

PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

AMBASSADOR MURSHED, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I AM VERY HONOURED TO BE PRESENT HERE TO ADDRESS THIS DISTINGUISHED GATHERING AND I AM GRATEFUL TO THE PAKISTAN EMBASSY FOR INVITING ME HERE ON THIS OCCASION.

THREE DAYS PRIOR TO THE BIRTH OF PAKISTAN, ON 11TH AUGUST 1947, THE FOUNDER OF PAKISTAN, QUAID-E-AZAM MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAH, DECLARED TO THE MEMBERS OF PAKISTAN'S CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY HIS PRESCRIPTION:

“THE FIRST OBSERVATION I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE IS THIS: YOU WILL NO DOUBT AGREE WITH ME THAT THE FIRST DUTY OF A GOVERNMENT IS TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER SO THAT THE LIFE, PROPERTY AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF ITS SUBJECTS ARE FULLY PROTECTED BY THE STATE...”

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, A FEW MONTHS LATER, IN FEBRUARY 1948, WHILE SPEAKING ON THE RADIO TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES, HE OBSERVED:

“ISLAM AND ITS IDEALS HAVE TAUGHT US DEMOCRACY. IT HAS TAUGHT EQUALITY OF MAN, JUSTICE AND FAIRPLAY TO EVERYBODY. WE ARE THE INHERITORS OF THESE GLORIOUS TRADITIONS AND ARE FULLY ALIVE TO OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND

OBLIGATIONS AS FRAMERS OF THE FUTURE CONSITUTION OF PAKISTAN.”

THAT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WAS THE VISION. NOW, LET’S LOOK AT SOME GROUND REALITIES.

ABOUT FIFTY-TWO YEARS LATER, ON 17TH OCTOBER 1999, MERELY FIVE DAYS AFTER TAKING OVER, PAKISTAN’S FOURTH MILITARY RULER, GEN. PERVEZ MUSHARRAF ADMITTED IN A SPEECH ON NATIONAL TELEVISION:

“PAKISTAN TODAY STANDS AT THE CROSSROADS OF ITS DESTINY – A DESTINY WHICH IS IN OUR HANDS TO MAKE OR BREAK. FIFTY-TWO YEARS AGO, WE STARTED WITH A BEACON OF HOPE AND TODAY THAT BEACON IS NO MORE AND WE STAND IN DARKNESS. THERE IS DESPONDENCY AND HOPELESSNESS SURROUNDING US WITH NO LIGHT VISIBLE ANYWHERE AROUND. THE SLIDE DOWN HAS BEEN GRADUAL BUT HAS RAPIDLY ACCELERATED IN THE LAST MANY YEARS.”

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: ANOTHER TWO YEARS DOWN THE ROAD, HAVING TRANSFORMED ITSELF FROM A SUBORDINATE ORGAN OF THE STATE TO BEING IN ABSOLUTE POWER, PAKISTAN’S MILITARY REGIME TIPTOES IN THE SHADOWS OF ITS CIVILIAN PREDECESSORS. IT SURELY NOW UNDERSTANDS THE CRUSHING BURDEN OF OFFICE AS IT STRUGGLES, LIKE ITS HAPLESS PREDECESSORS, TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT THE NATIONAL INTEREST, INVARIABLY IN ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: LET ME SUBMIT TO YOU WHAT IN MY MIND IS THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH – PAKISTAN CAME INTO BEING AS A RESULT OF A DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. AUTHORITARIANISM OF THE MILITARY KIND FITS NOWHERE INTO ITS FOUNDING PRINCIPLES.

CONSEQUENTLY, PAKISTAN'S GREATEST POLITICAL HANDICAP IS THE LACK OF A STABLE DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE. TRUE, PAKISTAN'S CIVILIAN LEADERS HAVE RULED THE COUNTRY WITH A GIFT FOR SELF SABOTAGE, BUT FOR ALL THOSE WHO LAY THE BLAME OF PAKISTAN'S RUIN ON THE SHOULDERS OF SOLELY THE ELECTED LEADERS, THE WRECKAGE LEFT BY PAKISTAN'S THREE MILITARY DICTATORSHIPS SERVES AS A USEFUL REBUTTAL.

