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**What defines national interest for India and Pakistan:
Economy, politics or religion?**

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Abstract. Recent political history of India suggests that religion has become a dominant force in country's politics. Here lies the irony the world has put a deaf year to by still accepting India as being secular democracy instead of a country dominated by Hindu identity. This Hindu identity defines India's security agenda as well as its relationship with the world. Country like US is comfortable with India under every President irrespective of being a Republican or a Democrat.

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1. Introduction: Secularism and religion in South Asia

According to Amartya Sen, there is a huge difference between religion as a personal matter and religion as a political phenomenon. This simple but at the same time intricate expression, explains a lot which has happened since 1947 in subcontinent India.

Though Sen is a self proclaimed atheist, he claimed he is/can be associated with Hinduism as a political entity. Well, same was true with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was a secular, but had to give up to the political pressure exerted by religious rhetoric coming out of the echelons of congress led by Gandhi. Despite Gandhi being a profound secular, he was strictly religious, and in his life his political identity primarily had come from Hinduism rather than being a 'secular Gandhi'. Later after his death, though the world knows him as a Secular Gandhi, in India he is identified as the demi god of contemporary Hindu history. Despite his claims of being secular, if anything Gandhi represented the political force which primarily symbolized ancient civilisation of Hindu India rather than multicultural India of nineteenth century.

Similarly a least religious man Jinnah, has to come to Muslim league, for his political identity. Muslim league was a party which was clearly dependent upon Islam, whereas Islam had been one of the most influential political forces till the mid 1880s not only in Sub continent India but larger Asia and Africa.

Thus 1947 was an outcome of two independent political and cultural forces, one being more indigenous in nature and one being more global in nature. The question was which force will overcome the other or whether they can retain their independent identities as well as political power.

Clearly Jinnah thought that in larger India, Muslims will be exploited by Hindus, as Hindus were in overwhelming majority. To sustain Islam as a political force in South Asia, Jinnah went on to ask for a separate homeland for Muslims.

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Hinduism and Islam as political forces were much like two political parties. Only one could have ruled and one would be subjugated by the other. Only the emergence of Pakistan would have ensured that Jinnah's Islam would not live under the rule of Gandhi's Hinduism.

Generally Muslims and Hindus or Islam and Hinduism do not seek to confront the other in pure religious sense. As Sen pointed out, both religions co-existed quite peacefully for centuries after the advent of Islam in sub continent India. Art, culture and science actually blossomed under the multicultural environment of India.

However both Islam and Hinduism become violent whenever they rise as opposite political forces. And then it doesn't matter whether you belong to a so-called religious state or you are the largest democracy in the South and self proclaimed secular. The outcome of religion as a political entity has the same effect on secular India as it has on Islamic Pakistan. This has happened in 1947 and this is happening today.

Today, India is indeed a secular country but stained with forces of hinduvta extremists which have nothing to do with religion and every thing to do with politics. Pakistan has it all mixed up, but again it is a country where religion is used as a political tool. The fate of Islamic Pakistan is much similar to that of Secular India. Secular India, may not be 'SECULAR' in a sense we perceive secularism should be, but yes it is a state run by secular laws but dwelled by majority Hindus. The reality is that secular India and atheist Amartya Sen associate themselves with Hinduism for their respective political identities in the globe as Pakistan looks for an Islamic identity.

2. Old wine in new bottle: Is India a constant in American politics and economics

In 2004, the outsourcing question had become the key issue in US presidential elections. This is what Senator John F. Kerry had to say to the world in general and American people in particular in his convention speech about outsourcing of jobs from USA: "We will reward companies that create and keep good-paying jobs right where they belong – in good old USA. We value an America that exports products, not jobs- and we believe American workers should never have to subsidize the loss of their own job."

