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Pakistan: Prospects for Stability and Democratic Consolidation

The February 2008 elections generated optimism that Pakistan could break out of a cycle of poor governance, authoritarianism, regional tensions and instability. The victory of the mainstream opposition parties, the Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PPP and PML-N) over the pro-establishment Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) was a cause for hope, as was for western observers the reversal of the Islamic parties' striking gains which had seen them win 53 seats in 2002. The country which had been wracked by protests, violence and a short-lived emergency in November 2007 appeared to have moved back from the brink of collapse following Benazir Bhutto's assassination on 27 December 2007.

In late March 2008 a coalition government led by the PPP and PML-N took office. Such unprecedented co-operation was to prove short-lived, as differences emerged over the restoration of the Judges deposed by President Musharraf. The coalition collapsed after Musharraf had been forced to step down under the threat of impeachment. Political crisis coincided with near economic collapse in October 2008. Peace deals with militant groups increased the fear of a creeping Talibanisation and the 26

November 2008 Mumbai bombings dealt a fatal blow to the stalled composite dialogue with India. Once again, analysts began to use the familiar term of "failed state" to describe the Pakistan predicament.

In order to assess Pakistan's prospects for democratic consolidation, it is necessary both to analyse the rapidly changing events since February 2008 and to set them in a longer term historical perspective. The period from Zia's death in 1988 to Musharraf's coup in October 1999 is very instructive when assessing possible future developments. It reveals the problems in achieving political consolidation in a chaotic and opportunistic political environment in which parties are weakly institutionalised. Politics thus become personalised and can rapidly deteriorate into a winner takes all environment. This on its own would inhibit democratic consolidation. The political culture is not just the product of feudal clientalism, but is also a reflection of the short-termism arising from a continued military presence behind the scenes.

Post February 2008 Turmoil

The new democratic government has faced a "perfect storm" of security, economic, political and regional crises since its assumption of

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Abstract

Pakistan is now undergoing its third democratic transition from quasi-military rule. Twenty months into this process, the future prospects remain uncertain.

As with previous transitions, in the 1970s and 1980s, the public's initial euphoria has subsided and has been replaced with cynicism and disquiet. Almost unparalleled economic and security crises have beset the fledgling democracy.

At the same time little headway has been made with the structural weaknesses which have undermined previous attempts to consolidate democracy.

This paper examines both sets of pressures in assessing the prospects for this third democratic transition in Pakistan.

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office. Democratic transition rather than bringing stability has been marked by a continuation of the turmoil which racked the closing year of the Musharraf regime. While the crises had contemporary catalysts, they were rooted in decades old problems whose solution had earlier eluded both democratic and authoritarian regimes.

The Swat Crisis

The security crisis was greatest not in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), but in the Swat district which is both more developed and politically integrated into regional and national politics. There have been no restrictions as in FATA on political party development and Swat is both more closely linked geographically and politically to Peshawar than such hotbeds of militancy as the Waziristan Agencies. Finally it should be noted that tribal structures are weaker than in FATA and that Swat has in part because of its history as a Princely state until 1969 more of a feudal landholding structure. Theories which link Islamic radicalisation with institutional and economic marginalisation and tribal backwardness thus do not fit so comfortably the Swat case.

The roots of the militancy in Swat can be dated back to the creation in June 1989 of the *Tehrik-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi* (TNSM) by Maulana Sufi Muhammad. It argued that customary tribal law should be replaced by the *shariah*. Tribal law which was favoured during Swat's period as a Princely State was retained when it became a Provincially Administered Tribal Agency in 1969. In 1994, it was replaced by civil law leading the TNSM

to step up its efforts. The mini-insurgency waged by the TNSM in 1994-5 was in many respects a small scale dress rehearsal for the current clashes. It was marked by the Pakistan state alternating a stick and carrot approach, including the promise to introduce an Islamic system. The post 2006 insurgency has been led by the Swat Taliban head Maulana Fazlullah, the son-in-law of Maulana Sufi Muhammad. He has made use of a controversial FM radio station to propagate his demands which include the introduction of *shariah* law. The organisational headquarters of his movement was based in his Inam Dheri seminary. The contemporary insurgency was more ruthless than that of the 1990s but similarly sought to challenge the writ of the state by targeted attacks on government installations. Suicide bombings formed a new element, leading to scores of deaths as for example in the attack on a police station at Charbagh on 23 August 2008.

