

# **The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): The Political Economy Analyzed**

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The CPEC was initiated in 2015 and was essentially a vast network of roads, rail links, power plants and other infrastructure connecting western China's Xinjiang province to Pakistan's southern port of Gwadar. The CPEC was now considered as a flagship project and the single greatest achievement of the OBOR vision. The initial investment was \$46 billion in CPEC which was then the biggest ever-foreign direct investment in Pakistan. Later the investment was increased to \$54 billion after the inclusion of more projects in CPEC such as investments in Pakistan Railways and financing of the Karachi Circular Railways project. Infrastructure and power projects are expected to be completed by 2030.<sup>1</sup> The total investment today has been increased to \$62 billion.<sup>2</sup> The CPEC will provide connectivity with Pakistan and the region beyond through a network of highways, railways and other connection networks like fiber optics. The road and railway links are being connected from Kashgar, China, to Khunjrab, Pakistan and will pass through Gilgit-Baltistan. An eastern route would pass through Punjab and Sindh and then would reach to Gwadar, its ultimate destination. Similarly, Western route would pass through Southern KPK and Balochistan. Some of the highways have been constructed and transportation has also started in these areas. Some roads are being built to connect with the main routes and some are being repaired. Work on railways connecting passage from Gwadar to Kashgar is also underway. Roads and industrial zones are now being built in less developed areas of Pakistan. The Gwadar port was now functional. It was planned that ultimately CPEC would integrate the region as which may include India, Afghanistan and Iran.<sup>3</sup> Gwadar and Karachi on the Arabian Sea are destined to become the regional hubs for

commerce, finance and energy transactions. Iran-Pakistan-China gas pipeline could soon become a viable option as would a Gwadar-Chabahar corridor. Chabahar port is in the Sistan-Balochistan province on Iran's southeastern coast and is of great strategic utility and will give India sea-land access route to Afghanistan bypassing Pakistan.

The economic landscape of Pakistan was being rapidly transformed. CPEC is a huge vote of confidence in Pakistan's economy. The required institutional structures and frameworks are already in place. These include inter-alia, the Pakistan-China Free Trade Agreement, the Joint Investment Company and currency swap arrangements. The Economic Cooperation Organization Summit, held in Islamabad in March 2017, welcomed CPEC. Participation of Afghanistan and Iran in CPEC processes and projects would be good for the region. Such cooperation could also be extended to the Gulf, Central Asia and Africa. The economic landscape of Pakistan was being rapidly transformed. CPEC was a huge vote of confidence in Pakistan's economy. The required institutional structures and frameworks are already in place. These include inter-alia, the Pakistan-China Free Trade Agreement, the Joint Investment Company and currency swap arrangements. The CPEC is an excellent example of mutual benefits that would accrue from the OBOR. CPEC is also a starting point for building ever expanding circles of win-win cooperation schemes, stability and peace extending from Pakistan and China to Eurasia and Africa.

A major chunk of the multibillion-dollar investment, \$34 billion, is going into electricity production and distribution. The project would help Pakistan to have 11,000 MW to overcome its energy shortfall. Currently, the CPEC's early harvest projects costing about \$16 billion are either completed or are in a near completion stage. Eleven of these projects are in the energy sector. Over 30% of all CPEC

projects are in Balochistan, Pakistan. Very recently, China has approved additional financing for infrastructure projects in Pakistan under the CPEC, taking the investment volume to \$62 billion from \$55 billion about three months ago. According to the ruling Nawaz Government, other countries are keen to become part of CPEC projects.<sup>4</sup> The CPEC is particularly important for China. With access to Pakistani ports, China will be able to expand its market reach and bring in foreign direct investment to ease the devaluation of the renminbi. The renminbi's drop signals China's hope to increase the amount of low wage jobs abroad and play it safe on future risks while implementing financial reform. Though China has become the world's largest banking system, debt has played a pivotal role in its growth in recent years . . . Massive investment in infrastructure will result in greater power of China to influence regional affairs. The CPEC has become a symbol of Pakistan and China's deep ties of friendship between the two nations. Also, CPEC represents China's attempts to gain influence and access to the Indian Ocean while providing Chinese industries a stimulus. Pakistan has proven a willing partner due to its political interests in the region and need for investment. Pakistan's Gwadar port was going to become a trade hub for CPEC on the Indian Ocean rim. China increased investments into CPEC to \$57 billion capped off by Gwadar.<sup>5</sup> To ensure the security of Chinese establishments and workers in the CPEC projects, the Pakistan Army plans to raise a special security force of 20,000.

Today, there was a lot of hype about CPEC being a "game changer" in the region. On April 6, 2017, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said that the multibillion CPEC and its related projects symbolized the people centric approach of the two countries and their resolve for regional connectivity. He lauded the Chinese diplomatic and materialistic support to Pakistan in its fight against terrorism. The Prime Minister

said the upcoming “Belt and Road Forum” being held in China next month would provide an excellent opportunity for exploring key areas of connectivity, infrastructure, trade, finance, people-to-people exchanges and think-tanks cooperation between Pakistan, China and the entire world community.<sup>6</sup> The Prime Minister said the CPEC will transform the economic dimension of the two countries' bilateral relationship.

Very recently, the United Kingdom expressed its willingness to join the CPEC. According to the Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Ahsan Iqbal, several other countries in the European Union and Central Asian Republics were also evincing keen interest in the project. He said that their inclination towards the project “proves that CPEC was not restricted only to Pakistan and China, but has a greater regional impact that will promote connectivity in the region and beyond. Besides improving the image of Pakistan across the world, the Pak-China project will make the country a manufacturing and commerce hub”.<sup>7</sup> Belarus had also expressed its keenness to join CPEC. President Mamnoon Hussain welcomed on Tuesday Belarus’ desire to join CPEC project, saying it would expedite the pace of development in the region.<sup>8</sup>

There was some muted criticism of the CPEC as it suffered from lack of transparency. The official website contains just a list of projects but no sufficient details about them. This paucity of information about CPEC was bewildering, to say the least. Last year, Shoaib Suddle, a former high-ranking bureaucrat had noted that the steps taken toward the settlement of route controversy were positive but more needed to be done so that convergence of views in Pakistan could become possible in the fulfilment of common objectives and goals. Ashfaq Hassan Khan, renowned economist, highlighted the need for greater financial transparency and remarked that financial spread related to CPEC projects needed to be made

publicly available so that CPEC-related changes in the total debt of Pakistan could be properly studied and correct policy recommendations could be derived to ease the debt burden.

Pakistan was faced with several multifaceted internal challenges: terrorism, extremism, domestic violence, poor counterterrorism policy, political paralysis resulting from the ongoing Panama Supreme Court case, sluggish economy, bad governance, civil-military power tussles, CPEC dependency, and lingering insurgency in Balochistan, a fractured state and society, weakened institutions, and visionless political leadership. Unprecedented corruption in Pakistan's government institutions had led to corrosion of state institutions. Bad governance was the norm, not the exception in the country. Politics in Pakistan was now a criminalized phenomenon and money matters the most. Pakistan had been weakened from within. It is facing an existential challenge from all sorts of extremist ideologies ranging from rightist Islamic radicalism to leftist ethnic identities assertions. Meanwhile, the global war on terror continues to haunt the country. Thus, there are several significant potential threats to the CPEC. Very recently, Weinbaum, a much-respected regional scholar, had stated that: <sup>9</sup>

This past year was another of muddling through for Pakistan. 2017 promises much the same. Continuity is suggested as Pakistan again avoids fully confronting its most challenging problems yet manages to do enough to avoid their becoming seriously worse. Measures to curb domestic violence undertaken by Pakistan's military and civilian government can be expected to fall short of making the hard choices needed to eliminate ensconced extremist groups. Nor will meaningful policies address corruption or advance human rights protections. Little will also be done in 2017 that moves Pakistan toward reforming structural weaknesses in its sluggish economy. Any pressures to act have been replaced by the belief among

most Pakistanis that China's promised infusion of more than \$50 billion to uplift the country's infrastructure will relieve the country of most economic ills. Despite continuing attempts by political opposition to weaken and delegitimize the Sharif government, it will probably continue to outmaneuver its political enemies while also giving Pakistan's military no reason to intervene.