John F. Kerry had made 'American Jobs' one of the core issues in his campaign. While campaigning in North Carolina last month, a state which is most hurt by job losses, Kerry declared that he would end tax breaks for companies that outsource overseas. He had given an outline for his economic plan which was biased against the companies which were outsourcing or which might plan to further relocate services to foreign lands.

The 'American jobs' was also one of those issues where Kerry had remained steadfast in his disagreement with Mr. George Bush from the beginning of his campaign: "Because of George Bush's wrong choices, this country is continuing to ship good jobs overseas- jobs with good wages and good benefits." Kerry also rightly rejects the assertion made by Bush and his aides that moving American jobs to low cost countries is a plus for US and Kerry's 'economic agenda' plans to create at least 10 million jobs in America and simultaneously put an immediate hold to the recent surge in outsourcing.

Well any such stand apropos outsourcing is clearly in contrast with Indian interests because American outsourcing to India has been one of the key determinants of 'India Shining'. Today for many American companies, India is the no.1 destination because of the maturity in its outsourcing market and its telecom infrastructure. It is estimated that over the next 15 years, 3.3 million U.S services industry jobs and \$ 136 billion in wages will desert the U.S soils, whereas India would be the top priority destination for the relocation of these jobs.

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Nearly every other American multinational has already set up their offices in India. Thus when an American calls to American Express, Citibank, IBM, Hewlett Packard, Dell, AOL, Delta Airlines, or Sprint's technical support number, the chances are that he'll be talking to an Indian. On a given day in New Delhi, Bombay and Bangalore, the thousands of new recruits join newly established call centers providing services to these multinational companies, where as these call center employees earn \$ 3,000 to \$ 5,000 a year in a nation where the per capita income is less than \$ 500.

Then the future of India much depended upon outsourcing as the multi billion dollar worth of American jobs were expected to fall in the laps of Indian middle class enabling India to sustain its growth rate of 8 percent.

Despite Kerry's stand against outsourcing, the predominant majority of Indian Americans were still following the traditions by supporting the democrats. Here, one rationale for Indian Americans to opt for Democrats could be the traditional Republican closeness to Pakistan. Indian Americans did not like the pampering of Pakistan by George W Bush since they seemed to distrust President Musharraf despite his peace initiatives and sweet talk. The memories of Kargil were still fresh in the minds of many. The Indian lobby in America still implicates Pakistan in cross border terrorism.

John Kerry lost elections to Bush jr. and US soon found itself in recession that was transformed into global recession by 2008. Americans voted for Democrats and elected Barrack Obama but his eight years of governance further increased discontent within American polity transforming the US economic slowdown into anti globalization feelings and what US economics and politics stood for.

American jobs became a significant issue before 2016 American elections. The only difference was that this time around it was a Republican campaign agenda to reverse the outsourcing phenomenon that has over the years parked trillions of US dollars in Chinese and Indian economies. Donald Trump was the leading candidate for the Republicans who also happened to be the winner of 2016 elections surprising political pundits world over that overwhelmingly predicted swift victory of Democrats and Hillary Clinton.

Unlike his predecessors, Trump is not for consumerism that is the epitome of New Classical Capitalism that deceptively promise idea of an affluent life style to an average Joe and in most cases exploiting the world with wars and yes innovation domestically. He is more concerned with labor part of the economy more than the capital part. He is following protectionism as his economic policy. But then every superpower of its time since 1800 has adopted protectionism. Recently his government has levied 500 billion dollars of tariffs on Chinese imports to the US.

This protectionism has given way to neo liberalism in China today. Can this divergence of economic orientation between China and US transform into armed conflict? It is highly unlikely. Welcome to the multi polar world again. There is credence to the argument that Trump's predecessors like Obama and Bush had bogged down trillions of dollars in armed interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. It costed US its liberalism and economic supremacy that had earlier helped US beat communism in the 1990s.

However in between all this, Trump's anti capitalist agenda worked short of taking any punitive action against multibillion outsourcing of US firms to India. If anything, he has continued with Obama administration's efforts to increase economic and strategic alliance with India.

