



## Essay

# The Incredible Awakening: Experiments in Future Studies in Pakistan

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## Future Studies in Pakistan

The work that I have done at times is an expression of how I feel and what I believe in. While I spent much of my childhood in the United Kingdom, I used to visit Pakistan almost every other summer vacation until when in my teens my parents decided to move back for good. That was a difficult cultural transition for me and my siblings.

I was born into an upper-middle class family in Lahore; in Pakistan, sometimes some of my views are perceived to be arrogant or elitist.

But that's not who I am.

Life threw many challenges my way for me to learn from. And yet, the journey still continues. Understanding methodologies both old and new and creating alternative futures has been a central focus in my life journey for over a decade now. This short essay tells that story with a particular focus on Futures Studies in Pakistan. I have friends and mentors who have helped me in my journey and still continue to be there for me along the way. Their trust in me expands my conscious existence. It is a blessing. If it weren't for them it would've been very exhausting and frustrating, part of me would've quit.



**Fig 1:** With journalists in what was formally known as FATA

Pakistan is not easy. The journalists in the formerly Federally Administrative Tribal Agency during the War on Terror experienced extremely dangerous reporting circumstances (Figure 1) being under constant threat from extremist factions.

In our everyday use of the language, we have the same word for yesterday and tomorrow 'kal'. For many to imagine a century in futures thinking is almost inconceivable, foreseeing alternative possibilities was unknown. Helping local teams to develop Realtime Delphi software in itself was a daunting task that took almost two years. The best part was that we were able to train more than 200 academics on how to use the tool. Some now use it all the time for their research.

## How I became who I am today

One would look at Pakistan and know instantly that we have all that nature has to offer to sustain all lifeforms, though the same can be said for the majority of other countries - what perhaps gets in the way and disconnects us completely from this reality are our myopic agendas. So, how did we all go wrong in all the right ways? I write to explore the fundamentals using different futures techniques and methodologies applicable to almost all countries.

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This is quite the mixed bag: as I grapple with my identity(ies), I also study coexistence in a manner that makes sense to my present condition. The condition over the years has undergone a series of transformational phases. I have witnessed a rude awakening and in other times, a provocative enlightenment. And although it's quite difficult to apply ideas to reality, once that has happened the concepts of success and failure become immensely meaningless. My life is a set of, as Carl Jung says, "meaningful coincidences" I find synchronicity in.

I used to imagine how energy functioned in the context of how the brain stored information, and how it used the memory bank to navigate in life. Very quickly I learnt that a failure of imagination can cause real harm. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many of the rules of navigation and the tools required would be very different. I often wondered if it is the most knowledgeable person or the most creative person in the room that has the ability to navigate among heightened complexities. Lecture series introducing Pakistan State of Future Index at different universities in the country revealed how in some cases we are quick to be dismissive about what should be considered as changes in the national and global context (Figure 2). The fact that more than half of the global population has access to the internet is by far one of the most extraordinary developments of recent history. Never in the history of humankind was there so much connectivity! Through this, we learn that if we could think a thought, we could also outthink it. So, the question arises on how often we are imagining when things don't really exist in reality.



**Fig 2:** Lecture at National University of Modern Languages

Innovation from the West has taught us quite a lot. Through their inventions and discoveries, we have found meaning. So bigger questions for the 22<sup>nd</sup> century are:

- How would people learn, and then how would their thinking inform their decisions, especially when everything around us feels as if it is changing at an incredible, even exponential pace?
- What will be the condition, the manner, the method, to what effect, and for what reason? (That would generate thought patterns, which are significantly different from how they have traditionally developed).
- Should we avoid the risk of being cyclical and quit chasing ourselves in circles?

Humour often helps us move towards the unexpected. A sharp wit is therefore a super power. Provocation creates windows of opportunities, builds bridges and opens closed spaces. Mind-bending exaggerations, the distortions, the wishful thinking, the bold, the unimaginable – Edward de Bono's lateral thinking uses indirect and creative approaches to solve issues that may not be immediately obvious.

