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Way Out to National Crises

Qadar Bakhsh Baloch*

Abstract

Ever since its creation, Pakistan has been in the midst of one crisis after another. Long-spells of military take-overs, shortsighted & self centered politicians, maimed judiciary paralyzed under law of necessity, inept democracies, foreign conspiracies mounting corruption and ever worsening law and order situation so on and so forth kept the nation in doldrums. The paper briefly discusses the unending crisis and suggests ways to deal with them and their after effects.

Ever since its creation, Pakistan has been in the midst of one crisis after another. The sad and untimely demise of Quaid-e-Azam left the nascent nation in doldrums. We kept groping in the dark without a constitution for nearly 9 years and the one that we finally did approve was abrogated after 2 years of its formation. Then came the dark era of military bureaucracy which lasted for nearly 11 years followed by another dictational regime that ended with the tragic breakup of Pakistan. Democracy finally came in 1971 but before it could make inroads, it was abruptly ended in 1977. This brief period of democracy gave us a consensus constitution famously known as 1973 constitution, created mass awareness and political insight. It was during this period that Pakistan embarked upon the acquisition of nuclear technology. Foreign powers did not view this progress favourably and conspired to overturn the process of democracy. The result was another military take over which endured till the divine intervention in 1988. Democracy got another chance but this too was crushed under the boots by another spoiler in 1999 who ruled the Country with the might of his brute force

* Dr. Qadar Bakhsh Baloch, Associate Professor, Department of Management Sciences, Qurtuba University, D.I.Khan, Pakistan. Email: qbuzdar@Yahoo.com

for 9 long years trampling the constitution and the judiciary. It can be said without doubt that while General Zia ul Haq sowed the seeds of Tablinisation, General Pervez Musharaf wilfully allowed it to flourish leaving the nation to the highly intolerant vultures adopting cold and brutal tactics. With their myopic vision and penchant for short term gains, both overlooked the fact that sponsoring large hordes of militants could result in a never ending cycle of violence that would spin out of control. The nation is paying heavily in terms of losses, anarchy, insecurity, crumbling economy and negative image.

It is hard to find any saving graces for the military dictators. They are squarely responsible for the mess and must be held accountable. However, a deep and insightful analysis of our short history does identify a large number of political skeletons also in the cupboard who kept their personal as well as party interests supreme to our national interests. It is they with whose connivance and support, the military dictators were able to perpetuate their regimes. May we therefore, safely say that they too must be exposed and brought to book to preclude our future political as well as military hierarchy from blatantly flouting the constitution and committing blunders, indeed Himalayan in nature.

The most recent revival of judiciary as a result of long struggle is an extremely positive development. Every effort must be made to consolidate the fruits of this struggle. As a first step, the judiciary must be separated from the executive and allowed to function independently. Any arms twisting of the judiciary by the Governments must be strongly resisted, and a deliberate mechanism worked out to keep the state functioning under thorough scrutiny and firm check. The judiciary could redeem itself by taking suo moto notice of all flagrant violations of the constitution in the recent past and punish its violators.

Army under the able command of General Kayani has largely restored its image by distancing itself from political wheeling dealing. This policy of non-interference must continue. Political parties on the other hand must shun politics of opportunism and expediency and keep the Army's role confined to its constitutional limits only. Any attempt by the politicians to hobnob with Army to serve their own interests must be strongly condemned. Judiciary must identify and take stock of all such politicians with tainted reputation whose sole politics revolve around remaining in the corridors of power.

Our political system also needs revamping. Parties with very less representation and independents have a field day in the post election scenario and settle for nothing less than a share in the Government and a fortune. A mechanism needs to be worked out towards a two (or three or even four) parties system. Elections could be used to weed out the minority parties to curtail their nuisance / bargaining value. One of the most serious crises afflicting our Nation is the trust deficit. Our leaders making tall claims and false promises end up leaving the public in lurch with numerous problems such as poverty and injustice. The society is distinctly divided into two groups; Haves and the Have Nots. It may be understood that middle class lends balance to the society – the larger the middle class, the more the balance. Unfortunately, due to faulty policies this class has shrunk to the level of a non-entity thereby creating a serious imbalance in society. There is a dire need to take steps to upgrade the lower class, both socially and economically to expand the base of middle class. This can be ensured through a sound education policy encompassing wide ranging skills in science and technology and vocational training for creation of concomitant jobs to enhance productivity. Trust in institutions and systems can only be developed

through merit, fair play and provision of level playing field to all irrespective of class or status. An ideal arrangement must exist wherein each and every citizen is assured of his due place and privileges without any connection; where every tax payer is convinced that his money will be rightfully spent, and where every citizen is more than sure that he can go up the ladder on the basis of sheer merit. It is in this context that the role of judiciary in keeping proper checks and balances assumes greater significance.