3. The military constants in South Asia: Case study of Vajpayee's government

On the one hand in June, 2003, India and China signed their first-ever joint declaration during Vajpayee's visit to Beijing, which led the two countries to not only contemplate solutions for protracted boundary dispute but also enabled them to initiate defense cooperation by incurring joint naval exercises soon thereafter.

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The momentum of this increased bilateral relations was such that the second round of talks for dispute settlement have already been taken place early this year in Beijing, where as another envoy lead by Chinese defense minister has recently visited New-Delhi. The official line of Indian government suggests that the issues that were the cause of conflict and subsequent stand-off situation between two countries were being addressed with best of the satisfaction of both parties and the bilateral relations are 'at its peak'.

On the other hand, inception of 2004 also witnessed improved Indo-Pak relations. A historic 'Islamabad Declaration' has been signed between Pakistan and India on the sidelines of the SAARC summit, where as for the first time SAFTA 'a free trade agreement between South Asian Economies' has been seriously contemplated in the summit itself. Vajpayee before leaving for New-Dehli, also bagged a commitment from Pakistan to curb cross border infiltration into Indian held Kashmir, the sincerity of which has been confirmed by the Indian establishment earlier this month by noticing a significant decline in the permeation activity along the line of control. The air and road ties between the two countries have been opened for couple of months now and a lot of cross border cerebral activity has been observed lately. The first round of "composite dialogue" at the director general-joint secretary level, has already taken place between the two neighbours on February 16-18, after a gap of over four years.

Such trends of improving relations with important neighbors like China and Pakistan have enabled the Indian Public to take a sigh of relief. It seems that, at last, things are moving in the right direction. Further good news for the Indian Junta is that the Indian economy which was long being decried as a slumbering elephant, may well be stirring after all as the new fiscal year is about to commence, bringing with it a reversal of a three-year long slowdown. India's gross domestic product growth in year ending 31 March 2004 is now likely to be around 7.5 percent -- the best performance since the 7.8 percent reported in 1996/97.

However, there is a compelling risk that, the Vajpayee government, which takes the credit for these peace initiatives and a good Indian economic out look, onto its apt policies, might as well usurp the whole peace process and send not only Indians but the whole of South Asian populace, once again, into the depths of uncertainty and languish. With the initiation of 2004, on the one hand the Indian administration hyped its media chanting for peace and harmony in the region, on the other hand, it has also been indulged into defence deals involving billions of dollars. Such an Indian defence posture tells a story which is far away from peace and stench of duplicity.

On January 18th of 2004, New-Dehli signed a deal with Russians worth more than a billion dollars and approved the purchase of a refurbished Russian aircraft carrier, the Admiral Gorshkov, along with MiG-29 combat jets in order to enhance the strike power of the country's navy. On January 24th, India tested a short-range nuclear-capable ballistic missile. The missile has a range of 150 to 300 kilometers and can carry warheads weighing up to, 1,000 kilograms. It was the 23rd test of the missile since the 1980s. On February 8, another Indian arms deal came forth in the media when Israel disclosed that it is sending three Phalcon early warning radar systems worth \$1.1 billion to India. Phalcon can pick up aircraft, including at low altitude, hundreds of kilometres away in any weather, day or night. After, barely a day, on February 10th, new-Dehli again made head lines in international newspapers for successfully testing a surface to air anti-aircraft missile, Trishul, which is India's version of the US-made patriot missile.

In the meanwhile, the four-month interim budget for 2004-2005, unveiled by Indian Finance Minister Jaswant Singh only last week, also divulge that the Indian government has increased its defence budget to Rs 666 billion, or 9.45 percent and established a Rs 250 billion non-lapsable Defence Modernisation Fund for the procurement of weapons systems. The new modernisation fund indicated that government is planning to make yet more defence deals including the acquisition of six 1,500 tonne displacement French Scorpene class submarines costing \$ 1.6

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billion. Other deals in the pipeline include the acquisition of 60 km range Russian Multi Barrel Rocket system SMERCH, 400 upgraded 155 MM artillery guns and anti infiltration devices. Where as India is also busy designing a largest ever built indigenous aircraft carrier weighing 37,000 tons, which shall also get a hefty share from the defence modernisation fund.

