

The Business

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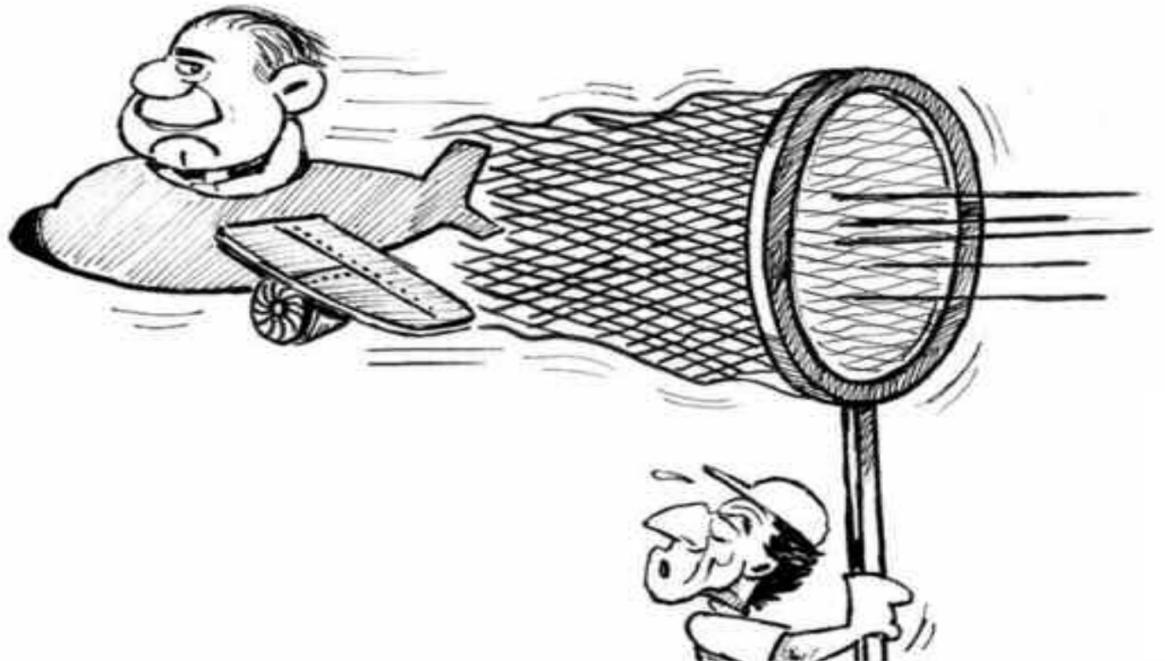
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LETTING NAWAZ GO ABROAD WAS A BIG MISTAKE:PM



Antidote to pain

For patients and their families, even more so when the patient is a child, there can be nothing worse than facing terminal illness and suffering the acute pain that often comes with disease, notably cancer. The best tool available to doctors to combat this pain and offer end of life care is opioid drugs such as morphine and fentanyl. But for many months, hospitals across the country have been unable to obtain these medicines, mainly because of bureaucratic hassles. At least five agencies are involved in the procurement, regulation and taxation process of these drugs. These agencies include DRAP, the Anti-Narcotics Force, the Narcotics Ministry, the Health Department, and the Excise and Taxation Department. In Punjab, the Excise Department has been eliminated from the process but this does not stop the long bureaucratic delays with the hospitals often left with no way to treat patients and put an end to their pain. We are told that one of the reasons the shortage began some 20 years ago was because young doctors had begun to misuse the opioids and utilise them themselves. This led to severe restrictions on the procurement of opioids by hospitals, with patients ending up bearing the brunt. Now, federal and provincial departments have got together and worked out a plan under which hospitals can apply for further supplies of opioids once they are left with the stock of around 50 percent. The question is whether or not this will work. The misuse of the drugs, which led to the problem in the first place also leaves open the question of how well hospitals are regulated. In most countries, a strict check is kept on how opioids are handed out to medical staff and on what patients they are used. Clearly, such a system of checks and balances was lacking in our wards. The fact that patients have suffered so badly for years is terrible evidence of what mismanagement can do. To make matters even more complicated, is the fact that opioid drugs are available quite openly on the black market for a price. Fentanyl is a widely misused narcotic in the country, as is morphine or other drugs which contain these materials. We can only hope that the new system put in place allowing hospitals to apply for the drugs before their stocks are depleted will work. Till now they have only been allowed to apply for further supplies of the vital drugs, when they have reached zero percent of stock level. We know there is a shortage of many medicines in the country. But a shortage in drugs which are so vital to the care of patients suffering severe illness, and possibly in the last stages of life is inhumane. We most hope that with hospitals even at the very top end of the private sector complaining that they face this problem, the issue will be solved not only for them, but for all hospitals that require these drugs for their patients and to prevent the suffering that they otherwise undergo due to their sickness.

