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## *Chapter 2*

### *POLITICAL HISTORY*

This chapter outlines Pakistan's political history. It also describes the country's recent electoral history, but leaves for later chapters the discussion of how historical developments affected the 1990 elections.

In 1947, Pakistan was carved out of contiguous Muslim majority areas of British India. A geographical aberration, East and West Pakistan were separated by more than 1,000 miles of hostile Indian territory. In 1971, after many years of acrimonious co-existence, East Pakistan seceded following a brutal and bloody war.

Today, Pakistan's society is a study in inequalities. It has a small, highly educated and wealthy elite, while large segments of the population are illiterate, impoverished and lack even drinkable water. The country is divided into four provinces – Sind, Baluchistan, Punjab and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Pakistan also governs the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Northern Areas through which the massive Karakoram Highway snakes its way into China's Xinjiang Province. The legal status of the Northern Areas is linked by India to the dispute over ownership of Kashmir.

Pakistan's geographical location has affected its politics, culture and self-perception. In Africa or Latin America, this country of 110 million people and 310,527 square miles, stretching from the Karakoram Mountains to the Indian Ocean, would be a great state. As it sits, however, at the crossroads of Central, South and West Asia, Pakistan is surrounded by giant neighbors – India, China, and the

Soviet Union (which lies to the north of the Wakhan corridor, a sliver of Afghan territory). Consequently, it considers itself an insecure country in need of extra-regional friends and allies.

Aware of their country's vulnerabilities, Pakistan's leaders have always sought close relations with outside powers, including the United States and Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran. Since 1963, however, China has been Pakistan's most steadfast regional ally.

Some of Pakistan's borders are challenged. Afghanistan disputes its southern border – the Durand Line – with Pakistan. In turn, Pakistan continues to quarrel with India over the status of Kashmir. Today, this region faces an armed, anti-Indian insurrection. If India and Pakistan go to war again because of Kashmir, the consequences for the region are likely to be grave: according to Western reports, both India and Pakistan now possess the capability to build nuclear weapons.

While China has been Pakistan's most consistent ally, since the outbreak of the Afghan conflict in 1980 the United States has been Pakistan's largest aid donor, annually providing it with more than \$550 million of economic and military assistance. American and Pakistani conceptions of their national interest are changing, however, and the relationship is at an impasse today. The two countries are quarrelling about issues ranging from Indo-Pakistani nuclear arms proliferation to Pakistan's flourishing narcotics trade. The United States has withheld aid to Pakistan pending resolution of the nuclear question.

Since independence in 1947, Pakistan has experienced a crisis of national identity which remains unresolved to this day. After years of political and military conflict, the debate about an appropriate political system for Pakistan is more acute than it was at independence. Successive Pakistani leaders have sought – and failed – to find legitimacy for their governing institutions.

At one level, Pakistan's political history has centered around the search for an appropriate form of government: Islamic or secular; civilian or military; parliamentary or presidential. On other levels, the relationship between the central government and the provinces has

never been sufficiently resolved; the politics of ethnicity and religion have remained prominent; and since the 1980s, Pakistan has suffered from the fallout of the Afghan war – a flourishing narcotics trade and approximately 3 million refugees.

Pakistan's political life has been characterized by failures to establish a *modus vivendi* among its ethnically varied citizens and among its civilian and military elites. It has experienced virtually all forms of conflict: tribal insurgencies, ethnic and sectarian struggles, civil war, secession, border disputes, irredentism and conventional war. Today, the ethnic and regional rivalries that divided Pakistan in 1971, and that flared up in Baluchistan in the mid-1970s, afflict the province of Sind. Not only do these tensions lead to intense intra-provincial rivalries, they also foster inter-provincial antagonisms as well. The allocation of scarce government resources among the provinces and the representation of the provinces within the national government and the military are constant sources of friction.

Electoral politics are conducted in a broadly feudal society that bears the imprint of extended periods of military rule and the continued assertion of the military's political power. Elections in Pakistan have rarely resulted in salutary outcomes. The 1970 elections led to a series of events which culminated in the disintegration of Pakistan. The 1977 elections precipitated the ouster of the civilian leader, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, by a military coup. The civilian-led government that was formed after the 1988 elections – following 11½ years of military rule – was dismissed on August 6, 1990.

