**In the memorium of PDM**

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Has the bubble of the PDM alreadyburst after occupying a short but tumultuous pied-a-terre in the choppy politics of Pakistan? It seems so. The contradictions inherent in the alliance finally surfaced to bring the PDM at a crossroads where it found no other option than falling for the baitof bye-elections and Senate polls as strategized by the PTI regime.Though many political analysts were skeptical about the ability of the alliance to dislodge the federal government, the leader of the PDM, however, was too sanguine to gain laurels in agitational politics sticking a feather in his colorful headgear.

The PDM, a collection of ideologically divergent parties, was bound to fail. The agitation was started too early. The PTI regime was through half of its 5-year term, and the country passing through thedeadly pandemic, difficult economic situation, and a hybrid war launched by our traditional enemy through disinformation as revealed by EU Disinfo lab. The people of Pakistan have almost accepted the narrative of the PTI regime that the economic malaise the country was suffering from was not of its making; it had inherited this situation from the preceding regimes, and was trying to remedy it. The crowds, after initial euphoria, started thinning out gradually culminating in the disappointing turnout in Lahore.

The oppositionstarted the agitational movement when the heat of the accountability became unbearable for the leaders of the mainstream parties. Prime Minister Imran Khan in his maiden speech to the nation had pointed out that the opposition would come together once he took them to task for corruption. The way the Pakistan Muslim League leader managed to escape his jail term and slip to London dodging the superior courts by skillfully staging the drama of imminent threat to his life, and his stunning healthy demeanour to outpour his anger against national institutions was disgusting for the people. They wondered how a three-term Prime Minister could descend into a chicanery of this kind. This came to be a damaging blow to his public image as a brave and bold leader that has always fitted in the hero worship of the people of this Subcontinent.

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His direct attack on a national Institution which is still popular in the central Punjab naming the names was a disaster. The irony was that he was attacking the Institution publicly and seeking reprieve from it through backdoor contacts. This duality of face proved an anathema to the people. The superior courts were also subjected to scathing attack by him, his heiress apparent and other leaders of the PDM. It wasn’t too difficult for the people to have a firm idea about the real motives of the PDM wrapped up in the scented attire of democracy and civilian supremacy. They wondered how far he respected democracy, good governance and rule of law in his three terms.

The Pakistan People’s Party under the wily Asif Zardari started having second thoughts about the PDM soon after the Gujranwala public meeting. Zardari is the only politician in the current lot who would never willingly commit political suicide by shutting his eyes to the ground realities in the country, and losing the Government of Sindh and having a head-on collision with the powers that may be. He has no love lost for the Sharifs who had missed no opportunity to humiliate his martyred wife and throw him behind bars to languish there for over 10 years with their acolyte, the Inspector General of Police in Sindh, Maqbool Butt, trying to lacerate his tongue in Karachi.

Zardari knows he would have no political yields if Sharifs escape the current accountability and regain their political standing. Punjab has become the political battle field between the Punjab-based PMLn and PTI. He would like to watch and waitand let them tire out each other. He is not unmindful of the third force with the known capacity to change the direction of this political battle. He would like to seek reprieve from the powers that may be within the existing hybrid system than squandering his chances in helping Sharifs to get out of their predicament.

The Moulana had his own political woes to launch this campaign. The PTI has banished him from the politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. His successive defeat in two elections has rendered him politically homeless. The Moulana had also allegedly indulged in making hay when the sun was shining on him as the king maker of the Mutahida Majlis- e- Amal. He had lavishly benefited from the largesse of President General Pervez Musharraf when he needed his cooperation for the 17th Amendment in the Constitution to regain the executive powers. He along with his acolytes was on the NAB radar.

He tried a solo flight and failed. He has the ability to gather crowds mostly from the seminaries run by JUI Moulvis. He was chosen to spearhead the PDM though all decisions were taken by the senior Sharif and Asif Zardari. He had to follow helplessly. Theodd combination of the inexperienced Maryam and Bilawal and the Moulana with the ideologically strange bedfellows like Achakzai, Mengal and Hoti in supportive role, could not inspire the people’s confidence. Their entire emphasis was on discrediting Prime Minister Imran Khan using derogatory refrains speckled with religiously inflammable chargesrather than presenting an alternative blueprint for civilian supremacy, good governance and economic rehabilitation.

The PDM, to put up a bold face, may strategize its long march and resignations from Assemblies(sans PPP) after the Senate elections. This would further expose their political hypocrisy trying to take all political benefits from the system when an opportunity comes their way, and simultaneously stab it if it serves their purpose.Theywill never concede that they have been beaten, humiliated and gagged nor we should treat them as a spent force. The shortlived tumult of PDM has at least impelled Prime Minister Imran Khan to expedite his public housing and Sehat Card schemes; replenish Ahsas subsidy;launch Kamiyab Naujawan and Kamiyab Kissan programs.

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