Another country which is also escalating its defence expenditure and recuperating its security by acquiring new defence technologies was no other than the imperialistic United States of America. However, Americans have a valid reason to switch resources from public welfare to defence. They are busy with a war on global terrorism which many argue was more to do with President George W. Bush junior's imperial schema elicited by American defence supremacy than to do with terrorism itself.

But what was Indian justification for its arms build-up? Where is Vajpayee's war on terror to justify his defence expenditures? If Vajpayee was not waging any war or is not planning to wage a war, why is his defence machinery making arms deal worth billions of dollars? If Vajpayee and his team were for peace in South Asia, why waste billions of dollars in acquiring such capabilities which shall be redundant in a peaceful South Asia? Was Vajpayee government also having some hidden imperial agendas?

The argument that Indian defence expenditure reflects the need for a certain level of deterrence viz a viz China, is no more a valid one. The joint naval exercises, undertaken recently by both countries prove that China has no odious intentions towards India. China is looking for a global role. China and USA, though important economic partners, have different ideologies. In American eyes, China is a country which once belonged to the Cold War Communist block and it is the only communist country today which is a potential threat to American hegemony. So, increased defence expenditure incurred by China has a global dimension than a regional one. Additionally, how China and India are dealing with each other tells that the two neighbours are not only seeking for long term economic relationship but also looking for enhanced defence cooperation.

Whereas, on the Indo-Pak front, though the composite dialogue had been started and both the parties had agreed on the dissuasion of an open-ended strategic or conventional arms race in order to ease the tensions on the nuclear as well as missile fronts, Indian defence expenditure had clearly presented a contradiction to Indian commitment towards curbing arms build up. This shows that the matter of increased arms race in the region is the worry of Pakistan only. (see Mamoon and Murshed, 2010 for technical analysis)

It was too early to call Vajpayee the 'man of peace'. Recently, one of India's most widely published columnists, Praful Bidwai, in his column in a Pakistani daily, advised Pakistanis to seek caution while trusting Vajpayee or his acolytes and exposed Vajpayee for his long practiced duplicity: "Vajpayee pursues double standards. He has failed to rise above narrow, partisan Hindutva. Vajpayee has never disowned Hindu-communal issues like the Ayodhya temple, Article 370 (pertaining to Kashmir's status) or a uniform personal law. He has declared that the thoroughly sectarian Ayodhya temple agitation was a "national movement".....He reinducted George Fernandes into the Cabinet when he was not cleared by an inquiry. And he refused to bring Narendra Modi to heel. He first made disapproving noises about the Gujarat killings. Within days, he was back at Muslim-bashing. Modi became a BJP hero. Vajpayee behaved disgracefully over Gujarat. He has since failed to redeem himself in any way. A man who refuses to take a stand against the state-sponsored butchery of his fellow-citizens cannot be a "statesman" or a "secular liberal". Vajpayee's image (man of peace) is a grotesque distortion of reality".

The Indo-Pak relations can best be explained as 'wait and see' fixture. If India was really serious about peace, the Vajpayee government had taken Pakistani qualms, regarding Indian arms procurement, sternly because with upgraded offensive capabilities of its armed forces, the Indian government was increasingly

hampering the strategic balance of deterrence between the two nations. Pakistan had already given much unilateral concessions to the Indians. The Kashmir issue is not going to be settled anytime soon.

4. Fitting the Pakistani equation in South Asia

Economic Survey of Pakistan for 2016-17 suggests that Pakistan's economy has reached 300 billion dollars mark. Real estate and stock market are the winners. However both exports and remittances showed a declining trend. It means that domestic economy of Pakistan is strengthened and due credit should be given to PML N government. Why Pakistan is not showing any improvement in its exports for more than a decade?

