**Day of Democracy`**

BY FAIZAAN QAYY UM | 1/12/2020

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| CONGRATULATIONS areinorder.After extensive debate, discussion and complete compliance with procedure, the parliament has decided to empower itself. In the f ace of incredible national and regional complexities, it has once again displayed exemplary wisdom, foresight and pragmatism, and shown us that nothing in this country can happen without its oversight. Hard to believe, I know, but we`re there. At last.The matter of extensions is a good illustration. This was one of the few issues on which parliament had not legislated. With the first opportunity that came their way, all parties have come together to stamp parliamentary approval on how the three chief s will be appointed. This consensus in a contentious political environment, when such agreement has been near impossible on all other issues, shows the sagacity of our popularly elected representatives. And, of course, welcome to the latest popularly elected representative. Congratulations to the parliament and to the nation.This is a remarkable success for all mainstream political parties. Think of the PPP, which survived a judicial murder (orchestrated by a military dictator no less), another murder under questionable circumstances (under the nose of another dictator), Memogate, and whatnot. Yet, with a firm commitment to procedure, they have shown us that democracy is indeed the best revenge.Militarychiefscannolonger just`take`extensions. Someone will have to fake them. Thank God the PPP took back their suggested amendment. Requiring the PM to justify an extension before a parliamentary committee would`ve made it that much harder! The PPP`s firm commitment to procedure highlights its importance in a democracy.We`ve relied on Maulana to deliver procedural democracy after all, and now we needed Bilawal`s tweets and Mian Nawaz Sharif`s letter to introduce procedural legislation. Never mind the outcomes at least we sat on it for long enough before unleashing the legislation on our own selves! On the other (same) side, the PML-N has finally identified the khalai makhlooq who have held us back for so long. But as party leaders confessed, only the elder Mian Sahib knows who they really are. They most certainly have nothing to do with the matter at hand. Instead of worrying about irrelevant issues like respect for vote(r)s, the PML-N has joined forces with other parties and exerted parliamentary supremacy on the most pressing issue of our times. No khalai makhlooq can do anything about it! After all, the PML-N has finally delivered izzat to the vote. Only voters, and by extension their elected representatives, can exercise sovereignty. And, by virtue of their sov-ereignty, they are also empowered to exercise their hypocrisies! Maybe now `Dawn leaks` will die down, Fawad Hasan Fawad`s ordeal will come to an end, and Punjab will once again see governance. The PML-N may even continue its tradition of protecting national interests and find another memo to go with it! We can`t even say we`re surprised.Pakistan`s parliament has a long history of exerting its supremacy; the only difference is, we were spared a trip to Changa Manga this time. Even the occasional humiliation to democratic institutions was only possible thanks to parliamentary consent all in the spirit of nationalinterest. In a display of reverence to the crocodiles of Manghopir, parliament established military courts. The same forum also authorised the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, which is now the go-to for all kinds of censorship. And remember who approved the insertion of 58-2(b) in the Constitution multiple times, threatening their own existence in the process?These are mere examples of infinite wisdom, foresight and pragmatism from our parliamentary history.Our parliamentarians know when national security necessities and other elements of our perpetual naazuk morh should overpower principles, tra-ditions and democratic debate and opposition. Very rarely have they erred and we all know what happened the one time they did, when the parliament forgot to endorse a second subversion of the Constitution.Perhaps that was the original sin. Our parliamentary leaders have exercised remarkable constraint and introspection in response.It`s almost like they`re ashamed of the one time they did not allow parliament to exercise its supremacy. But, as always, democracy is the best revenge, and we`ve had it.Parliament has stamped its approval on how the three service chief s will be appointed. In rubber. Hearing the opposition on critical issues of national importance is not procedurally required. Those voices were therefore too insignificant to even be given the floor. And with this, parliament has added another feather to its cap.Let Jan 7 be celebrated as the `Day of Democracy`. Let us mark it with ceremonies and a national holiday every year.Congratulations are in order.  The writer is a PhD student in planning at the University of Illinois.Twitter: @faizaang  |