

As colonialism was folding up, the charge of the newly independent countries in the developing world was transferred to the modern, western educated elite of these countries. This was true irrespective of whether the struggle for independence in these countries was peaceful or not. Even in the traditional societies, the departing colonials chose 'friendly' rulers to head of governments their countries. Why did this group that received the charge of their countries in Asia, the Middle East and Africa fail in some cases — and mostly in Muslim majority ones — to manage this trust of governance and improve upon it — which is what independence from colonialism was supposed to mean?

Of the several contributing factors, external as well as internal, a big responsibility for the failure is of the internecine fighting between the civil and military components of the modern, western educated elites of these countries. Pitted against each other over the fundamentals of governance, they alienated themselves from the traditionalists in their societies.

Each in its turn has also tried to woo the traditionalists to build up its strength and tilt the scales in its favour. Wherever this internecine struggle has persisted for long durations, it has distorted the governance, stunted the growth of institutions, and in the process, has held hostage the prosperity of the peoples of many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Over one hundred years ago, in the year 1900, Argentina was the fifth richest country in the world after England, the US, France and Germany. All other countries were poorer and came after it. Today, after decades of infighting over governance between the civil and military

~~It would be seen that this is a~~ problem that has occurred across cultures and counters where similar conditions existed. Although some scholars and experts in the West have recently tried to turn it into an Arab and Muslim-specific issue, inciting clashes of civilizations, the problem is neither culture nor religion-specific. In fact, if we look back into history, similar 'scholarly' arguments were also employed to justify colonialism on the racial and religious grounds in the 19th century and in the case of apartheid all the way up to the closing decades of the 20th century.

It should also be clear from this that time does not automatically translate into progress, if the governance is malfunctioning. There has been some talk recently of making Pakistan another Malaysia. That is a good idea and worth pursuing by Pakistan as well as other Muslim countries. Malaysia is a very successful modern country and commands respect in the international community. But it is pertinent to ask ourselves what makes Malaysia so successful and respected?

Malaysia is not the richest Muslim country, nor does it command the kind of resources found in many Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries. It is not the largest, nor the oldest independent state among Muslim countries. And yet, Malaysia is more peaceful, stable, prosperous and more industrialized than all other Muslim countries (32 per cent of its GDP is earned from manufacturing, compared to 17 per cent for Pakistan and Turkey and 19 per cent for Egypt). It has also been the most successful of all Muslim countries in turning the forces of globalization to its advantage.

But Malaysia also stands as the sole example of a Muslim coun-

in improving its economic indicators alone, it in improving its governance.

Governance is important in determining which way a country is headed and for what purpose should its human and capital resources be utilized? And the foremost point of governance is the issue of succession. How should the governance of a country be determined? Who has the right to govern a country and what should be the mode by which one set of rulers should be succeeded by another? From Plato's philosopher king, to hereditary kings; from conquerors to charismatic leaders, the world has tried out every-

thing. During the Ottoman period, the succession principles were vague and anyone of the half a dozen contenders: sons, brothers and other important figures always considered themselves entitled to have a fling at the top job after the death of a ruler. Many did not feel any pang of conscience in getting sons, brothers and fathers killed or imprisoned in their pursuit of power. These open-ended and free-for-all wars for succession have been held by many scholars to be the most important cause for the swift decline of their once rich and powerful empires. It still continues to haunt most of the Muslim world.

But in our age and time, the question of governance and succession has been decisively settled by the tried and tested system of democracy based on the principles of free and fair election, political accountability of rulers, plurality of opinion and impartiality. There is simply no alternative to this system in modern times. The system can give both stability and progress to a country.