

# General and the ulema

Pak-Pol & Const  
Dawood  
8.2.04

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THE MMA made life considerably easier for General Musharraf by accepting a slightly amended version of the LFO as part of the Constitution, and by ending their prolonged questioning of his legitimacy. Some observers believe he will continue to need its support to remain secure in his office, and that he will therefore have to accommodate their preferences on major policy issues.

This interpretation is not plausible. In accepting the LFO as a valid constitutional instrument, the MMA leaders did the general no favour. They accepted it for want of an option. Their agitating had failed to make him let go of it. The man on the street remained singularly unresponsive to calls for a revolt against the general and those who stood by him.

In return for their "flexibility," they are said to have received the assurance that their hold on power in the NWFP and Balochistan would not be disturbed. If true, this promise can be kept: there is no compelling reason for dislodging the MMA in these provinces. On the other hand, it should be noted that the MMA remains free to oppose the government whenever it deems fit. It did not support General Musharraf's bid for a vote of confidence from the presidential electoral college. In other words, a specific and limited deal was made which has been implemented and done with. The parties owe nothing to each other any more.

The MMA's position concerning Pakistan's relationship with the United States, terrorism, "jihad," Taliban and Al Qaeda is quite different from that of the general. The same holds for the country's relations with India and its evolving stance on the subject of Kashmir. The differences between them on further Islamization of the polity and society will become volatile when the MMA chooses to underscore that issue.

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain's assertion, made repeatedly and vociferously until a few months ago, that the present government and the MMA are "natural allies" is opportunistic gibberish. Governments in Pakistan, military as well as civilian, have done no more than made temporary arrangements with the ulema in which each side tried to use the other for its own purposes. This is true even of Ziaul

and interrogation (under foreign pressure) the government has heaped gross humiliation upon the nation.

It is generally conceded that the Kashmir issue cannot be resolved on the basis of either party's previously stated terms. That means departing from their original positions. But if and when the government of Pakistan makes the needed departures it will be accused of betraying the national interest and selling the Kashmiris down the river.

Then there is the ever-lurking issue of Islamization. Numerous Islamic injunctions have been written into law without having brought about any visible improvement in our individual morals or civic virtue. The Constitution of 1973, as amended, lays down that

ize education to ensure that Islamic outlook permeated all fields and levels of study. Those opposed to the "ideology of Pakistan" (presumably meaning the party's manifesto) would not be hired as teachers. Co-education would be abolished and separate institutions of higher education established for women according to their needs. Men and women would not be placed together in work places.

The ulema's professed commitment to democracy can be very tricky. Placed alongside the resolve to revive the pious caliphate, it would lead itself to several interpretations, some of which might even be mutually exclusive. We all know that the pious caliphate was basically a system of one-man rule with some input from the people, more likely notables, whom the caliph might consult, and whose advice he might take or disregard as he saw fit.

We know also that this consultative process, called the "shura," was never institutionalized: its membership, authority, rules and procedures, were never settled. We have only to recall the appointed "shura" Ziaul Haq had constituted to be wary of it. Given free rein, the ulema will want to give us, at best, an aristocracy of the pious. It is hard to know where they will find the requisite number of pious folks to do the governing. Even their best

Given the MMA's long-term objectives, how should Gen Musharraf respond to the demands it may address to him? It is probably no exaggeration to say that the land of the MMA's dreams will not be a place where most Pakistanis will enjoy living. Gen Musharraf owes it to the people of Pakistan to ignore, and resist if necessary, the MMA's pressure for extending its brand of Islamization.

any Muslim wishing to be a member of the National Assembly must be one who has adequate knowledge of Islamic teachings, follows Islamic injunctions, performs the obligatory duties, and "abstains from major sins." In addition, he should be "sagacious, righteous, non-profligate, honest, and "ameen" (Article 62). One may be sure that no more than a handful of our MNAs will answer this description.

What do the ulema have in mind when they demand further extension of Islamization? We may find an extended statement of their thinking in a historic document prepared by the Jamaat-i-Islami in January 1970 and presented to the people as its election manifesto. It was said to represent a broad consensus of the ulema on the subjects covered. This was admittedly a long time ago, but they would probably not disown any part of it even now.

