

account for the complexities of human consciousness and its implications for societal change. Hussain persuasively argues that meaningful societal transformation hinges on a fundamental shift in human consciousness, transcending selfish individualism towards a more holistic perspective. While the book primarily focuses on Pakistan, its insights possess broader relevance as it challenges conventional wisdom, urging us to reevaluate our societal structures and relationships, and adopt a paradigm that prioritizes human welfare and environmental sustainability.

The second discussant, Haque, stated that Hussain's perspective diverges significantly from prevailing economic narratives that focus solely on top-down economic development. Instead, Hussain's advocacy for "human economy" argues for a bottom-up approach that prioritizes the needs of the majority, and focuses on small farmers and micro-small-medium enterprises. This shift towards a more inclusive economic model, centered on empowering marginalized communities, represents a departure from traditional top-down strategies. Thus, in essence, his perspective challenges us to rethink established paradigms and embrace a more human-centric approach to economic and societal development. However, he argued that other than the colonized elite, a critical hurdle for decolonization was state subscribed religious nationalism, which ignored the colonial experience by instituting another colonized subject, the 'Hindu India', as the Other.

“...human well-being and social justice stand as the fundamental aims of economic policy.”

Dr. Hasan H. Karrar, an Associate Professor at the Mush-taq Ahmad Gurmani School of Humanities and Social Science, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) was invited to speak on **The Geopolitics of Infrastructure and Securitization** on February 14, 2024.



Karrar began the discourse by highlighting the presence of a large number of checkpoints in Gilgit-Baltistan despite the area being seemingly stable as compared to Baluchistan. The region is situated amidst the Karakoram high mountains, and shares borders with Afghanistan, China, and India. Before 1948, there had been no road links between down-country Pakistan and the Karakoram. An all-weather road known as the Karakoram Highway, was built in the 1960s. Since then, this arterial road has enabled outmigration for education and employment, and has spurred new markets, commercialization and tourist industries. It has led to the influx of political ideas, forming sectarian identities; and has spawned social justice and conservation movements.

He argued that these developments occurred under intense geo-political pressure, namely due to Pakistan's simmering territorial dispute with India, and its foreign and security policy alignment with China. These relationships with India and China, reflect Pakistan's geopolitical anxiety expressed in the form of internal securitization. Securitization is a state project enabled through infrastructure with the construction of Karakoram highway as material embodiment of statecraft i.e. a presentation of governmental authority and power. It bypasses normative laws allowing the state to transgress normative legal

and administrative structures. Quoting Carl Schmitt, he shared that after 9/11, normative and administrative structures were deemed inadequate in the face of emergencies, thereby creating a need for specific places of exception where government could transgress its own laws. This has been evident during colonial empires as well as in colonial statecraft, which marked exceptions for people living in the frontiers, as they were seen as primitive and unruly. Karrar argued that this approach to statecraft is visible in the Karakoram as the state is employing violence against individuals who are seen as working against a singular homogenizing national project. Rather than in extraordinary circumstances, non-normative statecraft is apparent in everyday life and serves as a backdrop to everyday experiences, routine movement, use of public space, lawful assembly and protest. He thus linked securitization of frontier spaces in the post-colony (post-colonial state) to non-normative colonial practices rather than charting a different path in an independent state.

Discussing the role of Pakistani military in the securitization process, Karrar highlighted the developmental and modernizing role of the General Ayub Khan regime in the 1960s, focusing on building infrastructure, like roads, in remote areas like the Karakoram region. Before these roads were built, places like the Karakoram were difficult to access, with only mule tracks and risky flights. Building roads was seen as crucial both for strategic and economic imperatives, as it helped the military secure disputed territories and brought these regions into the fold of modern development. The military didn't just build roads; they instilled modern practices including hygiene among local populations, echoing colonial enterprises, and its involvement wasn't just about construction but also power and control. Further, with improved expertise in building and maintaining roads, an organization called the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) was formed to handle these tasks.

