

NEWS LETTER

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Connecting People Through Ideas, Innovation and Research.



Dr. Syed Raghav Ali
Executive Director

Introducing LIRA

The Lahore Institute for Research and Analysis (LIRA) is a non profit, non-partisan research organization dedicated to quality research, meeting international standards based on empirical investigation and systematic inquiry.

Committed to openness, fairness, and impartiality, we aim at generating high-value and actionable research-oriented solutions matching the requirements of stakeholders across various disciplines. Our focus areas include Economy, Governance, Climate Change, Education, Health and Gender. Connecting people from across the globe, we aspire to create a 'LIRA Community' linked through ideas, innovation and research.

Focus Area

- > Introducing LIRA
- > LIRA Activities
- > LIRA Journal
- > Research Wing
- > LIRA MOUs Signing Ceremony
- > LIRA Interviews

Highlights

From the Desk of Executive Director

Information

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The Shifting Sands In The Middle East

Dr. Syed Raghab Ali

The Middle East is changing. The Fall of Damascus and what has happened in Gaza, Lebanon, Israel and Iran are nothing but the manifestations of an evolving 'New Middle East' where old actors are assuming new roles while new elements are entering the geopolitical theatre. The recent developments in Middle East seem to have set the stage for drastic and dramatic shifts within the regional geopolitical landscape having far reaching implications for future regional security architecture. These obtaining scenarios within the region have direct and indirect links to broader global power game, entailing new alliances, changing governance structures and ultimately shifting the balance of power in the Middle East.

Gaza Conflict: A human Catastrophe

Gaza Strip, home to around 2 million people, witnessed a human catastrophe unprecedented, unparalleled in the annals of history. The enormous death toll with live scenes of dying children, men and woman, on both sides, have a psychological cost that will take years to fade away.

Tensions reached a boiling point with indiscriminate bombings causing extreme destruction, following attacks from both sides. The 'Gaza conflict' led to a devastating humanitarian crisis, exacerbating the already dire conditions in Palestine. Thousands have been killed, and countless others have been displaced, with essential infrastructure including hospitals, schools, and water systems destroyed or severely damaged.

However, the intensity and the extent of Israel's revenge against unarmed population of Gaza region may soon be in jeopardy is beyond comprehension. Gaza Strip, home to around 2 million people, witnessed a human catastrophe unprecedented, unparalleled in the annals of history. The enormous death toll with live scenes of dying children, men and woman, on both sides, have a psychological cost that will take years to fade away. Tensions reached a boiling point with indiscriminate bombings causing extreme destruction, following attacks from both sides. The 'Gaza conflict' led to a devastating humanitarian crisis, exacerbating the already dire.

All these killings have not been able to resolve the situation on either side; Israel is unsafe

more than ever before and Gaza as well as the Palestinians seem nowhere near in realizing their long-cherished dream of statehood. The cosmetic role by international community, merely expressing concerns or calling for ceasefires, reflects the next level of indifference for which we all, as world community, should be 'ashamed of' as human beings. The atrocities and devastation unleashed in Gaza has not only challenged the very logic for having institutions like United Nations which purportedly guarantee peace and justice for humanity, but it has also tarnished the image of global community, particularly the Western society that claim to espouse the rhetoric of 'human rights'.

The Fall of Damascus: What Next?

Another episode which attracted the global attention during the period is The Fall of Damascus. Syria has been embroiled in a brutal civil war since 2011, with multiple actors vying for power. The Assad regime, backed by Russia and Iran, managed to maintain control over significant parts of the country, despite widespread protests, international condemnation, and foreign intervention. However, on 27 November 2024, escalation against Syrian government by the rebel forces started with the fall of Aleppo, and within ten days the 53 years' rule of Assad's Family ended in Syria.

Hafiz Al-Assad fled to Moscow with family and took refuge there. Again, hundreds and thousands of lives have been wasted in Syrian wars since 2011.

Damascus holds not just political and administrative importance, but also immense symbolic value. Its capture by opposition forces and internal collapse is a symbolic and strategic blow to Syrian nation as a whole. While this event may not immediately lead to factional feuds, the regime collapse has created an abrupt power vacuum that may trigger a major shift in the Syrian Conflict.

The Fall of Damascus could destabilize the region and potentially lead to the rise of new factions within Syria. The regional implications of the fall of Damascus are immense. For Iran, the loss of Assad's stronghold is being seen as a severe blow to its influence in the Levant. Tehran's access to Lebanon's Hezbollah, which it has cultivated for years as a proxy force, would be undermined. Moreover, the strategic corridor it has established across Iraq and Syria to the Mediterranean would be in jeopardy, affecting its ability to project power in the region. However, the experts of the Middle Eastern scene believe that the actual position will be clear once the new set up takes shape in Syria. There are still others who believe that whosoever takes power in Syria will be tilted more towards Iran as compared to Israel.

Russia's involvement in Syria has been pivotal in propping up the Assad regime. The fall of Damascus has posed a direct challenge to Russian influence, forcing Moscow to reassess its involvement in Syria and the broader Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape. For Russia, Syria is a critical component of its strategy to maintain influence in the region, especially given its competition with the U.S. and NATO. Again, the real outcome of the Fall of Damascus will be clear once the new government in Syria is formed and declare its priorities. Only time can tell who is the real winner of this game.



The Changing Geopolitical Landscape:

As the Gaza Conflict and the collapse of Damascus unfold, the broader Middle East is undergoing significant geopolitical changes. The two crises are not isolated; they are interconnected through regional rivalries, sectarian divides, and international power dynamics.

