**Always at a crossroads**

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Since its birth, distortion, confusion, and uncertainty ruled the roost in Pakistan. At the time of its inception, both leaders and the people did not know what type of a country it would be.

In the making of Pakistan, the All-India National Congress worked both ways. It fought against colonialism as well as failed to curb Hindutva even in its ranks. Subsequently, based on a separate electorate, the All-India Muslim League swept the Muslim seats in central and provincial elections held in December 1945 and January 1946 respectively.

The All-India Muslim League led the campaign for a separate homeland for Muslims of the Subcontinent but could not transform itself into an organized political party to take over at the time of independence and govern the country. So neither could it develop a comprehensive political concept of the governance for the new country nor could it give a constitution to the country. The first constitution which was adopted in 1956 was not only drafted by bureaucrats but was also enforced by bureaucrats. Mercifully, bureaucrats got us rid of the status of a dominion and made us a republic (!).

In fact, on August 14, 1947 real power landed in the hands of the highly organized institution of the Indian Civil Service created and groomed by the colonial rulers to serve them and rule the ‘subjects’ of India. Most of the judges also belonged to the Indian Civil Service. It is not difficult to discern their mindset about the people and the new country. Their concept of governance and rule was rooted almost purely in an administrative philosophy instead of a political-administrative concept; this continues to date.

Those who controlled and ruled the country from behind the curtains soon appeared on the stage of power. Who was Ghulam Mohammad? And what did he along with Ayub Khan do to the country? Who were the two Mohammad Alis’ and who was Iskandar Mirza – an honorary major general? These civil bureaucrats, including the judges, along with Ayub Khan – the real mastermind – shaped the future of the country.

Since 1951, Pakistan has been in the US and its allies’ camp. The parliamentary system was derailed in favour of personal dictatorship and the judiciary became subservient to the powerful. The judiciary bowed before Ayub Khan and Yahya. None of the judges invoked the writ of quo warranto. The country which was to become a federation in view of the 1940 resolution and in view of the Objectives Resolution officially christened East Bengal as East Pakistan through the principle of parity. The language issue in East Bengal and its treatment, inter alia, sowed the seeds of the dismemberment as early as 1948.

Justice Munir who earlier legalized the illegal action of dissolution of the National Assembly by Ghulam Mohammad crossed all limits of judicial integrity by invoking the ‘doctrine of necessity’ and used his office again to legitimize martial law in the country with the help of the theory of Hans Kelsen. Nobody asked the general and his accomplices who licensed them to trample all over the constitution and control the reins of the country.

Proponents of dictatorships and contaminators of the fundamental concept of Pakistan always advance the argument that our GDP growth rate has always been higher during our three main dictatorships. First of all, a country is neither simply geography nor is its stability, prosperity and future determined by GDP growth figures only. Even GDP growth never means that it is shared by all citizens and when it is not shared by all, it means that such growth is lopsided and mainly benefits certain groups and sections of the country. We all know about the 22 families in the Ayub era. The poor and regular citizens only got the leftovers from the dining tables of these 22 families.

Ayub’s period was characterized by the green revolution and mechanization of agriculture all around the world. Undoubtedly, Ayub was a very effective mercenary so he was also appreciated well by those he was serving.

All dictators have promoted certain classes and groups on the strength of all kinds of support received as a quid pro quo. Besides, all dictators being illegitimate, promoted individuals and groups who were corrupt and mercenary.

The question is: what was the result of the policies of the 1950s and the impact of the martial law of 1958 and 1969? The country got dismembered in the wake of a surrender. Forget about all commissions and books, just give a look at the book ‘Witness to Surrender’. Why don’t we try to read and understand what is written between the lines in the book?

The constituent parts of Pakistan existed physically before the new country emerged on the world map. People in those constituent parts did have their own history, culture, language, literature, heroes, enemies, politics, and sentiments. Only fools can argue that people would just voluntarily surrender their past, their culture, their sentiments, and their history or that they can be coerced to do so.