**Climate, world order and Pakistan**

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Part - I

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Pakistan today is in such a state where only historically unprecedented actions on a historically unprecedented scale can ensure its survival. This will be a massive challenge. But the stakes are also unprecedented. They are existential. The country’s miserable anti-people politics determined by an equally anti-people power structure is primarily responsible for this miserable state. Few people have been so manifestly betrayed by their elites, governments and rulers.

Moreover, the historically unprecedented climate challenge has become the overwhelming context for any discussion of national and international affairs. Through climate abuse we have contributed, even if in relatively modest measure, to making an enemy of Mother Nature. And now Mother Nature has made Father Time an enemy.

A critical global climate benchmark of net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 is already beyond reach due to political perversity rather than the state of technology. Steven Hawking, the physicist, said the best hope for mankind was to permanently settle a reproducible minimum number of human beings on Mars within 50 years. NASA’s latest Artemis Moon and Mars project is consistent with this desperate hope.

The Doomsday Clock was conceived by an NGO of leading scientists called the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists in 1947, two years after the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which were the greatest acts of terrorism in human history. If the DDC struck Midnight it would be the end of the world. It was initially set at seven minutes to midnight after the former USSR also acquired nuclear weapons capability. After the Cuban missile crisis of 1963, it was set at two minutes to midnight. It went below two minutes for the first time when President Trump threatened to wipe out North Korea and Iran and denounced existing and proposed nuclear weapons and missile agreements. Primarily as a result of climate heating, it is today set at 90 seconds to midnight. It could be even closer when the annual reset takes place in January 2023.

Accordingly, the existential choice before mankind is stark: either accelerated progress towards some kind of a Global Green New Deal (GGND) including the progressive replacement of the corporate state capitalist order by a more humane and democratic eco-socialist order; or the rise of climate-panic driven rabid ideologies in support of unthinkable possibilities, including population culling. Yes, mega-genocide!

Although the recent Conference of Parties or COP27 in Egypt failed to acknowledge it, the target of keeping the rise in global temperature, since the industrial revolution began 150 years ago, to within 1.5C by the end of this century is considered dead by most climate scientists. They now consider a 2.5C, and possibly a 3C, temperature rise much more likely, with consequences for the Middle East and South Asia too horrible to contemplate.

Having failed to heed the warnings of the scientific community over decades, Western industrial democracies, led by the US and abetted by industrializing late-comers, have pushed the world from the relatively manageable stage of ‘preventing’ climate tipping points into the far more dangerous and uncertain stage of ‘adaptation’ to, and ‘mitigation’ of, irreversible climate change. Fukuyama’s End of History was ideologically and politically an overstatement 30 years ago. But climatically it is well within view today.

The politically dominant business ethic of the US is based on maximizing growth, consumption, profits, inequality, state subsidies for the ruling 0.01 per cent, the merciless free market for the rest of the population, plutocracy (the rule of wealth) masquerading as democracy, continuous expansion and conflict, manufacturing consent through corporate ownership of the media, technology rendering much of the working class superfluous, Artificial Intelligence based surveillance states, and the unfettered despoliation of the earth, the atmosphere and the oceans.

Capitalism has produced more wealth than any other system in history. But it has also produced greater inequality and misery than any other system. If not radically reformed it is ultimately suicidal. ‘The Communist Manifesto’ of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, written 175 ago, is still the greatest political pamphlet ever written. It foretells capitalism’s contemporary form which is accelerating the end of the earth’s healing powers for humankind – which is being transformed into an enemy alien on planet earth.

This pessimistic appraisal was borne out by the results of COP27, despite progress on funding loss and damage, mitigation, and adaptation. Critically, there were no agreed mandatory targets for reducing carbon emissions or financial transfers to vulnerable developing countries. ‘Greenwashing’ or using climate friendly arguments to promote climate destroying investments was a prominent feature. Many critical decisions were postponed. Greta Thunberg, the no-nonsense young Swedish climate activist, refused even to attend the conference.

Pakistan is a flagship of the UN secretary general’s campaign against climate calamity. This imposes an opportunity, a responsibility and an imperative to become a regional and global leader. For this to be even a remote possibility Pakistan’s national and external policies will need to be re-conceptualized and implemented within such a paradigm. Zero-sum games both at home and abroad will have to be transformed into positive sum initiatives. Yesterday’s idealistic counsels of perfection have become today’s survival imperatives. There is nothing long term about the threat of climate warming which, if not countered, will consume our children and grandchildren. What account will we render to the Almighty?

There is a wide range of expert consensus on the steps that can and have to be taken immediately. Nevertheless, there will be elite global and national opposition to essential and indispensable radical measures. A passive and fatalistic people who do not rise up against such evil elites will deserve their fate. Intellectuals who will not offend the powers that be and leaders who do not educate, organize, mobilize and empower the people for radical structural reform can never be friends of the people.

Moreover, Trump-like populists, ruling 0.01 per cent elites, far-right corporate, racist and religious fascists, etc no longer rely on climate denial alone. They implicitly if not yet explicitly reject the inconvenience of collective survival. Instead, as climate anxiety deepens they, and those who follow them, will suggest a much smaller world population is the only way to buy time to develop technologies that can alleviate climate heating. To repeat, yes, mega-genocide!

On April 29, 2021 the US House Committee on Homeland Security discussed white supremacist ideologies of Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremist (REMVE) groups such as QAnon, Proud Boys, The Base, Atomwaffen in the US, the UK’s Combat 18, Norway’s Nordic Resistance Movement, Russia’s Russian Imperial Movement, Ukraine’s Azov Battalion, and many more. Far-right fascistic governments have already been elected in Europe.

If mitigation and adaptation policies do not meet climate deadlines climate heating and climate panic will mainstream maniacal extremism. Horror scenarios will define the unfolding global reality. Accordingly, educating public opinion on the imminence and implications of the climate threat and its satanic possibilities is a precondition for sustaining any hope the world will not become a doomed lunatic asylum.

Pakistan has provided admirable leadership in advocating international financing for both loss and damage compensation, and for mitigation and adaptation capacity building. It must now lead in demonstrating what developing countries can do for themselves. Its performance in the recent floods did not help in this respect. Its short-term and incoherent governance and its corrupt and crony politics remain formidable barriers. Its political and power leaders are on average a thousand times richer than their followers.

What are the implications of the climate imperative for Pakistan’s foreign policy? Legitimate and principled policy objectives should be maintained. But the manner in which they are pursued must change. Principled compromise has become essential. Constructive policy approaches, however, require the emergence of a facilitating political culture, or what Antonio Gramsci called a new “hegemonic commonsense”. However, self-serving elites implacably resist the emergence of a more rational, humane and educated commonsense. In a Muslim society Islamic democratic socialism, properly understood and implemented, can meet this challenge. But self-appointed guardians of our faith will be problematic.

The image of Pakistan will be far more important than the cogency of its diplomatic, economic and security arguments in getting international support for its points of view. A failing state even with the best diplomacy and civil service can never have a successful foreign and national policy. Pakistan’s survival will inevitably require the development of informed, organized, committed and participatory mass-level political movements that prioritize the people’s interests, education, health, human rights, science and technology, consultation, compromise and practical wisdom. As indicated, catalyzing such a process as rapidly as possible will be the first obligation of political leadership. Unfortunately, Pakistani elites and leaders by and large seek power and its rewards within a failing state syndrome.

To be continued

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