

Essay

Is Colonial Mentality impeding Pakistan's progress.

Brain Storming

Origin & Signs of Colonial Mentality.

- 1) Colonial mentality in bureaucracy.
 - a) Luxurious lifestyle.
 - b) Immunity from accountability.
 - c) Civic Apathy.
- 2) Colonial mentality in police.
 - a) Repressive policing.
 - b) used as political tool.
 - c) Colonial fear tactics.
- 3) Colonial mentality in feudalism.
 - a) Suppressing have nots to progress.
 - b) Democratic manipulation.
 - c) Resistance to change.
- 4) Colonial mentality in military.
 - a) Military intervention.
 - b) Enjoying perks & privileges.
- 5) Colonial mentality in judiciary.
 - a) Superior mentality in courts.
 - b) Decision influenced by ruling elites.
 - c) Delay in decisions and dispensation of justice.
- 6) Colonial mentality in Educational institutes.
 - a) Undervalued Urdu-Madrassah education.
 - b) Linguistic imperialism.
 - c) Uniform education failure.

1). Introduction.

- a). Background / Brief overview of Pakistan's history.
- b). What is colonial mentality? Defining colonial mentality.
- c). Thesis: Colonial mentality is represented by the institution of bureaucracy, police, Judiciary, military, feudalism, and educational system hindering social, political, and economic progress.

2). Main body.

Colonial mentality across state institutions.

2.1). Colonial Mentality in Bureaucracy.

- 2.1.1) Luxurious lifestyle: big mansions, fleet, servants, free units, tax.
- 2.1.2) Immunity from Accountability: Sahnial commissioner Nadir Chatta Incident (2021).
- 2.1.3) Public interest not a priority.

2.2). Colonial mentality in Police.

- 2.2.1) Repressive role of the police force just like colonial times.
- 2.2.2) Used as a political tool.
- 2.2.3) Thana culture creating fear like Colonial masters.

2.3). Colonial mentality in feudalism.

2.3.1) Suppressing the have nots to progress.

2.3.2) Manipulating Democracy for power control.

2.3.3) Resistance to change, Maintaining status quo.

2.4). Colonial mentality in military

2.4.1) Enjoying perks and privileges

2.4.2) Military interventions hindering democratic and economic progress.

2.5). Colonial mentality in Judiciary.

2.5.1) The superior mentality in Courts.

2.5.2) Decisions influenced by ruling elites: Molvi Tamizuddin Khan case (1954)

2.5.3) Delay in decisions and dispensation of Justice.

2.6). Colonial mentality in education Institutes.

2.6.1) English, Urdu- Madrasah education not consider worthy in our system.

2.6.2) Second language or superior culture influence in Higher Education.

2.6.3) Unsuccessful uniform education.

3). Conclusion.

3.1) There's restated, Summary of ideas presented.

3.2) Concluding thoughts.

The Essay

Introduction

"Freedom from colonial rule gave Pakistan a state—but not yet a nation with an independent mindset."

Pakistan gained independence in 1947, but over seven decades later, its governance still echoes the voice of British Empire. From bureaucratic red tape, elite policing, and military control, the effects of colonialism are still present. This inherited mindset has become one of the key hurdles in Pakistan's journey towards genuine independence and sustainable progress.

Colonial mentality is the internalized sense of inferiority or submissiveness that colonized societies adopt toward their former masters or their systems.

In Pakistan, it manifests through authoritarian governance, class-based institutions, and an obsession with control over service. At independence, Pakistan inherited the colonial administrative, legal, military, and policing structures of the British Raj. A ^{key} ^{early} example is the retention of the Police Act of 1861, a law originally designed to crush dissent among natives, not to protect citizens. This Act remained

in force for more than 150 years after independence, showing how deeply colonial habits are embedded in governance.

(172 words)

How colonial mindset Impeding Pakistan's Social, political, and Economic Development.

To begin with bureaucracy that represents the colonial mentality which ultimately hinders Pakistan's progress. Bureaucrats live a luxurious life just like former colonial masters. They live in luxurious government residences, enjoy fleets of servants, and receive hundreds of free electricity units each month — mirroring the lifestyle of British colonial officers. Despite the economic disaster, the bureaucracy has no moral standing to withdraw their perks and privileges. In addition, the present day bureaucracy consider themselves above law just like their colonial master did. A glaring example is from November 2021, when Sahiwal Commissioner Nodir Chattha publicly humiliated a teacher during a government event, using insulting language over alleged mismanagement. Rather than following proper disciplinary procedures, he behaved like a colonial-era 'district lord', reflecting feudal mindset that values authority over professionalism and human dignity. Despite the public outrage

no action was taken — exposing the culture of immunity from accountability in Pakistan's bureaucracy. Moreover, Pakistan's bureaucracy remains indifferent to public interest. Instead of acting as servants of people, bureaucrats often serve the political elite, just as they did during colonial rule. Public grievances are regularly delayed or suppressed through unnecessary formalities. Qudratullah Shahab, in his autobiography *Shahab Nama*, recounts an incident where a man filled a complaint against a patwari (village revenue officer) for demanding a bribe. The complaint traveled from the commissioner to the deputy commissioner, then to assistance commissioner, then to the tehsildar and finally ended up in the hands of same patwari the complaint was against. This ^{shows the} colonial mentality in bureaucracy where they consider the public inferior and themselves superior. This attitude hinders social, political, and economic development of Pakistan.