Pakistan is divided on ethnic and sectarian lines. Clashes on these lines take place every now and then which have kept the nation ablaze. Foreign powers conspiring against Pakistan have exploited this menace to their advantage. Religio-political and ethnic parties need to be a lot more pro-active in quelling this menace by propounding the binding forces of Islamic ideology and nationalism.

There was a time when the proponents of provincial autonomy were looked at with suspicion with regard to their patriotic credentials. The concept of a strong centre with weak provinces has become redundant, and provinces are now demanding greater share in national resources. An acceptable formula in NFC award must be worked out to cater to the area and backwardness of the provinces. Meanwhile concurrent list must be thoroughly debated in the two houses and revised to redress the grievances of the provinces. The process of decentralization of powers and resources could take place gradually and transition completed in about 4 years time. This is a long outstanding demand and must be taken up in all earnestly.

Corruption is another menace eating at the vitals of our society. Newspapers are full of such stories related to those at the helm of affairs. As per a famous Chinese proverb, the fish rots from the head. It is this

head or heads that need to be chopped to prevent its disease from spreading to other parts of the body. A system of inbuilt checks and balance mechanism must, therefore, be devised to strictly curb this menace. Good governance is a panacea to most of the maladies afflicting our nation. Unfortunately, this aspect has been sadly lacking due to the cold indifference, faulty policies and apathy of our governments in succession. Injustice, poverty, lawlessness and illiteracy have been allowed to grow to insurmountable magnitude. This calls for thorough wake up and shake up of administration and governance system; a system that ensures smooth transition to the concept of a welfare state. This may appear a tall order but given the resolve, determination and sincerity, it can be achieved.

Illiteracy has been one of the main sources of intolerance in our society. Uneducated people can be easily misled into violence and exploited on religious lines. Europe went through a similar phase of ' Dark Ages ' when church had a major say in the affairs of the state. It was during that era when crusade/wars were waged in the name of Christianity and the states were helplessness in front of religious zealots. Consequences of the overpowering missionaries brought chaos and disorder in the world. However, it was soon realized that the role of church had to be limited to restore peace and economic prosperity. Since then, Europe has not looked back and has moved on. Muslims on the other hand relished the fruits of research in the field of education. Great inventions and discoveries were made by Muslim scientists and scholars. Unfortunately, our roles were reversed and religious zealots took control of societies. Except for Sufis and few religious scholars who spread Islam through teachings based on tolerance and conviction, half-baked religious leaders preached violence and intolerance contrary to the

teachings of Islam. The concept of peace and tolerance should neither be misconceived nor mixed up with the nation's right to wage war against the wrongful occupation of its territory. America has flagrantly flouted the international norms by occupying Iraq and Afghanistan. So Iraqis and Afghans (not Pakistanis) are well within their rights to defend themselves and evict the foreign forces from their land by any mean possible. We only need to educate our people that we shall fight the foreign forces tooth and nail only if they invade Pakistan. Only that scenario would call for invoking the concept of Jihad for which the whole nation must be prepared. The Politico-religious parties after the division of the sub-continent adopted anti-Muslim tirade and advocated use of force as a means to defending the interests of Islam. Illiteracy was instrumental in facilitating their misdirected cause. We as a nation were made to believe that we were the sole custodians of Islam, and that a Muslim cause anywhere in the world was to be supported through violent demonstrations in Pakistan even at the cost of setting ablaze our very own country. While the whole Muslim world supports the Palestinian cause only diplomatically and morally, we frequently get carried away by destroying our own national assets and sending threatening overtures to Israel. It is ironic that while Egypt and Jordan, which suffered major reverses during the Arab-Israel wars, have restored diplomatic ties with Israel, we continue to sever relations with it even at the cost of our national interests. It is a known fact that the American policies are strongly influenced by the powerful Jewish lobby in America. By maintaining anti-Israeli stance, it is naive to expect wholehearted support from America. Lest I am misunderstood, I must hasten to add that the establishment of formal diplomatic ties with Israel must be considered only after the creation of a sovereign Palestinian State. This, however,

will not happen in a diplomatic void. Israel has to be engaged and her right to co-exit, alongside Palestine, accepted by the Muslim world including Pakistan. It is only by acquiring 100% literacy that we shall become more pragmatic in our response to international diplomacy. If we, in the words of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Shaheed, had to eat grass to make a nuclear bomb, we must not even for a while hesitate to eat grass or whatever to educate our nation. Our salvation lies only in being 100% literate. Federal as well Provincial Governments must therefore, allocate a sizeable share of its budget to education.