Pakistan's political parties lack both organization and institutionalization. They are usually coalitions formed around charismatic leaders and families, or they tend to be weak and easily fragmented. Parties also form around exclusive ethnic groups (e.g., the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM)) or religious groups (e.g., the Jamaat-a-Islami (JI)). There are also parties that advocate extreme regional autonomy and even talk of secession (some Sindhi and Pakhtun nationalist parties.)

Historically, civilian politicians have quarreled stubbornly among themselves, sometimes creating the impression that they would prefer

to keep other civilians, not soldiers, out of power. There have been no accepted rules of succession. To date, no elected leader of Pakistan has willingly left office.

Ideological differences among parties are often overshadowed by the linkages among members of Pakistan's political elite. This elite is composed of tribal chieftains, heads of clans and brotherhoods, mystical religious figures, large landlords, and businessmen, as well as a few secular inhabitants of the cities, leftist politicians and nationalists. A new political phenomenon is also emerging: the growth of a middle class, which inhabits the smaller, expanding industrial cities and towns, especially in Punjab.

A tradition of stable, competitive democratic politics has not yet been established in Pakistan. Its civilian rulers have conformed to two basic patterns: authoritarian leaders or quarreling coalitions and fragmented political parties. The only civilian who was able to place his stamp on policy – albeit a personal and not an institutional one – was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Other civilian leaders have been unable to affect national policy.

Officially, Pakistan is an Islamic republic. Yet the extent to which Pakistan should become a truly Islamic state – and who should guide it in that direction – remains an unresolved issue in Pakistan's national politics. Pakistan's population is approximately 97 percent Muslim. The majority of the population is Sunni, although Shias comprise a substantial minority, estimated at between 15 and 20 percent. In 1987, the Shias transformed their existing religious organization into a political party, the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh Jafaria (TNFJ). Disputes between Shias and Sunnis have long formed an integral part of the religious landscape. Now they are being translated into the political sphere.

The independence movement bequeathed to Pakistan two political legacies, one secular, the other religious. Since 1947, Pakistanis have deliberated over these competing legacies. The leaders of the independence movement were liberal lawyers who admired Western parliamentary traditions and sought a homeland in which Muslims would not be politically and economically dominated by Hindus. The movement they led, however, was grounded in Muslim nationalism.

Today, the religious parties, most of which opposed the creation of Pakistan in the 1940s, demand that it be made an Islamic state. They claim to be the true representatives of the Muslims led out of India by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of modern Pakistan. While all of Pakistan's constitutions have made reference to the Islamic nature of the Pakistani state, it was not until the last days of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government that a formal effort was made to institute Islamic rules and practices. At that time, the elder Bhutto announced that a controversial sect, the Ahmedis, were not Muslims, and he banned alcohol and gambling.

Despite Bhutto's professed support for an ideology of "Islamic Socialism," however, it was President Zia ul-Haq who promoted the Islamization of law, banking, taxation, and the penal code. During Zia ul-Haq's rule, the Shariat bill, advocating an Islamic political and legal system for Pakistan, was introduced in Parliament.

In recent elections, the religious parties have garnered limited electoral support, but they continue to be extremely well-organized and politically influential, both in coalition-building and in political agitation.

During Benazir Bhutto's tenure, the Senate – which was controlled by the opposition – approved the Shariat bill, but the National Assembly did not pass it. Under this bill, Islamic law would become the supreme law of Pakistan and authority would be vested in appointed religious judges. The rights of women and non-Muslims would be restricted.

In 1990, shortly after he dismissed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, an advocate of Islamization, signed the Qisas and Diyat ordinance, which provides Islamic punishments for criminal acts. In January 1991, the passage of the Shariat bill was again under consideration by the newly elected executive and assemblies of Pakistan.