In a nut shell, the geopolitical and strategic environment in Middle Eastern is bound to witness significant re-alignments. Israel seems trying to regain what it has lost in Gaza whereas Iran, in contrast to general expectations regarding her strategic potential, has emerged as a potent factor in Middle East with significant role to play in future regional geopolitics. Russia, on the other hand, appears to have re-aligned her position in Middle East in the face of her extended engagement in Ukrainian war whereas US may have to re-position herself in the aftermath of evolving regional dynamics where it will be difficult to defend Israel unilaterally or without taking into consideration the local sensitivities. Saudi Arabia's position is, perhaps, the most critical as well as intertwined. On the one side, it is gradually losing her previous over-arching stature of a leading actor within region as manifested in her rapprochement with Iran. On the other side, Saudi Arabia has to bear the brunt of Western/ US pressure being their main ally against Iran in the region. Nevertheless, the emerging ground realities within ME seem to suggest that in near future Iran and Saudi Arabia will be partners in the regional decision-making processes, which may not prove to be a favorable proposition for Israel, US and the West.

Lastly, the future disposition of Syria and how the regional and global powers deal with it will largely determine the future security dynamics within the region and beyond. It seems that the fall of Damascus supported by US and Israel is an effort to shift the war theatre deeper into Middle East, encroaching upon the Iranian sphere of influence, besides gaining time to re-adjust to new ground realities. In all possibilities, the geopolitical and geostrategic orientation of Middle East is destined to change drastically with the shifting ground realities where the old actors may have to take on new roles with broader regional and global implications. One thing is certain; it will not be the same ME that we have seen in the recent past and the same is true for global politics as whatever happens in Middle East is bound to have repercussions at international level.



Research Wing

Palestine Issue and Humanitarian Crisis

Dr Sapna Mumtaz

The situation in Palestine has been a subject of international debate and humanitarian concern for decades. The complexity of the issue involves a deep historical context, cultural narratives, and undeniable human suffering. Understanding the Palestinian predicament requires acknowledging the diverse perspectives that inform the rhetoric surrounding this region and its inhabitants, all while maintaining respect for the individuals caught in the crossfire.

At the heart of the Palestinian issue is a long-standing conflict that has its roots in the early 20th century, marked by the conflicting nationalist aspirations of Jewish and Arab populations in the region. Two populations lay claim to the same land, each with their own historical grievances, cultural ties, and aspirations for statehood. This dilemma has transcended politics and entered the realm of identity, making resolutions even more challenging. Current events have once again brought the conflict to the forefront, eliciting reactions from around the globe, bearing witness to the physical and psychological toll that the human beings involved experienced daily.

Data from various international organizations demonstrate that many Palestinians live under dire conditions, particularly in the Gaza Strip, which has faced blockades and repeated military confrontations. Access to necessities such as clean water, medical services, and adequate housing has been severely compromised. The statistics highlight stark realities: high unemployment rates, escalating poverty, and mental health crises fueled by the omnipresence of violence and instability.

For many, the day-to-day existence within this humanitarian landscape is marked not by the typical aspirations of life—education, employment, and family—but rather by a struggle for survival, leading to generations growing up in an environment rife with despair.

Equally important is the plight of displaced Palestinians, many of whom have been uprooted from their homes since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The refugee narrative is central to the Palestinian identity and to their calls for justice and the right of return. There are countless stories of families who have lived for decades in refugee camps, grappling with the legacy of loss and the longing for a homeland they have never seen. The concept of displacement transcends geographical boundaries, as it weaves a narrative that resonates with numerous communities worldwide who have faced similar circumstances. The emotional weight carried by these individuals and families cannot be understated; it reflects a struggle for dignity, recognition, and future possibilities.

Conversely, the security concerns of the Israeli population are also a major factor requiring acknowledgment. The fear of violence, rocket attacks, and the impact of terrorism have instilled a sense of vulnerability that is palpable among many Israelis. The cycle of violence breeds mistrust, and national security remains a top priority for a state that has faced existential threats since its inception. This shared anxiety leads to a defensive posture that sometimes translates into aggressive policies, often at the expense of Palestinian civilians. The experience of violence is deeply etched in the psyche of both sides—a generational trauma that complicates dialogue and transforms adversarial narratives into entrenched divisions.

Understanding the humanitarian factor necessitates an approach that can humanize both Israelis and Palestinians.

It calls for empathy, recognizing that individuals on both sides seek a sense of belonging, safety, and hope. The narratives that dominate media coverage often obscure the fact that people, regardless of nationality or religion, are suffering. Broad generalizations about either group foster a landscape of dehumanization, only serving to deepen animosities and deter meaningful dialogue. Efforts toward peace, therefore, must incorporate a humanitarian dimension that emphasizes mutual recognition of both peoples'

rights—an essential realization that without addressing the needs, aspirations, and grievances of both Israelis and Palestinians, any attempts at resolution may falter. Numerous proposals have been made over the years, ranging from two-state solutions to comprehensive peace agreements, yet progress remains elusive. The multitude of failed negotiations highlights a critical barrier: a lack of will to bridge historical divides and confront the harsh realities of coexistence.

Yet, within this grim narrative lies a glimmer of hope. Grassroots movements within both communities are emerging, advocating for peace, collaboration, and mutual understanding. Organizations dedicated to fostering dialogue and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians often draw upon shared experiences and a collective desire for peace. The humanization of each other's narratives plays a pivotal role in building relationships beyond the entrenched political divides. Initiatives focused on education, cultural exchange, and humanitarian aid can contribute to breaking down stereotypes and damaging perceptions that perpetuate conflict.

