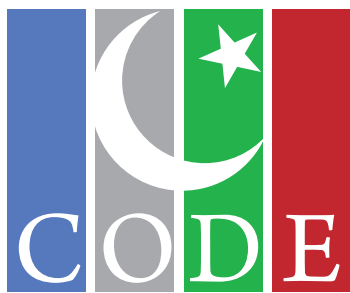


Report on the
Convergences and Divergences of Opinions
between Madrasah and University Students

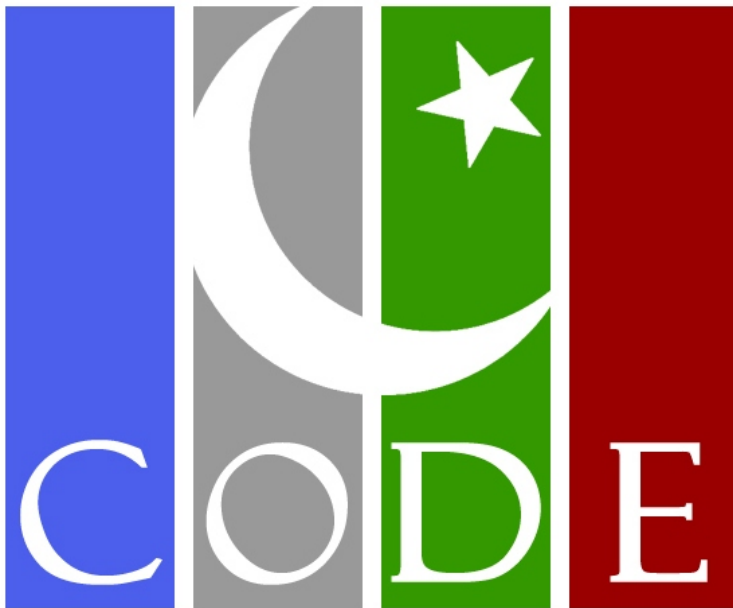
**UNIVERSITY MADRASAH
INTERACTION PROGRAM (UMIP)**



CURSOR OF DEVELOPMENT
AND EDUCATION PAKISTAN

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CONTENTS

About CODE PAKISTAN.....	1
About UMIP	3
Introduction	6
Chapter One: International Relations.....	11
• Muslim Ummah and Challenges of the Modern Times.....	11
➤ Summary.....	11
➤ Points of Convergence	12
➤ Points of Divergence.....	14
➤ Detailed Overview	15
• Peace through Economic Cooperation	19
➤ Summary.....	19
➤ Points of Convergence	21
➤ Points of Divergence.....	22
➤ Detailed Overview	24
• Conclusion	27
Chapter Two: Pakistan Affairs	29
• Problems of the Education System in Pakistan	29
➤ Summary.....	29
➤ Points of convergence.....	31
➤ Point of Divergence.....	33
➤ Detailed Overview	34
• Causes of Pakistan’s weak economy.....	39
➤ Summary.....	39
➤ Points of Convergence	40
➤ Points of Divergence.....	41
➤ Detailed Overview	42
• Conclusion	45
Chapter Three: Peaceful Co-Existence	47
• Who We Are? Pakistan’s Sectarian War.....	47
➤ Summary.....	47
➤ Points of Convergence	49
➤ Points of Divergence.....	50
➤ Detailed Overview	51

•	The Shrinking White in the Pakistani Flag	53
➤	Summary.....	53
➤	Points of convergence.....	55
➤	Points of Divergence.....	55
➤	Detailed Overview	56
•	Conclusion	59
Chapter Four: Art and Culture		61
•	Pakistan’s Cultural Identity: What are the Sources of our Cultural Pride?	61
➤	Summary:.....	61
➤	Points of Convergence	63
➤	Points of Divergence.....	64
➤	Detailed Overview	65
•	Art Forms and Islam: What is permissible?	68
➤	Summary.....	68
➤	Points of Convergence	69
➤	Points of Divergence.....	70
➤	Detailed Overview	71
•	Conclusion	73
Chapter Five: Science		74
•	Are Reason and Religion in Conflict with Each Other?	74
➤	Summary.....	74
➤	Points of Convergence	75
➤	Points of Divergence.....	76
➤	Detailed Overview	77
•	The Role of Science in Development and Prosperity of Nations	79
➤	Summary.....	79
➤	Points of Convergence	81
➤	Points of Divergence.....	81
➤	Detailed Overview	83
•	Conclusion	86
Chapter Six: Program’s Impact on Students’ Perceptions.....		88
Conclusion and Recommendations.....		91

List of Acronyms

CODE PAKISTAN	Cursor of Development and Education Pakistan
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
IPI	Iran-Pakistan-India
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAFTA	South Asian Free Trade Agreement
UMIP	University Madrasah Interaction Program

Acknowledgements

This report, and indeed the University Madrasah Interaction Program (UMIP), would not have been possible without the cooperation extended to us by Abasyn University and Madaris Foundation Pakistan. We would especially like to thank the Vice Chancellor of Abasyn University Dr. Jamil Ahmad, and the Chairman of Madaris Foundation Pakistan Maulana Abdul Qudoos for their support to us. We would also like to thank all the participating students of Abasyn University and various Madrasahs of Islamabad. The students really conducted themselves well in the discussions, some of which were a bit controversial and could have resulted in heated exchange of words. The students exhibited exemplary discipline and respect for diversity of opinion for which CODE PAKISTAN is really thankful to them.

We would also like to thank the faculty members of Abasyn University who helped us in UMIP. We would also like to thank the faculty of the various Madrasahs of Pakistan, which participated in this program.

About CODE PAKISTAN

CODE PAKISTAN is a not-for-profit independent organization registered with the Government of Pakistan under Societies Act XXI of 1860 with registration No. RS/ICT/793. The organization believes in collective civil society efforts to bring about peaceful communities. Our main focus is to help Pakistanis help themselves because, ultimately, only Pakistanis can develop Pakistan.

CODE PAKISTAN is an effort to build an inclusive and prosperous Pakistan through development and education initiatives. Our special pledge is to groups that represent populations whose voices are least likely to be heard when development and education policies are made and resources apportioned. We aim to offer national and local level interventions in the fields of development and education based on grassroots feedback and insights.

The stratified economic landscape of Pakistan demands development initiatives aimed at social equality. We plan to offer sustainable empowerment by engaging communities for developing their capacities in helping themselves. We, draw our mandate from the powerful definition of a not for profit being, “to promote the public interest and serve the public good”.

Education system in Pakistan is seen as a problem and the majority wants to do something about it. The compartmentalized education system of Pakistan is nurturing multiple narratives in the society. Public schools with Urdu as the predominant medium of instruction and private schools with English, the education system in Pakistan remains divided.

The presence of thousands of Madrasahs across the country adds to the polarization among the youth. This has stretched our social fabric and turned it into a blotting paper, where extremist narrative is increasing the radical spot, drop by drop. This divide has decreased the level of youth engagement around their neighborhood and communities. The

indifference to the problem is exacerbating the sense of deprivation among the youth of Pakistan. The ever-widening gap needs attention. We believe that students of Madrasah and universities need to come closer and create an environment of mutual trust and respect. We have developed a University Madrasah Interaction Program that enables both set of students to exchange views on important national topics.

CODE PAKISTAN believes in understanding the value of peaceful co-existence and the benefits of a tolerant and inclusive society. It aspires to help the youth in recognizing the worth of living in a violence free society where everyone is treated with respect and dignity, and has equal opportunities to develop and activate his/her leadership abilities.

As an organization, our focus is to nurture youth leadership in Pakistan to enable them to get involved, inform others and speak out on the benefits of a peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive society.

Dilawar Khan

Founder

CODE PAKISTAN

About UMIP

Pakistan is struggling to contain rising extremism, and polarization within the society. The opaque religious and sectarian Madrasah education system insulates its students from diversity and tolerance is compounding this social division and exclusion. The students of Madrasahs hardly get a chance of any meaningful dialogue with the students of the mainstream education system, that is, schools, colleges, and universities etc. This causes polarization and radicalization among the Madrasah students.

CODE PAKISTAN embarked on the four-month University Madrasah Interaction Program (UMIP) in October 2015 to bring the Madrasah students closer to the students of the mainstream educational institutions through a series of ten discussions between students of Abasyn University and various Islamabad-based Madrasahs. We are hoping that with the help of UMIP intervention, we will bring about moderation of views among the participating Madrasah and Abasyn University students.

The specific objectives of the program were as follows:

1. To train the 100 participating youth from Abasyn Universities and various Islamabad-based Madrasahs in having a non-hostile and meaningful dialogue;
2. To enhance the level of tolerance and understanding between the students of the Abasyn University and the Madrasahs;
3. To create a greater space for a non-violent and meaningful expression of ideas; and
4. To study the views of the students of Madrasahs and the university on the basis of interactions during the program as a baseline for such future interventions.

CODE PAKISTAN held ten discussions between the students of the two institutions as per the following schedule. For a brief overview of each of the ten discussions, please go to <http://codepak.org/university-Madrasah-interaction-program/>

No.	Discussion	Date
1.	Muslim Ummah and the Challenges of Modern Times	October 12, 2015
2.	Peace through Economic Cooperation: Can India and Pakistan Move Forward?	October 15, 2015
3.	Problems of Education System in Pakistan	October 22, 2015
4.	Causes of Pakistan's Weak Economy	October 29, 2015
5.	Who We Are? Pakistan's Sectarian War	November 04, 2015
6.	The Shrinking White in the Pakistani Flag	November 26, 2015
7.	Pakistan's Cultural Identity: What are the Sources of our Cultural Pride?	December 03, 2015
8.	Art Forms and Islam: What is Permissible?	December 10, 2015
9.	Are Reason and Religion in Conflict with Each Other?	December 16, 2015
10.	The Role of Science in Development and Prosperity of Nations	December 23, 2015

Besides the discussions and the study based on the discussions, CODE PAKISTAN also conducted 10 training sessions for every participating group of Madrasah and university students separately. The training sessions were aimed at introducing UMIP to the participating students as well as training them on having a non-hostile and meaningful dialogue in a situation where there could be serious disagreements in opinions. The

participating Madrasah and university students were trained on understanding the topic and giving logical arguments in favor of their stance on the topic. They were also trained on keeping the discussion relevant and on refraining from monopolizing time in order to give every participant of the discussion an opportunity to participate. The participating students were trained on how to express difference of opinion without getting confrontational in a spirit of a logical discussion rather than a competition as well. Since all the discussions under the program were moderated, the students were also trained on the rules and procedures of participation in moderated discussions.

An essay competition was also held among the participating students as part of the program to encourage them to hone their skills of logical reasoning and prove their point in a non-hostile and non-confrontational manner.

Introduction

CODE PAKISTAN initiated the four-month University Madrasah Interaction Program (UMIP) in October 2015 with two basic premises: One, there is not enough room for positive meaningful interaction between the university and Madrasah students causing them think negatively about each other. Two, because of this inadequacy, the perceptions of the students of the two education systems diverge from each other on issues of national importance. We believed that both of these factors were a cause of polarization among the youth, which could be damaging for the society in the long run.

Since we did not think of our initial two assumptions as etched in stone, we put both of them to test through UMIP. For ascertaining whether there was lack of meaningful interaction between Madrasah and university students and whether that, by extension, was causing negativity about each other, we conducted two surveys among the participating students of UMIP before and after the program intervention. While the pre-intervention survey was aimed at ascertaining the existing level of interaction and perception about each other prior to participation in the program, the post-intervention survey measured the change in their perception after the intervention. The findings of that study report became a lens through which we could assess our initial assumption, as well as to assess the impact we were able to make through the program intervention.

This report, however, is different from the report mentioned above, even though we have included a chapter in it to give a summary of the findings of that report. This Report on the Convergences and Divergences of Opinions between Madrasah and University Students is aimed at testing our second initial assumption, that is, whether the perceptions of the students of the two education systems diverge from each other on issues of national importance.

Let us be very clear, candid, and mindful about our limitations to begin with. University Madrasah Interaction Program or UMIP was implemented in partnership with the Abasyn University Islamabad, and a handful of Islamabad-based Madrasahs chosen by our partner institution, the Madaris Foundation Pakistan. These two institutions, in no way, represent the perceptions of the Madrasah students all across Pakistan. Moreover, only 100 students from both education systems participated in UMIP, which once again is a very small sample for a student body goes well into millions of students.

Having said that, however, the study is a remarkable body of knowledge on the hitherto unexplored subject of the convergences and divergences in perceptions of the students of the two education systems. The study has made some very interesting findings, some of which were a revelation to us as well.

This report on the convergences and divergences in opinions and logical discourse between Madrasah and university youth is the first compilation of the deductions made following the discussions. This body of knowledge could, therefore, inform future interventions in the field.

This report has been compiled based on the observations made during the ten discussion sessions held between the participating Madrasah students and students of Abasyn University. The students were given ten topics to discuss under five themes over a period of three months through two hour sessions organized by CODE PAKISTAN but held at the premises of Abasyn University, Islamabad (see “About UMIP” section above for a list of topics). In partnership with Abasyn University Islamabad and Madaris Foundation Pakistan, CODE PAKISTAN provided a platform for the students from either side to voice their opinions on the topics assigned and to be able to exercise freedom of expression in an open forum.

Instead of “training” the students on how they should be thinking, we allowed them to “educate” us on how they want us think through free

speech in these ten discussions. We did not give them any training materials on any topics to avoid leading them to certain viewpoints during the discussions. We did, however, give them extensive trainings on how to conduct themselves during the discussions and how to argue logically. The trainings were also much appreciated by the students in imparting certain skills to them on conducting formal discussions. In other words, the purpose of these discussions was not to force any opinion upon the students but to begin a dialogue which could help them breakaway from the apparent prejudices on either side. Feedback received from students has shown that these sessions have given them the kind of exposure that is highly desirable.

As mentioned above, although the students were given freedom of expression, we made sure that freedom of expression is not taken as a freedom of disregard toward fundamental human values. We had chosen some quite controversial topics for discussions about which one Madrasah student appreciated CODE PAKISTAN by saying that we dared to bring topics like those to a formal discussion table between university and Madrasah students which they might have been afraid of discussing even informally. Selection of such topics—which could have otherwise caused a heated debate among them—necessitated some strong discipline. Our team did a remarkable job in training the students on the modalities of the discussion and then conducting the discussion through expert moderators in a way that the participants felt most comfortable to speak honestly, with differences of opinion being appreciated and given due respect.

WE believe that the participating students of Abasyn University and Madrasahs also deserve applause for following all the rules of the discussions laid out in front of them during the training sessions, and for being respectful towards each other and differences in opinions. We think that by the mere fact of conducting the discussions in a meaningful and non-hostile manner in which difference of opinions was appreciated rather than abhorred, we have achieved a major milestone in countering intolerance that is the main cause of extremism.

We anticipate that this program will act as the catalyst for all initiatives that can be taken in future at the government and non-government levels for working with the university and Madrasah youth for promoting peace, tolerance, and inclusivity.

The following five chapters give an account of the convergences and divergences of opinions between Madrasah and university students on the five themes (ten discussion topics) of the program, which are as follows:

- International Relations
 - a. Muslim Ummah and the Challenges of Modern Times
 - b. Peace through economic cooperation: Can India and Pakistan move forward?
- Pakistan Affairs
 - a. Problems of the Education System in Pakistan
 - b. Causes of Pakistan's Weak Economy
- Peaceful Coexistence
 - a. Who we are? Pakistan's Sectarian War
 - b. The shrinking white in the Pakistani flag
- Art and Culture
 - a. Pakistan's cultural identity: What are the sources of our cultural pride?
 - b. Art forms and Islam: What is permissible?
- Science
 - a. Are reason and religion in conflict with each other?
 - b. The role of science in development and prosperity of nations

The sixth chapter gives a summarized version of our other report about the impact of the program on the perceptions of the participating students on the level of interaction between Madrasah and university students, existing disagreements between them, the possibility of a dialogue between the students of the two education systems, and their perceptions about each other.

The last chapter of the report gives our conclusions derived from our findings and some recommendations for future intervention in the field on the basis of our findings. We are hoping that our endeavors would go a long way in promotion of peace, tolerance, and inclusivity in our society, which is a great need of our time.

Chapter One: International Relations

We began our discussion sessions from the theme of “International Relations.” Participants discussed the relations between Muslim Countries and the present prospects of any economic relations between Pakistan and India. These marked the first two discussions of the ten sessions. The first topic was “Muslim Ummah and the Challenges of Modern Times”. We chose this topic to be the first to reduce the anxieties of the Madrasah students who were coming out of their comfort zone of religious gatherings and discussions.

