

SUMMARY of “Is Pakistan unusual?” by Pervez Hoodbhoy, Dawn, October 7th, 2023

In this article, Pervez Hoodbhoy explores Pakistan’s unique position among Muslim-majority countries. While some aspects differentiate Pakistan from others, it shares similarities, especially regarding authoritarianism, underdevelopment, and ongoing conflicts. Turkish author Ahmet Kuru’s research highlights that Muslim-majority countries tend to experience higher levels of violence. Pakistan’s history reflects this with recurrent Muslim-Muslim violence, such as recent suicide bombings during a religious celebration. Hoodbhoy emphasizes that non-Muslims often face discrimination, citing incidents of church burnings and desecration of non-Muslim places of worship.

Kuru’s broader analysis of 48 Muslim-majority countries reveals common challenges: lower GNP per capita, limited literacy rates, fewer years of schooling, less democracy, more authoritarian leadership, higher corruption rates, and smaller tax-to-GDP ratios. The primary revenue source for governments in these countries is often the exploitation of natural resources rather than industrial development. Notably, no Muslim-majority country excels in high-level technology production.

The decline in Muslim countries is attributed to a shift in power from independent scholars and merchants to clerics and rulers around the 11th century. This shift hindered progress in various fields, including literacy, printing technology, and banking. Hoodbhoy argues that the ulema-state alliance, although not an essential part of Islamic history, persists in countries like Pakistan. He highlights the symbiotic relationship between Pakistan’s military and clerics, which led to the Afghan and Kashmir jihads. This alliance caused societal devastation, as seen in events like the 2007 Lal Masjid insurrection.



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Today, Pakistan struggles with issues related to encroached land, differing prayer times, and the influence of madressahs. Hoodbhoy blames the spread of religious fanaticism on politicians who pander to extremist clerics for political gain. He suggests that this has led to a society where violence is more prevalent and even friends fear Pakistan.

Easy/Short SUMMARY:

Pervez Hoodbhoy discusses Pakistan's position among Muslim-majority countries. While it shares similarities like violence and underdevelopment, it also faces unique challenges. Hoodbhoy highlights the recurring issue of Muslim-Muslim violence in Pakistan, which stands as an example of religious tensions. He emphasizes that non-Muslims often suffer discrimination, citing incidents of church burnings and temple desecrations.

Hoodbhoy shares statistics from Ahmet Kuru's research, indicating that Muslim-majority countries generally have lower economic indicators, authoritarian leadership, and corruption issues. He attributes this decline to a historical shift in power from scholars and merchants to clerics and rulers. This shift hindered progress and innovation in Muslim societies.

The author also discusses the ongoing alliance between clerics and the state in Pakistan, which has contributed to societal problems. He points out issues related to encroached land, differing prayer times, and the influence of madressahs. Hoodbhoy blames politicians who exploit religion for political gain, leading to increased violence and a negative global perception of Pakistan.

SOLUTIONS of The Problem:

Addressing Religious Extremism:

- *Education and Awareness:* Promote education and awareness programs to counter religious extremism and foster tolerance.
- *Political Accountability:* Hold politicians accountable for pandering to extremist clerics and encourage a more inclusive political discourse.
- *Interfaith Dialogues:* Facilitate interfaith dialogues and initiatives to promote harmony among religious communities.

Economic Development:

- *Diversify Revenue Sources:* Encourage economic diversification to reduce dependency on resource exploitation.
- *Invest in Education:* Invest in education and vocational training to improve literacy rates and technological capabilities.
- *Anti-Corruption Measures:* Implement anti-corruption measures and ensure transparency in governance.

Reforming Religious Institutions:

- *Madressah Reform:* Undertake comprehensive madressah reform to align religious education with modern curricula and values.
- *Promote Pluralism:* Encourage religious institutions to embrace pluralistic and democratic values.
- *Government Oversight:* Enhance government oversight of religious institutions to prevent radicalization.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the article:

- Muslim-majority countries tend to have higher levels of violence compared to others.
- Pakistan experiences recurring incidents of Muslim-Muslim violence and discrimination against non-Muslims.
- Muslim-majority countries often have lower economic indicators, authoritarian leadership, higher corruption rates, and limited industrial development.
- The shift in power from scholars and merchants to clerics and rulers in the 11th century contributed to Muslim societies' decline.
- Pakistan's military-cleric alliance led to societal problems, including the 2007 Lal Masjid insurrection.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures out of the article:

- Muslim-majority countries share common challenges, such as underdevelopment and authoritarianism.