I often ended up telling myself: "what if we had insights on our current state of understanding, of the process of learning, in our context, of our environment, of our inner selves?" –How would this insight broaden our comprehension of structures, not just in the realm of science, but also culture, rituals, traditions, relationships, habits and behaviours? As these structures become more visible – or indeed obvious - we begin to empathize. We do this to make better sense of the world and draw out the dots to connect them into the future in a way that would help us in solving long-term challenges.



**Fig 3:** Millennium Project Planning Committee Meeting

What is critical is how we develop our sense of understanding on what a long-term challenge is; this is an existential question. We design a process that brings us closer to the heart of the matter and then build the capacity to identify how important the challenge in itself is and how it will impact a desired future. While attending one of my first of

Millennium Project Planning Committee Meeting (Figure 3), it became clearer that this sort of futures awareness is critical to our survival not only as Pakistanis but also for all humankind.

An expert on Pathological Relationships (Brown, 2012); defines awareness as "the state or ability to perceive, feel, or be conscious of events, objects or sensory patterns." The definition goes on to state, "in this level of consciousness, sense data can be confirmed by an observer without necessarily implying understanding". The expert goes on to say that as we grow older, we seem to become conflicted with the last part of the definition, feeling as though we have to 'understand' the sensory data to make sense of it, categorize it, and then take appropriate action. This is the part that seems to pose the problem – ‘not fleeing’ when sensory data is clearly sending material to become keenly aware of.

How often does one speak to oneself, what is the use of language and tone like; how often does one hear oneself thinking?



**Fig 4:** Participants involved in a simulation exercise based on Past, Present and Future experiences

Neuroscience informs us that people can consciously re-experience past events and pre-experience possible future events. According to scientists (Squire and Dede, 2015), the hippocampus plays a role in the consolidation of information from short-term memory to long-term memory, and in spatial memory that enables navigation. In contrast to the construction phase, elaboration was characterized by a remarkable overlap in regions comprising the autobiographical memory retrieval network, attributable to the common processes engaged during elaboration, including self-referential processing, contextual and episodic imagery.

The science and philosophy behind the functions of the human brain has become incredibly important for our work in futures.

As one neuroscientist (Seung, 2012) based in MIT puts it: “*Identity lies not in our genes but in the connections between our brain cells*”.

The world in which we live in today is grounded in identities. The conflict and peace we witness is often based on how I am different or similar in a major scheme of orchestration of values that either shapes or creates one’s identity. Since foresight can quite easily become a very tricky domain, sometimes we use art and culture to make sense of the environment and the context we operate in. Pakistan is no different: its quest to figure out what it means to be a Pakistani continues.

In our lives, some of us are looking for those who can imagine expanding our collective consciousness, and therefore making futures intelligence one of the key resources to avoid harm. In a day long workshop on futures thinking in Islamabad, organizing the participants into past, present and future (shown in Figure 4) tense demonstrated our collective ability in articulating our contextual experiences which we found as a useful sensemaking technique.

### Becoming a Futurist

Intelligence and intellect – both quite different in their operability – have over the past few years seen a dramatic



**Fig 5:** Live Challenge Pakistan upto 2060 - Strategic Foresight Workshop at Wilton Park

increase in research examining the role of memory in imagination and futures thinking. This work has revealed striking similarities between remembering the past and imagining or simulating the future, including the finding that a common brain network underlies both memory and imagination. I recall Wilton Park’s invitation to present “Live Challenge: The Future of Pakistan 2060” – more than 35 countries participated in the 5-day Strategic Foresight workshop in August 2014 (shown in Figure 5) – I was over the moon; I didn’t have the resources to pull off an international workshop for my study in Islamabad. This came as a blessing in disguise. I was now very close to completing my thesis at the Graduate Institute – and the School of International Futures was with me all throughout the journey, ensuring that I do not miss out on any of the steps of the methodology.

However, I never thought of myself as a futurist. It is something I became.