Pakistan was faced with a lingering insurgency in Balochistan. India supported the insurgency and this issue was a very real threat to Pakistan. It was also the primary bone of contention between Pakistan and India. Indian interference in Pakistan's affairs was well-documented but due to poor image of the country not believed in the international circles.

Talat Masood, a retired lieutenant general of the Pakistan Army and a former federal secretary, in his article aptly titled "Pakistan's multiple woes", published on March 21, 2017 argued that while Pakistan was being unfairly treated by the US there was also a need for a foremost reappraisal of Pakistan's domestic and foreign policies. He maintained that Pakistanis should examine the deeper problem of bolstering the deficient, undemocratic decision-making structures. Due to the disinterest towards institutionalized decision-making by Pakistan's rulers it was hardly surprising that policy and decision-making of national importance remained essentially personalized and incoherent. It was this very flaw that prevented the Government of Pakistan from conducting a true national strategy. Until and unless there was an institutional decision-making process Pakistan would continue to have lack of intellectual content the country would will always be faced with the crisis. Pakistan faced much larger challenges because of this poor policymaking. The county's all too willing participation in the Afghan jihad and impromptu acceptance of playing a pivotal role after 9/11, without weighing its full consequences, were some examples of this faulty

decision-making. The Kargil adventure nearly pushed nuclear Pakistan into a war with nuclear India although. One can give many examples where Pakistan had failed in proper policy formulation and had rationalized these mistakes by scapegoating the civilian leadership or military for them. It was very unfortunate that even Pakistan's civilian leaders rarely follow democratic norms of decision-making. This provided further leverage to the military to influence decision-making. Such failings could be largely offset if the government resorted to involving both cabinet and the parliament in the enunciation and oversight Pakistan's significant national policies, as was the norm in the system of democracy. The primary driver of Pakistan's international interest was security which has given significant leverage to the military. This state of affairs got a great increase during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and had continued to date. Pakistanis are repeatedly reminded that United States looks at Islamabad through Indian or Afghan lens. The erroneous view of Pakistan, in which security remained the main national interest for the United States and other powers, had increased its political problems. In the past foreign powers had exploited this fault and had even bypassed the civilian leadership and had directly communicating with the Army. Despite the enormous sacrifices that the Army had made in its fight against terror and securing Pakistan's borders, it was still criticized by India, the United States, and Afghanistan and other countries. These powers focused on the Army's perceived tolerance and relationship with the Jaish-e-Mohammad, Haqqani network, and Quetta Shura. Their focus had given India an excuse to employ territory in Afghanistan for deploying TTP and other dissident elements against Pakistan. In clear contrast, there wasn't any disapproval by United States about India's its brutal repression of the Kashmiri resistance movement and its policies towards Pakistan. On the contrary, there were powerful voices in the United States that were coming up with legislation

punishing Pakistan. The reason for this biased approach was obvious. The United States considered India as a strategic partner and the TTP and groups based operating from Afghanistan weren't a target. Pakistan can only come out of this vicious cycle through a major reappraisal of its domestic foreign and policies.<sup>10</sup>

Hasan Askari Rizvi, a leading Pakistani analyst, had argued that there was a problem in the country's very political discourse. He maintained that a respectable number of political leaders and parliamentarians use non-democratic and un-parliamentary idiom to address their political adversaries. Others, who may not indulge in such rude and ill-mannered interaction, are unable or unwilling to stop their party colleagues from adopting such a disposition that brings a bad name to democratic institutions and processes. Many factors explained the drop in the quality of political discourse and the use of offensive language by politicians.<sup>11</sup> He further argued that:<sup>12</sup>

The overall governance pattern negates the principles and spirit of democracy. Instead of creating viable democratic institutions and processes the focus is on building personalized political fiefdom. Professionalism, administrative nonpartisanship and judicious handling of state resources and socio-economic development are replaced with unconditional loyalty to the chief. All development work for the people is projected as personal favors of the ruler. As the distribution of state patronage and development fund are done by the ruler at the personalized level, there is a race in the political party for showing allegiance to the chief. One way of proving the loyalty is to praise the chief all the time and adopt a derogatory disposition towards political adversaries. Such a political culture is the major obstacle to democratic consolidation. The above statement on the poverty of democracy in Pakistan is not meant to make a case for discarding it. The deficiencies in Pakistani democracy are correctable — provided the top



political leaders of the major political parties agree to mend their ways. They need to work towards implementing the norms of democracy in the management of day-to-day politics and turn their political parties into self-sustaining political machines with internal democracy. The culture of sycophancy needs to be replaced with professionalism and experience. The top leaders must attend the assembly sessions with greater frequency. They must make sure that the members attend the sessions regularly, take part in the proceedings and maintain the decorum inside and outside the house. The sooner they make such a beginning the better.

While CPEC was viewed as a lifeline for Pakistan, yet three potential obstacles could yet derail this multifaceted project. Muhammad Daim Fazil, in his article “Pakistan: What Stands in CPEC’s Way?” published on February 15, 2016 maintained that:<sup>13</sup>

A lack of domestic consensus can hinder development in any part of the world, and CPEC is no exception. When CPEC was initially introduced, every mainstream political party supported it, including the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN-N). However, the enthusiasm turned to deep concern when political parties from economically weak provinces (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan) felt that their province’s reservations about CPEC were not being addressed. ...Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has already twice chaired an All Parties Conference to address provincial grievances and has formed a committee to tackle the issues. Regional parties from KPK (Tehreek-i-Insaf, Jamat Islami & Awami National Party) and Baluchistan (Baluchistan National Party-Mengal) have also organized APCs to discuss the provincial concerns. The debate has become so heated that China has felt it necessary to put out a statement urging parties to overcome their differences....Pakistan has a troubling history of ruining big projects through

political bickering, and there's fear that CPEC may meet the same fate....Another aspect that needs to be given close consideration is the status of Gilgit-Baltistan. Pakistan's claim that it has semi-autonomous control over (Azad) Kashmir is probably not wholly convincing to Chinese authorities...Islamabad is now working to give Gilgit-Baltistan constitutional status by making it the country's fifth province. Giving Gilgit provincial status is a bold step. As stated earlier, the region is part of the disputed Jammu & Kashmir territory, and thus India also lays claim to it. Giving it status would require Pakistan to back off a decades-old stance of plebiscite, and would require a disputed territory resolution through the United Nations. Moreover, there are concerns that India, which also claims Kashmir as its integral territory, could also annex it....Gilgit-Baltistan is the gateway to Pakistan from China, but there is no proposed hydropower scheme, economic zone, or infrastructure development plan – all of which the region needs. Gilgit-Baltistan is underdeveloped, lacks legal status, and is not getting its fair share of CPEC attention, all of which could lead to numerous problems.... The security atmosphere inside Pakistan poses numerous difficulties for CPEC. Starting from Kashgar, the project will pass through Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, followed by Baluchistan. Unlike Gilgit-Baltistan, the latter two have complex security challenges, owing to years of militancy and the presence of secessionist elements.... Separatists have frequently targeted Chinese workers in Baluchistan, while ruthless assaults on state apparatus continue. Chinese authorities are also wary of the Uighur militants' connections with the Afghan Taliban. Islamic militants in China have expanded the extent of their fight against the government in recent years, and the perpetrators are believed to have links with terrorist groups in the northwestern belt of Pakistan. Islamabad doing its best to eliminate anti-China elements from its territory; however, there is a possibility that Uighur and Taliban (TTP) militants may join forces to threaten CPEC. China is undoubtedly

aware of these conundrums...Sure, there remain real reasons to be skeptical. Much of the new construction would be done in the vast, restive Pakistani province of Baluchistan, where the army is still grappling with an entrenched separatist insurgency. In the recent past extremist outfits linked to ethnic Uighur separatists within Xinjiang had training camps in Pakistan's rugged borderlands with Afghanistan. The Uighurs are a Turkic Muslim minority chafing under Chinese rule. Given close ties with China, their cause rarely galvanized much Pakistani support.

