

ACCOUNTABILITY, GLOBALIZATION AND PAKISTAN

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Accountability, a misnomer, a conceptualization, a farce, a glimmer of hope, a stigma – what is accountability. It has infinite interpretations and is applicable at the individual, group, communal, societal, national and universal levels. We are individually and mutually accountable in this modern world of ugly want, we are born free but enslaved to society, we strive for peace and happiness but glamorize suffering, stratification and inequality. In a world which seems so well coordinated and process oriented there is rampant chaos and confusion harboring a serene insecurity, traversing across a path of exploitation and being reinforced with meaningless symbols of self preservation? Where are we going? We have moved from globalization to informatization, from independence to interdependence and from restricted economies to open economies. There is talk of good governance, corporate governance, social responsibility, matrixed accountability and participatory approaches—leading to what? Maybe we have to rethink our directions and comprehend where we truly want to see ourselves.

We live in a country where a pseudo culture has emerged in which two extremes are fructifying towards collision. Our values have been compromised by the advent of the antenna culture, where the antenna signifies power and authority. The story begins in 1999 when a so called draconian law was introduced to curb corruption and crease out miscreants who had for decades vandalized our beloved Pakistan. Fear and unabashed arrests led to work coming to a halt and business churning to slow gears. Anxiety and uncertainty was in the air. As an antidote to this environment, Toyota launched its new corolla model and suddenly offices buzzed with the anticipation of a black or white Xli corolla, propelling the

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black marketeering “on” so that the car went to nearly two hundred thousand rupees above its retail price. As white and black corolla is dotted the streets, the senior officials broke the monotony by flexing muscles and acquiring silver colored GLI corolla’s in contravention of procurement rules and regulations. Election fever gripped the nation and the police force with its new police ordinance became a formidable institution. They could be recognized from a far due to their over protruding antenna on their vehicles. The centre of authority became the antenna and a flood gate was suddenly opened whereby any body with a semblance of power got an antenna affixed to his vehicle. The new cabinet of government was sworn in and they too unfortunately only got 2.0D Saloon Corolla’s and as a compensation they were awarded with two antenna’s on their vehicles – the symbol of power and respect transgressed from the flag of Pakistan to the number of antennas on the vehicle. Some important officials with the real reins of authority could not be left behind so they installed 3 antennas on their vehicles. The race of antenna’s prompted the central figures of authority in Pakistan to have up to 5 antennas on their vehicles. In this modern world of communication and mobile telephony the question is how many times have they have ever needed these wireless sets which anyway have a negative impact on the driver and front seat passenger who have to awkwardly sit due to the wireless apparatus bulging out of the car frames. Anyway most of the time the wireless sets are packed away leaving the antenna’s to exuberate greatness. Where are we going? Pretentious and ostentatious frivolities have plunged us into a fantasy world where the petty reigns supreme. Now 2007 has seen the flux of alloy rims and flashy plates in the corridors of power – where do we go next? May be we should take a few lessons about austerity from next door Dr. Mannohan Singh or Mr. Badawi, the prime minister of Malaysia. Personalities and character matter not vehicles and pretentious grandeur.

Since time immemorial it has been observed that nations tend to holistically develop if they provide for effective accountability mechanisms and systems which are actually incorporated at the individual and collective social level. In Islam, from worship to dealing in social matters, faith and accountability assume central importance. It provides a system of ‘Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong’, which, on the one hand provides the individuals the freedom and opportunities of reforms and on the other suggests ways and means for the accountability of every person from Head of State to a common citizen. To

mention it correctly, the state of mind encapsulated in Islam is such as prominently characterized in a saying of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) ‘Hold you accountable, before you are held accountable’. The central pillars of the system are self-assessment and collective accountability. The process starts in this world but ends up in the Hereafter where no one will escape. This is what Allama Iqbal points in his famous poem “Iblees ki Majlis-e-Shoora”: He attributes the Ummah, asserting that what most frightens Satan is this ubiquitous notion of accountability.