One of the main sources of violence, besides poverty, deprivation and injustice, has been TV plays / dramas and movies preaching use of brute force. Heroes and macho men trotting with guns and killing people indiscriminately are eulogized and portrayed as legends. Needless to mention that these misdirected heroics impact negatively on the minds of people. Government must seriously consider placing ban on picturisation of violent themes and censor boards directed to pass only those plays / movies which meet the newly laid down criteria.

Finally, there is no denying the fact that our society is deeply religious and anti-Muslim forces are out to undermine Islam. Our strong passion for religion can be determined from the use of excessive means of violence such as suicide bombings etc. While these gory acts are deeply condemnable, they do indicate the extreme limits up to which they can willingly go to serve their cause. As an example, the torrential rains cause excessive damage to human life and property, but the same floods can be channelised to store water for irrigation and power generation by constructing large reservoirs of water / dams. On the same analogy, the deeply religious sentiments and strong passion of these

zealots can be harnessed into positive thinking and productivity. It is the duty of our religio- political pundits to highlight these conspiracies but the fault lies in their approach which they must alter radically to strengthen (rather than weaken) the bonds of fraternity, solidarity and brotherhood. They must aim at fortifying the nation by advocating acquisition of modern education, tolerance, selflessness, and unity amongst ranks and adherence to the teachings of Quran and Sunnah. They must motivate people to fulfill their obligations towards each other and the society at large. Mere offering of prayers (which of course is mandatory) and ignoring all other virtues, does not make one a good Muslim. It is this most significant facet of Islam that must be disseminated to the people in unambiguous manner. It only requires massive campaigning by media, religious leaders and other influential segments of society to redirect their thoughts, perceptions and actions on positive lines. Their passion then, instead of being destruction oriented, shall act as a force multiplier for nation building. May it be said that foreign powers have conspired to exploit this passion to their advantage. We must evolve a mechanism to convert this asset to our advantage. The task of evolving a mechanism can be assigned to a think tank committee of experts representing various schools of thoughts and trades. Government must seriously address this possibility to realize the task. As a first step, it may be seen whether it is possible to keep all mosques in the country under Government's control where the *Khateebs* are paid from the treasury and *Khutbas* delivered on given Islamic themes such as peace, harmony tolerance, brotherhood and obligations towards the State and society. District governments could play a pivotal role in organising committees down to the level of villages which must meet frequently to assess the role and performance of *khateebs* and

provide useful guidance and input, where necessary. This may sound abstract in the first place but nations determined to prosper have to convert such intangible expressions into reality. There is no other way out.

Jihad is the most frequently talked about theme in our religious discourses. This, however, has been largely misconstrued. War may sometimes be inevitable to defend the territorial and ideological frontiers of a country, but Jihad does not only mean waging war. In broader sense, it refers to the effort or struggle necessary to put the will of Allah into practice. Muslims are exhorted to strive in this endeavour on all fronts: intellectual, social, economic, spiritual and domestic. Some time Muslims may have to fight, but this is not their chief duty unless it is thrusted upon them. On the way back from *Badr*, Holy Prophet (PBUH) uttered an important and oft-quoted maxim, "We are returning from the lesser Jihad (the battle) and going to the greater Jihad (self-purification)", the more important and difficult struggle is to reopen their own society and their own hearts. This clearly implies that Jihad refers to one's own as well as society's struggle for transformation so that there exists a general environment of intellectual progress, social adjustment, spiritual grooming, economic development, tolerance and mutual bondage. These are the aspects that our clerics need to highlight. The onus of transformation lies squarely on the politico-religious leaders who enjoy mass following. They are capable of doing that if and only if they rise above their personal as well as party interests and give up their misguided obsessions.

To sum up, politico-religious leaders and clerics have a great responsibility to shoulder since they have a tremendous impact on the minds of common man. They must discharge their obligations in the true

spirit of Islam. Political leaders must also discharge their duties to meet the needs and aspirations of people through better governance. They must make concerted efforts to remove the misperception of pursuing the interests of foreign powers. Media must also play a more pro-active role in projecting the true face of Islam.

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