Second comes police department that manifest the colonial mentality which has hampered Pakistan's development. The police force in Pakistan continues to exhibit a deep-rooted colonial mentality, functioning less as a service-oriented institution and more as a tool of state control, repression, and fear. As highlighted

in Christophe Jaffrelot's *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation*, the police system inherited by Pakistan was never reformed to align with democratic ideals; instead, it retained its colonial character designed to suppress dissent rather than protect citizens. The police act of 1861, which still forms the basis of policing structures, was introduced by British after the 1857 revolt to maintain imperial authority through force and intimidation. In modern Pakistan, this legacy persists in the form of 'thana culture', where local police stations often act as centers of extortion, torture, and political manipulation. The 2014 Model Town incident in Lahore, where Punjab police opened fire on unarmed civilians protesting against the government-aligned Minhaj-ul-Quran office, killing 14 people. Similarly, during election seasons, ^{have been} police forces repeatedly accused of harassing opposition workers, rigging votes, and protecting corrupt officials. ~~As~~ Police have been used as a political tool to serve the interest of their masters instead of public. Government uses them to suppress their opposition. When the opposition comes back to power, it follows the same practice. The mentality of the police remains same. This unreformed structure reinforces a culture of impunity, violence, and class-based Justice, standing

a major
as barrier to Pakistan's democratic development, social justice, and long-term prosperity.

Third comes colonial mentality in feudalism, which continues to plague Pakistan's socio-political landscape by replacing the oppressive structures once used by colonial rulers to control the masses. The British empowered local landlords and tribal elites as intermediaries to extract loyalty and maintain order, a system that prioritized allegiance over justice or development. This feudal mindset persists today where powerful landowning families dominate rural Pakistan, suppressing the have-nots' opportunities for progress through control over land, resources, and even basic services like education and healthcare.

They often manipulate democratic processes by using vote buying and ^{political} patronage maneuvers, to secure seats in parliament, not to serve the people but to retain power and protect their interests. Their deep resistance to reform and reluctance to allow social mobility stems from a desire to maintain the status quo, where they remain at the top of hierarchy while the majority languishes in poverty and dependency. As Ishrat Hussain notes in *Governing the ungovernable*, Pakistan's governance crisis is largely rooted in the unchecked power of traditional elites.

who resists institutional reforms. Similarly, Anatol Lieven in *Pakistan: A hard country* argues that the deeply entrenched patronage networks and feudal loyalties make it nearly impossible to build a meritocratic and inclusive state. This feudal-colonial legacy hinders Pakistan's political stability, economic inclusiveness, and the very foundation of a just and a modern society.

Fourth comes military, an institution that much like its colonial predecessor continue to operate with a sense of superiority and entitlement, enjoying vast perks and privileges while exerting significant influence over civilian affairs. Originally structured under British colonial rule to protect imperial interests rather than to serve the people, the military in post-independence Pakistan inherited both the framework and mindset of dominance. This colonial legacy has manifested in repeated military interventions, including coups in 1958, 1977, and 1999, all of which severely disrupted democratic continuity and weekend civilian institutions. Even under elected governments, the military has retained control over key areas such as foreign policy, national security, and strategic decision-making, often sidelining

parliament and elected representatives. As Ayesha Siddiqi reveals in her seminal book *Military Inc: Inside Pakistan's Military economy*, the military is not only a political actor but also an economic empire, controlling vast business interests and land assets, often at expense of public welfare and institutional accountability. Similarly, Ishtad Hussain in *Governing the ungovernable* warns that military's deep involvement in civilian domains and its resistance to institutional balance hampers governance reforms and national progress. A striking example of its growing ~~federat~~ influence is the Supreme court's decision on 7th May 2025, which upheld that civilians accused of attacking military installations may be tried in military courts. This ~~case~~ ruling has raised serious concerns about the erosion of constitutional safeguards, and the independence of civilian judiciary. As a result, this enduring colonial mentality within the military establishment continues to stagnate Pakistan's democratic evolution, institutional development, and long-term stability.