Our history is landscaped with instances which substantiate that the fundamental reason of our decline, confusion and anxiety is our connivance and escape from accountability. In retrospect whether it was the assassination of the first Prime Minister or ousting of the second one and dissolution of the Assembly, the abrogation of the Constitution or the sacrilege of the Kashmir issue, doctoring the electoral results or military intervention of one’s own people, losing half the country or the permeation of regional and sectarian rifts, usurping out industrial and trade licenses or national landed property, engineering the cooperative scandal or plundering the banks, commissionizing business, or promoting over indulgence of kickbacks and blatantly abusing the authority – it goes on, all the culprits have glamorized their saga and the condition of the nation has dramatically deteriorated whereby the values of success are now being entrenched in material excess and unjust enrichment.

A few thousand families have greased their pockets with the sweat and blood of the nation. Whereas millions have gone to abeyance and abject poverty. Over 35 percent of the population is in deprivation of fundamental necessities of life. Industries are languishing and banks have been vanquished replaced by foreign banks and multinationals. Our indigenous industry and services are being side tracked by giving preferential status to foreigners thereby adding inputs to a new colonial ERA. Scandal after scandal has plagued the nation. Exploitists have destroyed the lives of innocent people by legalizing well structured extortion schemes. The country has lost international credibility and was stigmatized as the world’s second most corrupt country; now it is ranked as the fifth most corrupt despite all the accolades of a select community of vested interest. According to different sources the nation and even its coming generations has been buried under the heap of external debt, so much so that every individual – man or woman, elder or child – is indebted to the extent of Rs.

17,000. The nation is to pay the enormous amount of Rs. 900 million internal debt and US\$ 40 billions of external hard loans. Additionally 20 to 25 percent of the annual national income (GNP) over the past 3 years that amounts to over Rs. 400 billion got lost to corruption while another 450 billion rupees has been wasted by the nation. Is this development or is this retrogressive decadence?

Successive governments have not been able to develop effective machinery for accountability and whatever good or bad system was devised under the FIA, Ehtasab Cell or National Accountability Bureau, they could not make any notable headway. The nation has been repeatedly misled through a choreographed campaign that elections are the panacea towards accountability. There is no denying the fact that elections are part of the accountability process as provided by the Articles of the Constitution. However they have to be conducted through the electoral rules and processes which have to be applied in true essence and spirit. In the absence of these pre-requisites, elections cannot ensure even a limited degree of accountability, least to consider them as an alternative for the highly acclaimed broad-based accountability processes which are fashionably introduced under different garbs to victimize previous regimes and to gain popularity. All of them are the different bad eggs of the same basket. They have a single point agenda and that is to grasp the seat of power at all costs – legally or illegally and then traverse a journey of moral turpitude whereby they immerse themselves in a period of rotten self – aggrandizement at the cost of the people. Elections can only provide the starting point for the real accountability provided that they are fair.

If engineered elections are a ploy to cover those who ruled over the past years, as well as those who ruled the country before that with full authority and who mercilessly exploited its resources without the least fear, than it is sheer cosmetic surgery with no sustainable or long term implications. The accountability process cannot be confined to any specific period or persons. Anyone who held public office, whether as a servant or elected representative must face accountability without omission. This is what Islam demands and is the basic principle of democracy. If only elections amount to accountability then nothing should have been done to President Nixon because he was directly elected to office. Yet he was subjected to accountability and had to quit his job. In Japan and Italy, the elected Prime Ministers were

impeached and they had not only to leave their positions but also underwent long trials and imprisonments. It is thus evident that from the politico legal dimensions, accountability is a permanent process in itself. The first and foremost item on the national agenda was and is accountability, which must be undertaken with absolute honesty and justice. The nation has been in a stupor since its independence. The rulers sprinkle “hafeem” onto the people and they get into a trance of oblivion and get swayed into emotional allegiances of baradari, ethnicity or religious zeal. Where we heading and what is the future of Pakistan. It is imperative to become self aware before things tend to cascade around us and we permanently lose our sovereignty and sense of humor.

The fundamental requisites for accountability which must be ensured at the official level must incorporate but are not limited to the following:

1. Realignment of National Priorities

The first step is to prioritize accountability as the foremost issue and ensure that it is extended to individuals belonging to all parties and institutions of the government. In this regard the President, Prime Minister, members of Cabinet and Judiciary should first of all, offer themselves for accountability. Similarly, all members and officials of the Parliament, provincial assemblies and district governments should pass through the process of proactive disclosure. Additionally, responsible members of all the past governments should be subjected to it, with due care neither to omit any friend nor victimize any political foe. The neglect and dereliction of the government in this context reaches to criminality which has badly tarnished its integrity and legality, emulating the semblance of non-meritocracy and injustice.

