



# THE TRANSITION TO 'GUIDED' DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN

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## INTRODUCTION

On 12 October 1999, the Pakistani army under General Pervez Musharraf deposed the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after Sharif tried to oust the General. Musharraf's justifications for the coup echoed refrains similar to those offered by his military predecessors:

Not only have all the institutions been played around with, and systematically destroyed, even the economy is in a state of collapse... Self-serving policies have rocked the foundations of the Federation of Pakistan. My singular concern has been the well being of our country alone...the armed forces have moved in as a last resort to prevent any further destabilization.<sup>1</sup>

Since its inception more than fifty years ago, Pakistan has experienced four military coups. The first was staged by General Ayub Khan (1958), followed by General Yahya Khan (1969), General Zia ul-Haq (1977) and, finally, General Pervez Musharraf (1999). While the failure of democratic institutions in Pakistan is typically attributed to constitutional and judicial weaknesses, the poor quality of political leadership and the lack of socio-economic development, the structural constraints imposed on democratic institutionalization by the 'political militarism' of the Pakistani army remain generally underanalyzed.<sup>2</sup>

Democratic transitions have failed primarily because of repeated military interventions. Not one civilian government has been allowed to complete its tenure since independence in 1947. Elected authorities in Pakistan have been continually subject to policy embargoes in key domains of state policy, namely Pakistan's India and Afghanistan policies, the nuclear weapons program, defense expenditures, external intelligence and similar national security areas.

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<sup>1</sup> General Musharraf, televised address to the nation, 13 October 1999.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of political militarism is discussed at length in Kees Kroonings and Drik Kruijt eds., *Political Armies: Military Politics and the Mission of Nation Building* (London: Zed Books, 2002).

The roots of authoritarianism in Pakistan can be traced back to the early years of independence when a host of internal, regional and external factors tilted the civil-military equation in the army's favor.<sup>3</sup> 'Only the military-bureaucratic-intelligence elite that has guided Pakistan's destiny since 1947', argues noted Pakistani political analyst Ahmed Rashid, 'has had the right to determine the nature of threat to Pakistan's national security and its solutions—not elected governments, parliament, civic organizations or even common sense'.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter explores three closely related questions: Why did Pakistan's transition to democracy fail when civilian rule was restored in 1988? How central do structural and institutional factors remain in explaining the transitional outcome? Against the backdrop of a failed transition, and the military's ongoing attempts to embed its role in the constitution, what is the most likely outcome of the current transition to civil democracy?

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first will briefly explore the origins, development and nature of authoritarianism in a historical perspective. The second section will critically examine the eleven-year civilian interregnum (1988-1999) to assess the impact of a lingering legacy of authoritarianism and the continued political dominance of the military on the outcome of the democratic transition. The last section will offer a brief overview of the Musharraf period (1999-2003) to understand the nature and dynamics of the purported transition to civil democracy.

## **AUTHORITARIANISM: ORIGINS, EVOLUTION AND CONSOLIDATION**

When the British ceded power in 1947, the Muslim League was entrusted with the task of nation building in a multi-ethnic state. With few or no support-bases in the areas that constituted the post-colonial state, the migrant League leadership sought refuge in centralized rule, swiftly adopting the Government of India Act 1935 as an interim constitution which provided for a

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<sup>3</sup> See Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia* (Lahore: Sange Meel Publications, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p.210.

federal parliamentary structure but one with highly centralized features and minimal autonomy for the federating units.<sup>5</sup>

Pakistan's cold war alliance with the United States driven in most part by its perceived insecurity *vis-à-vis* India, as well the inchoate nature of its political institutions and civil society, provided the military bureaucratic elites the opportunity to gradually expand their role within the power structures of the state.<sup>6</sup> This institutional imbalance more than any other development would impede the development of democratic institutions. After the country's first constituent assembly tried curtailing his powers, for instance, Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad disbanded the assembly on 24 October 1954.<sup>7</sup> By the time the Second Constituent Assembly was convened, 'it could do little more than follow the framework established by the governor-general. Instead of a decentralized legislature-dominated system, a form of presidential government emerged'.<sup>8</sup>

The country's first constitution, promulgated in 1956, envisaged general elections within two years. Wary that holding elections would entail handing over power to elected officials, President Iskander Mirza declared martial law on 7 October 1958. On 27 October 1958, the military under General Ayub, which had backed the President's earlier action, deposed him to assume direct political power. Ayub quickly moved to ban political parties, disqualify politicians from seeking public office and gag the press.

