**Neither a Politician nor a Leader**

**The unfortunate reality is that the country has suffered tremendously due to the permeating political instability.**

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In a democratic dispensation, political parties are the pivot of the system. While vying for the winning franchise of the people to rule the country the rival parties are under an obligation to work to promote national interests and the well-being of the masses whether in power or in opposition. They are regarded as two sides of the same coin and consequently are also supposed to settle their political differences and any contentious issue through dialogue. Engagement is the name of the game. Our political history is witness to the fact that our political parties in spite of their bitter rivalries have found solutions to the complex and intractable issues through dialogue.

However, since the advent of PTI on the political landscape of the country it has slid into a perpetual instability due to politics of vendetta. Differences on political issues have assumed the hue of tribal enmities. An element of violence and impudence has become the hallmark of settling scores with political rivals. And above all the doors of dialogue have been slammed shut in complete disregard to democratic norms and demands of a democratic culture. Regrettably, the person responsible for foregoing aberrations in the political culture is Imran Khan the founding chairman of PTI who was catapulted to the corridors of power by the powers that be in a clandestine manner. Infested by delusional hubris and supported by his mentors-- while in power-- he used NAB to implicate leaders of PML (N) in the fake and fabricated cases a fact corroborated by honorable acquittal of all of them. Such were his ways of governing the country. He miserably failed to lift the political and economic profile of the country earning the ire and disappointment of his mentors. His style of governance ultimately forced the opposition parties to form an alliance against him which culminated in his ouster from power through a constitutional process.

Instead of gracefully accepting the outcome of the no-confidence motion against him and sitting in the assembly to play the role of an opposition leader, he opted for consigning the country to perennial instability by dissolving provincial assemblies of Punjab and KPK and also unleashed tirades against USA accusing it of having orchestrated his removal from power, then blamed the establishment for it and kept on throwing the responsibility on some other personalities including our former ambassador to USA Hussain Haqqani. However later on like always he took a U-turn on his allegations against the USA.

Allegedly in connivance with former DG ISI whom he wanted to be appointed as the next COAS, he made a number of clandestine moves to obstruct the path of General Asim Munir. When all those efforts failed the duo planned and executed attacks on military installations and monuments of martyrs on 9th May which decidedly was a well-calculated attempt to orchestrate a coup against General Asim Munir. Thank God the Army leadership handled the situation without being provoked into retaliatory action.

After the failure of the coup attempt, a sustained campaign was unleashed to malign the establishment, particularly the person of the incumbent COAS which continues till today. In the wake of the incarceration and conviction of Imran Khan on charges of corruption and misuse of authority, the party instead of opting for legal means to secure his release has adopted a path of confrontation with the federal government. The CM KPK has thrice marched on Islamabad with his armed supporters to coerce the government for release of Imran Khan not realizing that it was only the courts that could order his release if found innocent in the cases he is facing.

What transpired in Islamabad on 26th November is indeed very regrettable. The PTI leaders and its social media warriors have upped the ante against the military establishment blaming it for the alleged carnage of its workers by building and propagating false narratives in this regard. That is not the way political parties conduct themselves.

It is a matter of record that the coalition government has repeatedly urged the necessity of dialogue to settle political issues but the founding chairman of the party has been disdainfully rejecting those offers insisting that he would only talk to the establishment not withstanding the fact that the latter on several occasions has declared unequivocally that it has nothing to do with political issues and if a dialogue has to happen it should be between the political parties.

Nevertheless, in view of the PTI having failed to achieve its objective the founding chairman has climbed down from his position of not talking to the government and constituted a committee for dialogue with it. At the same time, he has demanded the formation of a judicial commission to probe the incident of 26th November and the release of all arrested persons failing which the party would unleash civil disobedience. That is the most flabbergasting proposition. Civil disobedience is launched against the colonial regimes and not against the government of your own country. So he has sabotaged the expected dialogue before it has even commenced.

The unfortunate reality is that the country has suffered tremendously due to the permeating political instability. The nation stands polarized. The image of the country has been tarnished on the international level.

Politics is the art of possible. It requires and necessitates flexibility. If we apply that touchstone to determine the credentials of Imran Khan as a politician he fails the test miserably. His obduracy and conceit have damaged not only him, and his party but also the country. A leader is one who unites the nation and selflessly works for its progress setting aside narrow political gains. So my humble conclusion is that Imran Khan is neither a politician nor a leader. No doubt he enjoys popularity for all the wrong reasons.

I am a strong supporter of dialogue and strongly feel that it should commence without any pre-conditions while the law takes its own course against those who were involved in challenging the writ of the state, sabotage, corruption, misuse of authority, and violence.

The core issue is alleged rigging in elections and the problems generated in their aftermath. If the PTI is really interested in dialogue it will have to shun its mantra of stolen mandate and maligning the Pakistan Army. It should not be forgotten that the party itself came into power in 2018 as a result of rigging. Moreover, its triumph in the 2024 election is also doubtful in view of the fact that Maulana Fazlar Rehman has repeatedly claimed that the mandate of his party was stolen in KPK.

The incumbent government must be allowed to complete its tenure. That is the only way forward. However, dialogue should not be held between PTI and the government but among all political parties to evolve a system of elections that eliminates the chances of rigging, as well as reforming the system of governance.

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