**Structural Analysis of Governance Crisis in Pakistan (Part I)**

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Administering public affairs has remained a key question at all times. Public affairs need to be well-managed for them to pave the way for being ascribed to the term good governance. Governance crises emerge in the shape of mismanaging all the affairs relating public. Governance crises are there when the economy is not working well; when there is political turmoil, poor accountability, lack of transparency and political participation and absence of local government and privatization. The disturbed civil-military relations over the past several decades have proved inimical to the democratic health of the country. From economy to politics and from society to religion, all issues have had their deep roots.

The term “governance” is vividly defined as managing and governing public affairs. When the administration is carried out in the best favour of the public, it is considered good governance. However, it is not as simple. World Bank puts up some key indicators for good governance: transparency, participation, accountability, inclusiveness and governmental efficiency viz-a-viz service delivery. Governance, therefore, means governing public affairs in a better way.

The need for reforms is badly felt when the governance regime is problematic and anti-public interests. In short, a governance structure, which is elite-oriented, sets aside the public will. This results in an economic downslide, where the economy caters for the capitalist and elitist sections of society, where the economy does not trickle down and where there is perpetual political turmoil and problematic civil-military relations.

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Pakistan is going through a long chain of a governance crises. Some of the key issues are poor economic growth, political crisis, mismanaged population growth, absence of local government, and perturbed civil-military relations. All of the said governance issues share a decades-long legacy of existence and resistance, which unmasks the structural nature of the poorly performed governance infrastructure.

Pakistan has been struggling with its economy since its inception. Economics was largely sacrificed for traditional and tangible security, which got the main seat on the priorities list. Such long-standing ignorance and deliberately putting economic development on the back seat have affected the growth and development of the economy. The economy has been choked off by trade deficits; the fastest depleting forex and the disturbing current account regime. It is coming across as a very imbalanced fiscal discipline and mounting circular debts. The burden of increasing foreign debts, climate change, corruption, and lack of accountability is doomed to be unbearable.

It is popularly held that Pakistan has hardly worked on export diversification and exports oriented growth which has resulted in an increasingly depleting forex. Many of its neighbours like China, Bangladesh and India have mounting and increasing forex reserves. The reason behind their success in the economic field is that they immensely prioritised their economic growth.

Moreover, the 1980s welcomed a new Public Management, wherein privatisation held a key position. Almost all developing countries share the same secret behind their rapid growth: privatisation, regulation-cum-deregulation. Pakistan has several public sectors and SOEs like PIA and Steel Mill, which have been on default over the past several decades by virtue of a plethora of issues ranging from politicisation and external interference to poor organisational set-up.

Service delivery is one of the key indicators of good governance. In fact, the government, via its administration, has a duty to properly deliver on public matters. This demands an inclusive governmental and institutional set-up popularly built on public interests at the cast of personal ones. Until and unless the institutions are inclusive and open to public participation, the government-cum-administration is doomed to fall, as anticipated by the famous write-up on political economy and comparative politics, “Why Nations Fail.” The exclusive nature of the state’s key institutions serves the few at the cost of all, as propagated by the former Finance Minister of Pakistan Miftah Ismail in his opinion piece, “One Percent Republic.” The structural analysis of institutional set-up in Pakistan clearly unfolds the exclusive nature of key institutions, which openly serve the elite and completely exclude people. Pakistan has performed poorly on almost all key services, ranging from socioeconomic to political, (poor educational and health infrastructure, water and sanitation problems, economic inequality, and inflation).

A fully authorised local government acts as a nursery for democratic-cum-political development. It guarantees improvement in service delivery and governance. Locally elected representatives know local affairs better than anybody else. Similarly, it provides for political parties to get stronger at the local level and strengthen their roots at the lower level. It results in a massive spread of political awareness, which, in turn, gives birth to an increasing number of political-cum-public participation. Article 140(A) of the 1973 constitution of Pakistan clearly mentions that there must be a politically and financially authorised and empowered local government system in Pakistan. Notwithstanding this constitutional guarantee and provision, a fully empowered local government has become a daydream in Pakistan in spite of the fact that there is a feeble presence of the LG system over there. This paradoxical form of local government is largely worthless. Pakistan has yet to install an empowered local government and this inability has largely infringed on its governance mechanism.

The lack of political will is largely agreed to be the root cause of all the challenges Pakistan is coming across right now. Some problems remain unresolved due to the absence of political will-the will of the government and administrators-while others have yet to be resolved, via the proper implementation of formulated policies. Politics in Pakistan is power-oriented and parochial; revolving around the fulfilment of personal agendas at the cost of the public interests. The Pakistani version of politics depicts mud-slinging, name-calling and dirty politics. There is a strong absence of constructive opposition inside the parliament, which largely presents an undesired picture. Similarly, the electoral regime of Pakistan is also problematic. In short, from putting a stamp on a ballot paper to voting on a proposed law in Parliament, the whole process needs to be revamped. All this plays an important role in impeding the political will, both in theory and practice, ushering into poor governance and service delivery.

(To Be Continued)

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