**Domestic Politics versus State Security (Part I)**

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June 5, 2023

Even if one requests Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to help avoid being politically biased while writing this article, I am certain that it will not entertain the request. The reason is very simple. The domestic political compulsions have ignored the basic elements of state security or for that matter; the national security of Pakistan.

Without going into a statistical comparison of the previous and present governments, because the relevant charts are available all over the print, electronic, and social media, I will highlight certain facts that should not have been ignored at any cost. And, perhaps this was the responsibility of the state to safeguard the national security interests of Pakistan because the government was deeply committed to its domestic political agenda. When I write state, it includes the people of Pakistan, military and civil establishments, state institutions that includes judiciary, and law enforcement agencies, and civil society.

Going back to basics, the national security of any state cannot be ensured without sound human security arrangements. This makes the job easy to evaluate the prevalent political, social, cultural, and economic situation in Pakistan. It is necessary to mention the seven primary elements of human security at this stage for clarity and objectivity. These include Personal, Political, Community, Economic, Food, Health, and Environmental.

To maintain objectivity, it would be prudent to briefly compare the prevalent situation vis a vis pre-regime change period, under each of these seven elements.

First and foremost is personal security. Unfortunately, this has been the worst-hit area. Not only the political opponents, but the members of civil society, media, and non-political family members are repeatedly harassed by state agencies at the behest of the government. The situation has been noticed by international watchdogs and is becoming a greater cause of concern as well as embarrassment for the state of Pakistan because the government does not feel any type of shame in its actions in pursuance of its political agenda.

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Second in line is political security. The above paragraph is ample proof of the political security situation in Pakistan. The entire state machinery led by the government comprised of 95 per cent of political parties are hellbent on eliminating the most popular leader and the party of Pakistan. This claim has been repeatedly proven in numerous by-elections that were held over the past year. Moreover, the government’s avoidance of holding provincial elections in Punjab and KP, despite the Supreme Court’s directives, is ample proof of the ruling elites’ fear of losing the elections and the government.

Coming to community security; the political polarization has reached a level of uncertainty that has no precedence in Pakistan’s political history. There has never been so much hatred and loud voice against Pakistan’s state institutions, as is seen today. It is necessary to insist that nations can survive natural disasters like Tsunamis, Droughts, Floods, Earthquakes, and even Pandemics, but cannot successfully negotiate with internal dissent of this level, for long.

No country can peacefully exist or progress among the comity of nations, if it is not economically independent and secure. Pakistan today, is on the verge of an economic default. Some government officials have publicly stated that we have already defaulted but held the official announcement for obvious reasons. When the previous government was ousted from office, the country was progressing at an impressive growth rate of 6 per cent for consecutive years, and that too in the post-pandemic environment. And, unfortunately, only one year later, the country’s projected growth rate is at less than half a percentage point. The worst part of such an economic downturn is that the country cannot meet its security needs without compromising on its national development which would directly affect the elements of human security, which are briefly discussed in this article.

Next in line is food security, without which people’s well-being, which is one of the vital interests of Pakistan, cannot be guaranteed. From being an agricultural country to an importer of critical agro-based products, Pakistan has become a bad example in this domain, primarily due to poor governance and wrong priorities by successive governments.

Likewise, the health security state for common people is also not satisfactory by any standards. Health cards introduced by the previous government did bring some relief to nearly 65 per cent of the country’s population, however, unconfirmed reports suggest that the present government is not willing to continue any of the public welfare projects of the previous government, primarily due to political vendetta.

Lastly, environmental security is an aspect that was initially ignored until it started to hurt the country due to adverse climatic outcomes. Not only has the weather changed, but also brought about regular floods. Moreover, the fast melting of glacial mountains is becoming a serious cause of concern for water scarcity for human consumption as well as agricultural needs.

This article aimed to highlight the negative impacts of domestic politics on the security of the state. While certain observations, based on the facts that have been pointed out in this article, effort will be made in Part II to make suitable recommendations to redress the situation. In Sha Allah, I am a firm believer in the famous dicta of the Chinese sage, Sun Tzu that challenges bring opportunities, provided these are successfully exploited.

*The writer of this article has authored two international books: “Nuclear Deterrence and Conflict Between India and Pakistan” and “South Asia Needs Hybrid Peace.”*