

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.

“...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.”

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

justified; militant religious nationalism whereby lynching or persecution in the name of religion is no longer an extraordinary news; the negation of critical thinking, culture and the arts is defended in the name of patriotism, nationalism or religion; and lastly professional dishonesty is often restricted to the aspect of corruption.

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Haque stated that these normalizations were an outcome of the strategic direction of the state which have stayed unchanged since the 1980s even as an army dictatorship gave way to electoral democracy and various political parties formed the government. Pakistan had adopted a strategic policy framework premised on the Security State, militant religious nationalism and neoliberalism inspired market-centric economic paradigm, and unless this framework was changed, the decline could not be arrested irrespective of who exercised power in the country. The book was an exercise in the development of a political, socio-cultural, economic and institutional critique of the existing policy framework, and proposes a political program to transform it, which adorns the title of the book, ‘De-securitize, De-colonize, Industrialize’. It instead proposes an alternative policy framework encompassing a Developmental State which adopts civic nationalism anchored in the people’s Indo-Islamic civilizational roots while espousing a production centric paradigm as its economic strategy, which could get the country out of its current predicament.

Haque then gave a brief overview of each of the three aspects. He argued that the Pakistani state fit all the criteria for a security state as defined by various scholars and shared his operational definition of Pakistan’s Security State as “a state that defines its core values based on military ethos, using enemy rhetoric to give primacy to traditional security against all other state responsibilities; it maintains its hegemony through a corpus of security-

oriented state laws, intimidation, greater share in public financial resources, commercial enterprises, and religious ideology & groups that collectively undermine substantive democracy constitutive of: the rule of law, civil liberties, a vibrant public sphere & civil society, and political stability”. State spending was a good indicator in judging the evolution of state’s character. In 1978-79, debt interest payments took 8% of the consolidated state spending which had increased to 27% in 2020-21, while the share of development spending had decreased from 38% to 13% in the same period. He further argued that the defence budget shared in the parliament understated the size of defense spending by about one trillion rupees as it did not include military pensions, paramilitary expenses and many other budgetary heads such as the Atomic Energy Commission. However, the implications of Pakistan’s Security State went far beyond the usual focus on the defense budget (fiscal deficit) to also include an adverse impact on sovereignty, nation building, international stature, rule of law, ‘physical, political and economic security’ and civil liberties. This was because the (unelected) leadership of the Security State was unaccountable while all non-security institutions of state were subservient to it. Thus, a change in the strategic policy direction of the state was not possible within the existing state structure, and so the only possible avenue for progress was to dismantle the Security State and transform it into a Developmental State focused on citizen welfare through the generation of employment and human capital development.

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The second requirement for state transformation was decolonization of the post-colonial state which had evolved into a Security State. He argued that Pakistanis were still treated like ‘subjects’ by the state. To transform them into ‘citizens’ required improved governance through a political plan that gave primary importance to the local (government, planning, knowledge, language, economy) and thus people. However, the state’s subscribed religious

nationalism was a hurdle in this regard as it used another colonized subject (the Hindu India) as the other, precluding a discussion on entrenched colonial structures and Decoloniality. He suggested that two-nation theory had been an outcome of the early 20th century Indian politics under colonial rule, which helped Muslims of North India to democratically win a separate country. However, by sanctifying it as the 'Ideology of Pakistan' amounts to being stuck in the politics of century past. He argued that although two-nation theory had been articulated within the territorial boundary of the Indian Sub-continent, its transformation into pan-Islamism had negated the Indo-Islamic civilizational roots of our identity. The adoption of a religion based national identity particularly in Punjab had led to an identity crisis with religious extremism as an outcome. He thus advocated for adopting civic nationalism for Pakistan's nation building project as it would better cater for Pakistan's diverse citizenry.



Lastly, discussing the aspect of Industrialization, Haque argued that Pakistan's twin fiscal and trade crises were linked to the country's weak production capacity and capability. He suggested that since the Bhutto era, Pakistani leaders have not devised a long-term plan for the economy, and disagreed that visions or medium-term development frameworks could be categorized as long-term plans. Instead, he argued that economic governance in Pakistan had been projectized, and left to the will of the market and policy prescriptions of the IFIs. Thus, for example, it made little difference to all governments that domestic capital was flowing into real-estate (not construction industry) raising land prices beyond the reach of even the middle class while making urban design un-

sustainable. Instead, it took away investments from employment generating productive sectors of the economy which could both decrease imports and increase exports. Additionally, he argued that the economic crisis could not be understood without taking into account the country's governance crisis, where the elite civil service was considered an institution rather than (most) government departments as these departments had no leadership of their own, no plan for institutional reforms, capacity building or leadership succession.

In conclusion, Haque suggested that Pakistan needed structural reforms to arrest its ongoing decline. Population pressure, education and employment needs owing to country's youth bulge, and increasing risks from Climate Change make it amply clear that business as usual would no longer work.

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