

NATION BUILDING POLICYMAKING CHALLENGES IN PAKISTAN SEEN FROM A DIPLOMAT'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Pakistan became an independent country on 14 August, 1947, under the most adverse historical, political and economic circumstances. Yet, it was fortunate in many respects too, with a strategic location, unexplored minerals resources, long coastline, vibrant agriculture, irrigation network, hardworking population and above all a well-trained cadre of loyal civil servants, who comprised the post partition Pakistan Civil Service. While its traditional adversary India was not reconciled to its sovereign existence, was well known. Soon, however a series of tragedies followed i.e. the Kashmir War, the untimely passing away of the Founder of the nation, rehabilitation of refugees, the assassination of the first Prime Minister, controversy on new Capital, protracted Constitutional crisis and alienation and separation of East Pakistan etc. The Western world, particularly the United States knew Pakistan's power potential and made sure to keep it on its right side. Pakistan however maintained steadfast solidarity with the liberation struggle of many countries in Asia and Africa during the de-colonization decades of 1950s and 1960s and 1970s. Pakistan's relative success in pursuing economic growth model (though funded by foreign aid) during the Cold War era, its active role as a spokesperson of the Free world, a close strategic relationship with China, facilitator of US-China normalization of diplomatic relations in 1971, a provider of security in the Gulf and the Middle East, an active role at the United Nations etc. All combined to make Pakistan successfully punch beyond its weight.

Keywords: Nation Building, Policy Making, Challenges, Cold War Era.

Introduction

In 2023, after, 75 years of its turbulent existence, Pakistan has come full circle! As it is said, 'the chickens are coming to roost'. Pakistani ruling elite has

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neither learnt, nor grown with time. Pakistan's serious dilemmas and paradoxes in nation building are all hard self-earned. It is not necessary to quote what prominent foreign scholars or our own ones say, to prove that the Pakistani state has been hijacked by narrow interests/mafias from the initial years of its inception. The unique domineering position of the father of nation Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, despite his frail health, kept these however under the wraps. But, the circumstances of his death, followed by assassination or so-called removal of Liaquat Ali Khan under equally suspicious circumstances removed all doubts, if any on the direction of Pakistan and its polity.

The US State Department documents deciphered after meeting the mandatory period, made it clear that, Liaquat's removal was an American plot, implemented by its handlers in Pakistan. In the 1950s, America was keen to opt Pakistan in its regional Coalitions as part of its Cold War strategy to oppose Soviet and Chinese Communism. The outcome was Pakistan's membership of Baghdad based CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) in 1955 and SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organization) in 1954. Thus the American Empire took over from the British Colonialists, to shape Pakistan's future including its society, economy, bureaucracy, military and foreign relations. Pakistan gained in the process through lavish aid and grants, civil and military training programs, weapons and equipment and diplomatic role of punching beyond its weight globally. These worked in perfect rhythm, as long as American interests were fulfilled. Then followed the decade of the Sixties, American failure to help resolve the Jammu and Kashmir problem, pro-India attitude of the American establishment, as well as American stance on Palestine, led Pakistan to cosy up to the People's Republic of China.

The Pakistani leadership, elite and masses were very bitter on US failure to honour its commitment to help resolve Jammu and Kashmir dispute, as a price for Pakistan's 'neutrality' in India- China War in October-November 1962. India was never so strategically ill placed and never was the opportunity as good and great for Pakistan to grab Jammu and Kashmir. In the subsequent years, Pakistan's cosy relations with China came in handy for the US, to normalize its own relations with secret visit of US National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger from Islamabad to Beijing in July 1971. This infuriated the Soviet Union so much that it signed a Mutual Friendship and Military Assistance Treaty, with India in August, 1971 which supported India to attack East Pakistan and convert it into Bangladesh, taking advantage of the political turmoil there. The Pakistani military was left

waiting for the arrival of the US Seventh Fleet. Neither the US Pakistan Mutual Assistance Defence Pact of 1959, nor CENTO or SEATO came to Pakistan's rescue, as it struggled to maintain its impossible geography. Pakistan's policy makers never knew, or would know that states only care for 'permanent interests'. Then in May 1974, India detonated its nuclear device, calling it perversely a 'smiling Buddha'.