Muslim Ummah and Challenges of the Modern Times

Summary

The purpose of discussion was to evaluate the position that the Muslim Ummah stands at today compared to the rest of the world and to address the challenges it faces in modern times. A general consensus was found on the point that the Muslim Ummah during its initial years following the Prophet’s time and the caliphate was extremely prosperous, progressing through leaps and bounds in every field of life. Students cited examples of Muslim Scientists and the inventions that they worked on which have now become the basis for the Western scientists and research centers to develop new concepts. Students lamented the sad state of Muslims in the modern day and age. They referred to various factors that could be held responsible for the overall decline and economic regression of the Muslim countries. Lack of unity among the Muslims was mentioned as the single biggest problem of Muslims today. A reference was also made to increased sectarian violence and intolerance. Some students also criticized the tendency of Muslim countries to be concerned only about their own internal problems rather than helping other Muslim countries needing their help in crises such as refusal of some Middle Eastern countries to help Syrian refugees. Students also emphasized that lack of education and knowledge of technology had affected progress in the Muslim world.

Some students referred to the abundant oil resources of Middle Eastern countries which, they argued, were being exploited by Western countries with very little benefit to the Muslim country that owned those reserves. Another pressing point made was about the indebtedness of Muslim countries to organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stunting their internal progress. One student of Abasyn University made particular reference to the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (formerly known as Organization for Islamic Conference). He maintained that the organization was formed primarily to discuss avenues to strengthen the Muslim community economically, socially, and politically, but that the member countries had never made the effort to strengthen the organization on the lines of the European Union with respect to European countries.¹

A general agreement was observed on the point that the abandonment of an Islamic way of life and governance was one of the major causes of the modern-day decline of Muslims. The adoption of the western capitalist model inclusive of the system of interest or usury by Muslim countries was specifically mentioned in this regard. Conclusively, everyone reiterated that education was crucial and the Muslim countries need to remain updated with the advancing world. Talking specifically about Pakistan, some students argued that access to education and the parallel systems of education were the key issues.

Points of Convergence

There was a great deal of convergence on the need for an Islamic system in the Muslim countries. Prof. Ataullah Mahmood of the Faculty of Shariah and Law at the International Islamic University, who was moderating the session, pointed out some legal points which came of value to the discussion as a whole and aided the process of convergence.

¹ Shabab Hussain Islam (Abasyn University student)

For instance he cited the Objectives Resolution which is enshrined in the Article 2(A) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan wherein it was supposed to bring about an Islamic ideology to the country. Another legal point which he put forward was that even the constitution says that Allah is the Supreme Power² in nature and that the Shariah Court is there for the purpose to strike down laws that are against the injunctions of Islam. Hence the conclusion reached in this regard was that an Islamic system was already instituted, which needed to be implemented.

Among the students, there was a general agreement among the students about lack of education being an obstacle in the way of progress of Muslims. Wajihul Hassan, a student of Abasyn University, conceded that proper religious education was not imparted in universities and called for improvement of religious education within the universities. A general agreement developed around the idea, however, that there should be a balance was needed in the curricula of both Madrasahs and universities. Hammad, a Madrasah student, stated, "The type of education is divided. Either students are taught a complete religious curriculum or a complete non-religious curriculum." He called for a balance between the two. Some university students also alluded to female literacy. Hafeezul Naqi from the Abasyn University said, "If a woman is educated then the whole family is educated."³ This opinion resonated throughout the discussion and all the students were in agreement on this particular point.

Madrasah and University students each agreed that there was a lack of unity within the Muslim Ummah. For instance, Shahbab Hussain cited the example of Organization of Islamic Cooperation which was supposed to be a collective voice of the Muslim Ummah, but had failed to make a true

² See the Preamble of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan <http://pakistanconstitutionlaw.com/preamble/>

³ Jamshedul Hassan and Adnan Ali Kazmi (Abasyn University) too were of a view along the same lines. However, it is imperative to mention here that this opinion was recognized by everyone within the session as something leading to the downfall of Muslim Ummah.

impact. Another student of Abasyn University Basharat Ullah said “We are seeing the troubles the Syrian refugees are enduring yet we are not inviting them in.”

Students agreed that the Muslim countries are all in debt to International organizations such as IMF and that sets the basis for International interference.

Points of Divergence

There was disagreement on the fact that there must be a complete Islamic system. Some students were of the view that there must be a complete Islamic system; with absolutely no room whatsoever for western elements, because to them it was the reason of the downfall of the Muslim Community.

Madrasah students were of the view that the teachings of Islam have been confined to the Madrasahs and no other students are taught extensively about Islam. Bilal, a Madrasah student, stated that “Madrasahs and schools have become two distinct entities and as soon as we separate the two, we have lost track of religion. People who go to Madrasahs are strictly taught Islam.”⁴ Whilst there were no clear divergences, as such when it came to education but one divergence which was seen within the sessions was that some Madrasah students were of the view that there is a lack of Islamic education. In contrast, some university students were of the view that the reason for the Muslim Ummah lagging behind was their lack of scientific learning because of which Western countries were exploiting their natural resources and cheap labour.⁵ They called for improving literacy rates and internal infrastructure to save Muslim countries from exploitation by Western countries.

⁴ Shehzad Abbasi and Hammad too were of a view along the same lines

⁵ Adnan Ali Kazmi (Abasyn University)

Madrasah students, on the other hand, accused Western countries of interference in the internal affairs of Muslim countries and termed it as one of the major causes of the regression of Muslims in the modern era. The strongly criticized what they called the efforts of Western powers to defeat Islamic governance and turn them towards a Western capitalist ideology.

Detailed Overview

The discussion was held on October 12, 2015. Prof. Ataullah Mahmood of the Faculty of Shariah and Law at the International Islamic University was the moderator of the discussion. President CODE PAKISTAN Dilawar Khan inaugurated the discussion by addressing the students. He told them that the interaction under UMIP was the beginning of greater interaction and understanding between the students of the university and Madrasahs and they should keep interacting with each other and keep exchanging views. The students were instructed to keep their discussion factual and to voice their opinion based on facts.

Professor Ataullah opened the forum for discussion by introducing the topic, saying that Muslims once ruled over most of the world. He further said, "Today nearly a quarter of the world's population is Muslim then why is it that the Ummah is confronting such difficult times?" He entreated the participants to voice their own opinion and thought on the present state of the Muslim Ummah. He purported that there were several reasons that could be accredited to the current state of affairs, like lack of education, no equality as per the distribution of wealth world over and sectarian differences within the community. He argued that even though difference of opinion is appreciated in the religion, there is increasing intolerance today. What solutions can be presented?

Wasif, a Madrasah student, started the discussion by saying that the Muslim community has lost its unity and is now divided. During the Prophet's time the Ummah came together as a strong entity that had the best standards of justice and governance. Today the Ummah is not concerned about its constituent members. When one Muslim country

suffers a crisis, the others detach themselves and appear only to be concerned about themselves.

Hafeezul Naqi, Abasyn University student, purported that the Muslim community has not given enough attention to education. He quoted examples for famous scientists in Islamic history, Ibne Batuta, Ibne Sine and Jabbir bin Hayyan. He further said that we have abandoned our strong tradition of study. The western world is now progressing and developing research that was first instituted by Muslim scientists. Moreover the Muslim countries are lagging behind with respect to IT and modern technology study. The religion instructs us to seek knowledge. He added that more than unity, education was vital.

Nazir, a Madrasah student pointed towards terrorism, sectarianism and unjust distribution of resources on a global level being the true reasons of the current state of the Ummah. He pointed that with reference to the 9/11 incident, Afghanistan was blamed for the attack and that was used as a justification for Western forces to infiltrate and to remove the prevalent Muslim rule. He further added that the western countries are not necessarily an example of justice. America didn't provide the right to vote to its citizens till the 60's.

Zeeshan, a Madrasah student added that Muslim countries were in severe debt. Islamic Development Bank Reports over the years reflect the amounts being spent to repay the debt. He added that the system of interest needs to be switched with zakat, a welfare system. Islam establishes justice as compared to capitalism.

Shahzad Abbasi argued that we have confined religion to a mosque and to a cupboard in our homes. We have resorted to killing for everything. There are abundant resources in Muslim Countries and foreign forces are feeding of those resources without any benefit to the Muslim countries.

Adnan Ali Kazmi, Abasyn student stated that a quarter of the population in the Middle Eastern countries is comprised of the youth. However all countries struggle with education. In Pakistan, children don't have access to free education in the public schools.

Bilal, a Madrasah student spoke about the divide between the Madrasah and the mainstream school's curriculum. He asserted that the mainstream schools go towards a secular extreme.

Wajihul Hasan, a university student pointed that Islamic education and the curriculum taught in mainstream schools are both of importance. We learn morals from Islamic teachings and we learn about the finite universe with the other subjects that we study.

The moderator agreed with this point saying that both styles of education are important. Social sciences and physical sciences. Morality laws are set by one and the study of physical sciences help us understand our nature and universe.

Akasha, an Abasyn student said that we have lost unity within the community. Recently the European Union extended an agreement with Malaysia to reduce border taxes⁶. We need to have a similar free trade agreement between Muslim countries. He added saying that If we do not come to a certain platform and if we don't discuss matters- we cannot succeed. As for interference by western countries and powers, if we take foreign aids and we use it for our country we are indebted to them and their interference will not stop. A solution is that instead of aid, if we apply it for a specific project so that it is specific and we can get on our feet quickly, we can become more independent. However a corrupt leadership has also aided to the increased debt.

⁶ See <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/malaysia/>

The moderator directed the students to highlight what it meant to abandon our Islamic guidelines and traditions and what were the reasons?

Ashraf, a Madrasah student responded saying that we have embraced a western system in the form of democracy and we have further distorted matters by presenting it as an Islamic system. We don't need any other legal system other than an Islamic system. Today it is the lack of an enforcement of the Islamic system that we have terrorism.

Shahbab, an Abasyn student made reference to the OIC and its inefficiency. It could have proved to be a strong organization where key matters could be discussed and tackled.

Abdul Ghafoor a Madrasah student argued that with reference to Pakistan, Madrasahs need to be brought on a government level. There is no current government support. Islamic studies need to be introduced and made compulsory in Universities. Even in the mainstream schools, there is presently a class system. Education is expensive.

Hafiz, an Abasyn student highlighted that education for women was most important. An educated mother will have educated children.

The moderator agreed and stated that we need one system of education and even if Madrasahs are to function separately they need to be given platforms for interaction.

Peace through Economic Cooperation

Summary

The participants mainly discussed the relations between India and Pakistan over the years and whether the history of conflict can allow the two countries to move forward and establish economic cooperation. Students made reference to the numerous attempts made by the countries to improve relations between them. Notably, references were made to the Shimla Summit, Agra Summit and the Lahore Summit. The students further noted, however, that relations between the two nations since the 1990s had gone south. This was attributed to increased tensions between the countries over the borders and the major wars fought between them. Students made reference to the Lahore-Delhi Bus service⁷ and the train service, Samjhota Express, which have helped deescalate the tensions across the border and encouraged travel to and from each country. Some students then made a reference to these efforts being affected by terrorist activities, such as, the 2007 bombing of the Samjhota Express and the 2008 Mumbai Attacks. Establishing good trading relations on the road to fixing all other political and security matters was emphasized a lot. Reference was made to the early bilateral agreements that were signed between the two countries.⁸ Students also addressed the Kashmir dispute and called for its early resolution.⁹ Students also highlighted some positives, namely the support that each

⁷ Sada-e-Sarhad inaugurated in February 1999 by Attal Bihari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif.

⁸ In 1948–49, 56 percent of Pakistan’s exports were sent to India. For the next several years—a period of tense political relations—India was Pakistan’s largest trading partner. Between 1947 and 1965, the two nations entered into 14 bilateral agreements related to trade facilitation. In 1965, the year Pakistan and India went to war over Kashmir, nine branches of six Indian banks were operating in Pakistan. And in 1972, following another Sub-continental war the previous year, the two sides concluded an agreement that produced a resumption of limited trade https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ASIA_121219_Pakistn%20India%20Trade%20rptFINAL.pdf

⁹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1399992/A-brief-history-of-the-Kashmir-onflict.html>

country has extended toward the other following natural disasters.¹⁰ Some students argued that the foreign policy needs had to dictate the economic relations between the two; while other argued that changes in political scenarios should not impede efforts to improve the mutual economy. Some students argued that media propaganda played a major role in creating hurdles in the way of better relations between the two countries. They were of the view that the media on both sides, more specifically in India, created a hateful narrative that influenced the general public on either side.¹¹ Other students referred to the positive attempts by media groups, like “Aman kee Asha”—by Times of India and Jang Group in Pakistan. Participants spoke about the communities that live on either side, referring to the Muslims who live across the border and the Hindus and Sikhs who live in Pakistan. They purported that relations could be improved because the communities shared a lot in common. One student in particular emphasized that illegal trade exceeded the legal trade, and called for opening proper trade routes for the benefit of both the economies.¹² Participants also asserted that leaders on either side needed to maintain a positive attitude toward the other side’s leadership for anything productive to happen. A particular example of Argentina and Spain was given on how they had improved relations over the years despite a similar past to Pakistan and India. Reference was also made to the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline.

¹⁰ Following an earthquake in 2001, Pakistan joined the growing list of countries sending aid to India. India reciprocated in 2005. <http://www.disasterdiplomacy.org/indiapakistan.html>.

¹¹ According to a 2014 BBC World Service Poll, 17% of Indians view Pakistan's influence positively, with 49% expressing a negative view, while 21% of Pakistanis view India's influence positively, with 58% expressing a negative view.

¹² The guesstimates of illegal trade between India and Pakistan range widely between 0.5 to 3 billion dollars. It exceeds considerably the value of legal trade between the two countries. Total annual trade over the past seven years has never exceeded 250 million dollars and stands at less than one percent of their combined total trade with the rest of the world- [http://sdpi.org/research_and_news_bulletin/Vol.%2012.%20No.%203%20\(May%20-%20June%202005\)/can_illegal_trade%20.htm](http://sdpi.org/research_and_news_bulletin/Vol.%2012.%20No.%203%20(May%20-%20June%202005)/can_illegal_trade%20.htm)

Moreover students argued that South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had not been able to maintain relations within the region like it should. Most students argued that it is India that does not reciprocate efforts and is mostly resistant to any cooperation. Moreover, students were skeptical about the progress that could be made with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in India, however, they still emphasized that good trading relations needed to be instituted.

Points of Convergence

Students agreed that trade relations were crucial in bringing economic prosperity on either side. Suggestions were made that import export process should be resumed and border taxes must be reduced. Examples of bilateral investment agreements being successful between China and Pakistan were quoted as examples. References were made to previous agreements and the need was expressed to resume trade channels through new agreements.¹³

A general agreement was seen between participants on the fact that trade is important, and agreements entered into must be complied with to make wholehearted commitments with adequate measures for the implementation of the agreements in letter and spirit. This consensus came after the secondary moderator Aarish Khan spoke on India's role within the Kashmir issue and asked the students if Kashmir was a matter that will prevent any progress to be made from a trade point of view or whether, taking the example of Arunachal Pradesh/South Tibet—a disputed territory between China and India—the Kashmir dispute should not stop the two countries from having a fruitful trading relationship. This was then followed by an affirmation on part of the students wherein a Madrasah student Adil Shah agreed that trade could still occur despite outstanding disputes like Kashmir. Aakasha Shahid, an Abasyn University student, agreeing with Aarish Khan went onto state that perhaps trade could be made a basis to solve other contentious

¹³<http://www.dawn.com/news/751037/pakistan-india-sign-three-trade-agreements>

issues. Students hence agreed that trade is necessary regardless of the role of India within this context, and it has the potential to resolve other matters.¹⁴

Towards the end of the debate several students opined that trade could be used as a platform to lead to betterment in the role of the media, the two governments, and implementation of the peace agreements once it commenced in a proper manner.

Points of Divergence

One distinct point of divergence was found between the participants when the Madrasah students argued that trade will not and cannot help the matters between the countries and that India is not in favour of any progress in Pakistan, Nazir Ahmed, a Madrasah student, argued that the countries have always been in a state of war, despite agreements in place, the ceasefire at the borders is violated every other day. Another Madrasah student Shehzad stated that many peace and trade agreements were signed including the Samjhota express but no results were achieved. He went on to say that the countries are stuck in an arms race. He purported that India based all of its policies on the conflict that it had with Pakistan and had an anti-Pakistan narrative.¹⁵ However, Akasha Shahid of Abasyn University argued that the countries have spent million respectively on their defense budgets when in fact they were both dealing with severe poverty and unemployment, in such a scenario it was in the interest of both countries to establish trade to maintain peace at the borders.