International actors also have a role to play in supporting these movements. Humanitarian aid, when administered judiciously, can alleviate immediate suffering and create pathways for dialogue. However, it is crucial that aid is not politicized but rather directed toward meeting the basic needs of all affected populations, regardless of their background. Aid must be coupled with advocacy for policies that promote respect for human rights and international law, recognizing the dignity inherent in every individual.

Collaboration among NGOs, civil societies, and international organizations provides a foundation for potential pathways toward reconciliation. Emphasizing shared humanity over polarization allows for new narratives to emerge—ones that prioritize peaceful coexistence over discord. These efforts contribute to planting the seeds for long-term change in a region fraught with tension. Furthermore, education must play an integral role; empowering the next generation with awareness, dialogue, and tolerance can shape a future resilient to the cycles of violence that have historically defined the territory.

Understanding the humanitarian aspect of the Palestine issue is not merely about acknowledging

suffering—it involves a commitment to constructing a narrative that embodies coexistence rather than conflict. To create a conducive environment for lasting peace, voices advocating for justice must concurrently champion empathy and understanding. It is a delicate balance, but one that can be achieved through conscious efforts dedicated to human dignity and rights.

In brief, the Palestinian issue encompasses a myriad of challenges that resonate on profound humanitarian levels. To navigate this landscape requires both a careful examination of historical grievances and an unwavering commitment to ensuring a future where every individual can live free of violence and fear. Acknowledging and addressing the humanitarian aspects does not constitute taking sides but rather affirms the importance of compassion, understanding, and respect for all human beings—an essential foundation on which peace can be constructed. A future grounded in mutual recognition and empathy remains the ultimate aspiration for both Palestinians and Israelis who desire to live in harmony and dignity. The time to strive for this reality is urgent, for in the face of suffering, we are all called to respond with humanity.



Research Wing

**Looming Smog Crisis in Lahore—
A Grim Warning for Our
Environmental Future**

Umama Anwar

Lahore is famous for its rich cultural heritage, considered the heart of Pakistan for its vibrancy and beauty. However, it is unfortunate that Lahore has gained the new identity of a city shrouded in toxic smog. We used to face winter nuisance occasionally but now it has transformed into an annual environmental crisis, disrupting regular life tasks, and health issues, and dims the future of this vibrant city. The smog in Lahore highlights the broader spectrum of environmental

mismanagement and it calls for dire action to solve this ever-increasing smog in the city.

Smog, a blend of smoke and fog caused by multiple pollutants in the atmosphere, has become a frequent feature of Lahore's winter months. The main culprits behind this thick, hazardous blanket are vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, and crop burning. Another factor is Lahore's booming population and rapidly increasing industrial zones, giving rise to smog in the city. The city's air quality index (AQI) frequently crosses hazardous levels, posing severe respiratory risks for its citizens. Schools are often closed, outdoor activities are curtailed, and people are urged to stay indoors. But not everyone can escape this toxic cloud—those with chronic illnesses, children, and the elderly suffer the most.

In 2023, Lahore was ranked among the most polluted cities in the world. Residents have grown accustomed to seeing the sun as a blurry disk, struggling to cut through the smoky haze. This is more than an inconvenience—it is a public health emergency. The prolonged exposure to such high levels of pollution leads to respiratory diseases, heart conditions, and worsened mental health, with children growing up in Lahore bearing the brunt of these impacts.

The smog crisis is a symptom of broader environmental degradation in Lahore. The unchecked deforestation for urban development, industrial emissions, and excessive reliance on fossil fuels have rapidly turned Lahore into an ecological disaster zone. Without serious interventions, the effects of this pollution will reverberate throughout the environment and society for generations to come.

The lack of green spaces exacerbates the problem. Industrial waste from nearby factories finds its way into rivers and fields, contaminating water sources and ruining agricultural land. Adding fuel to the fire, the problems of waste disposal and inefficient transportation systems, and it is crystal clear that smog is just one element of a multifaceted environmental crisis. The effect on agriculture is another long-term consequence. Smog limits sunlight, a critical component of photosynthesis, impacting crop yields. Farmers are already feeling the effects of this, and food security in the region may soon be in jeopardy if the air pollution problem continues to worsen.



We can predict the grim future of Lahore in the coming years if there is no sustainable program launched soon to combat the smog issue. Experts predict that, without significant reforms, Lahore's air quality will continue to deteriorate, making the city increasingly un-liveable, especially for those most vulnerable. The economic consequences will also be significant. As health costs rise and productivity falls due to pollution-related illnesses, Lahore will face mounting financial strain. Furthermore, the city may lose its appeal to tourists, investors, and even its residents, who may seek to relocate to cleaner, healthier environments.

But it's not too late to change course. Solutions exist, though they require political will, public awareness, and coordinated action. The government must impose strict regulations on industrial emissions, improve public transportation to reduce vehicular pollution and promote alternative energy sources like solar and wind. A mass tree-planting initiative is urgently needed to restore green cover, along with incentives for citizens to adopt sustainable practices, such as using electric vehicles and minimizing waste. Meanwhile, public awareness campaigns must be ramped up to educate people about how their choices contribute to the city's air quality.

Lahore is standing at a crossroads. If we continue down the current path, smog will become the defining feature of the city—its beauty, history, and culture suffocated beneath a pall of pollution. If we act now, there's a chance to reclaim Lahore's natural beauty, improve the health of its citizens, and set the city on a path to sustainable growth. The fight against smog is not just a fight for cleaner air but for the very future of Lahore itself.



