

SUMMARY of the Article

“Leadership, crisis, opportunity,” by

Maleeha Lodhi, Dawn, June 17th,

2024

Pakistan is currently at a critical juncture, grappling with numerous crises, including political polarization, economic instability, and institutional degradation. This multifaceted crisis, or polycrisis, involves overlapping issues in governance, economy, politics, security, and human development, all reinforcing each other and creating a formidable challenge. National morale is low, with a significant portion of the population believing the country is heading in the wrong direction. Unlike previous crises that Pakistan has managed to overcome, the current situation is exacerbated by decades of poor governance and missed opportunities. Immediate reforms, particularly economic ones, are essential to address these structural issues. A significant gap persists between the challenges faced and the responses provided by successive governments, which have lacked a coherent strategy and leadership. True leadership is distinguished by vision, strength of character, commitment to ethical practices, and the ability to inspire and unite people. Visionary leaders like Mohammad Ali Jinnah had the foresight and courage to effect change, unlike many of his successors who have failed to meet these criteria. Effective leadership also involves assembling competent teams based on merit rather than personal connections. Additionally, leaders must be able to motivate and communicate effectively with the public to garner support for their policies. Historical examples from Southeast Asia and Latin America show that countries can recover from economic crises with the right leadership and professional teams committed to structural reforms. The article underscores the urgent need for visionary leadership in Pakistan to navigate through its current crises and embark on a path of sustainable development and stability. The writer, Maleeha Lodhi, highlights that without such leadership,



institutions will drift, and the nation will face growing irrelevance and potential disaster.

Easy/Short SUMMARY:

Pakistan is facing many serious problems at the same time, including political, economic, and institutional issues. The public feels the country is going in the wrong direction. Unlike past crises, the current situation is worse because of long-term poor governance. Immediate reforms are needed. Effective leadership, characterized by vision, ethical practices, and the ability to unite people, is essential to solve these issues. Leaders should focus on merit-based team building and clear communication with the public. Historical examples show that strong leadership can help countries recover from crises. Without such leadership, Pakistan risks further decline.

SOLUTIONS of The Problem:

Promoting Visionary Leadership

Encourage the emergence of leaders with a clear, inspiring vision for the future, who can motivate and unite the populace toward common goals.

Implementing Structural Reforms

Undertake comprehensive economic and governance reforms to address the root causes of Pakistan's crises, focusing on sustainable development and long-term stability.

Merit-Based Team Building

Assemble competent teams based on merit and expertise, rather than personal connections or loyalty, to effectively implement policies and strategies.

Effective Communication Strategies

Develop robust communication channels to effectively convey government policies and reforms to the public, building trust and garnering support.

Strengthening Institutions

Focus on building and strengthening institutions to ensure they function effectively and independently, reducing the influence of vested interests and entrenched elites.

Learning from Successful Models

Study and adapt successful reform models from countries like those in Southeast Asia and Latin America, which have recovered from similar crises through effective leadership and professional teams.

Public Engagement and Participation

Involve the public in the decision-making process through consultations and feedback mechanisms, ensuring policies are aligned with the needs and aspirations of the people.

Investing in Human Capital

Prioritize education, training, and capacity-building initiatives to develop a skilled and knowledgeable workforce capable of driving the country's development.

Enhancing Accountability and Transparency

Establish robust mechanisms for accountability and transparency to combat corruption and ensure that government actions are in the public interest.

Fostering Political Stability

Work towards reducing political polarization by promoting dialogue and cooperation among different political parties and stakeholders, creating a stable environment for reform and development.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the Article:

- Pakistan is experiencing a polycrisis involving governance, economic, political, security, and human development issues.
- An Ipsos survey in May found that 82% of people believe the country is heading in the wrong direction.
- Current challenges are the cumulative result of decades of misgovernance and squandered opportunities.
- Leadership in Pakistan has often been about power, privilege, and patronage rather than offering coherent policy actions.
- Historical examples from Southeast Asia and Latin America highlight the importance of strong leadership and professional teams in overcoming economic crises.

