

## **Then Vs Now: The Concerns of Generation Z**

On February 5, 2023, I woke up to the news of "Musharraf - from one man army to the forgotten politician is no more."

The death news of the former president of Pakistan created a whirlpool of memories in my mind. His typical style of salute, his bold decisions for the sake of national interests, his unforgettable support for the war on terror against Afghanistan, his grudges against judges, his forgiveness to the corrupt politicians in the form of NRO, and his final apologies to the nation for the past misdeeds — all the events got recalled in my mind, and that was the moment when I found myself unable to answer why his death had arisen a wave of sorrow in my heart.

When I started pondering, I realized that I belong to Generation Z, aging between the late nineties and early two-thousands. Then, Musharraf was serving as the tenth president of Pakistan, the army man who rose to the position of four-star general after his consistent efforts and toughest military training. He tried to neutralize Zia's Islamization by enlightened moderation, which still needs to be implemented against the orthodox approach for a stable Pakistan. The war on terror in Afghanistan was the key factor that dented his reputation in public, but what other choices could he have made when America had already warned the country to be either hundred percent with it or hundred percent against it? And of course, the economically fragile countries like Pakistan couldn't afford to turn against the decisions of the superpower of that time. After his resignation, he apologized to the nation for the NRO and all the past misdeeds. However, he mentioned that whatever he did for the country, he did with good intentions.

These were the justifications consoling my heart in favor of Musharraf, as my childhood had witnessed his era. Then, life was quite simpler and happier. Saving wasn't a troublesome task for the middle class. People would spend earnings not just to meet both ends but for health, sports, and entertainment as well. Then, educational and technological advancements were finding their ways quite smoothly. Despite facing the menace of terrorism across the state and a deteriorating law and order situation in the country, people were not as frustrated and exhausted as they are today.

Now, the future of democracy has an uncertain roadmap to track. Depression and alienation have become all-time high among masses. So far, the highest inflation rate of 31.5% is mocking the low purchasing power parity of the middle class. The unabated electricity costs have compelled people to limit three meals to hardly two in a day. The lively and happy faces of the elders of

Generation Z have been lost in the paralysis of democratic progression. Now, they want their kids to invest all their efforts in education and skill-building with the vision of moving and settling abroad for a better future. What has ignited their thoughts is the notion that:

"Just living is not enough, one must have a quality life to live where justice prevails and the protection of human rights doesn't fail."

The Generation Z of today, owing to the state-created political and economic instabilities, realizes that their lives have become unbearable in Pakistan, and despite not admiring to flee from the Land of Pure, they are left with no other choice except leaving their motherland, considering the fact that they are in pain and how long they will endure. "This is the time to say goodbye," the childhood version of mine reminded me, and I got my answer for having an immense feeling of sadness over the death of the former President.

Consequently, then we needed American support to sustain the economy. Today, we need it more to escape complete economic deterioration. Then, the country was entangled in the web of Global South and North. Today, we are on the verge of catching up even with immediate neighbors. What we as a nation have gained and lost over the years is not unfathomable. The fathers of Generation Z claim to be financially independent and happier than Generation Z itself — the ultimate fact which cannot be ignored.