An agreement was signed between the NWFP government and militants led by Maulana Fazlullah on 21 May 2008. It was hailed as bringing permanent peace, but collapsed within 2 months. By the beginning of 2009, the Taliban were gaining ground and formed a parallel government in large parts of the Swat valley. The local populace were cowed into submission by the ruthless suppression of all dissent and the targeting of known Taliban opponents. As in FATA, government schools were attacked to break the link between the state and society as well as to discourage female education. By January 2009, over 170 schools had been destroyed. The polio vaccine campaigns in the area were another target.

In order to provide a respite from the fighting, the North West Frontier Government once again sought a peace deal with the Taliban. They sought to broker this through the offices of Maulana Sufi Muhammad who remained head of the banned TNSM and had only been released from prison in 2008. The Taliban military activities and parallel administrative systems were to be wound up in return for an agreement to enforce the *shariah* in the region. The Taliban's violation of the agreement and the movement of militants into the neighbouring districts of Buner and Dir formed the backdrop to the military operation ordered by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani on 7 May 2009.

Economic Crisis

The economic growth of the Musharraf era was already slowing by the time the PPP led coalition government took office¹. Rising oil prices in 2008 created a spike in inflation which peaked at over 25%; foreign investment declined as the international banking crisis hit; the depreciation of the rupee and the collapse of exports at a time of increasingly costly food and energy imports, raised the prospect of Pakistan defaulting on its external debt in the Autumn of 2008². Foreign

¹ Pakistan's average growth in GDP was 6.1% between 2001-6, with the peak at 8.6% in 2004-5. Post 9/11, debt rescheduling, an inflow of remittances and US financial aid fuelled the boom. See, H. SYNNOTT, *Transforming Pakistan: Ways out of Instability*, Routledge 2009, p. 56.

² For the rapid decline in Pakistan's current account see, «Dawn» (Karachi), 23 October 2008; R. LOONEY, *Failed Take-Off: An*

exchange reserves had fallen by November 2008 to only around \$3.4 billion, just one month's worth of imports³. President Zardari had to reverse his earlier public stance and seek support from the International Monetary Fund. Many of Pakistan's economic woes however had much longer historical roots arising from failure to invest in human capital, resulting in an uncompetitive labour force, diversify exports, increase the tax reach (at present around 1% of the population pays direct taxes) and most importantly introduce meaningful land reform⁴. Alongside these structural problems was the overblown defence expenditure which limited funds for social development and for addressing regional economic imbalances which feed both ethnic and Islamic militancy⁵.

The government's ability to address the economic problems was thrown into disarray by the emerging political crisis with the PML-N. This led the experienced finance minister Ishaq Dar to resign from the cabinet. As on numerous occasions, the international community was not prepared to see the Pakistan economy collapse. Western donors averted the crisis and as in the 1990s, the Government was once again

assisted by the IMF to structurally adjust its economy⁶. While macro-economic indicators have improved, inflation has declined from the peak of 25% in October 2007 to around 15%, continued high prices and shortages of commodities such as sugar, rice and flour and prolonged power outages have all been blamed on President Zardari's government. Widespread power cuts caused nationwide protests on a number of occasions in July 2009. Unless Zardari can address these bread and butter issues, he is unlikely to regain his popularity. The continued removal of subsidies will undoubtedly generate instability as they will coincide with increased unemployment as the rate of GDP growth settles at 3% after its historic highs of around 8% during the Musharraf era. This growth rate is barely above the increase in population at around 2.4% and is the same as the annual increase in the working-age population⁷. The question thus arises whether growing poverty, high interest rates and austerity programmes designed to ensure a steady flow of foreign resources could hinder democratic stability as it did in the 1990s⁸.