2. Formulating Pragmatic Implementable Laws

It is necessary to bring about suitable and crosscutting amendments in the laws and system of accountability, which could make it really impartial, authoritative and above approach. Accountability should on the one hand meet the true tenants of justice and free it of all anomalies. Our whole legal system has been rendered helpless against the shanigans of excessivity. We should not be carried away by the western adversarial approach of life which is immersed in a plethora of absurd competitiveness and capitalistic value. It would be

correct to employ inquisitional modes in the light of Islamic traditions (in Europe, the system is working in France and Italy, so that the institution of accountability does not get paralyzed before the ‘words’ and ‘terms’ of the law). Its objective should be to unveil the truth and propagate equitable justice. Lifting of the veil must be followed in essence and earnestly. Similarly, there is need to withdraw all discretionary powers which are actually catalyzing the plague of corruption and self aggrandizement. We also need to introduce the mechanism of true participative government which would be instrumental in uprooting corruption and inculcating collective values.

Islamic history is replete with examples which are very clear in this respect. If the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) could ask Hazrat Umar (R.A.A) to prove that there was no corruption involved in the dress he was wearing. And if the authoritative Caliph left all other activities and called his son to witness that his shirt was made by the two pieces, one gifted by his son, then why is it that the egoistic political leaders and stoic officials cannot be questioned today, to prove that whether their living standards, their properties and their lavish expenditures are sourced through their so called legitimate incomes or the benami properties of their spouses? The assembly members who have tendered their wealth returns, should first of all be screened as to how far these returns were based on facts and where have they concealed wealth by making false submissions. There is also a need to scrutinize the election expenditures which are an open farce. If our accountability institutions could assess without discrimination the wealth of the top few hundred people and hold them duly accountable, things will start improving at all levels. If this is not done, the plundered wealth is not recovered and further corruption is not curbed, then the time is not far when the nation will not be deceived through mere window dressing and hollow slogans. The era of deception and deceit has been circumscribed with the advent of informatization and media splendor. There is need for a law “of” accountability, not a law “off” accountability, relevant transparent implementation machinery and working methodology, so that people have faith in the system and justice / accountability can be visibly seen, projected and propagated.

3. Creating and Molding Public Opinion

A third important factor for the accountability processes is that public opinion should remain mobilized at the grass root level. All those who have gotten affected through prevalent corrupt and immoral activities, should without any fear or hindrance, be able to approach the accountability machinery to redress their grievances. The law should give them full protection. This will require facilitating the fundamental rights provided in the Constitution and the accountability laws. The political parties, various associations and scrupulous civil society members should become active to protect the rights of the oppressed and facilitate the accountability courts against the plunderers of national wealth. There is need to constitute people's committees and mobilize the common citizen across the urban and rural communities. Individuals who have been deprived of their money and property should without fear of repercussions come forward and expose the unrepenting dacoits of our nation. In this way the process of accountability would be made a reality.

The government, the political parties and the civil society all have to stand up and play their role. Whereas everyone has to undergo self-assessment, a system of general accountability has to be effectively mobilized. The process should cover monetary and political bungling and the corrupt individuals and also the policies of successive governments and those who have played with the fate of Pakistan and its primary interests. There has to be a financial and management audit at the national level with a trickle down effect. Accountability should be at the popular level, at the Forum of Parliament and Assemblies and in the courts of justice and law. Above all, it requires participatory government, free media and public dialogue. However, it also requires a responsible, self disciplined, socially aware media which positively contributes to public awareness. The media has assumed a new role in the past decade whereby it has become the 4th pillar of state. However it is important for the media Mughals to comprehend the magnitude of impact they have at the international and national arena. The media can exhibit irresponsibility when it callously comments without considering long term implications. The media is answerable to itself and to the public. It has a role of being teacher to the whole nation and for the sake of cheap publicity it should not indulge in bigoted witch hunts and over magnification of issues. It has to follow a code of ethics which encapsulates realism and objectivity. It is imperative that it makes the people understand that corruption is no more linked to ill gotten wealth but also to moral

standards which encompass wastage, favoritism, abuse of authority, discrimination of confusion, dereliction of duty, unjust enrichment indiscipline, damage to the environment, misuse of property misinformation etc.