### The Militancy Issue

Although the number of terrorist incidents has declined lately, the issue of militancy still threatens Pakistan. Surprisingly, the Nawaz Government does not even have a counter insurgency strategy of any substance to fight off the terrorist challenges. Meanwhile, the Pakistan Army was exhausted because of the prolonged War on Terror. The Islamic radical phenomenon is too deeply entrenched in Pakistani society and institutions that it cannot be easily eradicated. The country will face the problem for decades to come. A mushrooming effect happens when a known Islamic radical entity was ended. Another simply grows in that space available. The military brass was itself unfocused and unable to tackle the problem because of its deep and confounding nature. The Army dominated the country still and was not only responsible for the Pakistan's defense but also for the domestic security and its foreign relations. The Army chief clearly calls the shots in Pakistan. Though General Bajwa has been in command of Army for only four months he is now clearly dominant of Pakistan's political landscape. Such is the institutionalized power of the Pakistan Army. Meanwhile, the Nawaz government was crippled because of corruption, incapacity and political bickering with the Opposition. The morale is at its lowest in history.

A real crisis was looming across the horizon in the shape of greater interventions by India. The Government of Pakistan does not have a foreign policy to speak of. It only reacts to events by external powers, especially the India. It does not have an agency like Homeland Security in the US that can become the thrust of the fight against Islamic terrorism. Meanwhile, the political parties are discredited because of their actions, the bureaucracy demoralized because of bad governance, society divided on sectarian, linguistic and ethnic social cleavages. Most importantly, the youth are losing hope in the Pakistani dream. In fact, the country's educational institutions are in a shamble and the youth are frustrated as a result. The fact of the matter is that Pakistan is in a mess because of repeated military interventions. However, this does not absolve the civilian leadership of their duty to salvage the country. The tragedy with Pakistan is that the civilian leadership has been generally as bad as military rule, if not even worse. The lofty expectations of the people of the Nawaz government have been now dashed to the ground.

Governance challenges were significant and not enough attention was being focused on the issue. Rule of law was deficient in Pakistan. The country still ranked at 106/113 in the WJP Rule of Law Index which needs to be changed urgently. Rule of law was the fundamental principle of Islam, democracy and even civilization.<sup>14</sup>

Pakistan lacked the resolve to tackle the phenomenon of Islamic extremism and militancy. Ambivalence, appeasement, pusillanimity and denial have been the defining features of Pakistan's national response towards this menace in the past. There was an urgent need for reform of Pakistan's education system, especially the religious seminaries or madrassahs catering for the poorest of the poor. In these seminaries, the children are educated in theological subjects and are heavily indoctrinated in the extremist version of religion. According to Karin von Hippel,

an amount of \$1 billion has annually been spent on such madrassahs, out of which 75 percent of the contribution comes from abroad, mostly from Saudi Arabia.

As per a report by the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, there were six religious organizations in Pakistan in 1947 that have grown to be 239 by 2002. In 2013, in pursuance of the UN Resolution 1267, 60 militant organizations were banned. But they kept carrying out their activities by changing their names. Around 23 banned organizations are operating as the Punjabi Taliban in Punjab alone. An analysis of the internet presence of such groups shows that 20 out of 60 of them are active online. The actions of the Nawaz government were not adequate. Raashid Janjua had correctly argued that Pakistan must adopt a coherent approach to win this war where India and its allies who were bent on harming the country. The Islamic militant narrative needs to be countered. A “reverse takfiri doctrine” through our religious scholars is needed. :<sup>15</sup>

The state needs to wrest back mosques from extremists and convert madrassahs into public schools that teach “a standardized curriculum in sync with the national curriculum”.<sup>16</sup> The weekly Friday sermons in mosques need to be approved by the government and all religious discourse on the Internet and in print be regulated and monitored. “The hitherto laissez faire religious franchises must give way to state-controlled regulation to choke the flow of funds as well as extremist ideas”.

The Nawaz Government must boldly act and change Pakistan from within. Pakistan does not have the luxury of time. Let the Nawaz Government act immediately. The future of Pakistan depends on such rethinking. A frank and open discussion on these issues must commence immediately. Remember there are no sacred cows within Pakistan. Notwithstanding the opinion of the military brass, the Islamic republic of Pakistan was the only thing sacred for the citizens of the country and not its military. Because of past failures, Pakistan was facing an

existential crisis which emanates from several internal and external factors. The Nawaz government was largely impaired because of massive corruption, incapacity and endless and unwarranted political bickering with the PML (N) its main rival for power. The morale of the people is at its lowest in history. India, arch foe of Pakistan, smells blood and is going for the kill. It is accusing Pakistan of supporting terrorism and is bent on destroying its global image as a responsible military power. Tragically, the Nawaz Government does not have a foreign policy to speak of. It only reacts to events by external powers, especially the US and India. The Army calls the shots as far as foreign and defense policies are concerned and the US is interfering in Pakistan's internal affairs as never, virtually dictating our foreign policy now.

It was prudent to realize that Pakistan was not only threatened from outside but is also threatened from within. Seemingly, the current political and military leadership now stands discredited and does not have any credibility left. The tragedy of Pakistan does not stop here. The country's political parties are also discredited because of their actions, the bureaucracy demoralized because of bad governance, and the society itself badly divided on sectarian, linguistic and ethnic social cleavages. Pakistan is now certainly a mess. The country is now among the list of top ten failed states in the world. This is ironic because Pakistan also happens to be one of the strongest military powers in the world today. Pakistan's military strength cannot prevent an implosion of sorts like what happened with the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. The country was now dangerously isolated. It was only China that has shown some support. The people were feeling hapless and disillusioned as never. The country was in a mess with no silver lining on the horizon. The only good thing happening in Pakistan was the rising awareness thanks to the Information Revolution and the expended media. This awareness

needs to be channelized into a political force of some reckoning. Imran Khan's Tehreek-i Insaf had showed some promise but it needed several years to establish itself as a political party of some reckoning. The politics of elections was a different creature all together. Therefore, the Tehreek-i Insaf couldn't be expected to make a dent in the next general elections. Both the Pakistan Peoples Party has been vanquished and the ruling PML (N) has lost its steam and suffers from poor and visionless leadership.

The failure of the Nawaz Government was beyond doubt now. The incumbents' greatest fault is poor governance, which has sadly become the norm in Pakistan. Poor service delivery has alienated the masses like never. The Army Chief was more powerful than ever. Civilian space is becoming more and more restricted by the day. The Nawaz Government's performance, being dismal, the Army Chief's power was now largely by default. Notwithstanding the Nawaz Government's claims, the overall performance is pathetic, to say the least. Much was expected from the PML-N but disappointment reigned.

Instead of proper planning and bold action against terrorism, delay and procrastination have become hallmarks of the style of governance by the Nawaz government. Again, notwithstanding the tall claims made by Prime Minister, the civilian leadership has been both clueless and without any vision on how to tackle the various challenges confronting Pakistan. The PML-N has been focused on infrastructure development only. There is nothing wrong with that but a balanced approach is sorely missing. Meanwhile, the masses have suffered as economic growth has not been trickling down to them, as was expected and promised. Maybe it takes time for a new government to adjust but the poor of this country cannot wait so long. Desperation and alienation have set in the public as only a tiny segment of the population has prospered. Previously, General Raheel Sharif, then

army chief, had moved gradually and surely to gain influence in Pakistan. The mandate of the military has now been extended from security to ending corruption also. Thus, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the federal anti-corruption agency, has started functioning now. The Rangers have started successfully cleaning up the criminal-political-mafia terror nexus in Karachi. The once hapless people of Karachi now allow themselves to feel joy at the turn of events in the city.

