

WHAT ARE THE HURDLES IN OUR WAY TO
BECOME A TRULY INDEPENDENT STATE

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Essay

Great wall of China was built by the Qin Dynasty, 3000 years ago, to protect ~~their~~^{its} territory, interestingly the frequency of attacks increased abruptly. Upon investigation it was found that the guards of the wall were continuously bribed by the enemies, allowing easy access to enter than ever before. This clearly depicts that building something may not be as difficult as managing or regulating it. Such is the case with Pakistan, the state that had been tangled in multi-faceted problems since its nascent stage in 1947. These issues challenges the writ of Pakistan, preventing the state to be truly independent state. Economic overdependence, political instability and security

concerns are the major issues. Along with them, problematic neighbours, lack of investment in human development, centralization of power, poor diplomacy, environmental calamities and unethical use of the means of communication are the issues that hinder Pakistan's progress towards true independence.

Through pragmatic ways, however, these issues can be addressed for good. The country needs to prioritize investments in its vast population ahead of drafting political and economical charter. Further, the borders must be preserved besides strengthening foreign policy of the country. Hence, it is evident that Pakistan had been facing multi-faceted problems since its creation with respect to its land, population, government, and sovereignty, thwarting it to become truly independent. Nevertheless, practical approach will target the silver lining in dark clouds, diverting the country to correct path. The pale has given Pakistan lemons, it only needs to make a lemonade out-of-it.

To begin with, it is important to understand the concept of a truly independent state. It was not until 1648 that the concept of state came into being. The brutal religious thirty year war made it happen. Treaty of Westphalia signed by the Roman Catholics and Protestants that define that state must have four elements: population,

territory, independent government, and recognition by other states - sovereignty. Hence, a truly independent state is self-reliant especially in terms of economy and politics. External bodies can not intervene in state's own or internal affairs. The international recognition further forms diplomatic channels and define territorial boundaries. These characteristics made a state truly an independent country.

In the case of Pakistan, however, these conditions are not ideal.

There are many hurdles that hinders the Pakistan's progress towards a truly independent state.

Firstly, the economic hurdle stands against true independence of Pakistan. The economic situation of the country has hardly been sustained due to its loans and debts. To put things in perspective the country is in the onus of circular debt of \$10 billion and Public debt of \$290 billion, according to Pakistan Economic Survey (PES) 2024-25. Pakistan's debts have reached 90% of its GDP, making it depend upon international down such as International Monetary Fund (IMF) that intervene in domestic policies. The surging twin deficit of 5.5% of GDP made the country rely on World Bank, Saudi Arabia and China. Due to this, the uninterfere fit in policies happen with respect to country's creditors. Hence, the lower riparian country moves away from its true independence due to the economic constraint.

Secondly, political instability also affects the goal of true independence for Pakistan. The culture of dynastic politics promotes the authoritarian rule, thwarting democracy. People in the country feel less worried or even concerned for the betterment of the country, as they can not participate in the political arena. Along with it, the political polarization inflicts the peace in the country as well. It divides people into ethnicity, following-ship, sectorial grounds. The national unity is compromised and one of the most viable element of the state, population, does not stand for state but for their leader.

Therefore, political instability hinders the true independence goal for Pakistan to achieve.

Thirdly, the security situation also prevent Pakistan to be actually independent. The main reason for this can be trace back to the colonial era, 1893, when Durand line was drawn. The porous western border still a bone of contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It threatens ~~the~~ the sovereignty in the form of terrorism, resurrected since 2021. The attack by different militant bodies become difficult to intercept due to the open border.

In 2023 alone, according to the ISPR publication more than 3000 security personnel have been martyred in 1200 militant attacks. These attacks mainly done by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) that wants to divide Pakistan hence, acting as a hurdle for the independence of Pakistan.

Talking of the division of Pakistan, how can anyone forget India that solely favours it. Such intervention of India was seen in 1948, when it stopped canal water of Pakistan. Despite the ratification of Indus Water Treaty (IWT) of 1960, India keep violating its terms. The building of Kishanganga Dam on Jhelum - tributary of Pakistan - is its manifestation. Besides, the terror-financing of Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) by India clearly depicts that prolong internal issues in Pakistan are in India's favour.

Kulbushan Yadhas episode is its example.

Western borders, on the other hand, too challenge integrity of Pakistani state. as militants run into Afghanistan and Iran. Therefore, neighbours of Pakistan also hinders the independence of the country truly.

Moreover, there is a dearth of investment in Human Development in Pakistan. Addressing population is important as a state is nothing without it. Pakistan with a score of 0.54, stands at 164th out of 193 countries in Human Development Index 2023-24 by United Nation Development Program (UNDP). This gloomy state shows that Pakistan merely prioritize investing in its population.

Due to this, unemployment increases, forcing people to leave the country. More than eight million people left the country in 2023 according to NADRA. As talented youth is leaving, the state would rely on foreign workforce. Hence, HD acts as a hurdle as well.

