

TITLE:

Large Population can be An Asset Only when Properly Utilized

Outline

1. Introduction

Thesis statement: A large population can be an asset for a country, but bottlenecks such as socio-economic systems hinder its full potential. To effectively harness the benefits of a large population, it is better to develop an ecosystem based on meritocracy, social security, and national integration.

2. Exploring the concept of proper utilization of a large population, to raise it to an asset

3. A large population and its potential benefits when utilized properly

a. A large population can foster innovative solutions for governance issues

b. It forms giant military to guard national and territorial sovereignty

c. Extensive human resource and foreign investments. leading to economic boom

d. A spot of international attraction due to its rich culture and diverse languages

e. Educated population can drive scientific and technological advancements

4. Major challenges towards proper utilization of a large population

a. Deficiencies in STEM education and research culture in educational institutions

b. Dearth of resources to facilitate emerging startups and technology hubs

c. Unemployment and absence of meritocracy to honor local talent

d. Inadequate social amenities and healthcare facilities

e. Internal challenges like clash of resources allocation and ethno-political divides

f. In large population, youth are vulnerable to external threats

g. Gender inequality, harassment, and discriminatory practices in corporate and social sectors

5. Innovative ideas to make a large population an asset

a. STEAM education and early development of market competitive skill-set

b. Promotion of meritocracy and local startups to limit brain drain

c. Improvement in the policies of social protection and national security

d. Campaigns on national harmony and integration to bridge the internal divides.

6. Case study: China's large population has been its biggest strength, leveraged by strategic government policies

7. Conclusion

"The world that is evolving, the growth of humans is not a fundamental part, but a necessity.

Just as nurturing of plants, progress cannot be achieved without timely interventions in the growth of humans" - a quote from Dr. Leticia Appiah's

book, called "Human Resource to Human Capital: The Essence of Population Management." It implies that the growth of a population leads to prosperity of a nation, as it comes with certain benefits. Such benefits with a large population multiply, because it can foster innovative solutions for the prevalent governance issues. It forms giant military to protect national borders, and attracts foreign investments to strengthen fiscal reservoirs. Its diverse culture boosts tourism, and technological advancements shape the nation's identity in global market. However, it has its own challenges that undermine the overall effectiveness of a large population. In the fast-changing world, STEM education and efficient research culture is a pre-requisite to survive and sustain the competition. Similarly, the dearth of resources like electricity, and technology hubs undermine the work culture of a population. Persistently, if the social standards of meritocracy

~~the~~ ~~meritocracy~~ are missing, it shakes the confidence of a population in the system. The sustainable usage of a large population, in its country's favour, also demands the ^{presence of} adequate social amenities and healthcare facilities. Likewise, such population is relatively prone to both internal and external threats. Specifically, the social discriminatory attitudes suppress the morale of working population. Hence, the only way forward is to work on STEAM education, promotion of meritocracy, and the improvement of social and national security policies to realize true benefits of a large population.

Generally, large population is deemed as a liability on national resources, social facilities, and national exchequer. The silver lining is that large population is a blessing for a country. It provides excessive human resource to be utilized at war fronts, administrative fronts, and technology fronts, if the potential of every single individual is harnessed by the state correctly. The world has witnessed

true examples of such practices like United States of America and China. Both countries have developed an ecosystem of collective growth, harmony, and resilience to beat internal and external challenges, that might have exploited the potential of their large populations. State policies were designed in such a way that their large populations have become an asset multiplier, which are now contributing in their economic development and social welfare. Unfortunately in Pakistan, the fifth largest country of the world, is facing various challenges to utilize the potential of its population, in its favour.

A large population can foster innovative solutions for long lasting governance issues in a country. Governance, is a machinery of the state that ensures the smooth working of state bodies. It is often noticed that it gets checked through outdated practices and slow work environment. Large population is often full of brilliant minds

and subject experts that remove such chokes from the system efficiently. For instance, Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) was established in 2000, which was often criticized for its slow paced manual work.

Eventually, few brilliant minds digitized its overall setup, and currently it is connected with local union councils across Pakistan, as well as, Election Commission of Pakistan to facilitate in voters registration. This efficient step not only saved time but also revitalized its role as a main body to regulate national database, which is crucial for the functioning of legislative, executive, and judicial organs of the state. To sum up, a large population can navigate through governance issues which are unresolvable by a small population.

