

STRENGTHENING THE POLITICAL
CULTURAL ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES
& THE ARMED FORCES

SPEECH

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I am thankful for been given this opportunity. I am resisting the temptation of responding to some of the specific points raised by the learned speakers, particularly where I strongly disagree with them. However, three observations deserve to be made. As to my friend Mushahid concern about Jamaat-e-Islam's allegedly contradictory responses to Vajpayee's visit to Lahore in 1999 and Musharraf's proposed visit to Delhi in 2001, I would like to say, primarily to set the record straight, that there is a world of difference between the two. We are all for dialogue and peace talks. Despite our opposition to the ideology and politics of late Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, when he was going for Simla talks, the Jamaat supported him and the then Amir of the Jamaat saw him off at the airport. Mr, Vajpayee's visit to Lahore took place in a climate of suspicion, under heavy shadow of apprehensions about compromise and collusion. Hence the need for articulation of popular feelings on national issues, primarily to warn the two Prime Ministers and particularly making the BJP leadership realize the feelings of the Pakistani people. In fact, this would have strengthened the hands of Pakistani leadership if they had played their cards well. Had the government respected democratic norms and allowed public expression of popular feelings, nothing untoward would have happened. It was the highhandedness of the power-drunk rulers that led to an unhappy confrontation. It was the intolerance of the rulers towards expression of dissent that lies at the root of Lahore episode.

As to my other friend Aitizaz's uncalled for observation that the Jamaat-e-Islami opposed the creation of Pakistan, it is not only irrelevant, it is palpably incorrect. Aitizaz is a leading politician and lawyer and it is so unfortunate that he has made a statement without checking his facts. Jamaat NEVER opposed the creation of Pakistan. Mawlana Mawdudi was one of the chief exponents of the Two-Nation Theory and one of the greatest intellectuals after Iqbal, who demolished the concept of territorial nationalism advocated by Congress and Western secular thinkers. Yes, the Jamaat, in the pre- independence era, was not acting as a political party and as such did not participate in the movement. Despite Mawlana Mawdudi's certain clearly spelled out reservations about the political methodologies of the Muslim League, he criticized the leadership of the Jamiyat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind for advocating territorial nationalism. When the question of referendum in NWFP came, Mawlana Mawdudi wrote that "if I were in the NWFP I would have voted for Pakistan". Let us not distort facts, whatever be our political preferences. Moreover, let us concentrate on how some of us have behaved with Pakistan and lodged the country into crisis after crisis. You cannot run away from responsibility by bringing in this red-herring or that.

About Dr Waseem's thesis on the role of vested interest and establishment under despotic regimes, I cannot agree more. But the problem is that the role of the vested interests and establishment is no different even in some of the great democracies. Forget about India and the

Tehelka tremors. Look to America and examine the relationship between democracy and corruptions in electioneering, from \$ 4 billion campaign money to vote- rigging and court verdicts reflecting the linkages with who appointed whom. How can one totally ignore the lingering roles of Multi-Nationals, Fund-providers and the military bureaucratic complex. Whether it is the Defense Shield or energy policy for California, vested interests do play an important role, whether it is a democracy or dictatorship. Vested interests are not an exclusive part of the architecture of military rule. With Shakespeare, one is forced to say that "all is not well in the Kingdom of Denmark!"