Pakistan has also been afflicted by numerous conflicts between ethnic communities and between the central government and the provinces. In 1971, the Pakistani province of East Pakistan seceded. In the late 1970s, a war erupted in Baluchistan. Today, the conflict

between ethnic groups is worst in Sind which is inhabited by Sindhis and *muhajirs* (Muslim immigrants from India to post-independence Pakistan), Punjabis, Pakhtuns, Baluch and others.

While the violence in Sind has included Pakhtuns and Punjabis, it is Sindhis and *muhajirs* who have developed special political, economic and cultural grievances against each other, and against the central government. Here, Sindhi nationalists issue calls ranging from secession to radical provincial autonomy for their supporters, who are among Pakistan's most impoverished and neglected people. Meanwhile, the *muhajirs*, too, have become politicized and militant. With a large cadre of educated youth, they have felt increasingly under-represented in government and lacking in educational and economic opportunities. In the mid-1980s they formed the MQM. The MQM is an exclusively *muhajir* party, which promotes *muhajir* rights.

Today, Sind is divided between ethnic communities and between rural and urban communities. The *muhajirs* control the largest city, Karachi, while Sindhis dominate the rural areas. Since 1986, the violence among the different communities has left more than a thousand people dead. Civilian and military governments have failed to resolve Sind's problems. Neither Zia ul Haq, nor the two Sindhi prime ministers, Mohammed Khan Junejo and Benazir Bhutto, have been able to mediate between the warring communities. Recent demographic changes and deteriorating economic conditions suggest that ethnic polarization is unlikely to diminish in the near future.

The rise and the endurance of the military in the civil sphere has been another prominent feature of Pakistan's politics. Between 1947 and 1990, except for about 17 years of turbulent civilian rule, Pakistan has been governed by its 500,000-strong army. Pakistan's people continue to perceive the army as the principal arbiter in politics, and civilian political supremacy is tenuous.

Pakistan's military hierarchy view the decay of democratic institutions and civil administration as the reason they are forced to enter civil politics and impose martial law. Conversely, civilian politicians respond that it is the army's repeated interventions that contribute to the disability of democratic institutions and processes.

While both statements contain a grain of truth, taken together these truths have created a vicious cycle of history. Thus far, Pakistanis have not found a way out.

Between 1947 and 1958, successive civilian leaders governed the country. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who led Pakistan's independence movement, died a mere 13 months after Pakistan achieved independence, and his lieutenant, Liaquat Ali Khan, fell to an assassin's bullet a few years later. Their civilian successors embroiled themselves in political squabbles and were unable to write a constitution until 1956.

During the early period of fractious civilian rule, the army emerged as the only coherent institution in the state. Repeatedly, civilian politicians used the soldiers to quell religious and linguistic disturbances. Finally, in October 1958, during a period of great political uncertainty and violence, the first military intervention occurred under the leadership of General Ayub Khan. Shortly thereafter, political parties were banned, the constitution abrogated, and martial law announced. When President Iskander Mirza resigned, Ayub Khan assumed the presidency.

Ayub Khan proposed "Basic Democracy" as a framework for Pakistani politics. It was a concept Ayub believed "suited the genius" of Pakistan's people. The popular election of Basic Democrats at the local level occurred in January 1960. Of the 80,000 Basic Democrats elected, 75,000 voted for Ayub Khan in February 1960. The election gave him the mandate to draft a new constitution. The 1962 constitution provided for the election of the president and the National and provincial assemblies by the electoral college of Basic Democrats. In January 1965, Ayub Khan was re-elected to a five-year term as president.

In March 1969, after several months of political agitation against his government (marshalled, in part, by his ex-Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto), Ayub Khan relinquished office. The presidency was assumed by the Chief of Army Staff General Yahya Khan, who suspended the constitution and imposed martial law, but promised to hold national elections based on direct universal adult suffrage, and to convene a constituent assembly.

In December 1970, elections were held to the 313-member National Assembly and five provincial assemblies – four provinces in West Pakistan as well as East Pakistan. These elections are considered to have been the most free and fair in Pakistan's history. The polls, however, culminated in the secession of East Pakistan.

