

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In continuation of a tradition to conduct an annual grand event where varied issues relevant to Pakistan's traditional and non-traditional security challenges could be discussed under one roof, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) organized the "Dialogue Pakistan" on March 26, 2022, in Islamabad. 'Dialogue Pakistan' is a key initiative of PIPS to promote national-level discourse on critical issues that have a bearing on the national and international security landscape. This year's dialogues were centered on important themes, such as democracy, constitution, transparency, freedom of expression and Pak-Afghan relations. The four dialogue sessions were coupled with two report launches: 'Charter of Peace' and 'How Youth Views State, Society, Religion and Politics.'

The participants included current and former lawmakers, members of the federal cabinet, former senior military officials, religious scholars, representatives of civil society organizations, noted academics, and senior journalists. The participants in the event were invited from all four provinces of Pakistan and Gilgit Baltistan to give equal opportunity to all federal units for voicing their perspectives on policy questions.

PROCEEDING OF THE SESSIONS

Dialogue 01: Future of Parliament, Constitution and Democracy



In the first dialogue session, focusing on the future of parliament, constitution and democracy, senior politicians and representative of state and sitting government discussed topics such as supremacy of parliament, constitutional sacrosanctity, democratic deficit and the role of opposition and government in securing democracy and constitution. **Ghazi Salahuddin**, political analyst and writer, moderated of the session and invited **Lt. General Nasser Khan Janjua**, former National Security Advisor of Pakistan, to initiate the discourse. He advised to have an optimistic approach especially during challenging periods. He acknowledged the supremacy of the parliament and held that positive hopes must be attached with the future of parliament. However, he believed that the parliament must also adopt positive tradition and it ought to be a place where arguments can be presented openly, and policies can be constructed accordingly. Likewise, he believed that the constitution and democracy must be appreciated. Although he recognized that the environment of disappointment is prevailing in the society regarding the prospects of democracy, he believed democracy is a fundamental procedure for Pakistan's subsistence. He said, "we need to trust democracy and move towards political reconciliation by uniting all leaders and the Prime Minister must make decision through political consensus." While he accepted the problems of Pakistan, such as internal instabilities, limited wars, lack of education and peace, yet he believed that Pakistan is moving forward towards peace and stability.

Taqi Akhunzada, coordinator to Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, shared with the audience the political and economic deprivations of his region. He informed that consolidated democracy, parliament, and constitution do have an indecisive role in building a society and unfortunately, Gilgit Baltistan cannot enjoy any of these. He explained the necessity of Gilgit Baltistan to be a province of Pakistan so the people of the region could be connected to the central state through a social contract. He saw it as a prerequisite for maintaining law and order in Gilgit Baltistan.



Sanullah Baloch, former Senator and member Balochistan National Assembly, characterized parliament as a key institution with three roles i.e., to be representative, responsible, and responsive to crisis. He believed that the Parliament of Pakistan, both Senate and National Assembly, have failed to fulfil the three roles. According to him, a responsible and responsive parliament is guided by two codes of conduct: the constitution and rules of procedure. Unfortunately, the Constitution of Pakistan is neither obeyed nor respected, to the degree that basic subjects of constitution (human rights, political rights, freedom of speech etc.) are not followed. On the other hand, political leadership sets the rules and codes of conduct. He stated that our society is not only demeaning our parliament, but also, our own created constitution as well. Moreover, the state does not educate students on the constitution, so only a few are able to recognize that our parliament rarely follows the constitution. He believed that it is the responsibility of the state to create public awareness about the constitution to generate responsible citizens. He said, “if Pakistan kept on diffusing simplistic approaches, then extremist movements will rise, whereas constitution, law and civility awareness can only produce learned and cultured individuals.” On the whole, he stated that peace, harmony, and the federal system can only be maintained through fair play along with responsive and responsible government.

