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The Political Economy of Military Rule in Pakistan: The Musharraf Regime¹

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Writing about a political regime which has been in power for more than eight years at a time when it is at its weakest ever and is caught up in the throes of events and circumstances, largely of its own making one must add, is an intellectually challenging task, yet perhaps, hazardous academically. There is no question that the political events that have taken place since 9 March 2007 when President General Musharraf charge-sheeted Pakistan's Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and made him 'dysfunctional' as Chief Justice, have been unprecedented and of historic proportions, and perhaps may prove to be the second most important event since President General Musharraf took over power in October 1999 and which have had momentous repercussions on his rule and presidency.³

While many analysts and commentators in Pakistan and abroad have already gleefully written President General Musharraf's political epitaph, most – the dysfunctional Chief Justice, the Opposition, the loyal supporters of the General-President – are waiting and watching a show which has gone on for far longer than anyone had anticipated or could have imagined. It is certainly too early to celebrate either the demise of the Musharraf regime, or its possible victory over events and outcomes. Whatever the outcome, one can certainly analyse the structural and institutional foundations and factors, in a political economy context, which have made President General Musharraf's more the first seven-and-a-half years of his eight-year old rule largely trouble free. This is the main purpose of this paper. While choosing not to crystal-gaze and come up with numerous likely and equally unlikely scenarios, some of the reasons and explanations for why events have recently taken such a turn and, perhaps, where they are headed, might just be found in the same foundational issues which help explain the past.

¹ This paper was prepared for the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore, Singapore. It covered the period till August 2007. The update from September 2007 to early January 2008 was done by Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed, a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at ISAS. He can be contacted at isasia@nus.edu.sg.

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³ Even a casual reading of any of Pakistan's newspapers in the first week of May 2007, make one think that the events that have recently been taken place, are 'historic', 'phenomenal', 'revolutionary', etc. Even discounting for the hyperbole and the irrational exuberance, the tenor of commentary and opinion has changed considerably.

Life Before Musharraf: Islamic Authoritarianism, Democracy, and the ‘Lost Decade’ of the 1990s

Over the last 60 years since Pakistan’s independence, there have been numerous occasions when Pakistan’s politics, often its economy and economic structures, and occasionally its social and cultural direction, have all changed in fundamental ways making marked and clearly defined structural breaks. The most important, of course, was the structural geographical break in 1971, when what was created as Pakistan in August 1947, no longer existed, with the majority province (in terms of population) exiting what was earlier Pakistan, and emerging as an independent nation.

The first (and many would argue, the only) free and fair general elections held in 1970, ushered in a major political break with the past as well as with the economy and in terms of cultural and social tendencies in the truncated new Pakistan. The dynamics of a new geographical entity with democratic politics and a nationalist economic framework were rudely cut short by Pakistan’s second military coup in July 1977. The long period of 1977-88, created yet another disjuncture from the past, with military authoritarianism and dictatorship the political norm, with the return of free market enterprise. However, perhaps the greatest fracture from the past was in terms of cultural and social politics and norms and relationships, when a statist Islamic system was imposed on the people, with huge implications on society, legal structures and laws, the economy, and cultural practices, and perhaps most importantly, for religious minorities and women.

August 1988 saw an unexpected and welcome end to the political process started by General Zia ul Haq and the military in 1977, yet the underlying social and cultural engineering that had been undertaken by the Zia regime, continued well through the decade of the 1990s. Following the 11 year period of military dictatorship (1977-88), the 11 year period of 1988-99, the democratic interregnum, was perhaps not able to free itself from the huge influence and shadow of the previous 11 years of General Zia and all his deep-rooted structural changes that had been engineered in society. Hence, this second 11 year period (1988-99), marks less of a change and makes less of a break than did either 1970-71 or 1977. Or, for that matter, as did October 1999. In order to understand the post-1999 Musharraf era, it is important to draw out some of the key processes and developments that took place in the 1988-99 period, as well as the 11 year period prior to this. Only then will the extent of marked differences, both in events and circumstances, stand out between the Musharraf period and earlier.⁴

From early 1988 to end 1999, Pakistan had 11 changes of government, with four of these in 1988 alone. Many of the actors of these 11 governments played critical roles in more than one of these governments, often themselves ensuring the transition from one to the other, and at least two of the key actors from these 11 governments, were both in power twice. Hence, while there were attempts to try to make substantial changes in the pattern and manner of governance,⁵ for the most part, it would be fair to treat the 1988-99 period as largely one main form, with differences within that form.

⁴ Since the emphasis of this paper is on the Musharraf regime, we necessarily treat the period prior to this very briefly and in a summary manner.

⁵ In particular, the caretaker government headed by a World Bank Vice President, Moeen Quraishi, which was in power for only three months in 1993, undertook a number of measures (mostly related to governance and accountability) which had little precedence in the past.

The takeover by General Zia ul Haq in 1977 had crystallised the hegemony of the civil and military bureaucracy, not just on the political map of Pakistan, where they had existed previously, but also, for the first time, in the generation and distribution of economic resources and wealth. With political and administrative roles and interests, the civil and military bureaucracy emerged as a key and entrenched entity in the economy. It established and consolidated its role in economics and politics throughout the Zia period, going from strength to strength, a pattern that was to continue throughout the 1990s, but really take-off when the military returned to power and government, under General Musharraf in October 1999.⁶

The role of the military also changed in the Zia era compared to when it was first in power under General Ayub in the 1960s. Earlier, the military had played primarily an administrative role, but under Zia it became more and more visible in the economic sector as well. Many lucrative positions in the huge public sector were made available to retired and serving military personnel and it became far easier for private companies to curry favour and make economic progress if they had close ties with members of the military establishment. Military personnel were invited to serve on the boards of companies to assist in negotiating the controls and regulations involved in investment decisions. This networking paid great dividends both for industrialists and the private sector, and for individuals from the military. From the Zia period right up to today, the personal wealth of a very large number of military personnel has grown in a way that could not have originated from their official salaries. Today, many large businesses and enterprises are owned by retired military officials and they have joined the ranks of the industrialists, thanks to the links established under the rule of General Zia.

Moreover, the armed forces also emerged as a collective economic institution, where the different welfare foundations of the army, navy and air force became more involved in economic activities and even in direct economic production. In economic terms and by amassing huge fortunes, the military was a major beneficiary of the rule of General Zia ul Haq. The image of soldiers fighting to defend the motherland changed to one of serving military generals who were acting as corporate bosses, soldiering over tonnes of sugar, cement, and steel.

In the period 1977-87, more than US\$20 billion was remitted into Pakistan by workers overseas through official channels. This figure ignores the large amounts which came in through unofficial means, which suggests that twice as much as the official figure may have been remitted to Pakistan. If the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan prolonged Zia's political career, the Gulf boom resulted in unheard-of prosperity in most of the far-flung regions of Pakistan. While the amount remitted was itself very large, the geographical and locational dispersion of migrants, and hence remittances, was probably more important. Because this money was sent to numerous urban, peri-urban, and rural settlements of the country, it gave rise to economic development which was not concentrated in the more traditional regions of Karachi and central Punjab.

The remittance economy permitted millions of individuals in thousands of villages to improve their standard of living by a considerable margin. It also gave rise to previously unskilled workers becoming shopkeepers, setting up small-scale industrial units, becoming

⁶ See for example, the major work on this subject by Ayesha Siddiqi, *Military Inc: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*, Pluto Press, London, 2007.

transporters, etc. It allowed them considerable upward mobility and resulted in the broadening and strengthening of the middle class that had begun to emerge in the previous decade.⁷

On the economic front, it was essentially Gulf remittances, money amassed through the massive black economy, and high growth rates that gave rise to the economic consolidation of a middle class, both urban and rural. On the political front, it was the reintroduction of the Local Bodies elections that led to the political emergence, and possibly even consolidation, of this middle class, both urban and rural. Given the intrinsic connection between politics and economics in Pakistan, it is not surprising that each reinforced the other.