Political Crisis

Hopes for co-operation between the PPP and PML-N had been raised during the 2008 election campaign. However, the fall-out from the delay in restoring

those judges who Musharraf had dismissed when they refused to take the Provisional Constitutional Order oath at the time of the 3 November 2007 Emergency undermined their relations. The failure to meet the timetable agreed at Bhurban on 9 March for the judges' restoration and the PPP's insistence on dealing with this issue in a 18th Amendment Constitutional package, rather than by means of a Resolution in the National Assembly strained its historic alliance with the PML-N. The coalition lasted just long enough to force Musharraf to step aside as President on 18 August 2008 under the threat of impeachment. The withdrawal of the PML-N from the Cabinet has been presented as a mistake by Asif Ali Zardari and some of his close aides. But viewed in the longer perspective, it is hardly surprising that it was difficult for these two traditional rival parties to work together⁹. The deadlock seriously weakened the political response to the mounting security and economic crises.

The beginnings of a future tussle for influence emerged with Mian Shahbaz Sharif's return to the post of Punjab Chief Minister following a by-election success and the appointment of a PPP leaning governor of Punjab in Salman Taseer. The widening of the rift between the PPP and PML-N was further presaged when the latter complained on 30 June 2008 that it had not been taken into confidence over the launching of a military action in the Khyber Agency.

The key to both short term stability and longer term democratic consolidation in Pakistan lies in avoiding the

Assessment of Pakistan's October 2008 Economic Crisis, Pakistan Security Research Unit Brief, 46 October 2008.

³ In July 2007, they had stood at \$13.3 billion. H. SYNNOTT, cit., p. 83.

⁴ See, I. TALBOT, *Pakistan: A Modern History*, London, 2nd revised edition, 2009.

⁵ Baloch nationalism is rooted in a sense of economic exploitation and political marginalisation. For the encouragement to shariatisation arising from poverty, corruption and lack of social justice see, F. SHAIKH, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, London 2009.

⁶ In October 2008, Pakistan entered a 23 month stand-by Arrangement with the IMF worth \$7.6 billion.

⁷ H. SYNNOTT, cit., p. 81.

⁸ W.B. MILAM, *Bangladesh and Pakistan: Flirting with Failure in South Asia*, London 2009, pp. 137 ss.

⁹ See I. TALBOT, cit., chapters 10-11.

zero sum game approach to politics which marked relations between the PPP and the PML-N in the 1990s. President Zardari has talked frequently of the need for consensus, but there has been little practical outcome except the delaying of action, as for example in addressing the issues relating to Balochistan. By March 2009, Pakistan displayed all the signs of going back to the 1990s because of the Government's delay in restoring some of the judges sidelined by President Musharraf and the 25 February imposition of Governor's rule in the PML-N heartland of Punjab following a Supreme Court ruling which disqualified the Sharif brothers from holding elected office. While a fully fledged crisis was ultimately avoided, not only was President Zardari's standing greatly undermined, but the prospect of future PPP-PML-N conflict was increased. Most significantly, Zardari backed down at the army's instigation.

The Supreme Court's quashing on 17 July of Nawaz Sharif's conviction in the hijacking case removed the final hurdle to his return to parliamentary politics. He has been reluctant to fight a by-election leading to speculation as to whether he is merely biding his time or acting under Saudi behest. Nawaz Sharif's stock, nevertheless continues to rise in public opinion (the recent Global Attitudes Project gave him a rating of 79% compared with Zardari's 32%).

