Changing Dynamics of Global Power Structure: Policy Options for Pakistan

By Shakeel Ramay

Change in the dynamics of global power structure started with the intervention of Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The first wave of this process ended with the Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the disintegration of Soviet states. As a result, the then Soviet Republic reconstituted itself as the Russian Federation. It was the time when the United States of America emerged as a sole superpower and the then US President Georg Bush (Senior) gave a new doctrine for global governance in the early 1990s. It was right time to introduce a new doctrine, as i) there was no voice to oppose it, and ii) the compatible superpower had laid flat, which resulted into American hegemony in the world.

The last and first decades of 20th and 21st Centuries respectively witnessed the emergence of a good number of international organizations like WTO, UNFCCC, MDGs, etc. with a central role of the US and its western allies. The US hegemony remained unchallenged till the 9/11 incidents. After 9/11, the second wave of change in global power structure arose with the US declaration of war on terror. First, the US attacked Afghanistan to hunt Al-Qaida leadership and then attacked Iraq on the plea of destroying the weapons of mass destruction and curtail the power of Iraq. Later on, it was proved that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and both the US and UK had misguided the world.

Iraq war ended with huge destruction of infrastructure and causalities of hundreds of thousands, including children, women and elderly people. Both the US and UK withdrew their forces from Iraq leaving the country in the lurch. Now, the country is faced with basic issues, including provision of water, health and educational facilities to its people. On top of all are the terrorist activities, which are further damaging the infrastructure and causing causalities.

War on terror in Afghanistan is still going on. Although, the US and its allies have announced that they will withdraw their forces in 2014 and only keep a small number of soldiers in Afghanistan after the signing of Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with US and Status of Forces Agreement with NATO. NATO further made it clear that it will sign agreement after a bilateral agreement between Afghanistan and the US. Owning to delay in signing BSA by Afghan President, the US has threatened to withdraw all forces. Scenarios of complete withdrawal or retention of small number of US and NATO forces for training and assistance are yet to be finalized. Worst case scenario would be the complete withdrawal of forces, which no regional country wants.

Regional countries fear that complete withdrawal will encourage the reemergence of Taliban. Taliban regime in Afghanistan would not benefit any regional country and world at large. It is assumed that Taliban will support other religious movements in region like Uzbekistan, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Iran, etc. In this backdrop, all regional countries want the US and NATO forces to stay in Afghanistan till the signing of security agreements between the US and Afghanistan, and between NATO and Afghanistan.

Along with the Afghan and Iraq wars, other major changes are still happening, which are playing a critical role in shaping the new doctrine of engagement and global governance. First indication came from the intervention of Russia in Georgia in 2008. Russia was actively involved in war and played a decisive role. US and EU could not provide enough support to Georgian government and Russia was successful in securing its interest through a series of actions.

like air traffic suspension, migrants harassment, etc\(^3\). It was also first incident to depict the reemergence of Russia on international arena after its withdrawal from Afghanistan.

In 2010, a wave of change started across Middle East and North African countries, where a movement started against the ruling class. It started from Tunisia and Egypt\(^4\) and engulfed many more, including Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Morocco, Sudan, Saudi Arabia (at small level), Mali, etc. However, the level of uprising was different in different countries.

Libya and Syria are the other examples of Arab Spring outcome. In Libya and Syria, a civil war erupted throughout the countries, which caused infrastructure destruction and human causalities. In Libya, international community acted very strongly under the auspices of the UN by using “Responsibility to Protect” resolution of the UN. Muammar Qaddafi was overthrown and later on killed by the rebels. Similarly, Syria is also facing civil war. The US and West again tried to convince international community for Libya like intervention in Syria. This time the plea for intervention was made on the issue of use of chemical weapons by Syrian government on civilians. Russia took this matter seriously and opposed the military intervention in any form. This was the second time when Russia showed muscles and won the argument. But, the civil war is still continuing in Syria.

Spillover effects of Libya and Syria extended to Lebanon and Mali. In Mali, terrorist groups gave very tough time to forces and France had to help the government. Strong presence of terrorist groups in Mali shows the spread of religious fundamental terrorist groups in North Africa.

Oman somehow managed the unrest through the policy interventions. The government offered economic incentives and changed the governance system. Bahrain controlled the unrest through policy changes, economic incentive and intervention of GCC forces.

The most recent example on this front is Ukraine. After long protests, the protesters captured the government and Ukrainian President fled to Russia. Russia dispatched its troops to Crimea and rejected the new government.

In the beginning of 2000, the world viewed a gradual emergence of “Emerging Economies”, including Turkey, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, India, and China. These emerging economies expanded its economic presence and grabbed a big share in international trade and investment. Now, these countries are competing with the developed countries in trade and investment. Moreover, some countries are actively campaigning for inclusion in UN Security Council, e.g. India and Brazil.

Meanwhile, China emerged as a major beneficiary and player at international level in changing landscape of economics and diplomacy. China is now the second largest economy and it is predicted that it will become the biggest one in near future. China has sharply enhanced its investment portfolio in many developing countries and regions, e.g. African region, Afghanistan, Central Asia, South Asia, Pakistan, etc. China also expanded its power in military and diplomacy.

The first decade of 21st century witnessed dramatic changes in diplomacy and realignments at regional and global level. Although Pakistan is playing a frontline role in Afghanistan since 1978, but now US and NATO want a more prominent role of India in Afghanistan as well as in the region. India is also being promoted to counter China. At the same time, China and Russia expanded their relations. Egypt under the government of General Sisi is trying to build relations with Russia. China is also trying to enhance its influence through organizations like Shanghai Council, etc.

During the same period, two very unexpected things happened. First is the nuclear deal between P5+China and Iran, which annoyed Saudi Arabia and Israel. Both were also not happy over the back stepping of the US from attacking Syria, as they openly criticized the deal. Second is the emergence of strong differences among GCC member states. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain are criticizing the role of Qatar in supporting Brotherhood organization of Egypt. Even these countries called back their ambassadors from Qatar\(^5\).