The focus of the Western world in general and the United States in particular, was focused on stopping Pakistan following suit. Sanctions were imposed on Pakistan for sins, not committed. The most allied country became now the most sanctioned country. The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, rekindled the interest of the US deep establishment in general and President Ronald Reagan in particular in Pakistan. President Reagan believed in dismantling of the Soviet empire. He provided all out assistance to Afghan Mujahideen, most of which transited through Pakistan, in addition to annual certifications or clean chits to Pakistan on its nuclear program, in order for US military and economic aid to continue. This provided a golden opportunity for Pakistan to carry on its Nuclear Program. By early 1980s, Pakistan had achieved nuclear capability, but waited long enough to perfect its delivery capacities. While the Americans achieved their strategic objective of dismantling the Soviet Union, Pakistan achieved its strategic objective of nuclear capability in what the Americans prefer to call a 'transactional relationship', at its best. It was a win-win for both countries. After President General Zia-Ul-Haq and his closest aides, died in air crash in suspicious circumstances near Bahawalpur on 17 August 1988, the US deep establishment lost interest in Pakistan. The deep US establishment drew up an alternative strategy for the economic implosion of Pakistan, termed as the 'sweet revenge of democracy', and conceived in 1988-1989, under this game plan, Pakistan was shepherded by the IMF Hitmen to a Program of International Monetary Fund. Pakistan did not need an IMF Program. It had managed to achieve an average of 6 percent GDP growth rate from 1947-1987. In any case, Pakistan economy was doing better than both Bangladesh and India. India with its so-called Hindu rate of growth of 2 to 3 percent of four decades, had to mortgage 20 tons of gold reserves with the Bank of England in 1991, in order to settle its international debt obligations.

Subsequently, Indian political leaders such as Man Mohan Singh, realised the value of comprehensive economic reforms and implemented them to harness the potential of the economy by investing in education, simplifying ease of doing

business, improving governance, mobilizing Non Resident Indians (NRIs), promoting SMEs, Software exports, establishing Special Economic Zones and attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Pakistan was unable to keep tempo of the impressive growth rates of the first four decades and gradually fell behind, due to implementing the 'prior actions or the so-called conditionality under successive IMF Programs'. Little did Pakistani leaderships or its elite even realize that after failure by the Western Powers, to stop Pakistan's nuclear program, the IMF needed Pakistan to checkmate its stellar economic growth and to promote India's domination in South Asia. Pakistan undoubtedly stands weakened, but with 162 nations, behind China and Russia, in shaping up the new world order, the Western world, is losing the game. Rest is history!

Moment of Reckoning

Pakistan in 2023, confronts a moment of 'dead reckoning and wake-up call'. Enough time has been lost. No Pakistani leader in the past more than five decades was able to reverse Pakistan's sustained downslide. Pakistan does not have any more luxury, to continue the 'beaten path'. The attack on symbols of Pakistani state, military and Shaheed's monuments on 9 May, 2023, was Pakistan's 9/11. It was definitely an act of sophisticated hybrid warfare, as it coincided when the economy was on the brink of default, after 34 years of IMF Programs, creating utter hopelessness, rampant inflation, mass unemployment, rising poverty in the masses. Tragically, Pakistan Economy's position has declined from the 24th position in 2017 to 47th position in 2023.

As part of 22nd IMF Program signed in September 2018 for US\$6 billion, the Hit men heading Pakistan's top policy institutions have added US \$105 billion in national debt, as of June 2023, by implementing brutal policies, such as the uncalled for devaluation, repeated interest rate hikes, increase in fuel and utility charges etc. From all indications, it is now evident that due to incremental sins of omissions and commissions, Pakistan is now directly in the 'line of fire' and has begun paying for the sins of all leaderships' incompetence, naivety, and complicity. Nature's laws are same for everyone. It does not discriminate. The DNA of the ruling elite in Pakistan, like in next door Iran and Afghanistan in the 1970s or the Middle East and North Africa, a decade ago, makes them remain busy in their own self-gratification, self-indulgence, self-ignorance, closing their eyes and ears to the looming dangers. When the situation had worsened in these countries, as it is happening now in Pakistan, even good meaning reforms and Reformists, could not reverse the scourge and tide of history, although the state

