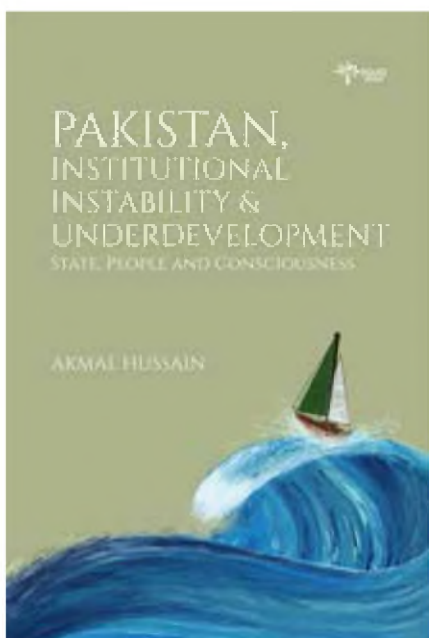


:Dr. Akmal Hussain, founder of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Information Technology University (ITU) and co-chair of the Governing Board of South Asia Centre for Policy Studies, was invited for his book launch of *Pakistan, Institutional Instability & Underdevelopment: State, People, and Consciousness* on June 19, 2023. Raheem ul Haque, Assistant Professor CPPG, and Nazeef Ishtiaq, Lecturer of Economics, FCC were discussants at the book launch.



Hussain commenced his talk with a conceptual elaboration of institutions. Institutions are humanly devised formal and informal rules that enable the orderly conduct of society's political, social, cultural, and religious spheres. Rules are based on a particular understanding of human cognition, and devised through different agencies to induce certain kinds of human behavior. While the state dominated by the elite formulates formal rules, informal rules arise out of the lived experience of a community over a long period.

Referring to Douglas C. North, he argued that informal rules have complex origins as they are rooted in culture, and emerge through a historical process of human interaction with each other and with nature. This collective memory of a community, could either be part of the collective consciousness of the people or the collective unconsciousness in the form of symbols, myths, and leg-

ends.

He argued that it was pertinent to decode this collective memory for an understanding, formulation and observance of rules. Taking Pakistan as a case study, he suggested that the culture of the elite (formal rules) has imposed itself on the culture of the people (informal rules). The elite culture is different because the colonial encounter has left an indelible mark on the colonized elite and their sabotaged consciousness has been carried forward in the post-colonial period. The colonial project robbed the colonized elites of their own history, "divorcing them from their language, their modes of knowing themselves, and estranging them from the sources of defiance." This has alienated them from themselves and their people, exaggerated the difference between them and the people, and laid the bedrock for the construction of a post-colonial state. The persisting colonized consciousness of the country's ruling elite is reflected in the political choices and the design of public policy, while Pakistan's institutional instability is due to the tussle between different elite groups. This has indeed created a crisis of legitimacy of the ruling elite, as this rent-based power structure has not only constrained human potential, but has also hampered "equitable, sustained and environmentally protective economic growth."

Hussain advocated for the decolonization of consciousness of the ruling elite which would require them to reconnect with pre-colonial heritage, thereby allowing society to rediscover and embrace its cultural identity. Moreover, it needs an experience of self (Khudi) following the universal man of Iqbal, and reconnect with human solidarity in beauty, truth, and justice. Also, a comprehensive restructuring of the economy is eminent to ensure that it serves the interests of all citizens rather than perpetuating the dominance of the colonized elite class. This entails: one, moving away from a framework of dependence on developed nations and towards a model that prioritizes self-sufficiency and equitable distribution of resources; two, unlock the full potential of Pakistan's human capital by giving high-quality education and educational opportunities to all members of society, regardless of their socioeconomic status; three, build empowered institutions and empowered elected governments for all three tiers - federal, provincial, and local.

Hussain shared that Jinnah also considered decolonization as a prerequisite to materialize the shift from a hegemonic to a liberated nation, and as an integral part of nation-building. Quoting his address to the gazetted officers of Chittagong on 25th March 1948, "...you are now the servants of Pakistan. Servants can only do their duties and discharge their responsibilities by serving. Those days have gone when the country was ruled by the bureaucracy. It is the people's government, responsible to people." Jinnah further advocated the Islamic ideals of social justice, quality, and fraternity to liberate society from colonial rule while clarifying that Pakistan would not be a theocratic state. Hussain argued that Jinnah was in line with Iqbal's perspective on Islam that advocated for spiritual comprehension and in actualizing human potential, and it was this perspective that combined spirituality with free inquiry, which made Jinnah counterpose Islam to theocracy.

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However, this decolonization was not materialized. Instead, Zia's military dictatorship used militant extremist ideology both as an instrument of prosecuting the war against Soviet troops in Afghanistan and also to impose authoritarian rule within. This inculcated bigotry, intolerance, and hate, suspending the sensibility of love and reason embedded in the intellectual tradition of Jalal-uddin Rumi, Abd-Al-Karim Al-Jili, and Ibn Arabi. After the end of the war, the military establishment used militant extremist groups as instruments for pursuing its policy objectives in Afghanistan and India. These groups gradually formed their own strategic objectives, challenging the constitutional order and sovereignty of the state, and counterposing Sufi ideology, whose message was organic to the consciousness of the people, bringing major implications for institutional instability, state, and society in Pakistan.

Discussing the framework for economic growth, Hussain shared three principles, inspired by Jinnah's economic

vision. He argued that human well-being and social justice stand as the fundamental aims of economic policy. Moreover, industrialization should be seen within the perspective of human welfare, in creating employment opportunities for people and making them economically independent. Lastly, equal opportunities should be provided to all citizens, especially women. He examined the IMF programs in Pakistan and argued that these programs entailed reduced public spending, raised interest rates, trade openness, devaluation of rupee and privatization of state-owned enterprises. However, instead of economic progress, these programs led to an economic slowdown, increased poverty, current account deficits, and inflation. Further, despite aiming to integrate Pakistan into the global market, structural issues have hindered its growth. According to New Institutional Economics (NIE), underdeveloped economies struggle to maintain high per capita income due to limited export diversification. Pakistan's focus on low-value exports like rice and textiles is a significant challenge, ranking low in the Economic Complexity Index due to a lack of transition to knowledge-intensive products.



Discussing the book, Ishtiaq drew attention to the concept of consciousness and argued that Hussain's insights have prompted him to reconsider prevailing paradigms, particularly the understanding of human nature. For centuries, philosophical materialism has dominated, reducing humanity to a mere collection of molecules driven solely by self-preservation. This reductionist perspective permeates our economic and political theories, overlooking the interconnectedness of individuals within society. As we confront pressing issues such as Climate Change and inequality, it becomes evident that existing models fail to

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.

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: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