

Essay Title : Pathways to Pakistan's prosperity

Outline :

(1) Introduction

(2) Pathways to Pakistan's Prosperity :

(2.1) Economic Development : Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Tax-base broadening should be prioritized.

(2.2) Regional Politics : Opportunities by Pak-Saudi Defense Agreement, Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, Global South, inter-dependency model, Afghanistan issue resolution, Role of Pakistan in Palestine-Israel ceasefire, TLP's Senator Mushtaq Ahmed.

(2.3) Internal Politics : Necessary reforms for better governance. (bale : civil and criminal laws). Legislation due to protect children, women, transgender workers. Successful implementation of already existing laws : Child Marriage Ban ACT 2025, Minimum wage set at 40,000 etc.

(2.4) National Unity : Curriculum updates. Importance of religion, culture, custom, traditions, language etc. taught to students.

(2.5) Women empowerment : Implementation of Paid Maternity Leaves, 3 times in ~~a~~ ^{work} career period, Work Place Harassment laws & day-care centres, Violence protection laws. Use of social media, NGOs, mainstream media.

(2.6) Child Protection Units : Role of education, parents, peers, schools, teachers vital to protect young minds from misinformation, explicit content, terrorist organizations etc.

(2.7) Role of Media : Social Media awareness campaigns, accountability of political leadership, bureaucracy, state authorities. Udaari Sammi, Baghi, Jana Tagareen etc. ~~are~~ are powerful narratives.

based donor but target social issues, raising awareness.

(2.8) Judicial Empowerment: Timely provision of justice. Having more judges to resolve backlogs (2 million pending cases - World Justice Report 2024)

(3) Hurdles in the way to prosperity:

(3.1) Multiple stakeholders: Pakistan's economy: Role of pressure groups, law enforcement agencies, external interventions i.e. Dependency Theory and IMF's Structural Adjustment programs

(3.2) Issues in political arena: Political polarization, coalition govt., alleged rigged elections (2013, 2018, 2024). Gallup survey June 2023: quarter of Pakistanis expressed ~~no~~ enough confidence.

(3.3) National Unity at Stake: 'My vs Yours' mindset. Multiple identities such as cultural, traditional, linguistic, tribal and sectarian. 5th most populous country in the world: diverse groups living together.

(3.4) Gender Inequality: Global Gender Gap Index 2025 $\Rightarrow$ 146/146 rank. Labour survey report: 23% women participating in country's ~~economy~~ formal economy. Population (50%), Quota (10%), Actual participation (5%) in federal jobs. Harassment, rape, extortion, cyber-bullying + low political participation etc.

(3.5) Vulnerable children: Increasing Juvenile Delinquency. 26 million out-of-school children out of total 60 million out-of-school children globally. Involved in terrorist activities, prostitution, child abuse, drug trade, begging etc. 11 million children involved in some sort of cheap labour. State's low spending towards education 0.8% of GDP vs 4-6% of GDP allocated recommended by UN.

(3.6) Role of NSAs: Terrorism, TTP, Afghanistan turmoil, Balochistan insurgency backed by foreign intelligence agencies like RAW. State is always raising security issues and securing borders.

(3.7) Judicial inefficiency: Outdated laws (CrPC 1898, PPC 1860), 26th Amendment - court packing. World Justice Project's Report (129/142 countries). Parallel Tujar Systems.

(3.8) Misinformation and Propaganda through media: Glorification of crime, slandering and ruin reputations during election campaigns. Objectification of women, unrealistic standards normalized as ~~new~~ bare minimum, propagation of dysfunctional ideas etc. World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report 2024: Misinformation is the biggest risk in upcoming future.

(4) Solutions to issues faced by Pakistan

(4.1) Awareness Campaigns: NGOs, Media, civil society etc. should play a role in educating people regarding women, children, transgender and animal rights. 60% of population under 30, desperately in need for direction.

(4.2) Fostering National Unity: Religious clerics should play their part to solve sectarian issues - cultural tolerance, curriculum updated to ~~help~~^{unite} people.

(4.3) State as reliable conflict resolution arbitrator: Independent judiciary, necessary legislation, e-governance operations, fair distribution of resources, using NFC Awards, New Charter of Democracy, constitutional control.

(4.4) Securing our National Interest - Economy: Attracting FDI, improving security, better governance and resource allocation.

(4.5) Counter-Terrorism measures: Implementation of National Action Plan in totality. Engaging Taliban government, encouraging Global South. Pakistan is already top contributor of peacekeeping in UN.

