



Can Pakistan become a Superpower?

Can Pakistan become a Superpower would be an odd question to ask. It would be odd because many around the world do not view Pakistan as having any potential. Pakistan has zero influence around the world today, its rulers are pawns for the global powers and Pakistan cannot even feed its own population let alone project influence abroad.

But the same was said about the United States in the early 19th century. Everyone would have laughed at you if you said within 100 years the US would become a global power, when it just secured independence. Similarly everyone would have laughed at any suggestion of China being a power in 1980 when over 85% of China's population was in poverty and it had - despite being 10 times larger in population than Spain, a GDP smaller than Spain.

A superpower is a nation that influences political landscape in multiple regions beyond its borders. It does this through its building and bringing to bear its political, economic, military and cultural capabilities.

Ideology

To be a superpower you need to have global aspirations. This means you need to have a global mission and something to offer the world. This would then also mean the capabilities to propagate such values, around the world, need to be developed. Russia embraced Communism in 1917 and built a whole nation to spread this around the world. It built its economy and military and entered into global struggle with the US in order to propagate its values, which it believed was the best system for the world's population

Successive Pakistani governments and the Pakistani elite have nothing of the sort. They do not look beyond the current secular system in place. However, Pakistan was created in the name of Islam and Islam as an ideology can be taken to the world. This is what our Prophet (saw) did and his Sahabah and Muslims afterwards continued this for over a century. This is how Islam came to Pakistan. To be a global power a nation is required to have something to take to the world. The West has taken capitalism and democracy as its global mission, the Soviet Union took communism, the Nazis, took their racist ideas. Pakistan has none currently, but this can change if it embraced Islam as its global mission.

Politics

Politically Pakistan has an entrenched and unelected elite. Pakistan's military leaders and directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI, exert a controlling influence over most of Pakistan's core policies, around them you then have a relatively small cadre of politicians, senior bureaucrats, and well-connected business families who have led, managed, owned and messed up most of the country since its independence in 1947. This elite view Pakistan as their personal bank account that should serve them, rather than the people. This elite have around them numerous opportunists, political parties and others who perpetuate this self-serving system. No amount of reform, elections and dictatorships will change this system, it has to be uprooted for real change to take place.

As Pakistan is one of the most powerful countries, alongside Egypt and Turkey among the Muslim nations, it can reunify with the wider Muslim world as they all share a common identity in Islam. All the 52 or so Muslim countries have borders that were created by the departing colonialists, they are completely artificial and actually go against the identities and sentiments of the masses.

Economy

In any global mission you will need an economy that will support this cause. Pakistan's economy has been driven into the ground by successive governments. They see the country as a mere cash cow for themselves. They have undertaken token development programs to appease the masses. But Pakistan's sad state of affairs with the economy is completely man-

made disaster. Pakistan's economy is just not built upon its strengths. It's been completely neglected by the rulers and what you have in the country is really a man-made problem.

Pakistan's economy is not built upon its strengths, this is why its economy is smaller than Finland. As an example, over half the economy is service based but half the labour force is in the Agriculture sector. Pakistan would need to transfer from a service-based economy to manufacturing based economy, this will allow it to develop the necessary industrial machinery and mass produce them. Pakistan has been blessed with mineral resources which have not been fully exploited, these include:

- The world's largest untapped coal reserves in the Thar Coal Field in Sindh. Thar coal is one of the world's largest lignite deposits spread over more than 9,000 sq. km. It comprises around 175 billion tonnes of coal which is the equivalent of 618 billion barrels of crude oil.

- Iron ore a primary ingredient in steel making, Pakistan's largest reserves are in Chiniot, around 160 kilometres northwest of Lahore. Estimates indicate 500 million tonnes of iron ore, which are currently not being exploited.

- The Reko Diq mine represents one of the largest copper reserve in Pakistan and in the world having estimated reserves of 5.9 billion tonnes of ore and gold reserves amounting to 41.5 million oz.

Manufacturing in Pakistan currently accounts for 20% of the economy. But cotton textile production and apparel manufacturing's are Pakistan's largest industries, account for 66% of Pakistan. This will need to change to producing iron and steel which is central to almost everything.

Military

On the military front, which is essential for any global power, Pakistan's relationship with India and strategically defending the border with India has been the military's paramount objective because it represents the most direct existential threat. For this Pakistan has constructed a large land force and acquired military technology and integrated this into its military posture. The need to face-off against an adversary which is quantitatively larger in every sense has led to the development of asymmetric forces, which has made regional nations take notice of Pakistan. It also led the country to develop nuclear weapons.

Pakistan's ground forces regularly train in offensive scenarios to deal with a possible Indian invasion and this makes the army capable of conducting operations to take and hold territory. Pakistan's ground forces have for over 60 years, postured, to conduct offensive operations rather than remain in static formations and focus on defending and holding territory. This means the ground forces are uniquely placed in most offensive scenarios.

The military's fundamental problem is the nation's economy. Civilian leaders one after the other have caused economic crisis and as a result the long-term finance needed for armament and platform development just has not been possible. It is unique, almost miraculous that the military of Pakistan still has been able to develop the capabilities to balance India, when she has more personnel, more equipment – more of everything, with such a dysfunctional economy. The zenith of this was the development of nuclear weapons.

Taking Islam as its mission, restructuring the economy and using the military to defend and reunify with the wider Muslim world, is the way for Pakistan to become a superpower.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Adnan Khan**