Raof Hasan shared government's stance on the issues. He admitted that Pakistan is in despair and argued about the causality of these circumstances. According to him, the core reason behind the political upheaval has been the degradation of the constitution. Every government of Pakistan makes amendments according to its own interests. There have been several amendments in the constitution, but we have not worked for the strengthening of the constitutional sanctity. The prospects of polarization are up rearing mainly due to the lack of discussion on 'truth'. He argued that national reconciliation is talked about, but we are hesitant to discuss the truth. The members of political institutions are focusing on accusing and denouncing each other, rather than being held accountable. Society and the institutions must initiate dialogues and provide forums, where the concept of justice, accountability truth and reconciliation are discussed among political individuals. On the whole, he asserted that Pakistan is leading towards annihilation and the causes for it have to be taken care of.

Qamar Zaman Kaira, former Senator and senior politician of Pakistan Peoples Party, pointed out that we have always managed to identify the problem, but we lack consensus on solutions and their practicality. He argued that states or nations do not prosper spontaneously; all developed states, consolidated democracies and parliamentary systems evolved with decades of struggle. Development of institutions and creation of a few codes of conduct do not transform the society. He asserted, "Democracy is a process which will not be established overnight." According to Kaira, dynamic, critical, and intellectual movements unite the societies and involve the individuals of the nation in the political and democratic process. He elucidated that parliaments will not become responsible on its own, it is not absolute practice or law. The politicians are not elected on their capabilities and capacities in Pakistan. He questioned if the current politicians of Pakistan are irresponsible and incompatible as compared to the founders of Pakistan, why it took years to develop a constitution or why the constitutions of 1956 and 1962 were dissolved. He recommended revisiting ideals and objectives, claiming that an agrarian society cannot become a liberal democracy, unless tolerance, culture and civilization are not inculcated in the society. The atmosphere and culture of democracy need to prevail. Furthermore, the system of accountability and judiciary have to be transformed and public opinion must be valued. He concluded that societies have not changed themselves based on certain ideas and laws, but they have struggled for their realization.

Niels Hegewisch, resident director at FES-Pakistan, concluded the discussion by providing an overview to the concept of democracy and the purpose of conducting panels on democracy, constitution and politics. He said that democracy is alive, when the society is willing to initiate a discourse on democracy, therefore, he thanked PIPS and his colleagues from FES to organize the discussion. Secondly, he explained the journey of democracy in Germany and the purpose of FES to promote democracy and governance. He said that foundational concept 'Democracy needs democrats', signifying the strength of politicians, society, judiciary and other institutes, that German society endorses for successful democracy. Lastly, he concluded that Germany lost its democracy due to extremism, political violence and flawed institutions in 1933, but the society of Germany strived to regain democracy and the core reason for the survival of parliament and political parties is the acceptance of the concept of democracy by all.

Dialogue 02: Taliban's Afghanistan and Challenges for Pakistan

Amir Rana, as the moderator of the session, questioned whether Pakistan's democracy, democratic institutions and administrative infrastructure possess the capacity to counter the challenges that Pakistan can face due to Afghanistan. **Dr. Simbal Khan**, a security and political analyst, focusing on the challenges to Pakistan said that, in the past 20 years, Afghanistan's turmoil has deeply impacted on politics and society of Pakistan. Pakistan has strongly and openly supported the Taliban for the same reason for Pakistan seeks peace and stability in its neighbor country. She believed that after the Taliban's government, the security situation has relatively improved but mentioned two significant challenges

before the Taliban government, namely the humanitarian crisis and economic collapse. She shared that although Pakistan adopted a more restrictive policy for controlling refugees this time, more than 3.5 lac refugees have already entered Pakistan through trafficking. Despite Pakistan's efforts to initiate diplomatic negotiations between the Taliban and the international community, the negative development regarding girls' education will cause an immense diplomatic loss. Simultaneously, the discord among the members of the Taliban government is evident, which will adversely impact Pakistan, as our expectation to control the Taliban to bring peace and counter TTP and IS-K will diminish. Lastly, the influence of India on Afghanistan has reduced, but the internal instability can upturn its influence.