narrative remained as 'everything normal', till the ignition of events. All national institutions in Pakistan confront, or have already confronted meltdown. There is visible and overwhelming degeneration in the society. Reading culture is extinct, educational institutions are in tatters and national mind set fossilized, looking for a 'Messiah'. Most Pakistanis agree that Pakistan is going through the worst patch of its history, even more traumatic than the events of 1971, which led to the dismemberment of the country. These unfortunate events however teach that state and national institutions should never become party in political controversies, lest they risk losing their respect and dignity. The feudal and tribal elite have failed to rule this country. The political forces have always used state machinery against the opposition. The resistance to establishment helps swell the vote banks of the opposition Political Parties, on the basis of their narrative of 'victimhood'.

The ultimate lesson is that political problems, never be resolved through the use of force. Time and again, it has shown in Pakistan that the use of force against Political parties have promoted terrorism and a culture of revenge, in a polarised polity achieving precisely the enemy's objectives. The foreign perpetrators of hybrid war, have been always all glee at the incompetence, naivety and failure of the Pakistani elite, to learn. Our friends have no hesitation to tell us that, 'we have become our own worst enemies'. Nobody can help those, who cannot help themselves. The rot in the political system in Pakistan has been long allowed for decades to reach its current tragic stage of 'impending implosion', which has been only temporarily and narrowly averted. Constitution, Politics, Judiciary, Civil and non-Civil institutions, are however all now, in a state of limbo, with no one showing the way. The greatest casualty in this drama has been 'trust', the social glue that holds any nation together.

Hybrid War at its Best

The beauty of the hybrid war against Pakistan is that the masses do not know whom to trust, the difference between falsehood and truth, good and bad. The element of foreign interference is neither new, nor surprising. The fact that Pakistanis are to blame themselves cannot be doubted, to say the least. The nature of the sophisticated hybrid 5th generation warfare against Pakistan has been such that 'truth' has been blurred to the extent that 'trust' has evaporated on public policies, institutions and personalities, alike. The mother system of Pakistan has been sick for decades, but it is only now that, Pakistanis discover, the 'Cancer' has spread to other parts of the body, which threaten its very existence. The toxicity in

the society, has reached a level, which threatens the very foundations of the State itself. Foreign Powers need no efforts, as the Pakistan's self-destructive elite are themselves facilitators, handlers and selectors of this deadly sophisticated hybrid war, irrespective of individual identities, party affiliations or backgrounds.

All great empires in global history have surprisingly fallen, due to failure to adopt merit, talent, rule of law, inclusiveness and system of justice. The problem of Pakistan is now beyond the capacity of any political party, or even a coalition of political parties, to retrieve the situation. A dozen elections have been held, but little has changed, except ensuring sustained downslide. Pakistan has already hit the bottom in South Asian rankings, in almost all economic and human indicators. No elite in any society does so much disservice to their own state, as it is in Pakistan. In 2023, Pakistan has very narrowly escaped a 'national tragedy', the objective of which was to pitch the masses against the armed forces or vice versa, besides creating 'Arab Spring style' like anarchy. The wide publicity to the narrative of debt default, the 'protracted delay' in reimbursement of the last installment of IMF bailout, whose prior conditions and actions, had been faithfully implemented by the authorities, or even the absence of state narrative or policies other than belated and half-hearted fire-fighting measures to control imports, were pointers to serious choreographed 'global strategic game plans'. The external powers long hostile to Pakistan, could never have dreamt achieving so much success in decimating Pakistan, so systematically in so short time.

Both the Civil and non-Civil elite appears however clueless, and unable to put up a sustainable sophisticated counter response strategy. The resort to 20th century means, such as using the state controlled print and electronic media, banners and posters in English, which hardly 2 percent of population can read or understand, are at best reflections of defunct elitism, stunted growth, or a failure at best to comprehend the nature of the hybrid war, Pakistan is going through. In the absence of reforms, the elite and the hitmen ensure that Pakistan continue operating at 2 percent of its actual potential. There appears to be a visible disconnect, gap or even incapacity in comprehension and strategic communication at all levels of state decision making, which provide serious and even greater reasons for concern. Metaphorically, it is like administering panadol or dispirins to patients, suffering from an advanced stage of Cancer. No one introspects, as to why and how Pakistan came to this stage of implosion. Only when the doctor/doctors know the type of disease of the patients, can they offer prescriptions for cure.

