

Jamat-e-Islami Shooting in the Dark

The elections in Pakistan are all too familiar to those who closely follow politics in Pakistan. Amidst unfulfilled promises and deceitful alliances, political groups carry on their undisrupted mission to exploit the Ummah in a game where the winner may change but the game remains unchanged. Democracy in Pakistan is a shade less deceptive than elsewhere in the world...feudal lords and corrupt capitalists continue to hijack the entire population under a convenient electoral process.

Elections '93 are perhaps over, but the deadlock between the rival groups in the parliament remains impervious to any change. An "elected" government can only but hope to fill its pockets as fast as it can. Meanwhile the Islamic groups continue to lose a battle they have failed to recognize. The Islamic front led by Jamaat-e-Islami is perhaps consistently a sad reality for all those who want to make Islam the law of the land. Now with only three seats in the parliament, Jamat-e-Islami faces no new change. It is expected as before, that the Jamat will continue to be a weightless element in the country's larger secular establishment. In this power politics, Jamat-e-Islami can at best choose to ally with either the victorious PPP or switch its allegiance back to the Muslim League, something that the Jammat has continued to refuse up until recently. Having abandoned the constructive revolutionary process its founder once so fervently advocated (before the partition), Jamat continues to drift away from a real ideological/intellectual struggle in addition to losing the support it once had. This election only goes on to prove the failure of Jamat-e-Islami to rally people around an effective agenda. Political compromises in the past have neither brought about any substantial changes, including the all too revered "gradual reforms" that Jamat envisions, nor have they succeeded in restoring the ailing credibility of the Party itself.

The issue at stake for all those who claim to carry the torch of Islam is not parliamentary seats at any cost amounting to nothing in the final analysis, it is however the complete implementation of Islam with no strings attached. Jamat-e-Islami has failed to understand the secular political machinery in Pakistan despite its long presence there. Participating in elections for the purpose of introducing Islam has always served maintain the status quo or worse still delay the implementation of Islam itself.

In a society where feudalism and tribal ties still determine political structure and economic policies, elections reflect nothing more than the will of the elite. Jamat-e-Islami or any other Islamic group needs to focus on this aspect of the Pakistani society. Thereupon it should embark upon an extra constitutional effort that aims to uproot current status quo rather than insisting upon a mere cosmetic re-arrangement of the Kufr system. It should be clearly understood that the State of Pakistan may have been founded upon Islamic emotions, but to this day it remains principally and ideologically un-Islamic. Moreover, a real lesson should be learned from the Algerian experience, where Islamic forces who have had significant success among the masses failed to bring about a revolutionary change through "Democratic" means. Jamat-e-Islami, however has failed to appeal to the grass roots by not being able to translate Islam into a practical agenda and by presenting it as merely moral reformation. The need of the hour is that the Jamat re-evaluate its political agenda with respect to Islamic teachings as well as political realities within which it has so long been functioning.

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