



Pakistan at 77: A Nation on the Brink of Ruin

What is there to Celebrate!

As Pakistan marks 77 years of independence, the reality confronting the nation is grim. What was once a land brimming with potential has become a glaring example of how chronic mismanagement, corruption, and short-sighted leadership can drive a country to the brink of collapse. While the occasion might call for celebration, it is overshadowed by the undeniable fact that Pakistan is failing its people on almost every front.

Political Instability: Governance in Shambles

Pakistan's political system is in disarray. Since its inception, the country has been plagued by political instability, characterized by frequent changes in leadership, military coups, and a deeply entrenched culture of corruption. In the 77 years since independence, Pakistan has seen over 30 prime ministers, none of whom have completed a full term in office. The recent political turmoil, including the ousting of Imran Khan, is merely the latest episode in a long history of governance failure that has left the country rudderless. This chronic instability has had devastating consequences. Pakistan's GDP growth has stagnated at an average of just 2.9% over the last decade, well below the rate needed to keep up with its rapidly growing population. Political chaos has also frightened away investors, leading to a 33% drop in foreign direct investment in 2023. The leadership's inability to rise above personal vendettas and power struggles has left the nation adrift, with no clear direction or strategy for the future.

Economic Meltdown: A Country Bankrupt in All but Name

Pakistan's economy is in freefall, teetering on the edge of total collapse. The country is effectively bankrupt, with foreign reserves plummeting to just \$2.9 billion—barely enough to cover a few weeks of imports. Inflation has soared to a crippling 38%, pushing millions of Pakistanis deeper into poverty and despair. The rupee has lost 35% of its value against the dollar in just one year, further eroding the purchasing power of ordinary citizens. The debt situation is equally dire. External liabilities have ballooned to over \$130 billion, and the debt-to-GDP ratio has surged to 90%. The recent \$3 billion IMF bailout is nothing more than a temporary lifeline, failing to address the underlying structural issues plaguing the economy. Agriculture, which should be the backbone of the economy, is crippled by water shortages, outdated techniques, and government neglect, pushing the country toward a catastrophic food crisis.

Healthcare: A Catastrophic Failure

Pakistan's healthcare system is in a state of collapse. The government's miserly allocation of just 1.1% of GDP to health is a damning indictment of its priorities. The country has one doctor for every 1,300 people and one hospital bed for every 1,600—a ratio that spells disaster in times of crisis. Pakistan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world at 59 per 1,000 live births. The maternal mortality rate is equally appalling at 140 deaths per 100,000 live births. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the severe deficiencies within the healthcare system, with hospitals overwhelmed, vaccine distribution marred by inefficiency, and millions left without access to basic care. In rural areas, healthcare facilities are virtually nonexistent. This isn't just a failure; it's a national disgrace.

Education: A System Designed to Fail

Pakistan's education system is a national embarrassment, failing to equip its youth with the skills needed to survive, let alone thrive, in the modern world. The country's literacy rate is stuck at around 60%, one of the lowest in the world. The government's meager 2% allocation of GDP to education reflects its utter disregard for the future. Over 23 million children are out of school, ranking Pakistan among the worst in the world for educational access. Those who do attend school face poorly trained teachers, outdated curricula, and crumbling infrastructure. The education system is churning out a generation of youth who are unprepared for the challenges of the 21st century, further deepening the cycle of poverty and hopelessness.

Poverty and Inequality: A Society on the Edge

Nearly 40% of Pakistan's 230 million people live below the poverty line, with millions surviving on less than \$2 a day. The wealth gap is obscene: the richest 10% control over 60% of the nation's wealth, while the bottom 40% are left to scramble for crumbs. This gross inequality is tearing at the fabric of society, fueling resentment and unrest. Pakistan's Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, is among the highest in the world, reflecting a society that is deeply fractured and unequal. Urban slums are expanding at an alarming rate as rural populations flee to cities in search of opportunities that simply do not exist. The unemployment rate among youth exceeds 25%, breeding discontent and setting the stage for social upheaval.

Conclusion: A Nation Straying Far from its Founding Principles

As Pakistan celebrates 77 years of independence, the harsh reality is that the nation has strayed far from the ideals upon which it was founded. Pakistan was created in the name of Islam, with the promise of establishing a state based on the principles of justice, equality, and social welfare, as envisioned in the Maqasid al-Shariah—the higher objectives of Islamic law. These objectives include the protection of life, religion, intellect, progeny, and wealth. Yet, today, Pakistan fails to uphold these very principles. The protection of life is compromised daily by a failing healthcare system, rampant poverty, and the absence of basic social services. The right to education—critical to the protection of intellect—remains inaccessible to millions of children. Economic policies that favor the wealthy at the expense of the poor violate the principles of equity and the protection of wealth. Social justice is a distant dream in a society where inequality is deepening, and corruption is entrenched. Pakistan's leaders must reflect on how far the nation has drifted from the vision of its founders. The time for empty rhetoric and superficial reforms is over. To truly honor the sacrifices made for independence, Pakistan must realign itself with the Maqasid al-Shariah, ensuring justice, equality, and welfare for all its citizens. Only by returning to these foundational principles can Pakistan hope to avert disaster and fulfill the promise of its creation. If the country's leaders continue to ignore these imperatives, the consequences will be catastrophic, not only for Pakistan but for the ideals it was meant to uphold.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Abdul Majeed Bhatti**