Since 'real' elections to the provincial and national assemblies were not held under Zia until at least 1985 (and how 'real' they were is a moot point), most of the traditional political entities did not take the first Local Bodies elections seriously. Also, because severe restrictions were imposed by General Zia's government on participation, many stalwarts were excluded. This allowed those with some means, essentially the emerging middle class, to contest elections, perhaps for the first time. They were able to enter politics because room had been created by the absence of the richer, more influential, traditional political actors. Local government seemed to work well under military dictators, and under Zia it seemed to work rather better, because of the relative importance given to this tier of government by the large developmental funds channelled through it. Urban and rural councillors were the only elected representatives of the regime, and were responsible and accountable, given their limitations, to the needs and demands of the electorate.

The main beneficiaries of the Zia regime were, then, members of the urban and rural middle classes, and members of the civil and, particularly, military bureaucracy. However, despite this emergence of the middle class and of the new entrepreneur under Zia, political power was clearly retained in the hands of the military with a subservient bureaucracy alongside. Large landowners, too, had made a comeback under Zia, hovering around the political establishment and being allowed some room in the 1985 elections. The somewhat unique concept of a praetorian democracy worked rather well for many months, but once elements of the democratic forces began to impinge upon the terrain of the military, the military demonstrated that it was well in control.

In the democratic interregnum of 1988-99 four elections were held, of which, with the possible exception of the first, were highly rigged and manipulated. The intrusive and secret arms of the state and of the military, set about creating political parties and alliances and supporting specific candidates. Moreover, they had a key interest and hand in dismissing both the Prime Ministers who emerged in this 11 year period. In 1991, these organisations, largely the Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) of the Pakistan military, helped create an alliance of political parties called the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad, which led to Nawaz Sharif being elected Prime Minister.⁸ Nawaz Sharif and the group of people he cobbled together into his political party, were amongst the main beneficiaries of the economic policies of General Zia ul Haq and a good representative of the economic and industrial elites who now joined politics. Local, provincial and national level economic actors were now forging themselves into political actors with relatives supporting different contesting political parties. The 1990s were

⁷ These arguments have been further developed in Chapter 22 of S Akbar Zaidi, *Issues in Pakistan's Economy*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, 2005.

⁸ See Hussain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, Vanguard Books, Lahore, 2005, for a detailed account of how the ISI ran government for most of the period since the 1990s.

the moment where the economic interests of middle and elite Pakistan became articulated into politics, and into a desire to use politics for economic gain and for political power.

Throughout the 1990s, and increasingly so as democracy ‘failed’ in Pakistan, the ISI and other bureaucratic and hierarchical non-democratic organisations and institutions began to interfere in and influence Pakistan’s democratic transition. Evidence now about the 1990s shows that what was called ‘democracy’ in Pakistan was more a manipulation of political actors, processes and results, by such agencies, and less any sort of reflection of the ‘will of the people’ or about what people really wanted or opted for.⁹ While the new economic groupings were staking their claim in the political arena, their participation – as it was of everyone else – was dependent on the space allowed to them by the more powerful and organised institutions in the country. The economic transformation of Pakistan with the rise of the middle class continued, but their ability to participate in the political process was constrained and compromised by far more powerful institutional interests.

Economic power increasingly rested with a middle class, but with regard to political power, they had to be junior partners with the military. There were 11 governments in office – and while they were in office one can’t really say that they were ever in ‘power’ – during the 1988-99 period, with some governments consisting of technocrats from international financial institutions imported into Pakistan just for a few weeks. Clearly, the power to decide who was worthy of being in government throughout the 1990s rested with groups and forces who had no tradition, experience or interest with democracy. This charade of who held real power in Pakistan, came to an unambiguous end on 12 October 1999.

In summarising the main elements of the 1988-99 period, we can say that a middle class had begun to emerge in Pakistan and gradually also acted as a political entity taking part in the many elections that were held throughout this decade. While politics was at the forefront of this period, the economy, due to numerous factors, suffered throughout. Due to the profligate Zia years, domestic and international debt had increased well beyond sustainable limits, and during 1988-99, Pakistan had become a highly indebted country paying large amounts of interest to bilateral and multilateral donors, all under severe structural adjustment programmes enforced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. On numerous occasions, Pakistan’s economy was nearing bankruptcy, and following the nuclear tests of May 1998, an economic crisis of major proportions had emerged and much of the economic growth under Zia, had begun to come undone.¹⁰ While these political and economic changes were the main differences that marked the 1980s with the 1990s, the cultural and social agenda inherited from the Islamicist Zia period, remained largely unchanged.

On all three counts – political, economic, social/cultural – the Musharraf regime marks a large change from the democratic decade,¹¹ as well as the Zia period, which had existed previously. It was a bankrupt, nuclear, ‘rogue’, ‘pariah’, failed state, which had become

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Hence the label the ‘Lost Decade’, coined by a World Bank Pakistani Vice President who later became Governor of Pakistan’s central bank.

¹¹ American analyst Stephen Cohen, like so many others and including General Musharraf himself, called this ten year period the ‘ten years of *flawed* democracy’; Stephen P Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, The Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 2004, p 279, emphasis in original. However, what is more interesting is that, the European Union Election Observation Mission to Pakistan which came to observe General Musharraf’s October 2002 elections, found the conduct of the voting to be ‘deeply flawed’; cited in Aqil Shah, ‘Pakistan’s “Armored” Democracy’, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol 14, No 4, 2003.

known perhaps more for harbouring Islamic fundamentalists and jihadis and for conducting insurgencies in neighbouring countries and the region, than for any other attribute, which General Musharraf took over in October 1999.

Before and After 9/11: Economic Growth

A complete transformation takes place in the nature of the Musharraf regime, in the economy, and in the demeanour of General Musharraf, when one compares his first two years in office, with his subsequent five. Coming into power and being welcomed by a large section of Pakistan's westernising middle and upper classes, and by a large number of political parties which suffered under the previous Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, General Musharraf announced his arrival as Pakistan's Chief Executive. Bringing with him a new and fresh personal style of doing business – compared to General Zia, Benazir Bhutto or Nawaz Sharif – Musharraf took on to solving Pakistan's 'problems' in the commando style he was trained in.

Perhaps the first major difference from his style and that of his predecessors, was his high degree of self confidence and bravado, which made him sound like a much surer, determined, leader than those whom he had replaced. This was not surprising. Given the fact that both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, the two democratically elected Prime Ministers, were constantly working under the heavy shadow of the military and its numerous secret and covert agencies, and were always watching over their shoulders – both were dismissed twice each when in power well before their terms ended – for the military to formally take over power and also formally manage government overtly rather than as it had, covertly, must have given its leader supreme confidence. Yet, despite this 'freshness', Musharraf sounded as stale as the previous two Generals who had replaced civilian governments.¹²

Promising to bring about better, cleaner, governance and greater accountability, he vowed to put the struggling economy back on track, as had all other coup-makers prior to him, but perhaps what distinguished General Musharraf from many of his predecessors, was his image – with early comparisons with Attaturk and with Muhammad Ali Jinnah – of a liberal, moderate and 'enlightened' Muslim Pakistani.¹³ It was this so-called moderateness, liberalness and enlightened-ness which marks out Musharraf from many earlier rulers, and which, in fact, endeared Musharraf to what was to become his most important early constituency, life-style liberals (distinct from political liberals) and the westernising elite in the days when he was Chief Executive, before he became President.

The Chief Executive's early cabinet, before the politicisation process began, included a number of prominent civil society and non-government organisation (NGO) activists who had previously struggled against a different, earlier, military regime. It included technocrats who were 'life-style liberals', perhaps most prominent of whom was Shaukat Aziz, the Citibank banker turned Finance Minister, who later became President General Musharraf's hand-picked Prime Minister and still continues to be Pakistan's Finance Minister. These first

¹² For an analysis and comparison of the earliest speeches made by General Ayub Khan, General Zia ul Haq and General Pervez Musharraf, see the *Herald*, November 1999, and many of the articles that appeared in the press soon after General Musharraf's takeover.