Nazir Ahmed countered that India had dealt with Pakistan through its two-faced policy and was spending a lot on the arms race. Towards the latter part of his argument though, he highlighted the rampant poverty in

¹⁴Shahbab of Abasyn University was of a view along the same lines

¹⁵ For a further discussion on how the thoughts of the students were with regards to the role of India, see below.

both the countries and questioned the spending on both sides on the defense budget. Another Madrasah student Hammad opined that India should end its enmity toward Pakistan and recognize it as a sovereign entity for the enmity to end. Other students, however, referred to the instances that India has come to Pakistan's aid and the recent efforts being made to better relations, like granting India the MFN status or the agreements under negotiation.¹⁶ Hafiz ul Naqi of Abasyn University was partially of the view that it was due to the interference of India within Pakistan that the economic cooperation was not progressing and stressed that until the resolution of Kashmir dispute nothing could happen.¹⁷

Madrasah student Shehzad was of the view that the foreign policies were changing with time and there was no proper consistency within them and that they were in need of a review. He then went on to criticize the media and said that they were a major cause of the ill-will between the two nations and that it needed regulation. A Madrasah student Wasif was of the view that foreign powers were at play in the sorry state of relations between India and Pakistan. He went on to add that there were agents working in Pakistan who served the interests of India. Zeeshan Irfan from the Abasyn University was of the view that SAARC ought to play a vital role and South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA)¹⁸ be implemented so as to improve trade between the countries.¹⁹ Akasha Shahid argued that the history books taught in schools in Pakistan were teaching a narrative which made it very difficult for any positive change to come. However at the same time other students referred to the positive role of media in bringing the two countries together: A prominent example being the Aman kee Asha.

¹⁶ <http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/india-pakistan-the-curious-case-of-the-mfn-status/>

¹⁷ Madrasah students Shehzad and Wasif too were of a view along the same lines

¹⁸ For an introduction of SAFTA see http://saarc-sec.org/areaofcooperation/detail.php?activity_id=5

¹⁹ The views of Hafiz ulNaqi of Abasyn University were along the same lines

Detailed Overview

The discussion was moderated by Daniyal Hasan, who is presently associated with the Research Society on International Relations. He began the discussion by articulating the importance of bringing about human development and prosperity in the South Asian region through greater economic integration. Daniyal began by highlighting a few facts about the countries. He made reference to the poverty levels on either side and said that with more than a quarter of the population being below poverty line in both countries, it is the need of the hour that they seriously think about establishing trading links²⁰. Executive Director CODE PAKISTAN Aarish Khan sat as the secondary moderator and argued that if the leaders of Germany and France could form the European Coal and Steel Community (that later became the European Union) in the aftermath of World War II, India and Pakistan could also put the past behind them and strive for a better future for their peoples through peace and prosperity.

Daniyal Hasan made reference to the Lahore-Delhi bus service²¹ and efforts such as the Samjota Express. How they have been impeded time and again due to terrorist incidents to the extent that the Samjhota Express is no longer functional. Hasan then made reference to the years of conflict between the countries and the wars fought in between as well the tension at the Line of Control. Students were requested to keep these background facts in mind before starting the discussion.

Adnan Ali, an Abasyn student started the discussion by pointing out that economy plays an important role to bring peace between countries. He gave reference to the European Union as an example of a community that is now working towards increased integration even though its

²⁰ The Human Development Report reveals that while India ranks slightly above Pakistan in its level of 'human development' – based on life expectancy, schooling and per capita income – its wider poverty level is worse than Pakistan's. In absolute terms, 41.6 per cent of India's 1.1 billion people earned less than 78 pence per day compared with 22.6 per cent of Pakistan's 173 million.

²¹ Sada-e-Sarhad, inaugurated in February 1999

constituent countries have had tensions with one another in the past. American and China have been able to secure good relations by way of bilateral investment agreements. He made reference to the early agreements signed between the countries²².

Adnan further argued that if India and Pakistan can take concrete steps to build positive trading relations each Country can improve its economy. Moreover it could bring peace across the borders and help the countries to tackle with the Kashmir dispute.

Wajihur Rehman, an Abasyn student made reference to the times each country has come to one another's aid following a natural disaster²³. Seeing these precedents he asserted that the two countries most definitely cooperate.

Shahzad, a Madrasah student argued that foreign policy does not depend on economic conditions but the events and changes in politics between the countries. He made reference to the Tashkan agreement²⁴ and how it has not yielded any results. There is still hostility between the two. He argued that India has been more stubborn with respect to any initiative

²² In 1948–49, Pakistan's exports to India accounted for 56 percent of its total exports, while 32 percent of Pakistan's imports came from India. The two countries were trading normally during this turbulent period. India was Pakistan's largest trading partner, and this continued to be the case until 1955–56. Between 1948 and 1965, Pakistan and India used a number of land routes for bilateral trade. These included eight customs stations in Punjab province at Wagah, Takia Ghawindi, Khem Karan, Ganda Singhwala, Mughalpura Railway Station, Lahore Railway Station, Haripur Bund on River Chenab, and the Macleod Ganj Road Railway Station. There were three custom check posts in Sindh at Khokrapar, Gadro, and Chhor. Pakistan and India, invoking Article 24/paragraph 3(a) of GATT, even signed a bilateral agreement on December 22, 1957, to facilitate border trade.-
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ASIA_121219_Pakistn%20India%20Trade%20rptFINAL.pdf

²³ During earthquakes, on either side. 2001 in India and 2005 in Pakistan.

²⁴ (Jan. 10, 1966), accord signed by India's prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri (who died the next day) and Pakistan's president Ayub Khan, ending the 17-day war between Pakistan and India of August–September 1965.

taken. He commented that the two countries are stuck in an arms race. He went on to say that India has an anti-Pakistan mindset and is responsible for the media propaganda against Pakistan. The media promotes hate amongst the people. The foreign policy isn't consistent about maintaining good relations between Pakistan and India.

Hafiz ul Naqi, an Abasyn student made comments on how cross border terrorism was all part of a propaganda. India needs to recognize Pakistan as a sovereign state. He stressed the fact that media can play a positive role in trying to bring about better relations.

Shahbab an Abasyn student argued that there is considerable level on trade that goes on illegally. If there are proper trade channels established, it could benefit both sides²⁵.

Zeeshan Irfan argued that SAARC has not been able to act to its full potential to bring peace and economic cooperation in the region. Agreements should be entered through SAARC with proper checks and balances in place for violations.

Akasha, an Abasyn student said that the relation between the two countries has always been very competitive. Whenever a cricket match takes place, there's an electricity on both sides and you feel patriotic when you defeat the other team. However he pointed out that there are a lot of positive initiatives that have been taken by both sides. Like the Aman Kee Asha initiative taken by Times of India and Jang Group. He spoke about how people on either side want peace but on many levels it becomes difficult to fathom, like making reference to the curriculum

²⁵ The guesstimates of illegal trade between India and Pakistan range widely between 0.5 to 3 billion dollars. It exceeds considerably the value of legal trade between the two countries. Total annual trade over the past seven years has never exceeded 250 million dollars and stands at less than one percent of their combined total trade with the rest of the world- [http://sdpi.org/research_and_news_bulletin/Vol.%2012,%20No.%203%20\(May%20-%20June%202005\)/can_illegal_trade%20.htm](http://sdpi.org/research_and_news_bulletin/Vol.%2012,%20No.%203%20(May%20-%20June%202005)/can_illegal_trade%20.htm)

taught in schools in Pakistan – the perception that it leaves every child with is very different and labels India as a perpetual enemy.

Nazir Ahmed, a Madrasah student said that just trade cannot help mainly because India has always maintained a very rigid policy in terms of Pakistan. The countries have had five major wars and each side invests so much into its defense budget when in fact there is such poverty to be dealt with on either side.

The secondary moderator, Mr Aarish Khan intervened and questioned the participants about what would be the way to go if India refused to solve the Kashmir dispute, would we still be able to continue with economic cooperation? He cited the example of the South Tibetan issue and how India and China have still managed to maintain good relations.

Hammad responded saying that conflicts can be resolved as long as India respects Pakistan as a sovereign entity. Attitudes need to be changed for any progress to be made.

Shafqat an Abasyn student said that any cooperation would be fruitless unless the tensions at the border eases and trade is allowed to function in a conducive environment.

Shehzad a Madrasah student mentioned Modi's appointment as Prime Minister of India as an example of the kind of attitude India has had towards Pakistan though other students like Hafiz Ullah from Abasyn mentioned the recent meetings between both Prime Ministers as a positive step.

Conclusion

Both the discussions on international relations yielded some interesting insights into the thinking of the youth about the international issues with respect to Muslims in general and Pakistan in particular.

The discussion on "Muslim Ummah and the Challenges of Modern Times" revealed that on some points like lack of an Islamic system in Muslim

countries as a source of their backwardness, the Madrasah and university students were having similar views. The major difference in the perceptions of the students of the two education systems on the problems confronted by the Muslims were on the importance of learning modern sciences for development and prosperity. While the Madrasah students blamed the backwardness of Muslims mostly on being away from Islam and conspiracies of the West, some university students pointed toward inadequacies in modern learning as a source of the backwardness of the Muslims. Some university students also highlighted the importance of female education as a source of development and prosperity of nations.

There did not appear to be much of a consensus between the Madrasah and university students on anything in the second discussion on international relations, "Peace through Economic Cooperation: Can India and Pakistan Move Forward?" Some of the students highlighted the importance of peace and prosperity in the region and called for greater economic cooperation between India and Pakistan. Other student argued, however, that economic cooperation cannot automatically lead to peace. They believed that economic cooperation is currently dominated by the political ups and downs in the relations between the two countries and that until and unless economic relations are institutionalized in a way that political temperatures don't affect them, they could not bring about peace. There was a broad consensus that while economic cooperation was important, the resolution of longstanding disputes between the two countries was as important for bringing about lasting peace in the region.

Chapter Two: Pakistan Affairs

The second theme of the discussion sessions was “Pakistan Affairs.” Participants discussed the problems of education in Pakistan in the first discussion on the theme, and the economy of the country in the second discussion on the them. These marked the third and fourth discussions of the ten sessions. The first topic was “Problems of Education System in Pakistan.” We chose this topic to be the first on the theme of Pakistan Affairs because we thought that it would be very educative to engage the students of two different education systems of Pakistan to deliberate on the education problems of the country.

Problems of the Education System in Pakistan

Summary

The discussion looked at the education history of Pakistan and the problems that it inherited post-independence as well as the multiple parallel systems that have risen over the years. The participating students talked about the low literacy rate in Pakistan. Pakistan was required to increase its literacy rate to 88% by 2015 under the Millennium Development Goals but as of the last two years it has been able to sustain its literacy rate at 58%.²⁶ The moderator discussed the dynamic of the education system, articulating that the education sector was similar to the American system, being overseen by the Ministry of Education as well as by the provincial governments whereas the federal government mostly facilitated in curriculum development, accreditation, and in financing of research and development. Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan was mentioned in the discussion which obligates the government to provide free of cost and compulsory

²⁶ See <http://tribune.com.pk/story/897995/education-woes-pakistan-misses-un-target-with-58-literacy-rate/>

primary education to children of the age group 3 to 16 years²⁷. Reference was also made to the fact that the government was still struggling with providing free education and the fact that Pakistan was still tackling parallel systems of education.²⁸ Pakistan has predominantly four structures, Urdu medium schooling, English medium schooling, the private British curriculum schools, and Madrasahs.

The discussion touched on the fact that initially the traditional schooling given in Madrasahs was the only schooling known to Muslims in the subcontinent until during the British rule.²⁹ Students made reference to how that was the first time that the split in the education systems was seen. This only grew post-independence with the parallel systems emerging over the years. English was made the official language even though the 1956 constitution limited its use for 20 years and the 1973 constitution stipulated a 15-year period for Urdu to replace English in all official correspondence.³⁰ This has only recently been applied by way of the Supreme Court decision.³¹ However, the process of implementation

²⁷ "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such a manner as may be determined by law"-
<http://www.pildat.org/publications/publication/EFA/RighttoFreeandCompulsoryEducationinPakistanBackgroundpaper.pdf>

²⁸ A report in JUNE 2010 recorded that there were 47 million illiterate adults in Pakistan, a number that was expected to increase to nearly 50 million by 2015, making Pakistan one of the few countries in the world in which the illiterate population is growing-
http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2010/6/pakistan-education-winthrop/06_pakistan_education_winthrop.pdf

²⁹ With the adoption of English as a medium of instruction after Thomas Babington Macaulay's infamous minute in 1835 and the rapid increase in the number of educational institutions following Sir Charles Wood's Education Dispatch of July 1854, learning in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian receded, making way for English and for the adoption of Western Education. Hindus took more readily to the new education than did the Muslims. Leaders like Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan played an important role in urging Muslims to embrace the modern education system introduced by the British so that Muslims could compete on a competence level for better jobs and not be deprived of good opportunities

³⁰<http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1141/Pakistan-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>

³¹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1205686>

is yet to be seen and evaluated. Students discussed that great reform was needed to bring the curriculums taught in Madrasahs and public schools on a similar footing as well as to bring coherence with respect to the curriculum being taught in private schools.

Students mainly made reference to the fact that with Madrasahs increasing in number it is most important to have an integrated system of education, otherwise students studying under their respective religious clergy were only exposed to the information provided by them and are not necessarily following uniform standards.³² Since the mode of teaching in Madrasahs is in Urdu it has created a lot of disparity with the English medium public and private schools. Madrasah students also spoke about the positive efforts made within their institution to provide their students with mainstream standards of education and therefore broke some of the misconceptions the university students had.

Reference was also made to the need for creating teacher training centers so that competent people could be inducted into teaching. Students also argued that many teachers were not motivated and, therefore, failed to inspire the youth to study and to achieve excellence. Corruption in the government sector and the fact that the budget for education was still very low compared to the expenditure on defense were also mentioned as problems of education in the country. Education for girls was also emphasized by some students. The irrelevance of education for improving livelihood conditions in the rural areas or solving their economic problems was also discussed.

Points of convergence

The students were all of the view that the different parallel education systems in Pakistan (see above) were damaging to its education system.

³² The number of madrassas in Pakistan have crossed 35,000 from fewer than 300 since the inception of Pakistan, according to a report issued in Karachi, 'The Madrasa Conundrum — The state of religious education in Pakistan', the report is authored by Umair Khalil, lead researcher of the non-governmental research organisation, HIVE.

They argued that the rural students could feel inferior to students studying in cities because they were predominantly studying in English medium format. Moreover, they argued that when the students from villages try to find jobs in the cities, they go through a difficult time as they do not comply with the standards usually required by the employers.

Almost all of the students were of the view that there was indeed a lack of institutions and centers for training of teachers. Thus when the moderator asked what should be done in this regard, many solutions came forth. For instance Muhammad Hamza of Abasyn University was of the view that proper teacher training centers be formed across Pakistan³³. Another Abasyn University student Faraz Ahmed attributed the downfall of the education to the lack of teacher training. Haseeb ul Hassan from the Madrasah was of the view that the government had tried to implement systems so as to train teachers yet due to the sheer de-motivation of teachers they were not working as they should. This could be attributed to their low pay scales.

There was also some agreement with regards to the manner in which most teachers are hired in government schools. Corruption in teacher recruitment was highlighted as a major problem in provision of quality of education.

The group as a whole stressed on free primary education for all and one student particularly made reference to the fact that it was a constitutional obligation of the government calling for its implementation.³⁴

³³ The views of Faraz Ahmed of Abasyn University were along the same lines

³⁴ Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan.

Point of Divergence

There was considerable disagreement between the students on the best education system for the country and the different aspects of Madrasah and mainstream education. One particular student from Abasyn, Muhammad Saeed purported that students in universities do not acquire the kind of religious study the students of Madrasahs could. He then added that conversely, students in Madrasah were not taught science and other mainstream subjects the way they should have been. However one Madrasah student Abdul Razziq disagreed that Madrasah students were denied mainstream education. He in fact argued that it was because of the war of independence that Muslims had to create a separate style of education and the Muslim scholars were forced to make their own curriculum—he explained this to be the basis of the Madrasah systems. One Madrasah student Ahsan ul Haq stated that his Madrasah was offering coaching to students for school examination.

One Madrasah student, Fazlur Rehman stressed that there must only be one Islamic system of education and all other systems of education should be abolished. He based his argument on the opinion that the students from universities and Madrasahs had a different thought process, which was causing problems.

There was a slight difference in opinion on how education for girls should be administered. Madrasah students stated that girls should receive education but in a manner that was in line with Islam, that is, in segregated settings.

Ahsan ul Haq from the Madrasah stated that while everyone was blaming the government and the teachers hired for the low quality of education, the real issue was that the students did not attend school. They skipped classes and teachers were helpless.