In West Pakistan, Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) secured 87 seats in the new 300-seat National Assembly. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League, which was committed to a program of radical regional autonomy for East Pakistan, won 167 seats, thereby obtaining a majority in the National Assembly. When the political leaders of West and East Pakistan failed to reach agreement on the leadership of the national government and on East Pakistan's political demands, civil war broke out. After a bloody conflict in which India intervened militarily on the side of the Bengalis, the forces of West Pakistan surrendered on December 16, 1971. Out of East Pakistan the state of Bangladesh was born.

After 12 years of military rule and a traumatic civil war in which more than a million people perished, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the leader of the truncated Pakistan. Bhutto was a study in contradictions. Head of a landowning clan by birth, his message – secular, socialist and populist – was not feudal. Bhutto was a charismatic leader who established an extraordinary rapport with the poor and underprivileged. Perhaps his greatest contribution to Pakistan was the creation of a political consciousness among the masses. Yet today, there are some Pakistanis who will argue that the institutional injustices of military governments were virtually matched by the arbitrary personal injustices of Bhutto.

Bhutto became president of Pakistan at a time when the possibilities for democracy seemed unlimited. The army had lost a war and 90,000 prisoners to India, and civilians rallied to the side of the PPP. Bhutto tried to assert civilian control over the army: he abolished the rank of "Commander in Chief" and sought to promote officers without known political loyalties. One such general, Zia ul-Haq, was promoted above his seniors to become the Chief of Army Staff.



In the early days of his government, Bhutto pursued populist, pro-labor policies. He nationalized important industries and services, including the banks. In 1973, he promulgated a new constitution and assumed the office of prime minister. Bhutto's tenure, however, was marred by the suspension of fundamental rights, restrictions on the press and labor unions, bans on his opponents' parties, and the imprisonment of opposition leaders. In the province of Baluchistan, Bhutto engaged in a war against tribal leaders. The PPP remained a party built around his personal charisma, rather than one based on a strong, democratic party organization.

Unexpectedly, in January 1977, Prime Minister Bhutto announced new elections, to be held in March. These elections spurred events that culminated in a military coup. Nine opposition parties, ranging from secular to religious, left-wing to right-wing, coalesced to form the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), which sought to remove Bhutto from power. The PNA accused the Bhutto government of inefficiency, corruption, and immorality, and campaigned on a platform of installing the Nizam-e-Mustapha (Order of the Prophet). The election campaign was marred by violence, and opposition candidates lodged numerous charges of electoral discrimination. The results showed that the PPP swept the polls, winning 155 out of 200 seats. The PNA won only 36 seats, mainly in the NWFP and in the industrial city of Karachi in Sind.

Amid mounting allegations of fraud, the election results were denounced by the PNA, whose leaders demanded new polls. Political chaos, strikes and protests engulfed Karachi and other major cities. Bhutto asked the army to restore order. As Bhutto and his civilian opponents were failing to reach a political compromise, the army, led by General Zia ul-Haq, intervened once more. On July 5, 1977, Zia ul-Haq removed Bhutto, suspended the constitution, and declared martial law. As Chief Martial Law Administrator, Zia ul-Haq announced that elections would be held within 90 days. They were not.

In September 1977, Bhutto was arrested and charged with complicity in the murder of a political opponent. He was found guilty by Pakistan's courts, and on March 18, 1978, he was sentenced to

death. On April 4, 1979, after the Supreme Court upheld the verdict and the death sentence, the former prime minister of Pakistan was hanged.

Zia ul-Haq's tenure was marked by efforts to fight the war against Soviet troops in Afghanistan, and promote Islamization at home while virtually silencing political debate. A soldier from Punjab's middle class, Zia ul-Haq tried to set Pakistan's society on a conservative political and social course. Although he spoke of an "Islamic democracy," the president promoted state-sponsored Islamization in which political sovereignty would rest not with the legislature, but with God and with selected clergy. He also liked to argue that political parties were antithetical to Islam.