Research Wing

Developing Youth Skills: A Perspective for Pakistan

Sawan Zubair

Pakistan has huge potential to become a significant player in the global economy, if its youth is equipped with the right skills. Having a population of more than 65% under 30 years, the country faces both an opportunity and a challenge. By investing in skill development and preparing youth for the demands of the 21st century, Pakistan cannot only reduce unemployment but also drive innovation and economic growth. These developments require proper planning and vision; however, growing youth bulge in Pakistan lacks access to quality education, especially in rural areas. Schools are underfunded, and the curriculum often doesn't meet the demands of modern job markets. Youth unemployment remains a significant issue, even those with degrees who often struggle to find jobs that match their qualifications or skills. With the emerging global advancements in technology, many Pakistani youth are not equipped with digital skills. This will lead to lack of access to proper training and the internet, especially in underprivileged areas.

To ensure that Pakistani youth are prepared for the future, efforts should focus on digital literacy and IT skills which includes courses such as JAVA, Python, Block-Chain, Software development and research related tools.

SPSS, STATA and INVIVO etc. In a world driven by technology, proficiency in IT is non-negotiable. Pakistan can bridge the digital divide by increasing access to digital education, offering computer classes, and encouraging entrepreneurship in the technology sector. Vocational Training and Technical Education can also be tailored to the country's needs in agriculture, manufacturing, and services sector. It will provide practical skills and encourage young people to explore careers in these fields. Entrepreneurial and Leadership Skills is another key driver for economic growth. It provides young Pakistanis with entrepreneurial education e.g. start-ups, courses on management and access to resources can encourage them to create their own businesses and driving job creation. Government should keep this on the top agenda to engage the young business community. In addition to technical skills, employers are increasingly seeking individuals with problem-solving abilities, creativity, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. Programs aimed at fostering these traits should be integrated into the education system, for example, computer literacy requires mathematics for basic understanding. Finally, a strong foundation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) is critical. Promoting STEM education in Pakistan can encourage innovation and participation in sectors that will drive the future economy.

The public-private sector and educational research institutions need to collaborate and create opportunities and initiatives for youth skill development. Government expanding on projects like Kamyab Jawan Program, Prime Minister's Youth Program, and technical education through NAVTTC can help support skill development across the country. Similarly, government can collaborate with private sector to improve vocational training centers, enhance digital infrastructure, and provide mentorship and internships to young people. Networking with global educational platforms and tech companies can bring in resources, provide exposure, and facilitate global opportunities for Pakistani youth as well.

With the expansion of internet access and mobile technology and e-learning platforms can revolutionize education, making tech-savvy resources accessible to everyone. Platforms like Coursera and EdX provide world-class online education, and incorporating them into Pakistan's educational framework

can empower students to learn at their own pace. Moreover, initiatives to teach coding, artificial intelligence, block-chain, and other future-forward skills can help position Pakistan as a competitive player in the global technology space.

Pakistan's youth can only be fruitful for economy, if there is a commitment to market inclusion and job equality. Gender disparity remains a significant issue, with fewer young women in the workforce or receiving the same educational opportunities as their male counterparts. Empowering women through scholarships, digital literacy programs, and leadership training is essential for achieving sustainable development. Additionally, with the rising demand, Government should encourage cultural exchange programs, language learning, and global collaborations can ensure that Pakistani youth are well-prepared to compete and collaborate on a global scale.

Pakistan stands at a crossroads where its large youth bulge can either become a demographic dividend or a burden. The future success of the country hinges on equipping young people with the right skills, education, and opportunities to thrive in a rapidly changing world. By focusing on digital literacy, vocational education, entrepreneurial skills, and STEM learning, alongside fostering critical thinking and creativity, Pakistan can unleash the potential of its youth to shape a brighter future for the nation.



Research Wing

Digi-CC-Awareness

Hania Ilyas

A post on Instagram or a tweet can lead to an unending argument in this digital era. Social Media has reshaped our way of thinking, perceptions, actions to an extent where we tend to understand things more clearly through hashtags, reels, live-streamed

protests and polls instead of their real-time identities. This has turned perceptions actually bigger than reality. A post on Instagram or a tweet can lead to an unending argument in this digital era. Social Media has reshaped our way of thinking, perceptions, actions to an extent where we tend to understand things more clearly through hashtags, reels, live-streamed protests and polls instead of their real-time identities. This has turned perceptions actually bigger than reality.

Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and TikTok are such social platforms which are not only being used for the entertainment purpose only but are also used for the education and awareness of the people for any specific cause. Climate change is such an umbrella under which our globe is trying to survive.

Environmental advocacy has renewed by digital activism. Data, fact and figures, stories and plans of actions which were only limited to the policy meetings and scientific papers are now accessible to the users, through hashtags like, #globalwarming, #Climatechange, #Actonclimate etc.

For instance, Instagram has noticed 1,300% growth in posts tagged with #climatecrises during the COP26, which actually highlights the strength of social media to deliver the awareness about the global affairs to the ordinary people of the world.

Social media has successfully contributed to humanize the climate issues, with its videos showing glaciers melting, wildfires, communities affected by the sea level risings and land sliding. This content creates the emotional response in users, additionally it makes the things more relatable to understand.

TikTok has made this thing more publicized by making short videos, in which short and related terms are explained and common people are able to understand the climate issue on a broader spectrum. Social media promotes the collaborations. Public movement and NGOs tend to arrange the protests and run the fundraising campaigns.

Greta Thunberg who is known for the global youth climate movement, has used the social media platforms to convey her messages regarding environment. To convert complicated data into easy material, social media campaigns were planned by the prominent international organizations like United Nations and Green space,

except individual influencers.

In 2021, Extinction Rebellion arranged the global protests on Facebook and Twitter to draw the attention of people towards the solution of climate issues. Besides this, YouTube also organized the webinars and discussions with the policymakers and scientists, this action plays the role of bridge among the people, policymakers and scientists.