The military's encroachment of civilian ruling space continues to expand unabatedly. The most powerful man in Pakistan was not the PM but the army chief. General Bajwa, the new Army Chief, seems honest and means business. He looks bent on cleaning the country of corruption and terrorism. The general is also perhaps the most popular man in Pakistan today. However, the greatest challenge remains. Pakistan is still faced with the existential challenge of terrorism, extremism, corruption and outright criminality. It is not going to be easy to clean up the mess that is Pakistan now. Past military actions have also contributed to this poor state of affairs. Everyone shares blame in the creation of the mess that is Pakistan today. The Army establishments itself suffers from endemic corruption of an institutionalized nature and cannot be expected to make any dent in the country's sorry state of affairs. Terrorism can only be eliminated through a comprehensive strategy in which all are on board. This requires commitment, patience and resolve.

The Army Chief had taken command of the situation in the absence of proper governance and the nation seemingly had resigned to the eventuality. There was seemingly no alternate to this state of affairs. Meanwhile, the Nawaz government is becoming defensive and was clearly unnerved by the sudden turn of events in



the country, especially the Panama leaks scandal and the upcoming Supreme Court verdict regarding the case.

Today, the greatest challenge for General Bajwa remains to eradicate terrorist groups from the country. The military cannot do it alone and neither can the elected PML-N government. It almost seems as if a new dispensation shall be worked out again with General Bajwa clearly in command and the Nawaz government following his directives. The chances of a coup d'état are zero since there is simply no need for it. Given the situation in Pakistan and the region, a military takeover would prove to be catastrophic and therefore cannot be imagined. Most importantly, the military brass realizes that military rule is also no solution to Pakistan's complex and myriad problems. Maybe a latest version of 'controlled democracy' is in the making. Desperate circumstances require new out-of-the-box thinking. Pakistanis need to ask themselves what they want as a nation: the rule of an army strong man or a government that gets its act together and works for the betterment of the people? Whatever the future dispensation in Pakistan the control of the Army on the country's foreign and security policies is ensured. The Army is too powerful and the political party system too weak to resist, not that they are even trying to wrestle control back from the Army.

Things have moved on, however. Pakistanis are relatively more educated and exposed as before. The civil society though comparatively weak as an institution is growing and finding its feet on the ground. The middle class is gradually growing and public awareness is increasing. The only saving grace in this very dismal situation was the growing public awareness of Pakistan's hour of danger. This awareness has largely happened because of a strident media. Notwithstanding the defaults, and there are many, the Pakistani media has done well to make the people aware of the situation in the country. There is still hope because of this

development alone. A crisis is also an opportunity to change. Gradually a better political leadership hopefully will emerge to steer the country out of the governance crisis. Patience was needed. Hopefully, in the long-run Pakistan will get its act together and becomes a great nation that the nation's forefathers dreamt about. Only time will tell. The only saving grace in this very dismal situation is the growing public awareness of Pakistan's hour of danger. This awareness has largely happened because of a strident media. Notwithstanding the defaults, and there are many, the Pakistani media has done well to make the people aware of the situation in the country. There is still hope because of this development alone. A crisis is also an opportunity to change.

The military launched Raddul Fasaad, the new countrywide anti-terrorist offensive, after a series of deadly bombings across Pakistan in February 2017 which had resulted in the death of over 100 people. This was overall 11th military operation launched in Pakistan since 2007 when the country adopted a comprehensive strategy to deal with terrorism. But most of earlier campaigns were restricted to the tribal regions, Balochistan and Karachi.<sup>17</sup>

The director general of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor, on April 17, 2017 announced that Ehsanullah Ehsan, former spokesperson of the TTP and a senior leader of the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, had turned himself in to Pakistan's security agencies. Ghafoor further said:<sup>18</sup>

"The people, the state and the institutions of Pakistan have made considerable progress in the betterment of the country's security situation. We have progressed to the point that the people who've been planning attacks on Pakistan's soil from across the border have started to see the error of their ways,"

He further claimed that 15 major operations, over 4,000 intelligence based operation have been carried out in all parts of the country since launch of operation. Over 5,000 suspects arrested and 1,859 unregistered Afghan nationals were arrested during the operations. Further, 4083 weapons and 6, 22,191 ammunitions were recovered, while 108 terrorists have so far been killed during the operations. The work on fencing along the Pak-Afghan border was continuing and under the first phase country's border linking its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province with Afghanistan will be fenced. In the second, phase, Balochistan's border with Afghanistan will be fenced. <sup>19</sup>

According to South Asia Terrorism Portal statistics, 940 civilians were killed in 2015 in terrorist attacks. In 2016, the toll mounted to 612 lives. As of April 9, 2017, the total killed was 184.<sup>20</sup> The attacks may have decreased but the casualties per attack have risen. An example of this is the attack carried out on February 16, 2017 in which at least 88 civilians were killed. The suicide bomber blew himself up inside a historic Sufi shrine in the town of Sehwan in Jamshoro district of Sindh. This is the worst attack, in terms of civilian fatalities, recorded in Pakistan since the December 2014 Army Public School attack in Peshawar. <sup>21</sup>. In just one suicide attack on Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's shrine on February 16, 2017 had left 90 dead and more than 250 people injured.

Officially the operation sought to eliminate the "residual/latent threat of terrorism", consolidating the gains made in other military operations, and further ensuring the security of Pakistan's borders. Hundreds of suspected terrorists have reportedly either been killed or arrested in raids carried out by security personnel since the start of the operation.

For the first time, after years of appeasing certain Islamist militant groups for political and religious reasons, the government has reluctantly agreed to allow the

armed forces to enter Punjab province, authorized with special powers to hunt down, arrest and shoot suspected militants. Punjab had previously remained immune from such action by paramilitary forces because the province was the political stronghold of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his ruling party, the PML-N. It was also the home of a variety of Islamist groups, including mainstream religious parties, sectarian movements officially banned for their violent methods, and anti-India militants who have been accused of a 2008 terrorist siege in Mumbai.

But the hodgepodge of Islamist movements based in Punjab, although attractive to many conservative Muslims and in some cases used as proxies in Pakistan's rivalry with next-door India, is increasingly seen as part of a larger, collaborative threat by Islamist extremists to Pakistan's stability, global stature and democratic way of life.

After the recent attacks, which rocked the nation and embarrassed its new army chief, the military embarked on a series of raids and arrests last weekend. Swooping into suspected militant hideouts and supportive communities, from Karachi in the south to border tribal areas in the north, the military claimed to have killed more than 100 terrorism suspects in three days.

But they did not touch Punjab. Even though one of the suicide bombs was detonated in its provincial capital, and police rounded up and arrested numerous suspects, the region remained off-limits to military forces. The reason was essentially political. All the extremist groups based in Punjab have served some useful purpose to the Sharif government and its control of the province. Some have delivered votes to the Muslim League, which hopes to see Sharif reelected next year. Some banned Sunni groups, such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, have been tolerated as anti-Shiite but not anti-government, and some have deflected pressure by

changing their names. Jamaat-ud-Dawah, once known as Lashkar-e-Taiba, has helped rally citizens to the national cause of liberating the border region of Kashmir from Indian control. In a rare step to curb the group last month, the Sharif government placed its leader under house arrest, but it has never tried him on charges from India that he masterminded the 2008 siege of Mumbai.

Critics have been protesting this flirtation for years, warning that it could encourage the “Talibanization” of Pakistani society and arguing that despite their different agendas, the extremist groups share common beliefs, can easily form alliances of convenience and can be difficult to put back into a box once they gather strength and support.

The U.S. Military Academy, Gen. John W. Nicholson, commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, noted that 20 of the 98 groups the U.S. government has designated as terrorists are in the region — “the highest concentration anywhere in the world. Nicholson said that because these groups exist in a common “medium” — with large numbers of jobless youths, the presence of criminal activity, and extremist teachings in some religious seminaries — “it creates kind of a petri dish within which these different strains of terrorism” can “converge, recruit and morph into more virulent strains.”

