

**THE PARADOX OF MILITARY RULE
IN PAKISTAN**

1982-83

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The assumption of political power by the military in a number of Asian and African states in the late fifties and the early sixties was interpreted by most scholars as a positive development that would create the necessary conditions for the protection and promotion of liberal democratic institutions and facilitate economic development, social change and national integration in these underdeveloped and fragmented societies. One analyst of Asian affairs described the ascendancy of the military to power as an opportunity for effecting a "breakthrough from present stagnation into a genuine developmental take-off"¹. While discussing the political implications of the emergence of the military on the political scene, Shils² and Pye³ looked at the military as the vehicle of modernization and change. Janowitz, more or less, shared their views on the role of the military in the political development of these nations⁴. Daalder talked about the "important developmental role" of the military elite⁵. Similarly a number of other scholars highlighted the military as a useful instrument of nation building, economic development and modernization⁶.

The initial optimism about the implication of the establishment of the military rule in Asia and Africa soon gave way to skepticism as empirical data became available on their performance in different states and regions. Several writers expressed reservations about the ability of

the military regimes to pursue meaningful economic development and social change and set up participatory democratic infra-structure. Some argued that the ability of military rulers "to provide democratic institutions and protect democratic practices (appeared) to be less pronounced than that of their civilian predecessors"⁷ Nicole Ball went to the extent of suggesting that self-reliant development could not take place under the military regimes. He viewed the elimination of the political role of the military as "an important prerequisite for the implementation of the sort of self-reliant development so urgently required in the Third World"⁸. These writers underlined the social, political and professional limitations which adversely affected the efficacy of the military regimes and pointed out to the political implications of the military's modernizing role for the future disposition of the military as well as the post-coup society⁹. A study indicated that the military regimes hardly differed from the non-military regimes from the perspective of "economic performance criteria"¹⁰. Another study, comparing data on 77 countries of the Third World during 1960-70, concluded that the military was not necessarily an agent of social change. Its performance in the field of modernization and change was not very different from that of the civilian regimes¹¹.

The wide discrepancy in their evaluation of the military regimes in the Third World stems from the fact that these scholars focused on two different groups of variables and time-frames. Emphasizing the organizational attributes of the military and the pro-West orientations of most military commanders assuming power, the former group of scholars was convinced that the man on horseback would salvage the deteriorating political and economic situation in these fragmented polities and, thus, set the tone

for stable democratic framework. What helped them to reach these conclusions was the contribution of the military towards nation-building and economic development of these societies in the pre-coup period, and the initial successes met by the military regimes in political, economic and social sectors. The latter group of scholars mainly reviewed the performance of the military regimes over an extended period of time and compared their performance with their civilian predecessors or other civilian regimes in the region. The performance of the military regimes has varied so much that a blanket statement describing the military as an agent of change and development will be unrealistic and too sweeping. The military's contribution towards nation-building during the pre-coup period and the successful execution of a coup d'etat is no guarantee that it will be equally successful in ruling the country in place of the civil elite.

The professional and organizational attributes which facilitate the assumption of power by the military become the obstacle to finding viable solutions to the major political and economic problems. As a hierarchical and authoritarian institution, it emphasizes internal cohesion, discipline, obedience and bureaucratic rigidity. It puts "premium on authoritarian rather than democratic attitude"¹². This mental framework evaluates policy-options by invoking what it considers "the criteria of rationality, efficiency and sound administration"¹² and stresses that "orders are to be obeyed, not discussed and debated"¹⁴. This has two major consequences for the military regime. First, the political institutions they create reflect

these ethos and provide little room for dialogue, bargaining, accommodation and participation. Second, they demonstrate a strong distaste for competitive and participatory political activity and adopt an impatient attitude towards dissent. They, at times, attempt to achieve what has been described as "cohesion without consensus"¹⁵ by relying on the control apparatus of the state. This provides a temporary relief to the regime but in the long run it evokes more opposition and accentuates political cleavage. In this way the military regime's efforts to create a viable political order are frustrated by the very policies it adopts to achieve this goal.

The extended stay in power or the repeated intervention in politics by the military commanders have their own trappings. Once they get used to the pleasures of exercising supreme political power under the cover of martial law or emergency decrees, they do not feel like surrendering all of it. Therefore, they favor a political framework for the state which will ensure the continuity of the policies introduced by them and protect most, if not all, benefits enjoyed by them.

There are different courses of action available to them to achieve these goals. First, the military commanders transfer power to those who share their political perspective or establish a puppet civil government. Second, they watch the civil government very carefully and if something goes against their wishes they pressurize or threaten to assume power to compel the civil leaders to adopt particular policies. Several military leaders favor a permanent legal guarantee for the exercise of this power over the civil government. Third, the ruling generals resign their military rank and civilianize their regime by coopting civilians.

If the military commanders cannot evolve a political framework

reflecting any of these principles or a combination thereof, they are reluctant to transfer power to their civilian counterparts unless certain unforeseen developments force them to do so, i.e. external intervention defeat in a war, dissension amongst the senior commanders, etc. Such a delay evokes strong opposition from different sections of population and political elite who find themselves excluded from the political process and confronts the military with a host of problems not different from those faced by their predecessor civil regime, i.e. crisis of legitimacy, inability to create self-sustaining political institutions, the continued reliance on the regulative and coercive apparatus of the state, a widespread political alienation. This dilutes the gains and good will, if any obtained by the military rulers in the initial period of assumption of power. The consequent disenchantment with military rule gives an impetus to the view that the extended military rule is by itself the main impediment to the establishment of a participatory political framework and that the civil leaders be given 'another chance'

The Pakistan military is highly professional and cohesive. It has employed its organizational resources and technological skills to extend useful help to civil authorities and to facilitate nation-building and other developmental activities¹⁶. Its performance suffered when it took upon itself the responsibilities of running the administration of the state. This has been despite the fact that on all the three occasions -- 1958, 1969, 1977 -- the military moved out of its barracks to displace the discredited regimes and consolidated hold over power without facing any serious challenge. All the three military regimes registered a number of initial gains, i.e. restoration of law and order, resumption of normal

economic activities some measure of efficiency in the administrative routines, steps against black-marketing, smuggling and corruption. A couple of policy measures won appreciation for the military regime of Ayub Khan as a modernizing and benevolent dictatorship (Family Laws and Land Reforms). But when it came to the creation of a viable participatory framework for political action and an infra-structure for ensuring socio-economic justice, their performance was no better than their civilian predecessors. In many respects these problems became more complex with greater ramifications on regional and ethnic interactions in the polity.

