**Dealing with militancy**

**[Lt Gen Tariq Khan (R)](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/lt-gen-tariq-khan-r)**

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Dispensing justice and appeasing criminals is mutually exclusive to one another. You can never have both. The primary function of a government is to defend the State; the purpose of the Constitution is to protect the people from their government. The government needs to be clear and state its position regarding how this State will be run in the future to meet the needs of what is normally defined as governance.

We are living in the critical moment where the government is compelled to make hard decisions and must make a choice, where it either takes measures to save the country from obscurantist thought, or then alternatively, it succumbs to the religious right throwing us in a perpetual search for divinity. In the recent TLP case, the government was caught up between a rock and a hard place and one can sympathise with its predicament.

Regardless of what it did the outcome was not going to be pleasant—the decision was probably based upon the conclusion—which of the two had the least consequences that could be unpleasant and where was it easier to apply damage control measures to spin one’s way out of the crisis.

[PSP moves SHC against Sindh LB amendment bill](https://nation.com.pk/01-Dec-2021/psp-moves-shc-against-sindh-lb-amendment-bill)

In my own opinion, the decision was not motivated by how Pakistan should be governed in the future or what would be the direction of the nation as a State in effect or practice. The unintended consequences of dealing with the TLP will throw up a number of other issues such as Sipah Sahaba, Lashker-e-Taiba, the MQM and subsequently FATF; all of which may return to revisit this government, sooner or later. The first rule of governance is that one cannot be selective in its approach—whatever is good for the goose is also good for the gander.

Nevertheless, it is the Government’s prerogative to take the decisions it needs to take but it is only fair that the decisions that it does take must have a proper and correct narrative based on logic and reasoning. Failing this, the consequences could be horrendous, specially if they are based on expediency just to clear the air immediately but not take into account of how it effects the State in the long-term.

[Saqlain Mushtaq to remain Pakistan head coach for West Indies series](https://nation.com.pk/01-Dec-2021/saqlain-mushtaq-to-remain-pakistan-head-coach-for-west-indies-series)

First and foremost, the government must take into consideration that this continual conflictual environment is a product of incremental omissions and commission by misgovernance over the years but nevertheless, will have to be eventually confronted and resolved by someone. Is this government that someone? What needs to be addressed by the government if it wants to go down the road to stability and peace is to deal with some of the main reasons for this self-inflicted chaos and confusion.

The absence of governance where the people felt that they were abandoned and had no one to turn to and this really led to the total erosion of the State’s writ in huge swaths of spaces. Concessions were given to breakaway factions that were allowed to hold the public hostage through so-called aman committees that passed themselves of as representatives of the government. So the Government has its work cut out, but if its priorities are and should be, stability, cohesion and security, then it will have to deal with these matters.

[Lawyer killed in gun attack on car in Karachi](https://nation.com.pk/01-Dec-2021/lawyer-killed-in-gun-attack-on-car-in-karachi)

While dealing with the TTP, history and precedence make a good guide to establish method and parameters in how to manage any engagement. In the first instance, the TTP is not known to comply with any agreement that it has ever made and there is no guarantee that they would do it now. Experience has shown, that they always find an excuse to violate the agreement whenever it suits them. The government should not find itself compelled to talk to the TTP since there is no reason for any such compulsion.

The government wants to deal from a position of strength but that’s where the government stands today anyway. It need not take any action to establish trust, good faith or credibility—it’s a take-it or leave-it position for the government. Negotiations with the militants usually lead to fulfilling the militant’s objectives—gaining time and relocating positions, under the so-called ceasefire. This further enhances their militant capacity and allows them to improve their operational posture. It then becomes an additional basis for further negotiations and the cycle goes on.

[PM Imran Khan lauds FBR over 35% growth in November revenues](https://nation.com.pk/01-Dec-2021/pm-imran-khan-lauds-fbr-over-35-percent-growth-in-november-revenues)

Religion has gradually entered into the domain of politics; it is only logical to expect that politics too has entered into the domain of religion. The two need to be rationalised and kept apart at a reasonable distance. The country cannot have its domestic and foreign policies being dictated to it by madrassas and mosques. Here is where the government must make difficult decisions but no one said that governing was easy. The time has now come where the direction that this country needs to take is finally established and decided and does not remain confused, ambiguous and weak; where a national identity takes precedence over an elusive Ummah who are so conspicuous in their lack of moral courage that they cannot stand by the hapless people of Kashmir or the miserable people of Palestine. If we do not change our ways, then factions such as the TTP and the TLP will make us conform to theirs. Let us learn to be Pakistanis first.

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[Lahore declared most polluted city globally](https://nation.com.pk/01-Dec-2021/lahore-declared-most-polluted-city-globally)

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