On Western front, EU is also facing a number of problems ranging from economy to diplomacy. Economic crisis really hit very hard and some economies in EU like Spain, and Italy got shaken. Experts started to debate the future of EU. At the moment, Germany along with France is striving to keep the EU in its present shape, but nobody can predict the future. EU countries also seem to be divided on certain issues including civil war in Syria, at international level. France supported an attack on Syria, but Germany thought the other way around.

These events are compelling every country to reformulate their foreign policies and relations, and Pakistan is no exception.

**Policy Options for Pakistan**

Now, in the changing circumstances, Pakistan has to de-

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vise a foreign policy, which satisfies its needs and build a positive image at global level. Moreover, Pakistan also needs to strengthen and enhance its position and role at global level. We suggest the following steps or options, which need to be comprehended before devising any policy.

1. First, we should understand the literal meanings of each and every word of the following statement of our founding father that “Our foreign policy is one of friendliness and goodwill towards all the nations of the world. We do not cherish aggressive designs against any country or nation. We believe in the principle of honesty and fair play in national and international dealings and are prepared to make our utmost contribution to the promotion of peace and prosperity among the nations of the world. Pakistan will never be found lacking in extending its material and moral support to the oppressed and suppressed peoples of the world, and in upholding the principles of the United Nations Charter.”

2. Pakistan should look into new emerging scenarios, e.g. India, Japan and Australia security agreement, emergence of China, reemergence of Russia, etc., and then it should define needs and options for policy.

3. Neutrality cannot serve the purpose, and Pakistan needs to take positions on international, regional and bilateral issues and pursue them accordingly.

4. Cornerstone of the policy must be on moral and ethical values.

5. The policy must define parameters, which put a check on proxy wars of different countries and actors in Pakistan, and for the purpose, there should be no distinction between any Muslim or Non-Muslim country.

6. The policy must discourage Cheque Book Diplomacy by the rich countries and oil rich countries.

7. Being host to the emerging economies, policy needs to pursue the economic interests by presenting Pakistan a good trading partner.

8. Pakistan’s geographical location can be exploited by providing trade and energy corridor for regional and global partners.

9. Pakistan must look for strategic partners first in the region and then globally.

10. Strategic partnerships should not be built on one way principle, i.e. not on the principle that what Pakistan can get, rather we must work on what we can offer.

11. Military and agencies must be a stakeholder in developing the foreign policy, especially for strategic part of the policy.

12. Finally, policy must be independent and free from any influence except the principles of moral and ethical values.

Welfare Impact of Afghan Trade on Balochistan, KPK

By Saad Shabbir

The bilateral trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan has seen an increasing trend since the US war on terror in Afghanistan. The volume of bilateral trade between the two countries has increased from US$ 1.1 billion in 2005-06 to US$ 2.4 billion in 2011-12. Exports from Pakistan to Afghanistan have increased from US$ 1063.4 million to US$ 2449 million during the same period. Figure 1 indicates a balance of trade heavily in favour of Pakistan.

Figure 1: Trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan from 2005 through 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exports (US$)</th>
<th>Imports (US$)</th>
<th>Balance (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>1063.4</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>1015.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>753.9</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>677.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>1143.6</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>1052.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>1398</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>1572</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>1433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>2336.7</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>2164.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>2245.6</td>
<td>199.4</td>
<td>2050.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (2013)

During the period, employment in trade, transport, warehousing and communication sectors increased on both sides of the border in Afghanistan and Pakistan\(^1\). A research conducted by SDPI to see the welfare impact on Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the neighboring provinces of Afghanistan, focuses upon three specific changes in this region:

- Increase in number of households associated with Trade, Transport, Warehousing and Communication (TTWC) sectors in seven years from 2004 to 2011.
- How many of these households in TTWC sector belong to the lowest income quintiles defined in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey of Pakistan.
- How have the growth in incomes of TTWC sector performed vis-à-vis non-trade sectors for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces in Pakistan.

In the post NATO exit milieu, any disturbance that deteriorates the political relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan will result in reduction of the formal bilateral trade, reduced commercial transit, possible increase in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees flowing from Afghanistan to Pakistan, and a rise in terror threat to the Pakistani population neighboring Afghanistan. The worst affected in this scenario will be the households already in the lowest income quintiles in TTWC sectors, who have come out of chronic and transient poverty as a result of increased trade with Afghanistan.

In order to assess the impact of TTWC sectors on the local population, we use HIES data from Pakistan for the years 2004-05 and 2010-11. We have compared the population numbers, household characteristics and welfare indicators of respondents associated with trade, transport and warehousing and Communication (TTWC) in both years.

Table 1 shows that the per capita incomes across both provinces neighboring Afghanistan increased in both nominal and real terms. More important is to note that the non-trade incomes remained lower than incomes associated with the trade sector.

We understand that growth in TTWC sectors will only impact the poor favourably if there is job creation for the lowest income quintiles. We see in tables 2 and 3 that this is precisely the case. The highest increase in employment is seen in the 1st and 2nd income quintiles (poorest segment). This increased employment of the poorest quintiles is seen for both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces. It may be mentioned that these calculations are not a true representation of the informal sector in TTWC, which has also grown immensely as a result of formal sector’s growth.

The more worrying aspect for the future is that agriculture and livestock, which were traditionally the main stake of local population in these two provinces, are now vulnerable to conflict and local-level political instability (Pasha 2013)\(^2\). Despite the several investment exhibitions in various parts of Pakistan, domestic investors are not inclined towards Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan’s potential in agriculture and livestock processing.

NATO cargo and commercial trade with Afghanistan is important for Pakistan’s rather large population associated with trade, transport, warehousing and communication sectors. During the period 2004-2011, employment in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces increased in TTWC sectors. This increase in employment is relatively more for the poorest quintiles.

During the same period, real incomes in TTWC sectors increased more vis-à-vis non-trade sectors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. We also know from the secondary literature that the trade sector in these provinces has a higher mean income vis-à-vis non-trade sectors. Similarly, the income gap between trade and non-trade sector widens in favour of trade sectors.