NEARLY THIRTY YEARS AGO, PAKISTAN'S THEN PRIME MINISTER ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO FORMED A COMMITTEE HEADED BY LT. GEN. K.M. AKHTAR TO LOOK INTO WHY PAKISTAN WAS SO PRONE TO MILITARY RULE. THE COMMITTEE CAME UP WITH THREE FUNDAMENTAL CAUSES:

1. WEAKNESS OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS
2. COLONIAL TRADITION OF USING THE ARMY TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER
3. LACK OF EDUCATION

REGRETTABLY, AFTER THE DEVASTATING PASSAGE OF THE LAST THREE DECADES, PAKISTAN'S DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS ARE AS WEAK AS EVER, THE COLONIAL TRADITION OF USING THE ARMY TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER IS PRACTICALLY PRESERVED TO THE HILT, AND

WITH ADULT LITERACY AT A DISMAL 45% AND FEMALE LITERACY AT A HOPELESS 25%, PAKISTAN RANKS AMONG THE MOST ILLITERATE COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD. MOREOVER, THE GOVERNMENT SPENDS A MERE 2.5% OF ITS GDP ON PUBLIC EDUCATION.

ONE ALWAYS HEARS ABOUT HOW STATE OFFICIALS WORLDWIDE ARE ADEPT AT THE ART OF LYING WITH STATISTICS. BUT IT IS COMMENDABLE THAT GEN. MUSHARRAF IS SERVING THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF HOW TO TELL THE TRUTH WITH STATISTICS. JUST TWO MONTHS AGO, IN A SPEECH DELIVERED ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOLY PROPHET'S BIRTH, HE OBSERVED:

“SEVENTY PER CENT OF THE WORLD'S ENERGY RESOURCES ARE IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES, BUT THE GDP OF ALL MUSLIM COUNTRIES PUT TOGETHER COMES TO MERELY 12 TO 13 BILLION DOLLARS. ON THE OTHER HAND, JAPAN'S GDP STANDS AT 55 BILLION DOLLARS AND GERMANY'S AT 25 BILLION DOLLARS. IN OTHER WORDS, GERMANY'S GDP IS TWICE THAT OF ALL MUSLIM COUNTRIES PUT TOGETHER AND JAPAN'S FOUR AND A HALF TIMES.

“WHY IS THIS SO?” ASKED THE GENERAL, AND THEN REPLIED, “IT'S BECAUSE OF A DIFFERENCE IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN QUALITY, OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT.

“JUST TAKE EDUCATION,” HE SAID, “IN THE ENTIRE MUSLIM WORLD THERE ARE SOME 380 UNIVERSITIES OF WHICH ONLY 25 ARE OF A WORLD RANKING. IN JAPAN 1,000 UNIVERSITIES ARE AWARDED PH.D. DEGREES.

THE WORLDWIDE MUSLIM COMMUNITY CAN BOAST OF A TOTAL OF 500 PH.D.S A YEAR. IN ENGLAND, EACH YEAR 3,000 PH.D.'S ARE AWARDED AND IN INDIA 5,000."

GEN. MUSHARRAF ALSO POSITED THE QUESTION, "HOW DOES THE WORLD LOOK AT US?"

AND THEN REPLIED, "THE WORLD LOOKS AT AS BACKWARDS AND CONSTANTLY GOING UNDER. ISLAM IS VIBRANT AND FORWARD-LOOKING. BUT MORE THAN THAT WE CLAIM THAT IT IS THE MOST TOLERANT OF FAITHS. BUT HOW DOES THE WORLD JUDGE OUR CLAIM? IT LOOKS UPON US AS TERRORISTS. WE HAVE BEEN KILLING EACH OTHER AND NOW WE WANT TO SPREAD THAT VIOLENCE AND TERROR ABROAD. NATURALLY THE WORLD REGARDS US AS TERRORISTS. OUR CLAIM OF TOLERANCE IS PHONEY IN ITS EYES. IT IS TIME WE TOOK STOCK OF OUR POSITION...."

THAT MUCH FOR THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, NOW WHERE DOES PAKISTAN STAND ECONOMICALLY? LET ME PRESENT TO YOU SOME DATA I HAVE RECENTLY COME ACROSS.

THERE HAS BEEN A FIFTY PERCENT REDUCTION IN THE RATE OF PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE LAST DECADE OR SO. DURING THE FIRST FORTY YEARS SINCE PAKISTAN'S BIRTH, THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY GREW AT THE RATE OF 6% ANNUALLY – IN THE LAST ONE DECADE, IT HAS ONLY GROWN AT 4% ANNUALLY.

WITH AN ANNUAL PER CAPITA INCOME OF ABOUT \$1,700, PAKISTAN RANKS 159TH AMONG 206 COUNTRIES. CURRENTLY IN PAKISTAN, SOME 50 MILLION PEOPLE OR

ABOUT 33% OF THE POPULATION LIVES BELOW THE POVERTY LINE. TEN YEARS AGO, ONLY 17% OF THE POPULATION FELL IN THAT CATEGORY.

