**So what?**

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For the past few years, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is facing the wrath of a syndrome that has quietly plagued the entire nation. The ‘So What’ Syndrome.
The objective economists are convinced that the main reason for the ongoing electricity crisis in the country is the agreements signed with the IPPs between 1994 to 2005. Fixing rates in dollars and not in rupees coupled with unnecessary capacity payments has resulted in huge losses to the government exchequer. The caretakers have simply put the IPPs review on the ‘Elected Government’ as if these agreements were not signed by the successive elected governments. Only a few blessed ones have seen the agreements that were signed by Islamabad with ‘foreign’ investors. In addressing the ongoing energy crisis, the hammer is hitting everywhere but the head. So what?
The rocketing inflation and unemployment have grabbed the people’s neck with iron claws. Even the middle class is digging deep in its pockets to make ends meet. On the other hand, the currency devaluation has crossed all red alerts. The trickledown effects of petrol prices are playing havoc with life. If the news of people committing suicide is sending shivers down the spine, so what?
Recently, soon after ruling the country for sixteen months through an amicable coalition, ruling political parties have seemingly parted ways particularly on the timeframe for holding the general election. Soon they will again be at loggerheads rather daggers drawn, fighting to win seats against each other. Those who could afford jumping the Ferris wheel ride are leaving the country. Those who have no way out of the well, cannot think beyond their barren kitchens. So what?
Overlooking and bypassing the IMF’s real conditions, the country has once again been put on the ‘business as usual’ track. Taxing the rich, and fair distribution of the sweets of the subsidies remains a dream for the Fund as well as the 241 million people of Pakistan. Not-so-long-ago, the whole nation was found petrified at the shores of an imminent default. The idea of becoming another Sri Lanka kept haunting all and sundry for months. Now the old video clips, depicting looting in the streets of Argentina are taking rounds on social media. No one knows whether these suggestive clips are circulated as some kind of forewarning or simple distractive tactics. Is someone preparing us for the inevitable? If those who have closely studied the history of civil wars and revolutions are dumbfounded, so what?
The ongoing political uncertainty, inter alia, has established new battle grounds pitting institutions against each other. The tussle between the Constitution and the Election Act 2017 on the general election’s framework has further dented the authority and credibility of the Supreme Court. Parliament’s credibility is already touching the far ends of erosion. Similarly, the directionless ministries and government departments seem helpless in rendering services to the people. They are forced to continue obeying orders coming from right, left and center to keep managing the stop-gap arrangements. Police chiefs are holding press conferences to justify the absence of law and order in the country. The modern-day Nero is playing the flute with a wry smile on his face. So what?
The security of sensitive documents has been compromised. The egg laying cypher message coupled with the mysterious rift within the Presidency over the (mis) handling of two important bills indicate certain serious security-related lapses. Important matters are being discussed, inquiries held, and opinion shaped on social media. A forty-page sheet containing postings and transfers of numerous personnel has gone unnoticed without questioning the criteria followed for such a massive change. Somehow, such changes have been accepted as ‘peanut decisions’ not worth questioning. Contrarily, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has been seen helpless in transferring his own staff. Why? Because the dove called ‘justice’ has migrated from the legal landscape of Pakistan, perhaps forever. Okay, but so what?
Conspiracy theories and propaganda tools have been used to achieve the desired results for ages. Nothing new. However, a whole country with nuclear capability being run only on conspiracies and propaganda was certainly unheard of. May it be the sale of the SOEs, airports, parks, or other assets, an invisible Juma Bazar erupts as and when required. The Reko Diq gold and copper reserves worth $700 billion are again being cited as the ‘real potential’ to change ‘the fate of the people of Pakistan’. Good governance is looking for administrators and vice versa. The country at present is devoid of any credible managers let alone visionary leadership. So what if there is no light at the end of the tunnel?
The caretaker set-up has vowed to follow the previous government’s economic policy without realising whether the latter had one in place, to begin with. Under the circumstances, so what if the issues related to population growth, health and education are no longer under discussion. Democracy and democratic values are in full swing while corruption seems to have been either eliminated or accepted as a norm. If accountability has become a stale joke. So what? If the foreign policy has been reduced to mere issuing PRs, corrigenda, and rebuttals. So what? if Islamabad would soon be unable to pay salaries and pensions to the civil and military officials. So what?