Furthermore, the centralization of power is another obstacle in the way of true independence for Pakistan. The 18th Amendment, for instance, has not been implemented despite passed a decade ago. The power-struggle mostly remains in center, ignoring local governments formulation. In result of this the red-tapism is increased because legislators and bureaucracy that share power are not accountable to general public. There is a reason that why Pakistan stands at 133th out of 180 in Corruption Index. Hence, poor governance also prevents Pakistan to achieve its true independence.

Along with it, poor diplomacy had also been a cause of not achieving true independence by Pakistan. To put things in perspective, poor diplomacy leads to blocks alignment. The tilt towards the west is its manifestation in the form of SEATO, CENTO, War on Terror. Due to this alignment, Pakistan could not liberate Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOK). During Afghan war on the request of Americans, Zia-ul-Haque moved the troops from Kashmir to Durand line, paving the path for Indian army to capture strategic points in Kashmir like, Sialkot. Due to the poor diplomacy, Pakistan had lost its east wing too, Bangladesh now. Therefore, diplomacy affects majority of country's sovereignty and it has hindered Pakistan's true independence as well.

When it comes to unaddressed issues, the environmental calamities stand at apex. Pakistan is one of the country in Global Risk Index and stands at top 8 countries vulnerable to climate change by World Economic Forum (WEF). Despite such grave situation, environment is not even considered in policy-making majority. This is manifested in the country's share in global carbon emissions, 0.9 percent in contrast of China and USA's combined 40% share according to UNFCCC report, 2023. Despite this more than 3000 people died with the loss of \$30bn according to National Disaster Management. This makes the country internally weak hence dependent, making true independence a distant dream.

Lastly, the unethical use of the means of communication also act as an obstacle for the true independence of the state. The population is affected by the propaganda on social media, turning them against anti-state. Resultantly, government limit the freedom of media. According to World Freedom Index by RSF, Pakistan stands at 151th mark out of 180 countries. Also, one in three Pakistanis feel insecure to post anything on social media. This curbs of digital freedom has made the citizenry to revolt against the state too. A balanced transparent approach is the need of the hour. Therefore, the curbs of digital freedom also made^{the} country to repel the concept of true independence.

So far, the ways or factors because of which Pakistan is unable to achieve its true independence has been discussed in detail. Now, the coming paragraphs will discuss the possible ways for Pakistan to achieve its true independence.

In order to achieve true independence for any state, addressing its population is prerequisite. Pakistan is no exception in it. The country spends 1 percent of its GDP on health and 1.5 per cent on education according to PES. This percentage needs to be improved as India spends 3.5% on its education. Pakistan needs to work in all walks of life with respect to individual. From closing the gender gap to addressing out-of-school children - 26 million - the path is long but achievable. Besides, the local institutions must be held accountable e.g. Police. This way the social security will prevail and the bulging youth, 69% of population, will properly be utilized. According to World Bank, if Pakistan can attain gender equality then its economy will be strengthened by 30 per cent. Hence, addressing the concerns of the citizenry is vital to foster true freedom in Pakistan.

Talking of improvements, the political and economic domain remained alien to it. Political and economic issues must be solved through consensus. The division

In politics must be counter through politics of tolerance. The ruling should not use the might of the state for personal vendetta with opposition. Smooth transition of power must be respected as in 2013 elections. Economic policies likewise must not be changed if beneficial. Economic charter must be drafted for this. This will strengthen state institutions. Pakistan should also build its relations on geo-economic interest globally. This way long term relations will be made, mitigating conflict. India-China trade volume is \$30bn despite being enemies. Pakistan needs to adopt the same methods to achieve stability hence, true independence.

In addition to this, the border disputes must be resolved to preserve the very land of Pakistan. The country can seek global support to resolve prolong Kashmir dispute once internal issues addressed - discussed above. International bodies like United Nations along with regional leaders e.g. Russia, China can help resolve the dispute. The treaty of South Tyrol can be taken as evidence or treaty of Osimo where Italy and then Yugoslavia agreed upon sharing territories in return of Trieste. Western porous border, on the other hand, must be settle via diplomatic approach. India's approach with respect to Myanmar can be an option where both allowed the free movement of its citizens upto 5-10 km. After all, people at West too have

ethnic similarities. Hence, border issue once resolved will promote peace hence, true independence for the country.

Lastly, foreign policy must be strengthened in order to achieve freedom. Pakistan must not align with any bloc anymore. The rise of China has raised this debate but; Pakistan must remain interest-oriented. Along with this, Pakistan should use its lobby and diplomats for collective efforts, for instance, in countering terrorism through RATS body of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Such collective approach will avoid landing any foreign boots on the country's soil rather promote self-reliance. In this way, the foreign policy will also drive the land of five rivers towards true independence.

To conclude, Pakistan had been facing multi-faceted problems since its creation with respect to its land, population, government, and sovereignty, thwarting it from becoming truly independent state. Nevertheless, practical approach will lift the silver lining in the dark clouds, diverting the country to the correct path. The solution-oriented path would include addressing the very four elements of state with respect to Pakistan. These projections will counter all factors that prevents Pakistan to achieve true independence from internally and externally both. The people, institutions and leaders, all need to come on the same page, making Pakistan truly independent and prosperous.