Karrar highlighted that Pakistan and China had deepened their ties by connecting roads in the mid-1960s. This included the extension of Indus Valley Road to Hunza Valley and linking it to the Chinese road network. This cooperation evolved amidst geopolitical shifts, such as Pakistan's alignment with Western alliances like the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), as well as its growing proximity

to China due to conflicts with India and the Sino-Soviet split. Despite the initial distance maintained by Pakistan's leadership from Beijing, events like the disclosure of Pakistan's opposition to American actions in Vietnam and China's tacit support to Pakistan during the 1965 war with India, the two nations came closer together. The construction and subsequent securitization of the Karakoram Highway depicts Pakistan's increasing reliance on China, particularly evident in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This interdependence has significantly shaped the geopolitical landscape of the region, impacting local livelihoods and everyday life along the highway, with security measures reflecting the complexities of transnational investment regimes and regional geopolitics.



He further stated that Pakistan's geopolitical anxieties regarding the Karakoram region and its integration into the national polity, were aggravated both by Gilgit-Baltistan's (GB) Shia majority status in a Sunni majority Pakistan, and social protest movements demanding a constitutional status for GB. Elaborating the sharpening of sectarian divisions and violence, he highlighted Zia's widespread Islamization and the return of Sunni militias during the Afghan conflict to the region, notably the 1988 massacre in Jalalabad Valley, Gilgit. The Karakoram Highway has since become a site of repeated sectarian violence, particularly in the early 2000s. State's use of anti-terrorism legislation against activists demanding equal rights adds another layer of complexity. This backdrop sets the stage for the entry of Chinese capital under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While China's past contributions, such as

building the Karakoram Highway and aiding in natural disasters, have earned appreciation and goodwill, questions arise regarding the tangible benefits of BRI investments for local communities. Instead, concerns about environmental impact, loss of land, and unequal distribution of benefits demand critical inquiry into the real costs of development.

In conclusion, Karrar argued that geopolitical tensions and securitization have led to the creation of divisions between those considered part of the nation and those seen as outsiders, which has resulted in the state being the main source of conflict and violence.

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Answering a question regarding the difference between China and Pakistan in terms of the securitization of Karakoram Highway, Karrar argued that securitization manifests differently in China and Pakistan, as influenced by their unique geopolitical dynamics. Pakistan's geopolitical anxiety lies in wanting to secure capital from China as seen through projects like the Diamer Bhasha Dam, which is heavily securitized due to regional tensions. Conversely, in China, securitization extends beyond economic considerations to encompass broader national security imperatives such as securing territorial integrity and maintaining stability.

Answering a question related to Climate Change in this region, Karrar remarked that Climate Change has increasingly become intertwined with local discourse and competition. However, it is essential to differentiate between genuine Climate Change impacts and other factors that may be misattributed to it as misinterpretations often obscure the true understanding of effects of Climate Change.

:Raheem ul Haque, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Public Policy and Governance, was invited for the book launch of *De-securitize, De-colonize, Industrialize: A Manifesto for Structural Reforms* on February 20, 2024.



Initiating the conversation, Haque stated that the objective for writing the book was to highlight that Pakistan is not simply going through an economic crisis but a polycrisis of state and society, and thus expecting that a 'Charter of Economy' would resolve the crisis is misplaced. Instead, he highlighted that Pakistan has been going a holistic decline since the 1980s. This decline spans all spheres of life including: education where we have both an out of school children crisis as well as an education quality crisis; sports where other than cricket, we were once internationally competitive in squash, field hockey and boxing; our cities have deteriorated as the largest cities are either the top most polluted city or the most unlive-able city in the world; in the cultural sphere, the country produces but a fraction of films that it produced in the 1970s and one rarely sees Pakistani cultural products on Netflix; our work ethic is such that there is no trust left in society; and the list goes on.

He pinpointed that this holistic decline was an outcome of five societal normalizations, aspects which no longer elicit a shock from the general public as these are now a part of our daily life. These include the normalization of: physical, political and economic insecurity whereby a bombing, or going to IMF are accepted as ordinary; a weak civil society as the lack of student or labour representation (unions) is generally not just accepted but also