¹³ Clearly, each of these terms – enlightened, liberal, moderate – mean very different things to different people. How one can be 'enlightened' or a 'liberal' without subscribing to the political philosophy which embeds these concepts, is difficult to comprehend. See the excellent commentary on a related issue – press freedom – by Hameed Haroon, 'Sunset at DAWN?', *Wall Street Journal*, 11 May 2007, Washington.

years were those of a moderate and liberal social and cultural space created in society, very different to the stifling Zia years of 1977-88. However, one of the many similarities with both General Zia two decades earlier, and General Ayub four decades prior to Musharraf was, the desire to 'give' people grass-roots democracy in the form of devolved local government. While all three Generals had curtailed and disallowed the political and democratic process at the national and provincial level, they were unlikely enthusiasts of devolution and decentralisation. By September 2001, all local bodies elections had been completed in Pakistan.¹⁴

The resurrection of the economy was one of the seven pillars on which General Musharraf wanted to build his reputation. The 1990s was the period when real per capita income rose slowly, perhaps at the slowest ever, and there were signs that a melt-down of resources and assets was underway. Per capita income in purchasing power parity terms, for instance, fell considerably from around US\$2,890 in 1992 to a mere US\$1,890 in 2001 – per capita gross domestic product (GDP) fell from US\$420 in 1992 to US\$373 in 1994, and although it rose again to US\$415 in 2001, was still below the level a decade earlier.¹⁵ One of the explanations given by General Musharraf for taking over, was to 'fix' the economy and rescue it from the deep depths into which it fallen.¹⁶ Yet, it is important to state, that in the first three years of the Musharraf regime (1999-2002), the growth rate for GDP was a mere three percent, *considerably lower* than the poor 4.6 percent for the lost decade.¹⁷

Pakistan had enough political and economic problems as it was, prior to 9/11. The nuclear test-related sanctions were still in place, democracy had been overthrown by a military coup, Pakistan's debt burden was still huge and the downturn in the economy had already set in prior to 9/11. There were two sets of outcomes with regard to 9/11 which were related to Pakistan's economic fortunes.

The first set included issues which emerged as a response to world economic growth slowing down more generally. This meant that with world growth slowing down, so would demand for world exports from the developed markets. Consumption and incomes fell in developed countries, and so did imports from other countries. Moreover, there was a sense of shock and insecurity, which meant that Americans were less enthusiastic to spend and were holding back. Second, there was a huge fear concerning Muslims, Islam, and people from other, particularly, Middle Eastern countries. Pakistan was also included in this category, so most

¹⁴ For the best analyses of local government in Pakistan, see Cheema, A., A. Khwaja and A. Qadir, 'Decentralization in Pakistan: Context, Content and Causes' in P. Bardhan and D. Mookherjee (eds) *Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Comparative Perspective*, forthcoming; Cheema, A. and S. Mohmand, 'The Political Economy of Devolved Provision: Equity-based Targeting or Elite Capture – Case Evidence from Two Pakistani Unions', unpublished mimeo, Lahore University of Management Sciences, 2005; Cheema, A., and S. Mohmand, 'Provisional Responses to Devolved Service Delivery – Case Evidence from Jaranwala Tehsil', mimeo, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, 2004; Cheema, A., and S. Mohmand, 'Local Government Reforms in Pakistan: Legitimising Centralisation or a Driver for Pro-Poor Change?' unpublished mimeo, 2003.

¹⁵ UNDP, *Human Development Report*, various issues, New York.

¹⁶ It is important to add that the crisis of the economy was not on account simply of bad governance or mismanagement, as apologists of the Musharraf regime claimed, but there were numerous inherited and structural problems which forced the two democratically elected governments to take certain unavoidable decisions. For further details see, S Akbar Zaidi, *Issues in Pakistan's Economy*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹⁷ The 4.6 percent for the 1990s, while not terribly bad, was much lower than the 6.8 percent during the 1980s. Hence, the claim that the economy was completely destroyed in the 1990s, needs to be seen in proper context.

American businesses and firms, treated Pakistanis and Pakistan with distrust if not with contempt. This meant that foreign investors would not be willing to invest in Pakistan nor even visit possible exporters and markets in the country. Travel advisories were issued which persuaded American and other western businessmen not to visit places like Pakistan. By all accounts, Pakistan was a no-go area for foreigners, particularly Americans, whether they were donors or businessmen. In addition, many countries were no longer eager to deal with Pakistani businessmen, and industry suffered. This was the earlier consequence on Pakistan's economy. However, as Pakistan yet again became a front-line state, things changed once again, this time fortuitously.

Nevertheless, in the medium and longer term, things changed dramatically, particularly for the military government of General Musharraf. From being labelled a rogue Islamic military state with nuclear pretensions, General Musharraf was welcomed back into the comity of civilised nations fighting the war against terror. Overnight, he became the darling of the West, with dozens of leaders and dignitaries from the developed countries – the very same leaders who had denounced his coup two years earlier – visiting him in Islamabad. While this ensured his political longevity at least for some time, the economic returns of siding with the Americans were unprecedented.

The biggest problem that had plagued Pakistan's government for many years since the profligate 1980s under General Zia was that of excessive and growing debt (both domestic but particularly international) and annual interest payments. Pakistan's economy was struggling under debt equivalent to its GDP, with half being foreign debt. As a return for Pakistan's support to the United States in particular and the West in general, huge amounts of debt were either written off, or rescheduled under very easy and comfortable terms relieving the pressure on Pakistan's foreign exchange situation. In addition, the quota for Pakistani exports to the United States and the European Union was increased to compensate for earlier cancelled orders and costs. Equally importantly, was the signal to the IMF and World Bank and numerous other donors, to re-enter the field and begin supporting Pakistan again. For example, even the United States Agency for International Development returned to Pakistan after nearly a decade, an aid agency which had exited Pakistan once nuclear-related sanctions were enforced under the Pressler Amendment in the early 1990s. Pakistan was no longer no-go territory, and as a consequence of Pakistan's role in the war against terror and the war against Afghanistan (and subsequently, in the United States' war against Iraq later in 2003) Pakistan's government was repaid handsomely.

There is little disagreement over the fact that the economy has benefited immensely – as have General Musharraf's political fortunes and his longevity – as a consequence of 9/11. The single most important attribute of Pakistan's economy right through the 1990s, was its severe debt burden. With having to repay large amounts of interest each year, little was left for domestic development. Soon after 9/11, a huge part of the country's debt was written off and rescheduled, creating immense fiscal space which was a windfall which the government could not have anticipated in its wildest dreams. Remittances and hidden wealth from Pakistanis overseas came back to Pakistan immediately after 9/11, when fearing grater scrutiny of their accounts, many Pakistanis (particularly those in the United States and Dubai) diverted their funds back to Pakistan. (This is evident from the fact that Pakistan's traditional source for remittances – between US\$2-4 billion – was the Middle East; however, after 9/11 in 2002-03, the United States, uncharacteristically, became Pakistan's single largest source of remittances by Pakistanis abroad, replacing Saudi Arabia). Apart from this, aid flew back into Pakistan, a pattern that we have seen when the two previous military dictators ruled Pakistan,

in the 1960s and 1980s. As much research has shown, external support to Pakistan, particularly from the United States and from multilateral financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, grows when the military is in power. It has been this windfall gain after 9/11 which has driven this boom, much of it on account of excess liquidity in the banking system.

A high GDP growth rate for the fourth year running (since 2002) resulting in high and increasing per capita incomes, is one of the more positive economic outcomes to emerge over the last few years. There are other positives as well, such as an increase in investment and a rise in exports. Other signs seen as important by the government which it claims shows how well the economy is doing, include the exponential growth in the Stock Market Index, all suggesting a 'Pakistan Shinning' scenario. However, from the point of view of the citizens of Pakistan, many of these numbers are not transformed into conditions which would result in an improvement in the quality of their lives. Even after three years of high growth and rising per capita incomes, most Pakistanis are still waiting for the benefits of this growth to trickle down. Moreover, a growth strategy focused on the rich and upper middle classes resulting in growing income disparity, is causing resentment not seen since the 1960s.