Very early on in life, my mother used to play audio-based stories (*cassette kahani*) before going to sleep, as I listened to them falling asleep a whole new world opened up in my imagination. I was born left-handed, later my family had me switch to the right. So, as one could imagine I had a natural tendency to scribble with both hands in colors on my grandparents’ walls. They did very little to stop me – maybe it was because I was the first granddaughter in the entire family, both paternal and maternal. The same continued as I went to school: this time I didn’t desecrate the infrastructure, but my workbooks got my own version of Picasso in them. Oftentimes, conflict bothered me. In my younger years I never understood why it is that people simply would not get along. This troubled me, and I was likewise intrigued as to how humans interacted with one another. My obsession with playing with legos and chess as a 7-year-old, using building blocks was a way for me to bring people together. Discovering newer ways with the latter came as a great joy to me. Here’s a fun fact: my grandmother (nani) taught me how to play chess; I was 5. My nani barely made it to 10<sup>th</sup> grade before she was wedded off to my grandfather (nana). What a chess player she was, brilliant in her head, strategic in her approach, and cutthroat when it came to winning! She was the wisest person I knew. I can still recall her scent, which brings back pleasant memories.



### Initiating Knowledge Platforms

As early as two decades ago, I came across literature around countries projecting their destiny spanning over 50-100 years, I was captivated. The work seemed incredibly important, but I knew very little of the frameworks, approaches, methodologies or techniques. I was curious to learn, had taught myself in the beginning. After working for years with the corporate sector, I ventured in 2010 to work for myself to apply my thoughts. Surprisingly, my family considered that to be a bad decision back then - lesson: listen closely to what your gut tells you – you'll never be lonely. In 2013, I got the hang of Strategic Foresight while studying for my Masters in International Negotiation and Policymaking from the Institut de hautes études internationales et du Développement in Geneva. Using the Horizon Scanning approach for my thesis was just the beginning. In the meantime, I had established the Asia Futures Network and spearheaded the Africa Knowledge Council, to bridge the understanding between the peoples of Pakistan and Africa bringing together the Foresight Practitioners together from Asia.

I felt that Pakistan's conscious didn't cater much to Africa's existence. There was this constant nagging in my head after visiting Kigali and then followed by Kampala –how could Islamabad miss out on the opportunities that this cradle of humanity had to offer. The platform I created both on Asia and Africa became the starting point - next up was becoming very much in tune with the young population and their aspirations. So, I caught up with many of the African leaders during a Regional Conference learning about their challenges and exchanging ideas over how I was able to implement futures thinking in Pakistan, which they found quite interesting and were open to the idea of implementing the same model in their respective countries. I also got to meet some of the most amazing young talents: the entrepreneurs, engaging the startup communities both in Rwanda and Uganda and exploring investment opportunities in innovative solutions. So, the platforms were something that connected us to them, we just had to do something to discover through young African entrepreneurs as the journey continued. I would travel to Africa at the drop of a hat, just as I would do for Pakistan's north. As I developed a very narrow experience given the limited time spent, I, in my hearts of hearts, wanted Islamabad to develop a long view on Africa along with the rest of Asia, as a result two platforms were developed, one Asia Institute of Public Policy and the other Africa Knowledge Council (shown in Figure 6). Basically, I wanted to develop solutions to improve governance in Pakistan, and the thought behind it was to share lessons and failures with folks in leadership positions, especially with the youth.



Fig 6: Asia Institute of Public Policy and Africa Knowledge Council

### What works?



Fig 7: Realtime Delphi Training at COMSATS University

The trainings, workshops (Figure 7), and informal discussions that I have had in Pakistan are usually quite engaging and equally exciting. Participants are often eager to learn more, but some are shy of long-term commitment. There have been occasions where I could tell those certain ideas made people very anxious or nervous and sometimes, they just get plain angry and leave. This reminds me of Taleb's 'Skin in the Game' (Taleb, 2017).

I think much of this behaviour had to do with patience and what they considered as relevant. For all the exercises we've always kept the agenda very open ended – an attempt to keep the participants in anticipation. Flow state. In one of the sessions on non-traditional security challenges covering the country's growing population (shown in Figure 8), in scenarios I conveyed how different projections will lead to different outcomes. My lecture on Scenarios at one of the most elite military colleges in Pakistan was an incredible success, the questions and the feedback that I got from the officers were intellectually sound and extremely strategic in nature. I was impressed. The Institute of Space Technology and Quaid-e-Azam University to this date remain an incredible support to our work. The Military College wants to continue with the lectures in the foreseeable future. The officers from the lecture imagined the institutional worth of such thinking processes at the policy level. I discussed the history of scenarios, introduced them to Herman Kahn's work and how corporations such as Shell incorporated the approach in their strategic thinking.