\(^1\)After a decade long war on terror the US has announced the exit of NATO troops by the end of 2014.


| Table 2: Household distribution in TTWC Sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Income Quintiles     | 1\(^{st}\) | 2\(^{nd}\) | 3\(^{rd}\) | 4\(^{th}\) | 5\(^{th}\) |
| 2004                 | 73   | 31   | 51   | 72   | 92   |
| 2011                 | 516  | 402  | 313  | 164  | 340  |
| Change in Employment (no.) | 443  | 371  | 262  | 92   | 248  |

Source: SDPI calculations from HIES

| Table 3: Household distribution in TTWC Sector in Balochistan |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Income Quintiles     | 1\(^{st}\) | 2\(^{nd}\) | 3\(^{rd}\) | 4\(^{th}\) | 5\(^{th}\) |
| 2004                 | 59   | 71   | 43   | 3    | 107  |
| 2011                 | 611  | 441  | 305  | 348  | 403  |
| Change in Employment (no.) | 552  | 370  | 262  | 345  | 296  |

Source: SDPI calculations from HIES

| Table 5: Employment and Incomes in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Variables             | 2004-05 | 2010-11 |
| HHs in survey dependent on TTWC | 1042   | 4844   |
| Actual HHs dependent on TTWC     | 315,757 | 1,670,344 |
| Mean per capita income in TTWC (nominal) | PKR 5998 | PKR 11,711 |
| Mean per capita income in TTWC (real) | PKR 5552 | PKR 5685 |
| Mean per capita income in non-TTWC (nominal) | PKR 5472 | PKR 10824 |
| Mean per capita income in non-TTWC (real) | PKR 5065 | PKR 5254 |

Source: Author calculation from HIES 2004-5 and 2010-11
A ccording to an earlier SDPI study reported in May 2013, alarmingly high mercury levels were observed in air (indoor as well as outdoor) at 11 of the 34 dental sites (17 dental teaching institutions, 7 general hospitals & 10 dental clinics) in five main cities of Pakistan. 88% of the sites indicated indoor mercury levels in air above the USA EPA reference level of 300ng/m³. These very high levels of mercury vapors in air were thought to be due to more than one reason, including the use of liquid mercury & non-mechanical mixing for mercury amalgam making and lack of environmentally sound best practices for mercury emissions/releases control. SDPI study also showed general unawareness among dental professionals regarding appropriate handling of mercury/mercury amalgam, management of mercury containing wastes, improper and inadequate ventilation system and lack of awareness about health hazards of mercury exposure to human health and its impact on the environment. Another main reason for the observed elevated levels of mercury vapors in air at operative dentistry wards/halls, adjacent corridors and surrounding air, at some of the visited dental teaching institutions, was the very careless/care free use of mercury/mercury amalgam by the students of these institutions.

In the list of toxic substances, mercury is ranked 3rd by Agency for Toxic Substances Diseases Registry (ATSDR). The global assessment report of United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) assesses mercury as toxic to humans, wildlife and environment. In humans, the nervous system is most sensitive to mercury exposure. Effects on brain functioning may lead to shyness, tremors, irritability, change in vision or hearing and memory problems. Short-term exposure to the elevated levels of mercury vapors may cause damage to the lungs, may cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, increase in blood pressure, skin rashes and eye irritation. Metallic mercury is an allergen that may cause eczema and mercury from amalgam fillings can lead to oral lichen. Recently, under the United Nation Environmental Program (UNEP), “Minamata Convention on Mercury” has been in-acted by over 140 countries to reduce/phase out mercury use globally. It has been already signed by 94 countries, including Pakistan.

The present SDPI study was undertaken in view of the hazardousness of mercury, its adverse impact on environment and health, lack of environmentally sound practices/technologies in dentistry and lack of awareness of the same, among majority of present and future dental professionals in the country. The main objective of the present study was to review the curriculum/syllabus, presently offered by national and professional bodies, including Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) to the dental teaching institutions in the country and to assess and evaluate its contents with regard to mercury/mercury amalgam use and the related issues. For comparison and guidance, the curriculum offered by medical and dental councils of neighboring countries, Bangladesh and India and some teaching institutions in India and Pakistan were also reviewed.

It was evident from the survey data analyzed and collected by SDPI team from 39 dental teaching institutions in the country (Punjab 15; Sindh 12; KPK 6; Baluchistan 1; FC Islamabad 4; Responses = 58%) and from the review of the curriculum contents offered by the national professional parent bodies (higher education commission (HEC), Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) & University of Health Sciences (UHS)) that an un-eaven education with serious omissions, regarding the use of mercury amalgam in operative dentistry, is going on at dental teaching institutions in the country. The responses to the questionnaire have indicated that the offered curriculum did not address the main mercury related issues or the control measures w.r.t. mercury/mercury amalgam use in dentistry, such as occupational health, safety, environment and mercury contaminated wastes. 42.86% of the respondents indicated that the present curriculum did not effectively lead outgoing future dental professionals and provide information, knowledge and training on these mercury/mercury amalgam...
related human health issues.

Curriculum is a comprehensive planning of an educational training programme for improving manpower to fulfil the dynamic needs of society. As also expressed by large majority of the respondents (90.48%), it’s time that the existing dental curriculum must be reviewed and revised to fulfil serious omissions by including relevant contents for the above identified health, safety, environment, mercury contaminated waste management and control measure/guidelines for the same.

To minimize the observed alarmingly very high mercury vapors contamination of air at dental sites, (details of which have already been provided in the earlier SDPI report 2013), being caused by the mercury/mercury amalgam use and to prevent health hazards resulting from mercury exposure to public in general and to the health workers, children & pregnant women in particular, we strongly recommend for an immediate review and revision of the current Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) curriculum and inclusion of relevant contents, with emphasis on the following for adequate teaching and training of students:

• Brief on the need, objectives and the relevant provisions of “Minamata Convention on Mercury,” regarding mercury in products (dental amalgam), health and environment
• Toxicity and health hazards resulting from mercury/mercury amalgam use, protection and control measures for the same to minimize mercury exposure and guidelines for mercury contaminated waste management
• Cost and clinically effective mercury-free alternatives to mercury amalgam filling, such as composites & glass ionomers; use of encapsulated mercury methodology and mechanized mixing
• Occupational health and safety; use of best in-house environmental practices at dental facilities, to reduce mercury exposure and releases to air, water and land.

