

POLITICAL LESSONS (II)

1. A collective struggle should be initiated aiming at forcing the military establishment to pack up and give way to a genuinely elected government.
2. **Elections:** Great stress should be put on the holding of fair and free elections under the auspices of a fully independent election commission headed by a CES 88appointed with the consensus of major political parties. The elections should be free from any pre-poll, polling-day or post-poll rigging.
3. The people have been voting for one party or another without knowing what it stands for, nor their votes being for any change in public policies or priorities. Forty-eight per cent say they don't feel like voting. They say there is no point in voting because their vote will not change anything in Pakistan.
4. Major political parties must achieve consensus on the basis national issues, and public pledge should be given by them to work for resolving these issues in the first place.
5. Expenses on securing justice must be reduced considerably.
6. People of integrity and honesty should be appointed to to high offices under the state, and strict watch kept over them. Before assuming office they should be required to declare their assets, and a complete inventory of their possessions be prepared and kept in record.
7. People should be treated equally in one's presence, in one's company and in one's decisions.
8. Land belongs to those who cultivate it, and that they should possess only that much that much land as they can cultivate.
9. The feudal stranglehold on the economic and feudal levers of the rural economy can only be removed through land reforms.
10. **Minorities:** There should be no coercion in religion. Non-Muslim population should be guaranteed life, liberty and property and given full citizenship of the state.
11. **National Unity:** National unity springs from a sense of equality among the people in all parts of the country and cannot be imparted through superficial means or empty rhetoric.

12. **Education:** Good schools that are affordable to the poor should be there in abundance. Good quality education is not a luxury. It is a fundamental human right and a basic need of men and society because it increases its economic productivity and improving the health and life of the people.
13. There is a breakdown in the confidence of the people in the government and its machinery. In the present circumstances the people are on no one's side.
14. **Poverty:** The low-income classes, and those living below the poverty line, are suffering from hardship. The politics being followed by the governments have stratified society, and the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. There is thus need for direct government action to reduce distress and poverty especially in rural areas.
15. An effective framework for poverty reduction can be built on four pillars: a) Accepting the principle of "right to food" for everyone; b) A pro-people growth strategy with a focus on agriculture and other sectors which directly benefit the poor; c) reducing inequality through redistribution of incomes and assets on a substantial scale; d) Sustained human and social development of the poor segments of the population.
16. The concept of pro-poor growth has developed into a full-fledged strategy consisting of pro-poor policies and pro-poor support organizations at the national, state and local levels to ensure the participation and empowerment of the poor. Under such a strategy, the process of growth gives special attention to sub-sectors on which the poor depends for their livelihood, namely crop, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and small scale rural industry. The infrastructure necessary for accelerating development is developed largely through a decentralized governing structure, but decentralization is accompanied by social mobilization of the poor to ensure that decentralization does not end up creating opportunities for vested interests to monopolize power and resources for their own advantage.
17. A series of policies should be evolved that can reduce inequality and empower the poor to claim their due share in national resources. Sufficient funds should flow regularly and directly to the poor and provide additional employment

- opportunities for 7.5 million households at a cost of Rs. 6,000/- per month per household. At the same time, elected institutions at the village level will be able to strengthen their capacity to prepare and implement projects and determine their priorities.
18. The poverty of a people is inversely proportional to their influence over governance. Those who influence decision-making process most also benefit from the allocation of resources more than the others.
 19. Alleviation of poverty depends on job creation provisions of services for health, education and health and smaller families.
 20. **Local Bodies:** Local bodies form an integral part of the democratic system. In true democracies local government systems are protected as a matter of tradition and sustained by the service they render to the people. In Pakistan, in the absence of this tradition and because of public indifference, the local governments should be protected by the Constitution. The sphere and responsibility of the district governments and the lower councils should be narrowed down and their relationship with the bureaucracy and police force is more precisely defined. Under the present set of laws, almost every provincial subject stands transferred to the local council, leaving only the laws and policy formation with the provinces. Moreover the local governments are directly controlled by the federation. Only the civic services, local development and regulations should be transferred to the districts. Subjects like irrigation, information, technology; land revenue, health and education (other than primary) should be planned and supervised only at the provincial level. The local bodies should properly look after water supply, sanitation clearing slums and preventing encroachments, developing new housing colonies and improving primary education and health.
 21. The decentralization of development functions to district governments is not accompanied by the social mobilization of the poor or a substantial transfer of resources to the grassroots level. As a result only a small proportion of development benefits will accrue to the poor.