Most of the factors that resulted in the poverty stricken nineties decade, delineated earlier, have all disappeared. The debt burden has been lifted creating fiscal space; there has been no change in government or leadership since 1999, suggesting perhaps a sense of stability; Karachi is no longer at war with itself; the jihadis have been reigned-in on account of which there is talk of serious peace and economic cooperation with India; sanctions have not only been lifted but debt write-off and large amounts of aid have been made available to the government in its support for the war on terror. One needs to emphasise that, *had the New York attack not taken place, it is quite improbable that Pakistan would have been able to get out of the post-nuclear tests and post-military coup scenario, both of which had been damaging to the economy.*¹⁸

With the growth rate at 8.6 percent in 2004-05 the highest in two decades, following a growth rate of 7.5 percent in the previous year, with the fiscal deficit near its lowest in almost two decades, with remittances at their highest levels ever, with exports crossing the US\$17 billion mark for the first time and showing signs of further growth, the government is claiming that the economy has rebounded, that there has been a 'turnaround' and that good times of high growth, human development along with political stability, have returned. Even the Stock Market has soared to inconceivable levels, setting new records every week. It seems that Pakistan is finally out of the ruinous decade of the 1990s and set on course for growth and development on its way to economic prosperity. However, there is no denying the fact that this change has taken place on account of the developments globally and particularly, in the region, on account of 9/11.

Global Events and Domestic Consolidation

If 9/11 saved Pakistan's economy and resurrected Pakistan's economic fortunes, more than anything else, 9/11 and the numerous events following that event, fortified General Musharraf's political future. Even had the economy not picked up by as much as it did as a consequence of 9/11 and events related to it, the political and diplomatic consequences alone,

¹⁸ For a detailed analysis of the positive outcomes for the economy as a consequence of 9/11 see, Zaidi, S Akbar, 'Pakistan's Economy After 9/11: Will the end be different this time Around?', Occasional Paper No 6, 2004, *Centre of South Asian Studies*, University of Cambridge. [Published May 2005].

would have given General Musharraf the long lease of life that he acquired. As a counterfactual, one can surmise, that even had the economy improved following the first three rather average years in terms of GDP growth in 1999-2002, General Musharraf would not have been able to stay on in power for as long as he has without the 9/11-related support he received. While improvements in the economy have helped, it has been international support, critically from President George W. Bush and his team, which have resulted in President General Musharraf's longevity.

While full of bravado and brimming with self-confidence, General Musharraf had little to show in terms of tangible achievements between October 1999 and September 2001. He did have a great deal of support from lifestyle liberals, NGOs, and most importantly, from his main constituency, the military – without whose support he could not have taken over power – but there were few achievements and it was more a case of hope triumphant over experience. Economic growth in terms of GDP growth was a mere two percent in 2000-01, and agricultural sector growth – where 50 percent of Pakistan's labour force works – was minus 2.5 percent on account of a drought in much of Pakistan.

Pakistan, which had seen aid cut off following its nuclear tests in 1998, was further ostracised by the international community when a military General ousted a democratically-elected Prime Minister. Pakistan was suspended from the Commonwealth, and General Musharraf was largely shunned by western leaders. Having been responsible for sabotaging the peace process with India which had been initiated by Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, through the military's suicidal folly in Kargil – for which General Musharraf, who was then (and continues to be) Chief of the Army Staff was solely responsible – the Chief Executive declared himself President of Pakistan in 2001, prior to a visit to Agra in India. The Agra Summit was a complete disaster in diplomacy, and Pakistan and India had drifted further apart, largely due to General Musharraf's behaviour and inexperience. On most counts then, the achievements and successes between 12 October 1999 and 10 September 2001 were few and far between.

Perhaps President General Musharraf did not need to be threatened by a United States Assistant Secretary, that Pakistan would be bombed into the dark ages if he did not willingly comply with United States' wishes in its war on terrorism. Hungry for any kind of international (western) recognition and support, he would have agreed to do so even at a mere hint. Nevertheless, General Musharraf's hurried and eager compliance to the requests by the United States, ensured that not only was he recognised as Pakistan's leader, being welcomed back amongst the comity of nations which had ostracised him until a few days earlier, but President General Musharraf may have become one of the three most important men in the world at the turn of the millennium. Pakistan's front-line status was once again restored as it had been in 1979, and General Musharraf emerged as a world leader. No coup-maker could have asked for more.

Even at the cost of repetition, one must emphasise, that it is very likely that without 9/11 President General Musharraf would probably have been forced into a corner some years ago. While local forces and groups have also been co-opted and played a collaborationist role – see next section – the United States' support has played a key role in keeping him in power all these long years. And once assured of power, President General Musharraf consolidated his domestic position.

President General Musharraf ‘staged a fraudulent referendum in April 2002 with the goal of gaining approval for a five-year extension of his presidential term. Rivers of cash flowed from state coffers to rent crowds for his public rallies and for hauling voters to polling stations. The thoroughly unsurprising result was a 97.5 percent vote in favour of keeping the general in the president's seat for another five years’.¹⁹ The complicit Supreme Court of Pakistan had, in October 1999, given the then Chief Executive of Pakistan three years to hold elections, which were held two days prior to the coup’s third anniversary. While the Supreme Court may have laid down the rule that the elections were to be held before three years had passed since General Musharraf took over power, it did not stop him from making far-reaching and deep-rooted changes in and around Pakistan’s Constitution.

In August 2002, President General Musharraf introduced 29 sweeping constitutional amendments under the heading of the Legal Framework Order (LFO). The most striking of these measures was the attempt to institutionalise the military's role in politics by creating a Turkish-style National Security Council through which senior uniformed officers are able to oversee the civilian government. Another revived Amendment allowed the President of Pakistan to dismiss an elected government and dissolve Parliament, an Amendment first imposed by General Zia ul Haq, but was repealed unanimously by the democratically elected Parliament in 1997. The LFO also gave far greater presidential powers than had existed hitherto, not that a military general in the past (or the incumbent one) had ever had the recourse or need for the Constitution.²⁰ Nevertheless, this window-dressing and the need to formally comply with some legal and constitutional norms points to many interesting processes discussed later in the paper.

Having made numerous interventions and amendments in the electoral process – such as disallowing those who were not graduates to contest the elections (or 94 percent of the population), and disallowing the two previous elected Prime Ministers from contesting elections again – the elections gave rise to many unexpected results. The first element was, the cudgelling up of a motley group of politicians into what was called the ‘King’s Party’. Patronage has always played a key role in Pakistan’s politics, and with a military man in power, the dispensation of patronage becomes far easier. Hence, given Pakistan’s very opportunistic politicians, it did not take long for President General Musharraf to conjure up a political party in Parliament of loyalists, which had a majority in Parliament and has stood solidly behind President General Musharraf since. Both General Musharraf and those who have supported him have profited immensely from this liaison. However, the earlier claim by the then-Chief Executive that his elections and government would bring new, and clean, faces into Parliament, proved to have failed. Most of those who formed Government after the 2002 elections, were those same people who had been accused of corruption and had been discredited in the soc-called ‘flawed’ democracy and electioneering of the 1990s. While there were some completely new faces in Parliament, President General Musharraf’s loyal government showed little change compared to the past.

One major change from the past, was the advent of a large (20 percent of the total number of seats) number of religious parties into the folds of Parliament for the first time. Pakistan is a largely socially conservative society with 97 percent of the population Muslim. While most Pakistanis are culturally Muslim, all are neither practising nor do they mix belief with politics. Religious parties have held sway over the cultural and social choices of a large

¹⁹ Aqil Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 25-26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

section of Pakistanis – especially women – and have played influential roles in setting the legal agenda where Islamic law has been enforced. They also have street power and do hold sway over large sections of society in certain areas of the country. Yet despite their social presence, politically – electorally, to be more correct – they have, for the most part, not been key players in Parliament. The ‘liberal’ Musharraf is responsible for baptising these religious social and political groups by mainstreaming them, making them Parliamentarians.

With the more traditional political parties not able to contest their full field of candidates and with the two previous prime ministers in exile, the religious parties emerged as the main Opposition grouping in Parliament. The Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA), a platform for six religious parties put together for the 2002 elections, won the third largest number of seats in the National Assembly, and its rise and prominence is almost entirely a result of President General Musharraf’s support of the United States’ policies in the region after 9/11. When the United States decided to invade Afghanistan, it used frontline Pakistan as a major conduit and stepping-stone. The Afghan Taliban and the international Al-Qaeda, were all active in Afghanistan with many having strong links in the area bordering the Afghan-Pakistan border. The United States-led attacks against the Taliban – who had a great deal of support and sympathy in the bordering the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in Pakistan – led to a strong anti-American reaction in the two provinces bordering Afghanistan, viz. Balochistan and the NWFP. Claiming that the Americans were anti-Muslim, anti-Islam and anti-Taliban, the MMA was able to launch an effective electoral campaign in the NWFP and Balochistan, gaining a majority in the former and forming the government there, and being part of a coalition government in Balochistan.