We also strongly recommend that Minama Convention on Mercury be signed & ratified by national governments including Pakistan (already signed) and accordingly, measures be taken by parties to the convention, to phase down the use of mercury/dental mercury amalgam in their respective countries, leading to its elimination at the earliest time possible.

Bibliography:

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Energy and Tax Reforms

Household and Firm Level Analyses from Pakistan

By Muhammad Adnan

SDPI has conducted a study on key reform areas — energy and tax. The evidence-based research (survey) has brought out specific knowledge products that can act as a baseline for measuring impact of current and future policies in tax and energy policy.

The survey reached out to 3,800 households across Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh. The districts included Faisalabad, Hyderabad, Karachi, Multan, Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Quetta. In the same districts, 300 firms were also surveyed. These include both formal and informal sector entities. The overall survey exercise is split into two volumes; first focusing on household-level perceptions while second provides details regarding informal and formal sector firms.

Perceptions Regarding Energy Reforms: Household Analysis from Pakistan

The Economic Survey of Pakistan noted that during 2011-12, around USD 4.8 billion or 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) was lost due to power sector outages. This is a major factor behind Pakistan’s poor economic performance over the past five years, with GDP growth averaging under 3%. The key challenges confronting this sector can be categorized into demand-supply gap, inefficiency and pilferage, and affordability.

At the household-level, it is clear that power consumers were not prepared for the sudden and inevitable hike seen in prices during the past medium term. There were 53% respondents, who felt that the prices had become too high for their household budget and 71% of these respondents have reduced the amount of power being utilized. Many have reported cutting back their household expenditures towards food, health, and education.

At the same time, we had a large number of respondents, who were willing to pay a higher unit price in lieu of a reduction in load-shedding. Karachi was the only district where no one agreed to pay beyond Rs 5,000. This per-
Perceptions Regarding Tax Reforms: Firm Level Analysis

Pakistan has the lowest levels of tax collection in the world with respect to income, even compared to countries with similar levels of per-capita income such as Bangladesh and India. In the sample of formal sector firms, we found 96% firms were registered with Federal or Provincial Board of Revenues and only 4% were not registered. The informal sector entities, however, did not see much benefit in such strategy for energy conservation and protecting supply to households and export-oriented industry.

There is lack of understanding that the root cause of energy crisis is people not paying full economic cost of energy, continuous reliance on subsidies and prolonged theft. Unfortunately, when subsidies are provided with over an indefinite timeline, people start perceiving such allowances as their right. Under a well-managed energy sector only a lifeline block consuming less than 100 units of power is allowed a subsidy. Contrary to this we see several layers of subsidies being provided in Pakistan for energy usage in residential, agricultural and industrial sectors.

Some entry points for the government and policy recommendations based on these findings can help steer a strong discourse on energy sector reforms. First, legal amendments may be undertaken to ensure effective punishment in case of energy theft. Second, the government should correct the perceptions at the community level that power sector defaulters are above the law. Finally, privatization of DISCOs may be expedited followed by GENCOs. Until this is done, GENCOs and IPPs should compete for fuel, based on their efficiency levels.

70% respondents seek external help in filing their tax returns. Out of these, 47% resort to tax agents, 30% seek help from tax lawyers, and 14% had accountants to file tax returns. Only 3% seek help from FBR for filing their tax returns. FBR should ideally be the only guiding source for the taxpayers.

There were 21% respondents, who occasionally provided in-kind or monetary gifts to officials during the recent past. However, 10% respondents have paid such bribes during all of their engagements with the tax officials. A substantial portion of the business community (46%) was of the view that tax collection can be increased by curbing corruption.

There were 74% respondents, who feel that the corporate tax rate is high keeping in view the depressed growth in the economy. Similarly, 15% of the respondents were of the view that compliance with corporate taxation rules should be simplified. Among the respondents favouring GST (in comparison to VAT), 54% said that the compliance in case of GST is easier. There were 14% who view lesser government interference under GST regime.

Among the informal enterprises, 57% stated that no incentive scheme will compel them to register with the tax authorities. However, 24% stated that they may register for GST if amnesty is granted for past years. There are 9% who will register for both income tax and GST if similar amnesty is granted.

These findings provide important entry points for the tax authorities. First, tax authorities need to design innovative outreach programmes in order to lessen the trust deficit. These programmes if carefully designed can help the public in understanding how paying taxes can improve service delivery. Second, the number of firms registered with SECP has grown overtime. The taxpayers’ facilitation units require expansion in order to cater to the demands of an expanding tax paying segment. Tax administration measures that put in place smart ICT tools can help minimize human interference and corruption. Third, the documentation on corporate taxes needs further simplification. It is difficult for small-scale enterprise to comply at an affordable transactions cost. Fourth, in case of indirect taxation a long-term strategy for transitioning towards VAT should be put in place. Fifth, it is important to correct perceptions regarding corruption. The leadership at the revenue authorities should keep a closer contact with business associations. Prompt ICT-enabled grievance redressal will help bridge the high levels of trust deficit.

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Social Media Revolutions: Passing Fad or New Reality?

By Akseeb Jawed

Internet has been continuously evolving since the 1990s not only in terms of infrastructure, but also the way we use it to connect is continuously changing. Later, the advent of social media has set a never ending chain reaction, with more and more people connecting via different social networking sites. You won’t deny that most of us are addicted to social networking and cannot even imagine going a day without logging on the internet.

While using the term social media I am not referring to either Facebook or Twitter, as there is a difference between social media and social networking. Social media is about content whereas, social networking is about conversation. If you want to broadcast, you use social media and for initiating a discussion you do social networking; and both can be done on the same platform. Most of us know social media from its different tools and communities.