The Ayub regime (1958-62, 1962-69), often described as the 'showcase for economic development and stability'¹⁷ ran aground while dealing with the participatory and distributive pressures on the political system. The stability given by the Ayubian system was personalized rather than institutionalized. It came to an end under worse condition than those which had led to assumption of power by Field Marshal Ayub Khan in 1958. General Yahya Khan (1969-71) lacked political insight and ability to steer Pakistan out of the then existing East-West Pakistan political crisis. His inability to maintain a balance between the diverse political, economic, social and regional forces plunged the country into one of the most unfortunate civil wars of the 20th Century. Instead of restoring democratic institutions he presided over the dismemberment of Pakistan.

The limits of the military rulers to create viable political institutions facilitating political participation, stability, continuity and socio-economic justice have, once again, surfaced during the period of General Zia-ul-Huq's martial law in Pakistan. General Zia-ul-Huq assumed power on July 5, 1977, by overthrowing Z A Bhutto's government as a

"caretaker" ruler to save the country from "political chaos" He promised to hold "fair and free elections within 90 days and return power to the elected representatives"¹⁸ However, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ years have passed since he made the promise Neither the elections have been held nor there are any prospects of transfer of power to the civil in the near future

EXPANSION OF THE GOALS OF THE COUP

The military regime is now operating with the 'messiah' and 'savior' complex General Zia-ul-Huq ascribes to himself the God-ordained mission of transforming the Pakistani society on 'Islamic lines' and emphasizes that as long as a ruler in an Islamic state (i.e. Zia in Pakistan) is performing his duties in accordance with the 'Quran' and 'Sunnah' "nobody can challenge him,"¹⁹ though he has never spelled out the operational criteria to evaluate the performance of a ruler in an Islamic state He made it quite clear on more than one occasion that he would not go back to the barracks as long as the mission of moral renewal and Islamization was not completed "We (the military) have no intention of leaving power till the accomplishment of our objectives of Islamization of the national polity and induction of decency in politics Until then neither I (General Zia) will step down nor will let any one rise"²⁰

This disposition of the military regime is drastically different from its posture at the time of, and soon after, the assumption of power The 90-day 'Operation Fairplay' as the military rulers described their coup of July 1977, started with a categorical promise of holding elections General Zia-ul-Huq declared

My sole aim is to organize free and fair elections which would be held in October this year Soon after the polls, power will be transferred to the elected representatives of the people I give a solemn assurance that I will not deviate from this schedule During

the next three months my total attention will be concentrated on the holding of elections and I would not like to dissipate my powers and energies as Chief Martial Law Administrator on anything else 21

During the last $5\frac{1}{2}$ years the military rulers have expanded the goals of the coup and made several shifts in their political priorities culminating into the present emphasis on 'Islamization' and 'decency' in politics. The following table outlines the changing pattern of the political priorities and expansion of goals of the military regime since July 1977, when it ousted Bhutto from power.

Approximate Date	Major Priorities
July 1977	Elections within 90-days and transfer of power to the elected representatives (Election date fixed Oct 18, 1977)
October 1977	(Elections postponed) Accountability of the ousted regime Islamization
February-March 1979	Islamization Elections (Date fixed Nov 17, 1979)
September-October 1979	(Elections postponed) Islamization and restructuring of the politico-economic system Induction of decency in Politics
January-February 1980	Islamization and restructuring of the politico-economic system. Moral renewal and decency in politics Defense of territorial and ideological boundaries in the backdrop of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan

(1) Postponement of the National Elections

Soon after the assumption of power, the military rulers fixed the election date. The machinery to oversee the elections was also set in motion. But there appeared a clear change in the strategy of the military rulers by the beginning of October 1977. The elections were postponed indefinitely and the accountability of the ousted Bhutto regime replaced the elections as the major priority of the military. We shall discuss the circumstances leading to this shift in the next section.

It was shortly before the Supreme Court finally condemned Bhutto to death that a new date (November 17, 1979) for the national elections was announced. As the political parties were getting ready for the election campaign the military rulers started changing the ground rules for the elections and took a number of steps which were disputed by different political parties on one ground or another. The major electoral changes introduced by the military regime included (i) the system of separate electorate for the Muslims and non-Muslims, (ii) Proportional representation instead of simple majority-single^{member} constituency system, (iii) an amendment in the Political Parties Act, 1962, which called for (a) registration of political parties with the Election Commission as a pre-requisite for taking part in the national elections, (b) submission of accounts of the parties to the Election Commission for scrutiny, (c) publication of a formal manifesto, (d) holding of annual elections for the office bearers of the party, (e) submission of a list of office bearers and ordinary members to the Election Commission. The Election Commission could refuse registration to any political party unable to fulfil any of these conditions. The political parties not registered with, or refused registration by the Election Commission could not take part in the national elections.

