ms. Khan.

Session 4: Realigning the Region



The final session of the second day of Ideas Conclave 2020 witnessed an important bilateral engagement. ‘Realigning the Region’ moderated by Senior Fellow Jinnah Institute Ammara Durrani, included participants Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi, former Afghan Ambassador Janan Mosazai, Professor Marvin Weinbaum and Editor, The Wire (India) Siddharth Varadarajan and saw the debate on the Afghanistan question take new trajectories to discuss the challenges still present in finding a resolution to the lingering conflict. The conversation began with an analysis on Pakistan’s shifting geo-political focus as a result of events close to home. The rising powers of China and India, alongside the US’ potential exit from a long and drawn-out conflict in Afghanistan necessitated a discussion on what shape the region would take moving forward.

At the outset, it was important to lay out Afghanistan’s internal context and where the public stood in reference to the negotiations process. The participants agreed that the “unbearable and untenable” violence demanded an immediate ceasefire and complete cessation of hostilities on Afghan soil, which was also the number one priority of its neighbours. The consequences of a proxy war—brought about by hasty withdrawal of US troops without talks coming to a successful conclusion in Afghanistan—would be “horrendous for the people of Afghanistan”.

The panellists also looked to assess the current Pakistan government’s positive engagement with its counterpart in Kabul and explain Islamabad’s stance on the peace process taking place. Pakistan’s commitment to peace and stability was indicated with Prime Minister Imran Khan’s

recent visit to Kabul. But ultimately, as the talks in Doha got underway, it was up to the Afghans themselves to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Panellists took a close look at India’s role in Afghanistan since 9/11. It was clear that India had rather deep reservations about the prospects for dialogue with the Taliban and the prospects for that kind of negotiated solution, especially if it came along with an “artificially hastened timeline” for the withdrawal of US forces.

When the discussion moved towards regional stakes in the peace process, Pakistan’s reservations on Pak-Afghan transit trade and New Delhi’s ambitions in Afghanistan, India’s actions in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir and the “crisis” that had erupted in South Asia as a result took centre stage. Ultimately, all other minor issues would take a backseat until there was resolution on Kashmir and its future.

Session 5: Inequities in Wealth and Development

The third and final day of ‘Jinnah Institute’s Ideas Conclave 2020’ commenced with a conversation on ‘Inequities in Wealth and Development’ where experts discussed the current state of the economy in Pakistan, the impact of Covid-19, and what path of recovery should be adopted considering the rising levels of inequality. Speakers of the session included former Provincial Minister of Finance, Aisha Ghous Pasha, General Secretary PMLN Sindh, Miftah Ismail,

Executive Director IBA, S. Akbar Zaidi, and Associate Professor of Political Economy at QAU, Aasim Sajjad Akhtar. The session was moderated by Assistant Editor at Dawn Newspaper, Khurram Husain.

South Asia is home to one-third of the world's poor population. Despite achieving substantial levels of growth, inequality levels have continued to rise in the region. Dr. Aisha Ghaus Pasha highlighted that there exists a strong correlation between reduction in inequality and reduction in poverty. She lamented the fact that government policies have been geared solely towards achieving growth while neglecting the rising levels of inequality. Dr. S. Akbar Zaidi pointed out that reducing poverty levels is a relatively easier task that can be achieved through income support programs such as BISP. However, addressing inequality requires undertaking structural reforms focused on wealth creation.

While traditionally it is understood that there is a trade-off between equity and efficiency, in Pakistan's context, an increase in equity would perhaps result in an increase in efficiency as well, noted Dr. Miftah Ismail. If growth is pursued in a more inclusive manner and more attention is paid to small and medium enterprises, a reduction in inequality can be achieved. While structural changes to reduce inequality will require long term measures, there is a need to identify that the greatest contributors to inequality over the last twenty-four months have been inflation and food inflation.

