

The changing parameters of external policies

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As warfare has altered over the decades with the shifting of the 'centre of gravity' and the notion of the cold war evolving into Hybrid warfare, so diplomacy and the domain of what was referred to as 'foreign policy' – but now is more cohesively understood as a state's external policy – have also altered qualitatively.

Just as the Gnomes of Zurich lost their relevance once Swiss banks had to provide access and data of foreign accounts, so the Mandarins sitting in the enclosed 'foreign offices' across the world, conducting closed-door state-to-state diplomacy, are fast becoming an anachronism. Democracy and parliaments have been a factor in challenging the Mandarins' closed-door approach to foreign policy, but even dictatorships and monarchies have had to move beyond the old style of diplomacy conducted behind closed doors where the internal dynamics of their states were neither a foreign policy agenda item nor an issue to be commented upon by other states.

The bipolar global structure in place after the end of World War II and the advent of the nuclear age saw shifts in the conduct of foreign policy. The cold war epitomised this

changing paradigm with the two superpowers seeking alliances beyond Europe, where the bipolar lines were strictly drawn. The battle for hearts and minds began, as did the massive interventions in developing states by the two superpowers to place in power regimes favourably disposed towards their interests. Can one forget the folly of Pakistan in allowing a U2 spy plane to fly from the US base at Badaber which almost led to a Soviet attack on Pakistan? US political interventions in Latin America are part of recorded history.

It is difficult to pinpoint one event or time when the whole approach to external policy altered globally, but some events clearly helped change the strictly state-centric parameters of a state's external policy emanating from the closed-door corridors of foreign offices/state departments/ministries of external affairs. The growing UN conventions focusing on rights of the child, the political and economic rights of citizens and on a host of other human rights issues certainly have been a major factor in expanding the scope of the external policies of states.

While the international system was traditionally defined as anarchic, the growing number of international conventions/treaties and supplier cartels in the field of arms control and dis-

armament gradually built up bodies of laws – international regimes – that states agreed to abide by, thereby giving a semblance of a loose world order. Another interesting development has been the assertion by some states, of the principle of humanitarian intervention to prevent genocide – in the wake of the Rwandan crisis. At present, though, this principle remains controversial and has not gained universal acceptance. Then there is the International Criminal Court (ICC), although it still awaits a wider acceptance of its jurisdiction.

The challenge to the post-1945 status quo posed in the 1970s by OPEC and the demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) – sadly now long forgotten – also had a role in altering the dynamics of international politics. As did unconventional wars, the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Iranian revolution (which gave the US a bogey to fill the 'evil empire' gap left after the demise of the Soviet Union) and the growing political asylum and refugee crises springing up in the wake of the West's haphazard approach to what was claimed to be a 'democracy agenda' but has reduced itself to an agenda of bloodshed and chaos in the Middle East with fallout far beyond.

So how is this relevant in the context of Pakistan? Many countries

have totally revamped their external policy focus. Public diplomacy, economic and trade diplomacy along with civil society activism have become endemic to the external policies of these states. As a result, human rights and trade have become central to the external policies of entities like the EU, especially when concessions like the GSP Plus are involved.

Countries like Germany use the Stiftungen attached to their different parliamentary political parties for advocacy purposes – pushing forward what the Germans feel should be priorities within the developing countries they are active in. The UK uses DFID as a central operative for its external policies. USAID and other US institutions also play an ever-increasing role in US external policies even though the US still has a strong traditional politico-security policy framework it operates on.

Let us not forget the multiple non-state actors who have now been playing an interventionist role in many countries – such as Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and so on. UN bodies like the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have also grown in importance in terms of proactive diplomacy. The Kashmir Report is one reflection of this. Nor can states make pledges to

politico-diplomatic and security interactions. Pakistan, of its own volition in May 2017, pledged to invite two UN Rapporteurs: one on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association; and, two, on the Right to Food. To date, we have not moved on this and the EU has taken this up in its GSP Plus demands.

Thus, even within the scope of traditional external policy parameters, the mandate of multilateral diplomacy through the growing body of conventions that countries ratify has expanded from peripheral areas of diplomacy to acquiring a central role. This demands the availability of a division of international law experts within each external affairs ministry – to deal with human rights conventions, trade laws of the WTO, FATF and so on.

Unfortunately, the Mandarins of the old Scheherazade Hotel have yet to change their traditional operational mode. In an age of specialists, generalists dominate.

Commerce, economics and human rights are kept on the peripheral edges as much as possible even when confronted with their primacy in dialogues on GSP plus, international treaty obligations, women and child rights, journalist protection and a host of issues that are now as critical to external policy as traditional

Security is still a crucial component of any state policy – internal and external – but security, like warfare, has acquired new expanded definitional parameters. The main stakeholders in external policy are multiple government bureaucracies, of which the Scheherazade Mandarins are just one component. Civil society and public diplomacy have also to be taken into account. States that have made the adjustments to hybrid external policy have effective external policies.

