



Essay

Pakistan's Generational Mind-Sets and Alternative Futures

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Abstract

This essay explores the possible and preferred futures for Pakistan through analyzing the changes in the social mind-set of its generations during different historical periods. Alternative futures are generated from this generational analysis. Ibn Khaldun's concept of 'Asabiyah' and 'pendulum' view of history have been used to understand the evolving mind-set (ranging from enslaved to revolutionary and progressive) of generations between 1917 and 2037. Methods and tools used for this analysis have been taken from Inayatullah's six pillars (Inayatullah, 2008b). Macrohistory is used to understand the mind-set patterns over three generations; the Futures Triangle is applied to explore critical social sectors; and finally scenarios are developed.

Keywords

Ibn Khaldun, Asabiyah, Generational Mind-Set, The Futures Triangle, Critical Social Sectors. Pakistan

Ibn Khaldun and the Social Mind-Set

Ibn Khaldun's concept of "Asabiyah" – the sinews that bind – is focused on the common group feeling and collective aspiration of a people/tribe which takes precedence over their personal interests. Khaldun defines this concept as a feeling of unity, sense of solidarity, collective consciousness, and "social solidarity" (Ali, 2019). Asabiyah is used to explain "the rise and fall of groups, communities, societies, and civilization." (Ali, 2019). The idea of Pakistan founded on the ideology of Islam was a strong and powerful collective vision that was eagerly adopted by Muslims all over the sub-continent. It was the "Asabiyah" of that time, we argue. The intellect of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and the social mind-set of Muslims at that time, were key factors in the realization of this vision.

We propose that if we apply Khaldun's 'cyclical' view of history (Inayatullah, 1998) to the Pakistani nation's mind-set then we can see and analyze the path that Pakistan has travelled so far as well as its possible emergent futures. We use here Khaldun's concept of natural lifespan of individuals and dynasties which is approximately one hundred and twenty years, comprising three generations (Khaldun, 2015). For the purpose of our analysis, we have used the lifespan of our nation ranging from 1917 to 2037, divided into three generations. Like Khaldun, we consider the natural lifespan of an individual in each generation to be around 60 years. In our view, the productive/influential period of his/her life is between 30 and 60, during which maturity is reached and then retrogression begins. The individuals in the first generation have spent half their lives in pre-1947 colonial India while the individuals of the next two generations belong to the post-1947 period of independent Pakistan. Table 1 gives the individual life span in each generation, the productive/influential period of an individual's life, and the mind-set during each generation.

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Table 1: Generational Perspectives

No	Natural Individual lifespan (60 Years)	Productive/influential Period of an individual's life	Generational Characteristics
1	1917 to 1977	1947 to 1977	Dominant mind-set of slavery and obedience. Conservative and selfish Conditioned by the Past and orthodox Supportive to status quo Disgraceful and lacking confidence
2	1947 to 2007	1977 to 2007	Hybrid of slave and free mind-set which is still dominated by the slave mind-set.
3	1977 to 2037	2007 to 2037	Free mind-set becoming dominant. Confident with self-respect Revolutionary and progressive Aware and more informative Righteous and straight Look for visionary Leadership

The above-mentioned mind-sets in each generation do not exist as absolutes but have considerable variation. The ones that are dominant in each generation define the overall mindset of the nation during that period.

The first generation from 1917 to 1977, whose productive/influential period was from 1947 to 1977, comprised of people who were around 30 years at the time of Pakistan’s independence (1947). They had lived half their lives in pre-1947 colonial India, so they were influenced by colonial rule; although they participated in the struggle for independence, but their thought processes remained colonial in nature. This is the mindset of slavery; of being an obedient servant. Due to this, the newborn Pakistani state entangled in plethora of political and economic issues, could not carry out the reform process necessary for real freedom. As a result, the country continued to be run with the same systems which were inherited from the British. It then suffered from periodic dictatorships and external influences. In 1958 martial law was imposed for the first time by General Ayyub Khan. He took the direction of the nation toward capitalism with the ethos of secularism and institutional development. In 1969, the second period of martial law began under General Yahya Khan. The 1971-1977 era consists of the period of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s government, who was initially the civilian Chief Martial Law administrator and later became the elected Prime minister. During this period the country became a socialist secular state and came under the influence of China.

