**Trichotomy of Interests**

[Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/dr-zia-ul-haque-shamsi/" \o "More Articles by Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi)

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In my short article ‘National Interests versus Public Interests’ published in Daily Times, Pakistan, I argued “The states have their interests usually referred to as national interests, however, these interests may or may not always be in sync with the public interests.”

However, I restricted my argument to security interests only. But, in this article, I will take the argument to another level to include the regime’s interests, which often supersede all other interests of the ruling elite to stay in power.

We commonly read and hear about the trichotomy of power that includes legislature, judiciary, and the government. Media is often referred to as the fourth pillar of the state. However, I intend to introduce a trichotomy of interest among the three stakeholders: the government or regime, the establishment, and the people.

Let me explain the respective interests of each of these stakeholders of any state who shape the policies and the future of their state.

First, the establishment includes all the state institutions: military, law enforcement agencies, bureaucracy, judiciary, civil societies, etc. The establishment of any state usually safeguards the national interests of the state. However, one can debate the selection of national interests and priorities-more on this after explaining to other stakeholders.

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Second, the regime includes the ruling elite, the respective mafias like the military-industrial complex in the developed West, and the hoarding mafias in the developing states. The regime’s interests lie in its survival in the power corridors so that it can continue the loot and plunder of the state resources.

Finally, the people, are the most important element of any state. The public interests are supposed to be looked after by the regime that gets elected by the same people. Unfortunately, regimes do not care for public interests due to which regimes become unpopular and people remain dissatisfied.

Having learnt a little about the stakeholders in any state, let’s now look at the respective interests and the probable causes of the clashes and their outcomes.

As stated earlier, usually the establishment guards the state’s national interests because any threat to the state from the enemy within or without would ultimately hurt their capacity to perform. For instance, political instability cannot be in the interest of the establishment of any state because it can throw the state into chaos which will have to be handled by them only. The governments come and go and come back again. Still, the state institutions are the permanent bodies and remain the only source to look up to the people – More so because the people can change the governments but not the Judges, Generals, and Public Servants.

The regimes on the other hand can play the national interests for the sake of domestic politics. It may happen in any state, developing or developed. The Bush Administration played on the fake folders to attack Iraq in 2003, and the Modi government played on Pulwama for his reelection in 2019. There are numerous examples where the regimes played on with the national interests and the public interests to further the regime’s interests. The regimes where the power can remain with a particular leader for an unlimited period do it more often because he/she does not want the leave the power corridors at any cost. To hang onto power, the regimes could care less for the national interests or the public interests. However, such regimes cannot do so without adequate support of the establishment.

Therefore, whenever the interests of the regime and the establishment converge, the government lasts longer. However, if the public interest is ignored for a longer period, they may revolt against the regime and at that stage, the establishment is faced with the dilemma of who to choose. Perhaps, the same happened in Sri Lanka and now in Bangladesh. In most situations, the establishment chooses to side with the people because it does not want chaos in the state as it may hurt the national interests in the short to medium term. Moreover, in developing states, the establishment does not wait for too long and intervenes in its way to resolve the crisis so that the state’s national interests are protected and the public does not feel alienated.

It is in this context, that I suggest that the establishment and the regimes must give respect for public opinion and give priority to public interests so that people remain behind their elected governments and respect their institutions as well.

In my opinion, peoples’ well-being must be kept as a top priority as part of national interests so that regimes do not turn their backs on people’s interests and the establishments also do not have to invest their energies on issues that are supposed to be handled by the regimes and not the establishment.

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