

The Business

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Focus on growth

Prime Minister Imran Khan while interacting with representatives of the business community stated that his government is now focused on growth subsequent to overcoming the challenge of economic stabilisation. This statement would baffle all independent economists – independent in particular because as per past practice, the government has allocated positions to many of the more vocal economists/analysts thereby muting their criticism. Prime Minister Khan has generated considerable assistance from friendly countries. One would hope that Prime Minister is made aware that while these loans have enabled the government to repay interest and/or principal due in the current year. These loans are for the short-term, a year, and would contribute to a raise in interest payments, a component of current expenditures and even if the Prime Minister succeeds in convincing Saudi Arabia and the UAE to extend the repayment period by another year yet the impact on interest payments would be evident in the next fiscal year. Additionally, the government has so far borrowed over Rs 3 trillion domestically, an amount expected to rise given the four months remaining till the end of the fiscal year, to meet its rising current expenditure with negative implications on inflation.

The Prime Minister is reportedly considering launching an amnesty scheme as a means to raise revenue (three were announced by the previous administration though none of the three was particularly successful). Reportedly, the amnesty scheme under consideration will succeed where others failed because of its inherent attractiveness. In this context, it is relevant to note that Pakistan Bano Certificates have generated only \$19.7 million so far, a scheme where those with foreign bank accounts are eligible and one would assume many of those who have foreign accounts may take advantage of the amnesty scheme, yet more aggressive marketing may, in time, bear fruit. However, one wonders if this is the right time for launching a scheme given that both Fitch and Standard and Poor's downgraded our rating recently.

Pakistan's budget deficit rose to one trillion rupees and at this rate the deficit projected by the Finance Ministry is estimated at around seven percent of GDP. Tax collection during the first six months of the current fiscal year witnessed a budgeted shortfall of Rs 173 billion while current expenditures particularly the interest payments and defence rose. The second finance amendment bill 2019 envisages fiscal incentives to industry, particularly the five zero-rated industries, and the government's calculation that the total cost of these incentives would be Rs 6.8 billion have been challenged by independent economists who maintain that the cost of the package would be over Rs 140 billion. The government needs to focus on reducing the budget deficit, which would reduce inflationary pressures with a positive impact on the poor and the vulnerable.



Blaming immigrants

ABDUL SATTAR

The recent terrorist incident in New Zealand has once again brought the debate of immigration into the spotlight with Far-Right forces heaping eulogies on the xenophobic attacker.

The heart-wrenching scenes of the carnage shook millions of people across the world. While the conscientious citizens of New Zealand took to social media to express their anger over the tragic incident, anti-immigrants psychopaths all over the advanced capitalist world remained adamant in defending the man who perpetrated the heinous crime.

Fascists have been legitimising the brutal attack on the pretext that immigrants are responsible for the immiseration of white working classes and impoverishment of their countries. They claim that the arrival of immigrants has led to an exponential rise in unemployment. They assert that non-white workers have also contributed to the housing crisis, and for the rising criminal and anti-social behavior. This narrative seems to suggest that Europe, the US, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and other white-dominated states were a heaven prior to the arrival of migrants and that this flux of barbaric races polluted this heaven.

But history flies in the face of such claims. Europe was an overcrowded and impoverished continent until its ruling elites started plundering other races, nations and continents. Ironically at least four modern nations – the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand – were founded after wiping out the indigenous population on that land. Some historians believe that European settlers are responsible for the extermination of over 56 million indigenous people in South, Central and North America alone.

