Age of impunity

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| THE political disorder is witnessing a shift in the balance of power from liberal democracies to autocratic regimes. As the rule of law weakens and decisions are made in violation of human rights, tackling global problems will become increasingly difficult.  And as democracies regress, accountability will fail as a measure of ethical evaluation, corruption will become rampant and the rights of the weak will suffer a setback. Thus will begin the `age of impunity` undoing all the gains of civilisation accumulated over more than a century and take us back to the `law of the jungle` where might is right.  The changing rules of the game have a direct link with diminishing resources of a planet that can no longer support its growing population. The death of democracy and the emergence of the strongman, using inflammatory rhetoric, flaunting law and making promises that appeal to the baser instincts of human nature will usher in an era of political chaos, financial upheaval and moral crisis.  The free world will come to an end if leaders and political parties around the world fail to grasp and address the fundamental problem of human security. Everything in life is sacrosanct to the concept of security be it food, energy, water or protection of life and property. The shif t from liberal to populist governance should be a matter of grave concern to the global community as unaccountable power, a skewed worldview and an exclusive way of lool(ing at the development agenda will mark the beginning of the end of rule of law.  There is already less outrage about moral misadventures and use of militaries, mercenaries and militias as well as demand for accountability in political decision-making for connictresolution.  As countries start looking inwards to build adaptive resilience, explore new economic models and review national security, it is important to remember the centrality of the looming climate crisis and its potential seismic effect on financial systems. The drastic changes that range from sea-level rise to droughts and extreme weather events have quadrupled over the last four decades and are likely toincreasefurtherif fossil fuel reserves are not left untapped underground. Financial markets are not protected against climate-induced losses putting us on the brink of a financial crisis, challenging our systems and capacity to absorb climate shocks.  The fragility of the state was never more exposed to threats beyond its control, and capacities compromised by limited space for manoeuvring. The planet may be headed towards extinction but Pakistan is facing an existential threat from within with animploding population and a rapidly altering climatic regime that will leave large numbers thirsty and hungry without shelter and exposed to disease, living a miserable life or facing an agonising death.  Faced with challenges within and without, the breakdown of rule of law, decline in global freedoms, violation of human rights with impunity in the region and deeply divided political fault lines at home will test the moral credentials of the government and require it to take urgent steps to minimise the damage, shore up preparedness and take bold initiatives in co-creating pollcies with collective ownership.  At risk is human security, rights-based laws and protection of the weak and vulnerable. The future of the Paris Agreement will also become clearer at COP26 in December.  As the US prepares to exit from the agreement and Brazil and Australia openly defy the articles of the agreement, we are looking at a world gradually descending into hell. The lower tiers of society will burn firstbut eventually the wrath of nature will spare no one and annihilate the rich as well.  The dilemma for Pakistan is whether to declare a climate emergency and highlight the issues that imperil its national/human security or desist from spreading alarm and continue with business as usual. The inherent risk in choosing the latter option is like the enemy standing at the door and the inhabitants oblivious of the danger lurking outside.  We are living in dangerous times under threatening conditions and therefore need to alert people about the risk level in stark and clear terms so that everyone is made aware. The next 20 years will unpack the climate catastrophe in its full fury, and if unchecked the population will hit 400 million around the same time. The time for action is now.  The electronic media needs to accelerate advocacy with urgency and build up the climate change campaign with greater zeal.  The moral underpinnings of one humanity and shared responsibility will be put to test requiring team work and coordinated action from all sectors and segments of society.  Governing with impunity should never be exercised as an option by us. The writer is chief executive of the Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change.  aisha@csccc.org.pk |