**Khan Beware the ides of March (A lesson from history)**

[Zara Abdullah](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/zara-abdullah/)

March 2, 2021

Nearly 2064 years ago, in the city of Rome located some 7000 kilometers from Islamabad, a conspiracy to murder was enacted; Julius Caesar, the great Roman emperor was assassinated by 60 of the 100 or so active members of the Roman Senate. The murderers included the trusted companions and closest friends of Caesar.

At the time of his assassination, Caesar was a hero, in addition to being one of the greatest conquerors of all time; he had successfully embarked upon an agenda of widespread reforms and poverty alleviation schemes for the poor and destitute in the Roman empire. As is the case with leaders all over the world, Caesar’s unrelenting ambition was his undoing. With the passage of years, he became more and more autocratic in his style of governance. These actions made his unpopular with the Roman aristocracy and the conspiracy to against him finally come to fruition on 15th March, 44 B.C., with his assassination at the hands of the Senate.

Over two millennia later, as the Senate elections in Pakistan approaches its climax in March, it’s conspiracies galore on the political front. While the ruling coalition is trying its best to remain intact and cohesive, their political opponents have teamed up to maintain the status quo of over 70 years in Pakistan politics. While no party can realistically claim to have clean hands in the lead up to the Senate elections, the burgeoning inflation, cost of living, unemployment and human poverty index have cast a dark shadow over the achievements of the PTI rule. These are key factors which have given the forces of opposition ample fodder to increase their influence upon the electoral college (who are all elected representatives) of the Senate. There is also no shortage of the likes of Brutus and Cassius among the corridors of power in Islamabad, all of whom are in search of their proverbial ‘pound of flesh’ from the nations coffers. There are even rumors of rumblings among the Legionnaires and Janissaries over the overdependence of the government on them, coupled with poor governance and smugness by those at the helm.

It is also important for them to remain conscious of the fact that people suffering from sudden, unexpected hardship are likely to adopt views they previously thought to be unthinkable, which is the case for a number of people that voted for PTI in 2018

It is therefore imperative for the country’s ruling leadership not to forget the lessons that history has taught us. They must remember that the tragedy of life is not found in failure, but in complacency. It is also important for them to remain conscious of the fact that people suffering from sudden, unexpected hardship are likely to adopt views they previously thought to be unthinkable, which is the case for a number of people that voted for PTI in 2018. The elements which had translated into votes for PTI was the frustration of the voters with the lack of performance of the two major parties namely, PML(N) and PPP and many of those who voted for PTI did not necessarily support their ideology or manifesto, but wished to give new leadership a chance. The high aspirations and hopes of the people of Pakistan from the present rulers are showing signs fast of eroding. Too little seems to happening regarding the much touted slogans of change and war against corruption. The leadership also needs be cognizant of the fact that at the national level progress happens too slowly for people to notice, whilst setbacks happen too fast for people to ignore.

Beneath the apparent calm there is an undeniable air of uneasiness, which must not be ignored. Realistically speaking, the forthcoming Senate elections in Pakistan will not be as dramatic as the events of 15th March, 44 B.C., in fact they may ensure greater strength in the upper house and greater political stability for the government in the short term, but it is evident that the seeds of discontent among the masses have taken root.

The people of Pakistan desperately want the present or for that matter any government to succeed and take the country on the path to progress. But they also wish for progress to be translated into tangible and visible benefits for the common man. This is not happening. Irrespective of who secures how many seats, the trends in recent by-elections has shown growing unpopularity of the incumbents and should serve as a wakeup call for the government.

Stories of the ill-gotten benefits derived by the ‘families’ of the previous ruling elites have now been substituted by the shenanigans of the ‘friends’ of the present rulers. Time is running out before long it will be general elections. The government needs to urgently make use of the political stability that they are expected to obtain from the forthcoming Senate elections, refocus, work hard and fast on good governance and restoring the confidence of the people, otherwise like Julius Caesar, the future might hold a rude shock.

*The author is an Islamabad based lawyer*