PERSONAL STATEMENT

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With the Pakistani job market saturated with development roles, only a handful of undergraduates envision a commitment as profound as pursuing a Ph.D. In a developing nation like Pakistan, the monetary worth of a Computer Science Bachelor's degree runs deep, to the point that most universities tailor their programs to capitalize on this value. I've seen friends and family attending these institutions, partly taking the same courses as me but never getting the chance to explore, let alone develop a passion for Computer Science's rich side of research. For some, the opportunity cost looms too large, and for many, the opportunities remain scarce, leaving me and others like me in a position of privilege. Yet, wanting to create the prospect and incentive to pursue research is not a pipe dream but a very achievable ambition that has been demonstrated by our neighbors in the region, namely India and China.

Out of the few who venture abroad to pursue further studies in Computer Science, even fewer come back to Pakistan to sow the seeds of opportunity. While they seem to have forgone an even greater prospect, they are, in fact, embracing a grander vision — one that encompasses fulfillment, purpose, and the noble pursuit of opening up avenues for research, all while inspiring others to follow suit. The one who inspired me to partake in this grand vision was my research advisor, Dr. Zafar Ayyub Qazi. Despite having completed his Postdoc, where he worked with some of the top researchers in the world, he made the unconventional choice of returning to Pakistan and assuming the role of an Assistant Professor at LUMS (Lahore University of Management Sciences). Had he not gone against the grain, there is a chance that I would not be harboring the ambitions I take pride in having today. In addition to research, I've also found fulfillment in serving as a teaching assistant for his networks/systems courses, culminating in recently leading his TA team for a graduate-level course in Distributed Systems. This experience has fostered a deep appreciation for the art of teaching and outreach, which I like to boil down to the act of distilling and effectively communicating fundamental ideas from intricate concepts. With that said, I wish to follow in his footsteps by engaging in cutting-edge research and fostering collaboration with Pakistani universities to attract external collaborators and create more opportunities.

It's no surprise that the appeal of a top-tier graduate program is undeniable for someone like myself. But, beyond the academic allure, I am just as eager to immerse myself and actively partake in the culturally rich and diverse community at the university. This engagement will not only serve to bolster my standing as a Pakistani Computer Scientist but also provide an opportunity to network with other ambitious researchers and innovators. Through such interactions, I will gain the awareness necessary to make the well-informed decisions that navigate through cultural nuances in shaping the future landscape of Computer Science education in my country for generations to come.