

# Political cleansing through accountability

Pakistan needs political cleansing. So far all attempts to this effect have been futile. The main flaw has been in the approach and lack of an effective framework, where there has to be a constitutional mechanism that must be followed across the board. In October 1958, Ayub Khan imposed the first martial law in the name of reforms. He even abrogated the unanimously passed 1956 constitution. His Elected Bodies Disqualification Ordinance (EBDO) knocked out the entire political leadership of the country.

Wali Khan and Qayyum Khan were prominent political leaders of that era. In the words of Wali Khan, "we never accused Qayyum Khan of corruption, though we had major ideological differences neither did he ever point at us. Even the last Governor General (GG) and first President Baboo/Maj General (Honorary) Iskander Mirza were not involved in illegal accumulation of wealth. In his exile in London he led a very simple life and then eventually perished there leaving behind no empire. When General Ayub Khan declared himself to be the President, his son Capt. (R) Gohar Ayub Khan had a scooter loan but within a few years he was a leading industrialist. The first political mansion on the hill near the Marriott Hotel was also built in that period. After the death of the dictator the property was sold and the proceeds distributed amongst his heirs. It is now the Hashwani House in Islamabad. Plots and permits were doled out to favorites at will. Justice Cornelius was also given a plot for his service to the country. He refused to accept the favour with a return note: 'I never applied for a plot as I do not need it'. He lived in Faletti's Hotel all his life. After his death Justice Jawad Khawaja handed over the room to the hotel management. His worldly belongings included one suit case and a few photo frames. Instead of reforms, Ayub Khan deformed the society and produced a new class of 'Permit Holders'. Pakistan became a nation of have and have nots. The first free and fair election of 1970 cleansed the political arena and genuine leadership emerged. While Ayub Khan abrogated the 1956 constitution, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto presented a new version in 1973. Despite major incursions the document has survived. Both Zia and Musharraf tried to tamper with this contract between the people and the State but it outlived them.

For its survival a country must follow the constitution. There are laid down provisions that ensure check and balance. In order to contest elections candidates have to meet certain criteria. Loan and tax defaulters stand automatically disqualified. In the nineties, President Farooq Leghari established the 'Ehtesab Bureau' after dismissing the government of his own party. He promised political cleansing but then backed out under pressure and fear of political grouping. After the Nawaz Sharif landslide the 'Ehtesab Bureau' came under Saifur Rehman who used to run a small medical store at Mozang Chungi (Zubair Medicos). Both father and son sold medicine across the country. Perhaps Mian Sahib valued this experience so much that he was made the 'Accountability Czar'. Musharraf then created the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in 1999 which was headed by the khakis. Chairman NAB was given powers to arrest for upto ninety days, investigate and then file references against the accused. It was then upto the courts to convict and award punishments. Instead of accountability (NAB) was used for witch-hunts and political arm twisting. Two of the Generals resigned in protest (Amjad, Shahid) as individuals who were being investigated were inducted into the cabinets; it was a scenario of prison to power through

NAB more like corruption laundering. In the charter of democracy (COD) signed by PPP and PML (N) across the board accountability was promised but never delivered. From Jinnah's (1947 to 1958) to Sharif's, Pakistan has moved from almost zero to total corruption with collapse of institutions. In the name of accountability crimes have been committed against the people of the country. So far there has been only one election in 1970 where will of the people has prevailed and accountability through ballot ensured.

Accountability through ballot is a tried and trusted approach, but unfortunately between 1977 and 2013, ten elections have been manipulated to deny this democratic right of the electorate. Before the elections in 1977 ZAB created an Election Cell within ISI to monitor the electoral process. It was this very cell that reported victory with simple majority for PPP to be decided to manipulate the process for absolute majority. When Zia dislodged ZAB it was this very cell that advised him against holding elections to keep PPP out. A few years back a judge of Supreme Court was stopped on the motorway for speeding. Instead of paying the fine he asked his squad to lift the officer and then dump him after crossing the Toll Plaza. No one knew about this incident except ISI but it was never revealed to the media. In the words of Air Marshal Asghar Khan the agencies know more about all important people than they know them-self. But unfortunately this information is not used for across the board accountability with national interests in mind.

Accountability is like law it either applies to everyone or no one. After a long time the khaki leadership has shown respect for the constitution of the country. Zia ridiculed while Musharraf defaced this important document. No one acted in national interests, where that is why political cleansing did not take place. The mandate of the present government is disputed. Elections in three out of the four objected constituencies have been declared void, while decision is awaited in the fourth. A large number of elected representatives are either tax or loan defaulters or do not file returns. Constitutional requirements are not being met. From EBDO to NAB accountability has been avoided but a lot of data has been collected by the agencies. For political cleansing transparency should prevail, it is time to call a spade a spade. Starting with credible elections, accountability and strict adherence to the constitution Pakistan can be put back on track. 'Naya Pakistan' will then emerge as envisioned by Jinnah and defaced by Sharif and CO.