**Struggle for democracy**

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Pakistan is striving for economic, political, and constitutional stability. Democratic principles, constitutional institutions, rule of law and patriotism are under assault from within. A nation of 250 million was held under siege by Imran Khan.

The economy is in tatters. There are trade and balance of payments deficits. The economy is on the edge. In such dire circumstances, the prime minister of Pakistan is working hard to salvage the nation and its institutions.

The establishment grasps the root cause of the national crisis. Khan and his accomplices are the enemy from within. Nothing is off limits nor sacrosanct for their machinations, which is why we saw the dissolution of the National Assembly after the presentation of a motion of a vote of no-confidence against him. This flagrant violation of the constitution and undermining of parliamentary democracy was a major blow to the constitution and democracy.

The Supreme Court took suo-motu notice of this fragrant violation and declared the PTI government’s action to be unconstitutional. Consequently, the National Assembly was restored, and a vote of no-confidence against Khan was moved. Elections for the speaker of the National Assembly and the prime minister of Pakistan were held and parliamentary democracy was restored as per the directions of the SC. The constitutional and democratic consequence was the election of Shehbaz Sharif as prime minister.

The resignations of PTI MNAs from the National Assembly, and the subsequent dissolution of the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) assemblies undermined parliamentary democracy with adverse consequences for the PTI. Imran Khan and his party have undermined parliamentary democracy and rule of law. Any political instability – more so civil strife, worst still the storming of national institutions – is bound to ground the national economy to a standstill. This dubious distinction goes to Imran Khan and his party.

This government and the constitutional institutions have resolved to proceed in accordance with the law. On facts as well as legal premises, Imran Khan, the PTI and its members were complicit in attacks on state installations. They will be prosecuted and punished under the Army Act.

Having damaged parliamentary democracy as well as the national institutions, Imran Khan planned, instigated and endorsed mob attacks on national institutions, especially the armed forces of Pakistan, including army personnel and installations.

Under the Army Act, 1952 as well as the law, any civilian involved in damaging military installations is liable to be prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced under the Army Act. Again, Imran Khan and his incitements are the cause of such attacks.

No democracy can function in the absence of rule of law. PTI members as well as its sympathizers came out on the streets and were directed to storm military installations. Such civil strife, nearing civil insurgency, constitute high treason as well as the violation of rule of law, democracy, and the constitution.

Imran Khan is a transient phenomenon. A great number of PTI members and its office bearers waged civil strife and insurgency against the nation and its armed forces. Now, belatedly, they are condemning their actions against the state and its institutions. There is a rush to exit the PTI. Such belated patriotism is suspect and seems opportunistic. On facts and legal premises, accountability cannot be diluted on the altar of political opportunism. Let the law and justice prevail.

This government, assuming power under the law, constitution, democratic norms and directions of the SC has a democratic, legal, constitutional, and judicial mandate to bring Pakistan out from the brink of a political and economic abyss. So far it has maintained democracy and avoided economic default. It may or may not have achieved its goals but it has avoided the worst. This is sometimes the maximum a statesman can do. Liberal democracy does not mean tyranny of the majority. The rights of the minority are, in essence, part of democracy. Rule of law ensures counter majoritarianism. Hence, there can be no democracy without rule of law and the rights of the minority.

Democratic and judicial accountability are the soul of democracy. Imran Khan and the PTI ought to submit to parliamentary and judicial accountability. All democratic governments must be held to account for their actions.

Loyalty to the state and its institutions constitute a red line. This is the bare minimum of patriotism. Any person or entity including political parties are to be held to account for their lack of patriotism.

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