**[Ahead to 2047](https://www.dawn.com/news/1693913/ahead-to-2047)**

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The writer is an author.

MY last article — ‘On reaching 80’ — evoked a startling response. Readers from across the world sent warm messages, fellow octogenarians took geriatric comfort in a shared condition, and a few wondered who I would like to meet in the next 80 years.

That depends on God, for life is in His hands. A long life is in the hands of one’s doctor. For the moment, I would prefer to enjoy today as if it is the first of endless tomorrows.

This year is more than my 80th; it is the 75th birthday of my country. In another 25 years, it will have completed its first century. Dare one conjecture what it will be like then?

It is improbable that even by then, it will have resolved its political dyslexia. The same dynastic political parties will dominate the landscape. By 2047, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari (then 58) will have inherited the PPP. He will have broadened his appeal across the country, even though he may not have converted it into a nation-wide vote bank.

Dare we conjecture what Pakistan will be like in 2047?

In the PML-N, Mian Nawaz Sharif (now 72) and his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif (70) will not survive as long as Queen Elizabeth has. Their successor will not be Hamza Sharif who limps as chief minister, Punjab, but his feisty cousin Maryam Nawaz (48). She has the stamina, the pugnaciousness, and the determination to avenge the injustices meted out to her father. (shades of Benazir Bhutto.)

In the PML-Q, Chaudhry Shujaat Husain (76) is not well, his cousin Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi (76) has unassuaged ambitions but not enough time to fulfil them. Elahi’s son Moonis (46) has the disadvantage of a US education — in Lahore and then U-Penn. He has been used as a passive pawn in his family’s strategies rather than a combative knight.

The MQM has lost one leader (Altaf Hussain) but has not adopted another of singular stature. Its survival will depend on the negotiating intrepidness skill of its future leadership. It will remain though a provincial party, with a presence confined to Sindh.

Parties in Balochistan have yet to outgrow their tribal instincts. The Bugtis and the Jamalis are losing their potency. Jam Mir Kamal Khan Alyani (49), who heads the BAP, is the 13th Jam of Lasbela. It is unlikely the 14th Jam will have a place in Baloch politics in 2047.

For the younger generation who plan to celebrate Pakistan’s centenary in 2047, the only party that matters is the PTI, and the only leader who commands their blind loyalty is Imran Khan. He is almost 70 and however fit he may maintain himself, his body is unlikely to last until 2047. He is both the PTI’s strength and its inherent weakness, for in a nation that cannot see beyond the myopia of dynastic politics, he has no perceived successor, nor does he want one. His stalwarts are mainly escapees from other parties whose loyalties are malleable.

Is 2047 too far away on the horizon to consider our future as a nation? I believe not. No nation can use the rear-view mirror as a guide.

In 2047, our population will have expanded to 328 million — an accretion of 100m, compressed in the same land mass. Education, housing, employment opportunities, retirement obligations, even digging sufficient graveyards are predictable imperatives.

Water resources are not only finite but diminishing. Water tables are dropping and climate change has taken water management out of our hands. Provincial bickering over water usage will continue even into 2047. Incidentally, by 2047, someone will think of changing the name of Punjab. It is a misnomer. After the Indus Water Accord of 1960, only two out of the five rivers from which the Punjab derived its name are in Pakistan’s Punjab.

By 2047, the Chinese presence in Pakistan will go beyond CPEC and military self-sufficiency. It will spr­ead into our agri-economy with mass production techni­ques designed to keep Chinese chopsticks clicking.

By 2047, we will be a nuclear power, with dentures. We lack the resources to upgrade our nuclear capability. We forget that it has been 24 years since we conducted our test at Chagai.

By 2047, when the world will be cloven into another Cold War divide, whose side will we be on? Uncle Sam’s or Dyadya Kremlin’s?

Three years ago, the World Bank published its forecast Pakistan@100: Shaping The Future. Detailed, comprehensive and evasive, it is worth reading, if only because it ignores the uneven relationship between the military and civil leadership, and the unequal allocation of budgetary resources. North Korea and Myanmar are glaring examples of countries where military might out-wrestles civilian right. There too, the non-security lifestyle of the establishment probably exceeds its legitimate defence needs. We cannot afford parallel governance.

Will those who live into 2047 celebrate a centenary, or a wasted past?

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