**Leadership criteria: Production or destruction?**

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According to Karl Marx, history is economics in action—the contest among individuals, groups, classes and states for food, fuel, materials and resultant economic power. The modern day competition among world powers still remains all about domination of the global commons; i.e. high seas, airspace, outer space and, now, cyberspace. From a security perspective, the primary concern is safeguarding ‘access’ to these domains for commercial and military reasons. The Global Commons also refers to those areas or regions which are outside the exclusive jurisdiction of the nation states and requires common governance and management by the international community. The other examples of the Global Commons are the Earth’s atmosphere, Antarctica, the ocean floor and the outer space. The domination of such spaces and lines of communications ensure control, monopoly and smooth flow of hydrocarbons, food and rare earth metals to the big powers and consequent status of Economic Giant. Hence, political forms, religious institutions, cultural creations, are all rooted in economic realities.

[Nawaz Sharif calls for full court in Punjab, KP elections case](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Mar-2023/nawaz-sharif-calls-for-full-court-in-punjab-kp-elections-case)

One big lesson we learn from the study of history from the economics point of view is that normally and generally, men are judged by their ability to produce except in war; when they are ranked according to their ability to destroy. The substitutes like oppression or ideological enthusiasm prove to be too unproductive, expensive and transient. For most part of its brief history, Pakistan has remained confronted with leadership, political, economic, security and religious and sectarian crises; reading it in reverse, it boils down to the crisis of leadership. After founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah, unfortunately the state has remained deprived of a sincere and true leader who could prevail upon all other stated crises and lead Pakistan to political and economic stability, due prosperity and security. In the given environment, the People of Pakistan are disillusioned and looking for a Messiah who can steer the country out of innumerable challenges. Can Pakistan continue to wait for being blessed with another Jinnah or someone like Mahathir bin Mohammad of Malaysia, or Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore?

[KP caretaker govt appoints under inquiry officer as DG Health](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Mar-2023/kp-caretaker-govt-appoints-under-inquiry-officer-as-dg-health)

A brief review of the past rulers and parties may be in order to refresh the short memories. Running a state on unstoppable foreign loans by lending state assets and sovereignty and making the lives of masses miserable has remained in vogue for rather too long. It has been a destructive path without production of a healthy state or society. A closer look at the IMF loans taken from 1958 till to date, which made the state always stand on crutches, besides inducing abhorrent corruption should be quite instructive for selection of a new leadership and even for promotion of all hues of bureaucracy. If we take a look at Pakistan’s history of borrowing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), some interesting facts come to light. Pakistan’s history of knocking upon the IMF’s door started back in 1958, when General Ayub Khan first took the country to the IMF route and signed an agreement to secure special drawing rights (SDR) 25 million under a Standby Agreement. The money was never withdrawn. After General Ayub, it was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who took the state to the doors of the IMF yet again on May 18, 1972. During his tenure, Pakistan went to the IMF three times consecutively from 1972 to 1974 and then again in 1977, and withdrew about SDR 314 million against the agreed SDR 330 million. General Zia-ul-Haq kept the ball rolling during his tenure, as from 1980 to 1981, Pakistan went to the IMF twice and secured loans of SDR 2.187 billion, from which only SDR 1.079 billion was utilised. During the Benazir-Nawaz model of democracy from 1988 to 1997, Pakistan went into IMF programs about eight times under the governments of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). In this period, Pakistan withdrew about SDR 1.64 billion. Out of these eight programs, five were during the PPP government while three were under the PML-N rule. Even General Musharraf’s government did not hesitate in reaching out to the IMF, and secured SDR 1.33 billion in two attempts in nine years, though on massively low interest rates. When Musharraf was replaced by the PPP in 2008, as soon as he was sent home, the first thing the PPP did was go to the IMF and secure the biggest IMF bailout package in our history, amounting to SDR 4.94 billion. The PML-N then came back in power in 2013, and keeping with tradition went to the IMF as soon as possible, securing the second largest loan that amounted to SDR 4.399 billion. All in all, till today, Pakistan has borrowed around SDR 13.79 billion from the IMF, out of which 47% of the loans were secured by PPP, followed by PML-N at 35%, while the military dictatorships lag behind with a mere 18%.

[Minority-ruled benches will compound existing crisis, says Tarar](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Mar-2023/minority-ruled-benches-will-compound-existing-crisis-says-tarar)

In circumstances where Pakistan seems to have hit the rock bottom and every institution and system appears at its nadir, following the phrase “God helps those who help themselves” sounds more logical than mere wishful thinking. If the prudence could prevail over self-serving and survival instincts of the current ruling elite, the country has to go for an immediate national general elections. During the elections, the people of Pakistan will have to keep in mind the leadership criteria for ability to produce, unite, change and construct the rotten institutions and systems and not to further destroy the gasping state. The government and its institutions will have to drop fake royal behaviour and merry making on public money and ensure adoption of real austerity as witnessed in all neighbouring states. The leadership in Pakistan ought to undertake serious introspection with regards to the position and role in domination of the global commons. The Chinese BRI, CPEC and membership of SCO and even CSTO provides golden chance for long awaited strategic realignment rather than always getting happily coerced by USA and her security and economic apparatus in place as a global hegemon. The new elected rulers will have to shed away the habit to survive by taking loans and discontinue old extravagance. The energy and food security by domestic means and control as well as reduction of inflation, prevalence of law and availability of prompt justice is what poor masses in Pakistan wish from any future political leadership and external or internal security from the military and para-military institutions. Let the horse lead the cart!