Balochistan's youth in focus

MUHAMMAD AMIR RANA



If we want to feel the pulse of Balochistan, we need to listen to the Baloch youth. Nothing else can tell us more about the political, ideological and social transformation in the province. The tribal chieftains, or sardars and nawabs, are not as relevant as the state, that continues to rely on them, believes. Neither are the bureaucracy and security institutions capable of an objective and accurate assessment of the situation. And the youth are not happy with what is happening in the province, or the country for that matter.

The recent terrorist attacks on the local headquarters of the Frontier Corps in Nushki and Panjgur have once again pushed Balochistan into the mainstream discussion. But the crux of the debate still revolves around the rhetoric of economic grievances and political marginalisation. This debate usually ends without leading to any solution. There is also some discussion on why the youth in Balochistan are joining insurgent groups, and how little is being done to reduce the appeal of insurgent causes. Very few people have had the courage to bring the issue of missing persons into the discourse; mostly external forces are blamed for fuelling the insurgency in the province. After the Afghan Taliban takeover, it has become difficult to blame Kabul for allowing miscreants to use its soil against Pakistan. Perhaps that is why Iran was included as part of the discussion. Iran did the right

thing by responding quickly and sending its interior minister to Pakistan to review existing border security understandings with Pakistani leaders. The thinking patterns of the educated youth can also help understand the dynamics of conflict and insurgency in Balochistan. The state has tried hard during the last 40 years to create apolitical students on campuses. It has largely achieved the target, but a critical though small mass that is not apolitical still exists. The Sindh government has recently tried to reverse the process by lifting the ban on student unions in the province after almost four decades and one can expect student politics to lead to greater social and political consciousness among the youth. However, the wait will be longer for Balochistan.

As in other parts of the country, three patterns among the educated youth can be discerned in Balochistan. The first category is apolitical and the majority of students belong to it; religiously sensitive youth but with little political consciousness form the next category; and politically conscious and secular youth the last. State institutions are concerned about the third category. A big number of the missing persons belong to this category. A recent study Discourse with Balochistan Youth on Society, Religion and Politics by an Islamabad-based think tank reveals that logical thinking and reasoning do not define the majority of apolitical students who may also suffer from a dearth of confidence. There is a struggle to process moderately complex

ideas. But state institutions seem to prefer this type of human resource. Those students who are inclined towards religious parties come from a madrasah background or from families affiliated with a particular religious party. They remain sensitive about social and religious norms but tend to see the world through narrow lenses. Neither the state nor the campus administrations care less about students who are inclined towards radical religious groups. Such students inspire the apolitical youth as well. The result is obvious, and one can easily comprehend how and why extremism is flourishing on campuses.

It has been pointed out that Baloch insurgent movements are not under the influence of the tribal chieftains anymore and that the recruits come from the middle class and their leadership also consists of educated youth. However, state institutions still depend on, talk to and share power with sardars and nawabs who agree to their terms. State institutions do not want to engage the insurgents' leadership in its half-hearted attempts at reconciliation. In fact, it tasked Shahzain Bugti with talking to the leadership in exile. The government wanted him to do so despite his controversial circumstances. For a political scientist, the youth's thought processes and student politics are critical to the study of sociopolitical

structures and the simmering unrest beneath the surface. The state has fractured student politics, but several student organisations are still surviving. For instance, the Baloch Students Organisation has remained instrumental in nationalist and separatist movements in Balochistan. Since 1979, the BSO has undergone several transformations. It split into various factions and was united again, in parallel to the changing political stances of the Baloch leadership. All these transformations reflected the changes in the political landscape of the province. If the nationalist leadership compromised, it caused a split within the organisation. A faction, BSO Azad, was founded by Dr Allah Nazar in 2002, and it was an indication that the youth were not happy with state policies or even with the nationalist leadership. In subsequent years, BSO Azad gave birth to the Balochistan Liberation Front, a lethal insurgent group active in the southern parts of the province.

