

radius of actions NGOs should be allowed (especially in the realm of environment) and how to increase their competence. The task of NGOs in general was described as continued efforts toward "SustainAbility", to civilize the market, and to concentrate on the injection of social values.

All participants of the workshop agreed that it was a rewarding and very stimulating exercise that deserved continuation. The genius loci of the Schlosshotel Teupitz, located at a lake south of Berlin, certainly contributed to the fruitful discussions.

Alexander Pfennig

New Perspectives on Pakistan

New York, 11–13 April 2003

Under the title "New Perspectives on Pakistan" the Southern Asian Institute and the Centre for Pakistan Studies of Columbia State University together with the American Institute of Pakistan Studies invited scholars to New York between April 11–13, 2003, to discuss the context, realities and vision of this country's future as well as the academic field of Pakistan Studies.

The conference was sponsored by the American Institute of Pakistan Studies (AIPS) and was initially to have been held in Islamabad. For security reasons, the venue had been relocated to New York. This event offered a unique opportunity not only to discuss relevant issues of current Pakistani affairs, but also to bring together well-known scholars as well as young academics from Pakistan, Europe and, of course, from Northern America. Especially among the young participants, many were of Pakistani origin, either from Pakistan itself, or Pakistanis currently working at Western institutions.

Prof. Gauri Viswanathan, director of the Southern Asian Institute, stated in her welcome address that Pakistan should be regarded from a wider focus than the often prevailing one of war and terror. Even before her speech, the organiser and current Quaid-e-Azam-chair Prof. Saeed Shafqat pleaded in his introduction that Pakistan must no longer be addressed as a "failed state" and that new perspectives of Pakistan studies are needed. Next, Prof. Ainslee Embree, one of the most prominent mentors of US research and policies on South Asia, embedded Pakistan in an area of global key importance. In this regard, he pointed to the extensive activities of the Ford Foundation in Pakistan. He, however, stated that the prime interest of the USA and UK in Pakistan has been from a Near and Middle East perspective.

The conference programme covered a wide range of topics with panels on "Rethinking Processes of State Formation in Pakistan", "Challenges of Pluralism: Social Forces and Interest Groups" and "Fighting Terrorism and Promoting Democracy" on Saturday, April 12, 2003. On Sunday, the conference continued with "Contributions from the Study of Pakistani Languages" and "Globalization and Economic Transformation".

Due to the country's current importance as well as the well-known speakers on "Democratization in Pakistan: The 2002 Election and After" (M. Wa-seem, Islamabad), "The Creation and Development of Pakistan's 'Anti-Terrorism Regime'" (Charles H. Kennedy), "Pakistan's Strategic Options: From Cold War to War on Terrorism" (Robert Wirsing), "Pakistan's Indian Policy: What is the 'Core Issue' after 9/11?" (Jean-Luc Racine, Paris), the first day's programme attracted the largest audience and lively discussions. Other presentations of this day, however, also covered basic topics such as a new interpretation of Jinnah, the basics of Pakistani culture, the role of particular ethnic groups or actors as well as their integration into Islamic political spheres (e.g. from secular to fundamentalist) and also the symbolic content of "Jihad" und its Western interpretations. All of these presentations by Western as well as Pakistani scholars provoked intensive and often also controversial discussion.

Additional incentives for more discussion were provided by one of the panel chairs, Farooq Kathwari, who opened the panel with a short presentation of the latest work and political initiatives of the "Kashmir Study Group", of which he is president. Various prominent speakers at the conference also belong to this group's board. Thus, the conference gained additional political importance without becoming either pro-Pakistani or pro-Indian. Kathwari's contribution was focused on Kashmir's population, who are the real sufferers, and their human rights situation. A consensus was found that only a peaceful process between the two neighbours may eventually solve their deeply rooted controversies. Kashmir itself may not remain the prime bilateral issue, even if it mirrors many of the wide ranging problems of Pakistan and India. Robert Wirsing identified Pakistan's role in a strategic set of two triangles, viz. Pakistan, India, China resp. the USA, with Pakistan being the weakest link.

Discussion in this panel, which is here chosen as a core example due to the huge number of participants, thus included geo-strategic dimensions as well. One possibility frequently mentioned was that of Pakistan's economic decline parallel to closer US-Indian relations. During this discussion, the complicated bilateral water issues were also taken up, a topic that would have required a panel of its own. One of the most provocative questions, however, was that regarding the institutions which really determine Paki-

stan's Kashmir policy: This question, of course, was a rhetorical one and not only those who raised it knew that the army was meant.

The programme on Sunday did not directly continue the political focus, since linguistic and economic topics were also presented. But these topics are by no means apolitical, since contemporary literature was analysed with regard to its political messages and critical analyses. During the last sessions, one of the economists drew a rather gloomy picture of Pakistan's economy, herein concurring with some of the political analysts. Proofs were presented by pointing to the growing poverty, increasing defence spending, the low economic growth rate as well as the ubiquitous corruption. By stating that for internal economic improvement, again, peace with India would be a major prerequisite, the previous day's discussion was once more taken up.

This dark scenario was only slightly lightened by the paper on Pakistan's potentials in the information technology sector, especially among the worldwide community of Pakistani scientists and businessmen. But even after the founding of different IT-colleges and universities and significant improvements in the internet infrastructure in Pakistan, the global digital divide has widened, leaving Pakistan's potentials still underutilized.

The conference did indeed fulfill the organizers' wish to create a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas, which also included exchange across the Atlantic Ocean and Arabian Sea. Many of the participants, for example, were not familiar with the work of German scholars on Pakistan despite the fact that it had been published in English as well.

Although no final conclusions, recommendations or visions were proposed on paper at the end of the conference, the range of topics clearly shows that the field of Pakistan studies does a better job than commonly known and may provide a basis for correcting the usually inaccurate and negative picture presented by the media of the "Country of the Pure". Even if some of the papers do provide proof of negative trends, especially the presentations by young researchers of Pakistani background were evidence of their self-criticism and their questioning or even deconstructing "basic" issues of Pakistani culture. Additionally, the scope for future work and exchange was identified, including such topics as water or the deconstruction of political stereotypes. Last but not least, a basis for more cooperation was laid, so one can but wish for greater participation of scholars from the "old Europe" at the forthcoming conference in Islamabad (2007).

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