In contrast, we should ask ourselves why we have failed to effectively expose Indian state terrorism in IOK effectively on international forums – even in the aftermath of the OHCHR Report on Kashmir. Why have we failed to use international conventions to our advantage to show the progress we have made in the field of human rights? While we still have a long way to traverse, we have made progress and are continuing to do so. Just as the Gnomes of Zurich had to confront new global realities of financial disclosure, the Mandarins of traditional 'foreign offices' have to confront the complex demands of hybrid external policy, which require greater inclusivity not exclusivity.

Learning from China

ZAHID HUSSAIN

Prime Minister Imran Khan is fascinated by China's miraculous feat of lifting 800 million people from poverty – and he seeks to emulate that achievement. Then again, who does not? Every speech of his, whether at home or abroad, is invariably laced with profuse praise of the emerging superpower. But it seems that he has little understanding of how it happened.

The rise of China is surely an amazing story, and its record in poverty reduction is without parallel in human history. It may not be possible for other countries to emulate the Chinese dream, yet there are lessons to learn from the country's Great Leap Forward. The transformation of a country with around one fifth of the world's population could not have come without the Communist Revolution in 1949 that destroyed the regressive social structure, thereby paving the way for a second revolution which led to phenomenal economic growth.

Since the initiation of China's reform and opening-up in 1978, it has achieved an annual average 9.5 per cent growth rate, increasing almost 35 times in size within the last four decades. There is no precedent in history of such sustained economic growth. This could not have been possible without political stability, a visionary leadership and strong institutions of the state.

It was the second stage of the revolution headed by Deng Xiaoping, who was also one of the leaders of the 1949 revolution, that led to the building of modern China. The principles enunciated by Deng guided Chinese policy since the 1980s. According to him, there are three criteria to judge whether or not a political system or policy is suitable or correct for a country, namely; is it beneficial for political stability, economic development and living standards? If it is for all three, then it is a good system or policy.

With its phenomenal scale of economic growth, China also focused on improving the lives of ordinary Chinese people. The enormous improvement in living standards is,

therefore, the most important achievement China has made since the reform and opening-up. For a country with huge numbers of poor people streaming into its cities, many living initially in conditions of abject misery, this has been an extraordinary success. Other factors that contributed to China's economic and social development are the massive investments it made on education and population control. For almost four decades, China strictly implemented a one-child policy that had helped the country achieve its anti-poverty drive. This policy has now been made more flexible to meet the demands of an expanding economy.

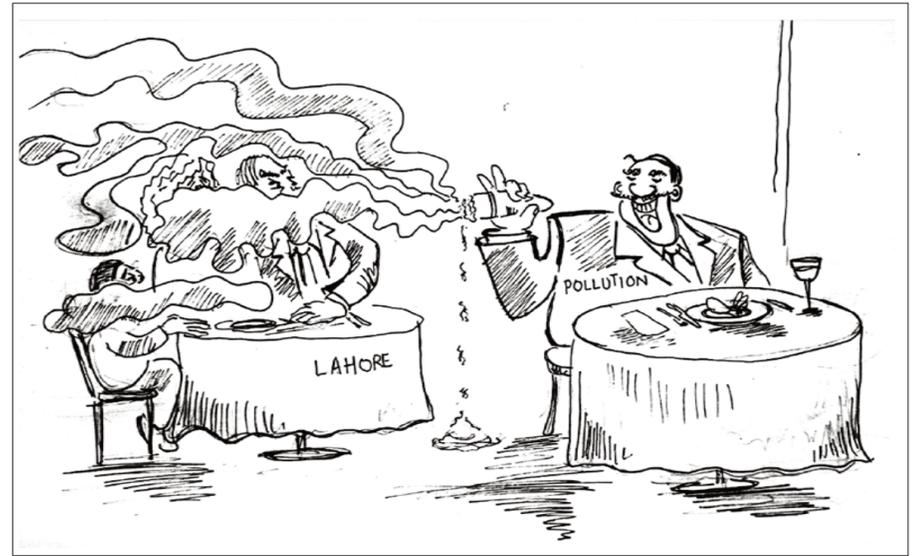
More importantly, successive Chinese leaders recognised that economic development and political stability were intertwined. While its entire focus had been on economic development, China has kept itself out of outside conflicts and avoided confrontation despite provocations. It has kept a relatively low profile, notwithstanding its position as a superpower. When Imran Khan says that he wants to learn from China, he should understand that such societal transformation can only occur when one has a clear vision and the will to make tough decisions. It is indeed commendable that the PTI government places greater emphasis on human development, but the welfare of the people also depends on political stability and economic development. Catchy mantras alone will not take this country out of its current predicament.