**Fig 8:** Lecture on Non-Traditional Security Challenges to Pakistan

### Comparing Pakistan and International Foresight Projects



**Fig 9:** With Abdul Sattar Edhi in Karachi

Internationally, futures is a way of making decisions — and in some cases, not making any at all — so the projects that I have been involved in are considered extremely important in the power corridors; whether it had to do with the Future of the Liberal International Order or on the future of cities, regions and communities. As for Pakistan, it's not about it being easy or difficult to practice foresight. In my personal opinion, it doesn't matter how decisions are made, because there's simply no accountability. I sense greed, callousness and insincerity amongst a select few as being the primary causes, although it's of course not limited to those only. This makes me sad, as Pakistan has so much to offer to global civilization. What makes me hopeful are the silent ones who so very quietly and almost continuously give back. People like the late Edhi (Figure 9) or Dr Adeb Rizvi, just to name two examples.

### Projects in Pakistan

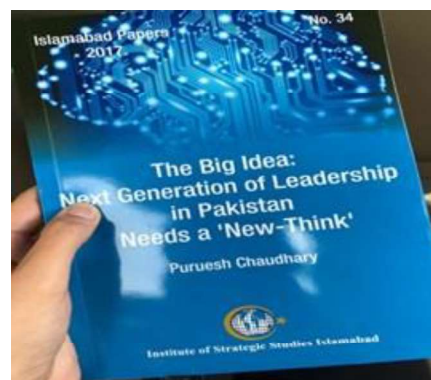
In one of my research works, I gathered that Pakistan has a narrative disorder. There was negligible focus on the post 9/11 generation, a demographic largely ignored from the policy discourse. What we do see is entirely staged and not the least bit organic. The engagement mechanisms despite the leadership over and over again speak of the 5<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare are obsolete, redundant and a waste of public expenditure. For years I have been working closely with academics and journalists all across the country, from developing ethical frameworks to enhancing futures thinking capacity, including producing several research publications. In 2014, when I launched the Pakistan Foresight Initiative with the aim of improving policymaking and strategic narratives on key priority areas by engaging legislators, strategists, academics, youth and the community and developing a shared understanding for the effective implementation of decisions; this led to a friend in Sri Lanka designing a foresight initiative in Colombo, with Kathmandu also seeing the potential, and Manila closing in the gap. What emerged was the need for an inherent capacity to revisit assumptions, explore perceptions, elaborate future growth opportunities and risks; this is what it means to generate multiple possibilities, suggesting alternate plausible scenarios in a collaborative environment. Enhancing anticipatory foresight of emerging risks and prospects examining important trends and plausible futures will improve learning achievements and increase quality policy input and strategic outcomes – ultimately reducing the chances of policy failures. To this day, my focus remains the same.

## Research Interests

In my thesis for The Graduate Institute Geneva, I used Horizon Scanning as a method to articulate the ‘Future of Pakistan up to 2060’ establishing four scenarios along the axis, it included: i) low citizen empowerment, regional integration ii) high citizen empowerment, regional integration iii) high citizen empowerment, regional fragmentation iv) low citizen empowerment, regional fragmentation – highlighting the drivers of change, plausible scenarios and strategic narratives. What transpired as a striking insight throughout the study was that those engaged in the 2060 research were unable to link or build a correlation between the youth bulge to anticipatory governance. This generation (interviewees of 7 oracle questions), who were once in leading decision-making or policy corridors having been the best of their times, is still not being fully equipped to cope with the challenges that it is confronted with due to globalization, international systems, economic interdependence and the emerging nature and contours of world affairs. I established in my conclusion that a fifth scenario needs to be explored to ideate transformational prospects through the lens of young Pakistanis falling between an age bracket of 18-35 years.