In addition, they emerged as the main opposition party, with a great deal of clout in Parliament in Islamabad. Perhaps this has been the greatest irony of the liberal Musharraf regime, where a confessed moderate, enlightened, liberal, has been responsible for legitimising the role and position of Islamic parties who did not carry much electoral support earlier. Moreover, the MMA has been a persistent thorn in the side of Musharraf ever since. Yet, with hindsight, it has also been a major bargaining chip which has allowed President General Musharraf to continue to garner the United States’ support in a post-9/11 world.

The Bogey of Militant Islam

While General Musharraf has benefited immensely on account of the United States’ war on terror and because he has become one of the main leaders on the world stage on account of Pakistan’s frontline status, President General Musharraf has also made capital by playing the there-is-no-alternative and the what-if, cards. In a post-9/11 and post-7/7 world, where the rise of militant Islam worldwide is seen as the greatest threat to world stability and to the West, a country which is 97 percent Muslim, has a long tradition of active militant Islamic groups conducting jihad in many countries – some a few thousand miles away – often with the compliance if not open support of institutions of the state, with a vociferous anti-American opposition, must give rise to sleepless nights in many a western capital.

Having suffered the consequences of a talibanised Afghanistan, the West will try to stop all such drifts towards a radicalised Islam. If one were to add the fact that one such country, Pakistan, has had in very recent memory, a military General who ruled with an iron hand for 11 years and who was responsible for the radicalisation of Islam and Islamic groups, and played an active role in other countries, the scenario for the west of Pakistan becoming increasingly ‘talibanised’ under a military General of the Zia ul Haq variety, becomes of even

greater concern. But, add to this the fact that Pakistan has nuclear weapons which could 'fall' into the hands of an anti-American, Islamist, regime or general, then indeed, there is a lot to worry about.

It is this worst-case scare scenario, more than anything else, which in the sixth year of a failing war on terror, ensures that the United States continues to support President General Musharraf. Clearly, for the United States it is far better to deal with an entity (read: General) one knows, rather than a complete unknown, and hence the belief that there-is-no-alternative to the incumbent General-President. While, perhaps, Musharraf's own personal agenda may genuinely also be one of clipping the wings of militant and radical Islam, his political need has been one to play up the militant Islam takeover scare in order to prolong his incumbency.

This has been the case particularly so as the United States' support due to changes in the public mood in the United States, has begun to change. After the November 2006 elections in the United States, the American public wanted a change in their country's strategy in the war on terror and particularly with regard to the United States' occupation of Iraq. The control by the Democrats of the Senate and Congress in Washington DC has meant a different focus on both these counts. In the first four months of 2007, there have been four Congressional teams visiting Pakistan.

While all have praised General Musharraf for his role and support in the United States' war on terror, all four missions have also urged him to have free and fair elections, which were originally scheduled for late 2007. Even early 2007, such suggestions would probably not have been voiced. By linking his political fortunes with the Bush-Cheney neo-conservative Washington set up of 1998-2006, General Musharraf's position has weakened as the political mood and the political power in the United States has changed. Hence, the need to further play up the what-if card.

President General Musharraf has been accused of not just raising the flag of (an improbable) Islamicist takeover, but also of actually manipulating and creating conditions which raise the scare level even higher. Events in April and May 2007 close to the power centres in Islamabad, where groups of seminary teachers and students – both boys/men and girls/women – took to the streets and made direct threats against institutions of the state, led many a commentator and analyst to claim that 'the government' had created these conditions and had created this 'crisis', precisely to show the United States that the threat of a militant Islamic takeover was very real. With links identified between the London bombers and those who planned such further events, with Pakistani madrasas, Musharraf knew that the world was listening. Every time militant Islam – or even peaceful demonstrations by bearded men on the streets of Pakistan are shown on CNN and the BBC – raises its voice or its flag, Musharraf's position has been further strengthened.

Not 9/11 Alone: The Failure of Pakistan's Civil and Political Society

While it is important to make the case, as we do in the aforementioned sections, about the critical United States' support needed by President General Musharraf in consolidating his position in the period after 2001, and also on account of the continued (though somewhat reduced) support he receives from western powers and particularly the United States even now, one must not overstate the United States-dependence case, and we need to temper these claims with an analysis of the domestic conditions which exist and on account of which

General Musharraf remains in power.²¹ Pakistan is not a tin-pot banana republic dependent solely on the United States' support, as were many Latin American countries in the 1970s and 1980s. Every military General in Pakistan, while thankful for the United States' support which has been more than generous, must also create his domestic constituency to be able to stay in prolonged periods of power. While domestic constituencies provide support, the failings of civil and political society in Pakistan, are also responsible, perhaps more so than external support, for the longevity of military dictatorships in the country.

Civil and Uncivil Society: 'Liberalism' rather than Democracy

The term 'civil society' is a complicated term which means different things to different people and is used in different contexts. Even in the more settled western societies, where the notion of the term evolved following Locke and Hegel, and with its more contemporary versions, while the term is more at home, here too, it has a changing meaning. While the meaning of the notion 'civil society' is more rooted in the western tradition, late-20th century events have made the category more fluid, with civil society actors and constituents, moving in and out of the realm of civil society over a period of time.²²

In the countries of the 'East' and the 'South', the location of the term 'civil society' and its meaning becomes even more complicated when concepts from the west are imported wholesale into very different societies. The presence of indigenous systems of belief, organisation and politics in such countries gives, or should give, the western meaning of the term a very different contextual slant. In Muslim and in Islamic countries, even those which have embraced – or have had it forced upon them – modernisation of the western kind wholeheartedly, the meaning of civil society becomes even more problematic. Moreover, within the Muslim world, civil society has different meaning; in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Malaysia or Pakistan, the particularities of their own historical specificities, with some broad over-arching similarities across all five countries, might help distinguish between different forms, notions and expressions of civil society and its actors and organisations. But perhaps more than any similarity across the Muslim world on account of them being Muslim, it is very likely that the differences on account of their particular politics and history account for considerably different forms of the expression of civil society.

While there are different notions and contexts about what civil society is and is not, there is at least some broad agreement about what it must necessarily be. Civil society is necessarily supposed to be outside, and perhaps preferably in opposition to, or in contradiction with, the state. In order to define civil society, it is a requirement that the organisations and actors of civil society not be controlled by the institutions or actors of the state. This 'autonomous' requirement is a necessary condition to distinguish civil society from the state. For some more radical thinkers, the stricter requirement is that civil society must stand against both state and market, and particularly against economic liberalism, and for them the 'state, market and civil society are rival channels for the exercise of power'. For other theorists, civil society must necessarily be a *democratising* force. Howsoever one defines civil society and its constituents, the Pakistani case offers interesting (and contradictory) insights about the

²¹ There is a tendency amongst many writers, notably American ones, who ignore the domestic conditions and severely overstate the United States role and influence. For them, it seems Pakistan's politics is being managed, puppet-like, from Washington. Stephen Cohen is one such example. See his *Idea of Pakistan*, op. cit., particularly Chapter Nine.

²² See the excellent collection in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani (eds), *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

nature and form, and location, of civil society more generally. It also shows the large number of contradictions which constitute the political settlement that is Pakistan.

Despite the fact that he overthrew an elected prime minister, albeit an incompetent one (not unlike the one prior to him), the largest and most public support for Musharraf in October 1999 came from the socially and culturally liberal and westernised section of Pakistan's elite, who embraced Musharraf as one of their own, which he very much was. Activists in the NGO movement in Pakistan were also vociferous in their support for Musharraf, precisely because he was seen as a 'liberal' and westernised man and some prominent members of the NGO movement who had struggled for a democratic order in Pakistan under General Zia, actually joined Musharraf's Cabinet. Employers associations, trade bodies, women's groups and other such groupings which are all part of some acceptable notion of 'civil society', also heralded the overthrow because Musharraf was a modernising man. Some intellectuals and peace and anti-nuclear activists also celebrated the arrival of a liberal head of state. Clearly, for the westernised sections of civil society in Pakistan, the military general, who had overthrown a democratically-elected prime minister, was seen as Pakistan's latest saviour.