Sure, Pakistan has a different system of government and there is no revolutionary party at the helm, but it is not difficult to implement some radical reforms to put the economy on the track of sustainable growth. There is also need for change in existing social and economic structures that are the biggest obstacles to the country's transformation. But, notwithstanding Imran Khan's grand idea of establishing 'Naya Pakistan', the PTI remains a party with no clear strategy for change. Almost five months into power, the government is still unable to set a clear direction. There appears to be systemic failure

in this country. While the PTI government is drifting without vision or purpose, growing political instability has rendered the system dysfunctional. One cannot hope getting the economy off the ground, let alone fighting poverty, in this environment of political confrontation. The country is not expected to move forward while depending on the financial support of friendly countries. It is disgraceful the way that bailout packages from Saudi Arabia and the UAE are being portrayed as diplomatic successes. In the absence of any clear agenda for reform, these kinds of temporary relief could become liabilities, further dragging the economy down. There is as yet no indication that the government is prepared to change its confrontationalist policy. More alarming is that it does not have any clear strategy to deal with the challenges it faces. Undoubtedly, corruption is a serious problem, but the government seems to only focus on this one issue. Imran Khan's claim that it is the main cause of all economic and political ills is exaggerated. The senseless campaign has increased economic and political uncertainty, making it more difficult to carry out any reform. Imran Khan often cites China's latest campaign against corruption. But what he has failed to understand is that China has been able to effectively counter the menace after it had consolidated its economy.

Instead of learning from China how it emerged as an economic superpower in such a short span of time, Imran Khan has superficially picked some aspects of its history to point to. A major factor that has caused Pakistan's economic and political slide is the absence of a long-term vision for development and social change. China's model cannot be emulated, but one can, at least, learn some lessons from its success. Poverty eradication, which Imran Khan appears so fascinated with, did not come without economic development and social reform.

The establishment of shelter homes for the homeless is indeed a positive step, but it cannot address the basic problem behind rampant poverty, unemployment and social backwardness.



A new traffic culture

IFTEKHAR A KHAN

Traffic shapes itself according to the administrative supervision that it is accorded – or due to the lack of it. The culture of traffic congestion and chaos that has developed on our roads deserves serious attention from the relevant authorities.

Almost every day, pictures of snarled-up traffic along major roads and angry letters about our mismanaged traffic system appear in various newspapers. But instead of improving, the situation has worsened by the day. The loss of life and permanent disabilities caused by road accidents are on the rise. Is the situation beyond redemption? No. All it needs is attention from senior traffic police officials who seem more concerned about facilitating VVIP movements along the roads than ensuring the orderly flow of traffic for road users. As it is, most drivers seem to ignore traffic laws. You see them moving about on the roads and changing lanes at will while being glued to their cellphones. The use of cellphones while driving has become rampant, as if business deals worth millions cannot wait until people are off the roads. As I write this article, I happen to glance on the news post section of this newspaper where a regular contributor decries how the Mianwali-Talagang Road has become a death trap for the commuters.

Such death traps exist everywhere. In another English newspaper of the same day, a letter draws attention to the perennial traffic jams at Thokar Niaz Baig Chowk under the flyover. This chowk is a nightmare to negotiate for the drivers who regularly travel through the route, leave alone visitors from other cities who seem completely baffled by the traffic chaos on the confluence of the six roads that meet here.

In my previous articles for this newspaper, I have mentioned how traffic jams are a permanent feature on Multan Road from Hudriara Drain to Thokar Niaz Baig. Mercifully, this stretch of road, measuring about 10.7 kilometres, is now under expansion, even though it has been redesigned from four lanes to three each way. Had the National Highway Authority kept the burgeoning traffic situation in mind, it would have followed the initial design. However, traffic mayhem along the roads is primarily an outcome of poor traffic management. Roads in Lahore are wide enough but the traffic is unruly. As they drive leisurely through the streets of Lahore, many drivers move in the fast lane and chat on their cellphones while others are in such a hurry to reach their destination that they overtake these drivers from the wrong side of the road. In addition, motorcycles and rickshaws moving along the centre of the road are an annoyance for other commuters. We

often fail to understand why motorists insist on squeezing past parked cars to get ahead at traffic lights. This reflects the apathetic attitude of traffic police officials who are untrained for the job and somewhat uninterested in performing their duty.

Whenever an accident takes place, a crowd of spectators often gathers on the scene. If a car has collided with another car, two angry drivers tend to alight from their vehicles in the middle of road and begin arguing with one another while passers-by gather around them. The traffic jams that result from such incidents often run into a few hundred metres. In this situation, it is the duty of the traffic police to instruct drivers to move their vehicles to one side of road and restore the traffic flow. They must also ask all nosy bystanders to disperse from the scene. The only way to keep undisciplined drivers in check is by imposing heavy fines on them.

