

The International Order is Rigged against Islam and Muslims. Pakistan's Development Path Lies in the Return to Islam and Re- establishing the Khilafah State

Pakistan's strategic and policy circles are grappling with the collapse of the economy and its ramifications for the state and society. There is a near unanimous consensus that Pakistan needs to try something new and different. However, there is a dearth of new ideas but the crisis atmosphere and the panic around it has created space for Pakistan's Westernized elite to push their agenda. Convinced that Pakistan needs to borrow from the Western development experience and ready to embrace the development path as prescribed by Western policy makers and academics, this Westernized elite believes that Pakistan hasn't gone down far enough on the reform path demanded by international institutions whether it be the liberalization of the economy, a reimagining of Pakistan's social construct and a redefining of Pakistan's international role and its international relations.

An interesting aspect of this new path and reform agenda debate is about winners and losers. In the rivalry between India and Pakistan, India has won and Pakistan has lost, this loss must thus, motivate Pakistan to reimagine and rethink its policies and development path. The clarion call of this elite faction is for Pakistan to submit to the new realities, abandon its ideological stance on Kashmir, revisit its relationship with Afghanistan, shun its ambition to compete with India and embark upon a cooperative relationship with her instead structured around trade and economic interconnectivity and strengthen Pakistan's alliance with the US. For them, Pakistan must reimagine itself as a society, redefine itself and make itself "relevant" to the international community especially the powerful Western nations, thus carving out acceptance and space for herself at the international level which will then allow economic dividends to flow towards Pakistan. This requires giving up on anti-Americanism and our Islamic identity and adopting legal modernity and social progressivism thereby altering the social and value structure of the society. In short what is holding Pakistan back, in their view, is an ideological and cultural identity which is incompatible with the international order and the modern world shaped by Western powers.

The idea of radically reimaging a society and state and their identity is often thrown in debates easily and casually but quite often its proponents really don't understand how societies and states operate and how national identities work. But that's only one aspect of it. The process of reimaging a society and a state is never divorced from the ideological inclinations and convictions of the one doing the reimaging. Consider the argument that Pakistan has lost to India and this should motivate and mobilize the society in to action to do something different. At one level this betrays a bias and a conviction that Pakistan and India are locked in a perpetual rivalry and this means that the amount of foreign exchange reserves, number of billionaires and big companies, the number and strength of militaries and the relevant geopolitical clout of both countries is a measuring stick for their progress. Pakistan's progress is thus measured against India's and not against, let's say with that of Japan or Germany or Poland. The call for shunning our historical animosity towards India is thus ironically presented by embracing the historical rivalry with India and channeling it towards different economic ends. History is not easily wished away.

At another level this goes to the heart of problem of misunderstanding how societies and nations are built and organized. National identities are defined by organic political experiences deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and foundational ideas which bind people together. The idea of Pakistan was built around the notion that Muslims of the subcontinent will lose their cultural and civilizational identity in a united subcontinent, that a secular confederation with constitutional protections for Muslims with defense, foreign affairs and communications being jointly managed by Muslims and Hindus from the center, isn't compatible with the political ambitions of Muslims who seek to build a society based on rulings extracted from the Quran and Sunnah. The political impulse and energy behind the creation of Pakistan, was thus not driven by economic considerations, but had a more fundamental motivation, who we are as a people and a society.

Central to the idea of the demand for the division of the subcontinent into Muslim majority and Hindu majority states was the religious identity and beliefs of the Indian populace. Muslims are the believers in Tauheed (monotheists), the Hindus are Mushrikeen (polytheists), Muslims can therefore never really submit to the authority of Hindus. It is this very same idea which has inspired and motivated the Muslims of Kashmir who have defied and struggled against the Hindu rule for more than seven decades. That occupied Kashmir is one of the most militarized regions in the World isn't a testimony to the success of the Indian state, it is proof that societies and states are not reimagined and restructured based on new realities, despair and a sense of defeat. Rather societies and states are built and restructured based on the ideological convictions and civilizational ambitions of the people who imagine a world they want to make and then strive to make it no matter what the cost.

