



Mirroring the Chinese Model of Development

By Mizna Nasir

China today is a picture of high rise buildings, penetrating into the clouds. The people are equipped with smartphone which, with a single scan of the seller's QR code, can help them pay for a bag full of potatoes even at any local village market. There has been an explosion of public transport with a huge mesh of Metros within city and even inter-city networks of railway.

This, however, was not how the huge country looked like about five decades back. The skyscrapers have replaced farms, fishing villages and markets. The myth of owning a credit card was to be addressed by long queues outside the bank. China, the giant in isolation, was facing several issues such as a high rate of population growth which

impaired its performance in per capita terms. The country had limited development of industry and modern sector. In the year 1978, the exports and imports of the country accounted for only 9.7% of GDP. The Cultural Revolution and 'The Great Leap Forward' had been an abysmal failure, the harrowing economic failures were at large and it was surrounded by 'Four Tigers' in Asia who were developing economically. Enveloped by such circumstances, reforms in China were inevitable, and these reforms came in the form of a person: Deng Xiaoping.

As China began its journey on its road to high end development, the premiers of the country continued to pitch in. Even today, Xi Jinping has come up with measures and reforms to curtail the prevailing issues in China. Initiatives like 'Made in China 2025' and 'Belt and Road Initiative' have subdued the

long prevalent dominance of the West. In its journey of becoming a Super Power, China has been benevolent to developing nations such as Pakistan. As the former Chief Minister Punjab quoted, 'Pakistan-China friendship is higher than Himalayas, deeper than ocean, sweeter than honey, and stronger than steel.'

Development brought in Pakistan via the China Pakistan Economic Corridor is just another example of the cordial Pakistan-China relationship. As the PTI government took control of office, Imran Khan seemed nothing but keen to address the basic issues of the country which include poverty, corruption, unemployment and population boom. On more than one occasions PM Imran Khan has expressed his penchant for the reforms brought in China to combat these issues and rise as an economic and technological hegemon of Asia. The question is, what can we learn from China?

If the state is adamant to alleviate its economic position, then first it must dig into the lower tier and uplift the socio-economic conditions to eliminate poverty from its roots. China promoted socio-economic growth in the poor regions of the country. It began the process with initial registration of the poor population. This was aimed to know the figures and regions which had to be restructured to eradicate poverty. The government commenced a 'five batch' policy via industrial development, relocation, eco-compensation, education and social security. Pakistan can replicate these measures for its lower tiers.

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Moreover, the strengthening of seven institutional systems of accountability system, investment system, policy system, assistance system, social mobilization of forces, supervision system and assessment system was a major step to take 82.39 million rural people, 80 per cent of impoverished villages and over half of impoverished counties out of poverty. In Pakistan, 24% people live under the poverty line which is highly prevalent in the rural sector and needs to be addressed in order to ensure sound economic development in the country. Another gigantic issue which hampered progress in China was its booming population.

Today, Pakistan encounters the same problem where its population is increasing exponentially. China catered this magnanimous problem by introducing the one child per family policy, birth control programs and offering economic incentives to families with fewer children. Although various governments in Pakistan have tried to mitigate the population boom, but failed owing to religious and societal pressures. However, the step to offer economic incentives for fewer children will help curtail this explosion especially in poverty ridden areas.

Along with poverty and population, another issue entangled with this is unemployment which was nagging China in the past. Pakistan has been subjected to unemployment too. In order to cater this issue, the state can take a leaf out of China's book of reforms and register the unemployed citizens and their details for better scrutiny. Training facilities, capacity building ought to be made a priority as was implemented in China. In China, local governments convince enterprises to provide internships to graduates and the governments give small living allowance to the interns. Later on, the same enterprises often offer jobs to the interns as per their capacity. This, so far, has remained effective in reducing unemployment in China and surely Pakistan can learn from it.

The PTI government has a clear stance since its inception. It was driving an anti-corruption vendetta against corrupt politicians and officials. According to Corruption Perception Index, China's score in 2014 was 36, which has improved gradually and reached a score of 39 in 2018. Though the improvement is gradual, but Xi Jinping's stance against corruption is similar to what Imran Khan aspires to do. Hence,

the basic measures and campaigns can be mirrored in Pakistan as well.

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Jinping's crackdown against 'tigers and flies' alike left no person too sacred to be convicted or investigated. More than 100,000 people have been indicted for corruption in China in the recent years. In this regard, the two countries can work together along the lines of the agreement signed between Beijing and Islamabad to facilitate the National Bureau of Corruption Prevention to combat corruption in CPEC projects. Moreover, the Xi Jinping government started Operation Fox Hunt (2014) and Operation Skynet (2015) to locate and repatriate corrupt officials and criminals who fled overseas. This is a common woe of Pakistan today and can be curtailed on similar grounds.

Hence, China Pakistan relations should not be confined to economic and military projects, but collective reforms and policy making may help bring paradigm shift. China provides a success model to follow ■



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