**Time to fix the wobbling ship**

[M Alam Brohi](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/m-alam-brohi/)

December 12, 2020

Should we take pride in Pakistan being one of the most important countries of the Muslim world possessing a strong army of over 600,000 soldiers, a formidable conventional firepower and a stock of nuclear arsenal, a huge population of over 200 million and a vibrant workforce or we lose our sleep over its unstable economy that, most of the years, has remained aid-dependent with a GDP of $280billion and unimpressive exchange reserves and exports hovering around $20 and $22billion respectively – much less than Bangladesh. Until recently, there have been wide current account deficits.

The poverty index has been on the rise with social sectors like education and healthcare sliding into steep decline. The state’s failure to provide education to the children of the country as provided in the Constitution has resulted in the mushroom growth of seminaries. The religious class engaged in the spread of seminaries has emerged as the well-organized and vocal class to reckon with.

They have developed formidable street power and can paralyze any elected government. The state has been unable to register the seminaries with an approved curriculum. This problem has to be addressed if we want to set the country on the path to progress and modernity.

There is a simmering unrest in the smaller federating units of the country particularly in Balochistan and Sindh. The Baloch have been struggling to have ownership over the economic resources of their province since the very inception of the country. We have relied more on the use of force to subdue Baloch than on political dialogue with the leaders of the province to strengthen national unity.

The public does not expect any positive contribution in improving the political climate of the country by the frustrated and desperate opposition

We have been following this erroneous policy since the amalgamation of Balochistan in Pakistan in 1948. The policy has miserably failed to yield positive results. The trust-deficit between the federal authority and the Baloch has kept widening.

The unrest in Balochistan has been excessively exploited by our adversaries to weaken our national harmony. The population balance in the province was disturbed by the huge influx of Afghan refugees deepening the political fissures there. Along with the use of force, we have followed the imperial policy of divide and rule. This policy did not help us in the former East Pakistan, or the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. It would also fail us in Balochistan.

The situation in Sindh is not much different from Balochistan. The connivance between the landed gentry and the powerful establishment has so far succeeded in keeping the nationalist movements in check. The province has serious differences with the federal government over the Financial Commission Awards, management of coastal belt, allocation of irrigation waters and natural gas, construction of dams on Indus River and provincial autonomy in terms of the 18 th Amendment.

These problems are exploited by the miscreants to sow the seeds of discord in the country. Instead of correcting these unjust policies by the Federal Government, the security forces of the country have been depending on the same failed strategy of forced disappearances and dumping of dead bodies. The workers of the Jiyee Sindh Qaumi Mahaz (JSQM) and Jiyee Sindh Mutahida Mahaz (JSMM) have borne the brunt of the disappearances.

The ethnic polarization sowed long years ago by dictator Zia has taken strong roots practically dividing the province into two parts. The rural and urban divide aggravated by the undue interference of the establishment has the potential of ripping Sindh apart. Political parties are hostage to their narrow political interests and have been fanning this ethnic divide between Pakhtun and Baloch in Balochistan and the Sindhi and Urdu speaking populations in Sindh to the peril of national unity. A country so deeply divided by economic and political interests cannot emerge as a powerful nation merely on the strength of its firepower.

In recent decades, the provinces of Balochistan and Sindh have witnessed the worst kind of misgovernance, corruption and plunder and enormous growth of poverty. The current process of accountability has been too politicized to inspire any confidence. Over the years, the FIA and the Provincial Anti-Corruption Establishments have turned into cesspools of inefficiency and corruption. The politicians and their cronies in the bureaucracy siphon off development funds and dispose of public lands at throw-away prices without any fear of accountability.

The scoundrels use their education and intelligence to eke out evil. Scores of senior and mid-ranking bureaucrats in Sindh have benefited from the plea bargain clause of the NAB Ordinance and regained their lucrative posts. The list of such bureaucrats submitted to the Supreme Court had stretched into a staggering number of over 500.

The public does not expect any positive contribution in improving the political climate of the country by the frustrated and desperate opposition. They openly confess their undemocratic objective to undermine the forthcoming elections to the vacant seats of the Senate in the coming March. This reflects their scanty respect for the established democratic institutions. Their second objective seems to fail the ongoing accountability process to save the skin of those who have been involved in the loot and plunder of the country. Instead of facing their cases in the courts of law, they have adopted mafia-like tactics to circumvent the reach of law.

Their movement has no roadmap for the rehabilitation of the economy, reversal of inflationary trends, alleviation of poverty, revamping of the foreign and security policy. Instead, they are just busy in spreading Covid-19. In the worst pandemic scenario, God forbid, they would hold the government responsible for mishandling the challenge.

The Federal government should not lose time in fixing these fissures in the wobbling ship of the country through constant dialogue and political interaction while steering it to the safe shores.