Along with resolving governance issues, a large population forms giant army to protect national and territorial sovereignty of a state. Large army, air force, and a naval force, actually, creates a deterrence at national

and international fronts. Each country in the world has a military to protect its borders, according to its national population. It is crucial for a state, embedded in geo-political tensions, to have a vast manpower for its territorial safety. For instance, Pakistan's geographic location demands a strong military force for its survival. Pakistan has taken benefit of its population to build world's 9th largest military strength according to Global Firepower, 2024 ranking. Another example, is of U.S which has the 3rd largest population of the world, and raised world's 1st largest military strength. To conclude, a large population efficiently protects its national and territorial sovereignty by building ^{the} largest armies.

Such large human resource is used at borders as well as in building cheap labour force and to attract foreign investments. Extensive human resource can be recruited at domestic level and exported to

other countries to raise remittances. Any state, first of all, uses its human force to address its labour demands. Once a cheap labour is desired at home, it can be ~~for~~ shifted to other countries to extract revenue. Pakistan, has been sending its extensive human resource to Gulf countries since 1970s with the discovery of oil reservoirs. According to Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), Pakistan has sent 8.7 million skilled and unskilled labour to Gulf countries from 1970-2015. It helps in raising remittances that strengthens foreign reserves of a country, as in Pakistan has received \$2.8 bn remittances equivalent to its exports, that stood as a pillar to stop its economic meltdown. Similarly, it provides home to biggest companies to open ^{their} chapters in a highly populous country to earn profit. Indeed, a large population works as a saviour for developing countries like Pakistan by providing cheap labour, remittances, and foreign investments.

It's overall culture and local diversity becomes a spot of attraction for international tourists. Big populations have a number of different cultures, heritage, languages, and social norms that run from generations to generations. Each tribe, or a caste system follows its settled social principles that attract international tourists. In Pakistan, there are Punjabis, Kashmiris, Sindhis, Balochis, Pashtuns which have their own traditions, customs, and values to live in a society. All these ethnic groups speak their own languages like Punjabi, Pahari, Sindhi, Saraiki, Balochi etc, which gives them an explicit identity. In 2021 and 2022, almost 1.2 million local as well as international tourists visited Northern Areas of Pakistan - according to the Bureau of Statistics. It shows the magnitude of diverse cultures, and heritages of a large population, that builds a separate identity in tourism industry.

Not only ^{the} International tourists, it also has the potential to drive scientific and technological advancements in home country. In 21st century, a nation's identity is highly dependent on its involvement in scientific researches and technological innovations. World's top largest populations reside in China, India, US, and Pakistan. The first three countries are thriving on the road of science and technology. U.S built "Silicon Valley" a tech hub, that introduced the world with Apple, Google, and Tesla. Similarly, China is observing "Tech boom", in which it introduced 5G, Artificial Intelligence, and e-vehicles. India also sent its Chandrayan-3 mission on the South-pole of the moon. It all reflects the role of a population in scientific and technological developments, which are beneficial for a state itself, and ^{for} the world at large.

Such cross cutting benefits of a large population are subjected to various challenges

which cannot be overlooked. The presence of challenges like deficiencies in STEM education and research culture of domestic institutions limits the potential of a large population. As, discussed earlier, U.S, China, and India are growing in science and technology domains, but Pakistan is lagging on this front, despite having the 5th largest population in the world. One reason is the deficiency in STEM education teaching methodology. Gov. of Pakistan has introduced "Single National Curriculum" in the country with significant innovations in science and maths subjects. But, teachers do not have prerequisite skills set to teach new courses. Secondly, there is a lack of funding to carry out up-to-date research studies at masters and P.h.d levels, that limits the scope of research in Pakistan (PIDE's webinar on "Education Crisis in Pakistan: A futureless system, 2024). It clearly reflects that absence of STEM or deficiencies in teaching

these subject with a lack of innovative research in required fields, limits the utilization of a population.