Musharraf's earliest critics and opponents included, what due to a lack of another term one can call, Islamic civil society, but not because the latter were more democratic, but because they did not like his liberalism and westernisation. The classical and western literature on civil society suggests that by being 'against the state' in some way, and especially by being against the autocratic undemocratic state, civil society is necessarily on the side of some form of democratic disposition. Not so in Pakistan.

For civil society in Pakistan, whether of the westernising, modernising kind, or of the more fundamentalist Islamic kind, the question has not been one of democracy versus non-democratic norms, but of 'liberalism' against the perceived and variously interpreted Islamic symbols and values. Unlike in the traditional (western?) notion of civil society, the pursuit of democratic ideals is not a necessary and defining condition. Not only is this a fundamental difference, but so too is the necessary distinction of the autonomy from the state, so integral to the meaning of civil society, in theory.

If sections of civil society are expected to challenge the state, in Pakistan, many are the state's partners, with both acquiring mutual benefits of some kind or the other. For instance, development groups which have emerged as a result of government failure in Pakistan and have become contractors in the form of NGOs in their own right, are often co-opted by institutions of the state to become the latter's 'advisors' winning lucrative contracts and getting the publicity they need to further their credentials. Human rights activists and advocacy groups too become 'partners' with other 'stakeholders', particularly government, and try to redress problems created by the very institutions of the state that they now are partnering. The essence of Pakistan's politics – very broadly defined – is one of compromise not confrontation, and of cooptation. Civil society in Pakistan is very much part of that political tradition.

Linked to this relationship with politics, and perhaps determining it, is the relationship of civil society more generally and of NGOs, more specifically, with money, particularly donor funding. If, for example, the most prominent and potentially radical civil society organisations in Pakistan receive funding from donors who have specific interests or agendas, the political-ness of these organisations gets muted. With the British and American governments amongst the biggest donors of civil society in Pakistan, one does not see, other

than a mere handful, much protest against both governments for their role in the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. After all, these governments are imposing their liberal social agenda on these two countries, an agenda which the westernised sections of Pakistani civil society endorse. Moreover, the requirement that civil society be autonomous of the state, also comes undone, since many of these NGOs, while perhaps not dependent on the Pakistani state, are highly dependent on another foreign (donor) state, be it the Norwegian, the British or American state. It is the broader westernised, 'liberal', modern (but in the case of Pakistan, non-democratic) vision which western governments share with the elite and the westernised sections of those who constitute civil society in Pakistan, which binds them together. Not so the Islamic elements or sections of civil society.

The greatest opposition to the imperial presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, and against Israel, has come from the political and non-political section of what one can only call 'Islamic' civil society. Unlike their westernised Pakistani cousins, this is, at least in a narrow non-Leninesque sense, an anti-imperialist political grouping, which is also against the agenda of the World Bank, IMF, and against economic liberalism, something that the westernised civil society supports very enthusiastically. For both, however, democracy is less important.

Most definitions of civil society would not stretch themselves (certainly in the western tradition) to include film societies, debating clubs or puppet and theatre festivals. Yet, because these entities have a *political* and radical cultural presence in the context of an Islamicised (and violently so) society like Pakistan, they can be included in a non-western, specific, context as belonging to civil society. Even such benign civil society organisations seek patronage from the Chief of the Army Staff, who is also the President of Pakistan, to further their cause: General Musharraf was the chief guest at the inaugural and closing ceremony of a Puppet Festival and a Film Festival, respectively, some months ago. While these cultural preferences may be the redeeming feature of Pakistan's military coup maker, one should not forget that Beethoven and Goethe were claimed as the cultural ancestors of a certain group of Germans not six decades ago.

This close accommodation between civil and uncivil society in Pakistan needs to be seen in the particular context of Pakistan's cultural, social and political evolution. One is not stating that Pakistan's experience is in any way unique, but one will argue that perhaps civil society ought to be defined by the conditions in which it exists so that one can understand its functioning and politics better. While Pakistan's civil society is an outcome of its particular history and the way its institutions and politics have evolved, it is, nevertheless, essential to apply some minimum acceptable norms of civil society behaviour, to be able to evaluate its role and performance. In the context of Pakistan, one is likely to find that its civil society (its western wing), aspires to only a select few of the necessary requisites which would elsewhere allow it to call itself that. For it, a westernised, socially and culturally liberal agenda, is far more important and preferable than the messy indigenous politics essential for democracy. In fact, one of the main consequences of this ideology has been the depoliticisation of public life in Pakistan.

Under such circumstances, where the main representatives of uncivil society are perceived to be equally westernised and socially and culturally liberal, where civil society actors work for the emancipation of women and for human rights, and military generals support the same agenda, both civil society and uncivil society make consenting bedfellows. President General Musharraf thrives on such support.

A Complicit Opposition: The Power of Patronage

While clearly not a dictatorship of the Latin American variety of the 1970s and 1980s, or even a particular brutal authoritarian regime, Musharraf's government has reaped the benefits of an authoritarian regime without necessarily having to become one. It is a dictatorship largely by default. If by authoritarian we mean a regime which gets its way without consent, often on the basis of the whims and fancies of a single leader, then Pakistan's is an authoritarian state. While the power of many barrels of many guns has always made Pakistan's military the dominant actor in the country's politics, and now increasingly of its economy and of society, one can argue that this situation has come about on *account of civil and political society letting it happen*.

There are at least two possible explanations why this has been the case. The first, one can argue, is that to most Pakistanis it matters little who is in power as long as things continue to their liking and life continues at a tolerable level, preferably showing signs of improvement over time. The second explanation is based on the principle that compromise and accommodation are better than confrontation, is a far superior rational choice compared to an alternative of outright confrontation and conflict.

I have argued for some years now, that there is no need or reason for Pakistanis to necessarily want or crave democracy.²³ There is no reason to suggest that it is an innate social need that Pakistanis are born with, and nor is a taste – given the nature of Pakistan's previous years of democracy – that they have acquired. The question which one poses is: why should Pakistanis (or any other people) want democracy if they do not know what it is? If, in fact, they continue to receive increased and growing benefits – whether economic or cultural/social – why change things?

Unlike India, for example, once it experienced its democracy under the forceful personality of Mr Nehru, who continued to lead India from the time of its independence struggle through its formative phase, the project of democracy began to take root and large vested interests were created who were willing to protect it. In Pakistan, for numerous and varied reasons, this did not happen and hence, no constituency for democracy emerged. In fact, it was India which bucked the trend, and perhaps Pakistan's predicament was much the norm for newly emerging countries struggling to survive, given their socioeconomic and political structures, with wrangling politicians and warlords, trying to acquire power in ill-formed states. The military only filled a large 'vacuum'; it walked in, without firing a shot, not once, but on three occasions.

If no constituency for democracy existed in Pakistan, it is not surprising that there was no one to defend democracy. It was only the social contradictions which emerged through Ayub Khan's state-led capitalist development model, where new rising and aspiring middle classes emerged, that began to ask for the right to be represented and to participate in the economic and political life of their country. Perhaps the late 1960s was the only period in Pakistan's history when a real democratic movement emerged and hence, resulted in the freest and fairest of elections ever held. Rather than the imposition of an individual 'creating' democracy in Pakistan, it was social and economic contradictions that did so.

²³ See for example, S Akbar Zaidi, 'State, Military and Social Transition: The Improbable Future of Democracy in Pakistan', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 40, No. 49, 2005.

General Zia ul Haq was welcomed into power by political parties opposed to Mr Bhutto, by parties and individuals who were political, supposedly democratic, entities. It was their dislike of Mr Bhutto and of his authoritarian style of government more than any 'problem' they may have had with having the military being in power, which resulted in Pakistan's opposition political parties inviting General Zia ul Haq to power. General Musharraf too, 22 years later and now seven years on, was welcomed by many political parties opposed to Nawaz Sharif, and he had little difficulty in either imposing his own mark on the government or in finding eager partners, both civil and political, who jumped on to his ship. *No military government in Pakistan has had any problems in finding civilian and political partners to legitimise its own particular brand of authoritarianism and dictatorship.* The earlier oppositions become the new partners.