Two issues with which he can put pressure on Zardari, while maintaining the moral high ground are the removal of Presidential powers to dissolve parliament and the prosecution of the former President Musharraf. On both of these issues, Zardari has shown a disinclination to act. The

Central Executive Committee of the PPP have expressed support for the repeal of the 17th Amendment, the PML-N has also pressed this as a necessary step for democratic consolidation. The Special Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional reforms began its deliberations on 27 August. Zardari has been pressed also with respect to Musharraf's prosecution. The Supreme Court decision on 31 July that the November 2007 Emergency was illegal and unconstitutional have strengthened opposition demands that Musharraf should be tried. The Musharraf case could act as a similar irritant in PPP-PML-N relations to the Judges case. It could again provide an excuse for the latter to reject reconciliation with the PPP. Nawaz may however prefer not to move on this issue because of international support for Musharraf and instead attack the government for failing to implement the terms of the Charter of Democracy which he agreed with Benazir Bhutto in May 2006.

Civil-Military Relations

Alongside the reining in of party conflict, the ordering of civil-military relations is crucial for democratic consolidation¹⁰. The picture which again emerges is one of limited progress since February 2008¹¹. The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) who

replaced Musharraf on 18 November 2007, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani has certainly not displayed any personal political ambition. Moreover, he signalled the army's willingness to withdraw from its political engagement by instructing serving officers to distance themselves from contacts with politicians and by calling back officers who were working in the highly controversial National Accountability Bureau¹². The army continues however to jealously guard its institutional interests.

When President Zardari attempted to place the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) under civilian control in July 2008 this was quickly squashed. Similarly, Prime Minister's Gilani's promise to despatch the Director General of ISI, Lt-General Ahmed Shuja Pasha to India to investigate claims of Pakistan involvement in the Mumbai bombings in November 2008 was blocked. Tensions between the government and the army bubbled to the surface over the Kerry-Lugar Bill. Its proposal to authorize \$1.5 billion of civilian aid to Pakistan for five years predated the Obama administration, but fitted into his new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The conditions for this material assistance were clearly designed to increase civilian oversight of the military¹³. Zardari called the

¹⁰ For an authoritative historical perspective see, H.A. RIZVI, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan, 1947-86*, Delhi 1988.

¹¹ For a useful overview see, ISHTIAQ AHMED, *The Pakistan Military: Change and Continuity Under General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani*, ISAS Working Paper, 90, 18 September 2009.

¹² Nevertheless, General Kayani denied his own ordinance regarding military non-involvement with politicians by meeting Aitzaz Ahsan in July 2009 and Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif in late September (see, «Dawn», the internet edition, 3 October 2009).

¹³ They included greater civilian control over promotions and appointments and parliamentary oversight of military budgets, along with certification that the security

passage of the Bill in Congress as the greatest foreign policy success of his year in office. The sniping of parliamentary opponents that it infringed Pakistan's "sovereignty" was of little concern to him. The government was however put firmly on the back foot, when the army publicly aired its objections following a meeting of the powerful Corps Commanders on 7 October. While General Kayani may be a benign figure, parallels remain with the 1990s in respect of the army's resistance to any attempts by elected governments to secure greater control over it.

During the first hundred days of democratic transition, the promptings of the PPP's coalition partner, the ANP, for dialogue coincided with military reluctance to engage militant groups in the Tribal Areas. The army had experienced a number of setbacks since it had first ventured into these areas in March 2004, in part because it had been traditionally trained for conventional warfare with India rather than for counter-insurgency missions¹⁴. The policy of seeking peace deals with militant groups, however predated the February 2008 elections having been introduced during Shaukat Aziz's government, with the September 2006 Miramshah Agreement in Waziristan. It became increasingly clear that the militants organised under the Taliban umbrella

forces were not subverting the political and judicial processes.