While generous aid from the United States helped the junta achieve impressive economic growth rates, per capita gains were to remain restricted to a small urban industrial elite. Within a decade, the negative political fallout from military's misguided adventure in Indian-administered Kashmir, pervasive economic inequalities and growing political polarization along regional and class lines had begun to erode Ayub's legitimacy, prompting populist forces like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party to mobilize

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<sup>5</sup> Samina Ahmed, 'The Fragile Base of Democracy in Pakistan', in Amita Shastri and A. Wilson (eds.) *The Post Colonial States of South Asia: Democracy, Identity, Development and Security* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), p.42.

<sup>6</sup> Jalal, *op.cit.*

<sup>7</sup> While the Sindh High Court declared the Governor-General's actions as unconstitutional, the central government's appeal against the ruling was upheld by the Federal Court. For a discussion, see Hamid Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.136-143.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Kennedy, 'Constitutional and Political Change in Pakistan: The Military Governance Paradigm,' paper prepared for 'Prospects for Peace in South Asia' Conference, Stanford University, February 21, 2003, p.3.

public opposition (students, trade unions and professional associations) to the authoritarian state.

In East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh), widespread grievances over the unequal distribution of economic and political resources had galvanized a popular movement for provincial autonomy under Sheikh Mujeeb's Awami League. Isolated and unable to control the rising tide of resistance to his authority, Ayub handed over power to General Yahya Khan who called for Pakistan's first general elections in 1970. While the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) scored a convincing victory in West Pakistan, the Awami League swept the polls in East Pakistan. Unwilling to transfer state power to civilian politicians, much less to the majority Bengalis, Yahya dispatched the army to crush the popular opposition in East Pakistan. A bloody civil war ensued and India intervened, ultimately paving the way for East Pakistan's secession from Pakistan in December 1971.<sup>9</sup>

Transition to civilian rule proved short lived. In July 1977, the army under General Zia deposed Bhutto amidst allegations of electoral rigging and manipulation by the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), an umbrella grouping of nine opposition parties. Zia imposed martial law, dissolved parliament and put the 1973 constitution in abeyance. Why did Bhutto fail to neutralize the military when its public credibility in the wake of the military defeat in East Pakistan was at an all-time low? Bhutto had tried to dilute the military's political influence, if only to secure his grip on power. The 1973 Constitution put the armed forces firmly under the 'command and control' of the federal government (Article 243). Moreover, military officers had to swear not to engage in any political activities.<sup>10</sup> Article 6 made the abrogation of the constitution punishable by death. A Cabinet Defense Committee headed by the Prime Minister was to serve as the highest decision-making body in matters of policy making, the military high command was restructured, several senior officers were sacked or reassigned, and a Federal Security Force was created to reduce the civil government's dependence on the army for the maintenance of law and order. But these constitutional sanctions, though necessary, were hardly sufficient to keep the military at bay. The PPP government's intrusions into what the military perceived as its internal affairs only increased the contempt of the senior ranks for the Prime Minister. The

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<sup>9</sup> For details, see Hasan Zaheer, *The Separation of East Pakistan - The Rise and Realization of Bengali Muslim Nationalism* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Article 244 enjoins military personnel to take the following oath, 'I do solemnly swear that I will...uphold the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan...I will not engage myself in any political activities whatsoever'.

ruling party's weak organizational base and intra-party divisions meant that Bhutto would come to rely excessively on the coercive arms of the state to preserve and enhance his power.<sup>11</sup> Before long, an opportunistic military high command would use the political deadlock between the PM and his opposition to displace yet another elected government.