Rising inequality has been a global trend. Dr. Aasim Sajjad Akhtar opined that this trend is a reflection of distinct political choices regarding the kind of economy leaders around the world have wanted to create; one that essentially controlled by big business interests. He further added that a narrative of imaginary growth and development has been sold to a mythical middle class, that in practice has continuously left out large segments of society. The rising populist impulse being witnessed globally is a response to the obscene levels of inequality that has come about by design.

On the subject of the kind of economic model that would help us achieve more inclusive growth, Dr. Aisha Ghaus Pasha stressed that it is imperative to focus on more labour intensive areas of the economy, especially the agricultural sector. Additionally, instead of providing subsidies to the large corporate sector, the government should introduce policies that are more supportive of small and medium level enterprises. These measures, along with the formalising of the informal economic sector will go a long way in bringing about a more equitable growth model for Pakistan.

Session 6: Fineprinting Security: Journalists Discuss Conflict Reportage



The final session of the Conclave, “Fineprinting Security: Journalists Discuss Conflict Reportage” was moderated by journalist Raza Rumi and featured experienced journalists Kathy Gannon, Amber Rahim Shamsi and Asad Hashim. This session highlighted challenges faced by journalists across South Asia while they cover conflict zones and areas which have been hit by violence.

Regardless of the environment a journalist is operating in, the principles of reporting remain the same. What is unique to conflict zones is perhaps the difficulty one faces when it comes to gaining access to voices you want to highlight, explained Kathy Gannon. Reflecting on her experience of reporting during the Afghanistan elections in 2014 when she came under attack and lost a friend, Ms. Gannon stated that “all one can do is try to mitigate the risks and dangers, but there is no way of eradicating them.”

While the principles of reporting may remain the same, journalists operating in Pakistan do face unique challenges. Amber Rahim Shamsi pointed out that it is important to recognize the privilege of journalists such as herself who have to travel to conflict zones instead of being situated there. Adding to the list of challenges is the often-witnessed scenario where reporting contradicts the state’s narrative regarding a particular conflict. Asad Hashim pointed out that state machineries attempting to mainstream a particular narrative is somewhat of a universal phenomenon. However, in Pakistan’s case the approach is very heavy handed to control the way a particular conflict is perceived, and also the extent of coverage it receives from news and media outlets.

Today, journalists are going through a particularly difficult period as we witness an increasing number of enforced disappearances.

The clampdown of information in IIOJK is another manifestation of this phenomenon. Kathy Gannon highlighted the determination of journalists in IIOJK who risked their lives to smuggle out written materials to ensure that the public is apprised of the on-ground situation. Despite the BJP government's best efforts, there have been some really moving stories to have come out of IIOJK. Whether they have the intended effect on the international stage however comes down to economic and regional clout of the country in question.

Towards the end of the session, digital spaces were discussed; in particular, the hostility and harassment faced by female journalists. "Women journalists aren't just targeted for their alleged yellow journalism being paid to do propaganda for a particular political party, but are also on the receiving end sexual abuse and rape threats", explained Amber Shamsi. A lot of these campaigns are coordinated and deliberate to undermine the credibility of female journalists. In addition to suppressing free speech, abuse faced by women journalists takes a significant toll on mental health and has real-life ramifications.

Open Democracy Initiative (ODI)

Pakistan's interrupted encounters with democracy, and diminished public input in governance have arrested the growth of institutions and rendered public services either too fragile or too disempowered to respond to a growing population of citizens alienated from the state. The twin menaces of terrorism and extremism have further exacerbated the crisis in the country.

The goal of the **Open Democracy Initiative** is to bridge the gap between citizens and state and to formulate and articulate policy responses based on inclusive research. By pursuing these goals, Jinnah Institute is creating awareness, expanding the knowledge base and facilitating the implementation of informed recommendations for researchers and policy-makers.

This program focuses on strengthening democratic practices such as transparency in public contracts, the right to religious freedom, social entitlements, right to information, and the provision of social justice. In addition, this initiative is an awareness and capacity building effort for better governance in Pakistan's public institutions. It advocates the reinstatement of state writ in areas where parallel and/or colonial structures restrict access to fundamental rights, such as universal suffrage and equal opportunities for all.

