**Let’s Move Forward and Rise Again!**

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Unfortunately, my fears have come true. None of the political parties is accepting the outcome of Pakistan’s General Elections 2024 held on 8th February. Running up to the already much-delayed elections, I had insisted on the fairness and transparency of the entire process for it to be accepted by the winners and losers.

Historically, the election processes have been questioned in Pakistan by all contestants and therefore it is no surprise that the 2024 election results have been questioned. What is different this time is that even the people of Pakistan are not accepting the outcome of the elections. Though it had happened earlier in 1977 also, 2024 is a different story. It began much before the election dates were announced. Each step of the entire process was challenged in the superior courts and the aspirants even had to go to the apex court to prove their eligibility to appear on the ballot paper.

Remember, the state is all about People, People, and People.

This short article is not aimed at repeating the wrongdoings done during the electioneering process, but to propose a way forward to emerge victorious from a deadlocked situation. Pakistan cannot afford political instability at this time when half of the world is at war. While the pandemic is not over, food and energy crises are already raging due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, and Israel continues to genocidal acts against the unarmed Palestinians.

Given the uncertainty and complexity of the global environment, let’s move forward and rise again. Pakistanis are hard-working, industrious, highly adaptable, and politically well-aware. Moreover, “Pakistan, with 60 to 65 per cent of its population below the age of 30, boasts of the largest Gen Z population in the world.” Therefore, I do not doubt that getting back on track will not be as hard as we are fearing.

In my opinion, following a few steps is fundamentally important at this time to recover from the morass that we have gotten ourselves into. However, it is necessary to mention that each state institution and organization will have to play a positive role in the recovery process without which it will be highly improbable to even float at this time.

First, elections have taken place and people have voted for their favourite candidates. Election Tribunals are in place to look after the complaints, but the process to redress the grievances must be undertaken expeditiously to complete the forum. The call for the first sitting of the new parliament may be delayed until all applications are settled.

Second, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the superior judiciary must ensure that only the genuinely elected members take oath as members of the Parliament. However, if a particular constituency needs to undergo a reelection, it must be done as quickly as practicable.

Third, let the truly elected governments be formed at the Centre and all the four Provinces as soon as the legal issues are resolved.

Fourth, the new governments should adopt a policy of reconciliation instead of confrontation, because Pakistan can ill afford another period of political instability or reelection before the expiry of the legal term of the parliament. Therefore, all political prisoners must be released immediately and allowed to participate in the subsequent political processes in their respective capacities.

Fifth, the judiciary must play its role as a problem-solver because the political actors have only two places to go: the people and the courts. People have already spoken; therefore, it is the superior courts where the cases will come with an expectation of speedy justice.

Sixth, the military establishment must try to remove the perception of being a facilitator of a particular contestant and help the incoming government in whatever capacity it is tasked.

Seventh, the bureaucracy must also assist the new government in settling down quickly instead of showing their loyalties to previous masters.

Eighth, the people of Pakistan must show resilience and patience to let the new governments at each tier perform. Usually, the first 100 days are considered crucial but given the present situation, I would suggest that at least six months may be given during which the annual budget will also be presented.

Finally, for the incoming governments; this may not be an ideal time to take over, but challenge yourself to perform because the people have shown confidence in you and you must deliver. Pakistan is Blessed with unaccounted bounties by Allah Almighty, and all one needs to do it to explore and exploit those for the well-being of the people. Remember, the state is all about People, People, and People. If you care for people, they will lay down their lives in return.

I sincerely wish the incoming governments that they will deliver because the people are resilient and the land has the treasure, therefore, the leadership just needs to have a sincerity of purpose, initiative, courage, compassion, and fear of Allah in their determinations.

*The writer of this article has authored three international books: “Nuclear Deterrence and Conflict Management Between India and Pakistan” “South Asia Needs Hybrid Peace” and “Understanding Sun Tzu and the Art of Hybrid War.”*