Social networking has taken a center stage in our lives—with tools like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flicker, Pinterest, My Space, Google, Instagram, Orkut, Reddit, etc. It holds a unique and vital role in our daily routine. Social networking is not just about having casual conversation with friends via Facebook or Twitter. It empowers people to raise their voice against social evils and was used to fight against drug cartels and human trafficking business in Mexico.

The communications landscape is changing with each passing day—it has become more complex, denser, crowded, and participatory. The cobweb of networking has increased the access of general public to information. Moreover, it not only provides more opportunities to engage in public speech but also enhanced the ability to undertake collective actions against any arising social or political issue. In the case of “Arab Spring”, social media undoubtedly helped the people, who have no other means to communicate their view, to be organized in their struggle to achieve democracy. Similarly, tens of thousands of people gathered in central Manila Park to protest against embedded corruption in the Philippine political system after rallying a call on Facebook and Twitter.

Similarly, no one can deny the fact that social media has become increasingly important for the world politics and it seems to be a continuous process. Social media provides a two-way communication between opinion leaders, colleagues, friends, acquaintances, and activists who directly impacts a voter’s opinion. In 2007, the centre-right UMP party’s Nocilas Sarkozy scored a decisive victory over the opposing socialist candidate Ségolène Royal for the French presidency. A survey revealed social media had a strong influence on the outcome of the elections as 40% of Inter-net users reported that political conversations and activities on the internet effecting their voting decisions. Likewise, Barak Obama’s 2008 US presidential campaign has often been regarded as the first electoral campaign in which the use of social media had a decisive impact. The core of the web-based campaign was “my.barakobama.com” a well-designed, versatile and dynamic website.

Also, we’ve witnessed a digitally active youth during the whole episode of Pakistan election 2013. There was huge involvement of technology in the campaigns strategized by Pakistani youth. The young supporters of PTI, PMLN, MQM, PPP, etc used social media to spread and explain the respective mandates of their political parties to the masses. Enthusiastic youth having extensive political wisdom along with a sound technological knowhow proved to be a lethal combination in the election 2013.

Social networking sites have made it possible to communicate with a large number of people anywhere on earth. It is an efficient and easy way to keep in touch and impart information, particularly in a time of crisis like floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.

Every major website provides a comment section for people—showing that the decisive power has been equally divided between the authoritative figures and the common people. Social media has empowered the common people providing them a safer platform for raising their voices. The recent events in US, Egypt, Iran, Yemen, Syria, and Sudan gives you an idea how quickly messages can go viral and can impact world affairs.

The diversity and richness of information provided by social media—explicitly states its modus operandi as gathering, modifying, and reorganizing contents from other media. Users no longer rely on single source for getting news and other data as now they can easily use several media side by side. However, this abundance of information becomes confusing for those who lack critical ability in prioritizing important issues.

This brings us to the other side of the coin, the paradox of social media, which is that of independence versus restriction, responsibility versus propaganda, truthfulness versus manipulation, and freedom versus privacy.

Social media around the world is not entirely an independent working entity rather all online content either in the form of tweets, texts, statues, news, emails, chats, or blogs are recorded somewhere on the logs of back-up-servers. Which means that the intelligence agencies worldwide can have access to the personal information, thus violating privacy rights of people?

Even if you are not a criminal, but if a suspect terrorist hacked into your account or somehow connected to you via Facebook, cell phone, Google groups, etc...then you’ll
eventually come on the hit list of intelligence agencies. Still there is no mechanism and law to address such a ploy. In addition, authoritative regimes in some countries are restricting people from giving voice to their opinion.

News and information rapidly spread on social media—which at times lead to unconfirmed reports thus, violating ethical values of true journalism, i.e. truthfulness. The advent of social media has brought the idea of propaganda to a whole new level. Whenever you post an opinion on Facebook, Twitter, or any other social interactive site, you are in fact issuing propaganda—a piece of information designed to make the readers, to think about an issue or to behave in a particular way conducive to what you want them to. Since, it becomes difficult for those lacking in making critical thinking to take rational decisions, which is mostly the case in Pakistan where people religiously follow political leaders.

Politicians or activists at times exploit social media to establish communication networks and manipulate common people to achieve their own vested interests such as the occupation wall street movement started in New York in 2011, the incident of Tahir-ul-Qadri’s long march, etc.

Indeed, Social networking has contributed to many positive things, but is it also affecting us negatively.

Social media networks can, without a doubt, spread protests quickly. But its real influence is ephemeral. It is often overstated and exaggerated by media. These episodic protests may be intense but they only distort the public image instead of thwarting the activities of any clique.

Marc Masmiquel, a graphic designer from Spain aptly summarized, The social media platforms is a form of media that can simplify communication and exponentially increase the number of people receiving the information, but the quality of the message is often lost along the way. There’s only so much you can say with 140 characters. Additionally, social media networks present an overly simplified view of the world. The appreciation for the wider picture disappears. Reality is much more complex and can’t be expressed by a simple slogan. A sticker can’t communicate nearly as much as a book.

New Media War: Dissecting Men

By Akseeb Jawed

Over the years media has been criticized for sculpturing the image of women as a Melpomene and men as Narcissus. In reality, media is an artistic way of giving voice to different shades of twisted human psychology. Yet, media has always been criticized for being indifferent towards women. Time to time women activists raised their concerns over projecting women as one of the weakest link of the society constantly yearning for others approval and support.

As a result, feminist wing has drawn attention to and fought against stereotypical, sexist, and subservient portrayals of women in mass media for over half a century. However, nothing significant has been done to examine the mass media representation of men and male identity. This is because the researcher’s particularly social activists assumed depiction of male community as predominantly positive in the media. In fact, in the progressive age of massive technological, social, industrial, and economic change, TV dramas have been propagating images of men as metrosexuals, workaholics, psychopaths, commitment phobic, abusive, deadbeat dads, violent, sweaty, unkempt, etc. Well to put in a nutshell, men are projected in an overwhelming depressingly ways which in turn have potential negative effects on men’s sense of self-identity.