Videos showing the after affects and side effects of deforestation, are being shared on broader spectrum, so the users cannot oversee or ignore the climate issue. According to the Pew research center report, 67 % of the adults who are under 30 years, gather the major chunk of their information through social media. This data portrays the ability and role of social media to educate and aware youth for the climate change.

Though, the role of social media is not limited to the awareness, its platforms are also for the concrete actions. The immediate connectivity of social media platforms has great impact on the fund raising campaigns for the reforestation and natural disaster management projects. Here are some successful campaigns like, #breakfreefromplastic, #FridaysforFuture, #Naturenow, #OurPlanet, #StopAdani, #ClimateStrike, #EarthHour, #TrashTagChallenge and #TeamTrees, which strengthen their messages, engage international audiences and did the noticeable real life actions by using the digital platforms against the fight of climate change. One of the leading campaigns, #TeamTrees gathered the fund of \$20million to plant 20 million trees. The success of this campaign shows how likes, followings and shares of digital engagements participates in showing the practical and tangible consequences.

However, on the other hand these digital activities are not flawless. Users who are engaged in doom scrolling and do not take part in any activity can make the online campaigns weak. One like, share or re tweet can make a difference in progress and can show support to these efforts. Yet challenges are there like the spread of misinformation on digital media.

Social Media platforms has to take the charge of the authenticity of the information and data. Moreover, the public awareness is essential in this context. One trending hashtag can be the center of attention but without long term planning and management, its impact would not be that much

fruitful. Despite all challenges, social media has its great influence specially on youth. We can use this for the solving of climate crises in the longer and practical run by making the digital revolution policies.



Research Wing

The Silence of Consent: Pakistan's Legal Blind Spot on Rape

Abdul Ahad

Rape is a serious affront to humanity, casting doubt on the progress of civilization. Governments and societies worldwide are actively working to denounce, prevent, and penalize this crime. Yet, there is always room for further refinement and improvement, especially as our understanding of gender continues to evolve.

Pakistan's rape laws have evolved in a complex and sometimes inconsistent manner. In response to an alarming increase in rape cases, the government enacted the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021 as the latest statutory framework aimed at improving the handling of sexual violence cases. This law is designed to streamline investigations, protect victims, and impose harsher penalties on offenders.

However, despite the advancements this act represents, critical gender- and consent-related issues persist within Pakistan's rape laws. This opinion piece explores these ongoing challenges.

The traditional Section 375 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) narrowly defines rape, limiting it to acts of non-consensual sexual intercourse against 'women'. Consequently, this definition excludes male and transgender individuals as potential victims, which severely limits their access to justice under Pakistan's main rape statute.

In the Anti-Rape (Investigation & Trial) Act, 2021, Section 2(k) similarly defines 'woman' and 'child' as

possible victims of rape, reinforcing a gender-specific approach that does not account for the full spectrum of sexual violence. This restrictive definition compels male and transgender victims to pursue their cases under Section 377 of the PPC, which addresses 'unnatural offence' and is generally associated with consensual acts rather than non-consensual sexual violence. This categorization not only fails to capture the seriousness of sexual assault on non-female victims but also results in reduced penalties compared to those under Section 375, effectively diminishing the severity of these offenses.

Hence, the offence of rape not only suffers from gender-based issues but the essential boundary between consensual and non-consensual sexual activity is also blurred. In Pakistan's legal context, the concept of consent is problematic in multiple ways.

First, Section 375 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) explicitly deems the consent of individuals under the age of 16 as invalid. However, the situation becomes ambiguous when the consent of a girl under 16 is validated through a valid nikkahnama (marriage contract). Despite the law treating such consent as vitiated, there are numerous cases where marital consent is defended, often based on religious or cultural arguments. This creates significant legal confusion, with the lines between lawful marital relations and sexual exploitation becoming blurred.

The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) has weighed in on such cases, often supporting the view that a valid nikkahnama can override the statutory age for consent, thereby justifying sexual intercourse with a girl under 16 if the marriage contract is valid. This stance complicates the issue further. Consequently, jurisprudence on this issue remains uncertain and contentious.

Furthermore, in many developed legal systems, consent obtained through deception—whether related to identity, marital status, or other aspects—is treated as vitiated, meaning the consent is considered invalid. This is based on the principle that true consent cannot be given if the victim is misled or deceived about crucial facts, such as the identity of the person with whom they are engaging in sexual activity.

However, in Pakistan, the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) only recognizes consent vitiation due to deception in one specific circumstance: when a man deceives a woman into believing that she is married to him, and he knows that he is not her husband. This provision, outlined in Section 375 of the PPC, focuses solely on the deception of a woman regarding the marital status of the man, leaving other forms of deception, such as identity misrepresentation, unaddressed.

If a man deceives a woman by pretending to be someone else—someone other than her husband—and she gives consent based on this false belief, the offence may only be treated as consensual Zina (extramarital sex). This charge carries high evidential requirements, making it particularly difficult for the woman to prove the case in court. Additionally, the social and legal stigmas surrounding Zina cases often deters women from coming forward, further complicating the issue.

In contrast, under international legal standards, such an act of deception—especially if it involves sexual activity—should arguably qualify as rape, as consent has been obtained through fraudulent means. The law, however, treats it less severely, as the vitiation of consent due to identity deception is not explicitly recognized as a form of rape under the PPC. This gap in the law highlights the need for broader reforms to better align Pakistan's legal framework with internationally accepted definitions of consent and sexual violence.