Upon assuming power, General Zia had pledged to restore democracy and hold elections within the constitutional timeframe of 90 days. Lacking both domestic legitimacy and a broad support base, he postponed this for almost eight years. In the meanwhile, he enlisted the support of the religious right by embarking on a sweeping Islamization program, introducing parallel Islamic institutions in the judiciary and the economy and enacting discriminatory legislation against minorities and women. After rigging a presidential referendum in 1984 to extend his tenure for another five years, Zia used a rubber-stamp parliament to indemnify all the laws, acts and orders issued by his government. The eighth Amendment to the 1973 Constitution empowered the president to dissolve the National Assembly, appoint military service chiefs, judges of the superior courts, and provincial governors. With his flanks secured, General Zia formally lifted martial law and handed over power to a civilian government in October 1985.<sup>12</sup>

#### **RETURN TO CIVIL RULE (1988-1999): CONTINUITY OR CHANGE?**

Zia's death in a mysterious plane crash in August 1988 paved the way for the restoration of civilian rule. Convinced that its corporate interests would be served best by restoring democracy, the military agreed to transfer power to the PPP and its leader Benazir Bhutto only after ensuring that it would retain its institutional autonomy as well as an exclusive monopoly over significant external and internal policy areas including foreign and defense affairs. Hamstrung by these awesome structural constraints and preoccupied with maintaining its narrow parliamentary majority, the first PPP government failed to live up to the expectations of its electorate.<sup>13</sup> After barely two years in

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<sup>11</sup> Jalal, *op.cit.*

<sup>12</sup> In August 1988, General Zia used his constitutional powers to dismiss Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo's government on trumped up charges of corruption and mismanagement. Zia's action was, however, prompted by growing rifts between him and the PM. Divergent views on Pakistan's Afghan policy and the Prime Minister's attempts to investigate the Ohjri Camp disaster (in which a military ammunition depot blew up, killing scores of innocent civilians) seem to have sealed his fate.

<sup>13</sup> In 1990, 5.8 percent of GDP was allocated for defense and 1.1 percent for health. See UNDP Human Development Report 2003 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

power, the Prime Minister's attempts to assert control over the military resulted in the dismissal of her government in 1990 by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on charges of corruption and inefficiency.<sup>14</sup> Two successive civilian governments—the 1990-93 Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, and the 1993-96 PPP government—were dismissed on similar charges of corruption and mismanagement. In October 1999, Musharraf's coup abruptly ended the country's already faltering transition to democratic rule. Analysts have described Pakistan's return to military rule as 'the single most serious reversal during the third wave of democratization'.<sup>15</sup> The country's latest democratic breakdown puts into sharp focus the possibility that democratization is not a predictable, sequential process of incremental steps that follows the end of authoritarian rule as idealized in the transition literature.<sup>16</sup>

Why did Pakistan's democratic transition breakdown? Did the institutional and structural legacy of authoritarianism play any role in the failure of democracy to take root? If so, how important were these factors in determining the outcome of the transition?

Experience with post-authoritarian democracy, whether in sub-Saharan Africa or the former communist countries, shows that the 'specific institutional legacies of predecessor regimes deeply affect (and shape) the outcome of attempted transitions'.<sup>17</sup> Zia's authoritarian legacy included a militarised society, a stifled political process, weakened civil institutions and a culture of pervasive political and administrative corruption. Besides, constraints on democratic transitions are even more severe when a 'unified, hierarchically-led military' oversees the transfer of power.<sup>18</sup> In such cases, the military imposes an interlocking set of limits on the policymaking capabilities of democratic governments through 'reserve domains' and 'military

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<sup>14</sup> See Saeed Shafqat, *Civil Military Relations in Pakistan: From Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Benazir Bhutto* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Larry Diamond, 'Is Pakistan the (Reverse) Wave of the Future?' *Journal of Democracy* 11:3 (July 2000), p.92.

<sup>16</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell challenges the teleology of the transition paradigm in 'Illusions About Consolidation,' *Journal of Democracy* 7 (April 1996): 34-51. For a response to O'Donnell's argument, see Richard Gunther, et al. 'O'Donnell's Illusions: A Rejoinder,' *Journal of Democracy* 7 (October 1996), pp.151-159.

<sup>17</sup> See Thomas Carothers, 'The End of the Transition Paradigm,' *Journal of Democracy* 13: 1 (2002), pp.5-21.

<sup>18</sup> Juan J Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

prerogatives'.<sup>19</sup> Thus facing confining limits on their authority and the constant threat of coups and removal from power, elected leaders of both the PPP and PML-N were expected to perform the formidable task of simultaneously consolidating democracy and reforming the economy. Inexperienced politicians, forcefully excluded from state power for decades, proved too weak to resist the temptation to maximize their hold over power through patronage politics. Personalization and centralization of power invariably translated into the emasculation of alternative centres of state power (judiciary, civil bureaucracy, legislature), eroding democratic accountability and undermining public confidence in state institutions.

