

**THE ARMED FORCES ROLE AND THE
FUTURE OF MR. PERVEZ MUSHARRAF**

TERJUMAN-UL-QURAN

April 2008

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By Professor Khurshid Ahmad

Another issue of vital importance for the country and the nation that needs to be settled amicably, following resolution of the issues of the restoration of judiciary, constitutional reforms and the supremacy of the Parliament, is the one concerning the role of the armed forces in national politics and the future of General (R) Pervez Musharraf, the principal actor of the sordid drama of the last eight years. Everyone has hailed the principled stand taken by the Army Chief to restrict the armed forces' role to their constitutional obligation of defending the country. This is certainly a step in the right direction. In addition to taking necessary steps to bring the country back on the rail, the coalition government is required to also settle the issue concerning the future of Mr. Pervez Musharraf. He has been responsible for blatant violation of the Constitution, reducing the Parliament to the status of a rubber stamp and engaging the armed forces into civilian administration and national politics. As is the established fact of history, the constitutional and democratic system and the dictator cannot go hand in hand. He has refused to quit honourably and the government has, therefore, no other option now but to prepare for his impeachment in the Parliament. Unless he is subjected to an effective accountability, the chapter of his dark rule cannot come to a close. This is the time that the nation and the world should know actual facts regarding his misadventure and abuse of authority. If properly brought to book, his case would also serve as a deterrent for every trigger-happy upstart who may be nurturing the notion of adventurism.

The period that preceded the 18 February elections has witnessed interplay of anti-national forces who were specially pressed into service to pave the way for inducting pro-US elements in seats of power. Pervez Musharraf and Altaf Hussain's MQM played key role in this respect. Time has come for the nation to adopt a clear-cut stand and take drastic action against such elements. To allow any further leeway to Pervez Musharraf and let him continue occupying the presidential chair is definitely contrary to national interests and a major threat to national security and solidarity. Similarly, the MQM has to be cut to its size, not because of its past misdeeds alone, but also because of what it has done as the armed wing of Pervez Musharraf, as amply demonstrated by the nasty game of May 12, 2007. Though Musharraf had himself declared before a group of senior journalists in Islamabad that Altaf Hussain was a traitor, he has been hand in glove with him during these last five years.

Altaf Hussain's anti-national instance has been reaffirmed time and again by the shady record of his policy and pronouncements as head of his own group of MQM. Who can condone him for his statement in India declaring the creation of Pakistan as a big blunder? He has since renounced Pakistan's nationality and taken refuge in Britain, fleeing from legal proceedings against the terrorist and subversive activities, in which he and his close associates were directly involved. Though holding British nationality, he continues to foment trouble in Karachi and Hyderabad

through his periodic telephonic talks. Hundreds of MQM activists, who were behind the bar on charges of murder, arson and subversion, are enjoying now the fruits of power under Musharraf's patronage. Altaf Hussain and his band of criminals also happen to be the favourites of the US and Britain in pursuance of their own nefarious agenda in Pakistan. Under the controversial National Reconciliation Ordinance, the Muttahida mafia stands absolved of all its crimes and is now Pervez Musharraf's 'Trojan Horse'. The stand taken by Muslim League (N) in their respect is perfectly correct. When seen in this backdrop, the move to associate them once again in power would only mean lending strength to Pervez Musharraf and his game of terror and patronizing the US designs in Pakistan.

Hence, the need of the hour is that the newly elected Assembly and Government must firm-p their policies viz-a-viz Pervez Musharraf and his henchmen. Unless this is done right in earnest, it would be difficult both for the Parliament and the executive to reassert its authority and establish the writ of the government in the land, which is already seething under international intrigues and the disastrous impact of Musharraf era policies in all fields of national activity.

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