22. The objective of empowerment of the people at the grassroots can be achieved only if development related policies and plans are approved by the councils and the nazims made accountable to them for implementation.
23. **Provincial Autonomy:** The list of concurrent subjects in the Constitution should be abolished. The control over the district administration and the police and the laws governing them should revert to the Provinces. Historically the urge of both the federal and provincial parliamentarians to exercise power and patronage at the grassroots has not been contained. Legislative powers in the assemblies are of little interest or concern to most among them.
24. Economic development of the provinces will come only in an environment of peace and tranquility, free of exploitation, blackmail or duress from any source. With greater share in political power and better economic opportunities the provinces could chart for themselves a new and better place in the federation of Pakistan.
25. **Economy:** Unequal distribution of power and resources, and exploitation of the natural wealth of the provinces, develops a feeling of political and economic alienation, which over time becomes a politico-constitutional crisis involving a demand for larger autonomy, and leading eventually to the break-up of the country.
26. Reckless pursuit of market-oriented policies in the recent past is now so skewed that any growth in per capita incomes automatically leads to greater inequality. Cost of every increment on one rupee in the GDP, 48 paisas accrues to the richest 20 per cent of the population and only seven per cent to the poorest 20 per cent. In the face of such glaring inequalities in incomes and in income-earning opportunities, a higher rate of economic growth, though necessary, will not be sufficient to reduce poverty in Pakistan. The micro-credit is a very effective instrument of providing self-employment opportunities to the poor. The annual rate of disbursement of micro-credit is 1.8 billion, reaching approximately 100,000 beneficiaries each year. That means only one per cent of the 10 million households categorized as extremely poor in Pakistan benefit from it. A

- one-time loan of Rs. 20 to 30 thousand can provide only temporary relief but cannot lift a poor household out of the trap of chronic poverty.
27. **Employment:** Employment generation from the more capital-intensive production processes will continue to be slow. Industry is not likely to play the role of the lead sector in providing adequate employment opportunities.
 28. **Islamic Society:** Islamic society is a revolutionary society dedicated to the promotion of certain values aimed at establishing truth and the rule of law in all spheres of human activity. Every Muslim is enjoined and obligated to take steps to protect and preserve Islamic values preached and practiced by the Holy Prophet. To protect what God forbids and to forbid what He permits, amounts to distorting the truth, subverting the rule of law and substituting God's law with one's own will.
 29. **United States of America:** Bush administration has revived, after over ten years, financial assistance to a wide section of opinion makers. From fellowships, scholarships, training programmes, study tours, funding social sector programmes through NGOs to holding seminars for legislators, Rs. 10 billion will be spent this year by the American government in Pakistan. The U.S. Agency for International Development is extending its operations in Pakistan.
 30. The United States took more than two hundred years of experimentation, and went through phases of flux, trial and tribulation, wars and depressions before it reached its maturation level.
 31. **Foreign Policy:** Growing misunderstandings between western nations and Muslim countries were the real threat to global harmony and security.
 32. We must at least start speaking out more forcefully about issues like Palestine, Iran and Afghanistan. Peace in these countries can only be secured when all occupation is ended and foreign forces withdrawn.
 33. **Corruption:** It is the poor who are made poorer by being forced to pay bribes to policemen, junior revenue officials and government clerks.

34. **Empowerment of the People:** A country cannot be developed without widening the circles of opportunity and power for its people.

35. **Development:** Rich nations build up their wealth because of the care they take in the utilization of their resources, and poor countries remain poor because of the cavalier attitude to their resources allocation decisions.

The closer we bring development to mean the economic and political empowerment of the people and the more successful we will be in eradicating poverty, reducing disparities, and taking the wing out of the sails of those who are preaching hatred, intolerance and violence.

34.**Governance:** In the absence of governance reforms, even if development funds are doubled or trebled for a country or a region, the old instruments of governance continue to channel the increased resource flows to further empower and benefit those who most influence the governance process, rather than the most deserving or needy.

Given a system of governance, which is representative of, and responsive to, the people, there is much greater chance of reducing poverty, illiteracy, hunger disease and malnutrition than any other system.

Poverty, under-development and the backwardness of a people or a region are more a function of governance that determines priorities of resource allocation, than of the scarcity of resources itself.

The mark of a civilized and developed society lies on how far the economic well being of its people does, as opposed to the politics of power, provide the driving force behind governance.

35. "Our God and your God is one." (Qur'an)

36. The best way to preach is by reasoning. The Qur'an, tells us about many facts and realities that can be used as substance in order to make arguments more meaningful e.g. the existence of harmony in the creation, and the creation of the universe.

37. Immaturity of the political parties system, and manipulation of the political process by undemocratic forces to keep their dominance over the state structure, has led to the failure of the democratic process in Pakistan so far.

38. Involvement of the military establishment in politics since 1950s didn't allow the democratic institutions to become stronger and stable.
39. The federal government needs to be much smaller but staffed with better paid, more intelligent and confident people.
40. All residue taxes, particularly sales tax should be assigned to the provinces.
41. It is politics that provides the meaning and purpose to a society.
42. The federation has just to play a leading role, providing the provinces and the people of the country necessary protection and opportunities to progress and prosper. A well-defined federalism would lessen unnecessary strain on the federation and also leave the provinces free to advance.
43. **New Political Party:** Past experience has shown vividly that Pakistan needs initiation of a truly democratic process by a new political party fully democratic in its composition and manned by democratic beings not dictators, honest in their intentions, and faithful to the democratic principles of Islam that advocate resolving of the problems of the masses of a nation, and ensuring participation of the people in governance, and service to humanity. Such a political party will also serve as a healthy check on the working of other political parties in the field. It will assist in doing away with the existing cultural psyche shaped by ignorance, hatred and prejudice, and help develop peace, progress and prosperity in the country.
43. **Humanitarian Approach:** "Better life for all humanity" should be the slogan for progressive political parties of every country.
44. **Islamic Way of Life:** Islam maintains that all human beings are socially equal and must, therefore, be given the same opportunities for development and self-expression.
45. Islam aims to build a classless unified society based on its permanent values.
46. **Democratic Culture and Society:** A vibrant and healthy democratic society can be born only out of well-informed and committed citizens.
47. Intolerance and hatred can never be part of democratic culture.