(5) Conclusion

Surviving is one thing, thriving is another. The bridge between the two once established will lead to abundant resource and social development in the country. As a developing country, Pakistan needs to change its governance in order to achieve prosperity. Special focus on economic development, regional politics, internal politics, national unity, women empowerment, child protection units, media and judicial accountability should be done. Issues like international interference, dynastic politics, national unrest, gender inequality, vulnerable children, No-State Areas, judicial inefficiency, misinformation and propaganda are blocking the pathway to Pakistan's development. Awareness campaigns, national cohesion, conflict resolution, economic development and counter-terrorism measures are the steps required to ensure timely resolution of the issues faced by Pakistan.

Prosperity refers to abundance of resource, fair distribution of public goods and services, justice, rule of law, transparency, non-corruption, absence of corruption, discrimination and presence of peace in a society. A state is made up of multiple people living together in a defined territory with a government responsible for its affairs. People work together to ensure their survival and better resource for their upcoming generations. However, sometimes state has to focus on some matters and prioritize over for security its national interest to ensure everything stays under control.

Pakistan's national interest for the long time has been its security. Due to its geo-strategic location, it has been prone to attacks by India in the East and Afghanistan in the West. However, now since Pakistan has a strong defence mechanism and nuclear deterrence the national interest has shifted from security to economic development. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Phase 2.0 is an example. Attempts have been made to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Recent 3-day ministerial expo is a sign that Pakistan is on the way to protect its national interest. Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has been established for that purpose. Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has also designed a plan to broaden its tax-base by adding more people into the tax pool.

i.e. e-commerce policies etc. Tax filing is recommended. Non-filers are strictly advised to file their tax returns to ensure increased revenues and better economy in Pakistan. Social institutions rest if a economic base can be stabilised through economic development ensuring better governance in the country.

Pakistan's location not only brings predators like India and terrorist organizations or Tareekh-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), but also makes Pakistan a key stakeholder in regional politics. Currently it is transforming on a economic corridor for trade between South Asian countries and Europe. Global South is coming together to form bilateral trade agreements among itself. Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO) is leading the way, China being the centre of attention. Interdependency model is used to establish peaceful relations. As a nuclear state, Pakistan plays a significant role in Muslim world. Pak-Saudi Defence Agreement is an evidence of Pakistan's importance. Afghanistan being a close neighbour of Pakistan and Taliban taking over it, brings opportunities of emergence of Pakistan as a peace-maker alongside China. Pakistan has also condemned the genocide of Palestinian Muslims in Gaza by Israeli forces. Participation of Tareekh-e-Labbaik Pakistan's Senator Mushtaq Ahmed in the Global Flotilla is a powerful message that Pakistan is capable of emerging as a regional stakeholder in foreign affairs globally. These matters allow Pakistan to become an active player in regional politics.

Apart from outer turmoil, Pakistan also has opportunity for improvement in internal politics. There is a lot of room for legislation, decisions, debates and discussions in Parliament regarding the protection of women, children, transgender rights. Setting minimum wage of workers at 40,000 rupees in Sindh and Punjab, passing of Child Marriage Prohibition Act (2025) are recent developments in the legislation that are commendable. Creation of Crime Control Department in Punjab is another contribution that is effective and practical. Legislation is a vital part of governance and without laws, maintenance of law and order is difficult.

The presence of law and order ensures peace in the country. Pakistan is rich in culture, traditions, tribes, languages, religions and norms. It is a matter of one's dignity ^{where} ~~and~~ association ~~that~~ gives meaning to his/her existence. People feel pride in their tribal identities and customs. It is celebrated with joy and propagated with respect. Adding these beautiful traditions and cultures in national curriculum will familiarize the young generation with the diversity found in the country. Familiarization brings confidence and clarity which engenders tolerance for other people in the society. National Unity is an important aspect of a country which needs to be prioritized.

Inculcating women, empowered ~~not~~ into the social fabric is an effective method to reach acceptance towards female participation in ~~the~~ ~~society~~ state affairs. NGOs, media, civil society and public administrators can come together to normalize women as an important stakeholder in the society. Paid Maternity leaves for three times in a woman's career, Work Place Harassment Laws, formation of day care centres, Anti-Violence Act etc. are some of the significant steps taken towards women empowerment. Piece-by-piece, we can create paths for women that can lead to peace and prosperity as Jinnah said, "No nation can achieve prosperity until their women walk side by side with men" towards achievement of national goals and objectives."