For decades, Pakistan has been like a well-built hospital with all facilities and resources, including 'capable security guards', but no Doctors. Pakistan's nation building dilemmas are essentially a question of 'software update crisis'. Pakistan needs a national re-set, social contract and economic charter. Everyone seems to be angry and cursing everyone else, except themselves. Decisions taken in anger can be devastating, achieving the objectives of the foreign perpetrators and the local handlers and facilitators of hybrid war, which they are supposed to defeat. Pakistanis love their armed forces, more than themselves and would not let any conspiracy to succeed.

Change in Course, Need of the Hour

Essentially, in my view, the crisis in Pakistan boils down to lack of leadership, lack of reforms and blatant foreign interference. The masses decry the poor quality of feudal and tribal political leaderships in Pakistan, imposed by the 'Selectors' for decades. The result has been bad governance, bad policies, rampant corruption, blatant cronyism, defunct elitism, parochialism and provincialism. The bureaucracy and judiciary stands badly compromised for decades, with narrow interests and mafias ruling the roost, resulting in flight of capital and brain drain. Honest means of wealth creation and acquisition of knowledge, intellect, values of piety, frugality, humility and honesty are all seen with great disdain by all shades of the elite. Corruption has been systematically institutionalized. Rules are made and unmade to suit only powerful individuals and mafias. Nowhere, can be seen the pursuit of 'national interests', by any pillar of the state. No wonder, Pakistan faces protracted downslide, which makes its friends, allies and adversaries, equally anxious.

All political leaders in opposition, excel in whipping the 'establishment' as responsible for their failures and not their own professional incapacities to take right decisions, lack of vision, inability to form a capable team of Advisors and Ministers, or withstand external pressures. While in power, they want to be left alone with 'absolute powers' to pursue self-gratification and their own individual vendetta agendas. This approach has cost the nation heavily. Pakistan economy's productive capacity stands decimated promoting indebtedness, inefficiency, illiteracy, insolvency etc. The political system has failed to undertake self-corrective measures, particularly in the key sectors of Civil Service, Agriculture, Taxation, Education, Energy, etc. No political leader enjoys personal credibility, stature or character. They cannot look beyond their own self and cronies' interests, which are responsible for the current state of decay. Political parties

hardly hold elections in their ranks or even maintain think tanks, for policy making. Rampant corruption has not been tackled by any regime, with sham accountability process always reserved for those in political opposition. The result has been that, every regime has left as part of its legacy, a much worse situation, as compared to what it had itself inherited.

The devastating consequences of such a style of governance and democracy have been only suffered by the masses of Pakistan and the state of Pakistan. Pakistan's national power profile including its defensive capacity and external image, have suffered immensely, as a result of protracted bad governance and meltdown of the economy, creating conditions for collapse of the Pakistani state. The pointers are recent events, on what pent up public anger, can do in West Asian and Middle East societies. Needless to recall that the Soviet Union having one of the strongest militaries, economies and nuclear arsenal could not withstand change and fell victim for avoiding, and more important in prioritising reforms. The brutal policies of IMF have left the masses of Pakistan barely surviving, given the high inflation and fall in standard of living. Those who pay taxes, establish industries, create employment opportunities, contributed in poverty alleviation, have been leaving the country. Those, who do not pay taxes, are sitting in the Parliament, while their siblings are manning the Civil and the non-Civil machinery of the state.

A few families have monopolised political power and have used it for self and dynastic enrichment. The country's middle class has been decimated. Alienation with the system has hit the skies. History is witness that no society has ever survived or progressed, without middle class. It is time to make a 'paradigm change' and adopt suitable amendments in the Constitution of Pakistan, creating a new political class, which is attached to the national roots, and are honest, educated and doers. This will require years of social engineering, but a beginning needs to be made now.