The second generation consisted of individuals born at the time of independence (1947) and whose productive/influential period ranged from 1977 to 2007. This is the hybrid stage wherein a mix of the slave and free mindsets co-existed; the slave mind-set, however, remained dominant. During this period the country made some progress, but the status quo of the slave mind-set remained a barrier constraining development. The third period of martial law was imposed by General Zia- ul-Haq in 1977 and continued till 1985. The Afghan war functioned as a proxy conflict involving the USA. During the martial law of General Zia, the country came under the influence of the USA and reverted to the capitalist economic and social system. At the same time, a rising tide of extremism and religious fundamentalism began to plague the country. In 1999, Pakistan again came under military rule, now for the fourth time, when General Pervez Musharraf seized power in a coup and dissolved the elected government. He remained in power till 2008. During this period the country became a moderate Islamic state with a liberal culture and a capitalistic economic model. The influence of the USA continued, as Pakistan was used as a proxy to curb the Taliban.

The third generation of individuals born in 1977, whose productive/influential period began from 2007 and will go continue to 2037. They comprise the current stage the nation is undergoing. Individuals in this time are mostly revolutionary, progressive, and looking for leadership which can give them direction. The colonial and slave mind-set and its effects are almost history. A possibility has emerged of developing “Asabiyah”, and this time there is a group feeling to earn respect as a nation through achieving excellence in key performance areas. Slogans of “Change” and “True Freedom” may have been political, but were never heard before. A debate for institutional

reforms in the power centers / state pillars may emerge as a new story, which can create collective consciousness, and social solidarity to move towards becoming a better nation.

The above explained individual/generational lifespans and the corresponding thinking and mind-sets in each period, reveal the trajectory of our nation in the economic and social arenas. We also observe the country switching from being a capitalist economic and social system to socialist and then back to becoming a capitalist system. Similarly, there is a switch from being individually and socially liberal to conservative and then back to a moderate liberal position (Inayatullah, 2008). Observing the changing mind-set of our nation during these periods, we can conclude that the mindset of colonial slavery turns people into obedient servants who can easily be turned to follow any direction, without considering implications. The coups and subsequent martial laws again reflect the psychology of those in power; how they acted like colonial rulers with the goal of prolonging their reign, and using the same methods as used by the British, while remaining under the influence of external powers and proxies. Coming to the third generation, a growing number of people are developing a free mindset – not conditioned by the past - which has the potential to create a progressive and revolutionary nation. The successful Lawyer’s Movement for restoration of Judges in 2007, during the dictatorship of General Pervaiz Musharraf, is one example, and evidence of the growing free mind-set in individuals and its perseverance and capability to leave behind the old mind-set. Another example is the peaceful *Azadi* (freedom) March of 2014 against systematic rigging in the 2013 general elections. This protest continued from August 14 to December 17, 2014. This prolonged and undeterred protest reflects the sentiments and determination of contemporary people to end institutional wrongdoings and weaknesses in the political system, which again shows their growing awareness and free mind-set. Today, despite the continuation of political, judicial and even constitutional crises, the debate and effort for systemic changes, and institutional reforms is continuously growing.

The Futures of Critical Social Sectors

In view of the changing mind-set and patterns of thinking across generations, the present generation is fully capable of taking advantage of the opportunities that are emerging for them today. They only need directions for the journey that they need to undertake till 2037. It is thus necessary to identify the critical social sectors that are important for Pakistan to go towards stable and long-term development.

In this section the Futures Triangle (Inayatullah, 2002, 2008b) is applied to explore some important social sectors in order to analyze and forecast the vision and journey to 2037. The Futures Triangle is a tool for exploring alternative futures. It is the primary method for the first pillar of futures studies i.e., mapping the future. The triangle maps through three dimensions. The first of these dimensions is the contending pulls of the future. These are images of the future that pull us forward. The second is the pushes of the present which are quantifiable critical drivers changing the future. Third is the weight of history, which are the barriers preventing the realization of a particular desired image of the future. Understanding the drivers of change, the weight of history and the image of the future is helpful in visualizing possible scenarios of the future.

The social sectors selected for analysis in this essay were based on the work of (Chaudhary, 2017), namely (i) Food Production, (ii) Freedom Level (freedom from Corruption), (iii) Federal Taxation System, (iv) Tertiary Education and (v) Performance and Credibility of Judiciary.

For this analysis, possible end states were presented for 2037. However, it is anticipated that signs of collective consciousness, and social solidarity in individuals with the free mindset would be clearly visible by 2030. The Futures Triangle 2037 for each selected sector was developed based on document analysis and personal experiences through observing the behaviors of people belonging to different age brackets; children, students and working individuals. The purpose of the Futures Triangle for each sector was not to provide a comprehensive vision of the future but to analyze the nation’s evolving changing patterns of thinking over generations. As mentioned above, the slavery mind-set promotes nepotism and discourages merit. The end result is the downfall of the whole nation. The pull of the future is true freedom which once achieved with a free mind-set will promote merit and the reins of the nation will be in the hands of capable and responsible people, leading to the desired level excellence.