So, if one follows the logic of non-locals and immigrants then the population of these four advanced capitalist countries is alien to these lands. They are foreigners and white immigrants, coming from various parts of Europe, wiping out native populations and settling there on the basis of force, intimidation and coercion. If the lands of native people have to be vacated and returned, then the logic will say that the Europeans should hand over these lands to the remaining indigenous people and go back to the countries of their origin but for white supremacists this logic is fal-

lacious because for them the white population had a right to wipe out these 'barbaric tribes', taking over their lands and settling there. If other people start following the same logic, then the world will be gripped by chaos and anarchy. With everyone trying to assert their claim of superiority, there will be death and destruction everywhere. So, co-existence is the way forward. The phenomenon of migration from the Global South to the Global North may be new but its causes are old. Imagine if the European powers and other capitalist countries had not colonised states, plundered their wealth, enslaved their men, women and children and forced their people to abandon their fertile lands – would the people from the Global South still have been as impoverished as they are today? Would they still have wanted to leave their homelands and loved ones to settle in strange lands where they face attacks from xenophobes, taunts from nationalists and possible extermination from violent fascists? European ruling elites and greedy capitalists of advanced democracies are responsible for many ills of the Global South today, which in part lead to the migration of people as well.

Undoing past sins could be one of the ways to end immigration. Far-Right forces in Europe and the advanced capitalist world believe that immigrants or foreigners should not come to their countries. Their logic also needs to account for the Europeans who went to the Global South as immigrants or foreigners, plundering their wealth and resources. Immigrants in European and advanced Western capitalist countries would gladly return to their states of origin if the European colonisers and plunderers return what they took away from there.

For instance, it is estimated that the British Empire stole \$45 trillion from India alone. The reparations for slavery in Africa is said to be around \$5 trillion; this money – \$50 trillion – on its own could usher in an era of wealth and prosperity in the Global South. According to some international development institutions' reports, around \$700 billion is required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Some other estimates suggest that only \$50 billion is enough to provide basic healthcare, primary education and sanitation in the developing world. Once citizens of the developing world have these

reparations, they will have enough prosperity at home that they would not have to go anywhere at all.

Another way to end migration from the Global South to the Global North lies in eliminating wars and conflicts, which are partly triggered by the West in developing countries. For instance, it is the West that dislodged a stable government in Libya, handing over the country to a bunch of gangsters who are now transporting thousands of immigrants every month. The same is the case with the civil conflict in Syria that led to the displacement of over 11 million people, forcing many of them to migrate to Europe and other states. The flux of Syrian refugees into Europe not only created resentment in Germany but across the continent. The Western capitalist elite supplied arms to more than 15 belligerent African states that fought each other in the last three decades. These wars added tens of thousands of people to the ever-rising number of displaced people, many moving towards Europe. Politicians in Europe and the US seem to be threatening to fragment Iran, which could trigger even more immigration.

One may ask that if the West concentrates all wealth by destroying the Global South, how can it not expect a massive migration towards its borders then? Finally immigration is one of the many issues the world faces – and not the only issue. For instance, with an estimated population of 127.11 million in 2015, the resident foreign population in Japan amounts to approximately 1.75 percent of the total population. The unemployment in the third largest economy is 2.5 percent. So, even if all immigrants are kicked out, unemployment will still be there. The percentage of foreign populations in Greece is as high as 7.1 percent in proportion to the total population of the country but the rate of joblessness is 18.5. So, even if all immigrants are expelled, the country would still be facing unemployment of more than 11 percent.

In reality the problem does not lie in immigration but in the capitalist system that we live in – the system that wants cheap labour, longer working hours and a certain rate of unemployment in a bid to keep wages down. The expulsion of immigrants will not help this situation, the elimination of capitalist plundering would and so is the way forward.

Revoking citizenship

ASAD ALI ABBASI

When the bill proposing to revoke the citizenship of naturalised citizens was read, Lord Houghton objected on the grounds that the bill "confide[s] to the Secretary of State a very transcendental power – more than ought to be entrusted to any man". Lord Houghton presented his sensible argument during the debate on the Naturalisation Bill in the House of Lords on March 10, 1870.

A century and a half later, British Home Secretary Sajid Javid has used his 'transcendental power' to revoke Shamima Begum's British citizenship. Shamima was born in Britain. At 15, she decided to go to Syria to support the militant Islamic State group, with two other friends. Four years later, Shamima, who just lost her newborn child, waits in the Syrian refugee camp. She intends to return to Britain. Major news and print outlets have debated whether she deserves another chance – but civil rights need not be the prerogative of a single individual, whether Shamima Begum or Sajid Javid. Rather, it is the concern of society at large.