I would now come to the positive side. I agree with the learned panelists. It is very sad that both major political parties as well as the army have failed in politics. The failure of political parties as of the 'Army-in-politics' has a sordid history. Bonapartism and Kemalism are alien to the ethos of Pakistani movement. This was a popular democratic movement. Pakistan was not established because of any role of the army as was the case in Modern Turkey. It was a democratic and popular movement that culminated in the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, as the largest Muslim country. This was a real popular coup in our history. But soon there was a counter-coup. After the demise of the founding fathers, it was the vested interests and traditional elite that took over the reins of power. In fact this group had, on the eve of independence, switched over its loyalty from the foreign rulers and later on it high jacked the fruits of the freedom movement. These political elements, in alliance with the civil and military bureaucracy, consolidated their hold on all centers of power. Some two hundred families have ruled under different garbs and shapes. Power was being shuffled between them, whether it was civilian rule or army dictatorship. You will find members of this very class everywhere, all major political parties, administration, police and even the army. In East Pakistan this feudal- capitalist group was swept away via land reforms, which paved the way of wider popular participation. So East Pakistan had to be marginalized, leading to parting of the ways. This did not happen in West Pakistan. What was left of Pakistan continues to be in the grip of this political maphia. Despite elections and several military coups, real transfer of power to the people has not taken place. It is this elite group that has been managing, controlling, and engineering our affairs. It has become a family affair. One member of the same family is in one political party, the other is in the other one. One is in the army, the other in police. One in bureaucracy and the other in business and industry. They have been sharing power and destroying political culture. Political parties became hereditary parties. Leadership, with even party and political positions in the country is inherited, almost by some kind of divine right. Parliament and Assemblies became irrelevant, simply non-entities. They were no longer seats of power and forums for decision-making. National issues and policies were not discussed. Even Constitutional amendments were rushed through in hours without debates. Accountability was nonexistent. Committees were not allowed to work. So the real transfer of power to the people did not take place. And institutions did not become operational. Army did not come to power in 1958. In fact, shadows of its power can be seen from 1951. When Ghulam Mohammad subverted the constitutional process in 1953, and 1954 the then Chief of Staff of the Army played a key role. The politicians changed loyalties overnight. This is how things worsened.

While army has a very important role to play in the security of the country, dragging it into politics is disastrous for the nation, its political culture and for the integrity and efficiency of army as a fighting force. Army should remain non-controversial. It should have unwavering national support. When you play political role, you become controversial. Army skills, training, experience are not geared to meet the needs of political governance. They have their own culture and expertise. When you transplant army to politics, it is bound to be a misfit. That is what has happened. Nobody has a divine right to rule. When somebody says I have a role - as if God-appointed - he is deceiving others and himself. While the failure of political parties is writ large on the horizon, the record of all military regimes is no better. One man rule, even in the name of continuity, is totally unacceptable. Despite all its weaknesses, it is only through a democratic process that the problems of civil society can be resolved. Political culture has failed, but so has the army. There is, however, some light beyond the tunnel. Whenever a dictatorship has come, and it has always come with claims of programme - Ayub came with an agenda as has Musharraf - but none could deliver, nor sustained support from the people. There has always been popular reaction. There was resistance and mass movement. They had to go. So this roller-coaster between civilians and political grabbings on power have a message that army rule cannot last for long.

Here I endorse to what Gen. Talat has rightly alluded to. First we should analyze the situation and search for solutions. We must realize that political power, i.e. real decision making must be given to the people. We have to get rid of the intermediaries who have high-jacked power and destroyed the system. There is no short cut. We have to go to the basics. People have to be galvanized. The middle classes have to play a catalyst role. We need the revival of the same spirit with which Pakistan movement was launched. Without that, change is not possible. It can be humbly submitted that either we will have to pursue the right path for change or change will impose itself through revolutionary means. It's time to adopt the less costly path - the political path.

Secondly, stability never depends upon individuals. All individuals are mortal, all make mistakes. We have to build and sustain institutions. Let us recall when after victory in war French Prime Minister Clemencio was projected as indispensable for France. He smiled and said: "the graveyard is full of indispensable people". It is only institutions, ideals and national character that bring stability.

My friends, we have heard of the Turkish model, and the Indonesian and Burmese models. They are not relevant to our situation at all. The Turkish situation is materially different from that of Pakistan. It was the Turkish army that saved Turkey and it is in this particular background, that they claim a certain role. And even that role is being questioned? There is popular debate to limit military's role. So let us not evoke that. As to Indonesia and Burma, I only pity the audacity of those who look for such failed models. That cannot, even remotely, be a model for us, or even of any relevance, except as a warning. So let us not chase mirages and shadows. Let us resolve to create our own model.