Social activists picket everything even if someone accidentally kills a dog in a movie the members of Pakistan Animal Rights Activists Society (PARAS) within no time would be outside the film sets. Likewise, if a TV advertisement shows women as helpless wives, feminist across the nation would create havoc. All this raise an important question: who defends men when they are depicted as birdbrains? This trend is more apparent in the popular Pakistani dramas like Humsafar, Maat, Shehrezaat, Daag, Dure Shahwar, ,Ullu Baray Farokht Nahi, Kankar,Aks der Aks, etc. The male protagonist of aforementioned dramas is nothing more than an ignorant virtually useless being in need of a woman for his rescue. On the other hand, the female lead of the play is shown as an intelligent, sacrificing, quick-witted, and socially adept person. Similarly, Pakistani soap operas describe husbands as inferior creatures jealous of their wives’ achievements well portrayed by the character Adeel in Dile Muztir.

In contrast to the past, men in TV serials are effeminate in appearance such as the male characters portrayed in Anokha Ladla, Qadussi Sahab ki Bewa, Aun Zara, etc. It seems that media has to walk on eggshells when it comes to portraying women in dramas but when it comes to men everything is taken as a fair play. In other words, give it your best shot in metro-sexualizing men’s identity and you’ll earn the respect of feminists.

In reality violence against men is taken lightly and often projected as being humorous. For instance, in the Ufone ad a wife mercilessly throws his husband out of the window. It clearly indicates that the media and society has no issues if a woman brutally assaults a man. In addition, the advertising agencies put their money on men because they are certain that they won’t neither file a lawsuit nor protest...
against them.

At the same time, mass media has religiously drafted ten commandants for men to behave in the society without their endorsement. Men are discouraged to feel a range of emotions, including fear, hurt, confusion, and dejection. These tapered masculine standards are unfair to those who deviate from them. Moreover, family oriented TV serials invariably involve dysfunctional matriarchal constructs where father is either missing or unimportant like Dehleez, Halki si Khalish, etc.

The discriminatory attitude of media towards men as initiated a new gender war whose sole victims are men. The way things are portrayed in the media powerfully affects questions in somewhat noisy environment where it was quite challenging to communicate and listen along with stinking chemical smells.

Most of the medium and small sized units do not display their firm’s names, which made it very difficult to pinpoint the firm of interest, so asking people about addresses in the locality was really cumbersome and huge waste of time.

Firms start working at 9 am but owners, CEOs, general managers and even managers come around 10am or 11am, so we had to wait for. Through information, what we try to get is not that confidential and secretive, but usually people get conscious. A manager told us that last time some people came to conduct a similar sort of survey in Millat Town, the very next day some ‘criminals’ came to factories introducing themselves as the officials of Environment Protection Agency (EPA), Water & Sanitation Agency (WASA), and Taxation department and threatened the industry owners that they would seal the industry for giving information. They blackmailed the industrialists if the latter wouldn’t give them monetary benefit.

In Abdullah pur, a firm’s CEO claimed that most of the firms are not even giving basic treatment to effluent/waste-water, as they do not have retention tanks. So, the water overflows causing dengue and other contagious diseases. EPA and WASA visit the firms quarterly and impose fine if found anyone violating the rules, but still many firms are running this way on day-to-day basis.

Factory /firms premises and surrounding streets and roads were more cleaner than rest of the residential areas. It’s because factories on daily basis manage the cleaning on their own, for which they are paying huge amounts (as low as Rs200,000) along with monthly billing (as low as Rs60,000) for waste management.

The behaviour of officials, such as district government officials, police, WASA, and EPA is very rude and not very cooperative with the industry. Their role is more of a regu-
Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri

She may not be living under the economic poverty line. However, her husband was an unemployed drug addict. She was a chronic victim of domestic violence. Arguments on financial issues occurred routinely, and on top of everything, there are reports that the children had not been fed for the last three days. First thing first. Can one imagine the state of mind in which Bisma decided to end the lives of her two minor children? She may be depressed, frustrated, helpless, extremist, revengeful, all of the above, or none of the above, but it does not change the fact that she took the precious lives of her children. And here arises the second question: who is responsible for the deaths of these children — Bisma, her husband, her relatives, the state, society, all of them or none of them? One can think of all kinds of possible answers; however, the Punjab police were quick in fixing responsibility and arrested her on a charge of murder. She would remain the talk of town for a few days and then all attention would be diverted to some other equally gruesome incident; after all, Pakistan is a land of the happening, where there is no dull moment.

I agree that ‘chronic poverty’ may not be the cause of this tragic incident, but Bisma’s extreme behaviour clearly indicates chronic depression and mental health issues, especially when she had a history of suicide attempts and her mother had also committed suicide a few years ago.

Fortunately, Bisma did not kill herself, but earlier last month, a cancer patient allegedly killed seven members of his family before committing suicide. Media reports are full of instances of such extreme behaviour. One wonders where we are heading towards as a society. Are we a mob of psychopaths, sadistic and violent individuals, or our sheer helplessness pushes us towards extreme behaviour? Perhaps, there is no easy answer to this question, but one can certainly assume that societal behaviour would have been quite normal, had there been attempts by our successive governments to implement Article 38 of the Constitution of Pakistan, which states: “The State shall provide basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief.” True that ours is a resource-starved country, but even if our state had abundant resources, it would only be able to provide basic necessities even if it knew the number of deprived people. Mapping the demand side reflects the political will to act; however, our policymakers are clearly living in a state of denial. They do not want to read their lab results as it may diagnose their chronic ailments.

We have not released our poverty figures for the last many years. The National Nutritional Survey result was released after a lapse of two years as someone in the bureaucracy was not comfortable with the fact that 58 per cent of the population in Pakistan is malnourished. The World Food Programme-SDPI-FAO-Unicef-led “State of food (in) security in Pakistan 2013” report, suggesting (on the basis of government data) that almost 50 per cent of the people have a chronic caloric insecurity, has been awaiting clearance and shuttling between the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council and the Ministry of Food Security and Research for the last six months. In a country where physical health requirements remain unmet, we simply do not believe that mental ailments exist; thus, most media reports

Poverty: a non-traditional security threat

where we are heading rather than a facilitator to understand industry’s problems first and help them find solution to ensure compliance.