The military has seldom had to face opposition in coming into power. In fact, it has been invited in by political parties and sections of the public at large. Coups have been walk-overs. With compromise rather than confrontation defining Pakistan's political culture and tradition, and with willing partners to be found by different dispensations of ideology packaged by military generals, it is not surprising that the military has ruled Pakistan for 32 of its 60 years. Perhaps it is not the military which is to blame for Pakistan's repeated military governments, but those of us who have invited it in and let it come and stay in power.

Why Musharraf Succeeded?

A series of questions which perplex social scientists are as follows: why does military rule persist in Pakistan for as long as it does, even up to a decade, often without much resistance? Why is it even acceptable to a large number of people, perhaps even the majority at certain times, preferred to Pakistan's own form of electoral politics, or democracy? Two possible, partial, explanations have been suggested earlier, one which relates to the nature of Pakistan's civil society, and questions whether it has a democratic gene in it, or whether its agenda is more of 'enlightened moderation' rather than of participatory politics, and hence is willing to support anyone, through any means who fulfils that agenda. Similarly, as a corollary, the second strand of this argument asserts, that the political class, which should be involved in the democratic process of politicking, is more interested in coming in to power through any means, even if that means coming to some agreement with military rule, rather than having to take the military head-on.

Clearly, what both these strands suggest, is that Pakistanis are opportunists, and are concerned, like most rational beings, in specific outcomes and results, and not in the process through which they are achieved. It also suggests that these groups in society are more willing to compromise, than are prone to come into conflict and contradiction with the institutions of the state. While perhaps a partial and tenuous argument, it ignores the role, at times brutal, at others accommodative, that the military plays in this equation. In order to understand the longevity of military rule in Pakistan, let us first remind ourselves of how General Zia stayed on in power for 11 years and how General Musharraf might achieve that target.

General Zia came in to power in July 1977 through a coup, which was backed by a large number of politicians who were against Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Clearly the supporters of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Bhutto's party, were against the coup and against Zia, especially when he hanged Bhutto in 1979. Zia's regime was oppressive and brutal by any definition of the terms. He had hundreds of Bhutto supporters arrested, jailed and flogged.

Some were even hanged. Zia's greatest opposition was from the PPP, and not from the collective constituency of political actors – women's groups were a noticeable and commendable exception. Many of those who had suffered Bhutto's wrath, if they did not openly support Zia, sat on the sidelines hoping that they too would get their turn in power.

Using Islamic laws and symbols as props for legitimacy, Zia managed to put the fear of God in all Pakistanis and became an active social engineer 'Islamising' Pakistani institutions and society. He claimed to derive his legitimacy to fulfil Pakistan's destiny to become an Islamic country and drew support from a large section of Pakistan's urban middle classes, many of whom endorsed his Islamisation programme. Essentially, he was able to get social support from key sections in Pakistan's society, as well as political support from Islamic parties by bringing them into the political arena as members of his parliament, the *Majlis-e Shoora*. However, a section of Pakistan's enlightened and moderate women played a key role in opposing his government. And of course, and most importantly, there was Afghanistan, and Pakistan became the United States' frontline state receiving large amounts of military and economic aid. The Musharraf story has many parallels with Zia's.

Just as Zia had alienated Bhutto's supporters but was able to draw support from other political groups and was able to build his own mainstream political constituency, Musharraf too, has been able to work with most political groups and parties who feel that by keeping their options open, they will be allowed in to share the power the military chooses to dispense. The military's game when in power is to quickly identify individuals and groups who are willing to work with it – and there are many, too many – and allow them some semblance of authority and autonomy in a political structure which is dominated by the military. This form of praetorian democracy has worked well for both Zia and Musharraf.

Identical to Zia's Islamisation programme and his desire to fulfil Pakistan's Islamic destiny, is the inverse of this, Musharraf's messianic mission of 'enlightened moderation', again trying to fulfil Pakistan's moderate destiny. In both cases, not surprisingly, there are numerous actors, groups and fractions who are willing – even genuinely eager and willing – to fulfil Pakistan's destiny in either of these two opposing directions. Hence, allies have never been a problem for any military regime in Pakistan.

In Musharraf's case, just as the general has himself genuinely meant that he (at least personally) wants to see a liberal and moderate Pakistan, there are numerous, perhaps even a majority of Pakistanis, who want Pakistan to be modern, liberal, enlightened and peaceful. Just as there were those who supported Zia's Islamic agenda out of their core belief in such a political system for Pakistan, there are those who feel the same way about Musharraf's vision. When the ends justify the means, why should either vision be spoiled by agitational politics or democracy?

It is this *accommodative and inclusive, rather than exclusionary, political strategy which ensures that military rule in Pakistan continues unabated*. Moreover, it is the refinement of this strategy from military regime to military regime, which allows the current Musharraf regime to be less repressive than either the Ayub or Zia regimes of the past.

Military rule in Pakistan is increasingly relying on the carrot rather than the stick. Also, in all three cases, the United States' government and Washington's financial institutions have played a key role in supporting the Generals rule in Pakistan. Without this financial, military and diplomatic support, none of the military governments would have survived as long as

they did. This factor also explains why the decades of military rule show higher growth rates for the economy than do the democratic interregnums. In each of the three cases when generals ruled Pakistan, they received large amounts of financial backing from the United States and other Western governments, which allowed the military rulers to provide patronage and buy-off political opposition, but to also invest in economic resources. They could not have done this on their own.

Clearly, military rule also makes enemies and does exclude some groups. However, interestingly, in the case of Pakistan, in each of three military regimes, it has been the exclusion and repression – often brutal and military – of ethnic/regional groups rather than mainstream political parties and groups. But what is critical is, that the military regimes are able to get away with this brutality precisely because there is not enough opposition to them (the military). Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan were able to rape East Pakistan because there was no protest against the military's actions in West Pakistan; the democratic movement against Zia came mainly from Sindh, and Zia was able to suppress Sindh because most of the other political parties and groups were being patronised by him and had been accommodated in his political settlement. And now Balochistan under Musharraf: the little resistance that his oppressive policies receive, is isolated and from Balochistan, far away on the sidelines of 'mainstream' political Pakistan, largely because there is no political opposition in Pakistan.

The Liberal Personal and the Liberal Political

The underlying assumption for many people, including the ubiquitous Americans, is that the regime of President General Musharraf is an enlightened, moderate, liberal, regime, and a buffer, or perhaps the last line of resistance, against talibanisation and the rise of radical, militant, Islamic fundamentalism in nuclear Pakistan. It is also very likely, as we argue above, that General Musharraf is himself a lifestyle liberal, that he is a moderate when it comes to religious beliefs and practices, and that he is enlightened in a worldly sense. These, indeed, seem to be many of the traits of his which have become public, and his earliest public images in print or in the media, give rise to this image. Yet, it must be emphasised, that President General Musharraf is no liberal in the political philosophy tradition and use of the term. In fact, he is an authoritarian military general through to the core.

In his seven or so years in power, General Musharraf has taken, or has helped devise, a number of measures where he has shown his social/cultural liberalism colours. Reserving one-third of the seats for women at all three tiers of the electioneering/governance rung is one of such major initiatives. Others include (many unsuccessful) attempts to get Parliament pass the repeal of a number of anti-women laws, particularly the Hudood Ordinance. Also, the passing of a watered-down Women's Protection Act through Parliament could not have happened without President General Musharraf's personal initiatives and commitments. Similarly, the reintroduction of joint electorates (and the repeal of separate electorates) for religious minorities, is also a major initiative for which General Musharraf personally, and his regime, more generally, do deserve credit. However, such achievements for which General Musharraf does deserve credit, need to be counter-posed with many of the derogatory statements he made regarding a well-publicised rape case.²⁴

²⁴ President General Musharraf said in an interview that women in Pakistan get raped 'so that they can get visas to go to Canada'!

President General Musharraf's personal liberalism needs to be tempered with his political il-liberalism and authoritarianism. On account of his policies and restrictions imposed at the time of the 2002 General Elections, large sections of the democratic forces – some of whom were socially conservative, others who were socially liberal – were barred from taking part in the elections. The consequence was that the religious political parties in the form of the MMA got elected in larger number than ever before. If the two mainstream political parties – the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League-N – had been able to contest a free and fair election, this would not have happened. Clearly, for the General, political expediency far outweighed any principles attached to any form of 'liberalism'.