One particular student from Abasyn was of the view that the government should take an action against people in villages who refuse to send their children to school.

Detailed Overview

The discussion session was presided by Ismail Khan, of the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS)- an independent think tank. Khan started the discussion by addressing some of the key issues. He said the most crucial issue was the nationwide literacy rate. However he urged the students to consider both the quantitative matters and qualitative matters. Statistics alone are not conclusive to evaluate the reasons the education sector is not doing well in Pakistan. He requested the students to discuss all aspects. Some individuals get the opportunity to acquire an education and some don't, how does it affect the way they contribute to society?

Dilawar Khan, the founder and Chief Executive of CODE PAKISTAN continued by endorsing that everyone would be in agreement that the education is a problem area in Pakistan. However the real question he posed is whether this is a problem inherited post -independence or whether it is our own negligence over the years. He asked the students to give solutions.

Muhammad Mateen ul Hasan, an Abasyn student said the group needs to look for solutions because compared to neighboring countries, Pakistan is really lagging behind.

Muhammad Ahsan ul Haq, a Madrasah student stated that Pakistan's biggest problem presently is poverty and poverty can be eradicated through education.

Abdul Majeed, a Madrasah student argued that Islam itself sets a precedence for education.

Sohaibal Hashmi, a Madrasah student, argued that any country is assessed by its literacy rate. In Pakistan, the literacy rate is low and that is why the country is lagging behind.

The Moderator intervened at this point to say that education is an issue and we all agree to the same. However what we need to focus on is what

are the missing links? What factors make us feel that the current standard is not satisfactory?

Nauman, an Abasyn student said that we have diverse systems. We have an English and Urdu medium standard, O and A level format and we have Madrasahs. We have divided children from different segments of society according to the system they will study. A student who has completed his matriculation may feel he has accomplished something but when he is compared to someone studying the O and A level format, he may not be able to compete. A Madrasah student may not compare with a Cambridge University student either. He argued that till matriculation everyone should study a unified system. This way two children of the same family studying in different schools will not have to grow up with differences in caliber.

Fazal ur Rehman, a Madrasah student stated that once we gained independence and became an Islamic Republic, we should have eradicated all other systems of study so that there is no difference between any student. The Madrasah students and university students should have been at the same level.

Muhammad Saeed, an Abasyn student argued that even prior to the discussion, university students were given survey forms written in English and the Madrasah students were given them in Urdu, why is there a difference? It is making distinctions like these that make one person feel superior and another could feel inferior. He argued that there are things Madrasah students are better informed about and then there are subjects like technology that the university students know better. If we all had the same level of knowledge and information, we wouldn't have run to Ulemahs when confused on a religious matter.

Ishan ul Haq, a Madrasah student argued that Madrasah students may not know English but now the situation is improving. The university students are taught an English curriculum and that is having a growing influence on them. The Supreme Court has now ordained Urdu to be the

official language³⁵. He further stressed that we have a divided education presently. The university students are taught Islamiyat for an hour's worth, that is not sufficient Islamic education. Mafrassah students are not given access to universities, they are not accepted because of their appearance. All these stereotypes are because of the divide in the education and this needs to be changed, he pleaded.

Mateen Hassan an Abasyn student commented that the division started in 1857 and that is what led to the downfall. When foreigners came to the subcontinent. They offered good positions to Hindus and educated them but Muslims were not given any benefits. It was Sir Syyed Ahmed Khan who urged Muslims to study but several people opposed this and instead said that Islamic education was enough. Mateen argued that in KPK province, education for girls was at a really low statistic. He argued that there has been many terrorist attacks against schools. Also that teacher training is a major issue.

The moderator asked if it was true that we are of a mind set that girls need not receive education after grade 12.

Muhammad Saeed, a Madrasah student argued that mother cannot teach their children unless they are educated themselves. It is the manner in which they are taught that is crucial. Women in KP receive education in all girls' institutes. This maintains segregation.

Muhammad Hamza a university student argued that there need to be training centers formed across Pakistan and a degree needs to be created that must be mandatory for all teachers to study before teaching.

Faraz Ahmed, a university student argued that teachers in villages don't know how to teach. They are strict and make children run their errands. Teachers are made to teach subjects they are not equipped to teach.

³⁵ <http://time.com/3975587/pakistan-english-urdu/>

Abdul Razziq, a Madrasah student, argues that the Muslims should not be blamed for not studying modern education, they were forced to start the traditional Islamic schools because the British East India Company refused to open doors for Muslims. When Pakistan gained independence it was decided that Urdu will be the official language but that was never followed. Moreover he argued that western education has led to the digression of education for Muslim females. Co-education leads to bad morals. If a woman goes out to work all day and returns home at night, she cannot fulfill the rights of the husband the way she should. He argued that women should be educated but they shouldn't have to work.

Mateen, an Abasyn university student argued that that the Prophet Muhammad spoke of education for both men and women, There is a lot of poverty in Pakistan. Taking the example of Iran he stated that there are schools in place where only girls study. He argued that this awareness needs to be given in Pakistan, girls should be required to wear a veil and this way they too can prosper. Women can contribute to society.

Muhammad Amar, a Madrasah student commented that subjects like chemistry, astronomy and mathematics find their roots in Islam. It is Muslim scientists who wrote and researched on them. However translations from their work were made in English and now the west has taken ownership of the advancement in each field rather than the Muslims.

Some students commented on how expensive education is and that a poor family is left with no choice but to resist sending their children to school. Salman Khan, an Abasyn student argued that the state should require all students studying in universities to teach a child from a poor family. This should be made a pre-condition to get their degree.

Ahsan ul Haq, a Madrasah student argued that teachers are not given respect today, they come and go and they do not interact with students. In their Madrasah he says, there are 13 to 15 teachers and the students

are being taught for matriculation exams. In public schools in Punjab, 350 teachers were fined for lack of attendance. We don't give a high regard to teachers anymore.

Mateen commented that that there is increased terrorism and Madrasahs are looked at as training centers for terrorists. Parents fear sending their children to Madrasahs because they think they will be taught jihad. We are presently in the middle of a sectarian war. Teachers in Madrasahs must also be trained so that they do not promote sectarian differences.

Causes of Pakistan's weak economy

Summary

The discussion causes of Pakistan's weak economy started with an overview of some of the major macroeconomic indicators of the country. With the population of the country standing at around 192 million,³⁶ and 22.3% of it being below poverty line,³⁷ Pakistan was referred to as economically weak. Pakistan is placed at the 26th position in terms of the biggest economies. Discussion also focused on how agriculture was a major but neglected sector of the economy. The high inflation rate into double digits since 2007 was also pointed out by the moderator of the discussion.

Participants also discussed how the present situation of war and terrorism in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (KP), and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Balochistan had damaged the country's economy and scared away foreign investors who could create employment opportunities for Pakistanis. It was also highlighted that Pakistan had very few trading partners: UAE, China, Saudi Arabia, and USA. It was also discussed that despite being an agrarian economy, Pakistan had to import agricultural produce at times. Therefore, the students argued that the agriculture sector has been neglected.

Students also noted the positives. They pointed towards the discreet economic progress made over the history of the country. Students noted that the country needed to focus on technology. Participants commented that it was not only the government but also the people when it came to sharing the blame for the slow progress of the country's economy. Some commented on how expenditure as compared to savings had gone disproportionate. They argued that money was being spent on sectors that were not economically viable. Most participants also tackled the

³⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_population

³⁷ <http://country-facts.findthedata.com/l/182/Pakistan>

debate of capitalism and socialism and argued for a welfare system based on *Shariah*. Moreover students noted that while capitalism and socialism went to extremes, Islam created the balance. Another key concern was the fact that much of the youth, if given the opportunity, wished to settle abroad. Political leaders had also misled the country, according to some participants. The participants said that ministries had been formed and a lot of expenditure was made on projects and positions with vested political interests rather than national interest.

Some students also noted that the trouble was that Pakistanis never took advance initiatives for prevention of foreseeable problems. For instance, they said that for the past few years Pakistan had seen annual floods in various regions, but the leadership hadn't come up with any concrete steps to build dams that could prevent the damage that occurred. Students argued that if Pakistani authorities would take the initiative of deciding what projects to begin, foreign investment would come. Participants argued that corruption at all levels was preventing investors from showing any interest in investing in Pakistan.

Points of Convergence

Students agreed that Pakistan had a lot of resources and a major issue was smartly investing on those resources and reaping economic benefits from them. Participants spoke in particular reference to agriculture and argued that the leadership hadn't paid much attention to the sector even though it could be the largest source of income for Pakistan.³⁸

Students made reference to the fact that compared to neighboring countries, Pakistan was lagging behind. For instance, India comparatively has a GDP growth rate of 6.90%.³⁹ India has worked on agricultural research and has improved its industries.

³⁸ 24% of the GDP- <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/agriculture-statistics>

³⁹<http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/agriculture-statistics>

Participants commented that primarily it was the government's responsibility. "There is no proper leadership," a student said. However the students also agreed that the people also shared some responsibility. "We as a people defy laws set by the government, do not pay taxes and bribe officials," said a student. Participants made reference to the World Bank Report *Doing Business in 2016* and the fact that Pakistan ranked at 138 out of 189 economies.⁴⁰

Students agreed that there was less focus on saving at both government and private levels. Students commented that many ministries were made just to please the people the government owed a favor to, but that they were not functioning the way they should have been. Students also argued that ministers wasted millions without much accountability. "A delegation accompanies the Prime Minister for Hajj on the tax money the people pay," said a student.

Reference was made to lack of focus on technology and the fact that investors also get discouraged because Pakistan is still struggling with it. Moreover, students argued that young people often wanted to leave the country after they complete their studies. Also, according to the students, most investors from Pakistan wanted to invest abroad for better profits.

Students also commented on the situation of law and order, and how that was affecting its economy by scaring local and foreign investors away.

Points of Divergence

Abdul Majeed, a Madrasah student commented that the reason Pakistan was not developing was because Pakistanis had abandoned Islamic principles. He purported that God had ordained that there could not be any progress by following in others' footsteps. He argued that Western countries might have acquired success and economic prosperity but

⁴⁰ <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/pakistan/>

being a Muslim country Pakistan could not follow their example. “Children today know about Adam Smith being the one who laid the foundation of economics but they have no idea about the contributions of the Muslim scientists,” he said.

Muhammad Jamshed, a Madrasah student commented that since 1947, governments that came into power either followed a capitalist ideology or socialism, which was the problem. Abdul Raziq, continued by saying that the Islamic system provided the fair balance. “We have acquired a foreign system and we need to follow our Islamic history,” he said. He further commented that Paksitan’s university courses had Islamiyat which was just basic concepts lacking any knowledge about Islamic economics.

Basit Ali, a Madrasah student, argued that the main issue was peace and added that Mullah Omar’s objective was to make the borders up to Chaman secure. He further argued that the government had no talent and, therefore, did not let truly talented individuals to come forward.

Detailed Overview

The moderator Dr. Kashif Saeed Khan of the Center for International Peace and Stability at the National Defence University presided the session. He began the discussion by putting forward some key facts that represent the current situation of Pakistan in terms of its economy. He spoke about the population, and its position in the list of countries with respect to its purchasing power⁴¹. He commented on the inflation rate and how it is in double digits since 2007. He said the value of the Pakistani Rupee is depreciating. He further commented how the services sector contributes more to the economy of the country than the agriculture sector⁴². He then continued by saying that the security

⁴¹ Pakistan has a population of nearly 192 Million and stands at number 26 with reference to PP.

⁴² Services sector make for more than 50% of the country’s economy. <http://www.pide.org.pk/pdf/Working%20Paper/WorkingPaper-79.pdf>

situation in the country is highly unstable. At the moment most of Pakistan's revenue comes from remittances sent by overseas Pakistanis. Foreign investors are reluctant to come to the country because of the security situation. The textile industry he said is an areas which could be a really strong sector but we haven't taken any initiative. Pakistan has very few trading partners. When Pakistan faces a shortage of agricultural production, it has to import items.

He further commented on the public debt and that it is at 64% of our GDP⁴³. He noted that one positive was that the foreign reserves has increased in recent years⁴⁴. He asked the students to comment on whether there has been any progression after the 60's?

Syed Ghayoor Haider, an Abasyn student commented that Pakistan inherited a huge population post-independence and so it faced challenges as of the first day. He added however that there has been some notable progress. Pakistan's position in terms of rice and dairy milk exports⁴⁵.

Fazal ur Rehman, a Madrasah students stated that economy is an important issue and is the backbone of any country's development and progress. He purported that the problem is that we have had different policies. We also have colliding systems. Mostly we have a capitalist system. Governments haven't made proper policies. Apart from dictator's who have come in government, the changing leaderships have had their own priorities and preferences so they have changed policies according to their interests.

⁴³<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/government-debt-to-gdp>

⁴⁴<http://www.dawn.com/news/1210218>

⁴⁵ The country exported 3.7 million tons of rice in the last fiscal year compared to 3.3 million tons in the previous fiscal year- <http://tribune.com.pk/story/922868/fiscal-year-2014-15-rice-exports-fall-to-1-84b-as-world-market-tumbles/>

Mateen Hassan, an Abasyn student said the budget is a crucial issue. The deficit from the budget is alarming. It was 8 percent in the 90's but now it is at 5.2 percent⁴⁶.

Shabir Ahmad, a Madrasah student commented that Pakistan is gifted with minerals and natural resources. Its location is such that people can travel by air and by sea but the reason why we haven't had much progress is a collective fault of the government and the people. He made a comparison with India and said that Pakistan's crop spreads across 265,500 sq. km. In India he says they have focused on cultivation, marketing and technology. Farmers are given resources to cultivate. There is far more agriculture research being done there than in Pakistan⁴⁷. He further commented that in Pakistan defy the laws set by the government. We don't pay taxes. He cited the World Bank 2016 report which states that Pakistan is at number 138 out of 189 countries in terms of places of viable business⁴⁸.

Ali Aslam an Abasyn student argued that our investments are low and our expenditure is not proportional to our saving. He made comparisons with India and China and how their saving is much better than Pakistan.

Abdul Majeed, a Madrasah student commented that being an Islamic Republic we should not spend more than means as our religion teaches us not to be spendthrifts. He argued that government sends delegations to other countries and spends millions. He argued that we should focus on a welfare system like Islam teaches us to. We should not follow the western system. He argued that we don't progress because we have abandoned our Islamic teachings. The western countries may have become developed but we cannot follow their ideology.

⁴⁶<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/government-budget>

⁴⁷<http://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/compare/India/Pakistan/Agriculture>

⁴⁸<http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/pakistan/>

Faraz Ahmed, an Abasyn student argued that technology is a crucial issue. He stated that if we pay attention towards technology it would benefit the economy. He commented that local business men prefer to invest abroad rather than the country. They need to be motivated to invest in the country.

Sohaib ul Hasan, a Madrasah student argued that because of the peace situation in Pakistan, foreign investors don't come to the country. He further argued that we keep taking loans from IMF and we don't have a proper plan in place to repay debts. He also commented that there is an unfair distribution of resources in Pakistan. He questioned why there is so much money spent on defense.

Nauman Ghaffar, an Abasyn student argued that the political differences are damaging the economy. He argued that the Metro project was very expensive. He argued that the Nandipur Power Project has been a wastage⁴⁹. We should look into projects that will help our economy get better. Ministers spend money without accountability.

Fazal ul Wadood, a Madrasah student purported that Pakistan is hit by floods almost every year and that affects the agricultural yield. We need to look into projects that will prevent such damage. We need to build dams. Such projects will also create employment.

Conclusion

During the two discussions on Pakistan Affairs, the students made some pertinent observations. As far as the first discussion on education was concerned, there seemed to be no unanimity beyond the point that there should be free primary education for all and that parallel education systems in the country were undesirable and needed to be replaced with a standardized education system for all. There was hardly any agreement on what that standardized education system should look like. While

⁴⁹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1206683>

some of the Madrasah students were calling for an Islamic education system, the university students were referring to the need for greater motivation of the teachers.

During the second Pakistan Affairs discussion on “Causes of Pakistan’s Weak Economy,” there was also convergence of opinions on the fact that Pakistan was economically weak and that diverse factors were responsible for the sorry state of economic affairs in the country. Beyond that there was a considerable amount of disagreement. Some students said that the government was responsible for the economic woes of the country while others pointed the finger toward the lack of dynamism within the society. Madrasah students called for adopting an Islamic model of economy that would ban interest-based banking. The university students, on the other hand, emphasized the need for controlling budget deficits and a greater government focus on education and technological development. There was unanimity of opinion on greater government support for agricultural sector as the mainstay of Pakistan’s economy though. There was also unanimity of views on controlling extravagance in the society and promoting greater savings. Some students also called for equitable distribution of wealth within the society and control over supply and demand of commodities. They argued that if good projects were taken up, they could create employment and eventually help the country. They also noted that the security situation in Pakistan was scaring away the local and foreign investors alike.

