

# POLICY BRIEF No. 4



Centre for Public Policy & Governance  
Forman Christian College (A Chartered University)

## US Withdrawal from Afghanistan & Pakistan's Strategy

August 2011

The Centre for Public Policy & Governance (CPPG) held a day long policy dialogue titled "US Withdrawal from Afghanistan & Pakistan's Strategy" on the 28th of July 2011. The dialogue was divided into two sessions, One, "Pakistan's Afghan Policy in Light of American Exit Strategy" and two, "Counter Terrorism and Counter Extremism Strategy". This was followed by a session on Next Steps. The objective of the dialogue was to build a consensus among the various stakeholders on the future direction of Pakistan's policy in light of the existing policy framework and examining the range of policy options available. This Policy Brief provides a short summary of the key consensus points among the participants. It also highlights issues that require further deliberation.

### Pakistan's Afghan Policy in Light of American Exit Strategy

**US Withdrawal:** There was a general consensus that US was unlikely to withdraw completely from the region as it had long term interests. It was argued by some that there was an evolving convergence of interest between US-China on South Asia. It was also observed that America's economic and domestic political concerns would lead to real draw down of troops and eventual transfer of power to the Afghans; others argued that without a functioning Political Centre in Afghanistan, dialogue among Afghan parties and Afghans assuming management of their security looked suspect while the declared drawdown policy was in fact a pull back of surge troops and 'end game'-- only suggesting a period of transition. The real question was whether the transition would be peaceful and if Pakistan would seize the opportunities that this transition period offers. There was a general consensus that Pakistan needed to redefine its terms of engagement with the US rather than move towards a path of confrontation.

**Strategic Depth:** A broad consensus emerged that the policy of Strategic Depth<sup>†</sup> needed to be revisited. Since the 1980's, its quest has been futile and has caused horrific blowback manifested in the form of militarization and radicalization of society. Pakistan's domestic anti-terror and anti-extremism strategy has been held subservient to it, with the State providing institutional patronage to militant non-state actors. It has disconcerted some important friendly countries in the region and could accelerate Pakistan's isolation from the world. Before it spirals completely out of control, a serious review and rollback of 'strategic depth' policy was in order.

**Afghan Policy:** It was observed that Afghan policy may be examined in the framework of Maximalist- Minimalist approach; the advocates of maximalist approach contend that Pakistan must strive and gain the maximum benefits suiting Pakistan's needs and desires from the Afghan settlement. While the Minimalists, propose a broad based peace in the region without Pakistan necessarily gaining overarching advantage. There was a general consensus that Pakistan should take the middle route rather than pursuing a Maximalist agenda or Minimalist approach. It was argued that Pakistan should facilitate the peace process rather than try to monopolize it. Pakistan could use this process to gain trust of various Afghan factions; the Northern Alliance and the Nationalist Afghan Pashtuns who have been alienated because of Pakistan's predisposition towards the Taliban. The participants cautioned our policy makers against trying to micro-manage the Afghan Taliban who wanted to negotiate their role in Afghan future independently. Pakistan needs to engage in a constructive and intense dialogue with Kabul, Afghan Taliban, US and Regional countries with the objective of peace and stability in Afghanistan-- a friendly rather than a subservient Afghan government with non-interference guarantees from all external parties including Pakistan. Security should not be the sole criteria driving Pakistan's Afghan policy but economic considerations must also be given primacy in formulation of our policy. Economic advantages in regional development through stable and peaceful Afghanistan are enormous: trade corridor and energy pipelines (linking Gulf, China, Central & South Asia).



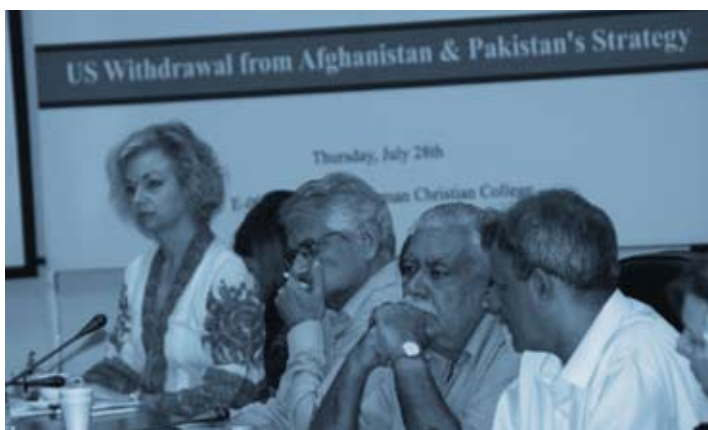
**India Centrality:** India is recognized as a regional power, relatively better governed than Pakistan with robust economy. The expectation that India would make any concessions to Pakistan, while Pakistan does not adopt self corrections, is delusional. There was broad consensus among the participants that Pakistan's policy of confrontation with India was misplaced, as it has led to depletion of Pakistan's resources; disintegration of the country and the emergence of violent militias while India has risen to the ranks of world powers.

