**A letter to the Pakistan Army**

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Dear Sirs, it is with a rising sense of foreboding that I write to you regarding the ongoing predicament in Pakistan. I ask you this: why should I pay a price for the shame issuing from the insanity that I witnessed over the past few days?

Sitting thousands of miles away, all I felt was a growing shame and rage as I saw the attacks on state sites and the shameful justification of an ‘organic’ reaction to a popular leader’s arrest. Well, as an incensed citizen, I too demand accountability of those who cast aspersions on my country, my honour, and my pride.

I ask you something: if Ali Wazir, Manzoor Pashteen or a Baloch nationalist leader had done even a fraction of this, a few miles from Wagah would they not have paid dearly for such acts? I would like to ask you what you intend to do about it. I hope that you, dear Sirs, are going to redeem your image and salvage some respect by setting a precedent and holding the architects of this nemesis accountable. Might I remind you that this might be your only redemption given the straitjacket you seem to have been placed in.

The carefully constructed narrative of untouchability and intolerance of any criticism, irrespective of how valid and legitimate it might have been, cultivated by the military over the past many decades has been torn asunder by no other than a mainstream political party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. My reminder to you of that narrative is not condoning it but to draw your attention to how you used that policy to quell legitimate concerns raised by people that were affected by conflict, displacements, abuse, and highhandedness of past military rulers.

There also needs to be an effort at introspection from within. Does everyone stand with their institution, its credibility, its dignity or have their political preferences overridden their duty, which also reveres its martyrs? The same martyrs whose images were defaced by the mobs that overtook the streets in Lahore and torched Jinnah House down.

Let me remind you of your role. You have to date and will continue to support political leaders and alleged security assets in the larger national interest. Despite this alleged support of so-called strategic assets and the open cultivation and manipulation of political experiments, you as an institution were the steadfast hope that in a macabre way was the glue we needed to hold our divided society together. You defended our borders, held the fort while we fought for power amongst ourselves.

I believed it – despite being of Baloch and Pakhtun stock, despite my conversations with your many broken-limbed, grieving fellow countrymen and women in our tribal lands and beyond. I reasoned, I pleaded, I argued against calls about the wardi, about far more repugnant calls for a greater Afghanistan. I protested Baloch nationalists calls to secede even as I cried tears of blood for the murder of Nawab Akbar Bugti who never wanted to break up Pakistan unlike some other Baloch sardars. Because I had faith in you, of taking cognizance of past errors and righting the wrong, which speaks of my naivete.

For the past two years I have been in conversations with the PTM for my PhD research and have been arguing over how integral the military is for upholding the Pakistani state. Yet, despite maintaining a heavy presence in Waziristan, terrorist attacks on our security forces continue. Even after suffering more than a decade of displacements we stand in dread of the imminent rumblings of more tanks on the horizon.

Born in a political family, I believed I had seen it all – military dictatorships, autocratic leaders, fledgling democratic setups, violations of the constitution, nurturing of assets, political and security. But the hurt inflicted by the PTI on the Pakistan military speaks louder to me and the subsequent generation of the humiliations inflicted on the security establishment, which is more hurtful than the distant memories of the 1971 debacle.

My critique of Khan is based on his denigration over the decades, into an idol of unhinged pride and grandiose delusions. However well-intentioned he might have been at the start of his political career; he has unfortunately assumed the role of Pakistan's Modi. But who is responsible for this?

Pakistan stands divided today because of the PTI that thrives on lies, hypocrisy, abuse, evasiveness of responsibility, nurturing of violence, thuggery, and systemic erosion of respect for everyone who differs from its expedient opinion or policy at a given time. If the military leadership supports him, it is the best in the world, if not, it is a cabal of traitors, murderers, plunderers. His popularity has created such deep fissures in society that even constructive critique pitches vitriolic warmongering among closest friends and family.

We are paying for the military’s experiments as we are for our civilian leadership's weaknesses and opportune politicians including Imran Khan who behind closed doors have been seeking a reset of relations with the army leadership.

But for now, we need accountability, starting from institutions that need to weed out their own ranks for producing grotesque caricatures that are robbing Pakistan of its dignity. For the indignity heaped on us by the miscreants who defaced our shuhuda. Pakistan Zindabad.

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