These policy measures were opposed by several political parties and some of the major political parties including the People's Party and the Tehrik-i-Istiqlal, refused to file registration papers. Amidst these controversies the military rulers decided to hold local bodies elections prior to national election on non-party basis. Most political parties opposed this move on the grounds that the political parties were disallowed to take part in the local bodies polls and that the military rulers had suddenly decided to hold these ahead of the national elections. Despite the negative response of the political parties the military authorities went ahead with the local bodies polls. Much to their dismay a large number of people having ties with the political parties, especially with the People's Party, got elected²². The success of the pro-People Party candidates alarmed the military rulers. They found themselves in a dilemma. If they excluded the People's Party from the electoral process the credibility of the national election would be in doubt. If they allowed the People's Party to take part in the national elections it was, in view of the results of the local bodies polls, expected to perform better than its rightist adversaries. The military, therefore, came to the conclusion that the time was not ripe for holding election and announced their postponement for the second time²³ because they did not want to repeat the "mistake" made by General Yahya Khan in 1971 — refusal to transfer power after the holding of national elections.

Since then the promise to hold elections at an 'appropriate time' in the future has been frequently repeated. Not many people give credence to these promises because the military leaders have made it quite clear that no elections and transfer of power will take place unless they are sure that the people who share their political perspective will be elected. They

advance several reasons to side-track the demand for elections and transfer of power. At times the military rulers call upon people to work for the 'welfare and good' of everybody rather than asking for national elections²⁴. Sometimes the need for establishment of an 'Islamic system of democracy' is cited as a higher priority²⁵. At other times they emphasize that elections could not be held without a guarantee of 'positive' results²⁶ — an indirect way of saying that as long as the prospects of the left of the centre parties, especially the People's Party performing better than the rightists, no elections could be held. At still other times regional strategic environment is referred to as the reason for not holding early elections²⁷. Pakistan's Interior Minister, Mahmood A. Haroon, was quite forthright when he declared that there could be no national elections as long as the Soviet troops stayed in Afghanistan²⁸. On top of all this General Zia-ul-Huq claims that if the majority makes a wrong decision it can be turned down because, in his opinion, Islam does not believe in the rule of majority. Only a 'correct decision' needs to be honored even if it is supported by a minority²⁹.

(ii) The Process of Accountability

The three month long agitation against the Bhutto government convinced the military commanders that the People's Party had run out of steam and that Bhutto would be politically dead once he was dethroned. This appraisal was reinforced by the quick capitulation of the ruling People's Party to the coup. The military leaders did not visualize any problem in holding national elections in 90 days and transferring power to the P N A (the opposition alliance) which was, in their opinion, sure to win the forthcoming polls. These calculations were greatly upset by the massive turn-out of people on the eve of Bhutto's first visit to Lahore, Multan and Karachi after being

released from the 'protective custody' of the military regime. This demonstrated that despite the overthrow of his government and defections in his People's Party, he did not altogether lose his popular base³⁰. This encouraged Bhutto to pursue the October 1977 election campaign aggressively because he did not want his support to fizzle out by adopting a low profile. He began to defy martial law authorities and threatened them with retribution if he was elected.

This put the ruling generals on the horns of a dilemma. If they ignored Bhutto's clear violations of the martial law regulations, the credibility of the martial law regime would have been compromised and Bhutto would have been able to sway more votes to his side. On the other hand if they reacted sharply, there was bound to be a direct confrontation between the military and the People's Party. The military commanders decided to adopt the latter course. The need for such policy was also underlined by the strong "fears" on the part of the ruling generals and the P N A that the People's Party would either win the October polls or perform better than its right-wing political adversaries.³¹ By an interesting coincidence it was during these days that the military leaders became aware of Bhutto's "misdeeds" and his "machivellian" style of rule. They, therefore, decided to get even with Bhutto by postponing national elections and instituting inquiries into the cases of irregularities by his government. They also reopened the murder case of Nawab Mohammad Ahmad Khan, involving Bhutto as a co-conspirator. Later the process of accountability was extended to cover other senior officials of the Bhutto government and members of his People's party.

While the process of accountability was underway and Bhutto's own case was under trial, a massive propaganda campaign of corruption and

abuse of power was launched against Bhutto and his ousted regime. The state controlled radio, T V , and the government owned newspapers took the lead. A number of right-wing dailies and weeklies orchestrated the same tune. The martial law authorities issued several White Papers spread over 2,771 pages describing how Bhutto rigged the March 1977 elections and how he and his family undermined the governmental institutions and procedures and obtained or extended to others illegal favors³². General Zia-ul-Huq characterized Bhutto as the "worst cheat and cold-blooded murderer" who "had been running a Gestapo style police state in which kidnapping and political murders had become a routine affair". He very confidently said that Bhutto and his colleagues would not be able to escape punishment and that the martial law powers would be used against such "criminals"³³. The national leadership and most party activists of the People's Party were placed under detention at one time or another during the 5½ years of martial law. A large number of them were tried before the special military courts and convicted, while some were kept in detention for varying periods without trial.

The tough attitude of the military government kept the People's Party off-balance and, coupled with the People's Party's organizational weaknesses, it undermined the ability of the party to launch a mass movement against the military government. This, however, dragged the military in political controversies to the point of no return. An impression was created as if it was a personal conflict between the ruling generals and Bhutto. This feeling was strengthened by the efforts of the martial law government to win over Bhutto's political adversaries on the Right and a considerable freedom enjoyed by a number of right-wing fundamentalist groups to engage in a low key political activity, especially in opposition to the People's Party.

Bhutto's execution in pursuance of the split judgement of the Supreme Court eliminated him physically from the political scene but his name, despite his reputation for corruption and despotism, is a formidable political force and the People's Party continues to enjoy a strong following amongst the rural and urban poor in the Punjab and Sind. In any national elections in the future, Bhutto's name and the fact that he was put to death by the military government will be an asset for the People's Party.

(iii) Alignment with the Political Right

It was for the first time in Pakistan's history that the military authorities exercising the supreme political power openly declared that they were rightist in their orientations and forged political ties with several groups of the Right. The following excerpt from an interview of General Zia-ul-Huq is quite instructive.

Question: There are rumors that yours is a rightist regime and you intend to suppress the leftist before holding elections. Would you comment on this?