Another significant challenge is at the market level, which faces the deficiency of resources to facilitate ^{the} emerging startups and technology hubs. Such startups are crucial for the survival of local markets. Since 2016, there is a boom in startup business in Pakistan. Young population is inclined towards establishing their own businesses, instead of doing corporate jobs. Government of Pakistan established National Incubation Centers (NICs) across the country to support these startups. Overall, the performance of NICs is satisfactory, however, in a survey conducted by Invest2Innovate, it was revealed that their major issues like "opening investments, friendly registration process, and regulatory and legal guidance" is still missing. "Airlift" was one of the successful startups ever launched in Pakistan, but was shut down due to financial

Constraints during Covid-19. It could have been saved by providing a temporary bailout package. However, there is a lack of enough resources to support and sustain emerging startups, and technology hubs in Pakistan.

Another major chunk of the population, faces unemployment and zero meritocracy during job recruitments in public and private sectors. Every year, when thousands of students graduate from universities, they need jobs. In context to Pakistan, first of all there is 8% unemployment according to IMF's figures 2024. Secondly, if jobs are available in any sector, those are mostly filled ~~with~~ on the basis of favouritism or nepotism. Meritocracy is hard to find across public private sectors. For instance, there are 33% reserved seats for women in the National Assembly of Pakistan. FAFEN - an electoral think tank, reports every post-election that the appointments on reserved seats ~~is~~ are not merit

driven, but a product of nepotism and favouritism in legislative assemblies. Hence, it lowers the morale of all the citizens, when local talent is not honored through meritocracy.

Unemployment is not an only challenge, in fact, the inadequate social amenities and healthcare facilities make a population a liability instead of an asset. In a tax driven economy, social amenities like well-structured schools, parks, markets, industries, and healthcare facilities are the responsibility of a government. If such facilities are missing, or expensive it directly affect the population. Sir Ganga Ram hospital, Lahore, according to Dawn News, 2024 has shut down its test services e.g., MRI and C.T Scan, and 80% of life-saving drugs are not available at the hospital. The dire situation of such basic facilities motivates the talented and skilled population of a country to move to

other countries for better opportunities and facilities. To simply put, inadequate social amenities and healthcare facilities are the prime causes → a nation to become a liability and not an asset, and people prefer to leave than staying.

Lack of facilities cause internal challenges like clash on the allocation of resources, ethnic, and political divides. Large populations comprises of different ethnicities, sects, and political affiliations within a specific region. Such diversity, when coupled with lack of resources for daily use of the citizens, leads to internal clashes. In Pakistan, there is a clash on water allocation under 1992 Act of Water management under IRSA.

It is not only the issue of water scarcity in the country, in fact, it fuels to other divides present in the form of sects e.g., Shia vs. Sunni, ethnicity e.g., Punjabis vs. Balochis and political division e.g., PMLN vs. PTI. Once, the country hits with

with any natural or unnatural calamity, these divides further widen. No country can stand for long, given its internal conflicts, neither its population number matters.

Similarly, such internally conflicted larger populations are more prone to external threats, especially, its youth. Internal vulnerabilities create space for external forces to target a nation's weak spot and young minds. Terrorism, is not something new for Pakistan. It has fought a long battle against Terrorism and still witnessing a new wave of it. Nationalists like BLA "Balochistan Liberation Army" and TTP "Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan" is often backed by foreign enemies of Pakistan. During the new wave of insurgency in Pakistan, it is being reported that BLA and TTP are targeting young students in local universities to carry out its agenda (Amir Rana, A Radical Shift in Insurgency, 2024). It was reported by the Sindh Counter

terrorism. Department back in 2016 as well. Therefore, in the rise of internal and external conflicts or insurgencies, a youth of a larger population becomes a prime victim of it.

This victimization is also visible in social and corporate settings in the form of gender inequality, harassment and discrimination. Women are mostly victims of gender inequality in social and corporate settings. Pakistan is a home of 49% of women and 51% of men. Unfortunately, gender segregation and harassment is on the rise every passing day. Federal Ombudsman for Harassment Protection (FOSPAN), reported in 2022 that it has received 2000 plus harassment complaints from working women. And, most of the cases are not reported out of the fear of victim blaming. Moreover, only 12% of women are working in the formal sector according to International Labour Organization (ILO). It implies that the potential

of big ^{portion of the} population has not been tapped yet, to derive benefits out of it.

