

SEMINARS @PIDE

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PIDE has also initiated a series of seminars alongside its in-house seminar series – the Nurturing Minds. These seminars are conducted on a weekly basis and are attended by students, researchers, academics and policymakers from different institutions around Islamabad. The aim is to create ideas, discuss new concepts, encourage critical thinking and to connect researchers from across different disciplines and institutions. The seminars are usually attended by huge number of participants and are full of intellectually stimulating debates.



Regional Connectivity and Research Needs

by Mr. Haroon Sharif

Growth is the most fundamental indicator of development. This talk focuses on how growth can be enhanced through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and what role can regional connectivity, especially in the context of CPEC can play in such a nexus. More importantly, this talk is built around the identification of two key processes related to the inflow of FDI. First is related to the identification of constraints within Pakistan that hinders investment inflows, and second talks about the ways of improving the policy environment to draw more investment inflows.

What Policy Needs from Research?

by Asad Umar

Asad Umar had a conversation with PIDE researchers and students. During the session, not only did he highlight the need for policy-oriented research but also suggested a few topics in fields of education, banking, water management for agriculture, external debt management and IMF program, to name a few. He stressed that for effective policies to be made within Pakistan, research institutions like PIDE must play their instrumental role by forming a research base on which such strategies can be drafted.

Gender, Urban Spaces and Mobility in Lyari, Karachi

by Dr. Nida Kirmani

Dr. Nida Kirmani's talk was based on her experiences with women of Lyari, Karachi. Dr. Kirmani's research highlighted the spaces (literal and figurative) of fun where women embody performative acts of enjoyment and pleasure that go beyond the monotony of their daily lives set against the patriarchal and crime-driven context of Lyari, Karachi. She also touched upon the issues of female agency, resistance, mobility, patriarchy, and social conditioning within the broader domain of Gender and Development (GAD).

Reforms of Local Government in Pakistan

by Mr. Bilal Rao

This lecture highlights the critical aspects of local government reforms that are currently underway across Punjab and KPK. Speaker firstly highlights the direct election of city mayors as an essential shift in the current setup and with that also discusses the problems that come during the implementation process. In this context, the speaker discusses not just the process through which functions of development authorities like CDA, LDA, etc. are being devolved and how their services may interact with powers of directly elected mayors.

Panel Discussion on “National Tariff Policy” at PIDE

by Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, Mr. Muhammad Ashraf, Ms. Robina Ather

This panel discussion not only highlights what recently announced National Tariff Policy is about but also why such a policy was so needed. In this context, it was shown that tariffs within Pakistan, unlike other countries, have been mainly used as an instrument of revenue generation rather than industrialization. The announced policy represents an economic paradigm shift where, for the first time, a policy attempt has been made to increase Pakistan's export competitiveness through decreasing the price of input imports via reduction of the tariff.

Islamabad Master Plan 2020-2040

by Zafar Iqbal, Nadeem Khurshid, Maira Khan, Dr. Naveed Iftikhar

This session discusses the ongoing debate over the Islamabad Master Plan, by bringing together representatives from CDA and other urban planners on one platform. The key question is whether there should be a master plan and if so, what should it entail? ►►

Seminar on Pride and Abstention: Christian National Identity in Pakistan

by Dr. Ryan Brasher

This seminar talks about the political identity of Christians in Pakistan. Based on survey research on FC college, the speaker shows that the Pakistani Christian community is well integrated and takes pride in being Pakistani.

Seminar on Water and Sustainable Development

by Mr. Ahmed Kamal, Ms. Zaigham Habib, Mr. Syed Abu Ahmad Akif, Mr. Naeem Qureshi

This seminar brought out various stakeholders from the ministry of water resources to people working in the private sector for water conservation. This seminar not only discussed the structural issue for water conservation, including the need for dams, efficient use of water for urban management, agricultural and industrial usage, etc. but also discussed ways to conserve water.

A Seminar on Media and Responsible Tourism in Pakistan

By Mr. Wajahat Malik

This seminar brings out what kind of adverse impact tourism may generate. In this context, the speaker talks about the negative impact on water conservation, the environment in general, and on culture in tourist places and what role media needs to play to create awareness to counter such effects.

Sustainable Urban Transportation

by Mr. Muhammad Rizwan

This talk explains how improvements within urban transportation should not be merely made through a few sets of isolated projects as is usually done within Pakistan, such as the metro bus project or a few flyovers but through working on it as a system of interlinked transportation facilities. The objective was to show how in organized urban communities, the planning of the urban transport system is done in a way that people who walk or use bicycles are well integrated with public transport facilities. Such a policy will not only control excessive car use but will encourage the use of public transport.

Designing Affordable Housing Policy

By Mr. Musharaf Zaidi

This talk was about how affordable housing policy, which is one aspect of Naya Pakistan Housing Programme, can be strengthened, improved, and mainstreamed. In the initial part of the talk, the issue of rising real estate prices, especially within the urban areas, is discussed. Whereas in the second part, various options that can bring down the final sale prices for affordable housing income groups are debated from high rise construction to zoning regulations and non-development fees. But the main point of the talk is to start a discussion on what could be policy options through which the price of housing can be decreased.



