

Pathways to Pakistan's Prosperity

OUTLINE:

1. Introduction

↳ Thesis Statement: The pathways to Pakistan's prosperity are economic stability, ensuring security, political stability, enhancing education, improving healthcare, ensuring gender equality, controlling the population growth, achieving environmental sustainability, and aging in IT.

2. Economic Sustainability

2.1. Ending Aid Dependency

↳ PBS Report: \$131 billion debt

2.2. Increasing Tax-to-GDP ratio

↳ Pakistan Economic Survey 2023-24

2.3. Uplifting Domestic Businesses and Industries

2.4. Using Natural Resources

↳ National Security Policy - Geoeconomics

3. Defence and Security

↳ Terrorist Organizations: TTP, ISKP etc.

↳ Separatist Organizations: BIA, BLF etc.

4. Political Stability

5. Enhancing Education

↳ Literacy Rate : 62. percent

↳ BISP Survey 2021 : 22.8 million children out of school

6. Improving Healthcare System

↳ SDPI Report : 0.05 percent of GDP on Health

7. Erasing Gender Equality

↳ Wage Gap Report of Labour Survey

8. Controlling Population Growth

↳ Pakistan - 5th most populous country

9. Achieving Environmental Sustainability

↳ Case Study : Floods 2022 - \$30 Billion

10. Acing in IT

↳ Board of Investment - 30% Annual Growth

11. Conclusion

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'Prosperity' is a term which has multiple aspects. It is often viewed in the economic perspective. While economy is an important aspect of prosperity, modern-day scholars argue that it means much more than economy. Prosperity can be defined in terms of political stability, education, gender equality, human rights, population control, sustainability and much more. When it comes to Pakistan, the country had an optimistic view towards prosperity. However, with the passage of time, the hopes of achieving prosperity diminished due to many setbacks. Pakistan lagged in almost every aspect of prosperity, even the economic one.

Today, Pakistan ^{needs} has to adopt multi-dimensional approach to achieve comprehensive prosperity. The pathways to Pakistan's prosperity are economic stability, security, political stability, enhanced education, improved healthcare system, gender equality, population control, environmental sustainability and ~~etc~~ ^{aging} in IT.

Economic stability is the most significant pathway to Pakistan's prosperity. The GDP growth of Pakistan is plundering for the last few years. The country is facing the issues of aid dependency,

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low Tax-to-GDP ratio, downfall of local businesses and industries, and inability to use natural resources.

Firstly, Pakistan's pathway to prosperity is to end aid dependency. Since the very beginning, Islamabad got aid from the US for its support against the communist bloc. This laid the foundations for the aid dependency in Pakistan. Since then, Pakistan has enjoyed foreign aid on multiple occasions such as in 'Afghan Jihad' against USSR and Global War on Terror. In addition to this, the country reached out to IMF at many instances to get bailout packages. Today, the external debt of Pakistan has reached its all-time high. Yet, its economy has not recovered. According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the debt of Pakistan has reached \$131 billion. In this precarious situation, the country need to build its economic muscle instead of resorting to bailout packages. Hence, breaking aid dependency is the pathway for Pakistan to achieve prosperity.

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Secondly, increasing Tax-to-GDP ratio is the pathway to Pakistan's prosperity. Tax collection is an element of prosperity in the economic domain. However, Pakistan has significantly low tax-to-GDP ratio. It should work to increase it 2 percent atleast in the first phase. The Economic Survey of Pakistan ~~rev~~ 2023-24 revealed that the expenditures of Pakistan are around \$ 19 million ^{rupees} and its tax collection target is \$ 13 million rupees. This suggest a shortfall of 06 million rupees, which Pakistan will have to borrow. Therefore, increasing the tax collection and tax-to-GDP ratio is crucial for Pakistan's pathway to prosperity.

Thirdly, Pakistan's pathway to prosperity is to uplift its domestic businesses and industries. The downfall of the local businesses and enterprises resulted in the downfall of Pakistan's economy. The national enterprises of state like PIA, TESCO, PESCO are in loss. These enterprises are a burden on the economy of Pakistan. Hence, Pakistan needs to privatize these state enterprises and instead focus on

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providing a suitable environment to its domestic industries. The government needs to incentivize the local production by raising tariffs and giving ~~tax~~ exemptions to them. Therefore It will help Pakistan stand on its own feet. Therefore, uplifting domestic enterprises is pathway to Pakistan's prosperity.

Fourthly, using the natural resources to their full potential is essential pathway for Pakistan to achieve prosperity. Pakistan has been blessed with abundance of natural resources and minerals. The country need to use these resources and minerals to its advantage. For this, Islamabad can reach out to its neighbours and allies. As the National Security Policy of Pakistan had declared shift of priority to 'geo-economics', Pakistan can seek help from China and friendly gulf countries to extract the natural resources and minerals. This will also Pakistan to end aid dependency and boost the local industries. Hence, using natural resources advantageously is another pathway to Pakistan's prosperity in the economic domain.

