



# AN APOLOGY TO THE YOUTH OF PAKISTAN FROM THE Older Generation!

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Dear Youth of Pakistan,

**On behalf of my generation, I offer you a heartfelt apology over our failure to leave you with hope and an inheritance that you can build on.**

Our fathers gave us an unfinished project called Pakistan. They had, however, given in very quickly to the pleasures of colonial apartheid, where they could live like 'brown sahibs' with all the perks of the white ruler. Wealth was easy to get as they followed in the footsteps of the colonial ruling class who had voluntarily left. Making an enlightened nation with rules laws with a culture of development and learning was harder and beyond them. Crude tribalism and theology were routinely used for power-grabs instead of the painstaking work required to build institutions for a modern state and governance.

We the first Pakistani-born generation, grew up in a still colonial Pakistan and inherited the culture of privilege, state provided wealth and easy government jobs. Like our fathers we bickered on the constitution, desired absolute power and were very greedy.

## GREEDY FOR POWER, NO BIG IDEAS

Perhaps our generation's biggest flaw was our inability to develop big ideas for the country. From the constitution to the patwar, we could not get beyond what the colonials left us with. We were too busy aping the colonial to throw up leaders like Lee Kuan Yu, Mahathir, Deng or Jefferson or Madison. The colonial comforts of centralized power insulated from the people were enticed to maintain a highly stratified society.

With raj privileges up for grabs, my generation got busy in continuous infighting. Byzantine intrigues and willful rule overtook law making and organization building. While the rest of the world was changing build systems to take advantage of technology and

globalization, we were busy dumbing down Pakistan with theology, ego and excessive politicking.

Deep down I think we are aware of our failures and suffer from a sense of inferiority. We have virtually ostracized our public intellectuals, policy champions, and social reformers to the annual lit-fest. Never are they allowed at tables where real decisions about the country are taken. Never are they consulted on how society and polity is to be shaped. They are not worthy.

While excommunicating local intellect, we have made a habit of begging for both money and ideas. To be a second fiddle to a donor consultant is high honor for us.

## LOBBYING AND INTRIGUE: YARDSTICK FOR SUCCESS

Busy in this war for government favors we failed to develop a system for rewarding merit anywhere. Sycophancy, not talent was rewarded with perks of company bahadur (VIP status and privileges paid for by taxpayers). Sadly, nothing was done on merit and even if some competent person was appointed, she was fired before important and beneficial changes could be made. We are now leaving a huge number of failed and loss-making agencies to you. We are leaving useless universities, overloaded

poorly managed universitas and regulatory agencies and government offices that are in reality bleeding parking places for the rich and powerful.

Drunk on colonial attitudes and power, rules, laws and constitutions were matters of convenience for us to be bent as desired for personal gain. Parliament seldom focused or debated ideas. Leaders at all levels professed crudity and an innate contempt for knowledge. Intrigue ruled the day. Rather than develop social contracts, build trust and laws, we brought out biradism, sectarianism, unproven accusations and demeaning the whole nation as morally concept and tax-cheating. There was no limit we would not go to get power.

## LEGACY DEVOID OF INSTITUTIONAL OR INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

The ambition of my generation was government office. We fought, we lobbied, we switched allegiances for all manner of government offices. Once there we abused our positions for more and more power. Sadly, there are few cases of any serious history being made. Politicians never made law or worked at developing consensus. Judges played politics, developed no precedents, and seldom bothered with dispensing evenhanded justice. Bureaucrats wanted control to be able to dispense favors. Generals too wanted to be policymakers and share in the spoil.

We leave you an institutional graveyard. Institutions they say are rules of engagement and are established if there is collective agreement to subject yourself to them. In my day, every government organization is involved in power grabs and has little conception of limits or rules. Elections are merely treated as exercises in choice of rajas who then seek to victimize all opposition into submission and who seek to rule through kitchen cabinets, ordinances and choice bureaucrats. The Raja portrays himself as a messiah come to save Pakistan in a hurry and on the principle of 'ends justify means' rides roughshod over all norms and practice.

We leave you with no heroes or role models. Few will be remembered from our generation. Even today, the power-grabbers are look upon with disdain. As time goes by and history crystalizes, they will be remembered even more poorly.



## WILL YOU THINK DIFFERENTLY?

Young people are quick to abuse us as they should? They feel let down deep in their gut. Let me tell you when I was young, I too felt like you and felt my generation would do better than that before us. But it was too easy to follow the legacy of colonialism.

So dear youth are you just casting stones like my generation did to merely capture power. Or will you be able to think big, follow rules, develop norms and rules of enlightenment, foster trust and teamwork? Will you be able to develop a proper constitution that is inclusive? Will you allow local governments? Will you allow autonomous organizations in government? Will you allow merit to prevail? Will you allow competition for position and resources? Or will you like us serve the beneficiaries of the land distribution of the colonial – the canal colony land recipients? Will you be able to compete on merit rather than innuendos and accusations as in our generation?

## THE FUTURE IS BLEAK OTHERWISE

There are over a 100 million of you and the economy is growing at a lackluster rate. Officialdom mired investment and enterprise with attestations, NOCs and permissions. Will there be enough jobs for you? Not unless you are able to re-imagine Pakistan. Continuing to beg for money and blindly follow consultant prescriptions with no thought or effort from you probably will not work anymore.

The 4th industrial revolution is upon us. Technology will soon overwhelm you and your job market. You are unprepared and certainly our government is not even aware of it. Our leaders too preoccupied to worry. Jobs and markets might disappear, as might migration possibilities. The need for change is urgent. Are you prepared?

Not only will finding a job be difficult, finding a home or space for entrepreneurship might be also be difficult. My generation has constrained housing supply to acquire plots for themselves. Even our architecture, our cities are bland because in our greed for 'plots.' We refused to let cities be developed or democratized. We have left you a suburban sprawl for cars but no room for you. I worry about your future as you are unable to find space in to live or work unless you quickly dismantle our thinking.

## YOU NEED A VISION BASED ON HARD WORK AND INTELLECT

The system we have set up seeks to preserve the worst by unleashing factionalism of the worst kind to undermines society. In the process all manner of civilized discourse and coalition formation is destroyed. The software of society and state is eroded now.

People especially donors will try to tell you to ignore society and just try to get loans to develop hardware of development. Learn from our experience, borrowing and begging is for fools who never escape the debt trap. The hard work of building the software of society can never be ignored.

Be bold! Take risks! Most importantly don't follow our example. Don't be mere followers of ideologies. Learn and develop your own discourse. Through that discourse think of new institutions, new rules of engagement, fresh paths to building trust and fostering sharing. Shun dividing yourself. Learn the methods of discourse to go beyond the name calling and wild accusations of corruption of our leaders from my generation.



**ABOVE ALL VALUE LEARNING AND  
BUILDING SOCIETY – SOMETHING MY  
GENERATION OF UPSTARTS NEVER  
UNDERSTOOD.**