Food production

Figure 1 explains the tremendous opportunities in the Food Production sector, as the CPEC makes Pakistan a gateway to Central Asia for trade in food and technology. Agriculture is the new real estate, and is referred to as the vision, metaphorically to explain the level of private investment required in the agriculture sector. This is only possible by a policy driven strategy with outcomes in the shape of a supply chain of production, process, and sale. The plausible future could be a return to the status-quo, when Punjab used to be the breadbasket of subcontinent. Stout workforce, fertile lands and network of rivers and canals are great potential. Corruption in the Irrigation Department and feudal culture in rural areas are the biggest threats to this vision.

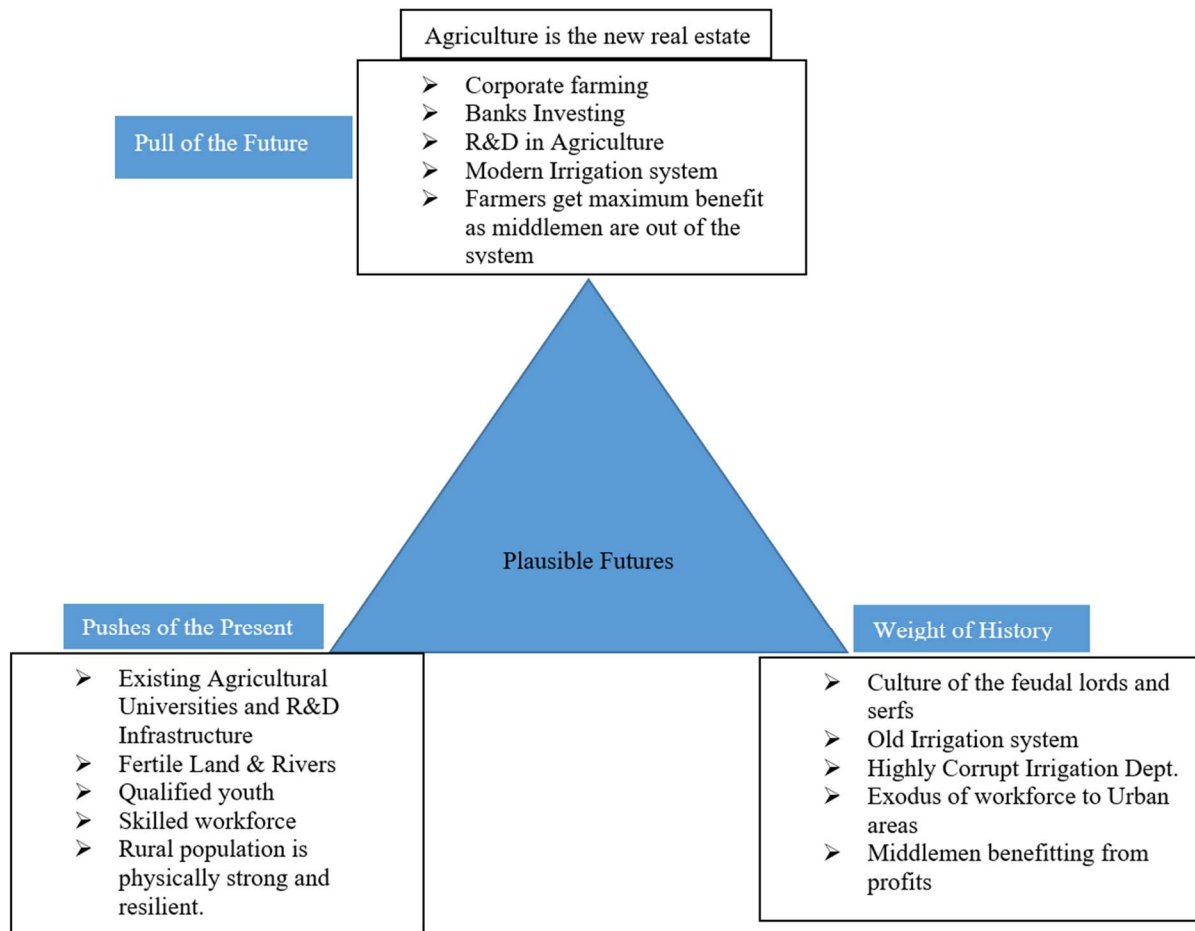


Fig 2: Future Triangle for Food Production

Freedom level (freedom from corruption)

The Futures Triangle in Figure 2 summarises analysis for the Freedom from Corruption in Pakistan. There are opportunities for reform that aim to deal with corruption: the media is getting stronger every day but needs direction and more freedom, while social media has changed the dynamics of influence. Here the pre-existing bureaucracy with a colonial mind-set is the biggest threat. The reformed justice system and the free mind - set, can lead Pakistan towards a welfare state, attributable to that existed in deep Islamic history.

