**[Celebrations for what?](https://www.dawn.com/news/1693744/celebrations-for-what)**

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IT was a weekend of ‘jubilation’, crowed *CNN* as it described Queen Elizabeth II’s platinum jubilee last weekend. The highlight, limited by the aging queen’s mobility issues, was her appearance on the balcony, where she waved to all her British subjects gathered to watch the archaic spectacle. Britain is no longer an empire, but the British would like everyone to remember that their country once ruled a good bit of the world and also that this rule, which produced countless famines and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, is cause for celebration.

The events over the weekend, then, were not just a celebration; they were also an exercise in sanitisation. They were meant to convey that even though we inhabit a world in which the invasion of other countries, domination by force, discrimination based on skin colour or religion or nationality are all considered abhorrent, it is, nevertheless, entirely all right, even venerable, to celebrate British domination over much of the world in the past.

**Read more**: [Military parade kicks off Queen Elizabeth's historic jubilee celebrations](https://www.dawn.com/news/1692760)

British royalty, whose increasing purpose in life is to provide reality television level drama, were there to do the job. The Duchess of Sussex, the only non-white person in the family, along with her husband the duke and their children were allotted predictably minor roles. The family of the heir prince and his prim missus were conversely highlighted. The ‘cute’ moment was when their fed-up progeny put his hands up to his ears to block out the sound of aeroplanes. Alas, everyone else was less lucky in shutting out this multimillion-dollar pantomime celebrating a monarch who no longer has power and a Britain that can barely govern itself.

At the same time, while former overlords can be critiqued for their cruelty, some space should also be saved for all our brown kings and queens who paraded their servility at Queen Victoria’s golden jubilee that was held in 1887. It had been only 30 years since the 1857 war of independence that saw death and executions in the thousands. Even so, the selfish maharajas, laden with debts to the crown, meaningless leaders as they were, traipsed over to London and put on their feathers and jewels to perform the exotic pageantry that the monarch and all her cohort were used to expect. The shame of it all was underscored by the fact that Queen Victoria, adorned with jewels pilfered from India, also appointed Indian Muslims as servants. Whether or not it was admitted at the time, they represented the general status of the former rulers of India in a bloated British Empire at its zenith.

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Independence has delivered Pakistan some relief from that very visible and pointed servitude. In its stead have come new forms of saying the same thing. Structurally bound by lack of skill or imagination or merit to the remnants of what the British left behind, the country is still governed as if citizens were in fact subjects. What they may want or need, things like water, electricity, some basic form of security, is beside the point. The goal of governance (as in a monarchy of alien rulers) is basically the subjugation of subjects, the scattering of just enough grain or gruel that keeps those stuck in the poverty cycle bickering among themselves. The ruling politicians, meanwhile, busy themselves in hiding their accrued wealth. If Victoria paraded her stolen wealth on her crown, they stow their riches in bank accounts in various parts of the globe.

Exposing the jubilee is tricky. I worry that the average Pakistani citizen would respond to an invitation just like the average Indian of more than 100 years ago did. Entrenched servility festers in our society; we are not at all impervious to the glow of having been chosen, or the loveliness of being envied by the ordinary others. The Pakistani of today in receipt of such an invitation would become the instant darling of social media, and don whatever frills and feathers were demanded by the rulers of old. Royally blessed, this Pakistani would have to line up with all the others to beg for a visa and say whatever magic words allow for the procurement of one. In this way, we remain stuck in a barely updated and equally constricted form of domination.

Now that Britain has a sizeable population of the formerly colonised including Pakistanis, murmurs have arisen regarding the racist flavours witnessed at the queen’s jubilee. One article I read noted the likeness of the many thousands of union jacks festooned over London’s Regent Street with Hitler’s swastikas. Such an extreme celebration of nationalism surely cannot be a good idea at a time of far-right belligerence.

Most, however, have limited themselves to commentary on the choreographed family drama that the royal family of 2022 was expected to produce. In this case, the less loved daughter-in-law Meghan Markle took husband and brood and left before the celebrations were officially complete. Her private jet, tabloids dutifully reported, arrived back in California, where she resides, on Sunday evening California time. Due respect, it was already deemed, would have demanded that the whole lot remain, pretend and be rebuffed as the role of the errant son demands.

**Read**: [*Cheers, jeers as Harry and Meghan return for Queen’s jubilee*](https://www.dawn.com/news/1693011/cheers-jeers-as-harry-and-meghan-return-for-queens-jubilee)

All is well that ends well, however. It turns out that even the queen was too tired to attend all of the events, leaving the scions of a long defunct aristocracy to act out their importance in their fluffed frocks and pressed coats. With their flapping white jowls, their powdered noses and their misbegotten snobbery, the British ex-aristocracy spent a few days pretending that they still mattered and that all the blood and savagery that their forbears had unleashed on the world was in fact a good thing. Those that lose become the past, and as bygones, gather only pity.

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