

Crises? Not in 2035

Dr Nasir Iqbal | 19th Jan 2025

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A currency dealer counts notes in this photo. — AFP/File

It is 2035, and Pakistan has defied history. For the first time, the economy is not in crisis, the government is not in debt distress, and Pakistan is not running on borrowed time. The global media no longer calls Pakistan a 'troubled state' – instead, it calls it 'Asia's Economic Phoenix'.

But this transformation did not happen by accident. It was deliberate, ruthless and necessary. We took radical steps that no government had ever dared to take before.

First, Pakistan completely dismantled its outdated governance model and rebuilt it from scratch. In 2029, a historic constitutional overhaul was undertaken, repealing the 1973 constitution and introducing the Constitution of Pakistan 2030, designed for a modern economic state rather than a post-colonial, bureaucratic setup.

This change eliminated the outdated civil service structure, replacing it with a results-based governance model. Ministries and institutions were no longer run by generalists with zero expertise in their fields – economists ran the finance ministry, technologists led the IT ministry, and trade experts shaped commerce policy.

Second, Pakistan became the first country in Asia to run a ‘data-driven government’. By 2031, the entire governance system became AI-powered, minimising human intervention in key policy decisions. AI-driven taxation, automated budgeting, and predictive policymaking meant that Pakistan no longer ran deficits, no longer mismanaged resources, and no longer relied on guesswork to make economic decisions.

Third, Pakistan made a radical shift by abolishing the income tax and replacing it with a consumption-based tax system. The flawed and corruption-prone income tax system was completely replaced with an automated transaction-based tax system that taxed spending instead of earnings. This eliminated tax evasion and brought 100 per cent of the economy into the tax net.

Fourth, Pakistan redefined ‘citizenship’ by introducing a performance-based citizenship model. In 2032, Pakistan became the first country in the world where citizenship was linked to economic and social contributions. Those who contributed to the economy received enhanced citizenship privileges such as lower taxes, business incentives, and priority government services. Those who did nothing for the country

were deprioritised in social benefits. This policy incentivised economic participation and eliminated free riding on state resources.

Fifth, Pakistan restructured its electoral process by introducing a hybrid meritocracy-democracy system. Instead of traditional politicians winning elections based on rhetoric, each candidate had to pass a national governance examination before being eligible to contest. Only those with proven policy knowledge, leadership skills, and governance experience could hold public office.

The days of illiterate and incompetent politicians running ministries worth billions were over. Political parties were now required to submit detailed five-year governance plans, which were legally binding. Any failure to meet governance commitments resulted in the automatic dissolution of the government.

Sixth, Pakistan became the first country in the region to abolish cash and fully transition to a digital currency system. By 2033, all transactions, salaries, business payments and public sector spending were 100 per cent digital, eliminating black money, tax fraud and financial corruption. Every rupee spent was traceable, making money laundering and undocumented wealth impossible.

Seventh, Pakistan restructured its security policy from a military-focused model to an economic security model. By 2030, Pakistan's national security doctrine had been rewritten, shifting the focus from military power to economic strength. Defence spending was tied to economic growth. This shift ended Pakistan's perpetual economic vulnerability, making it Asia's newest economic hub instead of a security battleground.

Eighth, Pakistan launched the world's first 'Global Pakistani Economic Initiative', treating its overseas citizens as economic partners rather than outsiders. The 12 million-strong diaspora, with \$2 trillion in combined

wealth, was formally integrated into the economy through diaspora investment zones, global digital banking, and incentive-driven remittance programs. By 2035, Pakistan's diaspora investment exceeded \$500 billion, funding infrastructure, tech startups and high-value industries.

Ninth, Pakistan undertook a historic administrative transformation by dividing the country into 38 provinces, ensuring decentralised governance and balanced regional development. The outdated structure of four large provinces was abolished, and governance was localised.

Each new province, based on existing divisions, was given complete economic, educational and infrastructural autonomy. This eliminated ethnic-based politics, ensured even resource distribution, and promoted true federalism. The local government system became the cornerstone of governance.

Tenth, Pakistan introduced the 'village economic zone' (VEZ) model, transforming rural Pakistan into an economic powerhouse. Rather than forcing rural populations to migrate to cities, Pakistan invested in making rural villages self-sufficient economic hubs. VEZs were equipped with modern infrastructure, digital connectivity, financial services, and agricultural innovation centers. Every village was linked to national and international supply chains, ensuring that rural economies thrived.

The agricultural sector was revolutionised through technology-driven farming, food processing units and direct export channels, eliminating exploitative middlemen. The result was a massive reduction in rural poverty and an economic boom in the countryside, creating a new rural middle class.

These bold and unthinkable reforms shattered old paradigms and forced Pakistan into the future. In 2035, Pakistan is no longer a country that reacts to crises; it is a country that drives global economic trends.

But none of this would have been possible if Pakistan had not taken the most difficult decision in its history: breaking the system that kept it back for 76 years and replacing it with a forward-looking, high-performance governance structure.

Pakistan's transformation was not a miracle – it was a choice. And the question for 2025 is: Do we have the courage to make that choice today?

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