**Pakistan in 21st Century**

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Pakistan was carved out of India in 1947, but its birth was not as per normal circumstances. Lawrence Ziring has likened the emergence of Pakistan to “a premature, feeble offspring at birth and although it survived a critical infancy, it never gained the strength necessary to combat its inborn ailments.”

There is no evidence that suggests that any blueprint was prepared for the new state of Pakistan. There was confusion about the nature and structure of the state as well as about the role of Islam in Pakistan. Furthermore, there was a clash of visions between the secularists and the fundamentalist: whether Pakistan was to be a state for Muslims or an Islamic state. The founding fathers had made it clear that Pakistan was not going to be a theocratic state.

As several speeches of the great leader Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah show, its governmental structure and functioning will be based on Islamic ideals, democratic norms, and equal citizenship to make Pakistan a modern nation-state. In short, the defining feature of his idea of the state was loyalty to the state rather than affiliation with religious groups, hence equality, not gradation, of citizens. It is said that today’s Pakistan stands in contrast to the one envisioned by the Quaid-e-Azam. The tidal wave of religious extremism, intolerance, and terrorism sweeping the country poses a serious threat to the ideals on which Pakistan was founded.

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Furthermore, there is not much hope outside its borders either. There is endemic disorder all around Pakistan as well as in the world. Survival of the fittest and the pursuit of national interests takes precedence over the UN Charter or international law. International norms are infringed regularly. There was some hope for peace and stability when the US assumed the role of the hegemon of the world in the post-Cold War period, but those hopes were badly affected by many US reckless actions, including the 2003 attack on Iraq. The Global War on Terror proved to be a coup de grace to those who had pinned hopes on a just world order under the US leadership. All this led to the return of great power politics.

Pakistan, as a strategically located state, is trying to cope with an extremely competitive global security landscape- both regionally and globally. It is important that Pakistan devise its grand strategy for the twenty-first century. It needs to be based on a realistic assessment of the evolving regional and global security environment. Might is right seems to be the only game in town, which is why the world is facing the frightening prospect of growing disorder. The incessant pursuit of national interest, by all means, has thus made world politics unstable and unpredictable.

There is growing literature that points to the fact that a power transition is happening in the world. In other words, an emerging power (China) is catching up with the existing superpower (the US). Media pundits and IR scholars have already started talking about “post-America’s world,” and the concomitant emergence of a multipolar world. The new world order needs new alliances. The world is already witnessing a shift in alliances (in search of new security umbrellas), and that is happening not only at the global but also at the regional level. States will seek security guarantees from great powers as long as anarchy prevails in the world. Pakistan is no exception.

First and foremost, Pakistan’s grand strategy needs to stress governance- the delivery of public goods- at all levels. Simply put, the state needs to provide a platform whereby citizens have easy access to the basic amenities of life; it has to provide them with high-quality education and health facilities. It also needs to stress the protection of the civil and political rights of all its citizens. More importantly, there need to be no roots for religious bigotry and intolerance in Pakistan.

Secondly, rapid economic progress, eradication of poverty, provision of employment opportunities, the removal of inequalities as well as ending discrimination in every sector of the state and society, are some of the necessary steps to be taken if Pakistan wants a dignified status for itself in the comity of nations. These measures are intimately linked with internal security and stability.

Thirdly, Pakistan needs to come up with creative solutions for its equation with India. On the one hand, it needs to utilize all its resources to prevent India from gaining a hegemonic position in South Asia; it should not miss any opportunity for a good, equal relationship with India, on the other.

Fourthly, the goal of Pakistan’s grand strategy would be to safeguard and promote its national interests. Its grand strategy must also strengthen its close ties with regional organizations such as the Economic cooperation organization (ECO) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as with the Persian Gulf regions with which Pakistan enjoys close historical, cultural and strategic ties.

Last but not least, the grand strategy needs to revolve around the pursuit of national interests. National interest can be pursued in a better way if there is synchronicity between domestic politics and foreign relations. The state will lag if there is a disconnect between the two. As it is known, the paramount role of grand strategy is to coordinate and direct all resources of a nation towards the attainment of its political objectives, so the policymakers of Pakistan must act in unison for devising and implementing a grand strategy for the twenty-first century. For this to happen, democratic institutions should be strengthened to ensure political stability in the country. A strong, democratic state is thus an effective antidote to the disproportionate power of the unelected state institutions in Pakistan.

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