**Looking Back: how Pakistan became an Asian Tiger by 2050 (Part-I)**

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‘[Looking Back](https://dailytimes.com.pk/98460/looking-back-iv/)‘ reads like a history book imbued with comic fiction. The very thought in today’s Pakistan that our country may one day become the Asian tiger is laughable in itself. An historical account of Pakistan’s reformation set in an alternate future, the book was written by Dr. Nadeem UlHaque, an economist, giving a blow by blow account as to how it is really possible by eliminating different threats to the system one after the other. He expounds that the winds of change will ultimately come from the unlikeliest corridors of academics and ordinary citizenry who become champions of a failed state whose inevitable doom has become a foregone conclusion.

Dr. Nadeem UlHaque was the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission in 2011 where he presented his infamous ‘Framework forEconomic Growth (FEG) for Pakistan. A PhD from University of Chicago, he spent his career almost in entirety with the IMF. Chicago school of thought – what he did at IMF, gave him an insight into the workings of third world economies, a trait he employed emphatically while designing FEG. His expertise in fiscal & monetary policies gave him an acute advantage as he formulated the comprehensive framework which unfortunately was never implemented. He was also the Vice Chancellor of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics. It is most unfortunate that he could not get a chance to implement his framework – which was highly appreciated by development practitioners of the world.

Though the framework for economic growth was approved by the parliament, its implementation remained in limbo despite the fact that its expansive and inclusive approach guarantees a growth rate of 8% over a period of a decade to assuage an emergent demographic challenge of ‘youth bulge’. This book in my opinion is purely a manifestation of his frustrations for his inability to fix a broken system of governance despite the availability of this brilliant tool. And his ideas of RFPs also have born of his need for a seed of change.

The story of the book recounts a cataclysmic event somewhere in 2019 which precipitated a fundamental change in the fabric of our society. The change was not a revolution but an evolutionary process, a ‘quiet revolution’ as Dr.Haque calls it

The book is an oddity in itself. Fiction written by an economist. An economist who probably gave the country its most emphatic blueprint for economic ascendancy and societal transformation but published by one of the more obscure publishing houses in the country. An economist of his stature could’ve easily gone to one of the ‘Big Five’ and had his work published. But as he so modestly put that this is for Pakistani people’s consumption and so Kitab (Pvt.) Limited put a meagre price tag so it can be accessible to all.

Narrated from the perspective of an Egyptian Nobel laureate DaudRashida, an economist, heading PTC [Pakistan Transformation Commission], in response to a letter by a fictional Secretary General of the UN in the year 2051, who requests commissioning of a report to glean an understanding of the country’s meteoric rise in an alternate future.

Dr. Haque takes the reader on a historical journey of Pakistan’s turbulent past from its nascence to a turning point of a “quiet revolution” in the future of this parallel universe. He recounts the ills that plagued Pakistan through much of its existence. Fundamental core issues that have retarded a real change. Germination of crony capitalism, centralization of power and decision making, laissez-faire mercantilist behaviours, lack of regulations and enforcement, ineffective taxation system, absence of innovation or contemporaneous practices, conformity of colonial status quo, utter dependence on donors, religious fundamentalist tendencies, rent-seeking behaviours of the political and bureaucratic elites have impeded development of the country and encouraged suppression of the people at large.

He explains how these extractive economic institutions have crippled the Pakistani economy and is constantly increasing the rich-poor disparity. At the heart of these problems, he singles out bureaucracy, both civil and military, with its rent-seeking tendencies, as the main culprit for much of what ails the country today. An indictment of the political system, he elaborates how the colonial civil service instituted to make the people subservient was further mutated by its ‘civil servants’ to further their own outlook as to how the country must progress. Governance by the people took a back seat and the state was pushed farther and farther into the gaping abyss of stagnation. Dr. Haque also derides the donors whose priorities have slowly crept into our governance hierarchy. How it contributed to ineptness and laziness in our system.

The story of the book recounts a cataclysmic event somewhere in 2019 which precipitated a fundamental change in the fabric of our society. The change was not a revolution but an evolutionary process, a ‘quiet revolution’ as Dr. Haque calls it. The ‘agents of change’ were not discernable actors in terms of personality or a movement. They were networks of ordinary citizens who only came together for national integration and national prestige. The story identifies these agents of change as “Research For Pakistan” (RFP). These RFP networks sprang across the national strata and were essentially a platform of research and thought

(To be Concluded)

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