4. Holistic Implementation of Good Governance Policies

Over the past 60 years, Pakistan has deviated from the true objective of its independence for which the Muslims of the Sub-Continent struggled and sacrificed their lives and property. Today, the situation is such that the whole nation is in the grasp of an exploitative system, where a few thousand influential and powerful persons have usurped the national resources. Constitution, law and electoral politics, notwithstanding these elite, have pacified the masses into tenants and the national resources into their personal fiefdoms. Feudalism is no more a representation of select strata of society. It is a mindset which has crept into the echelons of every individual. Anyone with even a little authority tends to abuse his situation to his own benefit whereby the plight of the common man has further deteriorated. Another dangerous dimension of this exploitative system is that it has collaborated with the Western powers and institutions and the collusion is jeopardizing the political, economic and cultural freedom of the Pakistani nation. The country's budget and economic policies are dictated, rather formulated by the consultants stationed here by the World Bank, the IMF and other donor institutions. Even in political matters, we are subservient to our true masters sitting in the white house. Whether it is the problem of Kashmir or Afghanistan, relations with Iran or India, unclear policies or military exercises – for all such matters, we are at beck and call from Washington. We are a proxy state, being held hostage to the shackles of international vested interests. Those holding the seat of authority remain apprehensive that they may not be considered and declared supporting the 'fundamentalists': thereby showing allegiance to alienated philosophies of national placation and disillusioned enlightened moderation and strong handed approaches to anything which is associated with our beloved religion. Loyalty is exhibited by, Pakistan and Islam bashing, just to prove that we are from their flock of enlightened and broad minded individuals. Obscenity, absurdity, vulgarity, immorality all categorize us to be in vogue with what is perceived to be correct. Is this the satanization of our culture? Have we gone blind and programmed our minds to be oblivious of basic facts and ground realities.

The system would change for the better when the country and the people endeavor with sincerity, commitment and zeal to realize certain goals and objectives and goals:

- Safeguarding the ideology of Pakistan and accordingly reconstructing the whole individual and social life models. But what is the ideology of Pakistan? Are the citizens conversant with this ideal?
- Protecting political, economic and sociological freedom and broadening its scope. But what is freedom?
- Liberating the nation from the clutches of the exploitative groups and establishing a just and transparent system in which sovereignty is with Allah and the authority is truly transferred to the people. What is transparency?
- Decisions should be executed according to the aspirations of the masses, for the benefit of the common man and all citizens should enjoy the protection of life, property and honor, without discrimination. Do the masses have any aspiration?
- Everyone should be able to avail the basic needs of life and equal opportunity of progress. Who wants opportunity?
- Understanding self and comprehending what the journey of life means. Are we slaves to society?
- Becoming self motivated, self disciplined and self accountable. Being committed to self and country and upholding patriotism as the flame of hope and salvation.
- Being passionate about Pakistan, loving every inch of it and loving every citizen of it. Developing bridges and not erecting barriers.

Today, the nation is standing at a critical juncture. If the political process does not provide means to achieve the above goals, then as history has revealed, the oppressed masses will get frustrated, loose faith in the ruling system and turn to revolutionary measures which at the end of the day will be counter productive and damaging to Pakistan. Already we are seeing the rampage of disgruntled society members whereby a cloud of insecurity has hovered over the nation. The time has arrived to wake up to realities and comprehend the

aspirations of the people. It is imperative to change current methodologies and for once move towards an equitable system in which people have a voice which is not shunned but amalgamated into the mechanisms of good governance. Poverty alleviation has to be coupled with the eradication of voice poverty and poverty of opportunity. Elitism cannot flourish relentlessly and it would have to be replaced with a system of rapprochement and judicious distribution of resources. It is important to comprehend and ascertain the following issues in the context of governance:

- What type of morality, capability, skill set and character do the individuals possess, who will be selected and posted to the seats of responsible authority.
- Evaluation of past performance and analysis of future potential of individuals taking public office.
- To what extent are the parliament and parliamentary institutions involved in legislation and policy formulation? Whether the democratic system will be cleansed of the practice of issuing ordinances, executive orders and subsidiary law-making? Or will the parliament and assemblies remain to sit idle and continue to be stamps of endorsement, subjugated by external forces? Will they languish in shackles and never be able to assert their freedom?
- Other constitutional amendments are also necessary which should aim at: creating an equilibrium of authority, effectively protecting the basic rights: ensure true freedom of the judiciary (from both government and themselves), particularly regularizing the judges of the Shariah court and providing them full judicial cover, introduction of the proportionate electoral system; adequate increase in the seats of the parliament to ensure wider representation; strengthening of institutions through capacity building, and a reasonable system of representation of women so that women representatives can become independent minded parliamentarians rather than just stooges of men.
- Devolution of authority and resources to the lower tiers of government i.e., the consolidation of provincial autonomy and the empowerment of local bodies, enumerated by law.