In supporting the war in Afghanistan, Zia ul-Haq transformed Pakistan into a major conduit for weapons. This effort, and the fact that Pakistan became home to more than 3 million Afghan refugees, cost his country dearly; it brought a flood of arms and heroin into Pakistan which exacerbated existing ethnic disputes as well as corruption.

Zia ul-Haq used a heavy hand to quiet both ethnic and political unrest. He placed large numbers of political leaders under arrest – including, among others, members of Bhutto's family, and established strict censorship over the press.

After he assumed the presidency in September 1978, Zia ul-Haq scheduled elections for November 1979. They were postponed, however, and on October 16, 1979, Zia ul-Haq banned political parties. Local elections were held on a non-party basis.

In 1980, 11 parties, including the PPP, founded the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). The MRD called for Zia ul-Haq's resignation, an end to martial law, new elections, and the restoration of the 1973 constitution.

In August 1983, Zia ul-Haq announced his decision to lift martial law and hold national elections by March 1985. He scheduled local elections on a non-party basis in August-September 1983. The MRD denounced the non-party elections and initiated a campaign of civil disobedience. Hundreds of people were killed. The MRD was

unable, however, to bring the masses into the streets in Punjab, Pakistan's key province, and the civil disobedience campaign eventually collapsed.

In 1984, Zia ul-Haq held a referendum in which a vote for Islamization was also a vote for him to continue in power for five more years. His opponents called for a boycott. The government claimed that there was a 65 percent turnout and 89 percent approval for Zia ul-Haq and Islamization. These claims have been disputed by many Pakistanis.

Still, Zia ul-Haq continued to search for political legitimacy. The period between March 1985 and the summer of 1988 was marked by his efforts to "civilianize" the government. The national elections Zia ul-Haq had promised were held in February 1985. Although the MRD called for a boycott once more, many politicians ran as independents. Partisans of the Muslim League and the Jamaat-e-Islami also ran. The turnout was reported as 53 percent and the elections appeared to have been generally free of fraud.

The new National Assembly met in March 1985. Zia ul-Haq selected Mohammed Khan Junejo, a veteran Sindhi member of the Muslim League, to be prime minister. Junejo lifted martial law as well as Bhutto's declaration of emergency powers on December 30, 1985. Civil liberties were restored and restrictions on the press were reduced.

Political parties were legalized pending their formal registration. They were allowed to hold rallies. The PPP, led by Benazir Bhutto and Nusrat Bhutto, refused to register with the Election Commission, arguing that it could lead to the harassment of party workers. The PPP also protested the requirement in the law that prohibited political parties from "propagating any opinion or acting in any manner prejudicial to the Islamic ideology, or the sovereignty, integrity, or security of Pakistan."

In October 1985, the National Assembly passed the controversial Constitutional (Eighth Amendment) bill that validated Zia ul-Haq's earlier constitutional amendments. Among other issues, it indemnified all actions taken by the military government and

prohibited constitutional appeals to the Supreme Court against that government. The president's discretionary powers were increased.

On November 30, 1987, Local Bodies elections were held throughout the country. These elections, which again were held on a non-party basis, were the first since martial law was lifted in 1985. Approximately 100,000 seats were contested by nearly three times as many candidates. The voter turnout was reported to be between 50 and 60 percent.

On May 29, 1988, Prime Minister Junejo's government was dismissed by Zia ul-Haq, who charged it with corruption, inefficiency and reluctance to support Islamization. The assemblies were dissolved and new elections were scheduled. Analysts of Pakistani politics have generally attributed Junejo's ouster to his growing differences with Zia ul-Haq over the conduct of the war and peacemaking in Afghanistan, Junejo's investigation of the military's role in a deadly explosion at a major ammunition dump near Rawalpindi, and his attacks on the perquisites of the generals.

On August 17, 1988, Zia ul-Haq died in an airplane crash that also killed much of the Pakistan army's high command, as well as U.S. Ambassador Arnold Raphel. After assuming their respective new offices under the constitutional provision for succession, Acting President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who had been president of the Senate, and Chief of Army Staff General Aslam Beg made commitments to proceed with the party-based elections scheduled for November 16 and 19, 1988.

