

Not many countries are persistently as busy as India and Pakistan in enhancing their security systems. Keeping huge armies is a dilemma. Even the rich nations cannot afford them, and to the poor they mean living with an undeclared emergency. The result is persistent uncertainty, and ever-increasing poverty. To keep poverty and uncertainty under control, a much higher investment and extraordinary efforts, are required. In spite of knowing about disadvantages of having oversized security, both nations continue to spend. Why? To both there are internal and external compulsions—some of which are real, but most are psychological—and moreover, the inability of their leadership to turn to wise options.

Internally, India is facing insurgencies in almost all of its northeastern states. In the State of Jammu and Kashmir the situation is worse. On societal front there is aggressive tussle between the lower caste and upper caste Hindus, which often leads to clashes and massacres. In spite of a society preaching tolerance, volatility of relationships between a large religious majority and minorities has not ended. On economic front the gap between the middle and the poor classes is not closing at required pace and that causes violent reaction. Naxalites are active and they believe in brutal means to bring about a social change. The larger side of economic negativism is more evident in the state-centre relationship. Almost all the states are dependent on the centre for their financial needs, which has fouled the fiscal dynamics. Any attempt to stop the states from overspending causes tension, damaging the ethics of politics. Regional monetary interests are steadily eroding the secular and democratic foundations of Indian nationalism. This is an indirect reason for growth of fundamentalism.

Pride and poverty

BY MUHAMMAD AHSAN YATU

There are many similar problems in Indo-Pak such as ethnicity, sectarianism and poverty.

In all, India from within is facing uncountable odds, which at times lead to violent polarisation, and in so many segments they create a will to hurt the Union or to separate from it. To the Indians, therefore, internal security demands keeping an oversized army even if it costs much. Though this is a short sighted strategy based on suppression of challenges instead of looking for their solutions, this is what Indian leaders continue with for now. The Indians however are not relying only on force; they are banking also on democracy. This combination, democracy and big army, has helped them in achieving some stability, and hence meaningful economic growth. But continuance with massive militarism is hindering, if not reversing, their vibrant society's march to progress; and it has also failed them miserably at least on one front, Pakistan.

Though there are many similar problems such as ethnicity, sectarianism and poverty in Pakistan but unlike India, not all is that open here. Some of the contradictions such as awful socio-economic disparities and sectarianism are visible, and they are known causes of social and sectarian violence. The others such as differential poverty between various ethnic groups are at present under the lid, and they are not even talked about. But they are like silent and unpredictable volcanoes; and if eruption starts, they are bound to create terrible disturbance. It has happened in the past; and it was also the main reason behind separation of East Pakistan. Our leadership is well aware of the turbulent situation. Hence need for an oversized army. Leadership, here, does

not mean the generals only; it also includes the authoritarian bureaucracy and the self-centred politicians. That is why whosoever ruled this country fortified the army with greater zeal. However, for Pakistan keeping a comparatively much bigger army has one more internal reason. For all practical purposes democracy, participatory governance and economy, never existed in Pakistan. Not now and not even during the earlier so-called democratic rules. And that aggravated the problems of poverty, and communal and ethnic disharmony. So, whether a non-democrat culture is a planned phenomenon that benefits self-centred politicians, generals and bureaucrats and the rich, or it is result of an unorganised economy, or vice versa, Pakistani is relying entirely on army for running of state and society.

Thus as percentage of GDP it spends 5 percent on defence. It is much more than of Indians; theirs is about 2.68 percent. For that matter Pakistan's defence-spending ratio is highest in the world excluding America, Israel and West Asian kingdoms. So comparison of the two societies of the subcontinent reveals that the instrument of democracy is certainly a cost-lowering factor in management of internal affairs, but it is not attracting

attention in Pakistan and that is strange. Or is it how situation develops when selfishness of the ruling and institutional elite has no limits? Or is it absence of vision?

Externally for India, Kashmir and hence Pakistan is one reason, and there are many more such as, its aspirations to become a super power, and fear of China, despite their prevailing friendly relations. For Pakistan, Kashmir and hence India is one reason, and there are many more such as: its aspiration to play a role that suits its size and strategic location, to unite Ummah, to check India's designs of regional domination and the pitfalls of international terrorism.

So both countries are facing almost similar external problems. Some of them such as fears of each other's strength, India's aspiration to become a super power, Pakistan's over-attachment to its strategic location and to a myth called unity of Ummah are rather psychological, when seen in the light of the small economies that both of them have. Even America with a ten trillion dollar economy and a per capita income of over thirty thousand dollars is not finding it easy to retain its super power status. Hence to become super as India wishes to be with 500 dollars per capita, and to pose super as Pakistan is doing with 450 dollars are emotional questions; and deserve no answers but treatment: an academic course in self awareness.

Some of the problems such as Kashmir conflict and the militancy and militarism related to it are real, and hence they can be resolved; but it will take time and that too when the two countries realise that they need to

think and do something useful; and that can be done only, besides searching a solution for Kashmir, by making economy a priority in their relationships. For Pakistan and to some extent for India also, international terrorism is yet another worry. Again solution lies in earned prosperity, which means engaging people in work culture, so that terrorism becomes support-less.

That would not be possible unless there is peace inside and on the borders. So, both countries need political solutions to their internal and external problems. Political solutions will not be achieved unless real democracy is introduced: And that to India would mean, besides reduction in defence spending, more wealth sharing between its various classes and castes; or turning to participatory economy. And to Pakistan it would mean doing much more, besides reduction in defence and reasonable sharing of whatever wealth it has; it will have to take a start to initiate a process that would help organise its wayward political, institutional, and economic activities; and to end whatever roots international terrorism has spread in its soil.

Will they do it? Living with huge armies is also a psychological dilemma. Their capabilities, technical paraphernalia, such as nuclear bombs and missiles and what not, and numerical strength make them an enticing combination, which in spite of its massive disadvantages becomes a matter of pride. So reducing it to required size is not that easy. Yet, Russia did it, China is on it, and Japan and Germany have done it. Why can't India and Pakistan? Living simultaneously with pride and poverty is not possible. Real, respectable and sustainable pride lies in prosperity: Both countries need to struggle jointly for early results.

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