Similarly, while Pakistan has had a very free and fair media and press for the most part for nearly a decade, as well as in the era of General Musharraf, of late, following the weakening of the Musharraf regime, the press has been gagged. Attacks have either been orchestrated by the government itself, or then allowed to happen, on television stations and on newspapers. The free press for which Pakistan has been known, has been in the line of fire for many months now. Reporting on military action in Waziristan and Balochistan, for example, has cost many journalists their lives, and evidence reported suggests that state agencies have been involved. With the press getting increasingly courageous, it is increasingly being threatened by government agencies.

Other instances in the last few years also point to the character of this necessarily authoritarian il-liberal political regime. The dismissal of President General Musharraf's first hand-picked Prime Minister, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, within one year of the 2002 elections, is one of many such examples. Jamali, an unknown and most unlikely candidate for Prime Minister was created out of nowhere on the assumption that a non-entity would be no trouble to anyone at all. Yet, it was just about a year when Jamali was sent packing because he was willing to differ on minor issues with the General-President, whose level of tolerance at the mere murmur of disagreement, was tested.

The Chief Justice 'issue' may be considered the most important event in that it set in motion a process that by the end of 2007 had greatly weakened President General Musharraf's political career. The sitting Chief Justice of the Pakistan Supreme Court was made dysfunctional in March 2007 by General Musharraf, when the President was advised that the sitting Chief Justice may take some decisions which might question President General Musharraf's attempt to get re-elected as President later in the year. The sitting Chief Justice, no radical or revolutionary, as a member of the Supreme Court, had signed and ratified all the various nefarious bills and Acts which allowed the then Chief Executive to take measures which to prolong his rule, including the General's issuance of the order and process through which he was able to become a uniformed Chief of the Army Staff and President of Pakistan, at the same time. This, despite the fact that the Constitution of Pakistan states that neither can hold both offices simultaneously. A compliant Chief Justice, who has now become a hero of the anti-Musharraf campaign, was dismissed under the impression, for which there was little prior evidence, that he would act as an obstacle to President General Musharraf's political career and in his getting re-elected as President of Pakistan while holding on to the office of the Chief of the Army Staff. Again, as in the case of Jamali, a murmur of a possible disagreement led to the ouster of the Chief Justice. The tolerance level of the lifestyle liberal Musharraf was tested and the authoritarian General prevailed.

A Weakened Presidency

Following the series of events and protests, the worst form of protracted state-sponsored violence for many years, took place. It began in Karachi on 12 and 13 May 2007, where dozens of people were killed, all of whom were peacefully trying to hold rallies in support of Pakistan's ousted Chief Justice who was on a tour of Pakistan's cities. All these indications suggest that the government of Pakistan – largely President General Musharraf's presidency – is at its weakest moment ever, and hence such desperate events. President General Musharraf is increasingly being called a 'lame-duck President', and that he is now 'a desperate man'.²⁵ While this is certainly the case, it does not necessarily mean that the General is on his way out, for as long as he has the support of the military – the only constituency that really counts – he continues to stay in power.

An armed confrontation with Islamic radicals followed soon after the constitutional crisis. It began in spring when Islamic radicals in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, began openly to defy the writ and authority of the government. Female students of the Lal Masjid (red mosque) seminary created a stir by raiding an alleged brothel and arresting the woman believed to be running it. Later, they declared that Islamic law or Sharia will be enforced by them in Islamabad and elsewhere in Pakistan. The government prevaricated for a long time but a showdown became inevitable as hardcore fundamentalist kept on increasing their level of open defiance and flagrant disregard for the government accusing Musharraf of serving the United States' interests in the war against terror by attacking strongholds of pro-Taliban forces in Pakistan. The government finally ordered military action to flush out the extremists from the mosque on 11 July 2007. Of the 1,500 men and women who were barricading inside the mosque and its various rooms and compounds some 1,300 accepted the amnesty offered to them by the government but the rest kept resisting as Operation Silence unfolded. Some 150 militants were killed.

The difficulties created by these two major crises were compounded by the demands of the opposition to hold fair and free elections. According to the constitution, elections were due sometimes in the end of 2007. President General Musharraf promised to hold the elections in time but insisted that he would be a candidate for the post of president, while retaining his position as chief of army staff. Additionally, he insisted that the sitting national and provincial assembly members will constitute the Electoral College to elect him. The opposition strongly criticised him insisting that they will not accept him in uniform as president and he should be elected by the new members of the assemblies as current assemblies had a majority that was pro-Musharraf. Pressure from the United States and other western powers in addition to the growing opposition at home forced Musharraf to change his stance though not completely. The presidential election was held on 6 October 2007 and he was elected by a large majority. The general elections were announced for 8 January 2008.

Meanwhile, under pressure from the United States, Musharraf was forced to drop all corruption charges against former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. She returned to Pakistan on 18 October 2007 after living several years in self-imposed exile. The country was thrown into utter chaos when a suicide bomber blasted two bombs on the convoy of Ms Bhutto that had assembled to welcome her back to the country. Some 149 people died and more than 500 were injured. Ms Bhutto survived that outrage. Nawaz Sharif, who Musharraf had sent into exile, returned to Pakistan on 25 November 2007. In his case, the Saudis exercised their

²⁵ Pervez Hoodbhoy, "Carnage in Karachi – What's Next?", 14 May 2007.

influence on Pakistan to let him in, but he and his brother were barred from contesting elections.

However, agitations continued against the authoritarian measures of President. Dramatic incidents of terrorism against state functionaries took place in the end of November and beginning of December 2007. On 2 December 2007, President General Musharraf imposed an emergency (which some people described as a partial martial law). The deposed Chief Justice and most other judges of the Supreme Court whom he accused of being hostile to him and aiming to destabilise Pakistan were deposed. Several new judges were appointed to the Supreme Court as well as the higher courts in the four provinces. The new Supreme Court in return declared his election as president valid. President Musharraf took off his uniform as became a civilian president.

Pressure mounted again on Musharraf to remove the emergency. Pakistan was expelled from the British Commonwealth. Pressure from the United States and other major states, and mounting opposition from within Pakistan proved too much, and on 16 December 2007, the emergency was removed and most of the people arrested on charges of threatening law and order were released.

The election campaign picked momentum and large public meetings and rallies began to take place. However, on 27 December 2007, Benazir Bhutto was slain in an assassination on her life that took place after she had addressed a public meeting in Rawalpindi. Some 20 other people were killed. It resulted in massive protests and agitations throughout Pakistan. In Ms Bhutto's home province of Sindh, angry mobs set on fire government buildings and destroyed the offices of the election commission. President Musharraf deployed the army in Sindh with orders to shoot upon site trouble makers. The Election Commission claimed that it was impossible to hold elections so soon after the massive protests. The date for the general election has now been moved to 18 February 2008.

What Next?

President Musharraf has lost support amongst those very sections and groups that ensured he had a largely trouble free seven and-a-half years, many of whom, particularly the lifestyle liberals who have benefited greatly by his Presidency, may have begun to abandon ship. Nevertheless, this important, powerful, and wealthy group, cannot really leave the President's coat-tails, for they still prefer his type of government to any other, whether democratic or military.

It is not possible to predict what happens next. Until free and fair elections are held as planned on 18 February 2008, the situation will remain volatile. The PPP of Benazir Bhutto, now led by her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, will probably benefit in terms of votes because a huge sympathy wave for the slain Ms Bhutto exists in Pakistan. Will the opposition accept sharing power with President Musharraf or insist that he should resign as Nawaz Sharif and others having been demanding, remains to be seen. The fact that he is no longer a president in uniform and resentment against his authoritarian regime have accumulated over the several months since March when the chief justice was deposed there is reason to believe that his position is very significantly weakened.

By every account, 2007 has been a most volatile year in Pakistani history. It coincides with Pakistan celebrating its 60th year of independence. Will 2008 bring to an end the regime of

President Musharraf or will he survive and remain a civilian president for the next five years?
Nothing can be said with certainty.

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