**Discerning False Narratives**

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Earlier this week, United States President Joe Biden made a few distasteful remarks about Pakistan’s nuclear policy. If the ethos of globalization rests on the advancement of cross-country diplomacy, Mr Biden’s remarks may just as well have driven an axe to all such development. According to Mr Biden, Pakistan is one of the “most dangerous nations,” which possesses, “nuclear weapons without any cohesion.” The resounding insensitivity of these words has every Pakistani citizen outraged to their core, yet foreign policy endeavours aimed at tackling such presumptuous words have been rather shallow. Were these words uttered as a result of a miscalculated political move, or was there something more sinister at play? Regardless of Mr Biden’s intentions, his statement not only had a political bearing on US-Pakistan ties but also relegated Pakistan’s diplomatic standing to a position of uncertainty. What is then needed is a thorough reading of Mr Biden’s remarks; a word-by-word dissection of his claims and a critical analysis of the veracity of his statement. Surely, one must exert enough discernment to uncloak the real narrative at hand.

In the first half of his statement, the US President anoints Pakistan as the “most dangerous nation.” The remarks not only take away the humanness of individual Pakistanis but also labels them as dangerous people in blanket terms. If policy findings on the War on Terror have taught us anything, it is the negative impact yielded by stereotyping, which ranges from scapegoating entire communities to social ostracisation and the very inevitable–and largely prevalent–hate crimes. Pakistan may not be in the most ideal political situation. Rather, its foundation for human, political and civil rights is often shaky, at times.

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But this is not to say that Pakistan has not taken the relevant steps to build a coherent policy in the fight against global terrorism. According to a special report by the United States Insitute of Peace, some three hundred Pakistani military troops were killed in 2005 in the war on terrorism, more than any other US ally engaged for this cause.

In addition to deploying its troops on the Afghan border, Pakistan has also given drone airspace to the US for military operations. In short, US-Pakistan engagement on military prerogatives is empirical proof of the fact that Pakistan has been an ally rather than a threat in the war against terrorism.

As if attacking Pakistan’s security mandate was not searing enough, Mr Biden went on to label its nuclear policy as “lacking cohesion.” However, Pakistan’s ranking on the Nuclear Safety Index (a benchmarker for nuclear security conditions) paints a completely different picture. In 2020, Pakistan was ranked 19th, India, 20th and the US, ninth. One might then inquire why Pakistan’s strategy is singularly demonised as far from perfect when it has been appraised as the “most improved country” with weapon-used nuclear materials by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI). To many ears, the US President’s words resonate with utter vitriol; a state that once blew up entire cities and left generations to suffer in the aftermath of a nuclear explosion dares to comment on another state’s supposedly lacking cohesive atomic policy.

Post the English Civil War, there was an emerging notion of the independent nation-state, a paradigmatic shift towards self-autonomy. Sovereignty, or the idea that a state is capable of governing itself, was the foundation of this new ideology. Former Prime Minister Imran Khan’s ideology is rooted in the idea of the independent nation-state–a mandate that beckons its subjects to emancipate themselves from the vestiges of a post-colonial mindset. Sadly, a person attempting to break the status quo is met with utmost opposition when trying to overthrow a system created at the behest of a hegemony where the weak are exploited at the hands of the powerful. Hence, this comes as no surprise that the democratic regime of Mr Khan was sabotaged as soon as a handful found their interests in jeopardy.

The dichotomy between the western world and Islam has always been an omnipresent one, yet Mr Khan’s narrative has always been one that calls for self-assertion and legal reform in a bid to interweave the precepts of an Islamic state with that of modern democracy. Yet, when political narratives have undertones of bias and prejudice, such attempts at harmonization are rendered futile by unduly subjecting a country to the guillotine of demonization.

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