We saw WASA machinery cleaning sludge from the street drains for which the firms concerned pay all the expenses. A general manager of one of the firms told us that the firms have even provided WASA the machinery and pumps for the proper flow of waste water through the city drains but all is in vain.

During a visit to industry in Millat Town, when we asked people about the names of firms we were looking for, many of them told us that many firms even give pensions to their retired employees.

On way to Chak Jhumra, on Jhumra road, we saw a number of factories, which can actually accommodate more than 6000 workers. They were all closed because of energy crisis. When we asked the people around and guards of a factory that since how long the factory is closed, the reply was ‘more than two years’. Similar situation we observed in factories located in Small Industrial Estate on Sargodha road, Samundari road, Maqbool road and Jaranwala road; more than half of the factories were running on their one third capacity.

Small Industrial Estate is located on Sargodha road, which is in dilapidated condition. Mostly it was more of an off-road track, streets were filled with factory waste such as used coal, and factory owners say it is the duty of WASA, as they monthly pay to WASA for cleanliness. We were about to step on fresh layer of hot coal, but suddenly a warm blow saved us from stepping on. What we have observed and experienced from industry by talking to owners, managers and directors along with our prior experience with stakeholders such as association, chamber and government body such as EPA, laws exist but there is no one, who can implement those laws in their true letter and spirit.
term Bisma a ‘ruthless mother’ and a ‘monster mom’. I wonder how many more deaths are required to convince ourselves that helplessness leads to extreme behaviours. We need to acknowledge the multidimensionality of poverty and need to recognize that poverty, in any form, is a non-traditional security threat, which can erode the basic societal fabric.

It may require a revised social contract to address societal extreme behaviours, but by then, it would be too late for this ‘ruthless mother’, who may attempt to commit suicide during her trial. I wish the court could have sent her for psychiatric treatment before handing her over to the police on judicial remand. It is still not too late. Perhaps, the Supreme Court or the Parliament’s Committee on Human Rights can still intervene and consider this case under Article 38. It would turn an accused into a victim, and may also lay the foundation of a paradigm shift, which is necessary if we want to provide psychological relief to our frustrated society. (Courtesy The Express Tribune, Islamabad: dated 8th March 2014)

Role of trade with India in post-2014 scenario

By Haider Abbas

The year 2014 will be crucial as the US withdraws its troops from Afghanistan. At the same time, India-Pakistan rivalry has the potential to intensify and undermine any fragile stability that may exist. In this situation, trade could be a mechanism for mitigating tension between the two countries.

If trade relations are normalised, Pakistan will get access to a market of over 1.2 billion consumers and India will have access to a market of over 180 million people. The increased economic activity will lead to more employment opportunities and higher stakes for people on both sides in maintaining peaceful ties.

According to studies, South Asia remains one of the least integrated regions in the world. Pakistan and India account for almost 92% of South Asia’s GDP, 85% of the region’s population and 80% of its surface area. Despite that, trade between the two constitutes only 20% of regional trade.

Pakistan has the largest export potential in textiles, jewellery, precious metals and base metals, accounting for 45% while India can augment its exports to Pakistan in three categories – machinery, mechanical appliances and electrical equipment. These three categories comprise 54% of India’s export potential. Therefore, it is clearly in the interest of both countries to find a political solution to their dispute.

In the current scenario, the entire globe is focused on the Middle East and Asia with the primary concern of protecting economic interests in the form of smooth flow of oil from the Persian Gulf region as well as tapping natural resources of the Central Asian Republics.

At this critical juncture, due to its strategic geographical position, Afghanistan has the potential to become a land-linked country providing both Pakistan and India with direct routes to the Central Asian region.

India should allow Pakistan to access Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan via its territory and Pakistan should give transit rights to India to access Afghanistan. This significantly impacts the trade potential, even with other neighbours.

Trade Restrictions

In the face of restrictive trade policies and transport bottlenecks, at present, a great deal of trade occurs via Dubai. The composition of informal trade between the two countries shows that a range of products are avoiding official tariff and non-tariff barriers to reach the third country, reflecting the potential for expanding official trade.

According to recent data of the World Bank, low transport costs, dismantling of tariff and non-tariff barriers, grant of MFN status to India by Pakistan and improvement of logistics arrangements can help increase the volume of bilateral trade to approximately $8-10 billion annually.

Current low volumes of trade and low trade integration in Pakistan and India have their roots in their respective systems. Both have relatively restrictive trade regulations. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the relaxation of constraints would benefit both countries.

The recent agreements between Minister of Commerce and Textile Khurram Dastgir Khan and his Indian counterpart Anand Sharma can play the role of a catalyst in harnessing the benefits of bilateral trade in the post-2014 scenario.

Trade will, of course, not solve all the glitches, but it could be an important catalytic agent in lowering the tensions. The reduced tensions – an inevitable benefit of strengthened economic ties – would improve the security climate for investment and economic development not only in Pakistan and India but also in the whole South Asian region. (Courtesy Express Tribune, Islamabad, dated: 10th Feb 2014)
In Pakistan, many manifestations of sexual violence prevail. These cases are rarely reported due to cultural and social reasons and taboos thus the women suffer in silence. According to World Health Organization 2010 report, sexual violence results into serious health implications for the victim. Incest, street harassment, trafficking, prostitution, forced marriages (wani, watta satta, swara), child abuse, intimate partner sexual violence (IPV), workplace sexual abuse/harassment (domestic workers, formal sector) and rape are some of the most commonly experienced abuses in Pakistan.

In order to tackle the issue, it is important to understand and disseminate information about sexual violence on the basis of credible research and ground realities. Sustainable Development Policy Institute in collaboration with International Alert conducted a research project to explore the trends of sexual violence in two districts of Southern Punjab, i.e. Dera Ghazi Khan and Muzaffargarh. The study aims at gauging the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders and key informants on the current state and dynamics of sexual violence, role of stakeholders and the efficacy of law-enforcement agencies in the two districts. For the purpose, both qualitative and quantitative research tools were used. Key informant interviews with district government representatives, law-enforcement agencies, civil society activists, media and lawyers were conducted. Similarly, focus group discussions with the community were held to gauge their perceptions about the issue. Major findings are enlisted under the subsequent headings.