Fifth comes Judiciary also reflects the same colonial mentality impeding the progress of

Pakistan. The superior mentality of present day Judges in Pakistani courts is similar to those of colonial times. The colonial mentality is evident by the attitude and behaviour of Judiciary. Pakistan's Judiciary continues to project a superior-than-thou attitude, often alienated from the needs and rights of ordinary citizens. A stark illustration of Judicial bias towards ruling elites is the Molvi Tameezuddin Khan case (1954), in which where the Judiciary validated the unconstitutional dismissal of the Constituent Assembly, laying the foundation for the notorious 'Doctrine of necessity', a tool repeatedly used to legitimize military coups. This colonial-era precedent resurfaced in the validation of General Zia-ul-Haq's martial law in Begum Nusrat Bhutto v. Chief of Army Staff (1977) and again in Zafar Ali Shah v. General Pervez Musharraf (2000), where courts upheld military takeovers instead of protecting constitutional rule. Moreover, the delay in the dispensation of Justice is the stark reflection of colonial mindset where the courts show sheer apathy to deliver the common citizen of Pakistan. This delay is so heinous

that Judiciary is not even ashamed of it just like the colonial Judiciary used to be. Public is considered inferior as ^{it} ~~at~~ was found in the recent executions of the accused. Mazhar Hussain was hanged in Adiala Jail two years before the Supreme Court announced him innocent. This pattern reinforces a system of delay or denial for the marginalized. Hence, the Judiciary's superior attitude, considering of elite's and not taking into account the common public interest is a hampering element towards Pakistan's progress.

Finally comes the colonial mentality in education system, which remains deeply fractured along linguistic, cultural, and class lines, a legacy of British rule that deliberately stratified education to serve colonial administration rather than mass enlightenment. Today, Pakistan's system is still divided into three unequal streams: English-medium private schools for the elite, Urdu-medium public schools for masses, and madrassahs, which are often stigmatized and marginalized as backward or irrelevant. This hierarchy reflects a colonial-era mindset that equates English fluency with intelligence and competence, thereby

systematically devaluing indigenous knowledge and religious education. As Tariq Reham argues in *Language and Politics in Pakistan*, the state's implicit policy has been to privilege English as the language of power, relegating Urdu and especially Madrasah education to the periphery. This has led to the emergence of a 'Two-nation education system', within the same country breeding inequality, alienation, and resentment. Furthermore, in higher education, the influence of western thought and second-language dominance often overshadows local realities and cultural relevance, with academic discourse frequently disconnected from Pakistan's socio-political context. Repeated attempts at a uniform education system, such as Single National Curriculum (SNC) introduced in recent years, have failed to bridge these divides due to poor implementation, resistance from private elites, and lack of consensus on content and medium. As Pervez Hoodbhoy emphasizes in *Education and the state: Fifty years of Pakistan*, the state has lacked both vision and will to democratize education, often prioritizing ideological control or foreign appeasement over critical thinking and innovation. This deeply entrenched colonial mentality

in education, where language, curriculum, and institutional access reflect societal hierarchies, continues to hinder Pakistan's intellectual development, social cohesion, and long-term progress as a modern nation state.

Reforming colonial mentalities for a progressive Pakistan.

To truly move forward, Pakistan must confront and dismantle the entrenched colonial mentalities that persist across its key institutions, bureaucracy, police, feudal system, military, judiciary and education system. These legacies, rooted in elitism, authoritarianism, and systemic inequality, can only be reformed through a deliberate, multi-tiered strategy. In bureaucracy, merit-based recruitment, transparency, and accountability must replace elitist privilege and red tape. Police reforms should focus on community policing, human rights training, and ending the exploitative thana culture that thrives on fear and corruption.

Feudalism's grip can be loosened through genuine land reforms, rural education, and empowering local governments, ensuring the 'have-nots' are

no longer politically or economically suppressed. Military's dominance in civilian matters must be constitutionally checked through parliamentary oversight and clarity of roles, respecting the supremacy of elected institutions. Judiciary must be reoriented to prioritize access to justice, swift dispensation, and insulation from political influence, moving away from its tradition of elite favouritism. Finally, educational reform must promote a unified, inclusive, and contextually relevant curriculum that respects both modern knowledge and indigenous wisdom, eliminating class-based disparities and linguistic hierarchies. Without addressing these embedded mindsets, any development will remain superficial, and a dream of progressive Pakistan will stay elusive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Pakistan's progress is severely hindered by the colonial mentality across its major institutions. From the bureaucracy's elitist functioning, the police's repressive and political use, and the feudal system's suppression of social mobility, to the military's intrusion into civilian affairs, the judiciary's favouritism to delay, and the education system's class-based fragmentation

each sector continues to reflect the values and structures left behind by colonial rulers.

Pakistan holds immense potential, with its strategic location, youthful population, and rich intellectual and cultural heritage. If these colonial mindsets are consciously transformed into people-centric, accountable, and democratic approaches. Converting outdated structures of dominance into inclusive systems of empowerment, and replacing inherited elitism with justice and opportunity. Pakistan can move decisively towards becoming a socially cohesive, economically stable, and globally respected nation.

"A Nation rise when it stops inheriting control and starts empowering its people".

(12260 words)