Muslim Ummah and the Challenges of Modern Times



Peace through Economic Cooperation: Can India and Pakistan Move Forward?



Problems of Education System in Pakistan



Causes of Pakistan's Weak Economy



Who We Are? Pakistan's Sectarian War



The Shrinking White in the Pakistani Flag



Pakistan's Cultural Identity: What are the Sources of our Cultural Pride?



Art Forms and Islam: What is Permissible?



Are Reason and Religion in Conflict with Each Other?



The Role of Science in Development and Prosperity of Nations



Concluding Ceremony









Chapter Three: Peaceful Co-Existence

The fifth and sixth discussions of UMIP were on the theme of peaceful coexistence. The two topics under the theme of peaceful coexistence were sectarian differences in the country and treatment accorded to religious minorities. The two discussions were on controversial topics but the students expressed their opinions on the two topics with great sense of responsibility and respect toward diversity of opinion. We believe that the very holding of the two discussions on these subjects was a success. Some participants of the two discussions also appreciated the effort of CODE PAKISTAN in bringing the students of the two education systems together for discussion on topics that they might not even discuss informally.

Who We Are? Pakistan's Sectarian War

Summary

The participants discussed the root causes of the sectarian violence that has risen in Pakistan over the years. The discussion started with how stereotyping has become common and has affected the level of tolerance. It was argued that Pakistanis generally stereotype everyone into categories and attach a certain judgment on their character; for instance, individuals with long beards, or the ones wearing western attire. The students argued that religion is a sensitive matter and when differences arise, people tend to be driven by emotionalism. Reference was made to the different schools of thought that we have in Islamic jurisprudence and the divisions within the various sects.⁵⁰ Students gave arguments on how the different identities have been made into a cause of conflict

⁵⁰ For details, see <http://www.al-islam.org/inquiries-about-shia-islam-sayyid-moustafa-al-qazwini/five-schools-islamic-thought>

instead of learning to coexist with them. The students maintained that differences were almost encouraged in Pakistan with the various groups having staunch notions about others.

The students argued that the Quran taught Muslims to be united. Examples were given of the Quranic references that discourage differences and in fact make mention of unity in faith towards the Lord and togetherness. The students argued that Quran has referred to "brotherhood" on several occasions.⁵¹ Participants quoted incidents of violence that have occurred over the years, killing of members of the Shia community, persecution of Ahmadis, and target-killing of Sunni leaders. Students opined that terrorism was not associated with any school of thought or religious following. They maintained that most recent incidents of violence had come from individuals who were not associated with any Madrasah or religious clergy which made it even more alarming. A student referred to the IBA student Saad Aziz and his friends, who allegedly took part in plotting terrorist attacks in Karachi.⁵²

Students argued that differences were generated by considering oneself to be superior, and considering one's own beliefs to be dictated by truth and stating everything else as being false. Some argued that terrorism was not just a local but a global issue. Some students referred to the Shiite revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 and opined that sectarianism was at its highest peak at the time. They maintained that some Sunni Arab leaders saw Khomeini as a Shia leader rather than a Muslim leader and the tensions were visible. Students further argued that similar troubles could be witnessed in Iraq and Syria. They commented that with the advent of Islam came the concept of peaceful coexistence. Most of the students were of the view that problems needed to be solved by constructive dialogue much like the discussion they were participating in under UMIP. Some students argued that sectarian

⁵¹ For more, see http://islam.about.com/od/divisions/f/quran_sects.htm

⁵² <http://www.dawn.com/news/1183322>

differences were fueled during the rule of former president of Pakistan Zial ul Haq.⁵³

Some students argued that individuals tried to take the law into their own hands when the state law or the government failed to provide any solutions. They blamed inaction on the part of the government for increase in hate because their grievances remained unaddressed. Some students also talked about the responsibility shared by the scholars and preachers. They called on the teachers and scholars to teach kindness and tolerance. Some students argued that in other countries, people from all sects went to one mosque but in Pakistan there were different places of worship. Some hinted that external influences were involved in fueling the hate. Mention was also made to the role of the media and how it needed to be considerate in what it was conveying to audiences.

Points of Convergence

All students agreed that there needed to be tolerance within the community and that Islam was a religion that emulated harmony and brotherhood. Many students made references to the relevant Quranic verses. The students argued that the matter could be resolved through dialogue.

A student of Abasyn University Fazal Rehman had everyone in agreement, when he purported that scholars and teachers only talked about the dissimilarities and did not teach about other sects in a way that could make his pupils understand them and respect them. He suggested that the commonalities must first be highlighted and that people should learn to accept others.

Students also agreed on a point made by Jahangir, a Madrasah student, that Pakistanis were generally rigid in their beliefs. "We want others to

⁵³ Statistics show that casualties of sectarian violence and terrorist incidents have been increasing since 2008 <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm>

follow what we think and that decreases tolerance. No one should be allowed to enforce their beliefs on another,” he said. He called on the government to make appropriate legislation against the spread of sectarian hatred.

Tanveer Ahmed made a point that resonated with the room, when he said that each sect had the right to love and be educated. “Matters turn into violence, when others try to influence groups and people,” he said.

Points of Divergence

Some students hinted at external forces being involved in spreading the violence. Comments were made about involvement of Jews and some quoted the 1979 Iranian revolution and the Afghan war against Russia as being the sources of discord. However the moderator was quick to challenge whether it is wise to blame others or whether we need to put our own house in order. This led to some agreement on individual responsibility. However, Abdullah Khaliq, a Madrasah student, dismissed any individual responsibility and said the burden was on the state and government. He argued that debates did not bring solutions because the ordinary person was not at fault.

Aqil Khaliq, a Madrasah student, commented that differences could be of two types, one on minor matters and the others relating to belief. He further argued that when there was a difference in belief or *Aqeeda*, it could be noted in Islamic history that an army was sent to address the matter. He added that it was the government’s responsibility to punish anyone who spread differences in belief. However he added that other disagreements could be dealt with in a peaceful manner.

Usama, an Abasyn University student lamented that in Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon, sectarian differences were created and arms were provided to escalate matters. He cautioned against such a situation in Pakistan.

Detailed Overview

The discussion was moderated by Ali Hameed of the Shaoor Foundation for Education and Awareness. He began the discussion making reference to the varied sects we have in Islam, having been formed over the years. He spoke about the different schools of thought. He said sectarian differences have increased in the past few years as we begin to stereotype people. We have preconceived notions about people who have beards and people who wear western attires. He made reference to the fact that today it is difficult to pin point one group for the terrorism. He gave Saad Aziz's example as reference, a regular student from IBA who was alleged to have plotted terrorist attacks in Karachi and presumably killed Sabeen Mehmud⁵⁴. He implored the students to discuss ways of breaking the stereotypes.

Abdul Rauf a Madrasah commented that diversity can be a blessing and it can also become an issue. He commented that diversity can be a gift, people with different religious beliefs have the right to express themselves and it is a beautiful thing. However it can become an issue when we begin to think of ourselves as superior and of another as inferior.

Hassan Hasnain Abid, an Abasyn student lamented that we need to look at sectarianism not from a Pakistani perspective but from a global point of view. He gave reference to how sectarian terrorism was on the rise during the Iranian revolution. He commented that matters were sorted by dialogue as seen all through the Islamic history, why can't they be sorted now like the discussion at present?

The moderator intervened to say that we need not blame other countries we must first put our own house in order. We need to first consider our own domestic problems and bring reform.

⁵⁴ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/889452/arrested-safoora-attack-mastermind-confesses-to-sabeen-mahmuds-murder/>

Usama an Abasyn student argued that there are verses from the Quran that speak of brotherhood, oneness as a community and oneness in our belief in Allah. He agreed with the moderator that we must look at ourselves prior to anyone else. He referred to three phases when he thinks the violence spewed, the Iranian revolution, Zial ul Haq's regime and the Afghan war against Russia. He also commented on the affect of the sectarian war on the country's economy and the GDP. He also spoke about Tunisia, Lebanon and Egypt and how sectarian differences were created within the communities and arms were provided. We must not follow their suit.

The moderator added that everyone has a different angle. We must leave today with one thought. He referred to the past and a time when the country was prospering despite the various sects living in Pakistan. He asked the students to pin point the issue.

Jahangir, a Madrasah student argued that we no longer respect one another. We stick to our own beliefs and expect others to think in the same way. The government should be responsible for enforcing laws that prevent people from mocking other's beliefs and offending other sects. People take the law into their own hands when the government fails to do anything and they feel aggrieved.

The moderator inquired about the responsibility of the scholars, preachers and teachers. We must educate each other on compassion. We are humans before anything else. We feel emotions the same way, have similar aspirations.

Jahangir further commented that it is the duty of the scholars to teach tolerance. He argued that no one gathers on any given day. During Friday prayers you sometimes see people from different schools of thought. Scholars should talk about it.

The moderator argued that the government must play its role. Even if there is any disagreement, we must not resort to violence.

Aqil Khaliq, a Madrassha student argued that the Sahaba Abu Hraira was given a reply by the Prophet once that Muslims are all brothers. Scholars and academics all condemn the violence. However he pointed that differences maybe of two types, one menial matters and one being difference in *Aqeeda*, with the latter he says there should be laws that punish people who spread differences in *Aqeeda*. However he made note of the fact that the religion itself talks about love and harmony and that is how it should be.

The moderator questioned the students on why matters turn into violence that leads to killing. The disagreement starts on a small scale but gets escalated.

Aqil Khaliq replied by saying that faith is in our hearts and who is right or wrong is a matter to be decided by the Lord.

The Shrinking White in the Pakistani Flag

Summary

The discussion involved students in evaluating the state of minorities in Pakistan. Interestingly, most students were of the view that the white in the Pakistani flag was not shrinking—as the topic of the discussion suggested—but was in fact spreading. They made these comments based on their opinions of the kind of security accorded to the minorities in Pakistan. Reference was made initially by the moderator to the percentage of non-Muslims that were residing in Pakistan at the time of partition, comprising 23 percent.⁵⁵ He spoke of the second largest temple in the world being in Baluchistan.⁵⁶ He emphasized Pakistan as home to several religions over history. He stated, however, that violence against minorities had increased in Pakistan over the past few years. He referred

⁵⁵ See <http://www.hudson.org/research/9781-cleansing-pakistan-of-minorities>

⁵⁶ See <https://wondersofpakistan.wordpress.com/2011/06/03/hinglaj-the-hindu-holy-shrine-in-hingol-balochistan/>

to the attacks on the Ahmadis⁵⁷ and Christians⁵⁸ and their general persecution.

Participants followed up the discussion making reference to the speech given by the founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah where he stated that people of all religious faiths will be able to reside in Pakistan⁵⁹ and argued that minorities in Pakistan were in fact very safe. According to the students, minorities in Pakistan were given more protection and rights than the Muslim majority. Participants argued that the Christian community in Pakistan was increasing and that comments taken from some Christians have shown that they are in fact quite satisfied. Some Madrasah students took note of the fact that the concept of minorities in a country was a western one and that in Islam all communities of all religions would live in agreement with the state. They argued that Islamic states protected religious minorities, gave them the right of property, and the right to practice their religion freely and pay taxes to the state in return. Students argued that violence was irreligious, and that all places of worship, including those of the Muslims, were attacked. Comments were also made on the fact that in Islam, no one could force the religion upon anyone, but if someone would leave the faith then the punishment was supposed to be death.

Students were of the view that the non-Muslims were accorded constitutional rights in Pakistan, including the right to vote. Some students noted that non-Muslims were studying with Muslims in schools and there was never any issue until there was a matter of blasphemy. Even in the cases of violence on matters of blasphemy, the students argued that it was the result of government's inaction against the perpetrators of blasphemy that would usually result in violence. Some of

⁵⁷ See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/ahmadi-mosque-attacked-in-pakistan-after-blasphemy-rumor_us_5650a369e4b0879a5b0b4242

⁵⁸ See <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/tag/attacks-on-christians-in-pakistan/>

⁵⁹ See http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/txt_jinnah_assembly_1947.html

the students did concede, however, that the blasphemy law was at times misused against people to serve individual interests. Students believed that only a few families had left Pakistan because of violence against minorities. They went on to suggest that religious minorities in Pakistan was much safer compared to other countries.

Points of convergence

Almost all the students agreed that minorities enjoyed a lot of freedom in Pakistan. They were given respect, allowed employment opportunities, received education, and allowed to vote.

Students acknowledged the incidents of violence that had occurred but commented that they usually involved a case of blasphemy. However, once the moderator made note of the fact that the blasphemy law was used to make false allegations, students agreed on such instances having occurred and regarded them as being done for personal interests. The students argued, however, that it was because of government's inaction against the perpetrators of blasphemy that would usually result in violence.

As the moderator made mention of some non-Muslims being forced out of their homes and receiving ill-treatment from Muslim majority, some students agreed that there were threats against minorities. In particular, Fazal Rehman of Abasyn University made reference to the ill-treatment towards girls in Hindu and Sikh communities in Sindh.

Points of Divergence

Some students argued that instances of violence with reference to blasphemy occurred because the government failed to take any action and the individuals had to take the law into their own hands. Tanveer, a Madrasah student argued that if someone would insult religion, or religious figures, there would be repercussions. However Fazal Rehman, an Abasyn student, argued that people should not be allowed to take the

law into their own hands and that the laws on blasphemy needed to be understood.

Some students argued that all instances of violence in the country were due to intolerance but nothing was particularly targeted against religious minorities. They argued that people tended to react before the state could even act on a matter. He made reference to the well-to-do Hindus and Sikhs who lived in Swat and said that there was absolute harmony. Some students argued that mosques were attacked more than any other place of worship so the general population was unsafe.

Some argued that Muslims in India were mistreated more than religious minorities in Pakistan. They maintained that Muslims in India were forced to change their religion, whereas in Pakistan, Hindus were given due respect.

Detailed Overview

The moderator began the discussion by making reference to the 23% non-Muslim population that came to live in Pakistan post-independence. He then made references to the various instances of violence that have now made it difficult for minorities to live in Pakistan. He spoke of the attack against the Ahmadi's place of worship in November⁶⁰ and said that we need to accept that there is mistreatment of minorities and that is a fact. Pakistan is situated in a region that has been home to many religions.

Osama, an Abasyn student argued that founder of the nation Mohammad Ali Jinnah on August 11, 1947 addressed the Constituent Assembly and said that minorities would be given the freedom to practice their religions in Pakistan.⁶¹ They will be considered equal citizens. Osama argued that the majority population in Pakistan is unsafe. He argued that

⁶⁰ <http://www.dawn.com/news/1221273>

⁶¹ http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/txt_jinnah_assembly_1947.html

he has inquired from Christian friends if they are satisfied with the treatment they are accorded in the country and they responded that the Christian community is spreading in Pakistan. The Media plays a negative role in taking sides. They show that Hazaras are being killed but they do not run the news about an attack on a mosque in Raja Bazar.

Abdul Rauf, a Madrasah student commented that he agreed with a lot of things that Osama had said, he said that there was a general opinion that minorities were not safe in Pakistan. He purported that the concept of minorities is a western one and in an Islamic jurisdiction, the idea is that non-Muslims live in agreement with the state. They are given the right to property, freedom of religion and in return they pay taxes. Even Islamic history denotes that the Prophet himself hosted many non-Muslim delegations. He himself opined that the white in the flag is not shrinking but in fact spreading rapidly.

Hafiz, an Abasyn student argued that violence sees no religion. It is pure terrorism. If a temple is attacked, so is a mosque. There are no differences in rights accorded to non-Muslims. They have equal job opportunities, they have the right to vote. In academics they can study ethics instead of Islamiyat. We have non-Muslims studying with us and there is never any problem. He problem arises he says when the issue involves blasphemy. The government doesn't act so people take the law into their own hands.

Tanveer, a Madrasah student argued that the Constitution of Pakistan provides rights to the minorities⁶². It has been based on standards of Shariah. Blasphemy is the main problem. When someone attacks your religion or religious figure, there will be a reaction. What one must do is enforce the constitution. The media projects issues in such a way that people feel their religion is not protected. The media never highlights

⁶² <http://www.itacec.org/document/nep09/minorities.pdf>

those countries where Muslims are suffering and going through inhumane treatment.