India's rise is not of its own making. For more than four decades India was on the sidelines of the international system keeping its distance from the great power competition shaping the international arena. By claiming neutrality under the non-aligned movement, India excluded itself from the international order setup up by America and its system of geopolitical incentives and disincentives. India's rise correlates with American concerns about China's massive economic growth which rang alarm bells in American foreign policy and defense establishments. The opening to China, envisaged by Henry Kissinger, to divide the communist camp and contain the Soviet Union, was coming back to bite American policy makers. America facilitated Chinese integration into the international order to preempt a communist alliance between China and the Soviet Union, by offering one to China, turning China into a factory for the Western world, and using China as a huge market for the global ambitions of American multinational companies. Now that China is an economic powerhouse and is using its economic strength to build up its defense capabilities and assert itself as a pacific power in the East and South China Seas, America fears China's geopolitical rise and is working to build India and Japan as counterweights to China. It is thus no surprise that both India and Japan are part of the four nation Quad alliance built by America which also includes Australia. America started integrating India into the international system under Manmohan Singh as an incentive to convince India to accept American geopolitical agenda just like Pakistan was showered with American aid and loans in the Ayub era to woo Pakistan to the American camp. Under Modi, India has signaled its willingness to do America's bidding and be a tool in the American chessboard against China. Just as China was used as a tool to achieve American geopolitical agenda against the Soviet Union, India has now replaced China as a geopolitical tool against China itself for the fulfilment of American geopolitical goals. This is the reality of the rise of India. It is neither due to the resilience of India's political system, nor due to the ingenuity of its political and ruling elite, or the strength of its educational institutions. India's rise is a geopolitical rent, an incentive and reward, for her willingness to execute American policy for the Indo-Pacific region.

And India's rise was directly enabled by Pakistan's military establishment. The strategic blunder of siding with America in its war on terror, restructuring and reorganizing Pakistan's military and security doctrine and capabilities and focusing them away from India towards developing counter terrorism capabilities, the initiation of peace talks and the adoption of the normalization agenda with India, the abandonment of Kashmir, the crackdown on India centric jihadi infrastructure and the ceasefire on the Line of Control created the space for India to move away from its strategic focus on Pakistan to the broader US agenda for the region. If anything India's "victory" today is an indictment of the disastrous decisions taken by Pakistan's rulers to follow the US dictation for South Asia and the Af-Pak region. India won because we helped it on its way to the "victory" stand. Instead of celebrating that victory by submitting to ground realities perhaps a wiser course would be to stop helping India and actually start competing with her in the real world.

The core of Pakistan's economic, political and military woes lies in the flawed development and progress model adopted by Pakistan's ruling elite. Since its inception Pakistan's ruling elites have seen Pakistan's development linked with Pakistan's integration with the international order built by America after the second world war. Whether it was Pakistan's rivalry with India, the structuring of its economy, the development of its military capabilities or achievement of its regional ambitions, Pakistan's rulers never imagined they can take Pakistan forward in any of these domains without help from America or the European powers. Pakistan's irrigation system

and dams and the whole agriculture policy was designed by Americans in exchange for Pakistan providing surveillance bases to America against the Soviet Union. Pakistan helped America fight the Afghan war against Soviet Union in exchange for economic support and financial resources which helped Pakistan build its military capabilities against India. When India professed neutrality and was part of the non-aligned movement and had refused integration in to America's international order, America looked the other way, as Pakistan built its nuclear weapons program in response to India's nuclear program. America saw Pakistan's nuclear weapons program as a stick to beat India in to submission and chose not to oppose it. When America launched its war on Islam after the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan accepted American guarantees of Indian non-aggression and restructured and reoriented its military doctrine towards counter terrorism making changes in Pakistan military's green book and removing India as the number one threat for Pakistan. Pakistan accepted American pressure on Kashmir and refused to militarily challenge India when Modi annexed occupied Kashmir in August 2019. FATF pressure was accepted to dismantle India centric jihadi infrastructure. Pakistan's power policy was designed by the World Bank which has resulted in a huge circular debt in the power sector and Pakistan has embarked upon repeated IMF reform programs to restructure Pakistan's economy according to Western dictates only to end up in another crisis requiring further support from America and its multilateral institutions. Even today the consensus amongst Pakistan's ruling elite and Westernized intelligentsia is that Pakistan has no option but to accept the IMF reform program to continue its development path. Even when Pakistan embarked upon a development path which was supposedly independent of America, it went to China to attract investments in its power and transport infrastructure, investments which have proved extractive and burdensome further burdening Pakistan's weak economy bringing Pakistan to the brink of bankruptcy.

The failure of Pakistan's ruling elite to imagine an independent path for Pakistan's progress and development partly lies in Pakistan's colonial past. Pakistan inherited the colonial ruling state and institutions developed by the British during the era of the British Raj. The British nurtured a political and intellectual atmosphere where development and progress of the subcontinent was linked to borrowing from the political and intellectual experience of the West. America built on this colonial legacy and has trapped Pakistan in to submission to its international order.