It was also observed that Pakistan's Afghan policy needed greater flexibility to show tolerance towards fencing off Indian interests as Pakistan demands (closing down of Indian Consulates in Kandahar and Kabul) protection of its interests. A general consensus emerged that Pakistan needed to revisit its India centric policy and pursue more nuanced and creative diplomacy for the attainment of peace. The participants were raucous in suggesting that the current tension between Pakistan and India was not on Kashmir but on each other's role in Afghanistan, however, in the last decade or so, there has hardly been any dialogue on Afghanistan between Pakistan & India. Thus a policy change was desirable on the contents of dialogue process between India and Pakistan- it needs to be broader than simply ritualistic. To make Pakistan a regional trading hub, it was imperative that the transit trade agreement with Afghanistan allowing Afghan goods access to India is implemented and trade cooperation between the two countries is deepened. The Jamaat-e-Islami representative voiced dissent on this point of consensus.

**Military Civil Relations & Foreign Policy:** Participants agreed that although Foreign Policy formulation is generally an elitist phenomenon and Foreign Office provides the lead. However, 34 years of military rule, Cold War and our overwhelming considerations of State security has made it the domain of the military elite. But military's (& Intelligence Agencies) dominance of Pakistan's foreign policy has primarily been its undoing. It is worth noting that Pakistan's major foreign policy disasters (all under the military: 1965, 1971, 1980-repercussions of the 1st Afghan war, 1999- Kargil conflict) have been due to Pakistani policy makers attempting to carve a role larger than the country's size and beyond its capacity. Thus it is imperative that Foreign Office regains control of formulating and executing the foreign policy of the country. The civilian government must assert to own foreign policy; encourage consultation with the parliament and political parties, so that Pakistan's Foreign Policy positions are publicly discussed and debated. More importantly, Pakistan's Foreign Policy needs to take into cognizance its domestic situation. Faced with escalating challenges of internal governance (economic, insurgency, terrorism), Pakistan cannot afford regional or international isolation. Nor should it embark on a confrontational path to antagonize the world, the Great powers, particularly, the United States. The US will determine on its own when to stop fighting and leave Afghanistan. Pakistan thus needed to engage the US and regional countries (Afghanistan, Iran & India) rather than alienate them. There is an urgent need to improve policy coherence and coordination among the civilian leadership, the Foreign Office and the GHQ.

**Durand Line:** Majority of the participants argued for a need to

normalize borders (both East & West) though few did not give Durand Line the importance and immediacy that it deserved, arguing that the 700 Pakistani military check posts along the Line had not stopped attacks from across the border or by Pakistani militants; second, the issue is contentious-- as Pashtuns along the Line were unwilling to accept the division. Still participants agreed that such contentious issues needed to be put on the table for discussion in bilateral dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan.



## Counter Terrorism and Counter Extremism Strategy

**Conspiracy Theories & Siege Mentality:** There was a general consensus among participants that Pakistan needed to get out of its collective siege mentality, bury conspiracy theories and blaming others; and start assessing the situation according to changing realities. The fact was that Pakistan was facing a blowback of its own policies. It had continued the Jihad policy even when America left the region in 1989 and its current terrorism and extremism predicament would need to be tackled whether the US stayed or left the region. Thus it was imperative for Pakistan to get out of the denial mode, start putting its internal house in order and not shy away from seeking international help. Despite Pakistan's crisis of reputation, the regional states and the global powers were favorably disposed towards helping Pakistan to counter the extremism and terrorism menace; of course they want to help Pakistan in their own interest.