Still, it took a week of high-profile bombings, a surge of public criticism and a private meeting between the army chief, General Bajwa, and senior officials in Punjab — where the top elected official is Sharif’s brother Shabbaz — to persuade the government to acquiesce.<sup>22</sup>

There was an urgent need to act at the intellectual level and the need to propagate the liberal version of Islam and counter the Jihad narrative with a message of peace. This required a great political will and effort which was unlikely to happen

any time soon in Pakistan. Both the Army and the ruling PMLN support Islamic fundamentalists of various shades and colors for their own reasons. Thus, Islamic fundamentalism will remain in the country for some time and cannot be uprooted easily.

Owen Bennett Jones, a British journalist and author of *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm*, in his article “Selective Approach” published in *Dawn*, April 13, 2017 argued that not all militant groups are being targeted and explains why this occurs. He said: <sup>23</sup>

And yet elsewhere in the country some militant outfits remain untouched. There are three types of groups to consider: those active in Afghanistan, the sectarian groups and the India-facing outfits. Despite all the impassioned official denials, the world has little doubt that the Afghan Taliban leadership has sanctuary in Quetta. Given that foreign affairs adviser Sartaj Aziz said as much it’s difficult to believe anything else. And there is a reason for this policy. In the minds of some of Pakistan’s military strategists the protection offered to senior Afghan Taliban leaders and their families serves Pakistan’s national interest. The international community, the argument goes, will be unable to get a peace deal Afghanistan without going through Pakistan. Similarly, the links with India-facing groups are plain for all to see. The idea that Pakistan can rely can on the indigenous movement in Kashmir may be gaining ground in some official circles but if Modi is in power the Pakistani militants are going, at the very least, to be held in reserve.

This leaves the sectarian groups. Even for the most hard-bitten supporter of the state’s use of jihadi proxies, support or toleration of the sectarian groups is very hard to understand. The sectarian groups cause huge suffering. They deepen a potentially disastrous rift in Pakistan society. They are already the subject of outside interference and financing and thereby undermine Pakistan sovereignty. In addition, they offer a potential route for the militant Islamic State group to get into

Pakistan society. While many analysts believe IS lacks the infrastructure or popular support base to become a major force in Pakistan, there is still a risk that the organization could become established by forming an alliance with anti-Shia groups such as Lashkar-I-Jhangvi. Despite all these serious considerations the sectarian groups continue to operate. The most likely explanation — beyond sectarian prejudices reportedly held by some senior officers — is that these groups are now so numerous that confronting them head-on would risk something approaching civil war in the key province of Punjab. There are other reasons to believe that several types of militant groups active outside the northwest will not be touched. The civilian government has still failed to adopt a clear position on militancy. Maulana Abdul Aziz Ghazi, one of the leaders of the Lal Masjid rebellion, remains in charge of an institution that became a byword for anti-state violence and which was cleansed of violent elements at a prohibitive cost to human life. Nor has the government instituted sufficiently thorough reforms to undermine the militants by providing people with schools, hospital and courts. But the failings are not by civilians alone. The lack of resolve is also creeping into military parlance. Increasingly, the military is moving away from saying militancy reflects internal divisions in Pakistan. Instead, it is taking the much easier and convenient line of blaming it all on foreigners. Even if such claims are sometimes justified, they run the risk of become a catch-all explanation that will undermine the clear thinking needed to take on such a difficult adversary.

Abbas Nasir, “What military ops can’t deliver” published on February 2017 argued that the current security operations were quite clearly aimed at the Takfiris - those who kill in the name of Islam and considered even Muslims following a different interpretation of their faith as justified to be slaughtered. However, such ideology defies what the vast, peaceful majority Pakistanis profess to be Islam. Taliban

represent this thinking. Will it be enough then when the Takfiri thinking was defeated?<sup>24</sup> He further stated:<sup>25</sup>

To me, a larger battle will be the one to somehow move society to a 'live and let live' state from the current intolerant, even bigoted, environment.... It is incumbent, then, on those who are elected to step forward and make sure that Quaid-i-Azam's plural Pakistan is a reality. Equally, state institutions have to abandon their surrogate, non-state actors. No military operation can achieve that.

An associated internal challenge to counter-terrorism efforts was purging the militant and religious-political groups of the Saudi influence, particularly those currently operating across various borders in south Asia. The war in Syria and the simmering conflicts in Yemen as well as in Iraq are some of the manifestation of how the Saudi geo-political agenda drives political narratives in countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan. Robert Fisk, a vocal British critic of western duplicity on Israel and Saudi Arabia, pointed out in *The Independent* (Nov 17, 2015) the complete refusal to think about Saudi Arabia's role "as a purveyor of the most extreme Wahabi-Sunni form of Islam, in which IS believes, shows how our leaders still decline to recognize the links between the kingdom and the organization which struck Paris".<sup>26</sup> Pakistan was a victim of the playing out of an intense Saudi-Iranian rivalry in the region. Sectarian groups had flourished in Pakistan that had foreign connections. Foreign wars and conflicts had attracted some Pakistani nationals also. For example, some Pakistani and afghan Shia were now fighting to defend the Assad regime in Syria who was a fellow Alawi Shia. Outside factors compound the terrorism phenomenon in Pakistan.

The lack of a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy and failure of civilian-military cooperation is causing problem in the fight against terrorism inside Pakistan. The editorial entitled "Third year of NAP" published in *Pakistan Today*



on March 19, 2017 claimed that the sudden increase in terrorism seemed to have died down somewhat, but it could reappear. Undoubtedly Zarb-e-Azb had dealt a strong blow to Pakistan's enemies by abolishing its command and control structure in FATA sending Taliban fleeing the Afghanistan sanctuary. However, there was a cause militants were still able to evade the security machinery. Several important points in the NAP have not been taken seriously. Among the most notable is failure to share information among dozens of intelligence and security agencies and, of course, the sad state of affairs of madrassa reforms. The prime minister's too-little-too-late speeches on the so-called national narrative against terrorism notwithstanding, the government has done precious little to influence that sea of Pakistanis that is unable to decide about the merits of the enemy's so-called jihad. Not only has the narrative just been missing for so long, but the root of the problem has never been addressed. It's not that all madrassas, or even many of them, are militant-making factories. It's that even the best intentioned mostly impart a form of religious education that blurs the practical religious understanding of most common people. So far, the government has not realized the centrality of this initiative. Unless regressive education institutions along with deliberate brainwashing centers are shut down completely, the enemy will always have an inexhaustible supply of its so called jihadis. Said:<sup>27</sup>

Nearly after four years of rule the Nawaz government suffered from bad governance which had become the norm. An editorial aptly entitled "Bad Governance as the hallmark of PML-N rule" published in Pakistan Today on March 16, 2017 maintained that it began from the first day and continued till toady. The arbitrary hike in the sales tax soon after coming to power had to be withdrawn since it could not have been imposed until Parliament passed the Finance Bill. Much later, the Supreme Court canceled promotions of senior

officials by a selection board headed by the Prime Minister on grounds of these conflicting with the prescribed procedure. The Premier being the chief executive of the country was required to take all major decisions in Cabinet meetings. For three years, Nawaz Sharif took these decisions himself not caring for the Cabinet till Supreme Court told the Government that this was unconstitutional. Secretiveness continues to persist in Government, forcing the Chinese government to intervene to remove these reservations. Total concentration on big projects which can be translated into votes at the next elections leads the Nawaz Government to ignore its constitutional responsibilities. The Supreme Court had to intercede numerous times to direct the Nawaz Government to correct its path. The Nawaz Government against its wishes had to be forced into the conduct of the Local Government elections and the Census. The method in which the Nawaz Government had managed the circular debt was another example of bad governance and lack of transparency. The secretive way the debt was paid off soon after the government came to power and the way it piled up to the dangerous level of Rs 216 billion in less than six months was no secret. This happened despite the Finance Minister's solemn promise that the circular debt would never be permitted to escalate again. The circular debt had now spilled over the entire fuel supply chain, choking ports, and refineries and down to transport. Meanwhile, the responsible federal ministries blamed one another for the crisis. This was yet another example of bad governance.<sup>28</sup>

Pakistan suffered from lack of political will to tackle the country's mushrooming seminary problem. The state had failed to initiate education reforms in the public sector. The galling failures were responsible in a large youth body that was very poorly educated and badly trained to take up any meaningful jobs in the growing economy. The entire education sector was in shambles with very few exceptions.