POLICY ROUNDTABLES



Webinar on The Ecology of Learning, Fun, and Activism

Date: August 12, 2020

Moderator

Sehar Tariq, Policy Analyst

Panelists

Ahmer Naqvi, Culture and Sports Writer

Asad Rahim Khan, Lawyer

Sabah Bano Malik, Journalist

Kaif Ghaznavi, Teacher and Performing Artist

Ramsha Jahangir, Journalist

The coronavirus pandemic has forced young people to cope with greater isolation and blurred lines between the personal and professional. On International Youth Day 2020, Jinnah Institute invited prominent activists, journalists and young thought leaders in their fields to discuss issues

faced by young people, in the post-COVID world. The webinar, themed The Ecology of Learning, Fun, and Activism, was moderated by policy analyst Sehar Tariq. Participants included culture and sports writer Ahmer Naqvi, lawyer Asad Rahim Khan, teacher and performing artist Kaif Ghaznavi, and journalists Ramsha Jahangir and Sabah Bano.

Participants discussed how the pandemic has changed the world around them. Ramsha Jahangir, a journalist working on digital privacy and technology, elaborated on challenges that have increased online with a barrage of misinformation and disinformation spreading all over the internet, amplified since the onset of coronavirus. Ms. Jahangir emphasised the need to disconnect for time periods, and to consume information from trusted sources when necessary.

She also identified problems that young people face with lockdowns and being restricted to home, particularly in the spheres of education and work. She stated that the two-fold challenge in connectivity – of access and affordability – were significant stumbling blocks against productivity for the youth in these challenging times.

Ms. Jahangir went on to discuss the use of digital tools as a means to rebel or raise one's voice on issues. Digital technology is a very important means to amplify one's voice, but she called it a "double-edged sword", due to the threats it exposed young people to, in particular women. Trolling and abuse are common occurrences, and one could step back and choose to go offline if mental health was a concern.

Journalist and comedian Sabah Bano Malik also believed that a "tech detox" is necessary in the pandemic. She believed that one must take moments to completely switch off and not try and constantly consume information or knowledge.

When asked about expressing her opinions online and being on the receiving end of abuse as a result, Ms. Malik believed that online abuse is part and parcel of being a woman, especially when expressing opinions that might not be universally accepted. Combatting cultural norms would always lead to trolling and women being categorised as 'good' or 'bad', Ms Malik explained. She believed in using humour to get arguments across and also negate trolls whenever possible.

Mr. Ahmer Naqvi believed that dealing with issues such as natural disasters, terrorism and economic instability had hardened sections of the populace, making them better equipped to meet challenges posed by COVID-19. Speaking from his previous experience of creating a digital startup, Mr. Naqvi explained that regardless of the changed situation, entrepreneurial innovation in Pakistan has a dearth of investment in the technology sector, a challenge and a benefit simultaneously. The challenge is the lack of infrastructure, while the lack of strong competition could be advantageous to new entrants.

In his opinion, the biggest challenge however, is the fact that entrepreneurship is not innovating enough in the country. He said that our standards and goals for quality work are too low, and these need to be improved to develop better products.

When asked a question about financing a new business, and whether youth had access to sources of funding, Mr. Naqvi pointed out that financial streams in Pakistan are limited.

Importantly, he also highlighted that privilege has a substantial role to play in determining whether financial capital could be acquired, in particular for ventures that were not digital.

Lawyer Asad Rahim Khan highlighted the importance of doing different things to safeguard one's mental health during the pandemic. The significance of human connections and their role in keeping one grounded plays a key role in mitigating the psychological effects of restrictions imposed due to the onset of coronavirus and the changed world.

Mr. Khan also discussed the pitfalls of the legal profession for the younger generation. He explained that much like in other professional streams, new entrants into the legal fraternity are also hostage to their privilege. However, he argued against painting privilege with a broad brush because the idea was not simply centred on class stratification; as a woman in the field of law, one's qualifications are often undermined by career assumptions. The recruitment practices of law firms in Pakistan are predicated on a utilitarian, zero-sum basis, where legal associates are only valued for the hours of work they can provide, not the quality.