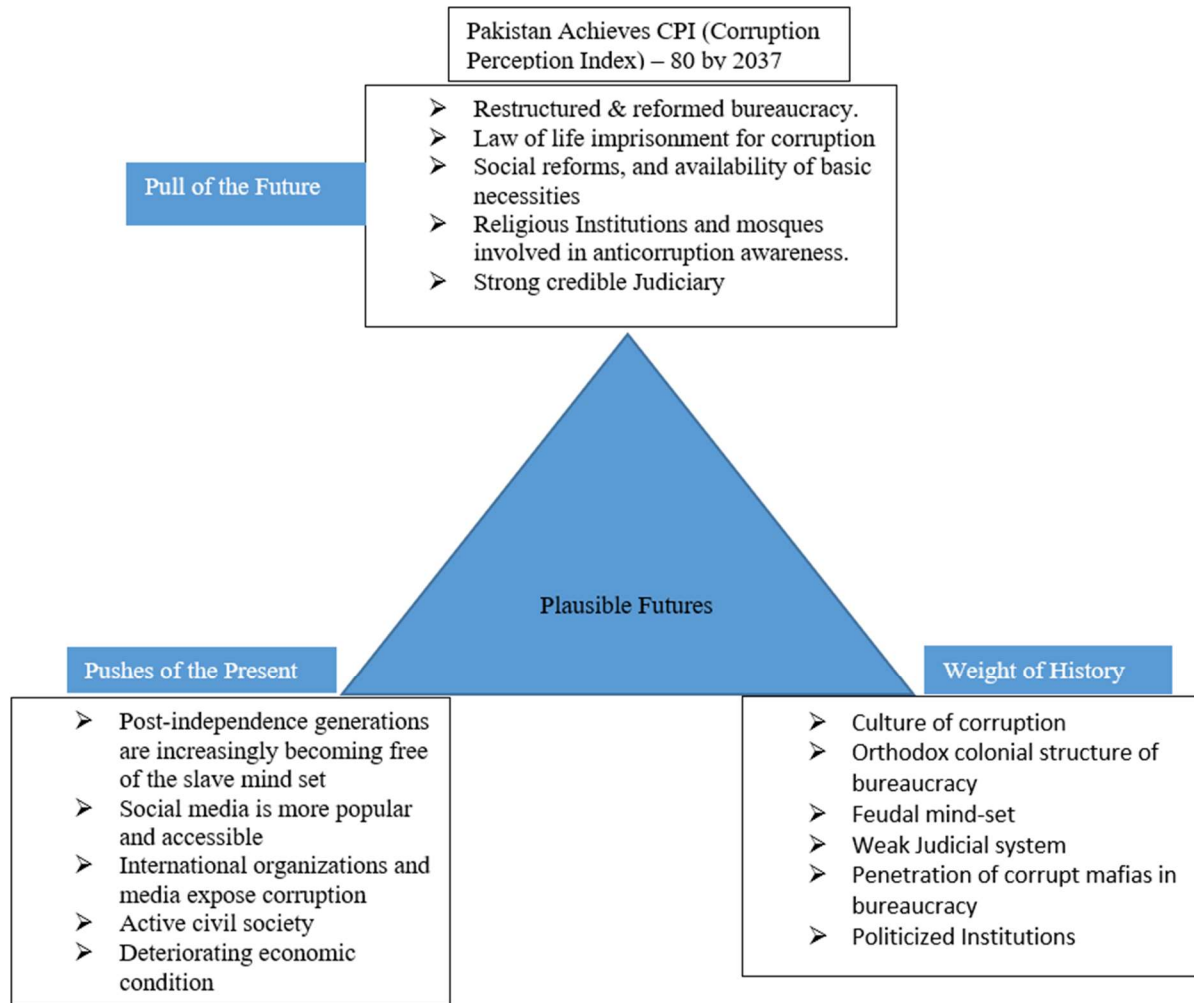


Fig 3: Future Triangle for Freedom from Corruption

Federal taxation system

Figure 3 refers to the futures triangle for the Taxation System. Recent governments have been implementing initiatives that provide incentives to tax filers; this has been a positive development that is taking us towards creating a culture of tax payment. However on-going political instability, Injustice and corruption are serious threats and obstacles for success. Once the nation has evolved and Institutions start to deliver after systemic reforms, the nation will capitalize its potentials to fullest and the productivity will rise with tremendous pace towards a strong regional economy.