In Pakistan, there is a pressing need to reform rape laws to include all genders as victims, recognizing that men and transgender individuals also suffer from sexual violence. Additionally, the conditions that vitiate consent should be expanded to cover modern forms of deception, such as identity fraud. This would ensure that the law better aligns with contemporary understandings of consent and offers equal protection for all victims. Such reforms are essential for a more inclusive and just legal system.



Lira | 07



Research Wing

Understanding Pakistan's Policy Conundrum

Sumreen Fatima

The term public policy is defined as a set of principles, objectives, and measures adopted by governments to address social, economic, and political problems within society. Harold Lasswell, one of the pioneers and founding fathers of the field of public policy, defines it as a systematic course of action, including policies designed by governments to achieve specific goals. Similarly, Lisa Anderson, a distinguished scholar in the field, emphasizes that public policy is fundamentally concerned with the common good or welfare of the community as a whole. Public policy experts suggest that the policymaking process consists of several distinct stages: problem identification, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. Together, these stages provide a structured framework for understanding the development and execution of public policies.

As established, public policy is a decision-making process aimed at addressing public issues. This process can manifest in various forms, including legislative votes on bills or executive orders at various levels of governance—federal, provincial, institutional, or organizational. Policies are designed and implemented across various sectors such as education, health, national security, international relations, development, industry, and agriculture, and others.

In Pakistan, the constitution designates the executive branch as the principal body responsible for policy making. This authority is further distributed across federal, provincial, and local levels of governance. However, the 18th Amendment devolved significant powers from the central government

to the provincial governments, enabling the provinces to further delegate authority, powers, and resources under their control to local governments. Like in any democratic setup, the government in Pakistan formulates policies, but these policies often fail to achieve the stated objectives.

This failure is symptomatic of the broader socio-political and economic culture in Pakistan, which is characterized by political instability, weak governance structures, increasing hybridity, a lack of political will and commitment, massive corruption, and inadequate mechanisms for policy implementation. More importantly, the country's political leadership has consistently subordinated public welfare to personal and partisan interests, using policy as an instrument of repression to perpetuate power. This has resulted in the establishment of extractive, rather than inclusive, institutional structures that continue to influence policymaking along self-serving lines.

Ishrat Husain (2013), former governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, critically analyzes the systemic flaws that undermine the effectiveness of Pakistan's policy making process. He contends that policy making in Pakistan often deviates from the ideal practices, primarily due to several structural and procedural shortcomings. He identifies several key factors contributing to this deviation, notably the superficial nature of stakeholder consultations, where dissenting views are disregarded, and inter-ministerial coordination is more confrontational than collaborative. Moreover, he argues that the absence of specialized knowledge and the lack of evidence-based, data-driven decision-making within policy making bodies further obstruct the formulation of informed and sound policies. Additionally, Husain emphasizes the failure to establish effective implementation mechanisms, which exacerbates the challenges in translating policies into action. These systemic flaws have significant implications for policy outcomes, particularly in sectors such as healthcare and education, where even well-intentioned and well-formulated policies often fail at the execution stage, as policy-making is sometimes disconnected from actual implementation.

For example, the consistent failure of educational policies in Pakistan, from 1958 to the present, can be attributed to shortcomings in implementation, despite the

well-meaning objectives behind their formulation. Several factors contributed to these failures, including inadequate resource mobilization, the setting of unrealistic goals, and ongoing political instability. Furthermore, there has been a notable lack of trust and collaboration among key stakeholders, compounded by insufficient funding and a failure to adapt policies to the evolving needs of society. The inefficient bureaucratic structure, failure of decentralization, lack of political will, leadership vacuum, and deeply entrenched corruption have also played significant roles in stymieing the implementation of educational policies. Military takeovers and the absence of consistency in policy making process further undermined efforts. Had these institutional and structural flaws been recognized and addressed in a timely and coordinated manner, policies could have been implemented more effectively.

In addressing Pakistan's long-standing and consistent policy failures, a potential solution can be drawn from Harold Lasswell's problem-oriented approach, which emphasizes the necessity of adapting policies to the unique contextual realities of a society. This means that policies must be designed not in isolation or based solely on abstract principles but must be grounded in a deep understanding of the specific circumstances and challenges a society faces. Inspiration can be taken from Singapore and South Korea, as both nations have successfully implemented contextually relevant policies that addressed their unique challenges, leading to rapid economic growth and social development. Achieving this in Pakistan, however, requires strong and visionary leadership—something Pakistan has long lacked. Therefore, addressing the country's policy failures must also involve strengthening effective leadership that is capable of guiding

LIRA Activities

Visit: Reflection on the Women's Leadership Program at Mehergarh

The visit focused on Dr. Fouzia Saeed's remarkable work, *Tapestry: Strands of Women's Struggle Woven Into Pakistan's History*. This visit underscored the significance of establishing clear goals, strategic planning, and fostering engagement from all sectors of society to address pressing social issues and injustices.

LIRA is profoundly grateful for the invaluable guidance and



mentorship provided by Dr. Fouzia Saeed, Dr. Kamran Ahmed—author of *Between Saints and Sinners*:

Understanding Men—and Miss Maliha Husain. The primary focus on Women's Leadership and Indigenous Strategies, featuring two distinguished Pashtun speakers. Samar Minallah Khan, an anthropologist and filmmaker, shared her compelling journey of criminalizing Sawara in tribal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through her ethnographic videos and unwavering dedication. Mariam Bibi, Executive Director of KhwendoKor, recounted her inspiring transformation from a financially struggling mother to the founder of the 'House of Sisters' alliance, which empowers women

and promotes sustainability. The insights gained from these extraordinary individuals deepened my understanding of the course substance. The stories and discussions among participants, held in the serene environment of Mehergarh, prompted profound reflections on our own paths and reinforced our convictions.