We should not just ask what moral grounds allow this individual her citizenship, but on what legal grounds does the state deny citizens their citizenship status? Specifically, we should look at how the state has come to acquire this 'transcendental power' that frightened members of the House of Lords in the 19th century.

Oxford University's Professor Matthew Gibney, an expert on forced migration, shows that the British state has tinkered with immigration laws several times before, starting with the Germans. The First World War saw a rise in anti-German sentiment in Britain. The government concocted laws as a threat to evacuate German residents.

Geopolitical changes after the Second World War brought changes in immigration and citizenship laws in 1948, in 1964 and in 1984. Yet, these laws played a minute role in politics and policies. But, events in 2001 changed the purpose, power and politics of these laws.

Two events, the Oldham riots in 2001, and 9/11, increased the intensity and scope of the denaturalisation law. In 2002, the Labour government presented the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill. Gibney notes: "The bill proposed three major changes to the deprivation law". First, the standard for denaturalisation changed from "disloyalty, trading with the enemy, etc. to a single standard: that the Secretary of State 'thinks that' an individual's holding citizenship is

'seriously prejudicial to the vital interests' of the United Kingdom."

Second, the law now applied to all "types of British citizen: those who had gained it through birth, registration, or naturalisation". Third, "the government now would not deprive if it would make an individual stateless". The third point was in the context of Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that affirms everyone has a right to belong to a nationality.

Amendments in 2004, 2005, and 2006 further enhanced the scope and power of the law. Now, in order to deny citizenship, the home secretary had to just argue that one's citizenship was 'not conducive to the public good'. Also, a notification letter from the Home Office would automatically revoke one's nationality.

Though Labour, under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, enacted these laws, the Conservative government employed them as a political tool. Gibney shows that in just one year, 2010-2011, David Cameron and Theresa May, then home secretary, denaturalised six people. This was more than Blair and Brown ever did in nine years. Just in 2011-2014, 23 people were denaturalised on the grounds of being 'not conducive to the public good'. In fact, the whole immigration policy under the Conservatives acted to alienate immigrants.

In 2014, the government proposed amendments in the law that ignored Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. After much parliamentary discussion, objection and deliberation, the power of the Home Office was extended but in a complicated way. Until now, British nationals, by birth and naturalisation, with dual citizenship could be denaturalised. After this amendment, those with single nationality could also be denaturalised on the grounds of 'not being conducive to public good' but only if they had received their citizenship through naturalisation, not by birth.

If a person has dual nationality, the Home Office can revoke their citizenship. If a person has single nationality through naturalisation, the Home Office can revoke their citizenship. If a person has single nationality through naturalisation, the Home Office can revoke their citizenship. If a person has single nationality through naturalisation, the Home Office can revoke their citizenship. If a person has single nationality through naturalisation, the Home Office can revoke their citizenship.

Why would it, at this moment, want to take to the streets with the PPP when it can see light at the end of the tunnel? Even the most nazriyati in the PML-N would not argue against this – especially as no one is really willing to believe that the PPP would actually turn nazriyati. Despite its serious legal problems, the PPP still has Sindh to hang on to. How aggressively can it protest? In other words, the PTI has little to fear from its opponents (for the moment). Chances are that they will keep parliament noisy and chaotic, but not the streets outside. The ruling party's Achilles heel is not those opposing it, but its own confusion and internal fault lines.

No common destiny

ARIFA NOOR

Spring has brought with it the season of reconciliation. While our prime minister is reaching out to India, the opposition is also in the mood for some love and friendship.

Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari played statesmen as he visited the ailing Nawaz Sharif in jail. It was a gesture widely applauded and appreciated. And at the same time, it set off fevered speculation of a new opposition alliance, which in turn triggered predictions of trouble for the PTI.