¹⁴ Military operations in South Waziristan had been unsuccessful both in 2004-5 and in January 2008. Lack of experience in counter-insurgency had resulted in high levels of collateral damage which made it vulnerable to revenge attacks under tribal codes of honour.

regarded peace agreements as an opportunity to regroup rather than a precursor to peace. Moreover, they saw them as a sign of government weakness and an invitation to establish a parallel administration in which Islamic law could be enforced upon the local population. The increasingly embattled western forces in Afghanistan saw the developments as providing opportunities for the establishment of militant safe havens and as bases for cross-border incursion. This point was also stressed by the Karzai government in Kabul causing a downturn in relations with Islamabad. Pakistani strategists for their part raised the fear of encirclement as India increased its influence in Afghanistan.

It would be wrong to understand the post-May 2009 military offensives against the Taliban in Swat, the Khyber and Waziristan Agencies as evidence of increased civilian control over security policy. These were the result of a combination of US pressure¹⁵ and as we have seen earlier, the over-reach of militant groups. National opinion regarding the Taliban shifted dramatically when video footage of the public flogging of a 17 year old girl in Swat surfaced on 2 April. Previously Pakistanis had regarded military action against militants as "fighting Washington's war". General Kayani in his previous role as DG of ISI (Inter Services Intelligence agency) undoubtedly had links with militant groups, but these would not stand in the way of resolute action if professional interests demanded this. Since 9/11, the Pakistan Army has developed a

¹⁵ Admiral Mike Mullen, US Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, paid a number of important visits to Islamabad in 2008-9.

calibrated approach to dealing with former militant *protégés*. It distinguishes between "foreign" and "indigenous" elements and those militants who may be useful to Pakistan's regional strategic interests and those who have become uncontrollable threats to both state and army security¹⁶. Operation *Rah-e-Rast* (Operation Black Thunderstorm) in Swat has in fact strengthened the army's position in two key areas; firstly it has renewed its long standing claim to be the protector of the nation; secondly it has restored its credibility with US critics who were questioning its effectiveness and commitment to the "war on terror". At the beginning of July 2008, there were growing signals from Washington that "hot pursuit" into Pakistan and unilateral action against militant strongholds in the Tribal Areas were a possibility. Moreover, these gains have been achieved without the army having to modify its understanding that India remains the country's main security threat. Finally, by increasing the value of its co-operation for the achievement of US strategic aims in FATA, the army may secure an expedient re-assessment of the Obama administration's pro-democracy agenda as enshrined in the Kerry-Lugar Bill.

A major reason for the army's lower political profile under Kayani was its declining public prestige during the Musharraf era. Military intervention in Swat has helped restore this. A historical parallel may be seen here with the army's rehabilitation from the debacle of 1971 following its involvement by

¹⁶ For an extended assessment of the army's "Faustian" dealings with Islamic militants see chapter 5 of F. SHAIKH, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, Columbia University Press, June 2009.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in the suppression of the Balochistan insurgency.

Significantly President Zardari has not benefited from the successes in Swat. He has attempted to convince western audiences that he has created a new national consensus against militancy. It is clear however that the Taliban excesses in Mingora and elsewhere helped create this, rather than government rallying calls to fight extremism. Moreover, just as the government's relations with India remain hostage to future terrorist outrages, so its reputation for maintaining law and order is vulnerable to an upsurge in suicide bombings in the main towns and cities in retaliation for military action in Swat and FATA. Some commentators thought that the Pakistan Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud's death on 5 August would handicap its activities¹⁷. Rumours circulated that his successor Hakimullah Mehsud had died during fierce fighting. Suicide bombings however continued in Bannu, Peshawar and Kohat. The day that Hakimullah reappeared to selected journalists coincided with an attack on the Headquarters of the World Food Programme in Islamabad which killed 5 UN personnel. Thereafter some embassies warned foreign nationals to restrict their movements in the federal capital.

¹⁷ See for example, ISHTIAQ AHMED, *Taliban Leader Baitullah Mehsud Dead: Is it the beginning of the end of Terrorism?*, ISAS Brief, 122, 11 August 2009; S.R. VALENTINE, *The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan: Ideology and Belief*, Pakistan Security Research Unit Brief, 49, 8 September 2009.