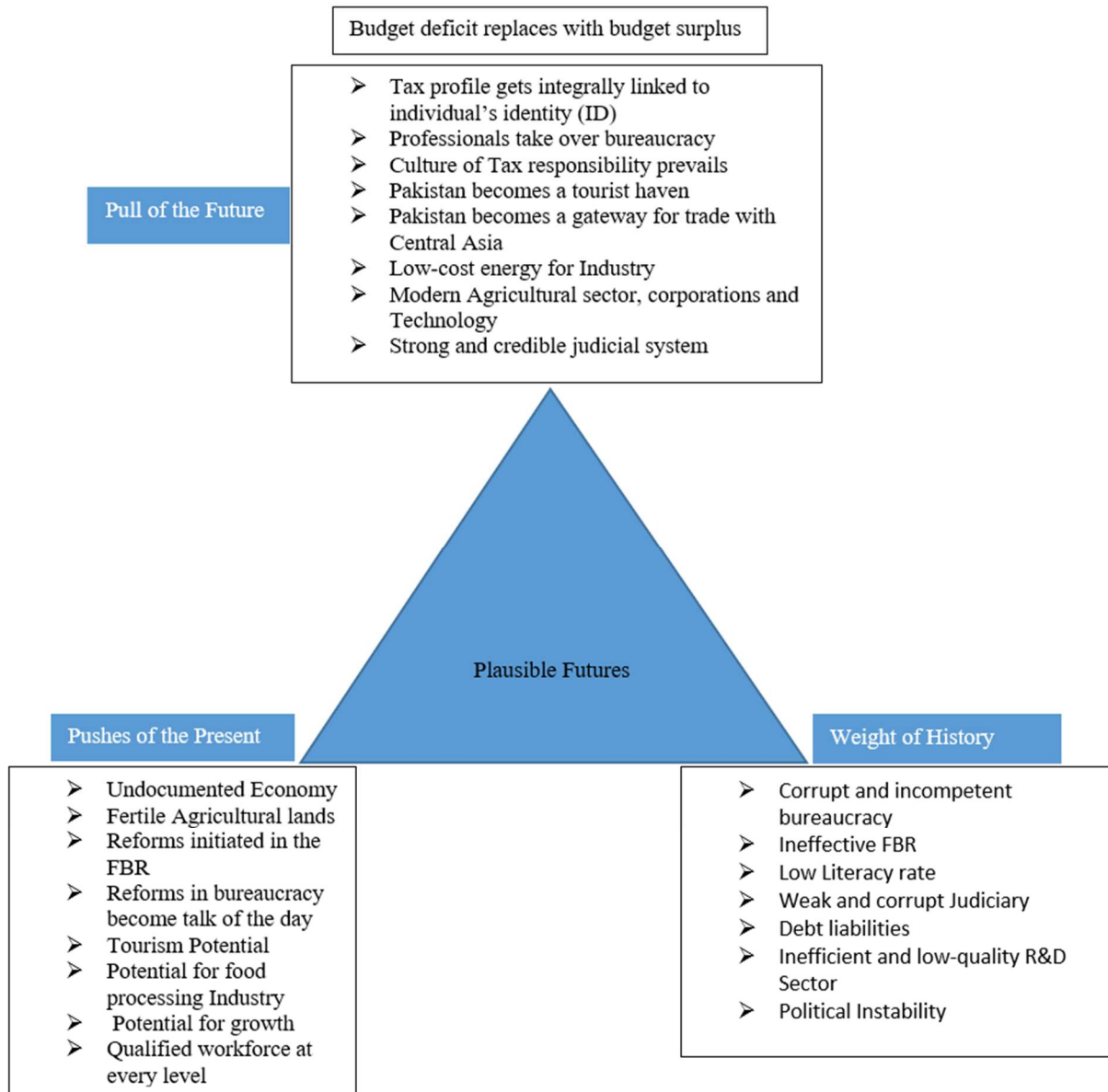


Fig 4: Future Triangle for Federal Tax System

Tertiary education

Figure 4 is the Future Triangle for this sector. Information Technology and the modernization of education based on it have the potential to grow exponentially and provide extensive opportunities to all individuals seeking to educate themselves. Collaboration with neighboring countries can bring about a revolution in this sector. An uncontrolled private sector, corruption, ineffective regulatory system are major threats to the rapid and stable development of this sector. The end of the feudal mind-set and pursuance of the path leading to the heritage of writers, philosophers and thinkers through research makes Pakistan a land of Intellectuals.