LIRA would also like to extend my sincere appreciation for the warm hospitality and support from the team members, which greatly enhanced this enriching experience.

This visit has left us with a lasting impact on us and serves as a source of inspiration for our ongoing commitment to women's leadership and social justice.



Internship: Leadership and Management

Lahore Institute for Research and Analysis (LIRA) in collaboration with Institute for Educating Environmental Resilience and Governance,

under the auspices of Department of Political Science Punjab University Lahore, has organised two weeks internship program for Leadership

The internship program has been designed to equip the participants with theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills necessary to excel as future leaders and managers in various fields of activities.



Leadership and Management

LIRA Activities

Conference On Lessons from CPEC Phase-1 & Implementation of Phase-II

On August 28, 2024, LIRA team participated in a conference organized by the Golden Ring Economic Forum (GREF) in collaboration with the University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore, on the "Lessons from Phase-I and Implementation of CPEC Phase-II."

Executive Director LIRA, DR Syed Raghav Ali attended the event as a speaker on the occasion. The chief Guest of the conference was H.E Mr. Zhao Shirin, the Chinese Consul General in Lahore.

The conference was also attended by eminent scholars and people from all walks of life who highlighted various contours of CPEC besides presenting insights into the experiences and realities of the initiative.

The hall mark of the event was the information regarding CPEC Phase-11 and the corridors announced by the China and Pakistan in this context.

The speakers shared their valuable input regarding the lessons learnt from Phase I and offered practical recommendations for the successful implementation of CPEC Phase II.



CPEC Phase-1 & Implementation of Phase-II

LIRA Activities

Conference On Democracy, Governance and Sustainability

Two days international hybrid conference on Democracy, Governance and Sustainability organized by Political Science Department and Institute for Educating Environmental resilience and Governance at Punjab University Lahore.

Lahore Institute for Research and Analysis LIRA, chaired a session by Dr Syed Raghab Ali on Democracy, Governance and Sustainability.



LIRA Activities

Book Review A Life's Work by Andrew Baughen

Andrew Baughen's *A Life's Work* is a refreshing exploration of how we define and measure value in our personal and professional lives. At a time when the concept of value is often reduced to monetary terms, Baughen challenges this narrative with a compelling framework that redefines success through six dimensions of value: Useful, Individual, Communal, Beautiful, Relational, and Generational.

The strength of this book lies in its holistic perspective. Each dimension of value is thoughtfully unpacked, offering readers a broader lens to view their impact on the world. Baughen's approach is both philosophical and practical, blending his deep reflections with actionable exercises and real-world examples from interviews with professionals. This combination makes the book

accessible and engaging for readers at all levels of their career or personal journey.

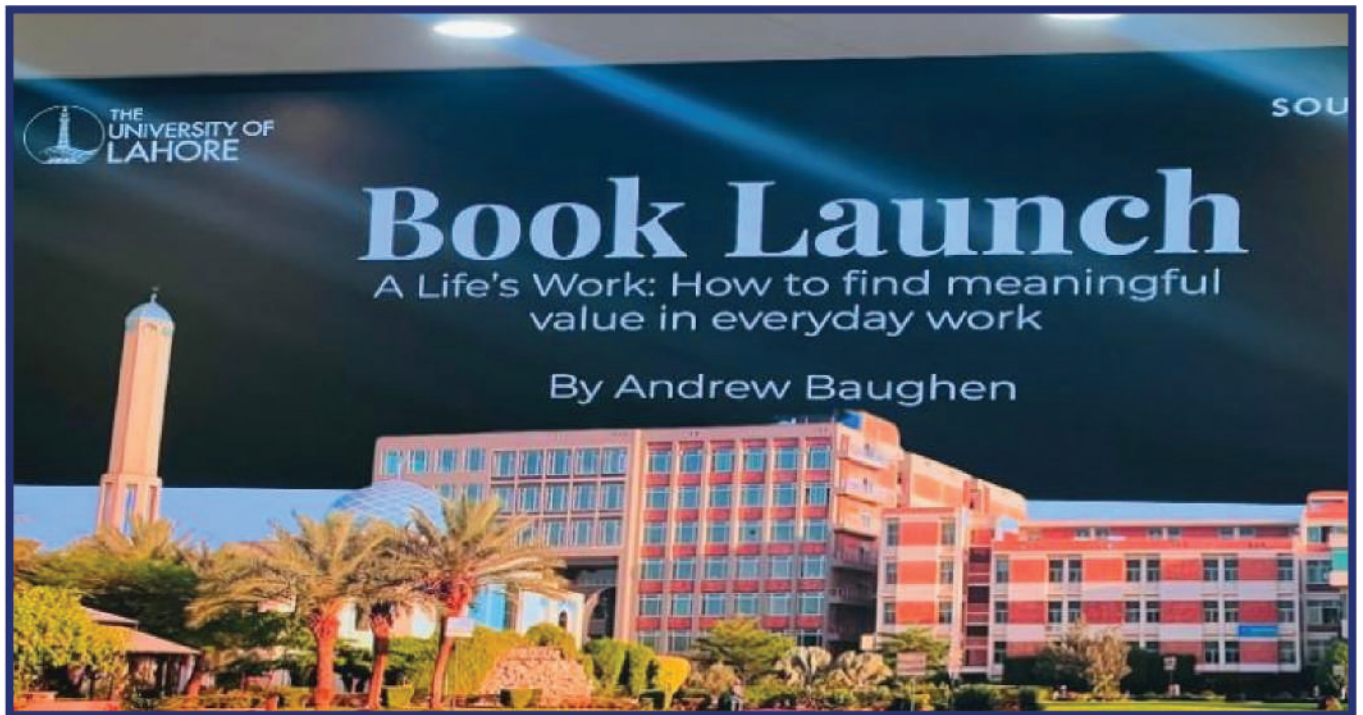
One of the standout aspects of *A Life's Work* is its focus on meaning and purpose. The book goes beyond the surface-level metrics of success to ask deeper questions about how our work affects not only ourselves but also those around us, the environment we live in, and the future we shape. Baughen's emphasis on Generational Value, for instance, prompts readers to think about the long-term legacy of their actions—a perspective often missing in conventional discussions of value.