Relations with India

Pakistan's growing security problems on its north-western borders occurred at the time of a cooling of relations with India. The already stalled India-Pakistan composite dialogue¹⁸ which had been underway since 2004 did not pick up as was hoped in the wake of Pakistan's elections. Internal developments within Indian administered Kashmir which culminated in the introduction of direct rule and resumed firing along the line of control were depressing straws in the wind. The Indian charge that the bombing of its embassy in Kabul on 7 July 2008 had the mark of support from the ISI sent a further signal that the advances in relations of the past 5 years were not irreversible. Some commentators have noted that India's growing influence in Afghanistan post-2001 could become a new source of tension with Pakistan in addition to the long running Kashmir flashpoint¹⁹.

It was however the Mumbai bombings of 26 November 2008 which ended hopes of renewed dialogue. The West's

¹⁸ This was originally set up in 1997 to discuss in separate working parties, eight outstanding issues which hindered a normalisation of relations. It had been halted by the Kargil War and the 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament building in New Delhi.

¹⁹ India since 2001 has contributed \$750million for reconstruction in Afghanistan, has 4,000 civilian and security personnel working in the country and has provided vital assistance in road-building and training of Afghan police, and civil servants. Pakistan has claimed that the Indian presence is directed against its interests not only in the country, but in the sensitive Balochistan province. See H. SYNNOTT, cit., pp. 137 ss.

immediate post-Mumbai concerns were to reduce tensions between South Asia's nuclear armed rivals, and to discourage Pakistan troop movements from its Afghanistan to Indian borders. The normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan is however also important for democratic consolidation in the latter state, so Mumbai added a further element of uncertainty to the already fraught process of transition. New Delhi has constantly pressed for greater Pakistan efforts against the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* organisation which allegedly master minded the attacks which had left 164 people dead and 308 wounded.

Steps for Stability

In order to mount a sustained challenge to the army's influence, the civilian politicians will need to learn the lessons of the 1990s and act in a disciplined and unified manner. But throughout its history, politics in Pakistan have been about the acquisition and use of power, not about accommodation and co-operation for the sake of a wider national interest. President Zardari is an inheritor of the clientalistic approach to politics which eschews statesmanship. Moreover, temperamentally he is unlikely to wish to act as a merely ceremonial President, although this might serve the future cause of democratic consolidation. Little progress has been made since the 1st meeting for 8 months between Nawaz Sharif and Zardari at Raiwind on 17th July 2009. While neither leader would wish to appear to international audiences as the cause of break down, rivalries continue to simmer. Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani can act as a broker between Zardari and the Sharifs but this may reactivate the tensions in

his own relationship with the President which encouraged some analysts earlier in the year to wonder whether he might be replaced by the Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

At the time of writing, it seems that neither Zardari nor Nawaz Sharif is prepared to push their rivalries to the point where chaos provides an opportunity for military intervention. To this extent some lessons may have been learned from the 1990s. Nevertheless, limited progress has been made in transforming a political culture which is inimical to democratic consolidation. Moreover, politics remains highly personalised with weak party institutions. The parties themselves need to be democratised, if the political system as a whole is to move from a transitional to a consolidated democracy.

Institutional political reforms have long been mooted as a means of reducing the sense of Punjabi domination in the smaller provinces²⁰. The redrawing of administrative boundaries within the Punjab has been stymied as the issue is so politically sensitive. Similarly, changes in the distribution of central funds from the centre to the provinces, so that levels of poverty rather than population size determine allocation would do much to meet for example Baloch grievances, but it remains a distant prospect and would be even less likely to occur under a government headed by Nawaz Sharif.

Democratic consolidation in the long term also needs to go hand in hand with the reduction of poverty and inequality. This cannot be achieved solely by “trickle down” effects of growth.