Mr. Khan also identified how there is a growing division within the legal community as well, where on the one side there is a vast majority of lawyers, locally educated from one of the many law schools in Pakistan that do not focus on quality education. On the other hand, there are lawyers from privileged backgrounds, and they occupy the most space in higher tiers of the system; the two rarely interact or learn from one another.

Importantly, Mr. Asad Rahim Khan identified policy recommendations for the legal profession to improve the dispensation of justice and improve training for younger legal minds. He suggested that bar associations should play a greater role in regulating who enters the profession. Mr. Khan also mentioned the significance of mentorship programmes and how important it is for younger professionals to find encouragement and support.

Ms. Kaif Ghaznavi, a performing artist and teacher, spoke about how the pandemic affected her in a different way. With educational institutes closed down, students and teachers were scrambling to get their coursework in order to complete the term in any way possible. This allowed for an opportunity to truly assess solutions available for youth during this difficult period.

It is important to take education forward, but also safeguard mental health alongside, stated Ms. Ghaznavi. Teachers were no longer just educators, but also had to step in to provide counselling where possible. For students, this was a particularly challenging period, as all of a sudden, they had lost the ability to connect with friends and stay in touch with their support systems. The ability to "escape" at schools and universities, away from their domestic lives, was no longer possible, and even students that came from far-flung rural areas felt trapped.

Ms. Ghaznavi discussed how the pandemic allowed for reflection on the real problems affecting society. The importance of helping disadvantaged groups during the pandemic in ways that allow for income generation should be prioritised. Developing a skill or service-based industry during this time would help those that need it the most.

Additionally, the speakers also discussed ideas of striving for change, through demonstrations and movements. The conversation also addressed the ideas of resistance and whether the youth

should engage in expressions of rebellion as a means to bring reform. They agreed that younger generations would, and often should rebel, as it could stand to bring about positive change. They also discussed ideas of inclusion and causes that unify versus those that might not.

SPECIAL FEATURES



Road to 2021: Forecasting Change in Pakistan

To mark the new year Jinnah Institute asked thought leaders and policy practitioners to comment on areas likely to dominate 2021. Themes under discussion covered key areas in foreign policy, regional security, economy, governance and social protection, human rights, education, and the climate crisis.

Contributors

Dr. Safieh Shah, Global Health Researcher

Dr. Samia Altaf, Professor of Practice in Public Health, LUMS

Asad Hashim, Al Jazeera English Correspondent in Pakistan

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar, Associate Professor of Political Economy, QAU

Ayesha Razzaque, Education Consultant

Khurram Husain, Business and Economy Journalist

Jamal Aziz, Lawyer and Executive Director RSIL

Fahd Humayun, Foreign Policy Analyst and PhD Candidate at Yale

Rimmel Mohyidin, Pakistan/South Asia Campaigner, Amnesty International

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Take One: The 2020 US Elections and a Biden Presidency: What Pakistan Should Expect in the Region

As a new US Administration is set to take office under President-elect Joe Biden, Jinnah Institute quizzes a panel of former diplomats and policy experts on the likely impact of US policy interests in the region, and specific implications for America's relations with Pakistan.

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Flashpoint: Bracing for September

What are the current challenges in Afghanistan's peace process, particularly with a complete US withdrawal on the horizon by September 2021, and will the Afghan government be able to secure civil rights for all its citizens? Jinnah Institute President Sherry Rehman, Senior Research Fellow Jinnah Institute Zahid Hussain, Honorary Senior Fellow Jinnah Institute Ammara Durrani, and former Foreign Secretaries Riaz Mohammad Khan, Najmuddin Shaikh, and Jalil Abbas Jilani weigh in on the developing situation in the region, with a focus on Pakistan's security interests, on prospects for a 'lasting peace agreement' between Kabul and the Afghan Taliban.

Read [here](#).