

Democracy  
30/8/04

# Sabotaging democracy *in News*

**S**omehow it seems that western democracy does not suit the psyche of the Muslim nations. Although Islam is the first religion in human history, which in an age of Roman and Persian empires when kings were considered gods and their subjects were treated like chattels, gave the world the concepts of *mushawarat* (consultation in matters of State) and *baiat* (voting for the caliph), the two cardinal principles on which the modern democracy has been evolved. In spite of this, most of the Muslim nations today are ruled either by dynastic kings or all powerful dictators. Although every Muslim knows, and says so, that Islam is against both monarchy and dictatorship, these two anti-Islamic institutions, somehow continue to exist and prosper in the Muslim world. Other than the period of elected caliphs of the Holy Prophet (SAW), the entire Islamic history, till the present time, is replete with dynastic *khaliifas* or monarchs, and dictators in clear violation of the Qur'anic edicts about the Islamic system of governance, and with the tacit support of the so-called *ulema* and religious scholars.

Pakistan was probably the only Muslim country which was conceived by its founding father as a western style democratic nation, but only after a decade of turbulent democratic history it fell into the lap of a military dictator, Ayub Khan who believed, and not entirely wrongly, that parliamentary democracy had failed to fulfill the country's two foremost needs - political stability and national unity. He also thought that the western democratic system was unworkable amid poverty and ignorance and, therefore, it did not suit the genius of the Pakistani people. Looking in retrospect, it seems he was right on both counts. Following the nightmare of an eleven-year long military dictatorship of Ziaul Haq, which had the full support and backing of the present religious political parties, the democratic governments of Benazir Bhutto and

Nawaz Sharif, also proved disastrous for the country's stability and progress.

After coming into power, President Musharraf gave democratic dispensation to the country once again with reasonably fairly elected parliament and provincial assemblies and made it abundantly clear that he would not allow, in any circumstances, the return of discredited political leaders, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif to the political scene, nor would he let fundamentalist religious leaders to set up a Taliban style theocracy in Pakistan. Quite unexpectedly, however, religious political parties were returned,



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ment, which is not doing a penny's worth work for them. One is justified to ask of what use is such a showpiece democracy?

After long and arduous negotiations on the issue of the National Security Council, MMA had agreed to accept it, if it was set up by an act of parliament. However, *Maulana* Fazlur Rehman, who is leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, not only declined to attend the inaugural session of NSC, but also advised the NWFP Chief Minister, who belongs to MMA, to boycott it. The MMA Supreme Council announced that President Musharraf's presence in the

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for the first time, with enough seats in parliament to form a formidable opposition together with majority of seats in NWFP and Baluchistan to form governments in these provinces.

Ever since the Parliament has come into being, MMA and ARD are hell bent to have it dissolved on one pretext or the other. It has not been able to perform its legislative functions for which it was elected. It did nothing besides disgracing democracy in the most disgusting shouting matches, slogan mongering against the President, foul mouthing each other and senseless walkouts. The country's tax-payers are spending millions, if not billions on the MMA's salaries and perks and the maintenance of a parliamentary establish-

ment as the Army Chief and the President undermines the supremacy of Parliament. The *Maulana* said the MMA had opposed the Council from the very first day. The MMA's opposition to its creation through the Legal Framework Order (LFO) resulted in changes to the 17th amendment bill. He said that due to their opposition, the ruling coalition was forced to bring it for legislation through Parliament. He claimed that whenever the MMA would come into power, it would delete the Council with simple majority. (What wishful thinking!)

MMA's acting chief, Qazi Hussain Ahmed also told reporters: "We are in principle against the setting up of the NSC, as it is not part of the Constitution and has been set up under an act

of Parliament. There is no need of NSC, which is headed by the Army Chief, General Pervez Musharraf. As it is against parliamentary democracy, Musharraf must give up his post of army chief. We want sanctity of democratic institutions."

What a somersault indeed! Both these venerable leaders had agreed to accept NSC, if it was not created through LFO, but an act of parliament. The President accepted this demand, and subsequently the Council was created through an act of parliament. But MMA went back on its solemn commitment without any plausible excuse. However, it has been reported in the press that *Maulana* Fazlur Rehman has now agreed to attend future meetings of NSC. If it is true, then it will be another stunning somersault within two days.

**T**he fact of the matter is that MMA leadership has been having a negative attitude from the very beginning, and wants to throw President Musharraf out and sabotage the present democratic process. Although they pay lip service to democracy, their real aim is to establish Taliban-like theocracy in the country, and take it back to the Middle Ages. Mr Zafarullah Khan Jamali had to resign from the Prime Minister's office, because he failed to control the unruly parliament and the belligerent opposition leadership, which is now determined to oust the President and destabilise the country. In the present atmosphere of terror and target killings in Pakistan, this is a dreadful scenario, and President Musharraf needs to act quickly and decisively to crush all such elements, which are bent upon to thwart proceedings of the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly of Sindh.

In the final analysis, the unity and solidarity of the nation, and in fact the very survival of the country, is much more important than democracy or any system of government.