Throughout Pakistan's history, the military has claimed that its intervention was necessary to counter the threats to national security posed by the corruption and mismanagement of civilian politicians. There is no doubt that civilian rule in the 1990s was marked by pervasive political and administrative corruption. But it is interesting to note that the alleged corruption of elected governments hardly ever triggered their dismissal. On the contrary, civilian governments (in 1988, 1990, 1993, 1997, and 1999) were ousted only after they crossed the lines drawn in their powersharing scripts written by the military. The October 1999 dismissal of the Sharif government is a case in point. Upon assuming power once again in 1997 with a resounding majority, the PML-N under Nawaz Sharif repealed article 58 (2) B, eliminating the president's power to dismiss elected governments.<sup>20</sup> Acutely aware of Pakistan's precarious economic situation, Sharif was keen to divert the country's limited economic resources from defense to development.<sup>21</sup> By entering into a substantive dialogue with New Delhi, the prime minister had also hoped to ease bilateral tensions and sideline the military internally. Not unsurprisingly, the army sabotaged his peace overtures to India by sending troops into Kargil. Wary of the army's discontent, Sharif made a futile attempt to remove General Musharraf when the former was on a trip to Sri Lanka. The army then seized power, dismissed the Prime Minister, and suspended the parliament and the constitution.

Politicians must also share the blame for giving short shrift to democratic and parliamentary norms, engaging in confrontational politics and abusing

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Also repealed was article 112(2)(b) that empowered governors to dismiss provincial governments.

<sup>21</sup> The United States, Japan and most western governments had imposed economic sanctions on Pakistan after Islamabad responded to India's nuclear tests by detonating its own nuclear devices in May 1998.

public office for personal gain. While in opposition, political leaders often clamoured for military intervention as a temporary step to pave the way for re-elections. In doing so, however, they ignored the fact that once in power, the military has a notorious tendency to develop its own political ambitions and perpetuate its stay in power to the detriment of civilian models of governance.

Legal sanction accorded to military interventions by the country's judiciary has also played no small part in undermining the prospects of democratic institutionalization. The Supreme Court validated Ayub Khan's coup on the grounds that coups d'état were an internationally recognized legal method of changing a constitution.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Zia's assumption of power was legalized on the grounds of state necessity.<sup>23</sup> In May 2000, the Supreme Court once again invoked the doctrine of necessity to rule that Musharraf's coup was justified. However, blaming the judiciary for legalizing military rule reveals only one side of the coin. Military rulers have deftly pre-empted any opposition from the judiciary by 'encouraging the superior judiciary to be compliant and to mandate their extra-constitutional practices'.<sup>24</sup> For instance, Zia promulgated his own Provisional Constitution Order (PCO) requiring judges to take a fresh oath of office. Refusal (by four supreme court judges) resulted in their retirement. Similarly, an executive order issued by General Musharraf on 31 December 1999 decreed that superior court judges take a fresh oath under his PCO. Six justices of the Supreme Court and nine judges of the High Courts who refused to take the new oath were promptly retired.

## **RECONSTRUCTING 'REAL' DEMOCRACY (1999-2002): RHETORIC AND REALITY**

### **Musharraf's Coup: Acting in the 'National Interest'?**

When General Musharraf assumed power, he justified his coup on the grounds that destroying the 'sham' democracy of past civilian governments was necessary for restoring a 'real' one. Justifying interventions on the promise of democratic reforms is a time-tested tradition in Pakistan. The armed forces, said General Ayub as early as 1958, were forced to impose military rule 'with the fullest conviction that there was no alternative expect the disintegration and complete ruination of the country' by corrupt and self-serving politicians.

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<sup>22</sup> State vs. Dosso PLD 1958 SC 533. See the discussion in Khan, *op.cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Begum Nusrat Bhutto vs. Chief of Army Staff PLD 1977 SC 657.