The moderator intervened to say that the Quaid had said that at one point the religions won't matter because everyone will be united by way of nationality. There is a long history against Hazara community. There is structural violence and then there are one off instances. Quetta is a small city and there is constant violence. Under Islamic law there is no encouragement towards violence. He questioned, what are we doing as a people? As a child he recalls, there was never any issue during the *Ashur days of Muharram*, but now the city goes on high alert. He also argued that blasphemy laws are wrongly used. Many Muslims become victims of the law because of false allegations. Sometimes because of petty matters, allegations of blasphemy are made and the whole community acts in violence before even giving the matter a second thought.

Zubair, an Abasyn student commented that Nawaz Sharif made all public places free for minorities so that there is equality among all.

Yasir, a Madrasah student argued that Pakistan gives rights to minorities. We live in an Islamic republic and our religion instructs us to do so. He strongly condemned any act of violence and said the religion preaches peace but he acknowledged that problems arise when the matter touches blasphemy.

Fazal Rehman an Abasyn student argued that girls from minority communities are forcibly taken away and compelled to accept Islam. He addressed the incident of violence against Ahemdis and said that was for political interests. The laws against blasphemy need to be properly understood. People should not be allowed to take the law into their own hands.

Hasnain, an Abasyn student commented that people have left Pakistan not because of violence against minorities but because of the living conditions. He argued that in some communities Hindus are landlords.

Sikhs come to Pakistan for pilgrimage. We as a nation need to be more tolerant. Most problems are because of growing terrorism.

Abdul Rauf, a Madrasah student argued that Muslims in countries like France are facing a lot of oppression. In Pakistan, no minority is living in that kind of fear. There are incidents of violence but they are because of personal differences. Islam encourages us to protect non-Muslims living in the community. According the taxing system set in Islamic jurisprudence, he argued that once you take money from non-Muslims, you are indebted to them. In Islam non-Muslims can even conduct business of things that are otherwise *haram*⁶³.

Muhammad Hsnain, an Abasyn student commented that in India, Muslims are forced to change their religion. Everyday a Muslim is martyred. Sikhs in India are also unhappy, in Pakistan, Hindus are given a safe environment.

Mhammad Idrees, a Madrasah student commented that when the court sentenced Salman Taseer's murderer to death⁶⁴, that set a good example of what is right and what is wrong. He further commented that the blasphemy laws are wrongly applied. He stated that the *Shariah*⁶⁵ gives us clear instructions on who can qualify as a witness but no regard is given to that in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The two discussions on the theme of Peaceful Coexistence were very informative about the perceptions of the students of the two education systems on some prickly issues. In the first discussion on sectarianism, there was a remarkable convergence of views between the students of Madrasahs and Abasyn University. Unfortunately, however, the views of the students of both education systems were not grounded in reality as

⁶³ Forbidden by religion.

⁶⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34467603>

⁶⁵ Islamic Law.

much as they should have been. For instance, both university and Madrasah students acknowledged that sectarian violence was a problem but very few of them were willing to admit it was a religious problems that could have religious solutions. All of them agreed that though the Muslim community needed to live in harmony and embrace tolerance. Few students also referred to the responsibility of the scholars to teach respect for other schools of thought and to caution students against resorting to violence.

The discussion on minority rights turned out to be another of those subjects on which the views of the students of Abasyn University and the Madrasahs did not seem to diverge too much. Students of both the institutions emphasized the religiously, politically, and legally ordained rights of minorities in Pakistan. As was the case with sectarianism, however, the students of both education systems seemed to have very little knowledge about the on-ground situation of the violation of minority rights in Pakistan. Many of them were in complete denial of violation of minority rights in the country, and some even said that Muslims were suffering more in Pakistan as compared to the religious minorities. The general argument was that religious minorities were protected by the constitution and given adequate rights. If at all, the instances of violence that occurred were either due to general terrorism which makes no distinction of religion and because of cases of blasphemy. However some agreed that blasphemy laws were not properly applied and are often misused.

Chapter Four: Art and Culture

The seventh and eighth discussion of UMIP were on the theme of art and culture. The first of the two discussions was on Pakistan's cultural identity and the sources of its pride while the second discussion was on art forms and Islam. The theme of art and culture was an important one because we hardly get a chance to hear from the students of Madrasah students on art and culture and what they think of the permissibility of different art forms or the sources of Pakistan's cultural pride. The two discussions resulted in some very interesting insights into the thinking of Madrasah as well as university students on Pakistan's cultural identity as well as art forms and Islam.

Pakistan's Cultural Identity: What are the Sources of our Cultural Pride?

Summary:

Culture is something which can give people a connection to certain social values, beliefs, religions, and customs. It allows them to identify with others of similar mindsets and backgrounds. Cultural heritage can provide an automatic sense of unity and belonging within a group and allows us to better understand our histories and traditions. We live in a time in which every nation faces cultural challenges. Some nations are more open to diversity, while others try to remain homogeneous. This was the very basis of the first discussion.

The purpose of the discussion was to engage the students of University and Madrasah alike into a discussion of what part of history they feel to be a source of cultural pride. Like every country, Pakistan boasts many cultural marvels many of which are recognized on a worldwide scale.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ For instance Pakistan has a cultural and ethnic background going back to the Indus Valley Civilization, which existed from 2800–1800 B.C., and was remarkable for its ordered cities, advanced sanitation, excellent roads, and uniquely structured society. Its remains

The moderator for the discussion put emphasis on the fact that Pakistan also hosts cultural and heritage sites of the minorities as well as monuments from Islamic history.⁶⁷The students were subjective in their opinions as to what they felt should and shouldn't be categorized as "cultural pride." Being able to voice their opinion, they did not restrict themselves to the things which we should take pride in, but took the opportunity to also discuss what they felt should not be a part of the cultural pride of Pakistan.

One of the primary points of discussion was language being a part of the culture. This provided the students the opportunity to discuss the role of the national language of Pakistan "Urdu" and the languages spoken in different regions within the country, i.e., Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, and Punjabi. The students were initially emphasizing the importance of Urdu and its prioritization over all other languages, especially the ones which are not inherent to Pakistan's culture or roots. On the other hand, other students were of the view that Urdu being a mixture of languages could not be categorized as part of our culture and instead the provincial languages which formed Pakistan's cultural pride. Regardless, there was a sense of unanimity that a total exclusion of other languages may stifle diversity. The moderator clarified that both Urdu and the provincial languages were indeed a part of our culture.

Another major point which was raised within the discussion was regarding religion as part of culture and specifically in the context Islam.

still exist i.e. MohenjoDaro<http://science.nationalgeographic.com/science/archaeology/mohenjo-daro/>

⁶⁷ For example Parsi Dare Meher is a worship place for Zoroastrians and is at times also referred to as 'fire temple'. The temple is one of the oldest architects of the city and even after six decades it is still very well maintained; **Katasraj Mandir** (Urdu: گھنٹا گاہ کاتسراج) is a Hindu temple complex situated in Katas village near Choa Saidan Shah in the Chakwal district of Punjab in Pakistan. Dedicated to Shiva the Hindu God. The smaller temples, built in pairs around the larger central temple, were built around 900 years or so ago, although the earliest of them dates back to the latter half of the 6th century AD.

Initially students were of the view that there should be a complete Islamic culture imposed into Pakistan and that Islam was a part of Pakistan's culture. Here, the moderator was quick to clarify that Pakistan had minorities and that if we were to do so this would be unjust to them. This resonated within the students and they eventually conceded the importance of religious diversity.

Lastly, another point which was condemned in the discussion was that of the culture of not letting women go out of their houses in certain parts of Pakistan. Several students agreed that such a culture should be condemned. They argued that neither was it just to women nor was it in line with the principles of Islam or any other religion. Never the less, some students made particular reference to this concept being in place as a respect for the women folk rather than as oppressive.

Points of Convergence

Although there were initial disagreements with regard to the standing of Urdu within our society, the moderator Shafqat Huma clarified the concept and said that both Urdu and the native languages of the provinces could form a part of the culture. Another convergence came later on when Burhan from Abasyn University expressed his view that notwithstanding the importance of Urdu and other native languages if another language could lead to prosperity, it could be adopted. M. Zaid Khalid of Abasyn University expressed a very interesting opinion which resonated throughout the discussion. He said that although Urdu was imperative for Pakistani culture, but if helpful literature could be found in other languages, those should be learnt as well.

The moderator initially pointed out that there were other minorities which were in Pakistan and it would not be just to them if a complete Islamic culture was imposed.⁶⁸ With regards to what Suhaib Hashmi said about culture being non-existent in Pakistan, the moderator cited few

⁶⁸ The views of Atif Arif of Abasyn University were along the same lines

very simple examples which were effective for clarifying the misconception of the students. For example, he pointed out that Buddha studied in the part of the subcontinent which we now call Pakistan.

The moderator and the students alike were of the view that the culture of putting strict restrictions on women should be condemned and that it was in no way a source of our cultural pride. As a student put it, "If nobody can provide for her or her children then what is she to do?" The moderator gave examples of freedoms accorded to women from Islamic history.

Points of Divergence

Prior to the convergence the students were divided in their views on the importance of language for culture. Different opinions were raised as to the extent of importance which should be given to the national language of Pakistan, i.e., Urdu.

Fazal ur Rahman from Madrasah was the first one to emphasize on the importance of Urdu and said, "as far as our culture is concerned Urdu is very crucial." He went onto express his concerns about Urdu falling into misuse and English being preferred over it. Muhammad Jamshed from Madrasah was of the view that language was very important for culture. Muhammad Saeed from Madrasah was of the view that Pakistanis could lead themselves to prosperity through Urdu instead of adopting foreign languages and that Urdu will keep playing an integral role in the development of Pakistan.

Another point which emerged was from Muhammad Huzaifa, a student of Abasyn University who said that language had nothing to do with the Pakistani culture because there was essentially no common language in the country. He was basically of the view that each province of Pakistan had its own native language. Ali Munir expressed views along the same lines where he pointed towards the history of Urdu and stated that it was a mixture of several different languages. One university student was in

particular agreement in this regard. He said, “If somebody were to ask me my language, I would say Pushto.”

The students were initially of the view that strict Islamic culture needed to be enforced within Pakistani society and that Pakistanis as nation should never overlook Islam as part of their culture.

Fazal ur Rahman from the Madrasah commented that Pakistanis should appreciate local traditions and also try and follow Islamic culture. Suhaib Hashmi from the Madrasah was of the view that the culture was now non-existent and that Pakistanis had left their ways. In essence, they wanted the elements of other cultures to not be a part of Pakistan. As evident from what Anas Bin Fakhar, a student from Madrasah said, other cultures ought not be followed as the culture was the representation of a person.

M. Jamshed from Madrasah expressed a different opinion by saying that there were two types of cultures the one inherent to the religion and the other inherent and distinct to that place.⁶⁹ However, he was ultimately of the view that anything against the notions of Islam shouldn't be adopted as part of culture.

With regards to women some students pointed out that in some parts of Pakistan it was part of the culture to not let the women go outside of their houses so as to study or do other things⁷⁰. They were against the idea, however, they still found it to be an important point within the discussion.

Detailed Overview

The discussion took place on the 3rd of December with the moderator for the day being Shafqat Huma who, as aforementioned, is currently the

⁶⁹ The views of Anas Bin Fakhar from Madrasah were along the same lines.

⁷⁰ The view of M. Huzaifa of Abasyn University and M. Jamshed from Madrasah

Assistant Professor at the University of Lahore and a fellow at the University of Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and is also a member of the advisory board of CODE PAKISTAN started off the discussion with the aim of identifying the sources of our cultural pride and the session was also presided over by Dilawar Khan, founder of CODE PAKISTAN. The moderator gave the floor to the students posing the initial question i.e. what the sources are per the students.

Fazal ur Rahman from Madrasah started off the discussion by stating the importance of language to any and every culture in the world. In particular he expressed the idea that Urdu should be spoken throughout Pakistan and that it is a source of our cultural pride. He was also of the opinion that people in Pakistan have abandoned their local tradition and have instead adopted other cultures. Lastly, he was of the view that an Islamic culture must be imposed within Pakistan.

Ali Munirof Abasyn University said that Urdu is not inherent to the Pakistani culture and instead it is a mixture of several other languages⁷¹. He further stressed that Islam is a part of our cultural pride as it was the reason for the formation of Pakistan⁷².

Umair Javed of Abasyn University stressed that we need some elements of other cultures to prosper. He cited the example of English and said that a lot of literature is in English and thus that part of another culture may be used so as to prosper.

Ahsan ul Haq from Madrasah expressed the view that as of now the people of Pakistan are divided into two categories. The one category is completely following the Islamic culture whilst the other category has

⁷¹ **Urdu is a mixture** of words taken from different **languages** such as Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Hindi. See <http://www.dawn.com/news/681263/urdus-origin-its-not-a-camp-language>

⁷² The **two-nation theory** was a founding principle of the Pakistan Movement and the partition of India in 1947. The ideology that religion is the main factor in defining the nationality of Indian Muslims was used by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He called it 'the awakening of Muslims for the creation of Pakistan'.

adopted a lot of things from other cultures. He expressed the opinion that this difference is leading to terrorism.

Muhammad Jamshed from Madrasah expressed his thoughts regarding the Islamic culture and said that religion and culture go hand in hand and that to prosper we must follow an Islamic culture. He also stressed the importance of language and its nexus with success as a nation.

Replying to Muhammad Jamshed, Muhammad Zaid Khalid of Abasyn University highlighted the importance of other languages and said that we can only revert back to our language if we have translated all the literature and since that hasn't been achieved we must rely on and use other languages.

Suhaib Hashmi from Madrasah expressed his opinion and said that the elements of culture which we took pride on are now non-existent and that we have left the ways of Islam.

Muhammad Huzaifa of Abasyn University was of the view that language has no relation with culture especially when it comes to Urdu as each province has their own language. He was also the first one to condemn the culture of not letting women out of their houses and said that if they are not educated they can't up bring their children properly.

Adding to what Huzaifa said Jasim Khan of Abasyn University said that if someone were to ask me my language I would say that it is Pashto.

Anas Bin Fakhar from Madrasah gave insight into the very definition of what culture is and raised the point that when people go abroad they take up other cultures and that this should be stopped.

In response to the non-existence of Pakistani culture the moderator gave some excellent examples of our cultural pride which have been described in the divergence and convergence section.

Basit Ali from Madrasah said that we have not followed Islam and had we done so women would be allowed to go out of their houses to get education and if women are not allowed to go out they can't provide for their families.

In response and appreciating what Basit and Muhammad Huzaifa said, the moderator cited an incident of Hazrat Ayesha to clarify as to how Islam has no room for such cultures.

Mudassir from the University was the first one to emphasize that the clothes we wear are a part of our cultural pride and that now we have taken up the attire of other cultures which should be condemned.

Muhammad Saeed from Madrasah agreed with Mudassir and said that we must stick to the attire which is inherent to our culture. He was further of the opinion that Urdu can lead us to prosperity.

Atif Arif from the university said that if we are to follow a completely Islamic culture it would be unjust to the minorities.

Burhan of Abasyn University talked about women rights and said that the culture regarding women be abolished. He was also of the opinion that national language may not necessarily lead to prosperity.

Lastly, Fazal ur Rahman raised the point that media should play a role in increasing awareness of our culture.

Art Forms and Islam: What is permissible?

Summary

The Madrasah students began with the clarification that Islam encouraged art and that the Islamic rulers had also produced several marvels when it comes to architectural excellence specifically in the construction of mosques. They were also mindful of the benefits that art brings with it in the form of employment and prosperity.

One of the major points of the discussion with regards to music and poetry, in this regard the Madrasah students were of the view that it is one of the few things which may not be permissible under Islam. Later on however, poetry and music were distinguished and thus dictating that music may only be permissible in very limited circumstances which are discussed in the divergences and convergences section.

With regards to photography and paintings, there was a consensus from the Madrasah students that the painting of living things can't be made, nor should photographs be taken of living things. However, any photo or painting of non-living things is permissible. When asked the question about the identification photos they expressed the view that it is one of the few exceptions and the reason for that is necessity.

Points of Convergence

It was Syed Hasnain from Abasyn University who differentiated music from poetry and said that if music did not influence one's thoughts in a negative manner it would be permissible. He further pointed out that the art of poetry had been exercised by several poets to express their love for the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and also used to spread positive messages as a whole. Upon this differentiation Nafees ul Hassan agreed that poetry if used in a positive manner was permissible, however, he still stood staunch on his beliefs regarding music. This view was echoed by Abdul Razzak from Madrasah who expressed the same opinions in this regard.⁷³

The students with regards to the extent of permissibility of photography and paintings had almost unanimous thoughts. Abdul Rahman of the Madrasah was the first one to point out that there was a prohibition on the photography of living things and photography of all other things was permissible. Muhammad Saeed added to this by including paintings and agreed with Abdul Rahman and said that indeed the rule about

⁷³ The views of Muhammad Saeed from Madrasah were along the same lines

photography extended to paintings as well. He further said that engineers made sketches for building designs, which were allowed.