**Policy Framework:** A general consensus existed on the immediate need for the government to formulate a comprehensive and holistic policy response to fight against Extremism and Terrorism (some arguing for a ministerial level). Without belittling army's role in fighting terrorism, it was accepted that any comprehensive drive needed to be spearheaded by the civilian forces and institutions including legislature, judiciary, prosecution, intelligence and police. The Regulatory Framework had not kept pace with changing ground realities. For example, the Anti-Terrorist Act of 1997

designed to deal with Shia-Sunni violence had not been updated and needs rapid and immediate changes to deal with issues like: Witness Protection, Judges Security and usage of Mobile phones as evidence among other aspects.

**Writ of the State:** Establishment of the writ of the state was termed an important factor in countering extremism and terrorism. It was argued that extremism had been imposed on areas under intimidation. Evidently, the indigenous populations rejected extremism as soon as the writ of the state was reestablished. It was observed that almost all of FATA, 16 districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the country side in Sindh and large areas in Southern Punjab were beyond the writ of the state. It was pointed out that the number of madaris and mosques had increased from 14000/15000 in 2005 to 19,000 in 2011. Such growth required State regulation to ensure that these institutions are not built illegally or are being used for militant training or hate speech.

**Ideology & Radicalization:** For both Anti-extremism and Anti-terrorism strategy, participants laid great emphasis on how the Ideology of the State of Pakistan and Identity formation were constructed through State curriculum. The ideology of the State came under particular scrutiny. There was a consensus among the participants that usage of ideology facilitated extremism rather than countering it; few participants even equated it with Al-Qaeda ideology in aspiring for a hard line State. Others blamed indigenous 'Islamization' of Pakistan as a contributory factor in perpetuating and promoting terrorism. A consensus emerged (the Jamaat-e-Islami representative took exception) that use of religion for political means, hate and exclusion in State curriculum had created a mindset which encouraged extra territorial and transnational loyalties in the name of Islam rather than national. It was thus imperative that social support for militancy, extremism be countered through refurbishing national curriculum, dismantling militant support base within state apparatus (for example attack on GHQ, Mehran Naval Base and Osama Bin Ladin case). The political parties, especially the religio-political parties --whose support base was being encroached and their youth network infiltrated by Al-Qaeda, needed to take public position against extremism, militancy and terrorism. This demanded that the anti-extremism strategy must take into cognizance that Pakistani society has become extremely conservative and the challenge was to ensure that conservatism was not instrumentalized into extremism; similarly, to counter Al-Qaeda's propaganda (pamphlets and new CD every 15 days), an alternative narrative needed to be devised whose esthetics could penetrate the Madrassa and youth network.

**Institutional Capacity & Governance:** The anti-terrorism and extremism strategy required three pronged approach;

first, threat assessment, second, formulating an appropriate response to the threat and finally managing and eradicating the threat. Pakistan continues to suffer from unrecognizing the scale and size of the threat, hence ambivalence and neglect. It is time to begin the process of Threat Assessment. Police, which is the first line of defense against terrorism, was ill-trained, ill-equipped and practically clueless about counter terrorism. No strategic thinking had taken place and no long term strategy had yet been prepared. Participants argued for capacity building of the police as a service and not as a force (military training, automatic weapons, armored vehicles, sniper etc.). A senior police officer perceptively remarked that militarization of police went hand in hand with militarization of the society; it increased the distance from the common man and was counter productive to effective policing which required empathy, problem solving and interpersonal skills. It was also observed that there was a need to build police's intelligence capacity as no military or police operation could succeed without reliable and actionable intelligence. This required an Intelligence Data Base, software and trained manpower for Police Record and Office Management Information System, and a mix of traditional/community to evolve knowledge based policing.



The Intelligence Establishment came under considerable discussion. It was observed that the Intelligence Community needed to improve its professional skills to effectively deal with the scale of threat faced by the country. The Intelligence Agencies (the ISI, MI, IB, CID, and Special Branch) have not been effective and skillful in disrupting, dismantling terror networks. The terrorists have become quite sophisticated in managing and operating their networks and that requires intelligence on their sponsors, financiers, weapons procurement and logistics. Several factors have contributed towards ineffectiveness; political use of intelligence agencies by the ruling elite, Inter intelligence rivalries, an absence of coordinated mechanisms, lack of accountability and the dominance of one intelligence agency over the rest. Participants agreed that the main objective of intelligence was to provide and share real time

data with both domestic and international agencies and that was a casualty. Additionally the process of receiving, collating and analyzing terror related incidences needed improvements beginning with recruitment. It was pointed out that religious orientation of the officer has been considered the sole criteria for postings in the Intelligence agencies among the armed forces (for example, Khalid Khwaja). The skills and techniques of field operators need reform and qualitative improvement for insightful and timely intelligence gathering.