Lt. General Nasser Khan Janjua, argued that when we label Afghanistan as "Taliban's Afghanistan," we, perhaps, limit our view of a diverse country. Considering it as a sovereign state will allow us to broaden our horizons of thinking, thus reaching a better conclusion. He laid forward three important facets of Afghanistan's prevalent situation. He was of the view that the U.S. departure from Afghanistan was in favor of Pakistan, as it is no more surrounded by two frontline states: India and Afghanistan. Secondly, Afghanistan and Pakistan have faced similar circumstances and our realities cannot be detached from each other. Therefore, Afghanistan and Pakistan can help each other strengthen. He highlighted the potential of Afghanistan to extend CPEC and become a trade corridor linking Pakistan to the Central Asian States. But such economic projects can only be realized when peace and stability are maintained. Commenting on the new world order and the growing US-China global competition, he held that Pakistan must maintain a policy where we can balance ourselves between the two blocs. On the whole, Pakistan needs to efficiently support society of Afghanistan and lay forward the prospects of trade, as laid in the National Security Plan.

Afrasiab Khattak, human rights activist and former senator, was asked to explain the transformation of Pakistan's society due to the turmoil in Afghanistan. He indicated that Pakistan's policy has long been to establish a government in Afghanistan that it can control. He believed that Pakistan is allying with the Taliban for the same purpose, but he cautioned that the country is heading towards a new war, instead of the proclaimed peace and stability. He asserted that the US policies made it possible for the Taliban to take control of Kabul and claimed that the core reason behind US support of the Taliban was to counter China. He criticized the Taliban for failing to form a representative or inclusive government, giving rise to internal conflicts and lawlessness, which will initiate a new phase of the crisis. Lastly, he suggested that Pakistan needs to revisit its policy on Afghanistan, inculcate geo-economics in the new policy, and discontinue being a frontline state. Instead, it must connect with the Afghan society and use soft power approaches to build a long-term friendly relationship with Afghans.

Nauman Wazir Khattak, former senator and a businessman, provided a few recommendations that Pakistan must practice in order to build economic ties with Afghanistan. He stated that Pakistan needs to work on ameliorating Afghan's capabilities and capacities and assist them in establishing a stable governance system. Pakistan must subsidize transit trade with its western neighbor and the trade ought to be through the local currency. He concluded that instead of controlling Afghanistan, we need to focus on geo-economics and trade, so to develop a relationship of co-dependency.

Shahzada Zulfiqar, president of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, shared that while Pakistan wanted to achieve strategic depth through control of Kabul, currently the Taliban's strategic depth in Pakistan is aggravating. He gave examples on how Pakistan has mostly failed in securing its interests after

Taliban takeover. The Taliban are not supporting Pakistan's stance on the Durand line and have several incidents of the Taliban fighting removing fences and the cross-border violations have been recorded after August 15. Likewise, Islamabad's expectations that the Taliban's government will reduce India's influence and will take strict action against banned outfits and organizations have largely been unmet. He recommended that instead of promoting restrictive policies, Pakistan needs to practically counter the problems through increasing trade prospects between the two countries.

Dialogue 03: The Debate on Freedom of Expression: Where does the problem lie?

Munizae Jahangir, a senior journalist, hosted the third session on the freedom of expression. She held that the topic has gained much significance in the current political crisis in the country. **Hamayoun Khan**, project manager at FES-Pakistan, pointed out the ambiguities about the aspects of freedom of speech in the constitution. He stated that articles 9 and 19 of the constitution can be interpreted differently by various sects and people having different perspectives on security and defense. He argued, "the constitution has provided an open-ended explanation of the freedom of speech and expression, which causes several ambiguities to creep in. The scope of the restrictions and penalties is blurred and have certain dualities, which is not practiced justly." Similarly, he believed that the notion of freedom of expression threatening the national interests of Pakistan is dependent on how and who defines it, which yet again clumsily defines the aspects of national interest. He concluded by recommending that the dynamics and boundaries of free speech, hate speech and national interest need to be clearly mentioned in the constitution.



Munizae Jahangir asked the senior journalist **Wusatullah Khan** about the hindrances to the freedom of expression in the current government, citing the PECA ordinance. He replied that although the Pakistani state has always viewed media and freedom with suspicion, the situation has not been this worse even in the past dictatorial regimes. He said that in the past, information officers used to review news items, censoring content. Currently, the state has come up with this new strategy of forced disappearances of journalists. So now we can enjoy the freedom of expression, in the sense that anything can be shared, but there is no guarantee of freedom after practising free speech.