Zia: I have no dispute on this. I am a rightist.

Question: How would you go about suppressing the leftist? This has created fears among the leftist - for example, the former National Awami Party.

Zia: Well, the sooner the leftist wake up and come on the middle of the road, the better it would be for them, because I have now started tightening my grip. We have no place for too many extremists.

Question: There are different types of leftists - extremists, moderates etc.

Zia: There is nothing much to choose among them. ³⁴

General Zia-ul-Huq's early socialization in a deeply religious home-environment and his preference for the orthodox-fundamentalist interpretation of Islam created a natural sympathy in his heart for the political parties of the Right, especially those religion-oriented parties which shared his

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perspective on Islam. The catalyst for the Right-military rulers partnership was the military's decision to initiate the process of accountability and contain the resurging influence of the People's Party. The military rulers thought that an understanding with these political groups would extend the government's political base, facilitate the introduction of fundamentalist Islamic reforms in the political system, and encourage the development of a viable leadership from amongst these groups as an alternative to the People's Party.

The military rulers' alignment with the Right can be divided into two phases

The First Phase 1978-79 - The P N A -- an alliance of 9 political parties which contested the March 1977 elections against the People's Party -- agreed to join the cabinet of General Zia-ul-Huq, ostensibly to facilitate Islamization of the polity and prepare the country for the national elections. This cooperation which lasted until two weeks after Bhutto's execution in April 1979, proved useful for the military in dealing with political dissidents and made the military rule partly civilianized and humane, at least to the Right. But it could neither throw up an alternative leadership the military could trust and ultimately transfer power nor it eroded the bases of support for the dissident Left and those political parties in the Right which were not prepared to join hands with the military rulers. Several reasons account for that

First, not all the constituent elements of the P N.A were equally inclined towards active cooperation with the military. Tehrik-i-Istiqal, the J U P. (Jamiat-i-Ulma-i-Pakistan), and the N.D.P (National Democratic Party) did not favor close identification with the military regime. These

political parties gradually withdrew from the P N A as its leadership moved closer to the military regime. The exit of these three political parties weakened the P N A. This also meant that a section of the Right stood aloof from the political arrangements between the P N.A. and the military. Second, the P N A went through a process of degeneration. There were personality, policy and factional conflicts. There was a temporary split in the Muslim League. This was followed by an open confrontation between a faction of the Muslim League and the Jamaat-i-Islami. Out of the constituent elements of the P N.A., the Jamaat-i-Islami was extending the most enthusiastic cooperation to the military and there was periodic grumbling on what other parties in the P N A considered greater tilt of the military towards the Jamaat-i-Islami and vice versa.

Third, the military and the P N A. were cooperating with each other for dissimilar considerations. The military leaders hoped that the inclusion of representatives of some political parties would give political legitimacy to their rule and help to bring about the politico-economic changes in the polity as desired by them. The P.N.A. thought that, in addition to 'sharing the credit' for the Islamization of the polity, the exercise of power would enable them to distribute state patronage amongst their party-men and strengthen their political base. The P.N.A. ministers soon realized that the military rulers did not want to share effective power. The ruling generals and the top bureaucrats often bypassed the ministers on important policy matters. This also impaired the P N A ministers' ability to distribute state patronage amongst their workers which caused frustration among them. The military rulers were also somewhat disappointed because of the intra-P N A squabbles, the ministers' desire to operate like

a political government and, what was described as the reluctant support of the P N A to the military

It was after the introduction of the first set of Islamic laws in February 1979 the refixation of the election date (November 1979) in March 1979, and the execution of Bhutto in April 1979, that the P N A decided to loosen its ties with the military. It withdrew its ministers from the cabinet but assured the military commanders of its continuous cooperation from outside of the government³⁵. The military commanders did not ask the P N.A. ministers to stay on.

The Second Phase 1979 to the Present - The second phase of alignment between the Right and the military saw the crystallisation of the "like-mindedness" between the military and the Jamaat-i-Islami. Another constituent element of the P N A - the Muslim League (Pagaro Group) also maintained a favorable disposition towards the military but more significant than this was the burgeoning understanding between the military and the Jamaat-i-Islami -- a fundamentalist religious party with a hierarchical structure and highly disciplined cadre. The roots of this cooperative relationship can be traced back to the first phase when the Jamaat-i-Islami, like the Muslim League (Pagaro group) was more keen to join the martial law government than other parties in the P.N.A. and made it clear that it would join the government even if the P N A did not³⁶.

After the decision of the military rulers to postpone the national elections scheduled for November 1979, for the second time, many rightist political groups, especially the J.U.I. (Jamiat-i-Ulma-i-Islam) which served as the king-pin in the P N.A., were alienated from the military. The growing cleavage between a number of the rightist political parties and the

military made it imperative for the military to cultivate those groups in the Right which were still sympathetic towards the military. These included the Jamaat-i-Islami and the highly orthodox 'ulma' (religious leaders) and their followers.

The military rulers and the Jamaat-i-Islami have realized that, despite some differences in their perspectives, a cooperative interaction will be mutually rewarding. Overtly they maintain a distance from each other. The martial law authorities do arrest and convict the Jamaat activists. Similarly the Jamaat leaders make adverse comments on the performance of the martial law regime. These are basically bargaining tactics to maximize the possible gains of the cooperative interaction by showing their ability to be rough on each other. The arrested Jamaat activists are always quietly released and the Jamaat leadership opposes political agitation against the military regime, especially the one spearheaded by the left of the centre political groups.