For that purpose, I submit, that the 1973 Constitution is the framework on which there is national consensus. It is the sheet anchor. Let us not reopen Pandora's Box. Let us build on that national achievement. Yes, Constitution too is a human document. It can be amended and improved, but not arbitrarily or simply to satisfy the whims of certain people. 1973 Constitution is a historic document and is built on three pillars. That constitutes the substance of our model. Let us stick to these and resolve our differences within that agreed framework. Then these three pillars are Islam, Parliamentary Democracy and Federalism.

First, Islam, there is no difference on this foundation, nor is there any real difference as to the substance of Islamic vision of man and society. There are some differences on certain matters of details in Islamic law. Yet there is a vast area of agreement. Even between the two major schools - Shia and Sunni, the area of agreement is vast - they agree on almost 90 to 95 percent of issues. Sectarian differences are not a bone of contention. We have lived with these differences. What is happening in the name of sects has nothing to do with religion. Islam is our bed-rock. It aims at establishing a just society. The vision is clear in the Constitution. Let us go by its preamble. Articles 2, 2A, Directive Principles and Articles 62, 63, 203, 227 - 230. That is one model - only if we are prepared to implement it.

Second, basis is parliamentary democracy, with all its institutions - not a Prime Ministerial system, nor a Presidential one, nor Dictatorship in any forms. A genuinely parliamentary democracy is the framework clearly spelled out in the Constitution.

Third is Federation with its three levels - Federal, Provincial and Local. I am a firm believer in devolution of power, but not the way it has been done under Musharraf regime. Moreover, local governments cannot be a substitute for national or provincial structures

So, that is the starting point. With that I will emphasize that we have to go to the people, - mobilize their support and develop tolerance, acceptance of dissent and plurality, respecting each other's differences, yet working for common obligations. Let us learn to live with our differences, rather than kill each other for petty considerations. I also want to submit that stability is possible only if institutions are built. Army is one such institution, but it has to stick to its original role. It has to be reigned in the same manner as bureaucracy has to be reigned. Political parties have to be organized on democratic lines to become a genuine link between state and the people. Political parties would become a source of destabilization if they are corrupt or inefficient, even if they get votes. Parties will have to restructure themselves. Proper distribution of power and effective checks and balances vis-a-vis executive, judiciary and legislative are a sine qua non of democracy. We visualize a very active role for the Parliament, if we are to be spared of a Prime Ministerial System, as was actually imposed by Benazir or Nawaz Sharif They were not working according to the rules of parliamentary democracy. They were trying to impose themselves and concentrate power in their own hands. If we are prepared to honestly realize our mistakes and commit to work within the framework of the Constitution to pursue the ideals of Islam, Parliamentary democracy and true

federalism, then there is light beyond the tunnel. I believe hundred forty million people of Pakistan cannot be ignored or by-passed. Gen. Musharraf has to realize that the concentration of power, which he seems to have unfortunately opted for, cannot work. It has its own contradictions. It is bound to have its reactions and repercussions. I wish all political forces could come to a common national agenda. Not only army but also politicians become self-critical and then analyze mistakes with a view to rectify them.

Then only we can move ahead. That is the path towards democracy, towards protection of our freedom. I am afraid, any effort to undermine them will also undermine our sovereignty as a state. Let us strengthen the democratic process, as internal and external threats are mounting fast. Globalization has its own agenda. Role of a state is being reduced. Multinational corporations are playing a dangerous game. NGOs with foreign linkages have their own axe to grind. They are now penetrating at the grass root level as vanguards of an alien culture. Sectarian flames are being fanned by domestic and foreign vested interests. There are challenges from every direction. We cannot afford to be passive spectators. The message of today's seminar is to get prepared to face these challenges, find out the common ground and resolve to set our own house in order as early as possible. It is only by playing our role honestly and diligently that we can pay back our debt to the heroes whose sacrifices led to the establishment of Pakistan.
