**APP – Long term hope?**

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On July 6th, a new political party was launched – the Awaam Pakistan Party (APP). The buzz created by the launch of this new party has been notable. Shortly after the launch event, many popular opinion makers and talking heads dedicated substantial time in their shows to discuss the APP. It has been interesting to see that the discussions were varied and vehement, yet, most did not seem to be based on any direct communications or contact with the founders of APP. That shows a level of arrogance about “knowing it all” without doing any fact-finding or reality checks. And as someone wise once said, arrogance combined with ignorance is a terrible combination. In any case, let us discuss the takeaways from the pundits.

On the positive side, a majority of the pundits praised the leadership of APP for their integrity, competence, nationalism, articulation, intellectualism, and character. However, after this short praise, interesting speculations were put forth which are being presented here in the form of questions as follows: First, why has a party been created when a vacuum for a party does not exist since PTI was already created to fill the political vacuum? Second, PML and PPP could not deliver for the nation due to their lack of governance capability, and PTI was thus created to govern and deliver. So what is the need for an APP when PTI is there? Third, why launch a party since there is space only for IK and PTI and no space for anyone else? Fourth, parties are created by the establishment when the need arises, such as impending elections. What is the need to launch this party at this time? Fifth, has APP been created as on option for breakaways from PML (similar to the Istehkam-e-Pakistan party which was created for the renegades of PTI)?

One cannot profess to know the answers to all the points raised, but knowing the kinds of people that have founded APP, we can offer a reasonably educated countertake. On the discussion that there is no vacuum and that PTI already filled the vacuum and IK is the only one who can take up the oxygen in the political space, one can argue that there is in fact a huge vacuum. IK may have filled the vacuum six years ago by presenting himself as an alternate politician to the masses, yet the real vacuum that needed filling was never of a politician, but the vacuum for a leader. A leader who can provide governance and deliver for Pakistan. In this, IK and PTI failed miserably. One can perhaps argue that if PTI had been given more time, it might have been able to learn from its mistakes and deliver. Who knows? Maybe it would have gotten even worse over time, not better. The author doesn’t say this as a critic of PTI since many such as myself served pro-bono with PTI for the betterment of Pakistan. Essentially, many of us were and still may be well-wishers of PTI, but we are bigger well-wishers of Pakistan. APP seems to have been formed by competent and tested people who can provide leadership to govern and deliver for the nation. They are not necessarily political leaders yet neither does Pakistan need more political leaders who are incapable of governing.

It is a worldwide phenomenon that pundits and media are sound bite-oriented and sensationalism-oriented. After all, news cycles move fast and vary within minutes and hours. Hence, one wonders if media personalities can even fathom long-term vision, and even if they did, discussion of long-term visions would be boring and would not sell the show. Criticism, sensationalism, and conspiracies sell. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that they do not apprehend APP’s long-term vision. It is doubtful that anyone in APP believes that they will be the change makers for Pakistan in the short term. They are not naïve to think that they will be a political force in the next few years. APP seems to have a long-term vision to take Pakistan forward, particularly towards the time when Pakistan arrives on the world stage as the third largest nation in the world totaling 400 million people.

Furthermore, APP is decidedly not a party of the establishment. They are not anti-establishment, just not a creation of the establishment. It is interesting to note that any party is labeled as pro and anti-establishment when no such distinction needs merit. The establishment serves the country and the country’s best interests as they see it. APP has been formed to serve the best interests of Pakistan as well and one doesn’t see any reason why they would be at odds, as long as either one or the other deviates from the national interest to myopic personal interest.

In sum then, regardless of the pundits, a new party has been launched which seems to have professional, competent, nationalistic, and intellectual leadership. It also has a long-term vision to generate and implement policies and provide governance that will change Pakistan’s continued downward slide. It also seems to be the party that wants to create a democracy within the party and without which will create “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people” (Abraham Lincoln). Good luck to APP!

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