It's not the population's strength that ^{solely} determines its worth, it's also the state policies, socio-economic, and corporate level ecosystem that determines the true potential of a population. Firstly, to cash the true potential of a large population, there is a need to introduce STEAM education, with an early development of market competitive skill-set.

The world has inculcated Arts, along with Science, Technology, engineering and mathematics to be taught at school level. Recently, the government of Punjab has introduced to add the subjects of Technology and arts in the secondary school syllabus, a highly recommended step. But, there is a dire need to teach basic coding, 3D animation and use of Power point presentations at school level, just as happening in Finnish school systems. It's not only about teaching such subject

but to prepare students for market ~~the~~ competitive position. It will also help students to get job in international job market while staying at home. to cash out their true potential.

Secondly, there is a need to promote meritocracy in domestic job markets and to provide support to the local startups to avoid brain drain. Meritocracy is a social and cultural phenomenon. It starts from social settings and ends with the appointment of key positions at national level. Countries like Sweden, Finland, and Norway rate high on the Human Development Index, because they promote meritocracy at all levels. Similarly, India hosts world's largest population, which has 1,17,000 registered startups due to the efforts of the government and national level programmes like "Shark Tank". Such programmes provide opening level finances, mentorship, and legal guidance

to new startups to sustain in the market. Same level of efforts are also required in Pakistan to utilize its population for economic boost.

Thirdly, policies for social protection and national security need improvement. There are number of social security policies passed by democratic governments in country's history.

It includes Sehat Sahulat Programme, Benazir Income Support Programme,

Bait-ul-maal formulation etc. For national security Pakistan has devised national security policy twice. The

only issue with these policies is of implementation, due to social, financial, and political constraints

To ensure effective implementation of social and national security policies

the three-pointed guidelines of ILO will be effective to utilize.

Firstly, there should be explicit and inclusive policy formation with

full engagement of targeted groups,
(ii) Time allocation to achieve targets of the policy with its full enforcement,
(iii) Involvement of subject experts at grass-root level to identify social, psychological constraints in policy implementation. These guidelines are crucial for the protection of a large population, through inclusive policy-making and implementation.

Fourthly, campaigns should be run on national harmony and integration to bridge the internal divides. In large populations internal divides pave a way to external forces to spread anarchy and insurgency. There is a vivid line between national integration and national disintegration on the basis of different sects, cultures, ethnicity, and languages. A communication gap between different groups creates doubts that result into major ethnic and sectarian clashes. The

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best solution is to conduct campaigns and collective sittings, just like Pashtun National Jirga. It created a space for the local citizens and state to come under one platform to discuss their grievance in order to mutually resolve them. Hence, national harmony is only possible through mutual dialogue and campaigns to foster the sentiment of national integration.

China is a role model for countries with large populations. It made its ^{2.4bn} population its strength through strategic government policies and emerged as one of the competitive economies of the world. It announced to end poverty by 2020 in China under its flagship program "Poverty Alleviation Programme." China successfully targeted its target by 2020. First of all, it targeted the impoverished regions and shifted the poor and unskilled citizens to the

well-developed urban settings. It provided them education and employment. Meanwhile, it built the infrastructure of impoverished regions like roads, parks, schools, hospital, and industries. It also focused on agriculture sector to save its farmers from natural calamities. For every age group, it introduced targeted programmes to raise them as an asset for the country and not as a liability. It is, indeed, a practical example for world's fastest growing population of Pakistan. to follow the footsteps of China to emerge as another fastest growing economy.

To sum the discussion up, large populations have potential benefits only when utilized properly. They It has the potential to resolve issues of the governance, to protect territorial boundaries, along with producing high remittances to

to support its economy. But it is only possible, if challenges like the deficiency of STEM education, and lack of up-to-date research culture are tackled on time. A state can earn true benefits, by providing jobs with reasonable remunerations, adequate social and health facilities to its masses, to avoid brain drain. Similarly, internal and external challenges posed to the vulnerable communities also need to be addressed. It is possible through deployment of STEAM education, meritocracy in job markets, and social campaigns and dialogues to promote national harmony. Another very pertinent example is of China that used effective policy formation - as a tool to alleviate impoverished communities from poverty. These policies make a ^{large} population an asset for its country. As, Eleanor Roosevelt has rightly said that;

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"Human resources are the most valuable assets the world has. They are all needed desperately"