MCQs from the Article:

1. What term does the article use to describe the multiple overlapping crises Pakistan is facing?

- A. Poly pandemic
- B. Poly problem
- C. Polycrisis**
- D. Poly dilemma

2. What percentage of people, according to an Ipsos survey in



May, felt that Pakistan was heading in the wrong direction?

- A. 72%
- B. 78%
- C. 82%**
- D. 88%

3. Who is cited as an example of visionary leadership in the article?

- A. Mohammad Ali Jinnah**
- B. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto
- C. Benazir Bhutto
- D. Imran Khan

4. Which key quality is NOT mentioned as essential for effective leadership in the article?

- A. Vision
- B. Strength of character
- C. Ethical practices
- D. Wealth accumulation**

5. Which regions are mentioned as having successfully navigated economic crises through strong leadership and professional teams?

- A. North America and Europe
- B. Southeast Asia and Latin America**
- C. Middle East and South Asia
- D. Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia

VOCABULARY:

1. **Inflection point** (noun) (نقطۂ پلٹنے): A moment of significant change.
2. **Polarisation** (noun) (قطبیت): Division into two sharply contrasting groups or

- sets of opinions or beliefs.
3. **Fragility** (noun) (□□□□□): The quality of being easily broken or damaged.
 4. **Institutional decay** (noun) (□□□□□□ □□□□□□): The gradual decline in the effectiveness and functionality of institutions.
 5. **Polycrisis** (noun) (□□□□□□ □□□□□): Multiple, overlapping crises.
 6. **Converging** (verb) (□□□□□□): Coming together from different directions to eventually meet.
 7. **Formidable** (adjective) (□□□□□□□): Inspiring fear or respect through being impressively large, powerful, or capable.
 8. **Resilience** (noun) (□□□□): The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.
 9. **Misgovernance** (noun) (□□□□□□□□□□□): Poor management or administration.
 10. **Squandered** (verb) (□□□□□ □□□□□): Wasted in a reckless or foolish manner.
 11. **Cumulative** (adjective) (□□□□□): Increasing or increased in quantity, degree, or force by successive additions.
 12. **Muddled** (verb) (□□□□□ □□□□□): Brought into a disordered or confusing state.
 13. **Visionary** (adjective) (□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□): Thinking about or planning the future with imagination or wisdom.
 14. **Entrenched** (adjective) (□□□□□□): Firmly established and difficult or unlikely to change.
 15. **Consensus** (noun) (□□□□□ □□□□□□): General agreement.
 16. **Platitudes** (noun) (□□□□□ □□□□): Statements that have been repeated so often they are no longer interesting or thoughtful.
 17. **Patronage** (noun) (□□□□□□□□□): The power to control appointments to office or the right to privileges.
 18. **Inspire** (verb) (□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□□□): Fill someone with the urge or ability to do or feel something.
 19. **Decisive** (adjective) (□□ □□□□□□): Settling an issue; producing a definite result.
 20. **Credibility** (noun) (□□□□□□): The quality of being trusted and believed in.

□ *Attention Please!*

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Leadership, crisis, opportunity

Maleeha Lodhi

7 - 8 minutes

PAKISTAN today is at an inflection point. It faces unparalleled challenges in an environment of political polarisation, economic fragility and institutional decay. The polycrisis it confronts involves multiple overlapping crises — governance, economic, political, security and human development. All of them are converging to reinforce each other and create an overall challenge more formidable than any single crisis. This at a time when national self-confidence is at a new low.

Successive public opinion polls have found a dispirited nation lacking much hope in the future. An Ipsos survey in May found 82 per cent of people felt the country was heading in the wrong direction.