Baughen's background as a TEDx speaker, lecturer, and management consultant is evident in his clear and persuasive writing. His experience enables him to connect abstract ideas with practical examples, helping readers to envision how they might apply the six dimensions of value in their daily lives. The inclusion of exercises and reflective prompts is particularly effective in making the

book an interactive guide rather than just a passive read. However, while the book's broad scope is its strength, it could also feel slightly overwhelming for readers who are new to the idea of redefining value. Some may find it challenging to focus on all six dimensions simultaneously, and the book might benefit from additional guidance on how to prioritize or integrate these values step-by-step.

Overall, *A Life's Work* is an inspiring and thought-provoking read that challenges conventional notions of success and encourages readers to seek deeper meaning in their work and lives. It's an ideal book for professionals, leaders, and anyone yearning to align their day-to-day efforts with their values and aspirations. Baughen's framework offers not just a way to measure success, but a way to live a more intentional and fulfilling life.

If you're ready to explore a richer definition of value and rediscover the joy and purpose in your work, *A Life's Work* is a must-read.



LIRA Activities

Book Review

Tapestry: Strands of Women's Struggle Woven Into Pakistan's History.

Dr. Fouzia Saeed's *Tapestry: Strands of Women's Struggle Woven Into Pakistan's History* is a deeply moving and meticulously researched tribute to the indomitable spirit of Pakistani women. As a renowned scholar, activist, and storyteller, Dr. Saeed captures the essence of women's resilience, their victories, and their ongoing struggles against patriarchal norms, weaving their contributions seamlessly into the broader narrative of Pakistan's history.

The book presents a nuanced and multifaceted account of women's lives in Pakistan, chronicling their roles in political movements, cultural revolutions, and social reforms. Through a combination of oral histories, personal anecdotes, and archival materials, Dr. Saeed presents an authentic portrayal of the challenges faced by

women from diverse walks of life, including rural, urban, working class, and elite backgrounds. Her ability to humanize history through these compelling stories makes the book both emotionally engaging and intellectually stimulating.

Dr. Saeed employs the metaphor of a tapestry to emphasize the interconnections of women's struggles and achievements, demonstrating how each thread contributes to the rich and complex fabric of Pakistan's past and present. This approach not only highlights individual and collective efforts but also underscores the importance of solidarity across different societal divides.

One of the book's most striking features is its focus on grassroots activism. From the women who played pivotal roles in the independence movement to those who continue to fight for equality and justice in modern Pakistan,

Dr. Saeed gives voice to unsung heroines whose stories often go unnoticed.

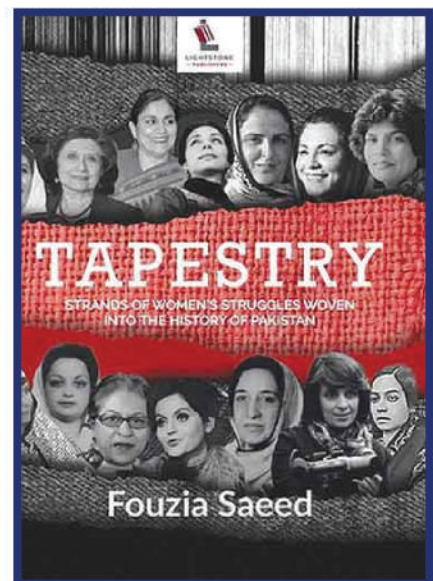
She also addresses broader systemic issues such as gender-based violence, economic disparity, and the legal and political barriers that women face.

While the book is comprehensive, its strength lies in its accessibility. Dr. Saeed's prose is eloquent yet approachable, making the content suitable for both academic and general audiences.

Each chapter is enriched with visuals, historical documents, and detailed context, which brings the stories to life.

However, the book could delve deeper into how global feminist movements have influenced women's activism in Pakistan, as well as the interplay of religion and cultural identity in shaping gender dynamics.

Nevertheless, these are minor omissions in an otherwise outstanding work.



LIRA Journals

The Lahore Institute for Research and Analysis Journal under the auspices of The University of Lahore addresses public policy issues facing nation states and international organizations, including governments. It applies various theoretical frameworks and concepts derived from the social sciences to pertinent socio-political and economic issues and to the processes that lead to the formation of public policies. The literature published in this journal addresses the concerns realized by established public policy scholars nationally. The multidisciplinary of the journal emanates from the innate nature of the field of public policy to address emerging problems in society. The journal is peer reviewed by a dozen social science scholars from across the country, which enhances the analytic rigor and accuracy of producing national policy-oriented literature.



LIRA MOU Signing Ceremony

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by Dr. Syed Raghav Ali, Executive Director LIRA (UOL) with Dr. Irum, HOD Department of Political Science, University of the Punjab, Lahore.



To come up with the modern-day guidelines of research and development based on collective wisdom through linkages and innovative solutions.





LIRA

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