There aren't as many traffic violations along the motorway as there are on main city roads. People don't violate traffic rules on the motorway for fear of heavy fines. As the population expands exponentially, thousands of vehicles are added to our roads. The day isn't far when commuters will remain stranded in traffic jams for hours. The signs that indicate such a situation are already apparent. Naya Pakistan demands a 'naya' traffic culture.

Letters to the Editor

Rules for new drivers

With every passing day, the number of new drivers on roads is increasing. These people are generally not aware of traffic rules, making it tough for all road users. One example of this situation is when drivers drive in the extreme right lane on the Islamabad highway well below the speed limit. This forces other drivers to overtake from the left. Another example is of drivers who drive their vehicles with the headlights on full beam, blinding other drivers. Pemra is requested to ask TV channels to run short public service announcements to make road users aware of the correct and incorrect ways of driving.

Syed Hussein El-Edroos
ISLAMABAD

Education in Sindh

The dismal condition of Sindh's educational institutions highlights the fact that the provincial government is not allotting sufficient funds to the province's education. The culture of cheating is rampant in schools and colleges and despite the authorities effort to curb cheating, wrongdoers come up with ways to cheat in an exam. The PPP has been ruling Sindh for more than a decade

now. The party should work more towards the betterment of the education sector. It is true that without education, a country cannot walk on the path to progress. Sindh will continue to lag behind in all fields unless the government takes immediate steps to revive the education sector.

Shafique Hussain Wassan
KHAIRPUR MIRS

Gas crisis

Six years back, when the PPP was in power, Pakistan witnessed one of the worst gas and electricity crises. It seems that with the PTI in power, the troubling days are back. Lahore's residents are facing an acute shortage of natural gas and electricity. Power is out every other hour and residents who use in-house electric motors to pump water have to spend hours without water. With the disappearance of water, gas and electricity, the life of Lahoris has become miserable in Naya Pakistan. Will the PTI-led government give attention to these issues? People will gradually realise that all promises were mere hollow slogans make during election campaign.

Engr Asim Nawab
ISLAMABAD

Polluted air

One of the serious problems faced by Pakistan has been air pollution. Emissions from fossil-fuelled power plants, unregulated industrial units, usage of vehicles and machinery with old internal combustion engines and uncontrolled burning of crop leftover are some of known causes of pollution. During the last five years, Karachi and Central Punjab suffered severe smog. After 2016 it became apparent that Lahore had a substantially increasing air pollution index with most of the district covered in heavy smog after the dual annual harvest season. In 2018, Lahore didn't have a single good air day.

Air pollution in Pakistan is a form of particulate contamination which can essentially be defined as solid and vapor particles suspended in air and unable to be transferred due to a lack of airflow owing to temperature inversion. The resulting smog is similar in nature, albeit a little less toxic, to coal dust and has severe health implications especially on children and the elderly. Its inhalation is said to be equivalent to smoking 50 plus cigarettes daily. Lahore currently faces only one type of smog (winter smog) which

is also common in New Delhi. However, the ever increasing carbon footprint from unregulated automobile emissions and domestic heating has a strong potential to cause photochemical (summer) smog in Lahore in the near future.

Muhammad Ibrahim Yahya
FAISALABAD

Tourism revenue

This letter refers to the article 'Ruins of the past' by Mubarak Ali. Keeping in view the importance of historical buildings for generating revenue and employment as mentioned by the author, I would further suggest that in Pakistan we can use religious places to generate revenue and provide job opportunities. The country has churches, forts, mosques, gurdwaras, temples, museums, gardens, Buddhist relics, princely state remnants like White Palace Swat, Noor Mahal Palace Bahawalpur and many other historical buildings/installations which can be preserved and protected in order to generate revenue and employment by opening such installations to domestic and foreign tourists. Installations in Punjab and Sindh can be visited by tourists in winter while

various locations in the north of Pakistan (Chitral, Swat and GB) can be visited by tourists in summer. This will bring revenue for the country throughout the year.

Shakeel Khan
PESHAWAR

Bangladesh's economy

Over the last decade, Bangladesh has doubled its per capita income and has achieved the impressive 7.86 percent economic growth. The country is planning to achieve the 10 percent target by the time it celebrates its 50th birthday in 2021. Pakistan's economy is crawling to grow at just about four to five percent per annum. Bangladesh is now producing most goods like cotton products earlier exported by Pakistan. The per capita income of Bangladesh, \$1800, is now larger than that of Pakistan's \$1600. The aggregate GDP (\$275 billion) is poised to overtake Pakistan's at \$310 billion in the coming years. While Bangladesh is planning to reduce reliance on foreign aid and is focusing on trade and investment, Pakistan is still looking for bailout packages. Our country needs to think wisely if it is serious about tackling the financial crisis.

Maryum Malik
RAWALPINDI