The Way Out of the National Crisis, is Only through Comprehensive Reforms

Extraordinary situation demand extraordinary measures. The peculiarities of the historical circumstances leading to creation of Pakistan and the very sophisticated nature of hybrid war against Pakistan, demand an equally robust counter strategy. The armed forces of Pakistan, being the guarantors of the ideological and geographical frontiers of the state of Pakistan, needs to take a lead

in supporting the comprehensive Reforms, for revival and renaissance of Pakistan. This can be done both in direct and indirect ways. Military all over the world, are supposed to be conservative institutions, find their roles changing, as the global issues continue to achieve levels of complexity and ferocity, unknown before. The armed forces of Pakistan, who are a truly national institution, are the pride of the people of Pakistan.

The people of Pakistan would prefer dying poor and hungry, but would like to ensure all resources are made available for the armed forces. Unfortunately, the crafty politicians have kept them illiterate, helpless and poor. In all civilized societies, all political problems are resolved politically. This is 'raison d'etre' of politics. If they cannot do it, they are not fit to be politicians. For long, Pakistan has been allowed to be destroyed, by these, vagabonds and fortune seekers. The writ of the state does not exist. This political class has learnt the art of survival. In a fast transforming world, when myths are being demolished, almost on daily basis, those who prefer to remain stubborn, stands to lose. No wonder, Pakistan has been the greatest loser of the globalization era. The armed forces with the support of the people of Pakistan should not let the state perish. Millions of lives were lost to achieve national independence. There is no doubt that the existing political class has failed the nation, and endangered its sovereign existence.

The question goes beyond the debate of 'Parliamentary or Presidential system of governance', or this or that Political Party. Pakistan has suffered, becoming a victim of its own self-inflicted traps. Crime, corruption and politics, have become indistinguishable, leaving no room for self-correction. Pakistan does not have the luxury of time, to continue with the existing rotten political culture and system. Einstein had rightly observed that 'doing the same thing again and again, and expecting different results, is an insanity'. British Economist John Maynard Keynes had similarly observed that 'the problem was not of generating new ideas, but of remaining with the old mind set'. In our own neighbourhood, Deng Xiaoping, China's great statesman and father of Reforms and Open Door Policy, in a reply to an American journalist, on his greatest challenge to transform China, observed that 'it was changing the mind-set of the people, who neither believed in change, nor thought that it could happen'.

Among his favourite 100 catchy slogans, the shortest, yet most powerful was: 'Either reform or perish'. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of the People's Republic of China, was essentially due to the mind set of their leaders.

The Soviets were hard headed, stubborn and arrogant. The Chinese leadership was flexible, positive and humble. All societies are product of their environment, which includes family values, education system, dreams and aspirations. Both Soviet Union and China went through their own long bloody revolutions. Both created 'ideological and systemic booby traps' for themselves, in the process. While the Chinese Reformist leadership in 1979, was ready to acknowledge the 'mistakes of their predecessors', the Soviets were full of themselves.

The Soviets instead went ahead invading Afghanistan, in order to look powerful and great. The Americans have committed the same mistake, time and again, not knowing that it cost America its power, prestige and position, irreversibly. During my visit to Moscow in the mid-nineties, I was amazed to hear a Russian scholar comment 'reform what'. Pakistan has inherited similarly a rotten political culture and governance model, drawn up by the departing British colonial rulers, to ensure that the decolonised societies are never able to achieve economic take off, except reciting their national anthems or holding their national flags. This political paradigm aka 'systemic booby trap' has for decades, developed utter despondency, dependence and indebtedness, promoted by the IFI ecosystem that makes Pakistan's doom, look like ultimately inevitable (God forbid).

For Pakistanis, fortunately, the example next door is that of People's Liberation Army of China, which was loathe and allergic to reforms in its early years, but now stands as its greatest beneficiaries and proponents, as China has grown rich and powerful. The militaries, all over the world, due to training, discipline and structures, believe in order, continuity and stability. China's PLA was brought on board, by the exceptional political persuasion, strength of character and long term vision of Deng Xiaoping. If Pakistan is to come out of the dark pit, the Armed forces of Pakistan need to take a lead in igniting this 'social revolution'. China's rise offers hope that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will achieve win-win results in the 2nd phase (2020-2025), provided genuine reforms and not IMF dictated macroeconomic book keeping, are undertaken. All policy initiatives for comprehensive reforms be undertaken with due diligence and honesty. Their results, would speak for themselves, restoring the trust of the masses, in them.