It is a well known fact that during the end of Musharraf government most of the value added industry of Pakistan in textiles has started shifting to Bangladesh. The main reason given was the high prices of fuel that generates electricity for these industries. However since PML N took power, world oil prices witnessed a sharp decline but it had not been translated into reverse of the situation.

Both Bangladesh and India have been showing robust improvement in their exports. They compete in the same industries as of Pakistan. Why Pakistan could not increase its exports? Part of the reason is artificially created hostilities by both India and Bangladesh towards Pakistan. They want Pakistan to remain a security state.

Trade is one aspect of a nation's integration and a barometer of its influence in the globe. We can have China's example in mind. So if Pakistan is able to export more to destinations like EU and US, it will have a greater influence in these regions in diplomatic front also. For example Pakistan would have more leverage and sympathy on issues like Kashmir dispute. We know that despite a very volatile situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir since last few years, world is relatively silent on the atrocities being made there by Indian army. If Kashmir becomes a flash point it is because Pakistan and India are both nuclear powers. Unlike China and US where both countries are competing in world economy and thus their global or regional influence, Pakistan and India relationship have not evolved beyond national security. It's a question for a different space to analyse the forces that want India and Pakistan to be continuously hostile with each other because recent history of South Asia tells us that Musharraf successfully made India sit on the negotiation table and talk about Kashmir. Same years witnessed a sharp increase in bilateral trade between India and Pakistan.

Nevertheless, Economic interests of the West is more integrated towards India and India is keeping them as such. India knows well if Pakistan moves beyond a consumer society and embrace active industrialization with value added export potential, it can influence Western policies towards issues like Kashmir. So India is bent on compromising Pakistan's security by promoting terrorism in Pakistan from Afghanistan as well as making its Eastern borders under constant strain.

However last few years have seen a visible improvement in civil military relationship in Pakistan. Democracy has been strengthened in Pakistan. Internal Security situation has improved a lot. The coming governments should follow this trend. Pakistan should evolve from a security state to an economic power.

4.1. What is the national interest of Pakistan?

It is good to be a nationalist. For Pakistanis it is good to be patriotic and work for Pakistaniat by supporting its institutions including Parliament, Judiciary and the army. Despite many challenges like outright wars to experimenting between democracy and autocracy, Pakistan has come out as a stronger country. Having said that Pakistan is still exposed to two risks. One is internal and the other is external.

The internal risk is the high debt levels. Historically, Pakistan has not been managing the debt well. Since post 1960s, poor debt management has partly lead to sharp depreciation of Pakistani rupee along with high levels of inflation. But

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Pakistan has not been alone. This is the common story of most developing countries. Countries like Argentina have defaulted many times and the crises have been so severe that central bank of Argentina completely lost its credibility while currency lost its value. The local population had to resort to barter trade and created their own money. This also meant that all economic and social gains were reversed. Argentina had been traditionally a prosperous countries. In 1800s its economy was stronger than that of US.

Critics claim that Argentina has been the victim of the policy recommendations of Bretton Wood Institutions (World Bank and IMF). They give loans to developing countries and create dependency. Notwithstanding the critics, the governments of countries like Argentina are to be blamed because it is all about debt management. Its simply like a bank loan for a simple investment. If the investment does not materialize, one doesn't blame the bank. It is job of the loan receiver to make a good investment. Though national debt is a bit more complicated concept as a simple bank loan, basic principles are the same.

Similarly Pakistan is under a huge debt burden. The debt is taken by the government. If not managed well, in future common man of Pakistan has to pay it in shape of higher taxes and higher inflation. This is an optimistic scenario. The current debt levels are the highest in the history of Pakistan and so is the risk of default. In case of default, which is the worse case scenario, Pakistan's middle class would be the biggest victim. The salaried person, who can afford urban life style of modern world of consumerism, would be the one to be worse off in a situation similar to the Argentinian one. In response small business would be hit the most.