Madrassah education was perhaps the worst of all. It was estimated that a decade ago, Pakistan had about 25,000 religious seminaries across the country. Now, however, the number was estimated to be around 35,000. Under a madrassa reform process that was much earlier approved by the government of Pervez Musharraf, religious seminaries were required to register and make public their funding resources. However, beyond the realm of what law demands, it was a bitter reality that successive governments since Musharraf's rule have not been able to ensure that religious seminaries register with the government, let alone making public their financial records. So far, Pakistan has shut down about 2,327 religious schools nationwide. Out of these, about 2,300 have been shut down in the province of Sindh alone while only two have been closed in Punjab. While the actual number of religious seminaries in Pakistan is in thousands, the closure of 2,300 religious seminaries, whose details remain anonymous, doesn't reflect in any way a headed policy action. Earlier this week, the chief of army staff stressed that the implementation of NAP needs to be expedited jointly by relevant stakeholders. Such requests by the military have been made before which are an indication that the civilian leadership's role, which under NAP also involves early regulation of religious seminaries, has been deplorable.

The early implementation of madrassa reforms should therefore be a vital component of any state level strategy that envisions a tolerant and progressive Pakistan.<sup>29</sup>

The Nawaz Government must boldly act and change Pakistan from within. Pakistan does not have the luxury of time. Let the Nawaz Government act immediately. The future of Pakistan depends on such rethinking. A frank and open discussion on these issues must commence immediately. Remember there are no sacred cows within Pakistan. Notwithstanding the opinion of the military brass, the

Islamic republic of Pakistan was the only thing sacred for the citizens of the country and not its military. Because of past failures, Pakistan was facing an existential crisis which emanates from several internal and external factors. The Nawaz government was largely impaired because of massive corruption, incapacity and endless and unwarranted political bickering with the PML (N) its main rival for power. The morale of the people is at its lowest in history. India, arch foe of Pakistan, smells blood and is going for the kill. It is accusing Pakistan of supporting terrorism and is bent on destroying its global image as a responsible military power. Tragically, the Nawaz Government does not have a foreign policy to speak of. It only reacts to events by external powers, especially the US and India. The Army calls the shots as far as foreign and defense policies are concerned and the US is interfering in Pakistan's internal affairs as never, virtually dictating our foreign policy now.

It was prudent to realize that Pakistan was not only threatened from outside but is also threatened from within. Seemingly, the current political and military leadership now stands discredited and does not have any credibility left. The tragedy of Pakistan does not stop here. The country's political parties are also discredited because of their actions, the bureaucracy demoralized because of bad governance, and the society itself badly divided on sectarian, linguistic and ethnic social cleavages. Pakistan is now certainly a mess. The country is now among the list of top ten failed states in the world. This is ironic because Pakistan also happens to be one of the strongest military powers in the world today. Pakistan's military strength cannot prevent an implosion of sorts like what happened with the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. The country was now dangerously isolated. It was only China that has shown some support. The people were feeling hapless and disillusioned as never. The country was in a mess with no silver lining on the

horizon. The only good thing happening in Pakistan was the rising awareness thanks to the Information Revolution and the expended media. This awareness needs to be channelized into a political force of some reckoning. Imran Khan's Tehreek-i Insaf had showed some promise but it needed several years to establish itself as a political party of some reckoning. The politics of elections was a different creature all together. Therefore, the Tehreek-i Insaf couldn't be expected to make a dent in the next general elections. Both the Pakistan Peoples Party has been vanquished and the ruling PML (N) has lost its steam and suffers from poor and visionless leadership.

The failure of the Nawaz Government was beyond doubt now. The incumbents' greatest fault is poor governance, which has sadly become the norm in Pakistan. Poor service delivery has alienated the masses like never. The Army Chief was more powerful than ever. Civilian space is becoming more and more restricted by the day. The Nawaz Government's performance, being dismal, the Army Chief's power was now largely by default. Notwithstanding the Nawaz Government's claims, the overall performance is pathetic, to say the least. Much was expected from the PML-N but disappointment reigned.

Instead of proper planning and bold action against terrorism, delay and procrastination have become hallmarks of the style of governance by the Nawaz government. Again, notwithstanding the tall claims made by Prime Minister, the civilian leadership has been both clueless and without any vision on how to tackle the various challenges confronting Pakistan. The PML-N has been focused on infrastructure development only. There is nothing wrong with that but a balanced approach is sorely missing. Meanwhile, the masses have suffered as economic growth has not been trickling down to them, as was expected and promised. Maybe it takes time for a new government to adjust but the poor of this country cannot

wait so long. Desperation and alienation have set in the public as only a tiny segment of the population has prospered. Previously, General Raheel Sharif, then army chief, had moved gradually and surely to gain influence in Pakistan. The mandate of the military has now been extended from security to ending corruption also. Thus, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the federal anti-corruption agency, has started functioning now. The Rangers have started successfully cleaning up the criminal-political-mafia terror nexus in Karachi. The once hapless people of Karachi now allow themselves to feel joy at the turn of events in the city. The military's encroachment of civilian ruling space continues to expand unabatedly. The most powerful man in Pakistan was not the PM but the army chief. General Bajwa, the new Army Chief, seems honest and means business. He looks bent on cleaning the country of corruption and terrorism. The general is also perhaps the most popular man in Pakistan today. However, the greatest challenge remains. Pakistan is still faced with the existential challenge of terrorism, extremism, corruption and outright criminality. It is not going to be easy to clean up the mess that is Pakistan now. Past military actions have also contributed to this poor state of affairs. Everyone shares blame in the creation of the mess that is Pakistan today. The Army establishments itself suffers from endemic corruption of an institutionalized nature and cannot be expected to make any dent in the country's sorry state of affairs. Terrorism can only be eliminated through a comprehensive strategy in which all are on board. This requires commitment, patience and resolve.

Pakistan desires peace in the region which is badly needed for its stability, progress, and economic development. However, it is hampered from achieving its desired goals by a corrupted political system and a weak leadership. Bold leadership is missing in the country. The Army which still calls the shots in foreign

and security policymaking is still myopic in its views and is obsessed with the enmity of India. Thus, Pakistan was moving closer to China and Russia as its mortal enemy- India – moved very close to the United States. For the military establishment in Pakistan it appeared to be a zero-sum game.

Pakistan must make efforts for peace with its neighbors but is challenged to do so by its own weak leadership at the helm of state affairs. However, with help from friends like United States it can make a breakthrough. There are some indications that the new Trump Administration might be conducive to the idea. Without resolving the Kashmir lingering dispute peace in the region is impossible. Given the nature of the region's history a settlement of the Kashmir dispute is very difficult but not impossible. It was in every one's interest that the Global War against Terrorism be ended immediately as the al Qaeda's leadership has been crippled. Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar were long dead. Previously, the US had accused Pakistan of supporting the Afghan Taliban, especially the Haqqani group and that of Mullah Omar. Things have changed now and Pakistan wasn't supporting the Haqqani group anymore. Previously, the Pakistan army is assisting some elements of the Afghan Taliban only because they are considered as strategic assets and future Afghan power holders. Pakistan must negotiate with the US an end of Indian interference in Baluchistan and most importantly, independence of Kashmir. Only the US has the prestige and status with India that can possibly take our two countries towards an eventual solution. Pakistan needs to convince the US that it would be ready to suspend expansion of its nuclear arsenal once there is tangible progress towards a viable and permanent solution in Kashmir.