With the numbers being what they are in the National Assembly, a combined alliance of the PML-N and PPP can end up causing considerable grief to the ruling party, and even bring down the government. But can the PPP and PML-N, jilted allies of the past, embrace each other once again?

The stories doing the rounds after the jail visit seemed to suggest so, as did Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's press talk as he came out. He spoke of 'Mian sahib'

as being 'nazriyati' and not interested in a deal with the rulers. In addition, it was reported that the Charter of Democracy was discussed by the two party leaders as well as the idea of co-operation. But it seems as if in the days that followed, more noise about this came from the PPP than the PML-N. The latter seemed quieter as is its wont these days.

On the other hand, the week that was, belonged to the PPP. The visit to the jail was followed by a stormy press conference by Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, in which he railed against many things including the big bad PTI, its links to extremism as well as the ease with which politicians are punished in Pakistan while militants seem to carry on blithely despite bans galore. For many, he was coming into his own as a leader, revealing shades of the same defiance associated with his grandfather and mother. But for others, the young emerging leader was sounding the war bugle because the legal troubles of his father, aunt and others were about to get messier. By Friday, the banking

court in Karachi had transferred the money laundering case against Asif Zardari and his sister to the NAB courts in Islamabad, withdrawing their bail as well. In NAB cases, bails are harder to secure because this power lies with the high court. And since the Supreme Court judgement in the NAB appeal against the bail given to Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz by the Islamabad High Court, the latter at least, has been rather averse to giving bail to the 'NAB-zadas'.

Indeed, it has been conjectured, perhaps not incorrectly, that the PPP's efforts to make nice with the PML-N have been prompted by their rapidly growing legal troubles. After all, just a handful of months ago, the PPP was in a less conciliatory mood when it ditched the PML-N in parliament at the time of the prime minister's election, or even earlier when it had no qualms about getting its hands dirty in the Senate elections. Those were also the bad old days when the PPP was quite gleeful about the Sharifs paying for their 'corrupt' deeds, including Panama.

In those days, it was rumoured that Nawaz Sharif would have been happy to meet Asif Zardari, but that it was the latter who was not interested. In those troubled times for the PML-N, the PPP was closer to the former's opponents than interested in democratic struggles or the charter it had once signed with Nawaz Sharif's party. The PML-N has not forgotten all this as the PPP once found it hard to forget the times the PML-N betrayed it – during the 'Memogate' controversy; the accountability drive in Karachi when the likes of Asim Hussain were picked up; and then in the days after Zardari's 'cent seent' speech against the military establishment.

Nawaz Sharif is not known to be a man who wears his heart on his sleeve, so it is hard to tell if he was genuinely welcoming of Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, having forgotten all that his party has yet to. But even if he has, he and his party have as much reason to cooperate with the PPP as the PPP had to cooperate with the N-League during the Senate election and then after the July

general elections.

The PML-N appears to have scraped through the worst of its problems. Nawaz Sharif's accountability court trials are over. Acquitted in one and convicted in two, he is now looking to secure his bail in the second one. The Supreme Court has accepted his appeal for bail on medical grounds.

His younger brother, Shahbaz Sharif, has secured bail in the two accountability references, despite the strictures of the apex court (which may have caused the Islamabad High Court to become conservative in bail cases, but not the Lahore High Court which heard Shahbaz Sharif's cases). The Lahore High Court bail order passed a verdict of sorts on the merits of the NAB cases against Shahbaz Sharif. Maryam Nawaz and her husband are already out on bail, while her cousin Hamza, despite the investigations against him, was allowed to travel to London. Hamza's brother, Salman, flew to London sometime ago. In addition, the PML-N also seems to have come to terms with its defeat in the 2018 elec-

tion. For the moment, it is focused on keeping itself together, safe from any further onslaught of the powers that be.

In other words, the PML-N would not want to invite further trouble for itself by getting together with the PPP. It would, instead, prefer to ensure bail for Nawaz Sharif, and then try and make sure the wheels of justice continue to grind slowly – very slowly, perhaps. Why would it, at this moment, want to take to the streets with the PPP when it can see light at the end of the tunnel?

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