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For the third time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been thrown out. In Pakistan where the army has wielded- directly or indirectly- more or less absolute power since the partition of India in 1947 the news of Nawaz Sharif's ouster is not a tectonic shift in the politics of the country but more or less expected since former cricketer Imran Khan, leader of Tehrik-e-Insaf started his agitation for Sharif's resignation when his and his family's name came out in the now famous Panama Papers.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan in its judgment pronounced: Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif is not honest in terms of Section 99(f) of ROPA (Representative of Peoples' Act 1976) and Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, therefore, he is disqualified to be a Member of the Parliament;(ii) The Election Commission of Pakistan shall issue a notification disqualifying Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif from being a Member of the Parliament with immediate effect, where after he shall cease to be the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Nawaz Sharif's fault was his failure to disclose his un-withdrawn receivables from a UAE registered firm in his nomination papers for the General Elections held in 2013 thus making him dishonest under ROPA and the constitution of Pakistan and consequent disqualification to be a member of Parliament. British paper The Guardian in an editorial mentioned the fate of a few others named by the Panama Papers. The Panama Papers sparked the resignation of Iceland's Prime Minister within days while David Cameron came under intense scrutiny over his family's tax affairs. While Malta is dealing with the fallout unofficial estimate puts Nawaz Sharif's wealth in billions of US dollars. The exact amount, if any, would be revealed by the committee set up by the Pakistani Supreme Court to investigate the allegations.

While corruption cannot be supported on ethical and legal grounds, more so when millions of people in developing countries (a term

popularized by economist Walt Whitman Rostow as underdevelopment signified countries having less money, less literacy rate, less life expectancy etc) live in sub-human conditions, undeniably corruption is an integral part of politics as evidenced by reports of Bretton Woods Institutions, Transparency International and scores of other reputed institutions. Only a few days back Bangladesh Supreme Court declaring the 16th amendment of Constitution as null and void stated : “It is expected in a country run by constitutional democracy that the following indispensable constituents would exist: (a) purity of election, (b) probity in governance, (c) sanctity of individual dignity, (d) sacrosanctity of rule of law, (e) independence of judiciary, (f) efficiency and acceptability of bureaucracy, (g) credibility of institutions like judiciary, bureaucracy, Election Commission, Parliament, (h) integrity and respectability of those who run those institutions,”.

The point to be driven home is that corruption, be it small or big, should not go unchallenged and should be judged under due process of law as one of the constituents of democracy that would make the authorities accountable to the people. The New York Times (July 24 2017) in a piece referred to the way corruption has spread in Pakistan. NYT wrote “Here’s how to get filthy rich in Pakistan: manipulate the law, get bank loans written off, use irregular accounting practices, evade tariffs and taxes and exploit labor. Mr. Sharif and his family are no different from others who are filthy rich, some of whom have joined Mr. (Imran) Khan’s P.T.I.”

One wonders if it rings a bell in Bangladesh. An English language daily reported (Bangladeshi money in Swiss Banks) that Bangladeshi nationals' deposits in Swiss banks rose more than twenty percent year-on-year in 2016 to 661.96 million Swiss francs or Tk 5,575 crore (10 million is one crore). The Swiss National Bank (SNB) revealed the data in its annual report titled “Banks in Switzerland 2016”. The amount was Tk 4,423 crore in 2015 and Tk 4,283 crore in 2014. The deposits went up in case of Bangladesh despite an ongoing global clampdown on the famed secrecy wall of Swiss banking system. The report, however, does not shed light on the alleged black money held by Bangladeshis. Global Financial Integrity (GFI), a Washington-based research organization, that gives a comprehensive picture about money laundered out of a country stated that Bangladesh lost between \$6 billion and \$9 billion to illegal money outflows in 2014. In another report GFI stated that more than \$57 billion has left the country illicitly between 2004 and 2013., According to the Malaysian High Commission in Dhaka Bangladesh is among the top three countries eligible to avail itself of the "Malaysia my second home (MM2H)" programme and as many three thousand Bangladeshis have so far taken advantage of the offer. According to Malaysian requirements for making Malaysia “my second home” it is estimated that around Tk 35.66 billion (3,566 crore) has been taken out of the country by those who want to settle in Malaysia. The reference to Bangladesh situation is only to highlight the fact that the co-existence of money with power is there in many developing countries all over the world and some developed countries as well.

One could infer that departure of Nawaz Sharif would affect Indo-Pak relations to a significant extent as Sharif decided against the reported wishes of the Pakistani establishment to attend the swearing ceremony of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Modi’s visit to Pakistan. But then the course of improvement, if any, was derailed by Pakistan sponsored terrorism in India and incidents in recent years in Mumbai, the Pathankot and Uri, beheading of Indian soldiers in the front lines, and continuing infiltration by Pak sponsored terrorists across the line of Control in Kashmir. Indo-Pak relations got fresh attention during Narendra Modi’s recent visit to the USA. The official joint statement made several references to Pakistan, notably a call for Pakistan to "ensure that its territory is not used to launch terrorist attacks on other

countries," and to "bring to justice the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai, Pathankot, and other cross-border terrorist attacks."