- Ensuring that the relationship with every individual of Allah will be signified by kindness, trustworthiness and brotherhood. As the Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to say, “that their reward whatsoever was with Allah and that they were only doing their duty by way of working for the good and service of human beings and leading them to a path that guarantees success in this world and in the Hereafter”. That their purpose of governance was to propagate goodness and discourage wrong doing. Conforming to the acts of the prophets (alahem-us-salam), we need to understand and declare that we are determined to follow their footprints and to uphold and struggle for their eternal mission of righteousness.
- Accountability is more importantly required for the leadership and officials than the common people and the nation as a whole. Therefore, it is necessary to make all arrangements to remind ourselves of our final goal, renew our pledge; repent for our lapses; persuade and provide good advice to our colleagues; and concentrate in the field of action to complete the pre-requisites of our predetermined universally accepted mission. Our real task is to establish a strong linkage with Allah and positively pressurize the vice-regents of Allah to fulfill their obligations towards their Master and Sustainer and their fellow human beings. Our goal and responsibility is to eliminate oppression and establish common justice. Individual efforts will not be sufficient for this purpose. Success depends on collective and organized endeavors. It is not the time to take rest. Rather, it is important to reach out to people in every city, village and dwelling, motivate them, energize them, create synergy and get them involved in the journey of collective approach. There is unfathomable potential – it just needs to be sparked. After our faith and reliance on Allah, our resource is the people and it should be our primary task to concretize and organize them. Lest we forget some of our more important issues; Popular affordable education for all; public service; religious preaching; moral reforms, collective efforts for rights and obligations and to work for bringing forth a new leadership that is faithful to Allah, striving for the general welfare of the Ummah and its objective should not be to make personal gains in this world, but for the greater welfare of humanity.

The struggle for the realization of this goal, demands vision, wisdom, maturity and a judicious approach, as ordained by Allah:

“Invite to the Way of the Lord with wisdom and beautified preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious” (Al-Negl 16:125)

In a broader context Globalization has catalyzed corruption not to be limited to the local or national level but has enabled it to spread its tentacles to the international arena. The global village has created a new Sardari Nizam which encapsulates a **uni-polar** world poignantly entrenched on a values system of stark materialism and shifting loyalties. The past few years have witnessed several instances in which the international political hyena’s have harbored third world countries under their hegemony in the name of collective accountability whereby they want to eradicate the so called wrong doings but in actuality are nurturing their criminal activities. We cannot deny the involvement of international politics and religious bias in their actions against these countries. It is the need of the hour to establish a “UN based Accountability Institute” and an “International Council of Accountability” to investigate and process the instances of abuse of authority by different states and individuals which in actuality tend to circumvent international conventions to achieve their ulterior motives of economic supremacy leading to global exploitation and modern colonialism.

Today, we stand at the edge of a precipice; it is not a time for indecisiveness because what could be initiated tomorrow should be accomplished today. We as a nation have to stand up with honor and emerge from the quagmire of chaos and confusion. We have to in all earnest strive for self accountability, communal accountability and national self preservation. Our youth and future leadership have to recognize that they have to exuberate their full inner potential to save our nation from internal annihilation and disintegration. A greater call for sacrifice has to be emulated whereby the collective energy of our future generations is channelized towards productive nation building activities. We are accountable to ourselves first, then to the global community. We have to rein in this malicious vermin of materialism which is eating into the very core of our existence. It is imperative to act for collective good, shedding away our petty differences and emerging as a rejuvenated, energized, self

disciplined nation which upholds the principles of humanity and Islam as the tools of self presentation and distributive justice.

“Nothing can withstand the powers of a determined and resolute mind – barriers fall, everything succumbs – if positively inspired the very gates of heaven open”.

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