There is nothing international about the world order and the international financial, economic, political and military infrastructure which governs the world today in terms of the power distribution within this system. This system is controlled by America alone to the exclusion of all other powers. America setup the International Monetary Institution at Bretton woods to impose the American Dollar on international trade. Pakistan's balance of payment crisis is the direct result of Pakistan's participation in this system. Pakistan and all of the Muslim world willingly chose to conduct international trade in dollars. IMF was setup to act as a lender of last resort for countries which have a shortage of dollars. Interestingly Pakistan and America both are at the brink of default. While Pakistan is being forced to accept the harsh conditions of the IMF program in exchange for dollars which has already brought the economy to a standstill and has piled up immense misery and economic pain on its people, America awaits an act of Congress to raise its debt ceiling which will effectively end America's default because America enjoys the unique position of issuing dollars through its central bank, the Federal Reserve. While Pakistan and the Muslim world have to earn dollars to be able to participate in international trade, America prints them or issues them at will through the complex financial system established by it. The World Bank was established to control the development path of countries where project financing is made available to recipient countries through aid and loans for projects aligned with Western interests and the interests of Western multinational companies. The infamous Reko Diq Copper and Gold Mine case where the international arbitration tribunal under the World Bank, strong armed Pakistan with a penalty of \$11 billion dollars, to award the mining contract to Barrick Gold is just one example of the hegemonic and colonial designs of these international institutions. Through the threat of removal from the Swift messaging system, denial of access to global capital markets, international shipping lanes and services etc. America imposes sanctions on countries not following American policy thus strong arming them in to submitting to American agenda.

The international order is thus totally subservient to American control. America chooses the winners and losers in this system. America allowed Japan and Germany to benefit from this

system on the condition that they both demilitarize and accept American protection and American troops in their countries after their defeat in world war II. Now through the threat of war in the Taiwan strait and the Ukraine-Russian war in Central Europe, America has forced both Japan and Germany to increase their defense budgets and adopt a more hostile posture towards China and Russia in service of American geopolitical goals. China was once at the favored end of this international system and now is at its receiving end. India was once an outcast in this system and now enjoys this system's blessings. Pakistan's ruling elites are willing to be a client state orbiting in the American sphere of influence in return for the same amount of access and privileges in this international system as granted to India. In fact they have repeatedly made the case to America for such a treatment, offering their power and resources in the service of American geopolitical interests. This betrays a shocking naivety in Pakistan's strategic circles. Notwithstanding the idea, that a client state never really steps out of line from the agenda of the state to which it is beholden, the Western education and indoctrination of Pakistan's ruling elites have blinded them to the fact that America will never allow a Muslim state to gain strength and power in this system because of the deep ideological animosity it holds against Islam and the fear it has of the civilizational power of the Islamic ideology. Up until a hundred years ago and before the first world war, Muslim lands were governed by the Khilafah (Caliphate) State which was a mighty and powerful actor in the international arena till the middle of the eighteenth century. Moreover, the Western colonization project which began in the 15th century, was able to conquer and dominate much of the World including Africa and the American continent, however it was the Muslim lands and the Islamic civilization which stood as the fiercest obstacle to Western colonialism despite finally coming under European and then American colonialism. The first pan European or pan Western experience, where the idea of a united Western civilization came together as a political project was the Christian crusades against the Khilafah State. Thus the formative and defining unity of the Western civilization as it had first started to form and view itself as a collective whole, was against Muslims and the Khilafah State. That emotional animosity, deeply rooted in the Christian political tradition continued to be part of the Western civilization even after the adoption of the secular ideology in the 17th and 18th centuries by various Western nations. The West till today views the Muslim World from the prism of the civilizational clash between Islam and the West. Its insistence on protecting blasphemy against Islamic sanctities in the name of freedom of expression and the recent Western push to force the Muslim World to accept the despicable act of homosexuality as a universal right is evidence of this civilizational clash, if any was needed.

The only way forward for Pakistan and the Muslim world is to come out of this international order controlled by America and chart its own and independent path for progress and development based on the Islamic ideology and Islamic civilization. The refusal of the Muslim world to submit to American hegemony in Iraq and Afghanistan has deep historical roots. The Muslim Ummah ruled the World under the Khilafah State. It controlled the international arena when Islam was implemented in Muslim lands and when it carried the message of Islam through Jihad to rest of the World. For centuries the Muslim Ummah refused to submit before reality. It took on the mighty Roman and Persian empires simultaneously, destroyed the Roman empire with the conquest of Constantinople, liberated Palestine from Christian control after losing it to the Christian world for 90 years, fought off European colonialism and is engaged in a fierce struggle to get rid of American hegemony. Pakistan's future lies in returning Islam to authority and power. A unified Muslim Ummah, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Middle East and the Muslim States of the Far East and Africa under the authority of a single Khaleefah (caliph) will be resource rich and will possess a powerful state through which it will reclaim its global status as the best nation raised for humankind.

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ﴾

“He is the One Who has sent His Messenger with true guidance and the Deen of truth, making it prevail over all others, even to the dismay of the polytheists.” [TMQ Surah At-Tawba 9:33]

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