

International Conference on Pakistan: Challenges to Democracy, Governance and National Unity on 24th-25TH October 2011

Punjab University's Pakistan Study Centre in collaboration with Department of History organized a two-day international conference on "Pakistan: Challenges to Democracy, Governance and National Unity". More than forty delegates from Germany, France, Russia, Sweden, Turkey, United States and eminent scholars from various universities and research institutions of Pakistan have contributed research papers in the conference. Funds for the conferences were provided by HEC and Punjab University. The two day conference was divided into 7 sessions.

Eminent international scholars of Pakistan Studies; Stephen McDowell from, USA, Tatiana Oranskaia from University of Hamburg, Germany, Jean-Luc Racine and Michel Boivin from France, Vyacheslave Y. Belokrentsky & Vladimir Sotnikov from Russia, Ihsan Yilmaz, Necdet Tosun and Salim Cevik from Turkey, participated in the last day of the conference. Eminent social scientists of Pakistan such as Hassan Askari Rizvi, Rasool Bukhsh Rais, Muhammad Waseem, Sajjad Naseer and Tariq Rahman presented their ideas observed that founder of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah gave clear guidelines 64 years ago as to how Pakistan should manage its affairs. He had indicated the role which bureaucracy, army, politicians and other state institutions will play for a democratic and prosperous Pakistan. Had these guidelines been followed, Pakistan would not have landed into present crises. They also observed that politicians instead of giving Pakistan a solid democratic foundation, politicians followed their personal agendas and worked for their selfish motives.



Inauguration session of the conference was presided over by the Prof. Dr. Mujahid Kamran, Vice-Chancellor, University of the Punjab.

Prof. Dr. S. Qalb-i-Abid, Dean, Faculty of Arts & Humanities, University of the Punjab, introduced the delegates and elaborated the theme of the conference. He expressed the hope the scholars would identify the challenges being faced by Pakistan but would also come up with concrete suggestions for their solutions. The conference was divided in to seven sessions. Prof.

Dr. Massarrat Abid, Conference Secretary thanked the Higher Education Commission and Punjab University for providing substantial financial support for the conference.

The scholars highlighted the challenges faced by Pakistan regarding ideology, governance, media performance, sociological and demographic problems and democratic transitions.



The second session of the conference titled '*Challenges to democracy & National Solidarity*' was chaired by Prof. Dr. Tatiana I. Oranskaia (Germany) and coordinated by Prof. Dr. Massarrat Abid.

Prof. Sharif al Mujahid (Karachi), Dr. Salim Cevik & Dr. Necdet Tosun (Turkey), Prof. Dr. Vladimir I. Stonikov (Russia), Prof. Dr. Huma Baqai (Karachi), Dr. Nazir Hussain & Dr. Tanvir Anjum, Islamabad presented their research papers.

Prof. Sharif al Mujahid (Karachi) focused on the failure to meet the challenges of diversity and craft a viable balance between Unity and Diversity as the greatest Challenges to Democracy, Governance and National Unity. Dr. Salim Cevik, Department of Political Science, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey delivered a paper about Religion and Nation Building, quoting examples from Turkey and Pakistan. Prof. Dr. Necdet Tosun (Turkey) stated "Ethnic nationalism" and "Religious sectarianism" as the two most importance causes of social disorder. He also urged that "tolerance" is necessary for social unity and peace. Prof. Dr. Vladimir Sotnikov (Russia) spoke about U.S. Pressure on Pakistan as a Challenge to Democracy and National Unity. He was of the opinion that gross negligence of Pak sovereign and legitimate rights, cancellation of economic support of Pakistan could cause severe economic crisis and aggravation of her insecurity. It can create insecurity, can create greater instability in South Asia and AfPak region which may lead to enhanced Islamist militancy in this area of the world.



The scholars comprehensively dealt with the challenges to democracy and national solidarity of Pakistan by highlighting unity in diversity, religion and nation-building, US pressure on Pakistan, Identity crisis and toleration of diversity. A detailed question-answer session was held at the end of the second session of the day.



A large number of scholars, faculty members and students of various educational institutions participated in the conference.

Four more academic sessions were held on the second day i.e. 25th October 2011 on the conference covering more issues related to the theme of conference which included Democracy, Governance and National Solidarity.



Prof. Dr. Jean Luc Racine (Sr Fellow, Cntr. for South Asian Studies, EHESS, France) chaired the third session titled “Pakistan’s Democratic Traditions & Conflict” and was coordinated by Prof. Dr. Iqbal Chawla.

Prof. Dr. Rashid Ahmad Khan (University of Sargodha), Inam Khawaja, Dr. A.Z. Hilali, Dr. Zahid Anwar (University of Peshawar), Akmal Hussain Shah (International Islamic University, Islamabad), Muhammad Mustansar Billah Hussain (IPRI), Amjad Abbas Magsi (Pakistan Study Centre, Punjab University) presented their research papers.