Middle class is the one that is the binding force of any economy. They are the one that generates economic activity in recessing business cycle especially when we consider that Pakistan is traditionally a consumer society. If its not debt, then a strong part of Pakistan's resources come from remittances from abroad. Pakistan is not house to high tech manufacturing with the likes of China.

So CPEC is the national interest of Pakistan. It aims to create industrial activity in Pakistan that was never seen before. A billion dollar investment from China is expected to create economic activity with a multiplier effect. A possibility of a trillion dollar industry is very plausible in the lands of Pakistan in future. There also lies the answer to debt repayment.

So Pakistan government has to tread carefully. Pakistan cannot afford corruption. CPEC needs to be implemented in all sincerity.

The second risk to Pakistan is conflict. World has seen what conflict is doing to Middle East. Syria was a tourist destination and doing well on economic front if not good. It was a prosperous country and well connected to the world in commerce. However today it presents a sad picture. The cities are in a ruin. Syrian people of its ruined cities were forced to live an impoverished life of an exile and it doesn't matter how well to do any one was economically.

What are the ingredients and standards of prosperous life style in a peaceful land. People take part in domestic or international commerce. The salaried middle class secures its future by making decent savings in financial institutions. They accumulate wealth by arranging for housing loans, car financing and even pension funds. Governments facilitate such kind of private sector activity enabling the economy to be stable enough so that the loans and funds are managed well in a lifetime of that person. In a peaceful country people live stable life styles and invest in their children to make their and country's future secure.

So it is in Pakistan's national interest to be peaceful with its neighbors. It is not to say that Pakistan should not focus on defence. It means that Pakistan should create enough deterrence to secure its economic interests in the region. Democracy that creates harmony in the society has to be strengthened in the country.

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4.2. Cost of military interventions: Can Pakistan escape its history

The umpire's finger of Imran Khan was taken figuratively as an indirect support of military establishment to PTI. Sit in protests by two major parties PPP and PML N. It didn't matter that one party was the opposition and the other one in the government. Both joined hands in making PTI's sit in protests a failed attempt to depose PM Nawaz Sharif.

In 2015, the Western media put honey on the finger in shape of Panama Leaks that gave a wide spread confirmation to the Pakistani masses that PM Nawaz Sharif was involved in corruption. It was a breath of fresh air to PTI opposition and they went to streets once again in the pretext of deposing PM Nawaz Sharif. This time around all opposition parties joined hands to keep the pressure on. It doesn't seem to matter that general elections of 2018 are around the corner.

It is an irony that PPP is the same party whose leader Asif Ali Zardari went to self exile in Dubai after threatening army leadership of dire consequences on their apparent clamp down on corrupt elements in Karachi. Then the COAS was General Raheel Sharif who made a point that the trail of terrorism and corruption are the same.

It definitely appeared a one sided accountability campaign against PPP, where some main party leaders were arrested on charges of corruption. Currently, Asif Zardari is back in Pakistan after the change of command in Pakistan army and is in active opposition with Nawaz Sharif.

It doesn't seem to matter that from General Kiani to General Raheel Sharif to General Qamar Bajawa; all have publicly committed their support for democracy. It also doesn't seem to matter that army has been instrumental in clamping down terrorism in Pakistan and has been giving its helping hand from standing out side polling booths to providing relief in case of Natural Disasters, it is viewed to have been involved in Pakistani politics.

If there is no one to blame, blame military establishment on what ails Pakistani politics. This is the baggage Pakistan is carrying after three military interventions in the country whereas last being of General Pervez Musharraf.

There is a thin line between a docile military establishment and a weak army. Pakistani democracy wants the former and our enemies want the later. Pakistan should better keep this thin line of difference while witnessing evolution of its political process because democracy is need for country's progress and strong army is the need of country's defence.

