**Geopolitics Holds Pakistan Hostage**

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As of today, there is no potential military threat that could harm Pakistan; but political instability is linked to the economic crisis. The country is unceasingly grappling with issues of governance, financial corruption, poor infrastructure, and a struggling economy. Unfortunately, chaos and poor governance have become the hallmarks of politics in Pakistan. The political fireworks are continuously distracting it from tackling its real challenge: a deeply dysfunctional and ailing economy. Furthermore, extremism and intolerance of diversity and dissent have grown, fuelled by a narrow vision of Pakistan’s national identity, and are threatening the country’s prospects for social cohesion and stability.

The Muslims of the Subcontinent struggled and wriggled ardently for the cause of a separate homeland; nevertheless, the global political climate following World War-2 also necessitated that the region be divided. The United States, in particular, had then foreseen that their future military conflicts during the second half of the twentieth century would be with the erstwhile USSR. This necessitated a compliant state in the northwest of the Subcontinent/South Asia; thus the strategic compulsion leading to the creation of Pakistan. However, the creation of Pakistan was not without countless sacrifices, controversies and had significant consequences for the region as a whole. Nevertheless, understanding the geopolitical context in which it was established is crucial to comprehend the complex dynamics of South- Asia and its relationship with the United States. The primary driver of the alliance has been the geographical location of Pakistan, which served as a bulwark against communism during the Cold War.

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The role of the Pakistan Army in governance or supervision of governance has been pivotal to American strategic interests in the region. American aid to Pakistan has been largely geared towards strengthening its military capabilities rather than democratic institutions, hence reinforcing the importance of GHQ in governing Pakistan. The Pakistan Army, often described as the ‘guardians of the state’ has always played a significant role in maintaining domestic stability and security. While there have been periods of tension between Washington and Islamabad over issues such as nuclear proliferation and terrorism, governance by the Army in Pakistan continued to be considered vital for advancing the interests of the USA in South Asia. The US aid, however, was often accompanied by attached strings that required aligning with her specific strategic interests in the region, ultimately leading to the increased militarisation of politics in Pakistan. Although the relationship always remained complex, it can be concluded that throughout history the USA has profoundly impacted Pakistan’s political structure and significantly influenced its decision-making processes for better or for worse.

While Pakistan Army continues to be highly regarded among the masses, concerns have always been raised that the involvement of GHQ in governance leads to a breach of democratic rights and freedom of people. At the same time, there is a counter-argument that the role of the military in governance is necessary for stability and security owing to the geostrategic location, Kashmir imbroglio, hostility with India, and deep-rooted interests of the USA in the region. Generally, military involvement in governance is often without formal constitutional changes. This kind of involvement has led to doubts about whether the civilian government actually possesses authority or if it’s simply acting as a façade for undemocratic forces. Additionally, it undermined important political institutions, such as the parliament itself and the provincial governments. Thus, there is always growing unease in Pakistan regarding good governance, following strict democratic norms, and renewed calls for increased transparency and accountability. In a nutshell, finding a balance between the military’s legitimate concerns and civilian control is essential for ensuring long-term stability and prosperity for Pakistan.

The economy is always directly proportional and dependent on political stability. The frequent changes of governments and lack of consensus among political parties have always resulted in unreliable economic policies, which caused significant damage to the country’s economy. Investors remain hesitant due to unpredictability and corruption; they avoid investing in a country with an unstable political environment. The absence of strong opposition and checks and balances leads to rampant corruption, favouritism, and nepotism at all levels of government. These issues impede foreign direct investment, as investors seek stability, certainty, transparency in the system, and assurance that their investments are protected against expropriation by those holding power.

The prevailing political and economic crisis necessitates a multipronged solution to address both short- and long-term governmental issues. Strengthening an institutionalised political system and solidification of democratic institutions will help reduce political as well as economic instability. There is a dire need to crack down on financial corruption, streamline the tax collection system, and encourage foreign direct investment. Investment in the education sector, healthcare, and infrastructure development is crucial to stimulate inclusive growth and encourage marginalised communities. Ultimately, the collaboration between government officials, business leaders, civil society organisations, and citizens is a necessity to bring about essential reforms for a stable political and economic landscape in Pakistan. The real trick in life is to turn hindsight into foresight that reveals insight.

“Democracy is in the blood of the Muslims, who look upon complete equality of mankind, and believe in fraternity, equality, and liberty.” (Muhammad Ali Jinnah)

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