This raised the question about the permissibility of photos when taken for the purposes of necessity, i.e., identification. Suhaib Hashmi from Madrasah clarified this point by saying that it was valid, because in the modern world it was a necessity to have photographic identification and on that basis it could be granted an exception to the general rule. He further stated that digital photos of living things could also be put in the exception to the general rule of non-photography and non-sketching of living things.

Points of Divergence

The point of the prohibition of music in Islam was initially raised by Nafees ul Hassan from the Madrasah who was of the view that religion had no room for music whatsoever and that there should be a prohibition on it.⁷⁴

Burhan from the Abasyn University asked the Madrasah students about the permissibility of Qawali in Islam, since it—in his opinion—was used to spread the message of Islam in the subcontinent.⁷⁵ Most of the Madrasah students, however, were opposed to the use of any musical instrument.

The points regarding photography started off from Abdul Rahman from the University who was of the view that there was a prohibition on photography, subject however to a few conditions which will be discussed within the convergence.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ The views of Abdul Razzak from Madrasah were along the same lines

⁷⁵ A style of Muslim devotional music now associated particularly with Sufis. For its details see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qawwali>

⁷⁶ The views of Burhan from the university were along the same lines

Detailed Overview

This session was presided over by Dilawar Khan the President of CODE PAKISTAN and the Executive Director of CODE PAKISTAN Aarish U. Khan. The moderator for the day was Shahid Ilyas (see Summary for the introduction). The discussion was initiated by Aarish who started off by giving the example of art as a medium of communication for instance when films are used to convey messages. He regarded it as a source of creativity, a creativity which may ultimately lead to inventions which may eventually benefit humans. He then gave the floor to the moderator Shahid. He started the discussion by telling the students about the broad interpretation of art and then gave the floor to the students so that discussion of what is and is not permissible in Shariah or Islam can be initiated.

Amir Rehman a student of Madrasah clarified that Islam embraces and welcomes art and that Islam wants us to appreciate beauty and one medium of expression could be regarded as art. He further added that Islam has itself brought about many marvels which are still looked upon with great respect.

Abdul Rehman from Abasyn University stated that photography is not allowed in Islam and explained and posed this question to Madrasah students as to why that is.

Nafeesul Hassan from the Madrasah was of the view that there is a strict prohibition of Music in Islam and it can't be justified.

However, Syed Hasnain from the University differentiated music from poetry and expressed the view that although music may not be permissible yet poetry is.

Thus in response Nafees ul Hassan agreed with Hasnain that poetry is indeed allowed and has been used by scholars to express their love for the religion and the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

Suhaib Hashmi from Madrasah contributed to the discussion by telling others that although as a general rule photography of living things is not allowed however, for the purposes of identification it is allowed as it is a necessity.

Burhan of Abasyn University expressed his opinion that although music is not allowed however qawallis are and they can be differentiated from music. He also expressed the opinion that photography and art with regards to non-living things is permissible.

Muhammad Jamshaid from Madrasah reminisced about the olden times and cited the example of Masjid e Nabwi and Masjid e Aqsa and said that they are an illustration of the type of art Islam has produced. He also expressed his assent with regards to the permissibility of poetry.

Muhammad Saeed from Madrasah was of the view that Islam merely stops the photography of living things and doesn't prohibit any other sketches. He gave the example of an engineer making sketches and said that it is totally permissible.

Syed Hasnain from the university said that Calligraphy, sword fighting speech is all permissible.

Abdul Razzak from Madrasah said that music is not allowed and nor is photography. However, he was strongly of the view that writing is completely permissible.

Jasim Khan from Abasyn University, with regards to Poetry and music said that if music is negatively influencing minds it is not allowed and further if poetry is mixed with music then it is not permissible.

Ahsan ul Haq from the Madrasah expressed his view that inventions can be incorporated and Islam doesn't prohibit that. He said that loudspeakers were at first prohibited but later when explained were allowed.

One particular thing about this session was that Molana Tahir the head of the Madrasah volunteered to speak on this topic and thus the students in that discussion got the privilege to learn from an expert and thus the session as a whole was very productive.

Conclusion

The perceptions of the Madrasah and university students were neither too similar nor too divergent on art and culture. The two discussions on the theme of art and culture revealed, however, that the understanding of the students of both education systems about these important elements of social life was quite shallow. For instance, a good portion of the discussion on sources of Pakistan's cultural identity revolved around language, as if it was the only major source of cultural identity. Hardly did anyone speak about cultural pride. Even when there were slight references toward cultural pride, they were in the context of Islamic culture. The understanding about the local culture of Pakistan, which is a blend of Islamic and Indian cultures, was very limited among the students of both education systems.

In the second discussion about art forms and Islam, students mostly talked about drawing pictures and music, which consumed almost all of the allotted time of the discussion. While some university students were considered music as permissible in Islam, the Madrasah students strongly disagreed with it. On the issue of drawing/taking pictures, the Madrasah students conceded that pictures of non-living things could be drawn/taken. They also made an interesting observation that digital pictures of living things were also permissible in Islam. It was disappointing though that the students only talked about the apparent manifestations of art forms without discussing the essence of art as instilling creativity, despite the fact that Executive Director CODE PAKISTAN Aarish Khan had talked about the importance of art for creativity in his opening remarks.

Chapter Five: Science

The ninth and tenth discussions of UMIP were on the theme of science. Science was chosen as the last theme of UMIP because in essence science, with its emphasis on the provability of processes, could raise questions about some of the foundationalist religious notions. This was exactly the question that was posed to the university and Madrasah students in the first discussion on the theme, that is, are reason and religion in conflict with each other. Thus the discussion partly also revolved around the ambit of science within the context of religion and whether it can or cannot abrogate these confines. The second discussion took the debate further by talking about the role of science in development and prosperity of nations.

Are Reason and Religion in Conflict with Each Other?

Summary

Some define reason to be a statement offered in explanation or justification, a rational ground or motive *or* a sufficient ground of explanation or of logical defense. It is therefore reasonable to think that it might be in conflict with religion, which appeals to faith with or without a provable explanation or justification. Thus this was the very topic which formed the basis of the discussion.

The moderator for the day was Shahid Ilyas a research officer at the Institute of Regional Studies. He started the discussion off by describing the roots of this conflict. Thus he discussed the renaissance era and how there was a clash between the church and the philosophers at the time.

The students spoke unanimously in their opinion that Islam clearly has room for reason and does in no way restrict it. Students gave the examples of Muslim scientists who were the forerunners of the rebirth of knowledge in Europe, and said that these people used their reason to mark their names in history so one must not restrict themselves to religion.

Notwithstanding this unanimity that there must be use of reason, some students denied the idea of reason and religion clashing with each other ever, and termed the two as distinct in nature. However, this divergence became a convergence upon the intervention through some excellent thoughts and thus the final thought on which the students left the discussion were: first, they may indeed clash; and second, in case of such a clash the religious view would prevail.

Much of the discussion also circled around the role of science and the clash it might have with religion. Initially the students expressed the view that the two things were the same and much of the knowledge of science was derivative from religion itself. However, ultimately there was a convergence that the two were indeed different. One student talked about Darwin's theory of evolution to prove that science and religion had differences.

Points of Convergence

Almost all the students were of the view that should a conflict between reason and religion occur the prevalence is to be given to religion.⁷⁷

Muhammad Umair Javed of Abasyn University expressed the view that People tend to do things in the name of religion without thinking them through therefore one had to use reason.⁷⁸ Even though Shakil of Abasyn University agreed that religion should prevail in case of a conflict, he still expressed the view that there should be a balance between religion and reason. In this regard, he said that some people would always confine themselves to a literal interpretation of religious texts while others would only make use of reason without ever resorting to religious explanations.

⁷⁷ The views of Khizar Hayat, MujeeburRahman from Madrasah were along the same lines

⁷⁸ The views of WaqasHussain of Abasyn University were along the same lines

A Madrasah student Asif Ullah differentiated Islam from science by saying that Islam tells us as to how we should conduct our affairs and thus there is a difference. Another slightly similar but rather interesting thought was from another Madrasah student Muhammad Awais who, within the context of reason, said that religion related to the spirit while science related to body.⁷⁹ Further, Ali Munirof Abasyn University was of the view that there have been instances of conflict between science and religion and gave the example of the Darwin's Theory of evolution. In this regard there was a broad consensus that religion and science must be balanced for there to be prosperity.⁸⁰

Points of Divergence

Some students like Muhammad Nasir from Madrasah were of the view that reason and religion could not conflict as they were different in nature. He, in particular, gave the example that just like an airplane and a car could not collide, reason and religion could not clash as well because they were on different tracks altogether.⁸¹

Muhammad Nawaz from Madrasah was strongly of the opinion that religion and science were not different and instead reason was subservient to religion. He gave the example of missile experiments to say that science could go wrong but religion could not. In this regard, Abdul Mohsin from Madrasah expressed the view that what Islam said 1400 years ago was now proving to be true thus proving that reason was indeed subservient to religion.⁸² Thus ultimately, the divergence was that science and religion were not different and rather science was subservient to religion. Collectively, they were expressing the view that since science is subservient to religion there can be no conflict.

⁷⁹ The views of MujeeburRahman from Madrasah were along the same lines

⁸⁰ See for instance the views of Muhammad Ibrahim from Madrasah

⁸¹ The views of Khizar Hayat, Muhammad Nasir and Shafiq Ahmed from Madrasah were along the same lines

⁸² The views of Abdur Rab Shah from the University were along the same lines

Detailed Overview

The session took place on the 16th of the December 2015, with the moderator for the day being Shahid Ilyas, a research analyst from IRS. The session was also presided over by the Director of CODE PAKISTAN Dilawar Khan. The moderator started off by discussing as to how the conflict between reason and religion began and he described the origin to be the renaissance era when the philosophers at the time used to question religion and were subsequently in clash with the church. He also reminisced about his childhood by saying that many scholars tended to prohibit us, to use our reason by saying that it would be against the religion. He then posed the question to the students that *“does religion really restrict reason to such an extent”* and then gave the floor to the students.

The first student to speak in this session was Muhammad Ibrahim, a student of Electrical Engineering from Abasyn University. He expressed the view that all world renowned Muslim scientists used their reason and furthermore in the present society it is imperative to not restrict ourselves to religion and instead use reason so that we can succeed in life.

Asif Ullah from Madrasah was of the view that religion gives us the information we need on how to conduct ourselves in the society, whereas science in the context of reason is regarding the pursuance of education and that we must take both hand in hand.

Muhammad Umair Javed of Abasyn University was of the view that although we should be emotional for our religion but that doesn't mean that we should restrict our reasoning. He further added that the people willing to do anything in the name of religion should also resort to reason.

Khizar Hayat from Madrasah was of the view that religion and reason have no conflict and are two different things. However, if there is a conflict then religion should prevail.

Waqas Hussain from the university was of the view that if we are to stay within the confines described by God and use reason within that ambit and not beyond, there can be no conflict.

Muhammad Nawaz from the Madrasah was of the view that there is no difference between religion and science. He reasons it by saying that science is proving the things what Islam has already described and that science may go wrong but religion can't.

Ali Munir from the University was of the view that religion and reason can indeed conflict particularly in the context of science and to prove his point he mentioned the Darwin theory and the conflict it has with Islam.

Abdul Mohsin from Madrasah was of the view that there can be no conflict and instead what Islam said 1400 years ago is now proving to be correct.

As a reply, Dilawar Khan cited the instance of *Miraj*⁸³ and the concept of time dilation and said that there is a big similarity between the two.

Abdur Rab Shah from the University was of the view that science is subservient to Quran and thus there can be no conflict.

Muhammad Nasir from Madrasah gave the example of a car and an airplane and said these two can't collide and just like them reason and religion can't either.

Shakil from the University expressed the views that there are people who stay within the limits of religion and never resort to reason and then there are others who use only reason and do not believe in religion. He was of the view that there should be a balance. These words were appreciated by the moderator.

⁸³ <http://www.islamicity.org/5843/isra-and-miraj-the-miraculous-night-journey/>

Mujeeb ur Rahman from the Madrasah was of the view that God has made things and science explains as to how they were made. He gives the examples of mountains and says that God made them and science explains the content of these mountains. He was also of the opinion that in case of a conflict we should prefer religion.

Shafiq Ahmed from Madrasah was of the view that science can use as much reason as it wants within its research and there will still be no conflict. According to him the reason for that is religion and reason being two different things.

Muhammad Awais from the Madrasah expressed the view and differentiated reason and religion by saying *“Religion is to spirituality what science is to body.”*

Ali Arif from the University explained and clarified the concept of time dilation.

Muhammad Ibrahim from the University was of the view that both religion and reason are imperative and thus there must be a balance between the two.

The Role of Science in Development and Prosperity of Nations

Summary

Developments in science and technology are fundamentally altering the way people live, connect, communicate and transact, with profound effects on economic development. And this was the very basis of the discussion at hand. The students from the university have a pre dominant engineering background and thus this discussion signified the value which their suggestion could well have.

Thus in essence this discussion was about the role that science has played within the society the role which it might be able to play in the future. However, gladly so the students did not limit the topic to this narrow interpretation and instead widened the scope by discussing the

drawbacks of science to nations and the role of languages with regards to science.

The students initially started a discussion on the benefits or drawbacks of science and the impacts of those very inventions. Some were of the view that science has made communication easy and has thus made it a global village⁸⁴. Others cited examples of the progress in the medical industry and how it is saving lives, some related it to the role science can play in eradicating famine. However, the others were of the view that science has corrupted morals and has brought deaths in the world through the weapons which have been created. However, there was a consensus that it is the user who uses science in an incorrect manner and the inventions itself aren't to be blamed.

Another pointed raised in the session was that of the role of language. The students expressed the view that Pakistan has a low literacy rate⁸⁵ and many people don't know English. Thus the content should be translated and only then can science play an effective role in the society. However, ultimately, a unanimity was found on the fact that it would take too much of a time to translate the content and instead focus should be upon learning English so as to benefit from science.

⁸⁴ According to the United Nations International Telecommunications Union (UN-ITU), by the end of 2010 there were an estimated 5.3 billion mobile cellular subscriptions worldwide, including 940 million subscriptions to 3g services. About 90 percent of the world's population can access mobile networks, with three-quarters of mobile subscribers living in developing economies. Cellular technology has allowed Africa to leapfrog the age of fixed line telephony, bringing affordable access to millions of people.

⁸⁵ While the overall literacy rate for 2012-13 has been shown at **60%**, it is actually **58%** in the PSLM data. The figures are alarming as under the United Nation's MDGs, Pakistan was required to increase its literacy rate to 88% by 2015.

Points of Convergence

An agreement was reached between the students when the moderator intervened at one point to comment that science is value neutral and the things in demand will be made. In essence this dictated that it is the people who misuse science and its inventions. This opinion reflected in what students had to say following this intervention. For instance Shakil from the university expressed the view that the negative aspects of science should be attributed to mankind and science in itself should not be criticized and he it is up to humans to make use of science to make weapons of mass destruction or utilities that help human beings.⁸⁶

The initial position that the students took with regards to the role of language changed and all of them converged to a single point. This convergence of opinion of opinion came about when the moderator argued that we haven't moved so far so as to be able to translate journals and move all scientific education to Urdu. Therefore, learning English is imperative. The moderator also pointed out that the internet is pre dominantly English and to be able to take proper advantage of it, we must again rely on English. The views of the students did ultimately begin to change and Muhammad Nawaz from the Madrasah said that we have started to lag behind and in order to make a comeback and compete with other nations we must learn English and then prosper in science.

Points of Divergence

Throughout this discussion students had mixed opinions about the benefits and drawbacks of science. They expressed their opinions by showing the impact be it positive or negative on nations One side was advocating the positive aspects of science and the other side was advocating about the negative aspects of science.

⁸⁶ The views of Muhammad Umair Javed and Shehryar from the University were along the same lines

Muhammad Ibrahim from the University was the first one to express his opinion in this regard and he commented that science has made communication easy and has thus made this world a global village. Asif Ullah from Madrasah was of the view that science has helped cure many diseases which in the past could not be imagined curable⁸⁷. Another benefit of science was mentioned by Omar Jamal from the University who was of the view that another major invention of science is the internet. He was of the view that this has led to the growth of many individuals and entities conducting business over it and thus is collectively benefiting the societies associated with it. Another interesting benefit of science was cited by Abdul Waheed from the University who was of the view that food engineering can help counteract famine⁸⁸. Turning towards the other group of students, although Shafiq Ahmed from the University praised science with regards to the development of nations however, he was also the first one to highlight the drawbacks of science. He expressed the view that weapons are invented through science and the technology of weapons has increased drastically and these very weapons are being used indiscriminately in the World, particularly Syria to kill other people, thus this prosperity is also bringing forth destruction. Muhammad Nawaz from the Madrasah was in agreement with Shafiq Ahmed and further added that the social media and the internet in particular is damaging the morality of people⁸⁹.