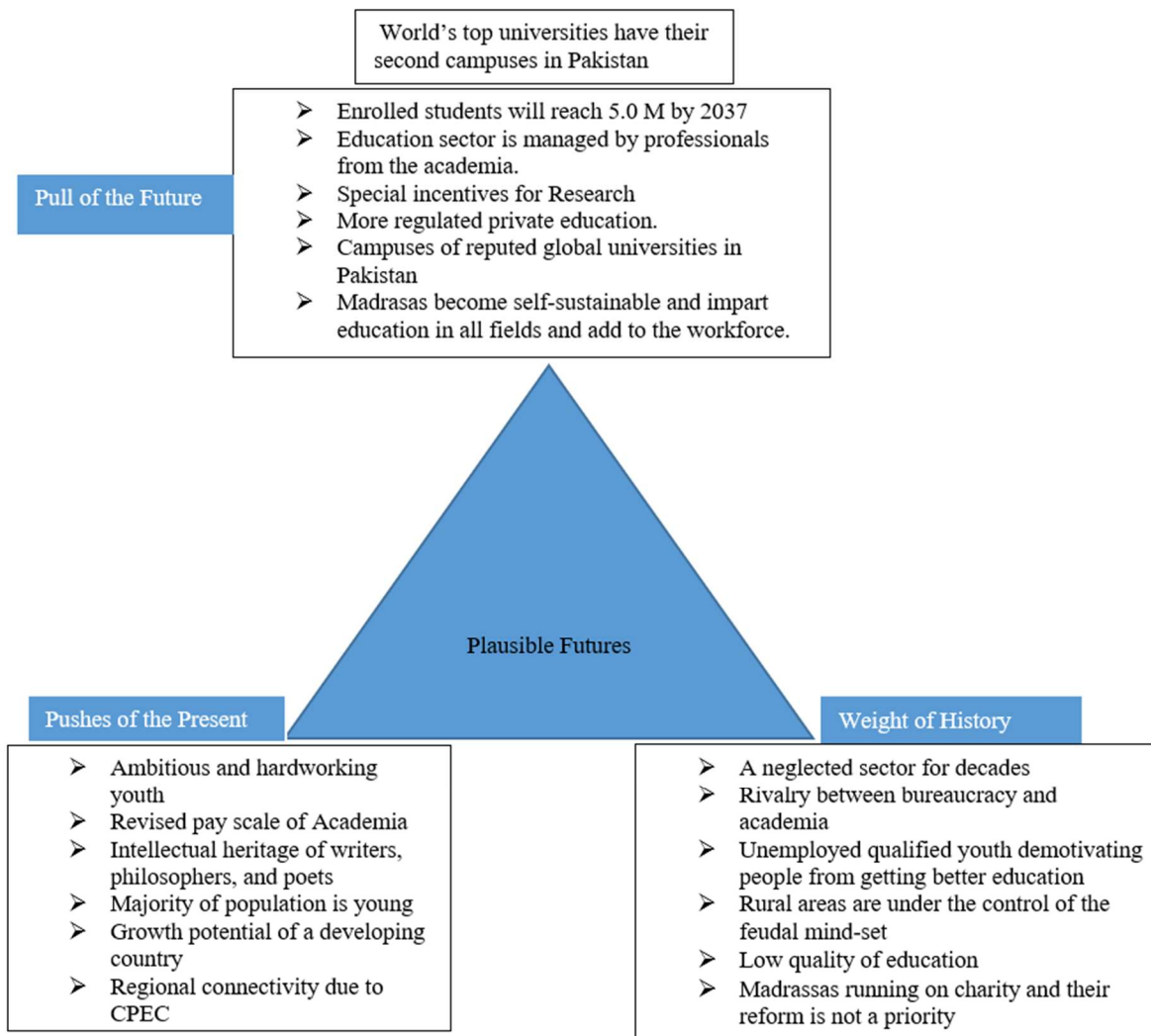


Fig 5: Future Triangle for Tertiary Education

Performance and credibility of judiciary

Figure 5 is the future Triangle for Judiciary. People are pushing for judicial reforms as their awareness level has increased. Modern technology and IT provide excellent ways to check corruption in courts, etc. The current generation has developed a dominant free mindset, which is influencing the system to reform towards excellence.

