Salam KPK

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As the dust settles down, I was wondering to try to sum up the phenomenon of PTI tsunami in Pakistan. Instead of looking at the grand change of Naya Pakistan, I thought of looking at its base and the fountainhead, KPK. KPK a decade ago was synonymous with terror attacks, suicide bomb blasts and an ungovernable space of misgovernance and humongous security challenges; International media called it the ultimate nemesis of Pakistan. KPK witnessed the massive internal migration from troubled FATA and even Swat as Zarb e Azb and Radul Fassad rolled down the terror dens from the inhospitable mountains when Pakistan fought the battle of its survival; the Armed forces got ‘their finest hour’ in the longest war due to staunch support, tenacity and sacrifices of the people of KPK.

It was a classic case of people and Army coming together with the epitome of sacrifice written in pure blood by heroes like AIG Safwat Ghayur shaheed and the angels of APS Peshawar. More recently we witnessed the courage of family of Shaheed Haroon Bilour when the RAW sponsored terror network targeted KPK to discourage the people from taking part in polls. The brave sons and daughters of this province responded by a massive tsunami of democratic counterattack against the forces of disruption and a solid mandate to a party they considered suitable to raise their voice. The factor of incumbency, so traditional and historic in KPK politics, was disregarded by its people through political awareness and faith in democracy.

Has KPK become the new model in the dispensation of democracy in Pakistan, and, has the youth of this province become the torch bearers of this new trend for rest of Pakistan? The answer to both these questions is a big YES. While comparing KPK with Lahore, one of my family members commented on social media site, “Comparing Lahore with KPK is interesting, despite being a city of education and a cosmopolitan landscape, Lahore will take a while to come at par with political awareness and show of democracy displayed by the people of mountains of KPK. The people of KPK have shown political astuteness, freedom, ability to shed the status quo and innovation to experiment change with bravery; in fact, KPK has become a symbol of independent thinking, so much desired by our liberal class in Pakistan. Lahore has yet to learn the nuances of true democracy due to its nature as a city of traders. While People of Lahore would love to gossip about democracy over a hot cup of coffee or a scoop of ice cream in their cushy drawing rooms and bustling campus cafes, the people of KPK hailing from the harsh mountainous terrain have practically displayed the understanding of the word democracy”.

KPK has voted against big stalwarts and broken away from traditionally accepted leadership norms headed by big names in old political parties like the secular ANP or the orthodox MMA and given the mandate to a new party, which they consider as the best bet in solving their problems. I will even vouch to say that KPK has voted for Jinnah’s Pakistan. While glancing at an old picture of Jinnah’s sojourn to old NWFP in the 1940s and the glimmering faces of ghayyur Pashtuns of that time, one finds similarities; same spirit, same smiling but rugged looks, and the spark in the eyes for a better tomorrow.

Interestingly, the KPK tsunami, which was ridiculed and made fun of by old political head honchos and liberal circles in Pakistan, has proven to be a reality in this election. It has cascades like a dam burst and swept through the mountains and valleys of KPK, hit the adjoining areas of Potohar(Islamabad, Murre, Pindi, Jehlum-Chakwal) and meandered through the Salt Range through Central and Western Punjab, all the way to South Punjab, with its tide entering the City of Lights. And this is the first phase of this tsunami after the dam burst from KPK, what lies in between is the urban central Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. If PTI can deliver on the promises it has made, this KPK tsunami has all the potential to spread all over Pakistan in the next five years.

KPK has been the gateway of invasions into the hinterland of old India as well as the driver of revolutionary ideas. Can it become the harbinger of strategic change in Pakistan’s polity? Again, my guess is a big YES. Pakistan sits on the young demographic gold mine with almost 100 million youth and a potential to move on a new trajectory of development and progress. Since the KPK tsunami was spearheaded by a vanguard of youth, it is natural that this tectonic shift in Pakistan’s polity and the scent of this youth movement spreads like aroma in rest of the country.

PTI leadership under Imran Khan have their hands full, and they have to move fast to exploit the dividends of KPK tsunami. I will try to cover the new agenda for Pakistan in coming days, but few early thoughts are tabulated. First, Imran Khan has to give a healing touch to entire Pakistan, friends and foes alike, by magnanimity and respect. Second, build upon the strength of KPK tsunami and convert this phenomenon into an operational strategy, which is practical and achievable. Third, take the message to heal the wounds of Balochistan by offering the youth of Balochistan a new social contract. Fourth, select a team which can represent all faiths, provinces, classes, genders and trades. Fifth, let the youth get organised through a system of first-class education, social uplift and health and develop their skills needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Last but most important, adopt the system of revolving capitals, don’t sit in cushy Islamabad surrounded by sycophants and durbaris. Spend one-third of your time visiting Quetta, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Gilgit and Muzaffarabad as the revolving capitals of Pakistan. The same formula can be applied to provinces. CMs and governors should be seen spending one-third of their time in cities like Turbat, Dadu, Kohistan, Skardu, Neelam, Khushab, Bahawalnagar and Tharparkar. Let the bureaucracy and your ministers move to feel the heat and cold of these hapless areas and their people to build Naya Pakistan.