What is needed is concerted action to reduce Pakistan’s glaring inequalities of income, power and access to public services. Ten per cent of the population possesses 26.3% of the national income; the poorest 10% of the population possesses only 4 % of national wealth. The PPP will continue to disillusion its supporters if it does not tackle these issues by matching rhetoric with action. The question remains however whether under its current leadership, it would have the ability to do so.

The restructuring of civil-military relations is equally crucial for long term political democratic development to come about. Rather than merely recalling serving officers from civilian departments such as the National Accountability Bureau, the army requires exposure to the same levels of accountability as elected politicians. This would not only involve the pursuit of corruption cases, but full parliamentary scrutiny of military expenditure. However, the army will continue to seek to safeguard its entrenched economic interests²¹ and will always be able to call on a section of Pakistan’s privileged political elites to work with it in the event of its seizing power. A “peace dividend” arising from the resolution of outstanding Indo-Pakistan conflicts would in all probability be required to permanently cut the military down to size. This could however be a trigger for destabilisation of an elected government on the verge of delivering what would be a blow to the *raison d’être* of the parallel security and military state in Pakistan.

²¹ On these see, A. SIDDIQA, *Military Inc: Inside Pakistan’s Military Economy*, London 2007.

Conclusion

Pakistan’s third democratic transition has been beset by crises. The euphoria followed by disillusionment which surrounded Benazir Bhutto’s first election victory in 1988 has echoes today. Inevitably, a single parliament is manifestly insufficient to introduce the structural economic and institutional reforms conducive to democratic consolidation. With respect to traditionally “backward” areas such as FATA, where literacy rates, access to health care and safe drinking water are well below the Pakistani average, a generation of developmental activity is required²². In the short term, the best that can be achieved alongside improved security is the establishment of job-creation schemes in neighbouring settled areas which would increase the economic prospects of FATA residents²³.

In a number of ways, the current situation has parallels with the 1990s transition which ultimately represented a missed opportunity for democracy. Party politics remain personalised with little intra-party democracy. Political culture is dominated by conflict, rather than cooperation and tensions are endemic at both state and societal levels arising from skewed resource distribution and an absence of social justice. The military remains a dangerously over-developed institution which continues to exercise influence over elected governments. The army’s public stance on the

²² The literacy rate in FATA is for example 17.5% compared with the Pakistani average of 44%. For an assessment on the future prospects of FATA see, I. TALBOT, *Future Prospects for FATA*, Pakistan Security Research Unit Brief, 41, 22 September 2008.

²³ H. SYNNOTT, cit., p. 170.

²⁰ See, I. TALBOT, cit., p. 373.

Kerry-Lugar Bill has graphically illustrated that it will not easily submit to greater civilian oversight through such mechanisms as an empowered Defence Committee of the Cabinet. Its security wing (ISI) remains only nominally under prime ministerial control.

Contemporary Pakistan differs however from the second era of democratic transition, which began in 1988 in two key respects. Firstly, international involvement in Afghanistan along with the army's "Faustian" deals with Islamic militants dating back to the Zia ul Haq period have strengthened the influence of extremist groups. This dawning realisation galvanised the response from May 2009 onwards. Secondly, civil society has become stronger with the emergence of a middle class, relative press freedom and the growth of satellite television channels²⁴. The lawyers' movement which undermined President Musharraf was unprecedented and heralded the new strength of civil society groups. These circumstances have led some analysts to see the possibility of intellectual and political realignment in Pakistan²⁵. At present, this process is however in its infancy and uncertainties continue to haunt Pakistan's third democratic transition.

²⁴ For an assessment see, I.H. MALIK, *Civil Society in Pakistan: Stake Holders in a Contested State*, Pakistan Security Research Unit Brief, 50, 20 September 2009.

²⁵ See, F. SHAIKH, cit., pp. 209-11. Synnott links civil society's ability to «bring positive changes to Pakistan's political culture» with electoral, constitutional, institutional and security sector reform and «real progress on public health and education». H. SYNNOTT, cit., pp.169 ss.

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