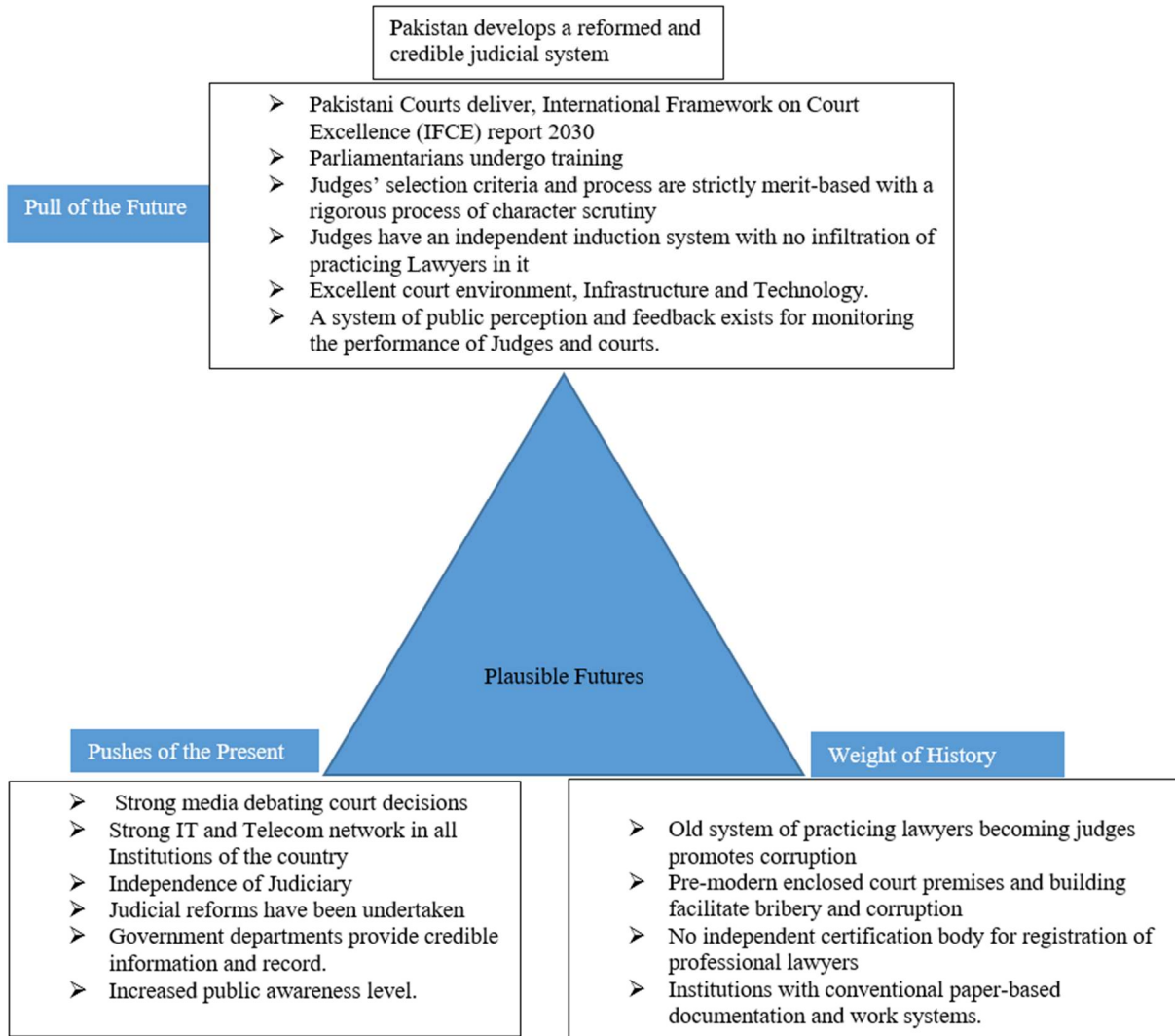


Fig 6: Future Triangle for Judiciary

Scenarios of Possible Futures

The above analysis of critical sectors linked to changing generational thinking and mind-set, can help to shape some scenarios of possible futures of Pakistan by 2037. Table-2 gives three cases of possible alternative futures. It is pertinent to note here that the scenarios created in this section have been inspired by Sohail Inayatullah’s work on the futures of Pakistan (Inayatullah, 1992) and (Inayatullah, 2008).

