**Pandemic Politics**

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Let me start by saying I am no public health policy expert and my musings are simply based on what I have observed as a layman. No reasonable person can actually believe the numbers that the Government has been putting out since the start of the Pandemic. When the Government wants to lower the numbers, it starts carrying out fewer tests and when it wants to increase them- as it does right now- it increases the numbers of tests. Pakistan’s infection rate is at about six percent. This means at 100,000 tests, Pakistan’s number of infections will be 6000 per day. If Pakistan were to increase this to say 1 million tests a day, the infection numbers would reach 60,000 cases a day. So why are the hospitals not filling up you may ask? For most people in Pakistan the virus has very mild symptoms and that is something we have yet to understand. It can have something to do with the fact that Pakistan’s population is younger than other countries. It also means that this government is betting on getting herd immunity and is callous towards the deaths it may cause.

The second wave is going to be deadly and it will be deadly because of this Government and Government alone but it will find an easy scapegoat. This time the virus will not differentiate between the young and the old. What is needed, as has been needed since the beginning of the pandemic is an 18-day complete lockdown. If Pakistan locks down strictly for 24 days, the Pandemic will be wiped out. It is commonsense. In 24 days everyone who has coronavirus would have either recovered or unfortunately would be dead. Furthermore, the Government should impose a 14 day quarantine for every visitor from abroad.

These are all basic things that the government should look at but it deliberately won’t. The real reason the government is refusing to lockdown is to ensure that the anti-government PDM jalsas can be blamed for the second wave. For its part the opposition is playing into the hands of the government despite knowing well that one Jalsas are not going to bring down this damnable government and second their Jalsas are super spreader events that will definitely compound the Pandemic. Once the second wave is out of control, the Government will impose a lockdown and blame the opposition for not just the second wave but the economic fall out of the lock down. Thus instead of sitting out the second wave the opposition has dug itself into a hole. Meanwhile for the Government it is a win-win. If the second wave turns out to be less deadly than predicted, it will take credit for it. If the second wave turns very deadly, it will blame it on the opposition. To prove that the second wave is deadly, the Government will simply start testing more.

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One thing that it proves is that none of the actors involve care much for the effect on the Pandemic on the poor and hapless masses of this country. In the opposition’s case, not only are they callous but their political decisions will only hurt them in the long run. Their super spreader events are likely to alienate their supporters. The best thing would be to wait till some sanity is achieved in the Pandemic. What will be gained if the Government goes? Will there be new elections? How will these elections be conducted during the Pandemic? And suppose the elections were conducted during the Pandemic, which is highly unlikely, and suppose the opposition won the elections, would it be able to control the Pandemic? It will be an utter disaster for the opposition. The Pandemic will spiral out of control because of the elections and the challenges faced by the new government are likely to be so grave that it would collapse and hoist with its own petard. Do the leaders of the opposition parties really want to do this? A better strategy would be rail about the persecution that has not abated during the Pandemic. The Government is guilty of political victimization. The more the Government victimizes the opposition during the Pandemic, the more opposition is like to win the sympathy of the people. Secondly the opposition must continue to criticize the Government for the mishandling of the Covid Crisis. Research will show that the Government is fudging numbers. This alone will give the opposition enough ammunition to make the Government look bad. So one’s advice to the opposition would be stand aside and see the Government collapse under the weight of its terrible mistakes during this crisis.

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