The Supreme Court supported the democratic process by handing down a series of important decisions. In one of the most significant decisions, it declared unconstitutional the requirement for political parties to register.

The 1988 election campaign was conducted in a relatively peaceful manner: all political parties were afforded an opportunity to communicate their respective messages to the voters; there were few observed irregularities in the balloting and counting processes; and the political parties played a critical role in monitoring each phase of the process. PPP leaders, however, alleged fraud. They argued that their

party would have obtained a larger plurality, perhaps even a majority, had it not been for the identification card requirement, which required voters to present their identification cards to the election officials at the polling station before voting on election day. The NDI observer delegation concluded, however, that there was no evidence that the identification card requirement affected any one party disproportionately.

The PPP won 93 seats; the IJI won 55; the MQM won 13; and other parties won 54. The PPP received 39 percent of actual votes cast, while the IJI won 32 percent. Prominent losers included former Prime Minister Junejo and Acting Prime Minister Ghulam Mustapha Jatoi. Benazir Bhutto and Nusrat Bhutto won their contests, as did Nawaz Sharif, the IJI leader. Three weeks after the election, PPP leader Benazir Bhutto was invited to form a government.

Benazir Bhutto's victory marked a historic moment in the modern history of Pakistan and of the Muslim world. She became the first Muslim woman to hold the office of prime minister. In the South Asian context, Bhutto's success resembled the careers of other prominent women political leaders: Indira Gandhi in India, Sirimavo Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka, and Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh. All these women, including Bhutto, inherited the political mantles of their fathers or husbands, men who had previously held high political office.

Like all the countries of South Asia, Pakistan contains a small group of educated professional women. The situation of the vast majority of women in Pakistan, however, bears no resemblance to the careers of its woman leaders. Although Benazir Bhutto initiated a few development and financial programs for Pakistan's women, they remain among the world's most socially oppressed, economically dependent, malnourished and uneducated citizens.

During its tenure, Benazir Bhutto's government expanded civil liberties, freed political prisoners and removed much of the previous censorship on the print media. A second television channel was also established, although Pakistan television and radio remained under government control. Still, the PPP was ineffective in office. Except for the annual budget, it did not pass any legislation. (The PPP

leadership argues that since the Senate was controlled by their opponents, the prospects for passing legislation were slim.) Increasingly, the Pakistani press labelled Bhutto's ministers and relatives corrupt.

Indeed, corruption pervades Pakistan's politics. According to local and international press reports, for example, the vote of no-confidence that was attempted against Benazir Bhutto's government in 1989 became a showcase of national corruption, with delegates on both sides of the political aisle reportedly being sequestered and liberally bribed. Party loyalties were reportedly up for sale.

As Benazir Bhutto's term in office progressed, political rifts between the PPP government and all other groups widened, resulting in the paralysis of policy making. The PPP's isolation grew. The MQM, which had allied itself with Bhutto, accused the PPP of violating their coalition agreement and severed its links to the Bhutto government. Some leaders of the Awami National Party (ANP), an important PPP ally in the NWFP, also abandoned Bhutto. Numerous and increasingly bitter disputes developed between the prime minister and the president, the military, and the civilian opposition.

Relations between the central government and the provinces disintegrated. An attempt was made to dissolve the Baluchistan provincial assembly. In addition, and more importantly, a political impasse was reached between the central government and the IJI government of the powerful province of Punjab, led by Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif. In Sind, the PPP government was unable to ameliorate the ethnic and political violence, and repeatedly called upon the army to aid civil power.

On August 6, 1990, President Ishaq Khan, relying on his authority under Article 58(2)(b) of the Pakistani Constitution, dismissed the government and dissolved the National Assembly as well as the provincial assemblies of the North West Frontier Province and Sind. Shortly thereafter, the non-PPP chief ministers of the Punjab and Baluchistan provinces submitted their resignations. A caretaker government was appointed, in which Ghulam Mustapha Jatoi, leader of the Combined Opposition Parties in the National Assembly, was named acting prime minister. As required by the constitution, new

national and provincial elections were scheduled for October 24 and October 27, 1990, respectively.