[The worrisome factor](https://nation.com.pk/08-Nov-2019/the-worrisome-factor" \t "_new)

Malik Muhammad Ashraf November 08, 2019

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As the sit-in by the followers of JUI (F) continues and the interaction between the negotiating teams of the government and the Rahbar committee of the opposition has failed to produce any positive results so far in regards to defusing the situation, the chances of a clash between the law enforcing agencies and the protestors are increasing because the government in spite of its cool demeanour so far cannot allow disruption of civic life indefinitely. The Maulana remains adamant on the demand of resignation by the Prime Minister and fresh elections in the country; a proposition also supported by the major political parties though they are not part of the sit-in.

One thing is certain that in spite of the fact that the Maulana has been able to bring a big number of his diehard followers to the capital but it is not a popular movement that could pose a serious threat to the government. Nevertheless the party is in a position to create law and order situation in some parts of the country or even in the capital right now if no negotiated solution is found to end the stalemate.

AS far as the demand of the JUI (F) seeking resignation of the Prime Minister and fresh elections is concerned the reason given by the Maulana and his allies is that the 2018 general elections were rigged and therefore the incumbent government lacked legitimacy. Nobody with a sane mind can endorse them in the light of article 225 of the constitution which says “No election to a House or a Provincial Assembly shall be called in question except by an election petition presented to such tribunal in such a manner as may be determined by Act of the Majlise-e-Shura (Parliament). The fact is that the JUI and its allied parties did not take the legal course to challenge the validity of the results of the elections or exhausted any other legal avenue available to them to seek redress to their grievances. So it can be safely inferred that their demand is unconstitutional. Instead of taking to the streets and creating a law and order situation the JUI (F) and other political parties should have adopted constitutional means to remove a government or the Prime Minister using the forum of the parliament. The refusal by the government to accept these demands, therefore, is the right response to unconstitutional machinations of JUI (F) and other opposition parties.

The fact is that Imran is the most popular leader in the country as per different surveys conducted from time to time and it is indeed naïve on part of the opposition parties to persist with their denial mode and resort to unconstitutional means to remove the government. The PTI has been mandated to rule the country for a five year term and it has the right to be allowed to complete its tenure. In a democratic dispensation it is for the people to decide the fate of a political party through ballot. The history is a witness to the fact that continued political instability owed to the unconstitutional actions of the political parties in their lust for power. The cause of democracy is best served if the political entities play the game according to the rules and promote a culture of tolerance and accommodation. Any action to the contrary actually shrinks space for the democratic forces.

The most worrisome factor in the present situation is the convergence of religious and politics. That is actually what the Maulana is doing at the moment. Such a course is bound to create more fissures in the society and lay bare the social fault lines which scuttle the national unity. Maulana needs to realize that though he may be in a position to give the government a worrying time but the sit-in cannot dislodge the government as being envisaged by him. The history of sit-ins in the last decade proves it beyond any doubt that resort to unconstitutional means cannot succeed in destabilizing the entire system though it can cause some dents in the political edifice. The strategy adopted by Maulna to re-establish relevance of his party to the political arena of the country after a decisive defeat in the elections is fraught with great dangers.

The government is rightly trying to engage Maulana and other stakeholders in a dialogue to defuse the situation and bringing an amicable end to the fiasco. The Maulana and his followers have to show flexibility recognizing the ground realities and avail this opportunity to collaborate with the government in bringing the much needed reforms in the system of governance and resolving some of the other contentious issues other than demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister and fresh elections.

It is simply not desirable and legitimate for a few thousand people to march on the capital and try to pull down the government through creation of law and order situation. This culture needs to be done away with to put the country on the course envisioned by the founding father. The political parties also need to shun the habit of blaming the state institutions for their own failures and political follies. The state institutions are bound by the constitution to support the legitimately elected government and their loyalty to it cannot be challenged. DG ISPR has rightly pointed out that the Army stood by the government in 2014 sit-in and therefore it has nothing to do with the Azadi march which is a political activity and there is no constitutional role of Army in it as an institution.

What the Maulana and his allies also need to understand and realize is that in the present circumstances when the country is faced with enormous challenges and a security threat from India in the backdrop of ending special status of Kashmir by the Mdoi government, it needs impregnable unity. Trying to create political turmoil and instability in the country at this juncture is tantamount to weakening our cause and ability to surmount those challenges. It in fact plays into the hands of the enemy. The situation is a test of the patriotic credentials of the opposition parties and their love for democratic norms and the constitution. They must pass this test if they genuinely believe in the democratic future of the country capable of thwarting nefarious designs of the enemies. The position taken by them negates their democratic credentials and may lead to perpetuation of the vicious circle of political instability to the detriment of national interests.

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