⁸⁷ A great illustration in this regard could be the **Great Plague of London**, lasting from 1665 to 1666, was the last major epidemic of the bubonic plague to occur in England. It happened within the centuries-long time period of the Second Pandemic. The Great Plague killed an estimated 100,000 people, almost a quarter of London's population.

⁸⁸ A **famine** is a widespread scarcity of food, caused by several factors including crop failure, population imbalance, or government policies. This phenomenon is usually accompanied or followed by regional malnutrition, starvation, epidemic, and increased mortality. Nearly every continent in the world has experienced a period of famine throughout history. Some countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, continue to have extreme cases of famine.

⁸⁹ The views of Khizar Hayat from Madrasah were along the same lines

The role of language was initially discussed by Shehryar from the university. He gave the example of China and Japan and said that like them we should have all the content in Urdu so that we too may be able to take complete advantage of science and this way Pakistan can attain prosperity. Shehzad from Madrasah expressed assent to what Shehryar said and he was of the view that many people in Pakistan don't know English and if the content is not utilized properly we can never attain prosperity. In his view more time should be spent on the translation of content than science⁹⁰.

Detailed Overview

The discussion took place on the 23rd of December 2015 with the moderator for the day being Aarish U. Khan the Executive Director of CODE PAKISTAN. The session was also presided over by Dilawar Khan the Director of CODE PAKISTAN.

The session was started off by Aarish who gave examples of the ease which science has produced within our lives, like say a microphone etc. and then moved onto pose the question to the students as to how science plays its role in the development of nations, if any.

Muhammad Ibrahim from the university gave the first benefit of science and in his opinion there is a direct link between effective communication and success and he says that science has provided us with this effective communication thereby making the world a global village.

Muhammad Khurshid from the university broke down science, particularly in biology, into two types one being the study of living things which is done so as to find cures of diseases. Whilst the second type is the study of non-living things which aids among its many benefits can help in engineering food products.

⁹⁰ The views of Muhammad Naseer from the Madrasah were along the same lines

Muhammad Zaid from the University put science and education into a direct relationship. In his view the more the literacy rate the more people will avail science to the benefit of the community at large and thus leading to prosperity.

Asif Ullah from the Madrasah was also advocating for the benefits of science and said that medicines were invented which are now able to fight off lethal diseases.

Although conceding to the benefits of science, Shafiq Ahmad from the university was of the view that science has its drawbacks as well, particularly when it comes to weapons and said that these lethal weapons are causing death and chaos throughout the globe.

In response to Shafiq, Sherhyar from the University highlighted the importance of weapons and said that they are imperative for each and every country for self-defense. He gave the example of Zarb-e-Azb⁹¹ and said this operation in itself highlights the importance of weapons. He further talked about the language and was the first one to raise this point that the content should be in Urdu instead of English so that a wide range of people in Pakistan can benefit from it.

Shehzad from Madrasah agreed with him and further added that only the people who know English can prosper from the benefits of science. He was further of the opinion that if more people could have access to science, Pakistan could benefit a lot and the superpowers which were once weak have now made us their subservient. Therefore he was of the view that more time should be spent on translation of content.

⁹¹**Operation Zarb-e-Azb** is a joint military offensive being conducted by the Pakistan Armed Forces against various militant groups, including the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, Lashkar-e-Ihangvi, al-Qaeda, Jundallah and the Haqqani network.

Moderator replied to Shehzad by saying that we now have to use the language of these superpowers, so should we now learn English?

Omar Jamal, a student of Abasyn University was of the view that among the many benefits of science, the one big benefit is internet and economies now-a-days are benefiting a lot from it.

Agreeing with Omar the moderator gave the view that the content on the internet is primarily in English, so should we not learn English?

Muhammad Nawaz from Madrasah was of the view that weapons are doing a lot of damage within the whole world, referring to the internet he gave the opinion that it is destroying the morals of people and this in essence is causing a lot of problems. He was further of the view that the Muslim Ummah was very much the leader when it came to science yet now whoever seems to succeed we condemn them and are not working hard and thus are lagging behind.

Abdul Waheed from the university raised the point regarding famine and said that this can be counteracted through the use of food engineering as the ways of natural production may not be able to meet the needs of people, with the population growth occurring.

Shakil from the University came up with the excellent point that even though science has made evil things, but ultimately it is us humans who use them in a wrong manner and don't refrain from doing so.

Being mindful of the benefits of science, like the ease of traveling through airplanes and the cures of disease, nevertheless gave the view that the content must be translated to Urdu.

Syed Muhammad Haider from the university agreed with Shehzad and said that we must not condemn others for prospering in science and rather we should admit that it is fault on our part that we have not been able to take full advantage of the opportunities and facilities science has to offer.

Muhammad Umair Javed also gave the opinion that science makes things which may be either beneficial or harmful to mankind but nevertheless it is humans who are misusing it and science can't be blamed for it.

Shafi ud din from Madrasah gave a great illustration of the role of science by comparing the past with the present. He said that we have a proper source of energy and are doing the work of months in a matter of days.

Muhammad Nasir was of the opinion that highlighted the importance of computers and said that the machinery and the engineering revolution which has been incorporated into agriculture is remarkable and has helped countries in increasing their exports.

Muhammad Nawaz from Madrasah gave the view that we can't blame the west for what they have done rather it is us who are at fault and we discourage whoever tries to succeed. Instead we must support the people who are playing a vital role in science.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the Madrasah and university students were coming from two different education systems, there was a remarkable unanimity in their opinions about the roles of science and religion in human lives. All the students considered reason as subservient to religion. Although there was some disagreement on the roles of reason and religion, and the possibility of a clash between them, all were unanimous in their view that in case of a clash between the two, the religious explanation would always prevail. Most the Madrasah students also seemed to have inflated images of the contributions of Muslim scientists to the body of scientific knowledge in the 21st century, as well as the role of Islam or Islamic state of the time in those contributions of Muslim scientists.

The last discussion of UMIP on the role of science in the development and prosperity of nations proved to be quite fascinating because the views of Madrasah students were found to be the most gullible on modern learning. They started from very strong views against learning

anything from the Western body of knowledge or languages, and ended up accepting that Muslims needed to learn from the West to prosper with the help of timely interventions by the moderator. In the end, there was a consensus in the room that science had brought progress to the west, and some Madrasah students actually went to the extent of saying that Western progress in science was actually the result of earlier Muslim contributions to the “worldly” knowledge.

Chapter Six: Program's Impact on Students' Perceptions

Besides this study on convergences and divergences of opinions between Madrasah and university students, CODE PAKISTAN also produced another report on the change in the perceptions of the students after the program intervention.⁹²With the help of four different pre- and post-intervention survey questionnaires, it was assessed whether UMIP had left a positive impact on the minds of the participating students.

The study proved that UMIP was an important initiative that brought the Madrasah and university students closer to each other. The survey results showed that although an overwhelming majority of the students agreed that they had frequent interactions with the students of the other education system, the "Strongly Agree" responses were still quite low. And when they were asked after the program intervention whether they had many any friends among the group of students, an overwhelming majority of them shared that they did so. This indicated the success of the program in bringing the students of the two institutions closer to each other at a personal level.

The program intervention also helped in moderation of opinions among the students of both the institutions on the possibility of a dialogue between them. The opinions of both Madrasah and university were considerably moderated on the question of existing disagreements between the students of the two education systems. Although the students of Madrasahs and Abasyn University were already positive about the possibility of a dialogue on sensitive subjects between them prior to program intervention, their positively was further reinforced after the program intervention.

⁹² See CODE PAKISTAN's *Impact Evaluation Report of University Madrasah Interaction Program* for details.

Although some of the students had had irregular contact with the other group of students, their responses to an open-ended question in the pre-intervention survey indicated that they wanted some sort of harmonization between Madrasahs and universities to bridge the significant differences between the two education systems. If on the one hand the Madrasah students were calling for greater inclusion of Islamic teachings in universities, the university students on the other hand called for greater inclusion of contemporary subjects in the Madrasahs. Responding to another open-ended question in the questionnaire, most of the students termed UMIP kind of interventions as the best possible alternative for bringing the two groups of students closer to each other, until some sort of harmonization was achieved between the two systems of education at the government level.

As far as the perceptions of the students of the two systems of education about each other were concerned, the program brought about changes in the perceptions of both groups of students. The influence on some parameters was more pronounced than the others though. For instance, the opinion of some university students (not majority) about Madrasahs being a source of extremism was only slightly changed for the better. On the other hand, the opinion of a small minority of Madrasah students viewing universities as harming Islamic ideology of Pakistan actually hardened after program intervention.

On all other counts, however, the perceptions were improved on both the sides about each other. The university students' perceptions about the potential of Madrasah students to become good citizens, Madrasah students being respectful towards them, their teachers, and women in general were considerably watered-down after participating in the program. The program intervention also diluted the more extreme views of the Madrasah students about the university students. The perception of the Madrasah students about university students spending their lives according to Islamic teaching, co-education in universities, and the level of respect of the university students towards them and their teachers also showed improvement after participation in the program.

Therefore, we can argue that the program was able to influence the thinking of the students of both the education systems about the other group. The views of university students, however, were positively affected more than those of the Madrasah students. It was not completely unexpected considering the fact that the Madrasah education system is more rigid, exclusive, and insular than the university education system. Even then, the program was somehow able to influence the thinking of Madrasah students about university students on subjects like co-education.

The students also found the trainings sessions very helpful in enhancing their understanding about conducting a meaningful dialogue in a non-hostile environment on issues on which there could be strong differences of opinion.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ten discussions between the Madrasah students and students of Abasyn University under the University Madrasah Interaction Program (UMIP) provided us with a wealth of knowledge about the views of students of the two education systems on important contemporary issues. UMIP was one of a kind intervention that brought the students of the two education systems together to discuss these issues and then produced this report and the other report summarized in Chapter Six of this report.

During the discussions on various themes we found that there was some divergence of opinion between the students of the two education systems. ON the other hand, however, the students of the two education systems also though alike on a host of issues.

When discussing “Muslim Ummah and the Challenges of Modern Times,” there was a remarkable divergence of opinions between the students of Madrasahs and university. While the university students believed that the major challenge for Muslims was to acquire modern knowledge, the Madrasah students blamed the backwardness of Muslims mostly on being away from Islam and conspiracies of the West. To an extent, however, the university students also seemed to agree with Madrasah students that there should be Islamic political systems in the Muslim countries to rid them of their problems.

Similarly, there was remarkable difference of opinion between Madrasah and university students on “Peace through Economic Cooperation: Can India and Pakistan Move Forward?” While the Madrasah students believed that security issues needed to be resolved between the two countries before making progress on softer issues like trade and economic cooperation, the university students called attention toward the plight of the poor in both the countries and emphasized economic cooperation alongside dialogue on security issues.

During the two discussions on Pakistan Affairs, there seemed to be a great amount of divergence of opinion between Madrasah and university students. For instance, during the discussion on “Problems of Education in Pakistan,” there was no unanimity beyond the point that there should be free primary education for all and that parallel education systems in the country were undesirable and needed to be replaced with a standardized education system for all. There was hardly any agreement on what that standardized education system should look like. While some of the Madrasah students were calling for an Islamic education system, the university students were referring to the need for greater motivation of the teachers.

Similarly, during the second Pakistan Affairs discussion on “Causes of Pakistan’s Weak Economy,” although all students agreed that Pakistan’s economy was weak requiring reform, there was hardly any convergence of opinion beyond this point. While Madrasah students mainly blamed the government, the university students did point the finger toward the lack of dynamism within the society as well. Madrasah students called for adopting an Islamic model of economy that would ban interest-based banking. The university students, on the other hand, emphasized the need for controlling budget deficits and a greater government focus on education and technological development. There was some convergence of opinion on greater government support for agricultural sector as the mainstay of Pakistan’s economy though. There was also unanimity of views on controlling extravagance in the society and promoting greater savings. Some students also called for equitable distribution of wealth within the society and control over supply and demand of commodities.

As far as the two discussions on the theme of peaceful coexistence were concerned, there was a remarkable convergence of views between the Madrasah and university students. Unfortunately, however, the views of the students of both education systems were not grounded in reality as much as they should have been. For instance, when discussing “Who We Are? Pakistan’s Sectarian War,” both university and Madrasah students acknowledged that sectarian violence was a problem but very few of

them were willing to admit it was a religious problem, and tended to support conspiracy theories of an external hand being involved in most the cases of sectarian violence in the country. Similarly, when discussing “The Shrinking White in the Pakistani Flag,” both university and Madrasah students seemed to deny the existence of any problems for religious minorities in Pakistan. As was the case with sectarianism, the students of both education systems seemed to have very little knowledge about the on-ground situation of the violation of religious minorities’ rights in Pakistan. Some even said that Muslims were suffering more in Pakistan as compared to the religious minorities. Some students admitted, however, that blasphemy laws were not properly applied and were often misused in the country.

The perceptions of the Madrasah and university students were neither too similar nor too divergent on art and culture. The two discussions on the theme of art and culture revealed, however, that the understanding of the students of both education systems about these important elements of social life was quite shallow. For instance, a good portion of the discussion on sources of Pakistan’s cultural identity revolved around language, as if it was the only major source of cultural identity. Hardly did anyone speak about cultural pride. Even when there were slight references toward cultural pride, they were in the context of Islamic culture. The understanding about the local culture of Pakistan, which is a blend of Islamic and Indian cultures, was very limited among the students of both education systems.

In the second discussion about art forms and Islam, students mostly talked about the permissibility of drawing pictures and music in Islam, which consumed almost all of the allotted time of the discussion. It was disappointing that the students only talked about the apparent manifestations of art forms without discussing the essence of art as instilling creativity, despite the fact that Executive Director CODE PAKISTAN Aarish Khan had talked about the importance of art for creativity in his opening remarks.

Despite the fact that the Madrasah and university students were coming from two different education systems, there was a remarkable unanimity in their opinions in the two discussions on the theme of science. For instance, in the first discussion on the theme, “Are Reason and Religion in Conflict with Each Other?” all the students considered reason as subservient to religion. Although there was some disagreement on the roles of reason and religion, and the possibility of a clash between them, all were unanimous in their view that in case of a clash between the two, the religious explanation would always prevail. Most the Madrasah students also seemed to have inflated images of the contributions of Muslim scientists to the body of scientific knowledge in the 21st century, as well as the role of Islam or Islamic state of the time in those contributions of Muslim scientists.

The last discussion of UMIP on the role of science in the development and prosperity of nations proved to be quite fascinating because the views of Madrasah students were found to be the most gullible on modern learning. They started from very strong views against learning anything from the Western body of knowledge or languages, and ended up accepting that Muslims needed to learn from the West to prosper with the help of timely interventions by the moderator. In the end, there was a consensus in the room that science had brought progress to the west, and some Madrasah students actually went to the extent of saying that Western progress in science was actually the result of earlier Muslim contributions to the “worldly” knowledge.

On the basis of the findings of this report as well as the Impact Evaluation Report of UMIP, the following is recommended for future interventions directed toward enhancing the level of tolerance and understanding between the Madrasah and university students:

- Madrasah regulation is a long-standing objective of the government of Pakistan. Registration of Madrasahs is the 10th point in the 20-point National Action Plan of the government announced in December 2014. Until now, however, the government has made only

limited progress in regulating and reforming the Madrasahs. In such a scenario, there is a dire need for further dialogue between Madrasah and university students involving more Madrasahs and universities.

- The interaction between Madrasah and university students needs to be made multi-faceted with inclusion of Madrasah-university debating competitions, and sports competitions etc. This would not only enable the students of Madrasahs to interact with the students of mainstream education institutions but would also provide more opportunities for understanding Madrasah education and its students better.
- There is an ongoing debate at the policy level in Pakistan about an “identity deficit” in the country. To develop national consensus on a common national identity, there is a need for enhancing the level of interaction between the two education systems. Besides the students, meaningful interaction between the faculties and administrations of Madrasahs and universities needs to be encouraged as well.
- Peace and tolerance needs to be inculcated through education. Therefore, there is a serious need for engaging the students from across this educational divide in, first, getting to know each other and the problems of the society well; and second, in working together for resolving common problems. Therefore, joint workshops for the Madrasah and university students need to be conducted in which the students of both education systems should be engaged in learning, role-play, problem solving, and other joint academic activities.

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