48. **People's Participation:** People who think they do not matter don't perform.

49. The reformation emphasized the direct relationship between man and God. It eliminated the role of the priests as intermediaries between man and God, and, as the sole repositories of truth as well as the final authority to interpret the word of God. Enlightenment blossomed when the Renaissance and the Reformation got intermixed. Thus the Renaissance and the Reformation threw the gates open for modern science. Modern science understands in order to believe. Science demands a world-view suffused with *tafakkur, tadabbur and ta'aqul*. At least one-ninth of the verses of the Qur'an emphasize these virtues. According to Allama Iqbal, "For purposes of knowledge, the spirit of Muslim culture fixes its gaze on the concrete and the finite. He goes on to say, "As a cultural movement, Islam rejects the old static view of the universe and reaches a dynamic view." It is clear there is no conflict between Islam and science. On the contrary, the spirit of Islam is revolutionary and scientific and spells destruction for the false gods of orthodoxy, dogmatism and obscurantism. The Muslim world has bypassed both the Renaissance and Reformation and consequently enlightenment. Social emancipation is a must so as to usher in a worldview whose basic values are tolerance, pluralism, humanism, democracy and social justice.

It is not possible to administer a country, and that too with a reformist agenda and in turbulent times, without an organized political party and a neutral bureaucracy.

The mainstream parties should seek an alliance not with each other but with nationalist and ethnic groups that have a following but which are confined to urban pockets or thinly scattered in rural Sindh and Balochistan.... Nationalist and ethnic parties could become a force enough to stem the rising tide of religious extremism as well as to check federal incursions into provincial spheres.

There is nothing wrong in raising external and internal loans. What matters is the political cost of the external loans, the financial terms, the year on which they were secured, the purpose for which the loans were used and how well they were actually used.

The clergy, the army, the civilian bureaucracy and the feudal aristocracy have collectively conspired to ensure that the illiterate masses remain virtually disenfranchised.

Punjab can save the federation by raising the voice of the smaller provinces.

There is a proposal to increase the defense budget by 26 billion. This will raise the total allocation for the year to Rs. 300 billion.

Within the system the problems we face are ethnic prejudice, favoritism, nepotism, patronage and sycophancy.

Power needs massive, concentrated, one-horizon, national and nationwide investment, restore the confidence of public in democracy and facilitate the rise of new parties and leaders who are seen as 'trust-restorers

All of the country's canals and watercourses could be lined at the cost of one dam and could save more water than a new dam could produce.

The Delhi administration in recent years has converted its entire fleet of 13,000 buses, 20,000 taxis and 60,000 rickshaws to CNG.

The government has shown complete inability to provide basic amenities and facilities to the people. It is, therefore, time for the government to re-prioritize and think long-term, as national interest is always the right path to take.

The role of the *awam* (people) had been marginal as they do not have a developed civil society, or the middle class, to play its role.

Not resolutions but a countrywide movement as an expression of the political will of the people was required to change the regime.

80,000 troops deployed on the Afghan border had failed to accomplish a job that could be done by just 5,000.

In order to confront the West or any other adversary, the Muslim world must first set its own house in order, better its economic performance, acquire the latest technology and forge unity in its ranks.

The influence of the religious extremists has to be countered through the spread of modern education, by improving living standards and by establishing more linkage with the rest of the world through collateral exchanges and easier travel.

Any alliance with the extremists e.g. to secure the ouster of the present regime would only work to the advantage of the extremists. One constant feature of the polity has been the collaboration of the feudal elite with the powers that be to safeguard their vested interests. Others in the fray vying for a control over the people's minds are the religious, ethnocentric and nationalist parties and groupings. These take turns in siding with or opposing the government as and when it suits their exigencies.

At no point has the need been felt to engage the people and voice their problems and concerns. The disdain shown towards the electorate by the so-called mainstream parties is incriminating.

A new leadership will have to take root in this stifled environment for it to effectively take stock of matters past, and steer the polity in the right direction. This is one hope we all must live in.

The necessity of institutional limitations on the power of an elected leader is always there.

The greatest disservice that our leaders over the years, be they civilian or military, have done is the systematic destruction of the institutions of the state. Executive powers have been freely exercised in the matter of high-level appointments of governors, judges, the Public Service Commission, vice-chancellors etc. without any regard to institutional norms or merit.

The main cause of the failure of the Muslim world was the absence of democracy in most of its countries and there was a great difference in the thinking and views of their rulers and the people.