<sup>24</sup> Kennedy, *op.cit.*, p.12.. Also see Paula Newberg, *Judging the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

The military's only objective, he stressed, was to give the country 'a sound democratic system and lay the foundations for a stable future'.<sup>25</sup>

Like military rulers before him, Musharraf too vowed to eliminate corruption, revive the economy, depoliticise state institutions, and establish the foundations of genuine democracy at the grassroots level. Collective frustration with the brand of democracy practiced in the 1990s led many in civil society to lend their support to the military's reform agenda, ostensibly in the hope that Musharraf was serious about putting Pakistan back on track. In their view, democratic governments had only undermined state institutions, mismanaged the economy and plundered the national exchequer. After three years in power, the military regime's much-touted governance reforms remain stalled as it focuses more on tailoring democracy to its needs than on delivering good governance.

Given the state's preoccupation with the threat from India, the military's political role is generally tolerated, if not considered wholly legitimate, by the public. But military interventions clearly distort the political process. While pro-military groups benefit from authoritarian rule, mainstream political parties are often coerced or sidelined to neutralize opposition.<sup>26</sup> General Musharraf's military regime is no exception. Politicians from the two mainstream parties, the PPP and PML-N, have been the primary targets of a selective and arbitrary anti-corruption campaign, which explicitly leaves out military officers and judges.

Like his predecessors, General Musharraf has rarely disguised his desire to exercise absolute control over state power. 'I am a soldier, I don't believe in sharing power,' he proclaimed cynically in a televised address last year, 'I believe in the unity of command'.<sup>27</sup> In August 2001, he had named himself President in the 'national interest'. In the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Musharraf, sensing an opportunity to secure international acceptance for his coup, quickly rallied Pakistan behind the US-led anti-terror coalition. The US Congress waived democracy sanctions (imposed under Section 508 of the US Foreign Operations Appropriations Act after the military coup) as well as those triggered by Pakistan's nuclear tests. Japan and European donors followed suit,

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<sup>25</sup> General Ayub Khan's first broadcast to the nation, 8 October 1958 in Hasan Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan 1947-1997* (Lahore: Sunge Meel Publications, 2000), p.293.

<sup>26</sup> Leo E. Rose and D. Hugh Evans, 'Pakistan's Enduring Experiment', *Journal of Democracy* 8 (January 1997): 83-96.

<sup>27</sup> At [www.pak.gov.pk/President\\_Addresses/presidential\\_addresses.htm](http://www.pak.gov.pk/President_Addresses/presidential_addresses.htm), downloaded November 2002.

rescheduling loans and extending grants in aid. International support boosted Musharraf's domestic standing, providing him the chance to further entrench his powers. On 6 October 2001, the very eve of the US military strikes on Afghanistan, Musharraf extended his tenure as the chief of the army staff indefinitely.

Since military interventions are usually undertaken in response to real or perceived national crises, or as a 'last resort' in General Musharraf's own words, they confer only temporary legitimacy on the coup makers. Hence military rulers 'tend to look for institutional mechanisms that can prolong their rule and give it a stable and permanent legitimate foundation'.<sup>28</sup> Institutionalization often entails the creation of new legal and constitutional mechanisms for 'neutralization of the existing political arena and subordination of the state to the military hierarchy'.<sup>29</sup> In April 2002, the general got himself elected for another five years through a fraudulent referendum. In August of that year, he promulgated the Legal Framework Order (LFO) that empowers him to dismiss the elected government, dissolve the national assembly, appoint military services chiefs and approve appointments to the superior judiciary. A supra-parliamentary National Security Council, headed by Musharraf, was created to oversee the performance of the civilian government.

### **Engineering Elections**

The Supreme Court decision upholding Musharraf's coup had also enjoined him to hold elections within three years, i.e. by October 2002. In the run-up to the elections, the military regime deployed the army-led National Accountability Bureau (NAB) as well as intelligence agencies to coerce opposition parliamentary candidates and force them to join the pro-Musharraf, Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q), a breakaway faction of the PML-N. General Musharraf also introduced several legal measures to stack the process against his political opposition. The 'Qualification to Hold Public Offices Order, 2002', barring anyone from holding the office of prime minister twice, clearly targeted the two former prime ministers, Sharif and Bhutto. Another, the 'Political Parties Order, 2002', prevented those disqualified from seeking election to parliament on corruption and other criminal convictions under Article 63 of the 1973 constitution from holding party posts. The LFO amended Article 63 to include non-payment of utility bills and loans as well as convictions for absconding from court as grounds for disqualification. The