4.3. Road to sustainable democracy in Pakistan: The PTI factor

History tells us that Pakistan has been experimenting with democracy and military dictatorship. As an Economist I see it less of political outcome and more of an economic circumstance. Last time democracy dwindled in Pakistan in 1999 was when Pakistan nearly defaulted. Economic sanctions were imposed on Pakistan after 1998 nuclear tests and diplomatic isolation was an outcome. The Rupee depreciated and import bills soared. Foreign currency accounts were frozen by the then incumbent government of Nawaz Sharif. It further deteriorated the confidence of the international commerce taking place as well as domestic business environment. Under these pressures a precursor for military intervention by General Pervez Musharraf took place. People of Pakistan, Opposition, judiciary and print media (then the predominant part of media outlet) welcomed the military intervention.

The cloak of military intervention upon Pakistan is always discussed and analysed by popular media nationally and internationally as a plausible possibility despite the fact that PPP government had completed its term of five years from 2008 to 2013 and PML N government has also done the same from 2013 to 2018. It is normal among some media outlets to present an encouraging picture for dominant military role in Pakistani politics. It does not seem to matter that military is officially taking a stand in support of democracy in Pakistan. If anything this

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tells us that military intervention is still a viable option for some political and media pundits.

Why would military want to intervene today? If we draw parallels to last intervention, in my view the only significant rational would be failure of economic governance in the country.

It is well known that debt has been multiplying in Pakistan since 2008. Well the economists in government roles claim that there is no need to worry. They are partly right based on an optimistic assumption. If the debt is translated into long term productive assets through generating economic activity, the high debt burden is not a problem. An economically stable and prosperous Pakistan where significant private activity has been generated would enable Pakistan to not only repay the debt but also make it debt free. But what is the time line we are talking about for such a scenario? Well say for example CPEC is functional with industrial zones generating billion dollar worth of economic activity as well as making Pakistan a gate way to Central Asia in addition to Chinese trade, we are talking about another 7 to 8 years. Such a Pakistan is envisioned by the policy makers at the helm of affairs and naturally then the debt they are accumulating is a calculated risk making its worth plausible in near future.

Now it is also good to be skeptical especially when we look into our history. Corruption is a valid argument to this effect. Corruption in Pakistan is a serious issue. If Pakistani political elite have not learnt anything from history, and if sincerity to economic governance is not shown, Pakistan may be heading to a economic disaster with such high debt levels. They are clearly not sustainable in the long run unless Pakistani economy starts to perform in next 2-3 years. By economic performance, I mean growth rates above 6 percent. So are we heading to another military intervention in the future if Pakistani economic performance does not outpace its debt accumulation?

Well my answer would have been positive if it would be about the politics of 1990s. Then amid serious corruption charges PPP and PML N governments conveniently took turns but could not change around the economy. The tyranny is that economic stability could happen only under a military rule though it also turned out to be momentary.

Today in the political landscape, Pakistan is already practicing a multiparty politics, where a third significant political party PTI has emerged as a force to reckon with. All credit to Imran Khan that his modest political start in 1990s has at last been transformed into a major wave of political change since 2013. PTI is a very vocal opposition and it is also a very reason for a wall between army intervention and democratic precedence in the country.

PTI has a generic appeal in at least two provinces of Pakistan namely KPK and Punjab. Nevertheless, its political activity can be seen all over the country making it a national party.

What happens in 2018 general election is open ended possibility. PML N has initiated an economic program for Pakistan. Some macro economic dividends like low inflation have already been delivered. But most of its initiatives will have to take some more time to materialize if they have been done in all sincerity and no dubious deals have been made. If it is the former, this makes PML N the fore runners for 2018 general elections as well. PTI should understand that while also knowing that it has done its job in strengthening the democratic precedence in the country, it will have an equal chance to govern the country in 2018.

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