Pakistan and all neighbors desired regional peace but that was only possible with the solution to the Kashmir dispute. Nothing else will convince the powerful

Pakistan military establishment to suspend the further development of the nuclear arsenals. Remember the country with the most rapid expansion of nuclear weapons is Pakistan. This is indeed ironic because Pakistan is also a country imploding from within. Pakistan's nuclear weapons cannot save it from this landslide. Bad governance and corruption is now endemic in the country. The Pakistan military leadership must realize that having such a large nuclear establishment is not helping matters at all. We are facing an unconventional war and nuclear weapons are of no use here. The primary threat is from within, as rightly acknowledged by the Army brass recently. Pakistan had suffered from militancy more than any other country in the world. The Nawaz Government must concentrate on fighting those Islamic radicals who have established themselves for foreign jihad ventures thereby acting against the national interests of the Pakistani state. This is not a war but mainly a counter-terrorism problem much like what India has witnessed in the last few decades, meaning that it must be taken as basically police operations only. No massive use of force is necessary here. Plus, the real battle is to win over the dissatisfied local populace through economic and social development. Only here can the battle be won. This was not a conventional war but an extraordinary unconventional conflict which required the Nawaz government to use new weapons and tactics to fight and win. Pakistan's leadership had to act smart and think out of the box. Things are very different than Pakistan's experiences in previous wars with India. Islamabad has been soaking up the benefits of its ever-growing relations with China for decades – arms sales, joint projects both military and economic, across-the-board diplomatic support, etc. But in recent years, their relations have been spurred by CPEC.

In conclusion, Pakistan was a mess. It was facing an acute image problem. Today Pakistan was misunderstood and was therefore being unfairly treated by the United



States and other Western powers for its perceived connections to global terrorism. It was more complicated state of affairs now. However, there indeed a need for a foremost reappraisal of Pakistan's domestic and foreign policies. Pakistan should strengthen its system of democracy because it was very deficient in countless ways and not functioning at all. The political paralysis was a result of these systematic faults. Islamic fundamentalist, poor governance, absence of democratic norms, intolerance in society, and inertia was the principle cause of the situation. Lack of political will to reform both state and society may be the single biggest reason for the mess: examining the deeper problem of bolstering the deficient, undemocratic decision-making structures. Due to the disinterest towards institutionalized decision-making by Pakistan's rulers it was hardly surprising that policy and decision-making of national importance remained essentially personalized and incoherent. It was this very flaw that prevented the Government of Pakistan from conducting a true national strategy. Until and unless there was an institutional decision-making process Pakistan would continue to have lack of intellectual content the country would always be faced with the crisis. Pakistan faced much larger challenges because of this poor policymaking. The country's past was haunting it now. Reckless decisions like the infamous U-turn of General Musharraf after 9/11 where Pakistan became an ally of the United States without weighing the full consequences of this abrupt departure of foreign policy. The Army's continued support of Jihadist entities like the Jaish-e-Mohammad, Haqqani network, and Quetta Shura. The main reason for this state of affairs was the personalist nature of rule in Pakistan. The civilian leaders don't follow democratic norms of decision-making. This empowered the Army even more and provided further leverage to it to influence Pakistan's decision-making. The Neither the Cabinet nor the Parliament are fulfilling their given roles assigned to them. Even the Judiciary is very deficient, especially at

the lower levels. The Parliament doesn't properly fulfill its legislative and oversight Pakistan, as was the norm in the system of democracy. The Cabinet doesn't deliberate as was needed for proper administration of the state institutions. The notion of national security was primary driver of Pakistan's national interest which had given significant leverage to the military. The military itself had a deficient national security paradigm and a very narrow focus of the regional situation, let alone the global one. It was obsessed with its enmity with India, the historic rival. This doesn't condone Indian actions in any way. The point was that the military as an institution was necessarily focused on fighting wars and winning them and not working for peace. The United States and other Western powers continued to consider Pakistan through Indian or Afghan lens. The erroneous view of Pakistan, in which security remained the paramount national interest for the United States and other powers, had exaggerated increased Pakistan's domestic political problems. India was now employing territory in Afghanistan for deploying TTP and other dissident elements against Pakistan. In clear contrast, to the criticism of Pakistan's support of some Jihadist entities that had external focus, there wasn't any disapproval by United States and other Western powers regarding India's its brutal repression of the Kashmiri independence movement and its policies towards Pakistan. Indian interference in Pakistan's internal affairs and support of Baluch insurgents, MQM and TTP was well-documented but remained ignored by the United States and other Western powers. On the contrary, there were powerful voices in the United States that were coming up with legislation punishing Pakistan. The reason for this biased approach was obvious. The United States had tilted towards India in very significant manner because of perceived commercial gains and other economic interests. The two countries had grown remarkably closer in the last few years or so. The United States now considered India as a strategic partner and the

nefarious role of India in destabilizing Pakistan was conveniently ignored. After all, the TTP and these ant-Pakistan groups based in Afghanistan and operating from Afghanistan's territory weren't targeting the United States nor other Western powers. Hence, a blind eye to their nefarious activities. To expect Pakistan to turn direction at once was simply expecting too much. This wasn't going to happen any time soon. However, a peace deal between India and Pakistan and a solution to the Kashmir dispute can possibly turn things around in the desired direction. Here the United States can play a key role.

The CPEC is a game changer and opens trade between the Central Asia and the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Its major purpose is for China to increase its trade with these regions by improving and simplifying logistics and transportation. Currently imports into Europe from China account for about \$450 billion which has room to grow in a \$7 trillion market. As trade increases along this corridor, it would be foolish if Pakistan did not develop its own national strategy to cooperatively capitalize and cash in some of the economic opportunities presented. The CPEC provides an unprecedented opportunity to Pakistan as it fulfills its geostrategic potential as the gateway of trade between Central Asia to the Middle East, Africa and Europe. It is ideally situated to become the most significant maritime trade hub between the Europe and Asia. A regional hub provides many opportunities other than logistics and transportation including legal, financial,

The CPEC is a game-changing opportunity for Pakistan. Global pundits are looking at the multi-trillion dollar investments being made by China and saying that its effective utilization is key to the success of this vision. Similarly, for Pakistan, if we do not evolve a vision of how we use this improved infrastructure and realignment of global trade in this region for our benefit, and execute on it

effectively we are in danger of being left behind. Indeed, it will be a shame if we do not rise to the opportunity and fashion national consensus on an inclusive strategy that leverages this project to propel a major part of our population, and not just a few families, into the economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, purposeful and sustainable reform is badly needed in Pakistan. Pakistan can only come out of this vicious cycle through a major reappraisal of its domestic foreign and policies. An excellent advice was given in a very recent editorial in Newsweek Pakistan which had argued:<sup>31</sup>

Pakistan can yet do more to shift out of its frozen military strategy of hanging its entire foreign policy on hatred of India. It can break out of its current regional and global isolation by adopting the posture of its friend China and invite India to join the trading corridor China is building in the country. It can also revive the snagged gas pipeline project with Iran by inviting India back into it, also offering it the trade route India wants to Afghanistan and Central Asia through its territory.

Undoubtedly, Pakistan's current policy of permanent Indian enmity and conflict was going nowhere. Pakistan was a security state because of this approach. The Pakistan military was adamant in confronting and was still supporting some jihadist elements like the LeT, HQN, and Quetta Shura for its own purposes. Clearly, a change in direction was required now. Given the complexity of the regional situation, more robust diplomacy was urgently to get Pakistan out of the current morass and crisis. However, the Nawaz government wasn't up to the task and was failing to protect Pakistan's vital national interests. Plus, it faced an immense image problem because of the Panama Papers case pending in the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Pakistan was faced with horrendous situation inside the country as rapid population growth was fueling a massive rural to urban migration, strain on the cities, and

massive environmental degradation. People were suffering from poor environment, lack of social services and neglect of state institutions to respond to the situation in any coherent manner. Bad governance was the norm, not the exception in state institutions. The poverty gap was striking and was widening in many areas of the country. Pakistan was deficient in governance matters as public services were inadequate and there was immense poverty in the country. The Human Development Index (HDI) was extremely low in Pakistan. The HDI was devised and launched in 1990, and was a statistic which ranked countries into four tiers of human development based on indicators like life expectancy, education and per capita income. A higher lifespan, higher level of education and higher GDP per capita results in a country scoring higher HDI.