**FATA:** There was a broad consensus among the participants on integrating FATA with the rest of the country either as a separate province or as part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A legal and constitutional ground was considered a pre-requisite for development in the area. Furthermore, it was noted that an effective anti-terrorist strategy demanded restoration of the writ of the state and political activity. Some participants slightly differed in their view of why even slight reforms in the FCR accepted by the presidency had not yet been notified\*, few pointing their finger towards the proponents of Strategic Depth—who aimed to maintain FATA as a sanctuary-- where militants could be kept, others feared that reforms (local government system) in FATA would lead to extremists winning. But a consensus emerged that these reforms were not enough, FCR was against the constitutional rights of people of FATA and thus integration with the state and full citizen rights were required.

### Chairperson's Closing Remarks

Ms. Bushra Gohar, Member National Assembly from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa supported a broadening of the current Pakistani approach arguing for a middle ground between Maximalist and Minimalist position. She asserted that it was the right of Afghans to negotiate a strategic partnership with Americans post 2014. Similarly, it was important for Pakistan to re-negotiate the terms of engagement with Americans and move from a transactional relationship with occasional spats to one built on mutual trust with clearly defined goals and interests. Pakistan should also engage in diplomatic talks with all regional states that have interests in Afghanistan. She articulated that there was certain degree of convergence in Pakistan-India long term interests and thus a Pak-Afghan-India trilateral dialogue was the need of the hour. Sharing her thoughts on Durand Line, she suggested, this issue could be discussed in a Pak-Afghan bilateral dialogue. She was emphatic in stating that a Taliban Government in Afghanistan meant Talibanization of the region. She was upfront in observing that the Taliban represented only a segment of the Pashtun opinion and it was important that in framing Pakistan's Afghan Policy, all Pashtun opinions were considered rather than only giving weight to armed groups holding Pashtun populations hostage across the region (Afghanistan, FATA, Swat).

She reminded that it must be recognized that Pakistan's internal situation was dire and there was a need to build a broad societal consensus for a way out of the current predicament. We could then, ask for international help if needed. She pointed out, it is time that the military realized that in the past, policy mistakes were made and unilateral decision making on Afghan and other foreign policy issues is no longer desirable. She argued for shifting some of the burden to the elected representatives to build alternative policy consensus. Ms. Gohar claimed that the Parliamentarians were conscious of their responsibility and recognized the gravity of the situation created by the global war on terror. She drew the attention of participants on the parliamentary resolution which was clear to the affect that Pakistan would not allow its land to be used for terrorist activities internally or externally. She observed that the Parliamentary Committees do and could play a more effective role in policy formulation process but needed research and policy analysis support from the universities, think tanks and centre's of excellence like the CPPG. She encouraged the CPPG to arrange a similar dialogue with the political leadership of the country. She expressed her optimism on the 18th amendment and considered it as a good first step that could lead to creativity in educational curriculum at the provincial level.



### Next Steps:

The first of its kind policy dialogue on US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the ramifications it could have on the region was a modest beginning by the FC College (A Chartered University). The objective was to bring together experts and representatives from academia, think tanks, political parties, religious and defense establishments, NGO's and students from FC College and other institutions. The dialogue gained tremendously from the presence of political and academic representatives from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well as the US Consulate diplomatic staff. However it was strongly felt that policy level representation was required from the Media, State and Government including the Foreign Office, the Armed

Forces, Intelligence Establishment, and Political Leadership and concerned Parliamentary Committees to carry forward the process of consensus building. To move forward the process the following next steps are suggested:



- Pakistan needs to start preparing for US Withdrawal (draw down). Foreign Policy issues are complex, require expert management and can't be left alone to Politicians or the Defense Establishment. It is thus important that the Foreign Office, particularly the Divisions and Directorates that deal with Afghanistan, Central Asia and India/South Asia are more forthcoming and engaging in such dialogues. For evidence based, futuristic and policy relevant research on such vital topic of national importance, support and facilitation by the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Interior is needed and would be a welcome gesture.
- Pakistan needs to devise a comprehensive Counter Terrorism, Insurgency & Extremism Strategy for which research is a pre-requisite. The participants were persuasive in suggesting that Police and Intelligence Establishments need to be involved in a similar dialogue for an open, transparent and academic exchange which explores threat assessment<sup>†</sup>, intra-departmental reforms and inter-departmental collaboration. Here provincial governments and particularly Punjab could play a leading role.
- For implementing any policy a broad State & Societal consensus on the nature and direction of a policy is an essential pre-condition. Thus similar dialogues both individualized and collective involving a broad segment of society and state were needed to raise awareness and sensitize and evolve an anti-terror and extremism communication strategy.
- Given the enormity, scale and implications of US troop's reduction in Afghanistan – since its implications directly impinge on Pakistani reality and reputation, therefore Pakistan needs to work at three levels. First, Pakistan needs to improve and streamline inter-provincial academic exchanges for better understanding of provincial perceptions and concerns on this issue. Second, to avert

the possibility of regional isolation and to promote better understanding of Pakistani sufferings as a consequence of prolonged Afghan war and global war on terror, we need to actively engage with academics, cultural institutions and policy think tanks at the regional level (Afghanistan, Iran, India, China, and Central Asia). Finally, international (United States, Europe & Russia) level as it was extremely important to change the focus from personalized emotional anti-ism to interest based national objectives, demonstrating respect, understanding and willingness to pursue and uphold UN Conventions and Treaties. Simultaneously deepen engagement and collaboration in research with academia and policy community at this level.



\*Since the dialogue, the President of Pakistan has amended the FCR to make it more responsive to human rights as well as extended the Political Parties Order 2002 to allow political parties in FATA. <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2011/08/fcr-amended-political-parties-allowed-in-tribal-areas>

†Explored in the Special Issue on Pakistan & Afghanistan of the CPPG Quarterly Research & News Issue 11-13. <http://cppg.fccollege.edu.pk/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/quarterly-April-2011.pdf>



## Dialogue Participants:

### Dialogue Initiators:

**Mr. Ahmed Rashid** is the Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review and The Daily Telegraph of London with twenty five year reporting experience. He is the author of *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism*, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* and most recently, *Descent into Chaos: How the war against Islamic extremism is being lost in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*.

**Mr. Amir Rana** is the founding member and Director, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies and a Research Analyst. He edits the English Research Journal 'Conflict and Peace Studies' and Urdu Monthly "Tajziat". He has written several books including *Jihad-e-Kashmir-o-Afghanistan*, *Gateway to Terrorism*, *Dynamics of Taliban Insurgency in FATA* (co-authored) and forthcoming *Dynamics of Political Islam in Pakistan*.

**Ms. Bushra Gohar** is the Senior Vice President of the Awami National Party (ANP) and Member of Parliament. She is Chair, National Assembly's Standing Committee on Women's Development; and Member, Finance and Revenue, Interior and Kashmir Affairs Committees. She has been a member of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW); Chair, South Asia Partnership-International (SAP-I) and Regional & Global VP., International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW).

**Ms. Carmela Conroy** is US Consul General Lahore. She has served in the US diplomatic staff in various capacities including Deputy Principal Officer, U.S. Consulate General Naha, Okinawa, Japan; Refugee Coordinator for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul and Advisor to the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamyan, Afghanistan.

**Dr. Farid Piracha** is currently the Deputy Secretary General Jamaat-e-Islami and a former MNA, MPA Punjab. He has been a member of the Ulema Academy since 1976, the Al-Khidmat Foundation since 1975, and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth since 1978. He has also served as the President, Punjab University Students Union and as member of the Punjab University Senate.

**Mr. Imtiaz Gul** is a correspondent for The Friday Times and German broadcaster Deutsche Welle. A career journalist, he writes columns for The News and hosts a weekly political talk show on Hum TV. His books include *The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan's Lawless Frontier*, *The Unholy Nexus: Afghan-Pakistan Relations under the Taliban Militia* and edited volumes including *Liberalism, Islam and Human Rights*.