In 2015, as a distinguished fellow for the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, a think tank associated with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Pakistan I conducted futures research (The Big Idea: Next Generation of Leadership in Pakistan needs a ‘new-think’) spanning over the course of the next 51 years, which was structured along: i) The Pakistan Lens ii) The Youth Perspective and the iii) Worldview of Pakistan. Each section explored thoughts and imagination (Figure 10). This body of research was essentially a study to gauge how the youth see the future of Pakistan, what role do they, or don’t they, see for themselves in that future and the factors which are influencing their behaviours and decisions. (The workshop was held at the National Defense University, Islamabad).

I was most shocked when I got the reactions from friends over the 2067 horizon. As I mention earlier there are limitations in language in its everyday use. It’s no wonder I was disappointed. We think about the *kal* (both yesterday and tomorrow). It makes perfect sense when they thought 2067 was way too distant and that I should narrow the frame to at most 5-10 years, which I do later in my research work. I could not believe the mentality I was dealing with, and I was greatly disappointed. The thought of people forgetting to dream saddened me. I didn’t really pay much heed to their lack of imagination. In Pakistan, there hasn’t been any significant attempt other than in the late 80s and early 90s to bring the futures discourse through a national prism and create a debate across academic, policy and professional dimensions. I discovered that insight from the youth should be at the center of every policy decision; they are critical forces that have an impact and influence on trends and patterns. The aspirations of a young Pakistan cannot be overlooked for short-term gains. The millennials will play a vital role in the coming elections for at least the next three decades. As Pakistan opens its doors to the region and the world as a whole – the country is heading in the right direction but as it does, it still lacks an effective local government system so investment opportunities can be severely hampered. While doing the research, I found that the youth need to participate in the process of creating preferred futures, which frames an identity and cultivates inspiration that converges into a formidable force to be reckoned with. They would be required to be part of the political development and cultural formation as they manifest. Ambitions may crystalize into a newer form of politics that connects governance to public purpose.



**Fig 10:** Title Cover of The Big Idea: Next Generation of Leadership in Pakistan needs a ‘New-Think’

## The Millennium Project

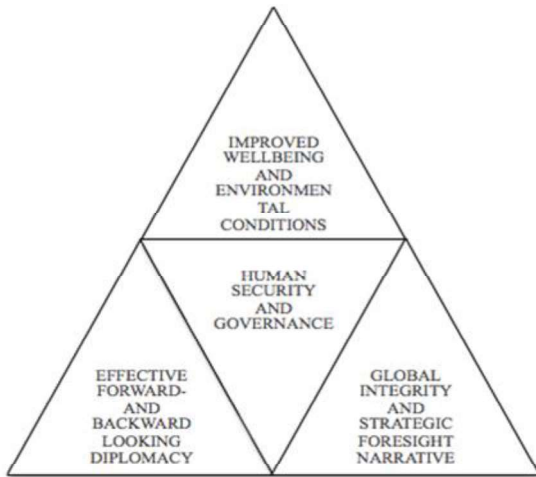
As part of the Millennium Project, I did a quick realtime delphi study with almost 60 Nodes (Country Partners of the Think Tank) on the worldview of Pakistan. What transpired as a key insight was the fact that while the views others outside of the country had were quite similar to what some Pakistanis usually subscribed to, this was also divided into what is expected of the country across two forms of systems level thinking: one is the ‘person’ and the other is the ‘social’. The notions were validated usually using ‘a certain-type’ of historical precedent to justify a dominating narrative about the country through the language and the images or the characters confining the local context as a frustrating deviation from the global dialogue. This reflects the fact that although sovereign in a

territorial sense, it appears that Pakistan has been unable to create a forward-looking knowledge-based system in the policy arena over the last 70 years. Pakistan suffers from a narrative trap. This trap is when one unknowingly uses language and ideas and at a subconscious level believe that they came out of one's own original thought process. However, this isn't case. So let's take a quick review of what that such a trap looks like. For over two decades the following trends have had an impact on Pakistan's discourse:

