**MQM**

People of Pakistan, particularly the people belonging to the urban cities of Pakistan’s Sindh province have always been keenly interested in MQM, which has become a representative political party of urban Sindh. This interest has risen again recently, due to a very important by-election of Pakistan’s National Assembly’s constituency number 246.   
  
This election is critical because this riding spans over Aziz Abad locality of Karachi, which is considered as the center of MQM, since its head office, and the residence of its founder Altaf Hussain, are also situated in this locality. It may be said that this is the area where MQM took its roots from.  
  
Since the inception of MQM its candidates have defeated their opponents by margins of at least a hundred thousand votes in this locality. In this election MQM will face its traditional rival Jamat e Islami, and PTI the very recent entrant into Pakistan’s politics. This seat has been vacated by Nabeel Gabool who was a non-traditional representative, who did not belong to the ethnic group that is known as community whose mother tongue is Urdu, and which is traditionally known as “Muhajir”, or a community of immigrants.   
  
The term Muhajir (immigrants) has been a controversial term in Pakistan as has been used for those who migrated from India to the geographical areas that constituted Pakistan at the partition of India. Pakistan’s citizens at large have always used this term for these people and continue to use it despite all controversies.   
  
We must consider that even in the civilized countries including Canada, new comers have also been called as “New Immigrants”. Only in those countries where equal human rights have been established, the use if this term gradually declines, otherwise it takes a long time for these “new immigrants” to become equal citizens. And equities and inequalities against the new comers continue for several generations.  
  
Pakistan’s Muhajirs or Immigrants have faced the same inequities and inequalities. And they have struggled against these just like the people of Baluchistan and Rural Sind have struggled. Following the social and sociological realities of any under developed and non-democratic country, it is unfortunate that Pakistan’s largest province Punjab that consists of 56 % of Pakistan, has indulged into hegemonic control of Pakistan’s economy, its resources, it politics, its armed forces, and its law enforcement institutions.   
  
This hegemonic dominance has resulted in parochial ethnic prejudices, inequities, and inequalities. MQM came into being as result of these inequalities and prejudices.  
  
One very sad and unfortunate example of these inequalities has been the quota system in employment, education, and other facilities, which required that “domicile holders of Karachi, Hyderabd, and other selected urban areas of Sind were not eligible for applying for employment and services”. This black and unjust system continues to prevail even today.

The “Muhajirs” of urban Sind were also punished and targeted with repression when they opposed military dictator Ayub Khan, and supported Fatima Jinnah, the sister of Pakistan’s founder.  
  
People of Pakistan will never be able to understand MQM, unless they understand these realities. It came as a massive wave of protest against these real or perceived inequalities, and for over 30 years its candidates have been sweeping elections in urban Sind for both the provincial and national parliamentary seats. It has played the role of King Maker in Sind as well as Pakistan.   
  
Various political parties and army dictators have relied on its support to form and sustain their governments. For the last many years the governor of Sind has been a representative of MQM. Due to this role in politics, MQM has also been accused of being a tool of the establishment.  
  
It has not only influenced provincial and national politics, but has also been a very effective player in Karachi’s municipal politics, and has played a constructive role in developing municipal services and institutions. It has also been instrumental in maintaining ethnic and religious harmony, and has been known as a secular force that has kept the influence of religion under control in its areas of dominance.   
  
Despite its constructive role in municipal politics and its national political influence, it has suffered because it has been under the personal and cultish influence of its founder. Over a period of time it has been accused of being involved in violence and corruption.   
  
It is unfortunate that Pakistan’s other political parties and its establishment have similarly been involved in these non-democratic practices. Like any undemocratic country, Pakistan’s power establishment ignores these violent and corrupt practices, so long the perpetrators continue to serve its interest. Whenever such characters are seen as a threat to the power establishment, it reacts and tries to decimate them through most repressive means. It sometimes succeeds immediately or may take a longer time to eliminate such characters. All political parties of Pakistan including Muslim League, MQM, PPP, and ANP have gone through these cycles of repression of establishment at various times. MQM has been a target of violent repressions in the past like the activists in Baluchistan and rural Sind.

Due to its grave mistakes and unwise policies of its leaders, MQM has once again provided the excuses to the establishment to act against it and violently repress it. It is once against under extreme pressure. It is unfortunate that MQM participated in a constitutional amendment that gave significant powers to Pakistan’s military in the areas of law and order. As a result it is now a target of the same establishment like some other political parties.

Its founder is facing money laundering charges in UK, and party is accused of being complicit in the murder of one of its major leaders, Imran Farooq. Some observers speculate that Pakistan’s current minister of interior, who many consider as a dubious political character, is using para military forces to subjugate MQM.   
  
The repressive action has been timed to coincide with elections mentioned above, and it is also rumored that establishment is using PTI of Imran Khan for this purpose. It is the same PTI that has recently gravely hurt Pakistan’s Parliament and Judiciary, and that has returned to Parliament after severely maligning it without even tendering an apology. The establishment has also accepted its demand that elections in Azizabad be conducted under para military forces. It is the first time that para military forces will manage a Pakistani election, that itself is dire political dishonesty.  
  
One can opine that due to its past electoral history and experience, MQM will win this election again. It cannot be defeated through non-political means. But it will have to change its policies and practices to sustain future support.  
  
Once the parties like, MQM, PPP, Muslim League, and ANP, win people’s hearts, it takes a very long time to eradicate their influence. It takes a long an vengeful period spanning over years to eliminate them through violent non-political and dictatorial repression. Dictatorships do not last that long and cannot sustain their repression.   
  
A value based respectable democratic political system Pakistan will develop only when its armed forces sincerely pull themselves out of politics. Otherwise Pakistan will continue to slide towards destruction and annihilation.