Global Value Chains & Trade Policy

Mr. Gonzalo J. Varela

The central theme of this lecture was to present evidence as to what extent are Pakistani exporter integrated into global value chains (GVC) and gaining from them. The findings show a bleak picture, and the prominent feature that comes out is that not all Pakistani exporters were well-integrated. In this context, presenter Mr. Gonzalo J. Varela identified two critical corrective measures. First, Pakistan needs to attract more foreign direct investment (FDI), particularly the type of FDI that is efficient seeking, and that aims at setting up export platforms within Pakistan, which will not only lead to the creation of more jobs but should also boost industrial production. Second, Pakistan needs to find a way to decrease trade costs which may quickly accumulate as goods move around global value chains.

Ideas Matter: A Reading List for Policy Wallahs

by Prof. Adil Najam

This lecture was more a conversation about books in which Dr. Adil Najam beautifully conveyed the policy ideas from ten notable books. The intent of doing a discussion on these books was not only to bring out their policy contributions but also to raise the love of reading within students not just for the sake of reading but for capturing ideas and finding a skill for independent thinking. This lecture is food for the soul for anyone trying to learn the mechanism of how to pick powerful ideas from books.

Development Politics and Donors reflection from a Practitioner

By Raza Rumi

This lecture is about foreign aid and donor contribution to Pakistan's development and why in spite of huge investments on the part of donors, Pakistan has not seen any positive results. His talk is structured around three essential aspects of Pakistan's engagement with donors. Firstly he points out how donor help has been time and time taken without any thinking and how our planners failed in analyzing the long term consequences



of aid and bilateral and multilateral loans. The second point that has been raised by the speaker is that given the comfort zone of donors rests with dealing with a few sets of people; this limits such engagements to bureaucracy only with no role of academics, civil society, and elected representatives. Hence this very structure presents an avenue of leakages. Finally, the talk ends by stressing that given our government is operating with too large and flawed civil services; hence most of the aid and donor money does not reach the very grass root level which is a primary cause of failure

Economy of debt: Alternatives to austerity and neoliberalism in Pakistan

By Dr. Aasim Sajjad Akhtar, Mr. Nawfal Saleemi and Mr. Ammar Rashid

This lecture instigates a debate in the context of Pakistan's re-entry into the IMF program by identifying what has been the base of Pakistan's economic crisis and what was the political aspect of it. Within this lecture, the presenters have challenged the notion that economics and politics are disconnected, and stress on the dire need to understand the political fundamentals of our failure to achieve economic stability and equality. The main point around which the whole discussion revolves is how military expenditure within Pakistan takes up a significant share of budgetary funds, leaving not much room for the economic development of people. The presenters stress that unless this practice does not change, Pakistan will remain trapped in the cycle of underdevelopment. The cause of such a vicious cycle is two-fold by presenters. First, Pakistan not only wastes a significant pool of resources in the name of national security, and second it repeatedly turns to the IMF to narrow its ever growing budgetary deficits. Lastly, presenters, against the backdrop of how economic fundamentals have trended for Pakistan, stress on the failure of the neoliberal policies committed under the present IMF regime.

State of Institutional Reforms

by Dr. Ishrat Hussain

Dr. Ishrat Hussain, in this lecture, firstly explains the key elements of institutional reform that are currently being done under his technical expertise and then pinpoints the research gaps for future research that policymakers need from end of think tanks and academics. In this context, he not only gives a detailed description of civil service reforms but also highlights the performance gaps within ministries and

► institution, he mainly focuses on the reform process within the State Bank of Pakistan, the Competition Commission of Pakistan, and the Audit General of Pakistan. In contrast, within civil service reform, he gives an in-depth analysis of changes that are being made in recruitment, performance evaluation, and compensation of the new inductees along with through what ways future pension bills can be made affordable for the government.

Charter City: Romer's Failed Attempt to Import Institutions

by Dr. Naveed Iftikhar and Ms. Maha Ahmed

In this seminar, the speaker explains the concept of Paul Romer's idea on the charter city and provides a critique of its practical implementation. According to the speaker, this idea seems quite attractive on the theoretical front, but in practice notion of importation of good institutions through the charter city in a country is very much eyed as to be challenging the sovereignty of people. Hence a better alternative for the speaker is to work with the existing institutional setup and try to improve it.

Unpacking Punjab School Reform

by Dr. Amna Ansari, Mr. Abdal Mufti and Ms. Mariam Aamir

Within this talk, the presenters highlighted not only the current framework of ongoing Punjab School Reforms but also why there has been a shift in initiatives from infrastructure provision to in-class learning. Unpacking the current Punjab Education Reform, two clear improvements come out from past interventions in the form of an ongoing early childhood program and a teacher in-class evaluation and feedback mechanism. Both of these interventions show that the focus has moved towards the quality of education rather than just enrollment. How far these initiatives will yield results is something that will be clear only with time.