Adil Shahzeb, a broadcast journalist and anchorperson, explicated that political parties are using multiple methods to control the journalists. For journalists trying to avoid taking sides of any political party and to maintain an unbiased view, it becomes a challenge to access political parties. He concluded with the fact that the aspect and the notion of true journalism have disappeared from the electronic media.

Sabookh Syed, social media researcher and journalist, sharing his views on whether media can openly talk about the corruption of establishment, held that we follow a policy of selective criticism. He held that the problem is when all are not treated equally. Countering him, **Gul e Nokhair Akhter**, a journalist and columnist, signified that language, basic ethics and principles of journalism have to be maintained. He believed that the electronic media, video blogs and YouTube channels are blurring the thin line between delivering the news and shaming the individuals. He shared past experiences when journalists were able to convey the message even in the most severe circumstances without targeting anyone's dignity.

However, **Harris Khalique**, Secretary-General of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, said that the core reason behind the growing use of the vlogs and YouTube channels is the strict censorship and negligence to key social issues in the mainstream media. He signified that objectivity, ethics and principles are the assets of journalism and argued that the clampdowns and censorships produce a ripple effect. He criticized the state's obsession with the establishment of a unitary system, where the society must adopt one idea, narrative and language. He argued against such a policy explaining that the diversity in society demands inclusion and the development of democratic institutions.

Aoun Sahi, Director of Current Affairs PTV, stated that despite working as a journalist since 2002, he has never been abducted or threatened. He pointed out the shortcomings of journalists in maintaining a professional attitude. Talking about social media, he held that the technological change has demeaned real-time journalism and YouTube has diminished the sense of responsibility among journalists.

Dialogue 04: Policy Discourse on Governance and Transparency

Journalist and anchorperson, **Adil Shahzeb** moderated the last dialogue session of the event that covers key questions on weak governance structure, institutional imbalance, transparency and radicalization and militancy.

Sanullah Baloch, initiated the discourse by explaining the crucial features of governance. He said that governance was earlier associated with an economic perspective and the discourse on governance was limited to economic aspects, but after the Cold War and the rise of a new wave of democracy, governance instills not only economic performance but also human rights, judiciary, freedom of speech, equality, and democracy. Keeping into consideration these characteristics of governance, he believed Pakistan has an immensely weak governance structure. As far as the question of its responsibility is concerned, the state is created through a pure democratic (social, political, and economic) process. But Pakistan tried to have a strategic governance process, and the national security perspective became the root cause of all the malfunctioning in the governance. The transparency issue, he states, was due to the weak and biased

accountability system. So, he concluded that a broader dialogue needs to be conducted, in order to modify the current approach.

Barrister Shahzad Akbar, former advisor to Prime Minister on interior and accountability, expounded that governance is to be bound by the constitution. The problem the society is facing is the lack of justice that substantially impacts the governance system. He asserted that for the power gain, the judiciary and other institutions often cross the threshold. Power politics has hindered the judicial system, which can only be regained through structural reform of judiciary.



Hafeez-ur-Rehman Ahsan, Former Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan, stated that governance has to play its role in all the sectors and institutions of the system. He believed that accountability is not the responsibility of the executive and should be left to the bureaucracy as the involvement of politicians in accountability politicized the whole system. He criticized the anti-democratic forces in the country for corrupting the system, so it does not flourish in the right direction, where the capacity building of the civil institutes is focused. He signified the necessity of judicial reform and an increase in the number of appointments of judges. Similarly, the management system and local bodies must be segregated into small units for better functioning. Lastly, he notified that Pakistan needs to advance its governance system through strong defamation laws, instead of information ministry and shift towards the digitalized system.

Maulana Abdul Qadir Luni, deputy head of JUI-N, argued that certain families, allies, and groups have controlled the political and economic system of Pakistan, where middle class and capable ones are unable to become part of the parliament. The accountability, transparency, governance, media coverage and security check post are not made for those who have power. Pakistan needs a system, where all regions and provinces have equal status with identical responsibilities and rights.