Women as well as children should be integrated into the world of men. Education is the pre-requisite of social development. Provision of opportunities to children will allow them to become responsible, educated and informed citizens. Schools, parents, teachers and peers shape the young minds. Protection from misinformation, explicit content, terrorist organizations, online predators, and extremist ideologies should be done. Supervision is important and so is mutual respect. A prosperous country should automatically be formed if we give special consideration to our young generation.

In a world of technology and AI, media is a powerful tool of shaping public opinion and disseminating information. It can be used to launch social media awareness campaigns, hold political leadership accountable, access bureaucracy and ensure transparency. Entertainment projects like Udaari, Sami, Baaghi, Jannat Hussain etc. highlight important social issues like child abuse, women's rights, human rights, harassment etc. They are a very responsible representation of our shortcomings as a nation. Media when used for a purpose leads to evolution of the entire country.

While media is a slightly informal medium of accountability, Judiciary is a proper issue addressal platform. World Justice Project's report established that there are 2 million plus pending cases in lower Judiciary of Pakistan. It is imperative that timely provision of justice is ensured to raise a society that is based on equality and rule of law.

Key areas where improvement is required have been ~~discussed~~ identified. There are issues that persist in these areas which need to be resolved to lead Pakistan towards success. Economy, for instance, is influenced by multiple stakeholders inside and outside the country. Pressure groups like industrialists and business corporations have been active in making important policy decisions. As a country dependent on foreign aid and loans from international financial institutions like IMF, it is really impossible to design our fiscal policies. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) ensure that the country is always dependent for survival on developed countries. Due to protectionist economic policies and political instability, confidence of foreign investors is low, so is the industrial growth. It is important to address these problems as soon as possible.

Economic policies are made by Federal Cabinet led by Prime Minister. Most of these governments are formed by coalition as no political party ~~has~~ has majority of seats in the elections. Political polarization often leads to conflicts that result in vote of No Confidence against the Prime Minister. Rather than being opposition, parliamentarians become enemies of each other. For elections

rather in the 2013, 2018 or 2024 has been accused of rigging by the losing political party. Gallup Survey June 2023 revealed that only a quarter of Pakistanis expressed enough confidence in the electoral procedures and the government of Pakistan. When the government itself is split into multiple chunks, national cohesion is a far off objective as presence of water is in a desert.

The political leadership ~~that~~ propagates narratives like tribal associations for political campaigns. People are influenced by these campaigns and they identify as their religion, tradition, culture, norms, sect and language. They no longer remember the essence of humanity and nationalism. 'My vs Xany' mindset is inculcated in them. As the 5th most populous country in the world, where multiple groups living together are found, this is a very dangerous state. National unity is at stake and it is highly recommended to connect people together.

Connections are even more vital where half of the population lives in isolation and is discriminated just because of their gender. Global Gender Gap Index (2025) ranks Pakistan at the last position - 146th. Labour survey report revealed that only 23% of women are employed in formal economy. Women constitute almost half of Pakistan's population, however the gender quota for them in federal jobs is 10% and ~~for~~ from that 10%, only 5% of women are actually employed in the federal service of Pakistan. Everyday we see headlines of honour killings i.e. Shereen from Balochistan and Sara Xany from Islamabad. Domestic violence, rape, slave buying, acid throwing, cyber bullying etc are some of the many heinous crimes committed against Pakistani women. Prosperity will be achieved where women will be safe and children will be protected.

Children in Pakistan are also in a vulnerable position. They are involved in all sorts of social evils in the age where they should be at school learning skills, tolerance, respect and morals. There are 26 million out-of-school children in Pakistan, it is noteworthy that there are total

60 million out of school children in the world. Almost 11 million out of these 26 million are involved in some sort of informal economy. State can no longer take care of these children as the funding given to education is 0.8% of the GDP as per Federal Budget 2025. The recommended budget allocated towards education by UN is 4-6% of the GDP. Due to inadequate funding, children ~~have~~ work as beggars, recyclers, drug mules, prostitutes to earn money for their poor households. Many fall victim to terrorist groups where they are groomed to ~~become~~ become anti-state suicide bombers. This is a threat to the country's existence.

