**Why is Pakistan in Regression?**

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Since December 2021, this is my second time in Rotterdam, Netherlands. What is truly remarkable is the complete absence of any instances of traffic rule violation, line-cutting in malls, rudeness, impoliteness, or disregard for societal and ethical norms. The Netherlands was almost totally crippled at the end of WW-2 but has become one of the leading economies of Europe today. However, the effects and implications of the ongoing Ukraine war are evident in economic, social, and cultural pursuits. We inherited one of the best parts of the land as Pakistan, having first-rate judicial, police, communication (road-railways), canal, agriculture, and municipal systems after the partition of the Subcontinent in August 1947. The first two decades or so sought some kind of status- quo or minor improvements; subsequently, the country and people of Pakistan in unison are going nose down in ethics, moral, social, and economic fields from top to bottom. Tragically, those who possess more (wealth and power) are of lesser ethics compared to those who lack these privileges in Pakistan.

Pakistan’s geostrategic position has indeed been significant in shaping its relationship with regional and global powers. Situated at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, Pakistan has continually been influenced by divergent geopolitical interests and rivalries. As a staging ground for regional conflicts or acting as a conduit for proxy wars, Pakistan found itself embroiled in the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s. Following the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan once again became a significant partner for the USA in the ‘Global War on Terror’. Although influenced by its geographical location and foreign interests, Pakistan’s preceding and present circumstances cannot be solely attributed to these external factors as it oversimplifies the challenges and weaknesses. A comprehensive understanding requires considering a broader range of factors, both internal and external, that have shaped Pakistan’s nosedive trajectory.

Cross-border conflicts, political as well as economic tensions always impact stability and development.

Pakistan’s regional dynamics, particularly its tension with India and the perpetual turmoil in Afghanistan, continue to have a significant impact on political stability and economic development. These factors ultimately contribute to security concerns and strained international relations plus impeding democratic, economic, and societal advancement. Additionally, the governance or supervision of governance by GHQ and the lack of a robust democratic system have led to political instability and a lack of accountability within the government and state institutions from one to all; creating a breeding ground for corruption and poor governance. Corruption and nepotism have sadly become deeply entrenched in Pakistan’s political landscape, eroding public trust in the government and hindering economic growth. The diversion of public funds for personal gain and the appointment of family members to key positions is the order of the day in Pakistan resulting in a nonexistence of meritocracy.

These complex issues are the result of multiple factors involving various stakeholders, including politicians, the military, civil society, and external influences. The military has directly ruled the country for several years, and even during civilian governments, it exerts influence on vital national security issues. Hence the military has rightly been criticised for interfering in political affairs, but it has also played a positive role in foreign relations, national security, infrastructure development as well as disaster management. Likewise, almost all political leaders and parties have been accused of corruption, nepotism, and ineffective governance from time to time. On the other hand, poverty, inequality, illiteracy, and population growth are not solely the responsibility of the government or politicians. These challenges require a collective effort from all stakeholders.

In today’s world, geopolitical dynamics, regional political environment – tensions, and global economic conditions greatly influence progress and challenges faced by nations with significant impacts on the country’s stability and development. It is essential to recognise that assigning blame solely to one entity oversimplifies the complex dynamics at play. Constructive progress requires a collaborative approach, where all stakeholders, including the army, politicians, civil society, and citizens, work together to address the challenges and build a better future for Pakistan.

One of the biggest curses from which Pakistan is suffering is bribery and corruption from top to bottom. I do not say that the world as a whole is free from it, but, I think, our condition is much worse. Eradication of massive financial corruption at the top hole is crucial for restoring transparency, accountability, and good governance. To overcome the challenges and foster development, Pakistan needs to implement unmitigated reforms in various sectors with priority from top to bottom. The ultimate resource in economic development is people. It is people, not capital or raw materials that develop an economy.

In a nutshell, political Instability, economic challenges, social unrest, ethnic tensions, religious/sectarian conflicts, and widespread dishonesty in various sectors of society one for all, have impeded progress and eroded public trust in Pakistan. Cross-border conflicts, political as well as economic tensions with neighbouring countries, and regional power struggles always impact stability and development. Insufficient investment in infrastructure, and inadequate access to education, healthcare, and other essential services hinder socioeconomic progress. Nevertheless, by addressing these issues collectively, Pakistan has the wherewithal for sustainable development and progress.

“Economic growth without social progress lets the great majority of people remain in poverty, while a privileged few reap the benefits of rising abundance.” J F Kennedy

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