**Ambassador (r) Iqbal Ahmad Khan** is a career diplomat in the Pakistan Foreign Service. He writes regularly on International Affairs and diplomatic relations for various newspapers including the Daily Times. He has served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran and Bangladesh.



**Mr. Khaled Ahmed** is Consulting Editor of The Friday Times with a 30-year career in journalism. His most recent book is Sectarian War: Pakistan's Sunni-Shia Violence and its links to the Middle East. Some of his other books include Musharraf Years: Religious Developments in Pakistan, Pakistan: Behind the Ideological Mask and Pakistan: The State in Crisis. He currently also serves as the Director, South Asian Media School, Lahore.

**Dr. Saeed Shafqat** is Professor & Director, Centre for Public Policy & Governance, FC College and Chairman Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). He has been Executive Director, National Institute of Population Studies and Quaid-e-Azam Distinguished Professor, Columbia University. His books include New Perspectives on Pakistan: Visions for the Future, Contemporary Issues in Pakistan Studies, Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan and Political System of Pakistan and Public Policy.

**Prof. Sajjad Naseer** is Senior Fellow and Professor of Political Science at the Lahore School of Economics. He has published extensively in Academic Journals concentrating on Political Science, Strategic & Security Affairs, Public Policy and Pakistan-India Relations. Some of his papers include Federalism and Constitutional Development in Pakistan, Pakistan - U.S. Relations 1988 -97: An Appraisal.

**Dr. Sarfaraz Khan** is currently Director, Area Study Centre (Central Asia), University of Peshawar. His books include Muslim Reformist Political Thought: Revivalists, Modernists and Free Will and How Elections Are Rigged in Pakistan. Some of his published papers include Special Status of Tribal Areas

(FATA): An Artificial Imperial Construct Bleeding Asia and Good Versus Evil: Argument to Begin War on Terrorism.

**Mr. Sarmad Saeed Khan** is currently Additional IGP Training. He has served as Deputy Commandant, National Police Academy, IG Northern Areas and in the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Liberia. His areas of expertise within policing are Community Policing, Stress Management and Human Rights.

**Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi** is Chairman All Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) and Editor of the Islamic monthly journal "Al-Hurriyat".



## Dialogue Participants:

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Ahmed Warraich	Senior Lecturer of Law, University College Lahore & Advocate High Court
Altaf Qureshi	Director Academy of Letters & former PPP Central Committee Member
Amir Butt	Editor Urban News, Punjab Urban Resource Centre
Anser Ali	Policy & Public Management Consultant
Beth Paige	Director USAID Lahore Field Office
Ejaz Haider	Columnist Pakistan Today, Tribune & Former Editor The Daily Times
Farida Batool	Assistant Professor, National College of Arts
Hafiz Abdul Ghani	Assistant Professor & Chair, Department of Religious Studies
Hajra Zafar	Research Associate, Centre for Public Policy & Governance
Dr. Ijaz Ahsan	Dean, University College of Medicine, Univ. of Lahore & Columnist, The Nation
Ikram ul Haque	Founder, Jinnah Ka Pakistan Movement
Imdad Hussain	Assistant Professor, Centre for Public Policy & Governance
Dr. Imtiaz Bokhari	Professor & Chair, Department of Political Science, Forman Christian College
Javed Masood	Retd. Civil Servant & former CEO, Pakistan Credit Rating Agency Limited
Jawad Butt	Student, Centre for Public Policy & Governance
Jennifer Larson	Public Affairs Officer, US Consulate General Lahore
Karan Swaner	Chief Political & Economic Officer, US Consulate Lahore
Khalida Ahson	Student, Centre for Public Policy & Governance
Majeed Shafqat	Group Captain (Retd), Pakistan Air Force
Col. Mazhar Elahi	Pakistan Army & Student Centre for Public Policy & Governance
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Dr. Sylvia Benjamin	Professor, Department of Chemistry, Forman Christian College
Tariq Mehmood	Former Interior Secretary, Government of Pakistan
Tayyeb Tariq	Student, Forman Christian College
Waseem Ashraf	Democracy & Governance Specialist, USAID Lahore
Zheng Bin	Journalist, China Economic Daily

\*\*\*In addition, various students from Forman Christian College, Punjab University, LUMS, and LSE were also present



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