The party's economic platform promised all kinds of good things to its audience, but for reasons of space we shall limit ourselves to only a few aspects of its outlook. It was more friendly towards landowners than it was towards industrialists and businessmen. Beyond a single one-time

friends will not claim that Maulana Fazlur Rahman and Qazi Hussain Ahmad are to be compared with Abu Bakr and Umar bin Khattab (may Allah be pleased with them) in terms of self-denial, wisdom, statesmanship, and generosity of spirit. Those who promise us the pious caliphate will actually deliver a tyranny of the few, who claim to be pious, over all the rest of us whom they will denounce as profligate. Their professed intention to "encourage" us to pray and fast will readily change into a resolve to use the police power of the state to compel us. They will declare most of us unfit to run for elective public office (as the "Council of Guardians" is doing in Iran) and may even deprive us of the right to vote.

The medieval ulema who interpreted Islam were not politicians. The ulema in Pakistan have been practising the craft for a long time. One may assume that, like other professional politicians, they are quite capable of ignoring the promises they had made before coming to power. They will have no difficulty in finding "Islamic" justifications for their change of stance.

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side tried to use the other for its own purposes. This is true even of Ziaul Haq's transactions with them.

The proposition that General Musharraf needs the MMA's continuing support is not credible. The questioning of his legitimacy has abated. Noise making in parliament has stopped. Mr Jamali's government commands majority support in the National Assembly. The danger that its supporters will defect to the MMA is virtually non-existent. There is little likelihood of an effective mass movement against the government being put together. There is then no apparent reason for the general to be overly solicitous of the MMA's sensibilities.

Sensitive issues will arise which the MMA can exploit to embarrass the present government. Some of our scientists, including the "father" of our nuclear programme, have confessed, under sustained interrogation, that they did transfer secret information and technology to certain foreign governments. Dr. A.Q. Khan says that in making these transfers he and some of his colleagues acted without the government's knowledge. He has also urged that the issue not be "politicized." His advice may not be taken. The genuineness of the scientists' confessions will be doubted. The MMA leaders are already saying that in subjecting these scientists to detention

was towards industrialists and businessmen. Beyond a single one-time reform to remove the "disharmonies" the previous rulers had created in Pakistan, it would place no limit on the amount of land an individual could own. But it would limit corporate profits and also the amount of stock an individual could own in a corporation.

It would reduce the disparity between the incomes of executives and workers to a ratio of twenty to one and eventually to that of ten to one. It would also prescribe a minimum wage for workers. But if offered the small peasant and tenant nothing specific beyond the general undertaking to protect him from the landlord's oppression and exploitation. It did not, for instance, indicate the tenant's share of the yield from the land he tilled.

The party would support democracy and protect fundamental rights, but it also said that it would reorder the polity on the model of the pious caliphate (632-661). It would enact Islamic principles and injunctions into law. It would forthwith prohibit extra-marital sex, drinking, gambling, and obscenity. It would halt family planning, repeal the existing law relating to inheritance and lift the constraints placed on polygamy and divorce.

It would adopt all possible means of encouraging prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage to Makkah. It would reorgan-

ize their change of stance.

Given the MMA's long-term objectives, how should Gen Musharraf respond to the demands it may address to him? It is probably no exaggeration to say that the land of the MMA's dreams will not be a place where most Pakistanis will enjoy living. Nor is that the country our founding fathers had envisaged. Moreover, it will not come about without a great deal of ferocious and destructive civil strife. It may then be said that Gen Musharraf owes it to the people of Pakistan to ignore, and resist if necessary, the MMA's pressure for extending its brand of Islamization. Its pressure should be resisted also if it stands in the way of a settlement with India, or in that of curbing extremist violence.

The general's professed goal of helping us become a modern, progressive, democratic, and moderate people (all of which is eminently Islamic) is worthy of being pursued. Those who reject it should be asked to take their case to the National Assembly or, if that resort is unavailing, to the people at the next election. If they are rebuffed there as well, they should have the decency to hold their peace.

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