Now the BSO is divided into several factions, but the close surveillance of campuses has shrunk the space for such organisations, and this approach has created more space for insurgent groups to recruit politically conscious minds from educational institutions.

Nevertheless, the state has to change its approach to deal with the problems in the province and to reduce dependence on the sardars, give politics a chance, and allow youth to fearlessly express themselves. The study cited earlier also notes that the majority of the youth still believe that the state can provide them the jobs and a normal life, which they desire most.

NSP: will it make us secure?

AHSAN IQBAL

The PTI government has launched a National Security Policy (NSP), a document meant to describe how a state aims to provide for the security of its people. A national security policy provides an overarching 'national' vision for the strategic direction of a country and seeks a 'collective' understanding of threats and risks as well as the values and principles intended to guide the nation forward. This therefore necessitates employing a 'whole of the nation' approach - bringing together all stakeholders, particularly critical voices within a polity, forging consensus and giving due ownership to all segments of society.



Unfortunately, unlike the National Action Plan (NAP), the National Internal Security Policies (2014 & 2018) and Vision 2025 formulated by the PML-N government, the NSP failed to achieve this. Neither parliament nor opposition parties were consulted in the policy formulation process. Even provinces, that have the biggest stake and responsibility in the domain of internal security, were not duly consulted. The policy doesn't even meet the 'whole of government' principle for implementation, what to talk of the 'whole of nation' principle that is critical to defend against the threats of fifth generation warfare. Yet, the NSP claims itself to be the 'first ever' national security policy and, even more ludicrously, the 'first ever' to introduce the notions of 'economic security' and 'citizen-centric security'.

ment of peace and security, economic development can neither be meaningful nor sustainable." Not to mention, unlike the NSP which has become partisan, Vision 2025 was officially endorsed by all major political parties including our worst critics (the PTI).

The fact is that the PML-N government initiated the process of codifying security policies in Pakistan soon after it formed the government in 2013. At the time, Pakistan was engulfed with existential security threats emanating from terrorism and extremism. The number of terrorist incidents peaked at 1806 in 2013-14 - culminating into the most grotesque of all tragedies, the APS attack. The PML-N government did not flinch when faced with such severe security crises. In its first year, the government came up with the country's National Internal Security Policy (2014) and complimented it with the development of the National Action Plan in the same year. The government went out of its way to build consensus on this sensitive issue. All political parties as well as state institutions at both the federal and provincial levels were consulted. The ownership and support thus generated gave the real impetus to suggested policy actions ranging from soft to hard measures to curtail this menace.

By 2018, the number of terrorist attacks had declined by over 70 percent. In order to consolidate the gains made in the struggle against terrorism, and to achieve sustainable peace, a comprehensive security framework with focus on non-kinetic interventions and reforms was developed in the form of the National Internal Security Policy (NISP) 2018 which aimed to tackle structural sources of insecurity in the country and provide a broader vision to establish positive peace. Unfortunately, rather than adopting NISP 2018, the PTI government wasted three and a half precious years just reshaping the PML-N's Vision 2025, NAP and NISP 1 & 2 into NSP. As terrorism rears its head again, the government must be made answerable for wasting time

and losing momentum in the nation's fight against terrorism and extremism.

Even after more than three years, the grand vision the government has come up with is nothing but a copy-paste of the PML-N's strategy, as I shall demonstrate below. This may still have been acceptable, if the government were actually following the said policy prescriptions as well. The fact is that in practice, the government's actions are completely opposite to what the PML-N's policies and its own NSP suggests. This shows a complete lack of leadership, vision and capacity to understand and resolve the complex challenges faced by the country.