- Religious extremism, ethnic discrimination, inequality:
- The War on Terror has had created a significant negative perception of the country, and failed narrative-building only fuelled that perception
- External influence:
- Pakistan in almost all the terrorist attacks in the country pointed its fingers towards India, in many cases presenting evidence to prove their involvement.
- Corporatocracy instead of true democracy:
- Business conglomerates coming into power in Pakistan; growing their ventures, striking deals.
- Regional instability:
- Pakistan is situated in a very volatile neighbourhood, there is an ongoing armed conflict in Afghanistan, there is the US and its problems with Iran, and India has issues with almost all its neighbours. It's a tricky dynamic, and yet there are many diplomatic opportunities.
- Retardation of economic development, unfair wealth distribution:
- Pakistan lost billions of dollars due to war and terror and is recovering slowly and painfully.
- Unemployment and underemployment:
- Pakistan needs to create a million jobs a year, we are nowhere close to having a serious conversation on this.
- Climate Change:
- The melting of glaciers is affecting the livelihoods of communities living in the northern areas of Pakistan.
- Lack of a mature political and institutional system:
- Rampant corruption, injustice, lack of accountability are some of the leading factors.
- Environmental degradation, Rise of Sea levels and Global Warming:
- The quality of air in major urban cities is terrible, leading to many health issues, and inadequate infrastructure adds to the crises.

The beauty of a strategic narrative is that it never challenges a 'core value' proposition and it has the ability to capture the aspiration of an ordinary Pakistani. Therefore, in Pakistan much of what is written, said and done using information technologies are not being optimized in either times of conflict or in times of peace. It is important to capture the thoughts and ideas of people, who have not physically visited Pakistan, and how they project the future and what frames their contemplations. Their observations inherently help create a matrix of factoids, tools and instruments that should provide insight to the decision-makers for them to build an innate capacity to recapitulate an outside view not from the spectrum to compete, but through a knowledge-based approach which has the integrity to create shared values. This will help Pakistan in determining the gaps formed through lack of knowledge participation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in specific areas. The worldview has been hugely Western narrative-centric, which structures Pakistan as being a country that supports terrorism, has unsafe nuclear arsenals and which lacks a strong democratic culture that prevents the country from becoming a secular state with a stable-inclusive-integrated society cultivating a culture of openness. So, in recent history the World looked at Pakistan through the lens of how India and its allies view the country.





**Fig 11:** Conceptual Policy Framework designed by Puruesh Chaudhary

Today, as the World faces a crippling pandemic, we are now beginning to also understand how Artificial Intelligence will change the way we do business, the way we run nations and civilizations. The top-down approach doesn't seem to be particularly relevant; the public policy and decision-making systems need to become non-linear and devolve if people are to maintain a competitive advantage.

A conceptual framework was developed incorporating global changes and its impact on the local context (Figure 11).

There is already an immense sense of consciousness amongst the younger generation - what is lacking is the sense of participation in reforms and development. Engaging and collaborating with the younger generation, therefore, is foundational to navigate through uncertainties and thus the approach can no longer be traditional.

Some policy reflections from the research work:

- Policymakers in Pakistan need to recognize that there is a cultural sea-change (paradigm shift) occurring, namely, popular disenchantment with the dominant materialist worldview that grounds Western culture. Youth are part of this desire to see ethical and spiritual values become central to policy and action in all spheres of life
- There is not one future but a range of alternative futures. Public policy-educational policy, employment policy, cultural policy-need to explore the full range of alternative futures. This means opening up the future, not closing it.
- Youth desires futures based on truths. Can Pakistan create a nation that incorporates integrity and authenticity? If not, of what use are the visions Pakistan is creating?

As technological growth patterns and the social implications converge, determining the shifts in security paradigms can be rationalized through efficient and effective use of technology.

I learned that Pakistan's future depends on the choices we create today and the decisions we make for a better tomorrow. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the reference template or frameworks we use in the public domain to create these choices matter even more. The country requires tools and instruments to create prescriptive knowledge and information management systems.

The Government of Pakistan needs to develop the capability and aptitude to be able to see what's lurking in the distant future.