Earlier, the 2015 Human Development Report (HDR), by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) declared that with a HDI value of 0.538, Pakistan ranks 147 out of 188 countries and territories. Pakistan ranks 121st out of 155 countries in terms of its Gender Inequality Index: only 19.3 percent of women reach secondary education compared to 46.1 percent of men, while female participation in the labor market is 24.6 percent compared to 82.9 percent for men.<sup>32</sup> Pakistan ranked again at 147 among 188 countries on HDI in 2016 as released by the UNDP.<sup>33</sup>

In a scathing criticism of the country's state of affairs in social welfare the Dawn editorial entitled "Human Development" published in Dawn, April 17, 2017 claimed that over the last twenty years most of South Asia has witnessed progress in human development. More children are in school, people are living longer, and there is greater access to basic social services. That said, countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan rank low on human development indicators because of severe neglect of public health and education, according to Health in South Asia, a

collection of analyses launched recently in Delhi. Examining rising infant mortality, vulnerability to infectious diseases and the poor capacity to respond to outbreaks, this research finds that the level of preparedness is inadequate to protect public health in South Asia — home to a quarter of the world’s population. The findings are no secret especially in countries where extreme poverty, child deaths, stunted development and limited future productivity have hampered progress. Noting that Afghanistan has the highest fertility rate followed by Pakistan, the work underscores the need for governments to invest in early childhood years through quality schooling, nutrition and healthcare. In Pakistan alone, 800,000 children die annually, more than 35pc from malnutrition. Regrettably, even such grim statistics fail to jolt our government’s conscience. For starters, with the population growing at the annual rate of almost 2pc, the government must campaign for smaller families with greater vigor across the country, and invest in accelerated family planning and female literacy to lower the fertility rate. With its pulse on economic development policies, the PML-N surely realizes that investment and sound policies in health, education and good governance are the only way to create a quality workforce.

It was intolerable that, regionally, Pakistan had the highest rate of infant mortality when the government was obligated to implement policy changes having signed up to the SDGs. Moreover, the World Bank had declared that it would name and shame countries before potential investors for failing to tackle stunting. The death of children due to hunger and the absence of government action and outrage was a stain on Pakistan’s collective conscience. There were 400,000 starving children in Thar and despite international food fortification assistance of over \$1m; malnutrition had deplorably increased in Pakistan.<sup>34</sup>

Democratic institutions are fragile and need to be strengthened through patient and sustained efforts. It was a doable, when there was the required political will. Essentially Pakistan's overall governance form simply refutes democratic principles and practices. The personalized political system doesn't allow the building of any workable democratic institutions. The prevailing norm of loyalty to the political leader had superseded the much-needed ethics of professionalism, merit, proper administration of governed funds, neutral bureaucracy, and focus on national socio-economic development. The only thing that matters in government is unconditional loyalty to the political leadership. Thus, the political leadership dispenses largesse and favors to the public instead of public rights and entitlements. The social contract has broken and a patronage system has developed instead. The leadership gets elected to bestow favors to those who got them to their much-coveted positions. Elections have become a business and were also getting more and more expensive as the years go on. The whole atmosphere of governance had been corrupted as money made an enormous impact on election outcomes. The leadership that came out of the electoral system was mostly transactional minded. Meaning the elected leadership was only there to reap hay while the sun shines and pocket as much money as was possible under the circumstances. Notwithstanding some exceptions, the entire leadership of the country was now corrupted beyond imagination. Resultantly, new values had entered the governed system of Pakistan. Sycophancy and timid behavior of the ruling circles and the bureaucracy that served them had all but destroyed the integrity of the entire system. Policymaking is on whims and becomes ineffective as serious deliberations aren't the norm any more. Mistakes result as the leadership couldn't see the whole picture nor get professional advice speaking

truth to power. Even figures are routinely fudged to present a better picture to the world. This sorry state of affairs was now a reality in Pakistan. How can Pakistan's political leadership and military rulers turn the country into a modern civilized nation with a contemporary system of government? Clearly, Pakistan society was failing to confront the daunting challenges facing it. How can the state face these challenges when some sections of it were even supporting Islamic extremism? How can the Nawaz Government, media, enlightened scholars, and jurists unite to formulate the path for essential reform in the legal, political and social spheres? Why wasn't enough voices of sanity speaking up now in the face of such cynical manipulation of Islamic sentiment. In any civilization, the rule of law must be supreme principle, and all state institutions must to guarantee that the principle exists and not the law of the jungle. It was a stark failure of both the Pakistani state and society, that the populace negated the belief that all people are innocent until proven guilty. Finally, questions must also be asked of Pakistan Army establishment which still considered some preservation of Islamic militancy as an essential and required element of country's security policy. Though continuous military operations were designed to eradicate terrorism, the relentless flow of Islamic messaging of Jihad and the fear of India had now entered the very fabric of Pakistani society. The country's political and military leadership used Islam to manipulate the people and to legitimize their power. Thus, society was being radicalized. If critical actions are not taken to finish the appeasement of Islamic extremism, no National Action Plan or military operation shall be adept to suppress the threatening forces of Islamic extremism that were now being let loose across the country. Pakistan had seen an unprecedented surge in Islamic extremism and fanaticism in the past decade. Islamist groups had constantly targeted religious minorities in Pakistan to impose their version of strict Islamic law on people. Pakistan is facing an existential challenge from within by Islamic fundamentalism



which has taken deep roots in the country and cannot be easily uprooted. Given the weaknesses of the ruling establishment, both military and civilian, it will take decades to eradicate the menace from Pakistan's state and society. The anarchy unleashed by Islamic fundamentalist must be checked in Pakistan before it engulfs the whole region in further chaos. A lot of deliberations have led to several initiatives but nothing remarkable has been reached so far. Pakistan response to terrorism is lacking a comprehensive approach. There was too much emphasis on Army operations and not enough was done at the critical civil administration, civil intelligence apparatuses and local policing spheres. Resultantly, the country will continue to be challenged by terrorism, Islamic extremism and insurgencies for decades to come. There was no silver lining on the horizon, so to speak. That was Pakistan's tragedy.

The country was expected to improve on the economic front thanks to CPEC initiative but the sheer negligence of the ruling establishment to tackle the issue of social justice and enlightened Islam will draw it back from reaching its true potential. The anarchy unleashed by Islamic fundamentalist must be checked in Pakistan before it engulfs the whole region in further chaos. Much depends on timely action taken by the ruling establishment of Pakistan to get its own act together to achieve the true prospects of economic development presented to the country by the CPEC initiative. Bad governance is still the norm in Pakistan and not the exception. Badly needed reform measures still await the nation. The nation is poorer because of its poor leadership, both military and civilian. It is hoped that a turnaround maybe yet happen as a new civilian leadership replaces the current lot. Pakistan has enormous potential in its youth but lacks leadership to make full use of the potential. The leadership is bickering among itself, complacent and corrupt. Too bad for the country. There was also a bright side to

the country's dismal picture, however. Pakistan can indeed have a great future, and be on the road of success and sustainable peace. Pakistanis are the most resilient nation. Pakistan's can indeed position itself in the region as a massive trade corridor that will catapult this country to economic prosperity and a symbol of geostrategic integration. Pakistan as the regional trade, industrial, and economic hub will be in a position of strength and the world will endeavor to improve relations with Pakistan. Pakistan believes in cooperation, instead of competition. Pakistan is carving out a trajectory of progress for the region by way of economics, which the world needs to recognize and acknowledge. Pakistan faced an existential crisis of a daunting magnitude. The primary threat was from within the country.

The time was to go back to the liberal message of Islam and propagate the Sufi version of it where the principle of Sulh-i Kul or peace with all must become the new societal paradigm of governance and mutual conduct of communal affairs. The message of peace and tolerance in the liberal version of Islam must be adopted by both state and society in Pakistan. Given the sorry state of affairs in Pakistan, there was little choice in the matter. It was time to act. Bold measures were needed and enlightened leadership at the helm of affairs in the country.

Much depends on the future leadership of the country not only at the governmental level but also at the societal level, especially the intellectual level. It was hoped that Pakistan would indeed make the best of the golden opportunity made available by the CPEC project and turn around the country towards a path of economic development, prosperity for all, peace and national security.

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