**Venomous Ethnic Activism**

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There are reasons to get worried about the future of Pakistan but living in a state of constant despair is no option. Over some time, social media platforms have become a source of anxiety in society. With no disregard for the importance of a swift flow of information and valuable awareness on various issues imparted through digital means, we need to take stock of the toxicity attached to these platforms. Contributions to our talk shows are not appreciable either! Extra focus on stereotype political controversies and exchange of allegations between party spokespersons have spoiled the impact of prime-time talk shows. The audience subjected to social media and talk show rhetoric has been gradually influenced to view every issue through the lens of hopelessness. Infinite criticism in the name of analysis and inconclusive debates lacking solutions have seriously compromised the intended objectives of intellectual discourse. Growing anxiety and chaos in our society is a by-product of conjectural media-based rhetoric mostly diverting the focus from much-needed solutions. Our multilayered challenges on internal and external fronts are complex but manageable. Let’s take a glance at surging terrorism which, undeniably, has remained a major challenge at the national level. Terrorism thrust in KP and Baluchistan provinces has roots attached to geo-political contestation. Our firebrand critics, wittingly or unwittingly, opt to criticize the national institutes without considering the true complexity of the issue. Let’s first agree on the fact that Pakistan is surrounded by troubled neighbourhoods. Indian hostile designs need no further elaboration if viewed in the context of unresolved Kashmir issues, Pakistan’s valid concerns on RAW-sponsored terrorism and New Delhi’s obsession with militarization of disputed territories along LoC and LAC. Iran is also an important neighbour contesting hostile players like the US and Israel while surviving under tough sanctions. Prolonged unrest in Afghanistan has multiple implications for Pakistan and the most pinching one is the presence of TTP on Afghan soil. After witnessing the varying degrees of wars, foreign invasions and internal turf battles now Afghanistan is under a government that lacks international recognition. IEA’s rule on Afghanistan is nothing but another form of prolonged unrest. The country is under the international radar for human rights violations, female suppression and the presence of terrorist outfits like ISKP, and TTP with splinter groups scattered along Pakistan’s Western borders. Despite tremendous success against terrorist groups on the internal front, Pakistan continues to suffer because of Afghanistan-based terrorists. Unrest in Afghanistan and the meaningful hesitant response of IEA on the issue of TTP should not be twisted as a failure of the national institutions of Pakistan. Such baseless criticism creates disillusion and drifts the debate much away from the exploration of solutions. More than three million Afghan refugees are now dependent on Pakistan. The number of daily commuters at border crossing points is in the thousands. Afghan warring groups carry varying natures of alignment with regional and global players. Survival, in a polarized and badly governed country like Afghanistan, becomes easier for TTP. Elimination of terrorist groups, entrenched across the border, is not an easy task. It merits sensible weighing of all pros and cons with due deliberation on diplomatic options as well. Exploitative twisting of terrorism by ethnic groups needs to be viewed in the correct perspective. A recent gathering of an ethnic group on the outskirts of Islamabad is a relevant example to understand the damaging campaigning of short-sighted firebrand group leaders. The irony with ethnic groups is that most of their so-called leaders usually lose sight of the real issue in a desperate quest to gain public applause with baseless demagoguery. Participants of the Islamabad rally tried to trigger ethnic discord and incited hatred against the state by exploiting the Pushtoon victimhood card. Accusing the state intuitions for foreign-sponsored terrorism is no less than bailing out the terrorists. Nefarious intents of dubious ethnic groups were further exposed once supportive sentiments started pouring in from Afghani characters like Ammar Ullah Saleh who are known for their irrational non-flexible anti-Pakistan stance. The question rightly arises as to why the ethnic activists are criticizing those state institutions that have sacrificed precious lives in the fight against terrorism. Meaningful synchronization between ethnic and terrorist groups is much evident from the IED attack in Waziristan claimed by TTP which appeared within a few hours of the Islamabad rally. Mere criticism and fanning of the ethnic fire to ignite the public sentiments over terrorism under the existing environment is enough evidence of questionable intentions. Those who claim to be the well-wishers of Pushtoons and Balouchs should come out with concrete solutions to restore the peace. Unfortunately, they seem more inclined to generate chaos and expand their support base with poisonous demagoguery. We haven’t ever seen any of the ethnic leaders either engaging their followers in constructive activities or suggesting cogent corrective measures to improve the situation according to their perceived vision. Directionless hateful campaigning, mostly via social media, is serving the purpose of hostile players. Demagogues are infecting the Pushtoon youth with the poison of hopelessness, ethnic prejudice and hatred towards the state. Pushtoons should hold all the ethnic activists accountable for perpetuating chaos and anxiety with hollow verbosity.

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