An approach suggested to and published by the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad:

Almost 50 countries compute national SOFI's (or something similar) to assess their future and have standing committee for the futures in national legislatures. National foresight and decision-making can be improved. Presidents' or Prime Ministers' foresight or futures units and governments in general could be improved by:

- Creating a network of government and nongovernmental futurists on call for quick futures assessments
- Requiring a "future considerations" section in policy reporting requirements
- Adding foresight as a performance evaluation criterion for senior government officials
- Including how to connect foresight to decision-making in government training programs
- Testing proposed policies before implementation by postulating random future events of all sorts and evaluating how these might affect the policies
- Computing and publishing an annual national State of the Future Index
- Synthesizing relevant futures research for an annual state of the nation's future report
- Including 5–10 year allocations in budgets based on rolling 5–10 year SOFIs, scenarios, and strategies
- Participating in the informal long-term strategy networks to share best practices
- Establishing a permanent parliamentary "Committee for the Future," as Finland has done to provide foresight to other parliamentary committees to improve their decision-making
- Creating a collective intelligence system and connecting it to related units in government agencies and e-government systems

[Note: The Millennium-Project assists Government foresight units in developing futurist networks for fast response, require 'future considerations' section in policy reporting requirements add foresight in performance evaluation produce annual SOFI. AGAHI is a institutional partner of the Millennium-Project]

I do not see any reason why Pakistan cannot create or re-engineer existing institutions that look ahead in terms of decades and not days, which assess the actions society can take today to shape a long-term future. The recommendation for a Human Security Council and for a Ministry of the Future in the study suggested to the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad came with its own set of benchmarks of excellence and an exponential degree of contextual-intellect and higher thinking order.

### SOFI as one Answer

As an attempt to bring the national focus towards futures-oriented knowledge, I created a SOFI, following



**Fig 12:** Launch Ceremony of Pakistan State of Future Index in Islamabad

methodology formulated by Glenn (2009): the First Edition: Pakistan State of Future Index – Anticipating 2027, this inaugural study (Figure 12) was launched in October 2017. The Pakistan State of Future Index is a 10-year future index composed of variables that indicate if the future is getting better or worse; it shows 30-year trends of improvement and decline; each variable is forecasted based on 20 years of past data which are then further assessed for the best possible and worst possible values in 10 years. In collaboration with its partnering organizations and individuals more than a hundred Pakistanis participated in the Realtime Delphi Study; and over 20 academics provided their expert judgment on the variables selected. The study has been scaled between sentiment and sensitivity benchmarks. The variables included in the study were further classified using the STEEP-C technique which covered the Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political Cultural Sphere. We took a more ambitious account, gathered data for at least 30 variables to develop a good sense

of how the country's next 10 years would evolve. This was a remarkable challenge undertaken in the public policy space which received overwhelming nationwide media coverage.



**Fig 13:** Participants from the Inaugural Workshop on ‘Karachi Futures’ using Causal Layered Analysis Method

In 2017, we brought our intention towards developing some sense around the most populous city of Pakistan, the seventh most populous city of the world; this is the economic hub of Pakistan, with a share of 20% in the country's GDP, housing two of the busiest seaports that handle a major chunk of foreign trade and with over 50% of total revenue collected by the Federal Board of Revenue. Karachi Futures, an independent platform emerged from a two-day workshop using causal layered analysis (Inayatullah, 2015; 2018) (Workshop participants shown in Figure 13). This city needed foresight, building on the capacity of a local resource pool of experts and domain specialists. We explored four alternative scenarios – 1) Karachi as city of zombies; 2) The Water City; 3) The Global City Alliance and 4) The Great Jump – Karachi 4.0. This platform continues to evolve under the leadership of young Pakistanis guiding the process.

Karachi Futures is now an independent startup focusing on the environment, with the younger generation dominating the discourse on socio-political issues.