The Jamaat-i-Islami has benefited by enjoying a relative freedom for engaging in a low-key political activity and extending its influence in the bureaucracy, the military, the mass media and educational institutions. For the military government the threat of political agitation by a political party with a highly disciplined cadre has been temporarily eliminated. The Jamaat has also helped the military to undercut the efforts by other political groups to launch a political agitation against the military government. The Jamaat's support to the military was quite crucial in the period immediately after Bhutto's execution in April 1979. A few hours before Bhutto's execution the chief of the Jamaat-i-Islami, Maulana Tufail Muhammad, met with General Zia-ul-Huq. It was not known what transpired between them but what the Jamaat Chief said to the newspaper correspondents after the meeting

was quite revealing. He said that Bhutto's execution would not lead to the deterioration of political situation. If at all that happened, his party would take care of that.³⁷ After Bhutto's execution the 'hard-core' of the Jamaat were clearly visible in several urban centres. The Jamaat-i-Islami through its student wing, has helped the authorities to defuse the agitational potential of Pakistan's politicized universities by intimidating the dissident students and faculty and, at times, by influencing the exercise of discretionary powers and patronage by the university authorities.

The other major group cultivated by the military comprises the extremely orthodox religious leaders and their followers. They hold extremely conservative political, social and economic views and are opposed to participatory political process. They support the government decision to postpone elections indefinitely and favor the use of all the resources of the state including the coercive power, to effect the 'total and immediate' Islamization of the society.

More important than their support to the martial law regime has been their role as the surrogates of the military in political confrontation between the military government and those who are opposed to the government. These religious leaders constantly engage in the criticism and condemnation of the left of the centre political groups and describe them as secularists and communists — two most despised political labels in Pakistan. This diverts the attention of several political groups from the military government to these religious leaders, and, from the basic political issues to the secondary and non-central issues played up by these ultra right religious leaders.

(iv) Islamization

The 'Islamization' of the polity has emerged as the cardinal concern of the martial law regime. Some attribute this to the disposition of General Zia-ul-Huq who had the reputation of being a religious person even before coming to power. What amazes most is that the desire to restructure the polity on Islamic lines did not appear prominently in the early days of the martial law regime. In his first speech after coming to power General Zia-ul-Huq took note of the resurgence of Islamic sentiments in the anti-Bhutto movement and declared that he considered the introduction of Islamic system "as an essential prerequisite" for Pakistan. However, the theme of 'Islamization' was not pressed hard by the military regime. While presenting the government point-of-view before the Supreme Court in the well-known Begum Bhutto case, the defense council did not highlight 'Islamization' as the main objective of the martial law regime. The Supreme Court, while legitimizing the imposition of martial law under the doctrine of necessity, conditioned it with "the earliest possible holding of free and fair elections for the purpose of the restoration of democratic institutions under the 1973 Constitution"³⁸

As the commitment of the martial law regime to hold elections on October 18, 1977, wavered, and as a confrontation started developing between the martial law authorities and the People's Party, the need for the 'Islamization' of politics and society began to figure prominently in their speeches and statements. Once the elections were pushed to the background and the accountability of the ousted regime was initiated, 'Islamization' was employed as *raison d'etre* of the martial law regime. The 'Islamization' process comprised three aspects. First, efforts to mobilize and forge a cooperative relationship with those sections of people which shared the

regime's perspective on the 'Islamization' of the Pakistani polity. This has been discussed in the previous section. Second, the reliance on the conservative Islamic tenets to introduce (or make proposals for) changes in the 1973 Constitution. This will be examined in the next section. Third, introduction of several measures, including new laws, administrative actions and guidelines for imbuing Islamic spirit in the society.

The major focus of the 'Islamization' drive has been regulative and punitive with very little effort to project other characteristics of Islam i.e. social and economic egalitarianism and accountability of those exercising authority. A series of laws pertaining to the imposition of "Islamic punishments" for certain crimes were enforced. A Federal Shariat Court was established and a promise was made to set up "Islamic courts" at all levels. The 'Interest free' banking counters (the Profit and Loss Sharing Accounts) were opened in all commercial banks, though once funds were deposited in the PLS account, these were used by the banks in the same way as were the funds in the conventional saving accounts. Interest on these PLS accounts was designated as profit. A compulsory 'Zakat' ($2\frac{1}{2}\%$ / annual deduction from saving accounts) was imposed and the government used this fund for helping the poor. Another annual tax -- 'Usher' -- on farm produce has been introduced from 1983. The mass media was directed to reflect the orthodox Islamic values, film censor was made stricter than ever, and various cultural activities considered not in conformity with the fundamentals of Islam were discouraged. The government offices were ordered to make specific provisions for prayer in their schedules and the heads of departments were advised to lead the prayer for the staff or make alternate arrangements.

The 'Islamization' process had its problems. A number of Muslim sects who did not share the establishment's perspective on Islam resented the lack of adequate attention to their religious sensitivities. The most forceful expression of resentment was made by the Shia sect. Under the leadership of their religious leaders they staged a massive protest in Islamabad in the Summer of 1980 against the compulsory deduction of 'Zakat' by the government. The government, fearing that it might kick off agitation in other cities, with political parties jumping on the bandwagon, gave in and made 'Zakat' voluntary for the Shia sect. Tension between the Shias and one of the most conservative Sunni sect -- the Wahabis -- who are generally supportive of the government, has surfaced quite often.

Several religious groups favoring a participatory and an egalitarian Islamic system have also been critical of the authoritarian enforcement of Islam from the above, that too, of its punitive and regulative aspects. They (especially the J U P) believe that this strategy may help the military to maintain a political status quo in the country but it is not likely to solve the major social and political problems of the common folks and, thus, will prove counter-productive to the goal of 'Islamization' of the Pakistani society. The left of the centre groups, especially the People's Party, are the strongest critics of the government's drive for 'Islamization' as they have suffered most under this martial law and the 'Islamization' process has been used by the military regime to contain and undermine their political activities.

