**Isnt it time of introspection?**

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The country is facing religious extremism, disinformation systematically disseminated by adversarial powers, escalating tension on eastern border, mounting foreign and security policy challenges,economic morbidity, and political instability.  Aggravating these challengesis the agitational politics being carried on by the hotchpotch coalition of the opposition euphemistically called Pakistan Democratic Movement spearheaded by a Moulana who calls it true Jihadto dislodge PTI regime with the leadership of the mainstream parties keeping a strange silence over the abuse of religion for a manifestly political purpose.

We have had the bitter results of the political movements streaked by sensitive religious slogans like Qarardad e Maqasid, Shoukat e Islam, Nizam e Mustafa. These movements served the political ambitions of praetorian forces and plunged the country into long spells of military rule. Pretending to advance the cause of Nizam e Mustafa, dictator Zia pushed the country into dogmatic religiosity, unleashing the monstrosities of sectarian extremism and jihadist militancy. He destroyed the religious equilibrium in the country Islamizing criminal and civil laws in accordance with the Salafi jurisprudence as advised to him by the Egyptian-born and Saudi gifted Dr. Maroof Dualibi.

This sectarian extremism devoured thousands of precious lives. Even the Bahawalpur plane crash that killed President Zia along with two dozensenior military and civil officerswas suspected to have links with the sectarian extremism triggered by his partisan Islamisation. A sheaf of papers would be needed to contain the names of scholars, religious and political leaders lost to sectarian extremism and militancy since his rule to this day. The sectarianorganizations that took birth in the early 1980s ramified into many branches in all the provinces of the country and carried on sectarian cleansing as independent groups or proxies of foreign powers. They had no shortage of funds which flowed without hindrance from our generous Salafi Arabs.

***The spectacle of the agitational politics launched by the PDM is only aggravating the political chaos this country has long suffered from***

We have the formidably determined enemy to the east that has been aflame to undo the partition of the Subcontinent or reduce us to a vassal state to acquiesce to its dominance in the region. It has unleashed an avalanche of poisonous propaganda against us as evidenced by disinformation lab, detected by the European Union. The enemy has targeted the Armed Forces of Pakistan trying to discredit them and to create a wedge between them and the people. The report about the Disinformation lab names many persons and organizations on the enemy’s payroll. Some of our compatriots, out of sheer naivety, or for their vested interests, have been playing in the hands of the enemy which is so treacherous and callous that it stages Black Swan operations killing its own soldiers just to discredit Pakistan.

We have been witnessing vast political and strategic changes in the regions in our immediate neighborhood including the South West Asia, Middle East, East Asia and Pacific.  President Joe Biden, in all probability, beginning to address the social and ethnic polarization and the political chasm triggered by his predecessor would turn his attention to trans-Atlantic cooperation;the US supremacy over rival powers; the Afghanistan conundrum;the Persian Gulf and East Asia and Pacific. Pakistan would figure out on the chessboard of pressures and inducements in the context of the Sino-US rivalry; the Indian role as a counterpoise to China; CPEC and Afghanistan. These foreign policy challenges brook no disharmony and political chaos at the national level.

The spectacle of the agitational politics launched by the PDM is only aggravating the political chaos this country has long suffered from. The mainstream political parties accepted the results of the elections of 2018 and took oath in the Assemblies. They don’t deny the crucial role the accountability plays in advancing the cause of democracy and good governance. They never thought of reforming the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) which played a mute role under their rule. Apparently, the PTI regimehas given it a free hand to carry out its mandated responsibility. The Institutions’ evolutionary rise to perfection is supported by leaders across the aisle. The opposition leaders, finding fault with the current process of accountability, should have initiated legislation in the parliament to improve it.

No doubt, the performance of the NAB leaves much to be desired. The process of investigation is slow and trials sluggish with the accused languishing in the lockups of NAB or jail.The whole process looks more like harassing or persecuting suspects rather than prosecuting wrong doers.Because of faulty investigations, most of the cases of the prosecution do not withstand judicial scrutiny and result in acquittals. The Bureau is tempted more by the number of high profile cases than the quality of prosecutions. The Bureau hastaken into custody some big namesfor corruption and money laundering. It would cause incalculable harm to the entire process if it fails to prosecute themin time, and successfully.

The PTI regime, by all appearances, is wrapped up in political complacency. The democracy in our country has never been free from threats which always lurk in the shadow. The opposition’s strategy is designed to push the country into adiarchy system of governance by manifestly seeking political reprieve from the constitutionally unauthorized quarters than resorting to the Parliament. Their naked threats to the national institutions – Judiciary, National Accountability Bureau and Election Commission of Pakistan, General Headquarters –aretimed to pressurize and blackmail them into acquiescence to their unjustified demands, or to commit a blunder that may push the country into anarchy.

The PTI has disappointed many of its supporters. Its performance during the past two years has been dismal, to say the least. It has not shown the political acumen to establish a working relationship with the opposition and take short and long term steps to put the economy on the track to recovery, and for controlling of the cyclical inflationary trends. The PTI leadership, over obsessed with the accountability of the opposition leaders, has lost sight of the utmost importance of good governancethat includes poverty alleviation andreforms, rule of law and the protection of the constitutional rights of the citizens.