The only hitch is that Pakistan does not have any political leader of the stature of Deng Xiaoping or Lee Kuan Yew, in the existing political class who could be as honest, visionary and capable enough to lead this transformation

process, as the 'Helmsman'. But the second best option could be shortlisting among the existing lot, 'a collective leadership', through Elections, who have not been tried so far. Alternatively, a new Legal Framework Order would be needed on priority to be promulgated, in order to declare Emergency, through a Presidential Ordinance, keeping the Constitution in abeyance. The LFO may establish a Technocrat set up, minus Hitmen and dual nationals, to be guided by a Supra committee of a hundred honest, eminent elders, scholars, to carry out comprehensive Reforms to improve governance in every sector of life. As a first policy move for Electoral reforms, the existing political parties and politicians who have served in Federal Parliament or Provincial Assemblies in the past five decades need to be disenfranchised en masse, without exception, with impartial accountability. Only their political workers may participate in Elections. The masses of Pakistan are sure to welcome such a move, fed up with the old lots who have merely enriched themselves and their cronies, clans and close relatives only.

The major follow up Reforms could include: Proportionate electoral system with only three time stint for legislators; Re-demarcation of provincial boundaries to create 20 or more Provinces; Abolition of Quota system, with 10 percent reserved for underdeveloped regions; Institution of Qazi court/ Mediation courts system; Training schools for cadres of Political parties; Fair and equitable taxation system; Rule of law; Mass education, national curriculum; Retrenchment in Civil service; Reduction in state expenditure; End to corruption, wastage; Abolition of subsidies; Privatization of unprofitable state owned enterprises; Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); Information Technology and Software development; Launching of Special Economic Zones/Industrial Parks; Construction of Reservoirs and dams; Development of blue economy; Disposal of state land; Mobilization of overseas Pakistanis; Simplification of ease of doing business; Reduction in cost of doing business; Improvements in irrigation networks; Improvements in urban planning, transport and infrastructure; Promotion of foreign investment; Relocation of China's industries to SEZs of Pakistan; Agriculture reforms; Taxation reforms; Investment in Higher education; Energy Reforms; Development of Livestock; Horticulture; Greening of environment etc. All these reforms should be given constitutional cover, by the next Parliament, whenever the elections are held. A capable and sincere national technocrat team can achieve results within a few years.

Conclusion

Nature abhors vacuum. Societies go through their dark and bright patches of history. For Pakistan, the current period is the darkest patch in its 75-year history. The father of nation Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had made it clear prior to partition of India, that 'he wanted military, before Pakistan'. Pakistan can do without politics, but not without military. The Politicians have never looked beyond their narrow interests and never let the civil machinery capacities to develop, with the result that, whether dealing with law and order, natural calamities, census, elections, vaccination campaigns, etc. the role of the armed forces becomes critical. Pakistanis are no strangers to political and non-political crisis. These were in the past, resolved as the national institutions such as Presidency, Judiciary and the Executive, had writ of the state. But with the passage of time, the decline in the quality of political leadership and dual nationals, manning the policy making bodies, the writ of the national institutions has evaporated, creating the current national quagmire. In the extreme polarised environment of Pakistan, sanity is the last thing to be expected.

Globally, chaotic and anarchic places lead to exodus of the wealthy and educated lot, let alone attract foreign investors, irrespective of the marketing strategy. Pakistan is no exception. The unfortunate happenings of May 9, 2023 are deplorable. These must be investigated to find root causes. The fact that these happened first time on such a scale, also calls for not only serious introspection, but also why these could not be averted by state institutions. Only those who innovate by learning and growing, do not suffocate. Singapore leader Lee Kuan Yew had observed: 'we never stopped learning, because the world outside was always changing'. Pakistan has all the resources to make it happen, being the best blessed and placed country for the future, which is one of the major reasons for it to remain as the 'eye of the storm'. It is no more secret that the Western Powers did everything to precipitate the collapse of Pakistan. Yet, Pakistan survives, to thrive.