**Are Think Tanks Thinking?**

**What is the use of these research papers if the recommenda-tions given therein are not acted upon by the concerned quarters.**

[Najm us Saqib](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/najm-us-saqib)

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[Opinions](https://www.nation.com.pk/opinions), [Columns](https://www.nation.com.pk/columns), [Newspaper](https://www.nation.com.pk/newspaper)

Yes, they are. Are they producing good investigative papers based on quality research. Perhaps, yes. Are they following one of Pablo Picas­so’s leading findings - ‘Good art­ists copy, great artists steal.’ Per­haps, yes. Perhaps, no. However, two factors seem to be true. Think tanks follow the guide­lines given to them by their sponsors and stay within the prescribed limits even in formu­lating recommendations. In this way, they practically close the doors that lead to hitherto unexplored pathways. Secondly, in countries like Pakistan, the policymakers hardly care to go through various proposals put forward by these think tanks for the purpose of making policies. In the process, some quality papers aiming at bringing new ideas re­main buried in the archives.

On the other hand, being fully cogni­zant of their specific ‘role’, such insti­tutions remain focused on keeping the wheels of research moving but do only the ‘needful’. High government officials use the data and findings of any such exercise only when needed, particular­ly at the time of making presentations for the executives. Barring a few honor­able exceptions such as the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad (IRS) and its output - especially in the past three years, job creation for CEOs, officials and researchers seems to be the only worth-while outcome of establishing such think tanks and institutions.

[Remittances post over 13% YoY increase](https://www.nation.com.pk/30-Jan-2024/remittances-post-over-13-percent-yoy-increase)

Against all odds, our think tanks and institutes keep busy in ‘interdisciplin­ary research with the objective of pro­viding advice on a diverse range of pol­icy issues and products through the use of specialized knowledge and the ac­tivation of networks.’ The question is: what is the use of these research papers if the recommendations given there­in are not acted upon by the concerned quarters or these could only be used to make your PowerPoint presentations look impressive?

In a much-sophisticated way, this pertinent question was raised by none other than the President of the Islam­ic Republic of Pakistan. Speaking at the inaugural session of the Regional Di­alogue-2024 organized by the IRS last week - Dr Arif Alvi, inter alia, lamented the fact that the efforts of think tanks would go in vain in the absence of cor­responding actions. Come to think of it, the President’s lament is worth consid­ering as it is widely believed that the people at the helm of affairs do not have the time to read such reports let alone acting upon the wisdom such a Dia­logue generates.

[Weather turns cold after rain in Karachi](https://www.nation.com.pk/30-Jan-2024/weather-turns-cold-after-rain-in-karachi)

The three-day Regional Dialogue en­titled ‘Climate Crisis: Shaping South Asia’s Resilience’ came up with more than thirty broad recommendations. Eminent speakers pointed out the vul­nerabilities, issues, and resource con­straints in dealing with the adverse effects of Climate Change while not of­fering any concrete proposal to address the related challenges effectively. To have a better understanding of what is being said here, let’s have a look at the key take-aways of the Dialogue:

-The world faces threat from human activity.

-South Asia has immense natural wealth- it needs effective management.

-The government is unable to ful­ly benefit from the green solar energy produced by households.

-Climate finance pledges are inade­quate while the adaptation investment market is estimated to be worth $ two trillion; investors will only go to mar­kets where they expect returns.

[Livestock minister takes notice of complaints regarding irregularities](https://www.nation.com.pk/30-Jan-2024/livestock-minister-takes-notice-of-complaints-regarding-irregularities)

-Public-private partnerships are the key to deal with climate change.

Now, some of the major recommenda­tions made during the Dialogue:

-Geo-economics and cooperation on cli­mate can play a crucial role in the region.

-Coordinated regional approach is re­quired in addition to national responses.

-Climate must be dealt with at com­munal, national and regional levels.

-We need proactive climate diplomacy.

-Public and private entities should pool their resources to generate verita­ble green bonds.

-Promote conservation of biodiver­sity and effective utilization of water.

It is not clear as to how these recom­mendations will be translated into re­ality and by whom and when? The IRS may have to organize another three-day workshop to collate information on how exactly these recommendations be approved and implemented in letter and spirit. If the idea was to organize a befitting and well-attended Dialogue on a subject of importance, the IRS Presi­dent Ambassador Nadeem Riyaz and his capable team deserve due praise.

[IGP meets delegation of welfare organisation](https://www.nation.com.pk/30-Jan-2024/igp-meets-delegation-of-welfare-organisation)

For this writer, during the Dialogue, besides DG (ISSI) Ambassador Sohail Mahmood’s thought-provoking ad­dress on geo-economics, the real food for thought was provided by former FM Inam Ul Haque, incumbent FM Jalil Ab­bas Jilani and Aisha Khan of Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change. Conclud­ing his all-inclusive keynote address in the inaugural session, Mr. Haque urged all of us to start ‘telling the truth’. Mr. Jilani hoped that the world understood the importance of having ‘peace’ to ad­dress any issue including the challeng­es posed by Climate Change. Ms. Khan, being an expert on Climate Change, de­sired us to take responsibility for find­ing indigenous solutions while promot­ing Pakistan’s case internationally or seeking external support.

Let us unplug ourselves for a few sec­onds and think. Let us switch off our cell­phones, laptops, and tv sets for a few minutes and think. Let us spare a few mo­ments from our busy lives, sit down and think. Just a few moments to realize the difference between just thinking and tak­ing correspondingly desirable actions. Soon you may come across an astonish­ingly alarming deduction. You will see a yawning gap between what you have been thinking and what you were sup­posed to do. The stark inaction may cause a moment of gloom but soon the invisible inertia would overwhelm you, letting the process of procrastination flourish...!

[PFA discards 2,000 litre substandard milk, 400kg inferior-quality sweets](https://www.nation.com.pk/30-Jan-2024/pfa-discards-2-000-litre-substandard-milk-400kg-inferior-quality-sweets)

Experience the amount of informa­tion that your mind has been gathering from various sources to convince you on certain specific matters of concern. Then see if any practical steps were tak­en to assimilate the ideas before taking the desired actions. Now ask yourself a simple question: what is the use of this immense knowledge if it remains as such and not brought to bear the de­sired results? Person-A has the poten­tial of planting a thousand trees, but he doesn’t sow even a single seed and per­ishes along with his enviable potential. Person-B has the potential to plant only one tree and he does so during his life­time. Which of these two persons our planet needs more?

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