The US for the first time designated Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. Indian Foreign Ministry termed the US position as "the strongest joint expression of the commitment of the two sides" on fighting terrorism. About a decade back Daniel Markey (Foreign Affairs-July/August 2007) had suggested that the choice facing the US "between supporting Pakistan's army and promoting democracy has always been a false one. Both are necessary. Only by helping to empower civilians and earning the trust of the army at the same time will the United States successfully prosecute the long war against extremism and militancy". It has been argued in favor of Daniel Markey's premise that societies like that of Pakistan burdened with the attributes of tribalism preclude fairness and justice to the people. Added to this feudalistic character of the society is the constant fear of Hindu India overrunning smaller (but nuclear) Pakistan. It has been suggested that the Pakistan army and its intelligence agency-ISI's- retention of ties with the militants and Taliban sympathizers have been done as a hedge against abandonment by the US in case of an Indo-Pak conflict. Besides given the Pakistan army and its intelligence services' long standing relationship with the Islamists they were never serious about fighting terrorists.

Despite common belief that the Taliban are still present in Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas- FATA) and that Osama bin Laden was (later proved to be false) living in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, some South Asian experts advised that the US administration to broaden its relations with the army as a constant in the power politics of Pakistan and even if a civilian government were to come to power it will have to negotiate its perilous relationship with the army. Ayesha Siddiqa (Military Inc) wrote that "the military's power allows it to define its economic interests and exploit public and private resources, a behavior that increases the organization's appetite for power". Siddiqa's contention was strengthened by the belief that Pakistan military would not accept any dilution of power, however tainted some elements of the army remain of Islamist extremism and Jihadist ideology.

The future of Pakistan would be better served by a choice between the military and the democrats and not the military and the Mullahs as constantly propagated by the vested quarters. According to some the Deobandi ascendancy in Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan and Afghanistan created an Islamist-Pathan belt stretching from Kandahar to Quetta to Peshawar. Does it necessarily mean the ascendancy of the Islamists in Pakistan? Though Pakistan is a deeply religious Islamic country the past elections have shown that the Islamists have not fared well at the polls. Therefore the Western hope of establishing in some parts of Pakistan of a form of secular government may not be ill founded. Obstacles to deliberative and liberal democracy remain in the feudal structure of the Pakistani society and the extent of illiteracy in the country that prevent the general public of knowledge of their rights and privileges written in the Constitution and in various laws. In this case ignorance of the general public is bliss for the military rulers who often regard laws and rules with utter contempt.

Stephen Cohen in his book *The Idea of Pakistan* grappled with the description that can be given to Pakistan--'rogue state', 'a delinquent nation', 'Taliban East' a 'failing state' or just 'misunderstood but an effective US ally'. Cohen argues that the state of Pakistan today is the unresolved question about Mohammad Ali Jinnah's secular Pakistan or the Islamist Pakistan that the country is heading. In this quarrel Pakistan army has always projected itself as the only protector of Jinnah's ideology though effectively their role could not have been further

from a secular and democratic state. Apologists have given many reasons for the prominence of the army-the part forming Pakistan-inherited the lion's share of "martial race" of British India; death of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan and the armed forces being better organized took over the leadership; hostile relationship with Afghanistan which cast the only vote against Pakistan's admission into the UN and with India; and the global environment which saw India as a leader of the Non-aligned Movement and Pakistan as member of SEATO and CENTO. In the wake of escalating Cold War the Americans wanted strong military rulers like Ayub Khan to rule Pakistan. Second time the US intervened in the wake of defeat in Vietnam War to take revenge against the USSR in Afghanistan by supporting Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was not the US' first choice as Bhutto realized the disastrous potential consequences of the US involvement in Afghanistan resulting in a switch to General Zia ul Huq who hanged Bhutto on trumped up charges. Then in 1999 General Pervez Musharraf overthrew Nawaz Sharif mainly because of Nawaz Sharif's desire to bring civilian control over the army; army's dislike of Sharif's policy to transform hostile relations with India; and no less importantly Sharif's reneging on his promise to let General Parvez Musharraf leave Pakistan to avoid being found guilty of treason in ongoing trial.

Going back a few years one may recall that Pakistan Supreme Court legalized each of the three successful military coups-1958, 1977 and 1999. The audacity of then Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani's description of the army being "a state within a state" and for allowing Osama bin Laden to live in Pakistan for several years without keeping the civilian government informed cost him his job. Such boldness by a civilian was difficult to stomach for the army and Yusuf Raza Gilani had to go. Husain Haqqani, a former Pakistani ambassador to the US has argued against Pakistan's "singular focus on its disputes and problems with India, and looking upon the United States as a source of money and weaponry to pursue its conflict with India. The American interest in Pakistan has essentially been to take advantage of Pakistan's geostrategic location –primarily a transactional relationship-- and there have been many moments when both parties felt that the other had not kept its end of the bargain. After 9/11, says Haqqani, Pakistan had a new opportunity to try and be useful to the United States and received large amounts of economic and military assistance in return for that usefulness. The discovery of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan essentially convinced an overwhelming majority of Americans that Pakistan cannot be a reliable ally.. Haqqani advises that Pakistan needs to reorient its foreign policy and mend fences with India. It is doubtful whether such advice would be heeded by the Pakistani establishment.

Generations of Pakistanis have been sold to the idea that India remains the preeminent enemy of Pakistan which particularly after Bangladesh liberation war has buried into the grave the two nations theory the raison d'être of the existence of Pakistan. While North Korea remains an immediate threat to the world Indo-Pakistan rivalry (both nuclear powered nations though Pakistan does not have the economic strength to pursue a long war with India) remains an existential threat to the peace and progress of the world. The Damocles sword hanging over the head of Nawaz Sharif could, depending on the unpredictability of the Pakistani establishment, could very well be hanging over all of us.

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