(v) Towards A New Political System

The military rulers did not abrogate the 1973 Constitution at the time of assumption of power in 1977. Some of its articles were suspended. When they decided to expand their goals by initiating accountability and 'Islamization', several changes were gradually made in the 1973 Constitution to strengthen the position of the martial law authorities. The major target of these changes was the superior judiciary which was slowly stripped off of its power of judicial review and writ jurisdiction. In March 1981, a Provisional Constitutional Order replaced what was left of the 1973 Constitution which completely subordinated the superior judiciary to the martial law authorities. 15 judges of the superior courts (Supreme Court 4 including the Chief Justice, Punjab High Court 7, Sindh High Court 2, and Baluchistan High Court 2 including the Chief Justice) either refused or were disallowed to take oath under the Provisional Constitutional Order. They lost their jobs. In December 1981, an all-nominated Federal Council (Majlis-e-Shoora) was set-up. This advisory body has no law-making and financial powers which has reduced it to a grand debating society whose expenses are paid by the state-treasury.

General Zia-ul-Huq's views on the future shape of the political system are not fully articulate. He talks in terms of cliches and doctrines without fully operationalizing them or allowing an open debate on these issues. We can, however, identify the following major themes in his speeches and statements -

1. The military rulers have made up their mind not to restore the 1973 Constitution, at least in its original shape.
2. They want to introduce what they call the "Islamic Democratic System". Under this system they will like to (i) either completely do away

with political parties or put severe restrictions on their role, (ii) introduce numerous changes in the electoral process allowing the military government to do the pre-election screening of candidates in one way or the other, tilt the electoral process in favor of the orthodox and fundamentalist groups, (iii) provide a strong federal executive with a docile legislature, (iv) a complete overhaul of the judicial system providing for a limited power of judicial review of the executive actions, and the setting up of the "Qazi" courts, presided over by those who have the knowledge of "Fiqh", preferably the religious leaders

- 3 A constitutional guarantee enabling the military to share the decision-making power with the political elite and to warn or displace them when the military commanders are convinced that their (politicians) policies would jeopardise stability and integrity of the country

The military leaders are finding it difficult to implement all these principles as there is a difference of opinion amongst those who support the military regime as to the operationalization of these principles. Two key institutions, relevant to the 'Islamization' of the polity, do not fully endorse General Zia-ul-Huq's political framework. The Federal Shariat Court -- set up by the military government as a part of its 'Islamization' drive -- rejected several petitions seeking the Court's injunction that, among other things, political parties, the electoral process as outlined in the 1973 Constitution, and parliamentary system of government were un-Islamic. These petitions were filed by a number of orthodox persons who were generally supportive of the military regime. The dismissal of these petitions provided political ammunition to those who did not favor restrictions on political

parties and the circumventing of the democratic process. Another advisory body appointed by the President — the Council of Islamic Ideology — refused to go along with General Zia-ul-Huq's political views all the way. Its report on the future shape of the political system did not endorse the official standpoint on party system and electoral process. It recommended a federal system, universal adult franchise, separate electorate and right to vote for women³⁹. It did not favor the holding of elections on non-party basis⁴⁰. The military government, for obvious reasons, returned the report to the Council of Islamic Ideology for reconsideration.

The most controversial proposal has been the one envisaging a permanent constitutional arrangement for the sharing of power between the top brass of the military and the political elite. This was not for the first time that such a proposal was mooted. General Yahya Khan assigned the power of suspending the constitution to the Chief of Army Staff in his proposed constitution⁴¹ which could not be implemented due to the surrender of Pakistani troops in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and the subsequent transfer of power to Bhutto in December 1971. The 1973 Constitution restricted the functions of the military to defense against external aggression or threat of war, and assistance to the civil authorities when called upon to do so⁴². The present military rulers want to expand the scope of their function by adding the responsibility of 'overall development and defense of ideological frontiers'⁴³. It is an indirect way of ascribing a permanent role in domestic politics to the military. General Zia-ul-Huq proposed a Higher Command Council comprising the President, the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister and the three Service Chiefs with powers to "take decision on vital and important issues"⁴⁴. At times, he talked about a constitutional provision allowing the military to take over the reins of

government at the time of 'national emergency'⁴⁵ These ideas have met with more opposition than other political and constitutional suggestions. With the exception of the government circles and the government controlled newspapers,⁴⁶ this proposal was either not welcomed or was totally opposed.⁴⁷ All political parties, including the pro-military Jamaat-i-Islami and the Muslim League (Pagaro Group) have made adverse comments on the proposal for a constitutional role for the military in domestic politics.

POLITICAL IMPASSE, DISSENT, AND CONTROL

These policy measures — the postponement of the national elections, the initiation of the process of accountability, the alignment with the political Right, Islamization, and the restructuring of the polity — have moved the military so far away from their original goal that they can neither go back nor they find it easy to move ahead with their expanded goals. Despite their best efforts the military authorities who, after staying in power for over $5\frac{1}{2}$ years — longer than Bhutto — find themselves in a greater political impasse than the one they set out to resolve in 1977.

The present military rulers are confronted with an extremely complex political situation. The people are not so politically docile as was the case when Ayub Khan assumed power in 1958. A number of developments in the late 1960s and the 1970s have made people more assertive and politicized. These developments include the 1968-69 anti-Ayub movement, the elections and the East Pakistan crisis (1970-71), Bhutto's style of mass politics, the 1977 elections and the P.N.A movement against the Bhutto regime. In such a politicized environment the Zia regime put severe restrictions on political activities and talked of "depoliticizing" the society. But the policies it adopted contributed to greater political controversies and polarisation.

in Pakistan. The major step that eluded their goal of "depoliticization" of the polity was their decision to identify the regime with the political Right and tamper with the fundamental features of the 1973 Constitution. As a result the Right-Left polarisation affected people at all levels and in all walks of life. Many found themselves extremely vulnerable or isolated unless they tilted towards one side or the other. This compromised the political autonomy of the regime and made its credentials as an 'impartial broker' unacceptable to those who suffered because of the orientation and policies of the military regime. This undermined the ability of the military regime to find viable solutions of the intricate political problems, especially the problems of evolving a participatory framework, and confronted the military rulers with the kind of dilemmas which led to the failure of their predecessor civil regime, i.e. the ever-deepening participatory crisis, the lack of consensus on the operational norms of the political system, the fragility of the civil institutions, economic disparities between regions and people, and the growing political alienation.