Terrorist organizations act as Non-State Actors to disrupt country's day-to-day affairs. Foreign intelligence agencies like RAW provide training and funding to individuals with anti-state tendencies, resulting in insurgency like in Balochistan. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has support from its ~~brother~~ ideological brother, Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan (TTA). They ~~are~~ are constantly causing turmoil on Western border of Pakistan by using Afghan oil to launch a strike on Pakistan. State is always engaged in countering these activities, leading to no space for economic development in the country. Accountability mechanisms are weak so people tend to support these extremist ideologies.

Accountability is an important tool to establish justice in a country. Role of Judiciary is important to ensure equality before law and to counter anti-state activities. Independent judiciary can take decisions based on rationality and unbiasedness. However, criminal and civil laws in the country are in desperate need for reform. The Criminal Procedural Code was made in 1898 and Pakistan Penal Code was made in 1860. They are decades old and no longer practical and relevant. Moreover, 20th Amendment has been passed quickly by the Parliament. 20th Amendment is an attempt to court-packing by creating a judicial bench that approves legislation without any resistance.

Critics have argued that it is a way to by-pass judicial accountability mechanisms. Apart from this, there are parallel or shadow systems called Jirgas where the tribal elders come together and take decisions of the community. However, they are extremely intrusive and derogatory to already marginalized communities of the society like non-muslim minority, transgender and women. World Justice Project Report 2018 ranking has placed Pakistan at 129th position out of the total 142 countries, ~~revealing~~ revealing the gaps between ideal and real life scenario. It is of immense importance that we as a society work towards advocating or establishing an empowered independent judiciary.

Empowerment is done not only by day-to-day real life interactions but also by media campaigns. Media, however, believes in sensationalism, propaganda, glorified through repetition, slandering during elections and propagation of irrelevant ideals is done. World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report 2024 has established misinformation as the biggest risk in upcoming future. Media needs to learn responsibility rather than propagating viral news without prior verification.

The issues faced by Pakistan can be solved by establishing the problem first. Awareness campaigns should be launched by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Media, civil society, human rights activists, animal rights organizations etc. We need to talk about taboo topics that need to be addressed. Sectarianism, mis-interpretation of religion, ~~not~~ importance of education, role of media has to be discussed openly. In a society where 60% of the population is under 30, we need to focus our energy on matters that actually are worth our time and resources.

There may be tens and hundreds of reasons why we need separate territories as Sindhis, Punjabis, Balochis, Pathans, ~~they~~ Muhajirs, Shikhs, Shias, Deobands, Brelvis, Urdu-speaking etc., but that does not change our identity as Muslims believing in the Allah and his beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

This country was formed for Islam and nothing ~~will~~ can harm our country if we are united under the umbrella of Islam. Recent escalation between Pakistan and India revealed that no matter what our identities and religions be, Pakistan will always come first. Religious clerics should play their role and solve sectarian issues. They should inculcate cross-cultural tolerance in people. State should update curriculum to establish unity among people.

State is sovereign authority and nothing can come in its way if it decides to resolve conflicts as priority. Diplomacy solves every dispute. Judiciary shall be safe from any political intervention, proper legislation should be done as per the needs of public, e-governance operation should be introduced to reduce bureaucratic hurdles. NFC Awards should be re-evaluated to ensure fair distribution of resource. Political parties should be brought to the page by making a new charter of Democracy by taking all the stakeholders in consideration. This will reduce conflict and empower the state institutions.

National Interest would be prioritized at all costs. Legislative reforms should be introduced to attract FDI, improve security of the state and to allow everyone to participate fairly and equally. Counter-terrorism operations like Operation Azm-e-Istehkam should be regularly to ~~ensure~~ establish writ of state in areas where security situation is compromised. National Action Plan (NAP) should be implemented in totality. Engaging Taliban government and involving China as well as other Central Asian countries will be effective to resolve Afghanistan issue. Pakistan is already top contributor to UN peacekeeping missions. Fixing these regional issues will establish soft image of Pakistan in the world.

Since the beginning of Pakistan's independence, it has faced multiple issues but as a nation we have gracefully handled them all. There is

notably our sincere way of Pakistan's prosperity. If the state is
united, we together, united for Pakistan. Politics, civil society,
media and NGOs are already working towards betterment of the country.
The pace may be slow but there is dedication, patriotism and passion to
make Pakistan successful as well as well-equipped. Quaid-e-Azam
Muhammad Ali Jinnah was really a poet when he said, "No one can undo
Pakistan." May we forever work for our country's progress and prosperity.