**Dera Ghazi Khan**

The study concludes that due to strong feudal culture in tribal and rural areas of Dera Ghazi Khan, the society is experiencing conservative setup with the high prevalence of sexual violence in the area. Lack of education and accountability is exacerbating the criticality of the issue. Backwardness coupled with the deep-rooted patriarchy is promoting the culture of sexual violence as perceived by the respondents. One of the findings indicates that cultural violence/ customary practice is present/practiced to a large extent. Presence of Watta Satta is up to 100% in tribal and rural areas that are providing breeding ground to the issue to flourish. Rape, IPV, child sexual abuse and incest, stalking, pornography, sexual exploitation and prostitution, sexual harassment, and bullying and professional sexual exploitation is the most common type of sexual violence found in the area. The scenario became worst when women of the area accept and surrender to their defined role and position by the society. People are reluctant to talk on the issue. Most of the cases relating to sexual violence get unreported due to the honor issue.

**Muzaffargarh**

Analogous to DG Khan, Muzaffargarh district demonstrate strong feudal culture where landlords, feudal lords, politicians and to some extent religious leaders dominate and influence the area. Class, caste, ethnicity, gender, age, etc. intersect in defining the types of violence prevalent against women and men. The research findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between customary practices and local conflict, which propagate violence against women. Thence, local conflicts and disputes play pivotal role in reinforcing customary practices, which lead to gender based violence. Land dispute, water dispute, sectarian violence, family disputes, family feuds, and Baraderism are the major forms of conflict that prevail in the area. Interestingly, the locals define the conflicts in three words, Zan, Zar, tay Zameen (Women, Gold (money) and Land). Marriage customs like early marriages, forced marriages, watta satta (marriages in exchange) are highly prevalent in the district, which breeds violence against women. Abduction, harassment, domestic violence, IPV, marital rape, Incest, verbal harassment prevail in the district. Few of the cases are reported while mostly the cases get unreported. Some of the major reasons of local conflicts are backwardness, ignorance, lack of education and illiteracy in the area. The other main reason pointed out by the research respondents was the feudal culture and difference in power dynamics.
Based on the phrase Inspiring Change, the global theme for International Women’s Day 2014 (IWD 2014), Gender and Human Security Unit at SDPI launched its Woman of Substance Series (WSS) on March 14, 2014.

The main aim behind the series is to preserve the spirit and continuity of IWD 2014. The idea is to conduct public interviews with the women achievers of Pakistan: women who have proved their mettle through intellect, rationality, activism, and creativity in different domains. The purpose of these interviews is to mainly explore the sense of personhood, wisdom, and professional expertise of guests. The unit aims to invite such women whose credibility rests in their proven record to raise questions, and struggle to provide substantive answers. The unit is also interested in the policy implications that may emerge from the guest’s expert opinion about the state of affairs in their area of specialism.

In this connection, two events, one with Asma Jahangir and another with Moneeza Hashmi have already taken place.
Pakistan is home to over one and a half million transgender population (also called khwaja-sara or hijra in the local language). Historically, khwaja-saras had been respected as caretakers of royal harems, masters of art and culture, and trusted as messengers, watchmen and guardians. Contemporary transgender people now live on the margins of the society as entertainers, beggars and sex workers. Hijras are vulnerable in Pakistan because of widespread unacceptance by the society. In most cases, they are not only secluded from the society but also often repulsed by their own family members.

Continued discrimination and repulsion for the transgender community has left them in poverty and other chronic social evils. They continue to be deprived of basic human rights in Pakistan, including access to services like education, health and job opportunities. Discrimination against them is not structural to a society but largely rooted in how they are perceived as equal members of the society. In most cases, they are widely ridiculed and grossly mocked at even if they try to make efforts towards a decent living for themselves.

SDPI conducted a series of District Dialogue Forums under a project in 25 districts of four provinces, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan under a project on the Status of Women Khawar Mumtaz noted this approach as very important. While attending Moneeza Hashmi’s event, she said this was similar to “recording oral history” of women achievers of Pakistan.

— By Dr Maleeha Aslam

Seminar on Educational Constraints of Transgender

The team behind WSS is keen to generate interests among attendees and allow them to learn directly from the “lived experience” of the panelists. Therefore, the preference is not to have formal statements or presentations but to engage our Woman of Substance into informal conversation and discussion. The Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women Khawar Mumtaz noted this approach as very important. While attending Moneeza Hashmi’s event, she said this was similar to “recording oral history” of women achievers of Pakistan.

— By Dr Maleeha Aslam

Asma Jahangir speaks at the seminar
ect, Pakistan Peace Initiatives. In the first phase of the project, youth, media and community leaders from 25 districts were trained on the promotion of dialogue through media and youth mobilization. In the second phase, the group of trained youth, media and community were asked to identify the conflicts and issues in their respective areas to conduct dialogue forums accordingly. In Lahore, the forum was conducted on the issue titled: “Educational Constraints Faced by Transgender Community in Pakistan” held in Khawaja Sara Society, Lahore. The two-day dialogue session was concluded by the formation of committee to take one step further. Gender and Human Security Unit at SDPI even after the closure of the project felt the need for bringing the constraints faced by the marginalized segment of the society in the limelight. For the purpose, the unit organized a seminar on February 3, 2014 to generate a discussion on the issues faced by transgender community to access the basic human rights such as education and employment opportunities from human rights perspectives.

The seminar was able to generate awareness with regard to human rights and access to basic services for transgender as equal citizens in the country. It brought attention of institutions (NGOs and INGOs) and policy-makers towards the rights of transgender. Special focus on societal bottlenecks preventing their acceptance in social life in Pakistan was highlighted and debated. Seminar was attended by a large number of people from different segments of society particularly, civil society activists, lawyers, khawja saras, development practitioners, researchers and media.