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Achieving excellence in the domain of defence and security is another pathway for Pakistan to achieve prosperity. Security is an important element in ensuring prosperity, because with peace it is impossible to prosper. Currently, Pakistan is facing terrorist and separatist challenges. The terrorist organization like TTP, ISKP, and Al-Qaeda are conducting attacks in Pakistan. Similarly, the separatist elements like BLA, BLF, and BRA targetting the innocent civilians, including the Chinese workers. Security is a pre-condition for economic prosperity. Hence, Islamabad should look at security as a pathway to prosperity.

The pathway of political stability is essential for the prosperity of Pakistan. The frequent shift in the policies due to political instability hinders Pakistan's progress towards prosperity. Every incoming government ~~revis~~ alters the policies made by the previous government which leads to confusion and chaos. There is a need to achieve a political consensus on important issues such as economy. Continuity of policies will

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help the country gauge its ^{progress towards} prosperity. Therefore, political stability is the pathway to Pakistan's prosperity.

Education is one of important pathways to Pakistan's prosperity. The condition of education in Pakistan is not satisfactory. As per the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2023-24, the literacy rate is 62 percent. This suggests that around 38 percent of the population of Pakistan is not literate. The more alarming thing is the BISP Survey of 2021. It reported that 22.8 million children are out-of-school in Pakistan. By educating the young minds, Pakistan can pave the way towards prosperity. Hence, reforming the education system ~~is~~ is the pathway to Pakistan's prosperity.

Also, improving the healthcare system is one of the pathways to prosperity. Healthcare is a yardstick to measure the prosperity of any country. Pakistan lacks healthcare infrastructure, and still it is not investing enough in the this sector. According to the analysis of Sustainable

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Development Policy Institute, the federal budget of 2023 allocated only 0.05 percent of GDP to the health sector. This amount of budget is way below the requirement of the health sector. Increasing the spending on health, improving the infrastructure, and providing health services to peripheral areas of the country can help Pakistan improve its healthcare system and achieve prosperity.

Ensuring gender equality is another important pathway for Pakistan to become prosperous. Gender equality is essential for the development of any nation. A country can not achieve prosperity without the active participation of its whole population. In Pakistan, the situation of gender equality is precarious. The female and intersex population of the country is widely marginalised. As per Labour Force Survey 2020-21, female employees get 82 percent of the pay as compared to that of their ^{male} counterparts. Moreover, Pakistan ranks 142 out of 146 countries as per Global Gender Gap Index 2023 of World Economic Forum (WEF). More than half of Pakistan's population

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consists of females. Pakistan needs to take advantage of this significant chunk of its population. Female and intersex people have a huge potential to work for the development of the country. Hence, ensuring gender equality is a pathway towards Pakistan's prosperity.

Furthermore, controlling the exponential population growth is one of the pathways to Pakistan's prosperity. Pakistan is the fifth most populous country of the world. Its population is still growing exponentially. The constantly increasing population and youth bulge puts pressure on the strained resources of the country. Pakistan is not in the economic position to cope up with this pressure. More population means more demand of food, water, jobs, education, and health facilities. Pakistan can avoid this issue by and embark on the path of prosperity by controlling its population. This will help Pakistan allocate more resources per capita in every sector. Therefore, controlling the increasing population is a pathway to Pakistan's prosperity.

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Achieving environmental sustainability is yet another pathway to Pakistan's prosperity. The entire world is suffering from the negative impacts of Climate Change. Moreover, the climatic disasters are impeding the growth of countries around the globe. The floods of 2022 had a devastating impact on Pakistan and its economy and infrastructure. The Dawn reported that the 2022 Floods caused Pakistan a loss of \$30 billion. Coping with climate change and ensuring environmental sustainability is vital for the progress. Building a disaster resilient system can help Pakistan in dealing with the hazards of climate change. That is why, achieving environmental sustainability is a pathway to Pakistan's prosperity.

Lastly, a cing in IT sector is a promising pathway to Pakistan's prosperity. The IT sector of Pakistan is thriving since 2014. The IT exports have soared dramatically. According to Pakistan Board of Investment, the IT and IT-related services are witnessing growth of 30 percent annually. Pakistan is

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blessed with a huge youth population. The country can cash in this blessing by redirecting the youth in IT sector. It will not only improve Pakistan's economy but also upgrade the digitalization process in the government sector. So, acting in IT is one of the best pathways to Pakistan's prosperity.

To sum up, economic stability, security, political stability, good education, improved healthcare system, gender equality, population control, environmental sustainability, and thriving IT sector are the pathways to Pakistan's prosperity. Stabilising the economy by ending aid dependency, increasing tax collection, lifting domestic industries, and utilizing natural resources can put Pakistan on the road to economic prosperity. Similarly, ensuring internal and external security and maintaining political stability is the pathway to Pakistan's political prosperity. Improvement in education system, healthcare sector, and bridging the gender gap are the pathways to the social prosperity of Pakistan. Controlling the exponential growth of population

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and tackling climate change are the pathways to Pakistan's environmental prosperity while aging in IT is the pathway to technological prosperity. The country needs to adopt a holistic view of the prosperity to achieve prosperity in multiple domains and dimensions. While Pakistan is suffering from multiple challenges and issues, there are still numerous promising pathways to its prosperity.