True, Pakistan has weathered many storms in the past and rebounded from crisis. Its underlying resilience has enabled it to overcome its troubles of the time. But present-day challenges are fundamentally different as they are the cumulative consequence of decades of misgovernance and squandered opportunities. Solving these problems can no longer be postponed. In fact, the country is already paying the price of postponed reforms, especially economic reforms, to deal with structural issues, which lie at the root of its perennial financial crises. All these challenges have to be addressed if Pakistan is to move forward and embark on a path of economic development and political stability to meet the needs and aspirations of its people.

The polycrisis today has resulted from and reflects the persisting gap between challenge and response, between rule and governance and between power and purpose. Successive governments have simply muddled through without a plan or strategy to deal with long-standing problems. The overarching missing element over the years has been leadership because wielding power doesn't make for leadership. Nor is a manager a leader; managers uphold the status quo while



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leaders are standard bearers and agents of change. This distinction between a leader and manager has long been made and discussed in debate on this issue.

What then is leadership? What are those essential qualities in a political leader that can enable him or her to shape the environment, unite people and lead a country to transformation and change? It is above all a vision that can capture the public imagination, inspire the people and chart a way that goes beyond the moment to what is possible in the future. A vision is what makes for transformational leadership, which is needed in challenging times. Leadership is also strength of character, commitment to ethical practices and setting an exemplary standard of integrity. It is about building institutions and learning from the past, not living in it.

The gap persists between challenge and response and between rule and governance.

Leadership involves fashioning a strategy to execute a vision, and then staying on course to achieve that. Visionary leaders set a clear direction, confidently embark on that path, are willing to take risks and are unafraid of the opposition they inevitably face from vested interests and entrenched elites. Mohammad Ali Jinnah's leadership embodied these qualities and serves as an example of how leaders can change history. But most of the country's leaders who came after the Quaid were both uninspired and uninspiring. That has also been Pakistan's more recent experience.

Effective leadership not only requires setting out a vision about the future but also a strategy to implement it and forging a national consensus to support it. Evaluated against this criterion, it is apparent many of the country's 'leaders' have fallen short of this test. Politics here has long been about power, privilege, patronage and vanquishing opponents rather than offering a coherent programme of policy actions. Slogans there have been aplenty but platitudes have substituted for policy and rhetoric for solutions.

Leadership in government also means executing a strategy by placing the right people in the right positions. Only by assembling a competent team can a vision be translated into reality. Pakistan's experience over the years shows that factors other than merit and competence were given more importance. A personalised approach to team-building took precedence over considerations of expertise or



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competence. The premium was on proximity to the 'boss' and other 'connections', not on who was qualified to get the job done.

A third ingredient of leadership is the ability to motivate and inspire people to support the government's policy goals. This involves connecting to citizens, understanding what they want and winning their confidence. It also means communicating effectively to influence and shape public opinion. The answer to the question whether the country's leaders are able to do this is obvious. The paradox that defines the country today is that leaders are elected to public office but without the vision or means to enthuse and unite the country.

Looking at the experience of countries that have faced economic crisis but used it as an opportunity to bounce back stronger and more resilient, the distinguishing factor that made this possible was the quality of leadership. Success depended on leaders who ran a competent government that was committed to structural reforms and had the motivation, political will and credibility to take measures that were painful in the near-term but yielded rich and enduring dividends in the long run.

Countries that achieved such an economic turnaround, for example in Southeast Asia and Latin America, all deployed capable teams of professionals who assisted their governments to craft and implement reforms. This enabled the country to navigate through the crisis towards sustained recovery and growth. In every successful case of a country that took the path to a better economic future, the quality of professionals who shaped and oversaw the reform process was significant. But again, it was the leadership that chose the right team and then guided and inspired them to deliver.

In his thoughtful book, *Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy*, the late Henry Kissinger wrote that "Without leadership institutions drift and nations court growing irrelevance and ultimately, disaster." Leaders who Kissinger deemed to have provided strategic leadership were all bold, courageous, decisive and had a powerful vision and strong sense of reality. They did not hesitate to court controversy or take on entrenched interests. That he regarded as "the price of making history". Do we in Pakistan have leaders who can forge history and extricate the country from its polycrisis?

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