**Whipping dead horses**

Friday, Oct 08, 2021

By Raoof Hasan

There is much mediocrity enveloping the people in recent times. Faced with a growing paucity of creative indulgences, this penchant has degenerated to assuming the form of whipping dead horses in fond anticipation of reinvigorating the gory times of the past.

With divisions galore within the PML-N, pitting one half of the family against the other, and the PPP virtually reduced to life support, there are a few vociferous bootleggers desperately trying to stripe them to life simply because their resurgence would suit their ill-intended purposes. Through their tenures in the annals of power, the two parties have been inextricably linked with promoting a culture of corruption and nepotism in the country. While the leadership of both parties has always remained a hierarchical matter, their respective governments were notorious for promoting their own ilk and kind in defiance of the bars of ability and suitability, thus riding over the demise of institutions which were all packed with the basest variety of their toadies and sycophants.

Confronted with ever-depleting prospects of their revival, there is a vile attempt to liken every initiative of the government with its failing. At times, it goes much further than that and the state is assaulted for its policies and programmes. The atmosphere is loaded with venom.

Absolutely ludicrous demands are being made in the wake of the Pandora Papers revelations. One former prime minister of the country was heard demanding that all 700 persons named should be convicted simply because Nawaz Sharif was held accountable. There was no attempt to rationalise that the reason he was punished was because he was unable, unwilling, or both, to give the source of his assets and their transmittal to foreign lands to invest in purchase of expensive properties and businesses.

Also forgotten is the fact that the convicted Nawaz Sharif was given close to two long years for furnishing proof of his financial holdings as he kept hiding behind one premise or the other, all of which proved to be incontrovertibly false and fabricated. He did not even spare the floor of parliament to indulge in a harangue of lies. In the end, he bribed his way to submitting a false medical report to escape for treatment abroad, supposedly for life-threatening ailments.

Till today, neither has treatment started nor has he come back. It is a matter of utter shame that a case is being made for a person who is completely denuded of even a shred of character and integrity. Not only is his entire political life rooted in promoting a culture of loot and plunder, he is even guilty of assaulting the state and its institutions.

The prime minister has set up a special cell to investigate all those named in the Pandora Papers. With the help of the FIA, NAB and FBR, the cell will submit recommendations for action.

Much criticism is also being heaped upon the government’s decision to initiate a process of dialogue with the TTP. These inveterate critics fail to understand that there is nothing known as a perpetual war. All wars and conflicts must come to an end. In fact, there is never a need to start a war other than in circumstances where all other means for reconciliation have failed and there is a threat to the security of the state and its people. It was in such conditions when the TTP had launched an attack against the state of Pakistan that an operation was initiated which ended in neutralising the emerging threat.

This resulted in the consequent escape of much of its leadership to Afghanistan where the government of the day, in collusion with RAW, was actively and aggressively engaged in activities to destabilise Pakistan. It is due to lack of support from an inimical government that the fleeing leaders could not be apprehended and remnants of the terrorist entity managed to continue their operations. Now that the circumstances have changed and the survival of the TTP is threatened, Pakistan is in a position of strength to engage the opponent in negotiations to nip the evil.

The TTP has committed indescribably heinous crimes against the people. The sentiments of those parents who lost their innocent children to their barbarity in the past are understandable. Their loss is irreparable and their suffering immeasurable. There are countless others, brave officers and soldiers, who sacrificed their lives for ensuring the security of Pakistan, and those in the civilian echelons who also suffered at the hands of TTP barbarism. But does that mean that the conflict should continue into the future with no end in sight?

Like I said earlier, there is no perpetual war. There is a time to bring violence to an end. That time has come for Pakistan so that it can be taken along the trajectory of economic salvation, strength and sovereignty. Now that there is a government across our Western border which is supportive of our efforts for peace, and which is willing to help out, it may be the right time to engage the deviants of this terrorist organisation in a dialogue to eliminate the danger of any further destabilisation of the country.

It is yet to be seen what the contours of a possible agreement are, but attacking the very effort for forging peace makes no sense at all. Instead, it is symptomatic of an inherent and distasteful antipathy towards whatever the government may initiate for the sake of securing the interests of the state. This attitude is embedded in personalised conveniences which remains an abominable aberration in the annals of politics.

The time really has come to undertake a comprehensive reappraisal of our attitudes. Personal interests can never take precedence over the state. The very comparison is odious. But it is taking time to sink in simply because the continued relevance of some political conglomerates is severely endangered in these times when Pakistan has a new and refreshing identity, dedicated solely to establishing a transparent and accountable governance mechanism and promoting the state interests without compromise. This is in sharp contrast to the past leaderships which sold these interests before their foreign masters, thus endangering the state and bringing untold misery to the people. This sordid past is dead and buried. No amount of whipping can bring it back to life.

Today, Pakistan is recognised for its efforts for securing peace and bringing the world together through economic connectivity that would ensure progress and prosperity. It stands tall for its pioneering climate policies, its green Pakistan dream, its billion-tree tsunami, its commitment to creating transparent and accountable institutions and promoting an egalitarian society for bringing relief to people in conformity with its foundational ethos. Pakistan surges forward.

The writer is the special assistant to the PM on information, a political and security strategist, and the founder of the Regional Peace Institute.

Twitter: @RaoofHasan