Prof. Dr. Stephen McDowell (Director of the School of Communication, Florida State University, USA) chaired the fourth session titled ‘Challenges to Governance & Democracy’.

The session was coordinated by Dr. Faraz Anjam. Prof. Dr. Tariq Rehman (Beaconhouse University), Dr. Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi (University of Peshawar), Dr. Umbreen Javaid (Pol. Sci., Dept. Punjab University), Dr. Musarrat Jabeen (NUST, Islamabad), Naumana Kiran (Punjab University), Mr. Ghazi Abdullah (History Dept., Punjab University, Lahore) presented their papers.



On the second day 25th October 2011, the 5th session titled ‘*Pakistan Facing Major Challenges,*’ was chaired by Prof. Dr. Vyacheslav Y. Belokrenitsky, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, and coordinated by Mr. Amjad Abbas Magsi, Lecturer, Pakistan Study Centre, University of the Punjab, Lahore.



Dr. Sultan-i-Rome (Swat), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Chawla (History Dept., Punjab University), Dr. Naeem Ahmed (International Relations Dept., Asma Afzal Shami (PhD Scholar, Punjab University) presented their research papers.

The sixth session of the conference titled ‘*Regional Political Forces and Issues of National Solidarity*’ was chaired by Prof. Dr. Vladimir I. Sotnikov (Sr. Researcher, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow) and was coordinated by Mr. Ghazi Abdullah (Lecturer, Dept. of History, University of the Punjab, Lahore)

Prof. Dr. Imdad Hussain Sahito (Khairpur), Prof. Qasim Bughio, (Sindh University), Dr. Iram Khalid (Dept. of Pol. Sci, Punjab University), Abdul Basit Mujahid (AIOU, Islamabad), Dr. Syed Tahir Hussain Bukhari (Dept. of History, QIA Uni.) and Mr. Waqar Ali, (Dept. of Gender Studies, Peshwar University) presented their research papers.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

“A creative, innovative and incorruptible leadership was needed to meet the present day challenges confronted by Pakistan. The goal can be achieved by

following the vision of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan.”

These views were expressed at the concluding session of two-day international conference. Following recommendations were made:

- Establishing think-tanks of Pakistani scholars / academicians and experts to make recommendations on crucial matters of importance to Pakistan.
- It was recommended that various committees of the Parliament should play an active role in formulating plans and making recommendations and strategies to respond to day-to-day challenges and making short term and long term plans for the security, stability and economic prosperity of the country.
- Analyzing the working of the governance, it was observed that almost all ministers proved to be extremely incompetent in addressing issues and that the bureaucracy assisting these ministers is also incompetent to address and solve problems.
- Conference stressed upon the need to appoint eligible people only on merit basis so that they can properly deal with the problems.
- It was pointed out that Pakistan needs to apply austerity



measures in order to cut down her budget deficit. The whole restructuring of Pakistan’s economy was recommended. Examples were given that during last eight months more than hundred meetings were arranged at the highest level to address, the debt crises in Europe. The United State’s Senate, House of Representatives and the Obama administration has arranged a number of high level meetings and formed various committees of experts to reduce their budget deficit and thirteen trillion dollars austerity measures were recommended to be adopted by US administration. But the government of Pakistan has done nothing to solve economic crises.

- Pakistani youth is consisting of almost 70% of the total population. It is forcefully recommended that in order to stop brain drain, a comprehensive plan for job creation must be worked out by the government.
- A new tax system should be devised and those who can afford to pay must pay their taxes. Agriculture sector should also be brought under tax system.
- Corruption has increased in Pakistan manifold and if measures were not taken to address this problem, Pakistan may land into further economic turmoil leading to its failure.

- Public sector corporations like Railways, PIA, Steel Mills must come on the top of government agenda to make them workable and functional.
- The lower part of the judiciary is full of corruption. Field data collected shows that the supporters of Taliban have inculcated their message in the minds of their young supporters that the present judicial system in Pakistan has failed that Taliban form of justice is very quick and it takes two to three week to decide all cases, whereas Pakistani system takes years and years and a lot of money to be paid to corrupt judges and lawyers. Judiciary's inactiveness promotes extremism in Pakistan.
- Law and order and security issues should be addressed on top priority basis because investments and economic progress depends upon creating peaceful and conducive atmosphere.
- The conference recommended allocation of atleast four percent of GDP for to education.
- The conference stressed upon the need to construct big and small dams for water storage; this will solve the energy crises in country.
- The European Union model should be adopted to establish trade and cultural relations between South Asian countries.
- A new culture of accountability should be created in Pakistan.

The Principal Organizer S. Qalb-i-Abid and Massarrat Abid, Conference Secretary thanked the Higher Education Commission and Punjab University for providing substantial financial support for the conference.