If the military finds itself bogged down in the political arena, the performance of the political leaders and political parties is not commendable either. They have been unable to generate enough political pressure which could force the military out of power. Political parties in Pakistan have traditionally been weak, suffering from intra- and inter-party conflicts based on personality, political orientations, ethnicity-cum-regionalism, and political opportunism. They formed political alliances in the past but these proved fragile because of mutual distrust and squabbles. These problems continue to afflict the political parties during the present martial law period. The P N A degenerated to such an extent that it cannot operate as a unified body against the government or the left of the

centre political parties

The People's Party was never allowed to develop a viable organizational network by its founder-leader, Bhutto. Once the party lost power and Bhutto was put out of effective circulation by the military rulers, the People's Party was in a disarray. It, no doubt, enjoyed a widespread support at the mass level and, if elections were held, it was likely to perform better than its right-wing political rivals, but it was unable to transform its support into a mass movement due to its leadership and organizational problems. The People's Party was also hurt by the irresponsible attitude of some of its adherents - the hijacking of the P I A aircraft by al-Zulfikar. Though the People's Party leadership condemned the hijacking and declared that it had no connections with al-Zulfikar, the fact that the eldest son of the executed Prime Minister led the al-Zulfikar operation, did not fully absolve the People Party of the blame for the hijacking. This provided a convenient excuse to the martial law authorities to further clamp down political activities and arrest the dissidents.

Several attempts were made to put up a challenge to the military regime either by creating a united front (i.e. the M R.D. in Feb-March 1981) or by efforts to launch protest movements. Lawyers and journalists have been the most vocal critics of the military regime. The lawyers have been holding periodic conventions since the summer of 1980. The latest series of conventions took place in September-October 1982 which turned out to be an open confrontation between them and the military government⁴⁸. On all these occasions the military rulers were able to contain the dissenting groups, at least for the time being.

In addition to mobilising the pro-military groups, the military leaders have pursued the policy of swift action against any political activity aimed

at the military regime before it takes-off. The approach is 'isolate and suppress' which comprises a number of related actions. First, discouragement to, or restriction on, the press (including censorship) to publish the views of the dissenting politicians. The private printers run the risk of heavy financial and legal penalties for printing their views in the form of booklets or pamphlets. Second, restrictions on the movement of political leaders. House arrest, detention or restriction on their inter-provincial or inter-city travel so that they are not able to establish a rapport with each other. Some of the political leaders including Air Marshal (Retd) Asghar Khan, Mrs Husrat Bhutto, Banazir Bhutto, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, and General (Retd) Tikka Khan have been under house arrest for periods ranging from 3 months to over 3 years. Some of them are still under house-arrest. Third, warnings to desist from making statements. Denial of permission to hold closed-door meetings of political activists at somebody's residence, not to speak of public meeting or mass-contact tour. Fourth, periodic arrests of political leaders, especially the political activists at the middle and the lowest levels under the martial law regulations whereby no writ can be filed in the regular civilian courts for their release. Some are released after a few days or weeks, Others are sentenced to imprisonment and/or whipping by the military courts. Still others are kept in detention without trial for months.

Two other factors need to be identified which have compromised the ability of the politicians to launch a political movement against the military government. First, a fairly reasonable pace of economic development was maintained during the last 4-5 years. There were no food shortages. More important than this has been the inflow of funds in the form of remittances by the Pakistanis working abroad, mainly in the Gulf and the Middle Eastern

states The Middle East bonanza or the Gulf connection of the Pakistan economy has made more funds available to a substantial number of the lower middle and the lowest class families, thereby enabling them to absorb the shocks of inflation and price hikes It has also produced a boom for the middle and the small business (the 'Bazari' in the context of the Iranian revolution) catering to the buying spree of the "nouveau riche" In this way the benefits of the Gulf connection have gone far beyond those who have their relatives working abroad This has dampened the agitational zeal of the poor and provided a useful but temporary safety valve for the military regime To most, an opportunity of job in the Middle East holds better prospects for the future than a change of government in Pakistan following a mass upsurge As long as this remains a viable option and the consequent prosperity and consumerism stays afloat, the politicians will face an uphill task to translate the widespread alienation from, and resentment against, the military into a sustained political agitation

Second, the direct Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979, and the influx of Afghan refugees has been successfully used by the military government to deflect political pressures in the domestic political system by claiming that the regional geo-strategic environment does not warrant political activities, let alone agitation against the government The activities of the anti-military government circles, it is claimed, will undermine the nation's ability to deal effectively with the political and strategic fall-out of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan The state-owned radio, T V and newspapers have continuously played up these themes which are shared by a considerable number of groups and people on the right of the centre These elements often join the government in condemning their political adversaries on the ground that they are trying to engage in

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agitational politics at a time when the security of Pakistan is "threatened" by the Soviet troops

The key to the invulnerability of the Zia regime is the support it enjoys from the senior military commanders. General Zia-ul-Haq's inoffensive style with streaks of humility has given other senior commanders no reason for complaints. The military government has been quite generous towards its colleagues in the three Services. The budgetary allocation for the defense services rose by about 172% during 1976-77 to 1982-83, compared with an increase of about 118% during the Bhutto period. The Army, especially its higher echelons, were parcelled out several material benefits, i.e. jobs before and after retirement, absorption in the 'Fauji Foundation' after retirement, an assignment in the Gulf states, pieces of land for construction of houses in cantonments and urban centres, facilities for loans, etc. A number of officers passed on the residential plots given to them at cheap rates to the civilians at the exorbitant rates. Their most valuable gain has been the 'access' and 'contact' with the decision-makers which has its own 'advantages' and 'benefits' in a society suffering from the perennial 'scarcity' of the 'valued goods and services'.