HAVING TAKEN YOU THROUGH THIS BLEAK JOURNEY ACROSS PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE, AM I SUGGESTING THAT THERE'S NO LIGHT AT THE END OF THIS DESOLATE TUNNEL?

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THERE IS.

THE FIRST ELEMENT OF THIS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IS THAT PAKISTAN'S PRESENT LEADERSHIP – WHATEVER MAY HAVE BEEN ITS MANNER OF ASSUMING OFFICE – IS NOT PERPETUATING ITSELF THROUGH A PACK OF LIES AND SUBTERFUGE, BUT IS ACCEPTING THE TRUTH AND TAKING THE CHALLENGE HEAD-ON.

THE SECOND ELEMENT, BRIGHTENING THIS LIGHT, IS THE ROADMAP FOR THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY THAT WAS HANDED DOWN YESTERDAY. THE PROMISE HAS BEEN MADE, ITS DELIVERY IS AWAITED.

THE THIRD ELEMENT, THAT MAKES THE LIGHT BRIGHTER YET, IS THE UNPRECEDENTED FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, EXPRESSION AND INFORMATION THAT PREVAILS IN PAKISTAN DESPITE A MILITARY GOVERNMENT BEING IN OFFICE. NOBEL LAUREATE, RENOWNED HUMANITARIAN AND DISSIDENT SOVIET SCIENTIST AND WRITER ANDREI SAKHAROV OBSERVED, MOST CONVINVINGLY, AND I QUOTE:

“FREEDOM OF THOUGHT IS THE ONLY GUARANTEE AGAINST AN INFECTION OF PEOPLE BY MASS MYTHS,

WHICH, IN THE HANDS OF TREACHEROUS DEMAGOGUES, CAN BE TRANSFORMED INTO BLOODY DICTATORSHIPS.”

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PAKISTAN’S ECONOMY IS CURRENTLY IN SHAMBLES, BUT WITH A LITTLE BIT OF SINCERETY AND DETERMINATION TOWARDS THE RESTORATION OF LAW AND ORDER, WITH A LITTLE BIT OF DISCIPLINE, AND WITH A LITTLE BIT OF OPTIMISM, IT CAN BE BACK ON TRACK AGAIN.

TO THIS END, I’M SURE PAKISTAN’S POLICY MAKERS CAN TAKE A LEAF OR TWO OUT OF THE PUTIN ADMINISTRATION’S REFORM PROGRAM. AND, ON THAT NOTE, AMBASSADOR, PLEASE TELL ME WHY WE ARE UNABLE TO GET RID OF THE EXCESS BAGGAGE OF OUR TURBULENT HISTORY AND GET ON WITH A SOUND, RELIABLE AND PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH RUSSIA? AS OSCAR WILDE SAID, “ONE CAN NEVER BE TOO CAREFUL IN THE CHOICE OF ONE’S ENEMIES,” BUT, THROUGH THICK AND THIN, RUSSIA HAS STOOD BY ALL COUNTRIES THAT CHOSE IT AS A FRIEND, WHILE SOME OF PAKISTAN’S SO CALLED GOOD FRIENDS HAVE TIME AND AGAIN LET IT DOWN.

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE BEST ANSWER TO ANY OUTSIDE THREAT IS A PAKISTAN AT PEACE WITH ITSELF AND STRONG AT HOME, SOMETHING THAT CAN ONLY COME FROM ITS OWN EFFORTS.

PAKISTAN’S LARGE AND YOUNG POPULATION CAN BE A TREMENDOUS ECONOMIC ASSET – READY TO BE TRAINED, EDUCATED AND EXPORTED TO COUNTRIES THAT ARE DESPERATELY SHORT OF SKILLED WORKERS. THERE ARE SIZEABLE PAKISTANI COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE, NORTH

AMERICA, AND THE MIDDLE EAST THAT ARE PUTTING
ASIDE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS A YEAR IN SAVINGS. THEY
ARE ALL DEEPLY COMMITTED PAKISTANIS WHO
PERENNIALY AWAIT HONEST, DEDICATED LEADERSHIP
AND ARE PERENNIALY DISAPPOINTED.

LET THE OPENING EMERGE, AND THE LIGHT AT THE END
OF THE TUNNEL WILL BE A BRAND NEW DAY, NOT THE
TRAIN COMING FROM THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

WALID IQBAL
MOSCOW
15TH AUGUST 2001