Law and Economics

by Mr. Feisal Naqvi

If you have to define economics in one word, then the word that suits best for it is "incentives." How incentives are defined for the economic actors is very much linked to law. In this talk, presenter points to these very gaps and how, within Pakistan, laws having their colonial origins are creating wrong signals for economic activity. Speaker explains this phenomenon through various examples in the context of Pakistan, especially through pointing out dysfunctionality within the tax system and agricultural land markets that have their basis in wrong laws.

Book Launch "Making Sense of Joan Robinson on China"

by Dr. Pervez Tahir

The book launched at the event explains the professional journey of Joan Robinson, who not only excelled in economic theory but was second to none in work. The aspects of her professional life that the author has touched are how being a woman and having sympathetic views on China led Joan to lose out Nobel prize win and why.

A Roundtable Discussion "With ongoing developments in Afghanistan and Tension Brewing Between India and Pakistan: What are Prospects of Reconciliation and Peace in the Region"

by Mr. Michael Kugelman

In this discussion, Mr. Michael Kugelman explains why he finds peace as a difficult possibility within the region of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In the context of Afghanistan, he builds the argument around the failure of the Afghan government to bring forward a negotiating team and also an incentive structure within the Taliban to continue the fight even if the USA chose to go as the key hurdles peace process. Further, in the case of India and Pakistan tension, he stresses the toxic anti-peace sentiments within the current Indian regime as just not the prime cause of the recent conflict but also its continuity.

Panel Session on "Culture of Research in Pakistan" *by Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, Dr. Zain ul Abdin, Dr. Idrees Khawaja, Dr. Zahid Asghar*

Within this session, Dr. Nadeem Ul Haque, in light of his findings from his recent work that has been co-authored by Mr. Mahboob Mahmood, "The University Research System in Pakistan," raises the need for *moving from impact factor to impact*. In this context, he and other panelists, Dr. Zain ul Abdin, Dr. Idrees Khawaja, Dr. Zahid Asghar highlight both positive and negative incentives that have come out from HEC regulations and how they need to be improved.

The key insights that came out about the research system in Pakistan from Dr. Nadeem and Sir Mahboob's account from the countrywide visits and surveys is that research is indeed happening in the universities, which is a good sign. Still, researchers are isolated and have no significant impact, which is worrisome.

The reason for this low impact research is that the incentive structures under HEC regulation for research within Pakistan have made publications ►►



a tool for promotion instead of being solution-oriented. Further, there is any money provided by the Government to research institutions because of which research within Pakistan has primarily become donor-driven, neglecting all the key areas that may be essential for Pakistan development but are not on agenda of international funders.

Pointing to varied incentive structures across natural and social science with the former having much easier access to both fundings and publications, the panelists stress on HEC to revisit its policies. In this context, to inculcate functional and vibrant research culture in Pakistan, it is important to make important changes in our current research system. For this, it was stressed not only is there a need to find more ways for funds generation for research within government but also to devise incentives that reward quality research and not merely the quantity of publications. In this context, as the last point, all speakers emphasized strengthening the linkages of the research community with both demands of industry and government and debated on what should be the institutional way forward in this context, especially in the context of ORIC.

Book Launch Event "So Much Aid, So Little Development"

by Dr. Samia Altaf

In this session, Dr. Samia Altaf launches her book titled "So Much Aid, So Little Development". As the title shows, this book highlights the problem with foreign aid received in Pakistan. Focusing on her experience with donor funding in the health sector of Pakistan, she, in her book, shows not only the problem within donor and local engagements and how money is misused. A valuable insight that makes her book worth reading is about how all stakeholders in this nexus have the interest to keep things in the existing status quo.

Urban Development in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities

by Prof. Dr. Murtaza Haider

Prof. Murtaza Haider, in this session, explains how Pakistan is losing out on by not using its ever-increasing size of urban population as an engine of growth. The reasons for this, in his view, are two-fold. Firstly, there is a need for a redefinition of urban centers within Pakistan in the data compilation process if one wants to counter the misreporting of the size of urban areas and how they have evolved over the years. Secondly, there requires a shift within policymakers' outlook on urban development as a mere demand for housing but as a center of commerce. Further, in terms of housing requirement, he stresses mid-rise construction as an ideal model for Pakistan because of its ability to cover a vast amount of population density within small space and in light of our limited local capacity for provisions of safety.

German Experience of Exports and Value Chains

by Prof. Dr. Christoph Scherrer

In this session, Prof. Dr. Christoph Scherrer explains the structural factors with German growth patterns post world war two that have led to its export surplus and how Germany is further benefitting from the global value chains. Within this process, he highlights how research, and high labor productivity that has come out from high wages to labor and a continuous environment of innovation, has played an important role. ■