The Zia martial law has led to what Kiner describes as the "military colonization of other institutions" whereby "the military acts as a reservoir or core of personnel for the sensitive institutions of the state"¹⁹. The military officers are being gradually spread-out in the civil administration, semi-government and autonomous corporations. Many officers of the rank of Brigadier and above (mostly retired) are holding the positions of federal or provincial secretaries and the top or near top positions in government corporations and bodies. They are also being appointed to the elite groups of the Central Superior Services. The most common groups

selected for their induction include the District Management Group (formerly the C S P), the Foreign Service of Pakistan, and the Police Service of Pakistan. This has caused bitterness amongst their civilian counterparts who join these services after a cut-throat competitive examination. A 10 per cent quota of civil jobs has been fixed for the ex-servicemen. But in several government corporation and autonomous bodies the actual ratio is more than the recommended figure. In mid-1982, out of 42 Pakistani ambassadors posted abroad, 18 came from the military (the Army 15, the Air Force 3)⁵⁰

The military has become a ladder for lucrative jobs after retirement in almost all those states which have seen the ascendancy of the military to power. Ayub Khan relied on this strategy during his rule. But, unlike him who was able to develop the alternate sources of support and thus push the military partially in the background, General Zia-ul-Huq has not been able to 'civilianize' his regime and has continued to lean heavily on the military for the sustenance of his regime. This made him distribute the exploits of power in his constituency — the military — in a more consistent and extensive manner than any previous military ruler in Pakistan. "Military rule thus means not only Islamic purity it also means big business — for the military"⁵¹. The higher echelons of the military have, in fact, emerged as the most privileged and entrenched caste in Pakistan.

The success of the military regime in containing the expression of dissent has been marred by the gradual rise of political violence (murders, sabotage and arson) over the last couple of years. At least three political leaders were assassinated. Two of them were pro-military government. A retired judge of Supreme Court (who presided over Bhutto's murder trial

in the Lahore High Court) escaped an assassination attempt. Several pro-military government leaders, especially the members of the Federal Council received anonymous threats to their lives. There were several instances of mysterious fires on the government property, bomb blasts and hijacking attempts. A rocket was fired at an aircraft taking-off from Rawalpindi in February 1982 which missed the target by a narrow margin. The reliable sources claimed that the said aircraft was carrying General Zia-ul-Huq. The ruling generals do not see these activities as a consequence of the severe restrictions on political activities. They describe these activities as the acts of the anti-state and foreign inspired groups. A large number of Pakistani social scientists see a correlation between the germination of violence in politics and the continued clogging of the channels of expression and political participation.

OBSERVATIONS

The Zia regime is well entrenched but its inability to evolve a viable political framework for the future and effect a transfer of power or 'civilianize' itself is as pronounced as is the incapacity of the political elite to wrestle political initiative out of the hands of General Zia-ul-Huq. In the past the general has been quite successful in deflecting and containing political dissent. He can continue to do so in the future as long as, inter alia, the senior commanders are willing and capable of staying by his side. This will enable the military rulers to hold on to power for some time but it is not likely to facilitate the widespread acceptance of their political-preference scale as the basis of the new political system for Pakistan.

The military rulers postponed the national elections and expanded the goals of the coup with the hope that this would reduce politicization in the polity and consolidate the position of those rightist political leaders who were favorably disposed towards the military regime. They would then transfer power to or share it with, them. But the strategies adopted by the martial law authorities to achieve these objectives had the opposite effects. As the process of accountability and alignment with the right adversely affected the People's Party which had retained a substantial following in the Punjab and the interior of Sind, and the 'Islamization' process touched on some of the fundamental features of the first-ever unanimously adopted Constitution (1973), these measures were bound to embroil the military in the on-going political struggle. The follow-up measures adopted by the military to secure the cooperation of the orthodox and ultra-right groups and the crack down on their adversaries by a policy of suppression and rewards intensified the existing cleavages in the polity.

The military rulers in Pakistan are in a paradox. On the one hand praetorianism has become quite strong by the repeated intervention of the military in politics since the mid-fifties. The present military rulers wish to provide a constitutional coverage to this practice so that no legal and constitutional questions are raised about their praetorian role. On the other hand the emotional and ideological commitment to democratic process and civilian supremacy over the military is still strong in the society. The military, as one scholar puts, "remains hostage to its origins"⁵². The British legacy of the military's subordination to the executive/civil authority figures prominently in the military training program. The political elite, bitter at the loss of power, persistently oppose any effort designed to institutionalize praetorianism. They cite Jinnah who upheld the principle

of civilian supremacy over the military, and remind the military commanders that Pakistan was not conquered by a general but it was created through a democratic/political process under the leadership of a civilian political leader — Jinnah — and that the restoration of this tradition would ensure the salvation of Pakistan in the future⁵³

There are little prospects of an upheaval in Pakistan in the near future but, in view of the wide discrepancy in the political perspectives of the ruling generals and the political elite, the military regime will continue to face opposition and legitimacy crisis. The prolongation of the present political impasse or the enforcement of any form of diluted democracy under the title of Islamic Democracy will accentuate discontent, alienation and polarisation, and give a fillip to political violence. The festering resentment, especially amongst those who find themselves at the periphery of the system or completely excluded from the decision-making process, will mount heavy strains on the military, in fact, the very fabric of the polity, thereby making a graceful transfer of power increasingly difficult.

The experience of Pakistan suggests that it may be easy for a professional and disciplined army to assume political power in a crisis-ridden polity but a successful coup or the initial accomplishments in the post-coup period are no guarantees that the military rulers will be equally successful in solving the basic social, political and economic problems which are the root-causes of the fragility of the civilian institutions in the Third World states. The longer they stay in power, the more vulnerable they become to the charges not dissimilar to those they once framed against the deposed regime.

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