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<sup>28</sup> Koonings and Kruijt, *op.cit.*, p.26.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

'absconder' clause was Bhutto-specific as she had earlier been convicted for failing to appear in court in a corruption case.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the holding of a bachelor's degree was made compulsory for contesting elections. While this condition disqualified almost half the members of the National and Provincial Assemblies dissolved after the October coup, candidates of the Islamic parties emerged unscathed as most of them hold *madrassa* degrees that were granted equivalence. The military regime also resorted to other forms of what opposition politicians call 'pre-poll rigging', namely gerrymandering and delimiting constituencies to assist the PML-Q, and other parties in the pro-military Grand National Alliance.

In the 10 October polls, no single political party was able to score a clear majority at the national level, indicating a hung parliament. The regime-backed PML-Q secured the highest number of seats, though it was far short of the simple majority needed to form a government. More notably, the Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA), a coalition of six religious parties, secured the third-largest tally of seats in the national assembly besides sweeping the ballot in the Northwestern and Baluchistan provinces. Systematic suppression of the moderate political parties (and the public resentment against the US-led war on terror) has played into the hands of the Islamists in a structural shift that could become entrenched as the new reality of Pakistani politics.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, the military is pressuring and persuading opposition politicians to back the PML-Q in parliament. Musharraf has issued legal ordinances to encourage independent candidates to join the PML-Q and facilitate floor-crossing.<sup>32</sup> Facilitated by the military's pressure tactics and the suspension of a constitutional ban on floor crossing, the party eventually secured enough votes to form a coalition government at the center.

Why did the military restore the processes of democracy if it was not willing to transfer real state powers to civilians? Given the unmistakable international preference for democracy, even during the war on terror, the Pakistani military clearly sees its corporate interests served best by transferring power to a 'guided' civilian government, while retaining tutelary powers over it. Thus the military will leave the thankless job of running the day-to-day affairs

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<sup>30</sup> To avert disqualification, the PPP created the PPP Parliamentarians (PPPP) to contest the polls.

<sup>31</sup> Shah, *op.cit.*, 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Through an ordinance promulgated on the eve of the elections, independent candidates were given three days to join a party after winning the elections.

of the government to the elected government, while cloaking itself in 'formal respectability and democratic compliance'.<sup>33</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The military's consistent refusal to subject itself to legitimate civilian authority lies at the heart of Pakistan's democratic failure. Barring a fundamental restructuring of civil-military relations, the prospects for meaningful democratization remain grim. Given the country's critical reliance on external economic and military aid, pressure from the international community, especially the United States, could play an instrumental role in influencing political liberalization in the direction of civil democracy. However, the Pakistani military's strategic importance to the US anti-terror campaign against al-Qaida and Taliban remnants means international pressure, if any, will remain limited to mild diplomatic rebukes. By holding elections and promising to transfer authority to an elected government, moreover, the military may already have neutralized international concerns.

While opposition to Musharraf's LFO by the PPP, PML-N and the MMA resulted in a parliamentary deadlock that lasted for a year, the Musharraf government, in late December 2003, was able to reach a separate negotiated settlement with the Islamist alliance. In return for agreeing to retire as army chief by December 2004, Musharraf secured the MMA's consent to the 17 Constitutional Amendment Bill that allows him to remain in office till 2007 after receiving a formal vote of confidence from parliament, vests in him presidential powers to dismiss an elected government and allows him to appoint military service chiefs albeit in 'consultation' with the prime minister.<sup>34</sup> The National Security Council is to be created through an act of parliament. Far from civilianizing the political system, the new amendments institutionalize a hybridized authoritarian one in which the army high command retains its grip over the state apparatus behind an electoral facade.

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<sup>33</sup> Koonings and Kruijt, *op.cit.*, p.32.

<sup>34</sup> For the text of the bill see <http://www.dawn.com/2003/12/30/top2.htm>, downloaded 12 March 2004. Qazi Hussain Ahmad, MMA's parliamentary leader, stated on 2 January 2004 that while the agreement included concessions that his side had made reluctantly, it was the best deal that could have been secured under the circumstances. See <http://www.dawn.com/2004/01/03/>, downloaded 12 March 2004.