The NSP suggests a strong economy is essential for traditional and human security and advocates pro-growth economic policies. In reality, the PTI has wrecked the economy through its mismanagement and incompetence. It pursued fiscally irresponsible policies that shrank the size of the economy from \$315 billion in 2018 to \$280 billion in 2021. The PML-N on the other hand, increased the size of the economic pie and doubled tax revenues which translated into record increases in spending in the social sector, infrastructure development and the defence budget. The NSP suggests redistribution to deal with the grievances and push factors that force people to take up violent paths. One of the six pillars of NISP 2018 was redistribution. Similarly, the emphasis on national cohesion through 'unity in diversity', recognition of minority communities and gender mainstreaming were also key dimensions of NISP 2018. Pursuing reconciliation with armed groups where possible and working towards regional peace were also two of the six pillars of NISP 2018 that have been reproduced in NSP using the same language. The NSP emphasizes geo-economics, another idea taken squarely from NISP 2018 and Vision 2025. While the PML-N put this to practice through CPEC, the PTI government has in practice stalled the progress in this direction. The NSP advocates not joining geo-strategic camps, and maintaining cordial relations with both China and the US. The fact is that under the PTI, Pakistan's relations have soured with

both world powers. During the PML-N's government, while our relations with China soared even higher under CPEC, we also initiated the US-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor with annual 1,000 PhD scholarships for ten years to promote cooperation with the US in higher education. The PML-N government expanded the size of the Fulbright Scholarship Program by becoming the first country to make a matching contribution. Today, the American president is not even interested in speaking to our prime minister on the phone.

Take any aspect of the NSP and you will find the PML-N's vision and demonstrable performance reflected in that. Compare the same with the PTI's approach and you will see actions completely in the opposite direction. Along with the similarities with the PML-N's vision, there are four key aspects where the NSP remains silent. First and second, it provides no commitment to democratic consolidation and ensuring basic freedoms, particularly freedom of speech in the country. This is not surprising given the party's record on hounding opposition parties through bogus and politically motivated cases and attacks on the lives and livelihoods of journalists and other dissenting voices. This reveals the PTI's truly authoritarian and fascist face that did not even find it worthy to pay lip service to these issues in its so-called 'historic' national document.

Third, despite its tall pre-election claims, the PTI has simply dropped the ball on the institutional reforms needed to effectively implement any national policy. The first R in NISP (2018), Reorient, proposed a complete overhaul of the state's security apparatus, especially much needed reforms in the justice and law enforcement sectors to achieve the desired results. During its tenure, the PML-N focused extensively on evolving a community policing model and using technology, for example the Safe City projects, to bring much-needed efficiency. Model police stations and modern facilitation centers were established to improve police-citizen interactions. A comprehensive strategy to improve investigation and prosecution was developed. The PTI, on the contrary, has stalled

progress in this direction. Its modus operandi has only been to officiate unnecessary transfers and posting of senior government officers on a whimsical basis, demoralising key institutions such as the police and the bureaucracy. Internal security threats are the real challenges that Pakistan faces to ensure peace and stability for economic development. The chapter on internal security is vague and nowhere. Extremism and sectarianism have been dealt with in a small paragraph, which even a high school student can write better. The policy guidelines in the document neither provide any vision nor any framework. The readers are advised to have a look at NISP-2018 and judge for themselves. Fourth, technology is changing the security paradigm in all its dimensions rapidly. The NSP is silent and at best makes a cursory reference. Technology advances are making it unthinkable to reckon military strength by counting soldiers, tanks, and airplanes. Advanced electronics and robots can already make a defensive conventional army more effective than an offensive army larger in terms of pure firepower. Smart robotic weapons can spot and destroy enemy tanks, planes, and military concentrations. Superior electronic warfare can enable forces to block enemy communications while preventing them from jamming ours. Similarly, computer-assisted management of battle information makes possible highly focused military actions. Likewise, innovation in Artificial Intelligence, big data, cloud computing, automation & robotics, biotechnology, nanotechnology and space technology are reshaping the landscape of future economy and security. The NSP is a resounding vindication of the PML-N's vision, strategy and approach to national security and a damning indictment of the PTI's capacity, practices and performance proving that the PML-N is the only political party that has the capacity and commitment to deliver concrete results on issues of critical importance for national security.

The writer is an MNA and former minister for interior, planning, development and reforms. He tweets @betterpakistan and can be