The follow up research on Karachi Futures was included in the Second Edition: Pakistan State of Future Index – The Future of Possibilities 2029 launched in 2019. This edition explored potential developments that would impact the country's outlook in the coming years. It used the Trend Impact Analysis method that incorporated 50 potential developments. AGAHI in collaboration with Strategic Vision Institute held a brainstorming session in July 2019 to identify plausible future developments that would have an impact on the wellbeing of the people of Pakistan. The participations from the session highlighted more than 150 developments that could have an impact on the country's future condition; this session was followed-up in interactions with multiple stakeholders, which included the academia, civil bureaucracy, national security analysts, intelligence community, economists, scientists, scholars, entrepreneurs, political leadership and students. The index included two new variables: internal and external debt; this meant that there were in total 32 variables in the 2029 edition. The second edition is even more ambitious than the first; it gave us a tremendous competitive advantage in the region, as our work remained as transparent as possible.

With a team of software engineers and researchers I developed an inhouse Realtime Delphi tool, a decision support system and an efficient and a cost-effective process to generate expert judgements. Now, I am currently moving on to develop the Pakistan Collective Integrated Intelligence System (P-CIIS) so as to provide futures-based software and services to improve anticipatory governance.

## Methods and Approaches

There are so many approaches which can sometimes lead one to some form of truth or even in the wildest of cases, a novelty. However, there are different reasons for using certain methods or even approaches depending on your question, or what you're hoping to discover in process and even as a way to expand your own consciousness – the magical feeling of what it makes one to imagine. So procedurally, depending on the clientele a sensible futurist would know which method or approach to employ. Say for instance, a National Government or Provincial Legislature wants to improve or incorporate anticipatory governance into practice. With this agenda, Leon Fuerth very aptly explains that Anticipatory Governance is a “systems of systems” (Fuerth, 2009: 15) comprising a disciplined foresight-policy linkage, networked management and budgeting to mission, and feedback systems to monitor and adjust, which would register and track events that are just barely visible at the event horizon; it would self-organize to deal with the unexpected and the discontinuous, and it would adjust rapidly to the interactions between policies and problems. This is quite substantial and one which all Governments must pursue. In my personal capacity, I am trying to encourage a range of stakeholders to understand and deploy such solutions in order to improve governance and avoid wastage of public expenditure in their respective countries.

There are so many methods I enjoy, but the one I prefer the most is the Futures Wheel, invented by Jerome C. Glenn in 1972 (Glenn, 1972). This approach opens the mind in so many unimaginable and unthinkable ways, which is an absolute delight. What is even more captivating is how ideas evolve from one generation to the next. It amazes me how people come together and cooperate with one another even when they are at loggerheads over diverging issues and conflicting ideas.

## A World of Futures

In the future, if we are to avoid conflict and intend on creating harmony, I would ideally want to see all countries have a State of Future Index in the public space within the next decade.

It's the End of Pessimism as we knew it

The year is 2024. Billions of citizens around the world become future-oriented, more self-aware with greater access to information and knowledge. The Balkanization of the internet has strengthened the local economies of the developing nations. 5G technologies is creating space for newer ideas and concepts – the accelerated pace is redefining the work culture and opportunities are in abundance. The world is changing, and things are evolving at a different pace; authoritarian regimes are becoming more cautious and careful as to whom they identify as an enemy and who they call a traitor. The new enemy is not the other but the mindset. It is the self. The tech giants continue to pursue the bottom-up approach, the inverted pyramid for the first time in the history of the human race has become real. Governments continue to implement anticipatory governance; the collaboration between the State and the Public has transitioned from the traditional form of the social contract, making the United Nations ever more relevant in the 5<sup>th</sup> Industrial Wave.

The UN 5.0 promotes greater individual freedoms; genome projects and brain science have become essential to safeguard humanity. Nations become more innovative in their approach, sovereignty gains momentum, evolutionary psyche become prominent in the policy outputs. The gains from the Belt and Road Initiative are becoming very real. This development is critical for Pakistan; the upgrading of its infrastructure will enable greater access to over two billion people in the region. If all this materializes the local economies will be encouraged to compete or they will be overshadowed by big businesses.

‘There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns — the ones we don't know we don't know’. - Donald Rumsfeld (N.D).

The Global Foresight Community continues to think and imagine alternate possibilities making sense and giving meaning to how the world is; Asia and Africa lead world politics, shaping contextual intelligence and enhancing collective consciousness.



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