- Historical factors like the decline of scholars and merchants and the rise of clerics contributed to Muslim societies' decline.
- Pakistan's political landscape is influenced by an alliance between the military and clerics.

MCQs from the Article:

1. *What does Ahmet Kuru's research suggest about Muslim-majority countries?*
- A. They have lower violence levels.
 - B. They enjoy high economic prosperity.
 - C. They often face underdevelopment and authoritarianism.
 - D. They prioritize technological advancements.

Answer: C. They often face underdevelopment and authoritarianism.

2. *What historical shift is attributed to the decline of Muslim societies, according to the article?*
- A. The rise of scholars and merchants.
 - B. The dominance of clerics and rulers.
 - C. The advent of colonialism.
 - D. The influence of Western powers.

Answer: B. The dominance of clerics and rulers.

3. *What does Pervez Hoodbhoy blame for the spread of religious fanaticism in Pakistan?*
- A. Lack of religious education.
 - B. Pandering by politicians to extremist clerics.
 - C. International interference.
 - D. Economic instability.

Answer: B. Pandering by politicians to extremist clerics.

4. *What societal issues are mentioned in the article regarding mosques and madressahs in Islamabad?*
- A. Encroached land and differing prayer times.
 - B. Lack of religious education and extremism.
 - C. Political instability and corruption.

D. Economic challenges and underdevelopment.

Answer: A. Encroached land and differing prayer times.

VOCABULARY:

1. *Authoritarianism* (noun) (اوتھورٹاریٹیزم): The enforcement or advocacy of strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom.
2. *Symbiotic* (adjective) (سائبروٹیک): Involving interaction between two different organisms living in close physical proximity and typically to the advantage of both.
3. *Cleric* (noun) (کلریک): A priest or religious leader, especially a Christian or Muslim one.
4. *Sect* (noun) (سکٹ): A group of people with somewhat different religious beliefs from those of a larger group to which they belong.
5. *Desecrate* (verb) (ڈیسیکریٹ): Treat (a sacred place or thing) with violent disrespect; violate.

1. *Pitiful* (adjective) (پٹیفول): Deserving or arousing pity.
2. *Hare-brained* (adjective) (ہیرے دماغی): Lacking sense or judgment; foolish.
3. *Pluralistic* (adjective) (پلورلسٹک): Relating to or advocating for a system in which multiple distinct ethnic, religious, or cultural groups coexist within a society.



4. *Fanaticism* (noun) (فانسیزم): Excessive and irrational zeal or enthusiasm, especially for a religious or political cause.
5. *Pander* (verb) (پانڈر): Gratify or indulge (an immoral or distasteful desire or taste or a person with such a desire or taste).
6. *Societal* (adjective) (سوسائٹی): Relating to society or social relations.
7. *Polarization* (noun) (پولرائزیشن): The process by which individuals or groups develop contrasting opinions, leading to division or conflict within a society.
8. *Underdevelopment* (noun) (انڈر ڈیولپمنٹ): The state of not being developed or advanced in economic and social aspects.
9. *Ulema* (noun) (اولیما): The body of Muslim scholars recognized as authorities on Islamic theology and law.
10. *Authoritarian* (adjective) (اتھورٹریٹری): Favoring or enforcing strict obedience to authority, especially that of the government, at the expense of personal freedom.
11. *Encroached* (verb) (انکریچ): Intrude on (a person's territory, rights, personal life, etc.).
12. *Symbiotically* (adverb) (سیمیوٹیکلی): In a manner involving interaction or cooperation between two different organisms or entities.
13. *Gutenberg* (noun) (گوتنبرگ): Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of the printing press.



14. *Lal Masjid* (noun) (لاال مسجد): A mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan, known for its association with militant activities.

15. *Imposition* (noun) (إمposition): The action or process of imposing something unwelcome or unfamiliar.

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