Table 2: Scenarios of Possible Futures

S. No.	Type	Scenario
1	Worst case	Chaos and Unrest
2	Best Case	Asabiyah
3	Outlier	India Attacks Pakistan

Worst case scenario: chaos and unrest

The status quo continues and no reforms are undertaken in critical sectors of agriculture, education, judiciary, and taxation. Pakistan's economy continues to become more and more unstable; mafias are stronger than ever and control the country's institutions. Pakistan continues to import major food items, with heavy expenditures. As a result, poverty levels have reached dangerous proportions. A corrupt, ineffective judiciary take Pakistan in the direction of becoming a failed state. People become cynical and desperate after hearing so many false promises of good governance from the ruling elite. The contemporary generation with a free mindset is struggling and fighting the evil of the status quo mind-set but cannot find a way out as the force of the old mind-set preserve itself being stronger. The result of this strife is a highly stretched environment and growing chaos.

Metaphor: Street Dog (hungry, weak and without ownership)

Best case scenario: asabiyah

Pakistan moves in the direction of becoming a strong nation with high productivity. It represents a return to the prosperity of the Mughal Empire, and a revival of the historical silk route in the form of CPEC. This leads to technological advancement and a strong economy. Pakistan achieves successful reforms in all critical sectors: education, food, judiciary, tax collection and corruption. This success is attributed to the changing mind-set over generations - a transition from the "slave mind-set" to "free" and then "respected" mind-set - the "Asabiyah" of this time.

Pakistan reaches a 5.0M level of enrolment in tertiary education and many of the world's high-ranking Universities have their campuses in Pakistan. Bureaucracy has been delinked from academia and the leaders of academia are successfully advising political leaders. There is evidence-based governance. Education is the top priority in the budget. Pakistan has done well in terms of revenue targets and has paid off all its debts. It has a comprehensive and largest ever (financially and in scope) development program. Pakistan has made its agricultural sector attractive for investors. The youth are attracted towards making a career in the Agriculture Sector. Local manufacturing of hi-tech agriculture machinery and plants through R&D, and corporations are in, and landlords are out. Courts are now truly delivering and protecting human rights.

Metaphor- Master Yoda (spiritual and intellectual strength)

Outlier scenario: Indo-Pak war

India has become an uncontrolled state, due to the continuous rise of fundamentalism practiced by hardline orthodox Hindus. Their situation is similar to what Pakistan faced in the 80s when the Mujahidin were created to fight the Russians in Afghanistan. With an economically weakening Pakistan and provinces seeking greater autonomy, India takes advantage and makes aggressive moves toward Pakistan. Things get out of control and a full-fledged war starts which may turn into a nuclear conflict. Hardliners push for the use of tactical nuclear weapons. The shadow of an all-out nuclear war hangs over the region.

Metaphor- I am Death (nuclear destruction)

Conclusion

Each of the above scenarios is a possibility depending on how Pakistan moulds itself in response to external developments and whether it manages to decode and address its internal enigmas in the years to come. There is no

doubt that the potential of the current generation needs to be capitalized upon and tapped for a better future. Pakistan enjoys friendly relations with all Central Asian Islamic States which have tremendous trade potentials. Trade with these states after connectivity through CPEC, could change the economics of the whole region and Pakistan would benefit maximum being gateway to Central Asia.

An example of a positive sign of change within the individual is the story of Usama, an undergraduate student from Bahawalpur, studying at a university in Islamabad. Usama is studying Hotel Management and has to cover all his expenses of study, boarding and so on, as he cannot be a burden on his lower middle-class family. I met him in a restaurant at Kohsar market where he works part time as a waiter. Most of the restaurants in this market have outdoor seating, in the open natural environment, right at the foot of the Margala Hills. Usama told me that he works in the restaurant from three pm to 12 am daily and he is able to cover his expenses from the wage he gets. I find this amazing, since when I graduated in the late 80s, this model was not possible. A free mind availing the opportunity to go for a better future and earn respect replaces the slave mind, which was vulnerable to exploitation. This is a sign of the emergence and growth of intellect, and the possibility of creating peace, harmony and happiness as a society and a nation. Despite the negative factors and problems like record high inflation, etc., which are currently engulfing our society and country, the increasing magnitude of positive factors can turn the tide. As we argued from the beginning, generational change with Asabiyah could be the critical factors for a transformed Pakistan.

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