

# **Promise of Democracy in Pakistan**

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## INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a 57-year story of assassinations, *coup d'etats*, martial laws, rigged elections and representative governments being removed through non-democratic means. Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan's first prime minister, was assassinated while addressing a public meeting at Municipal Park, Rawalpindi. Khawaja Nazimuddin, Pakistan's second prime minister, was unceremoniously dismissed by Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad. Prime Ministers Mohammad Ali Bogra, Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, Hussein Shaheed Suhrawardy, I.I. Chundrigar and Malik Feroz Khan Noon were all ousted by President Major-Gen Iskander Mirza (1).

On 7 October 1958, President Iskander Mirza abrogated the Constitution, dissolved the assemblies and proclaimed Martial Law throughout Pakistan. General Ayub Khan, the Army chief, was appointed as the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA). The CMLA declared: "Our ultimate aim is to restore democracy but of the type that people can understand and work."

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's first elected prime minister, was sent to the gallows via a 'judicial murder'; courtesy of a four-star general. President General Zia ul Haq then went on to dismiss the government of Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo, the general's handpicked PM. On 2 December 1988, Benazir Bhutto was sworn in as the eleventh prime minister. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed her government on 6 August 1990. Nawaz Sharif was elected as the twelfth prime minister by the National Assembly and dismissed by President Ishaq on 18 April 1993.

Benazir Bhutto was sworn in for the second time as the thirteenth prime minister. President Leghari dismissed her government. Nawaz Sharif was sworn in for the second time as the fourteenth prime minister of the country. General Musharraf ousted Nawaz Sharif in a *coup d'etat* and brought in Mir Zafarullah Jamali as the fifteenth prime minister of Pakistan. On 30 June 2004, President General Musharraf ordered Jamali to take a hike. Not a single prime minister in Pakistan's history has completed his tenure.

As a matter of record, of the 57 members of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) some two-dozen—Sudan, Gambia, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Syria, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Iran, Maldives, Tunisia, Mauritius, Lebanon, Guinea, Libya, Somalia, Uganda, Azerbaijan, Cote d'Ivoire and Gabon—are 'Authoritarian Regimes'. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, U.A.E., Brunei, Oman, Qatar, Morocco and Kuwait are 'Traditional Monarchies'. Comoros, Senegal, Jordan, Malaysia, Tajikistan, Chad, Yemen, Cameroon and Egypt are classified as 'Restricted Democratic Practices' (2).

According to Freedom House, the non-profit, non-partisan think-tank dedicated to democracy-related research, only 9 Muslim-majority states are genuine electoral democracies. That means less than 16 percent of all Muslim-majority states are democratic. In the non-Muslim world, some 80 percent of all UN-member states are democratic. The largest chunks of Muslims living under functioning democratic regimes live in India, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Turkey (3).

A large majority of Pakistan's population is deeply religious. At least 100 million Pakistanis, two-third of the population, live in rural areas. Forty percent of all employed Pakistanis are 'skilled agricultural & fishery workers' (4). According to the latest Pakistan Integrated Household Survey (PIHS), the "incidence of poverty in Pakistan has increased from 30.6 percent in 1998-99 to 32.1 percent in 2001-02, the latest estimates available in the country (5)." Rural poverty remains rampant.

## PROMISE OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy to our 'skilled agricultural & fishery workers' is about gaining access to tools that can deliver social justice. Democracy to our rural population stands for elected representatives saving poverty stricken ruralites from the coercive apparatus of the state—the police and the judicial infrastructure. A hundred million rural Pakistanis see in democracy means to relieve state repression.

Pakistan's private sector sees a connection between democracy and economic repression. There is evidence that the incidence of economic repression is much higher in authoritarian regimes than under electoral democracies. Then there is this inverse relationship between economic repression and per capita income—the higher the repression the lower the income and vice versa (6).

Pakistani intellectuals go back a hundred years and find that there was not a country on the face of the planet that could be classified a democracy (judged by the rather liberal standards of universal suffrage and multi-party, multi-candidate competitive elections). In 1950, less than two-dozen countries were electoral democracies covering a mere third of world population. By the dawn of the new century 140 countries—out of more than 200--had become electoral democracies governing over 65% of world population. The world has gone from 0% democratic in 1900 to 33% democratic in 1950 and 65% democratic by 2000. The 20th century has truly been democracy's century.

In 1900, Pakistan was a 'colonial dependency'. In 1950, we became a 'Restricted Democratic Practice' perhaps a nation in transit moving towards a wholesome democracy. In 1973, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave us a Constitution that guaranteed universal suffrage. In 1999, we marched into the past and were classified as an 'Authoritarian Regime'.

In 1900, India was also a colonial dependency. In 1950 it was classified a democracy and has continued to maintain that status ever since. Some fifty years ago when Jawaharlal Nehru was holding India's first elections Governor General Ghulam Mohammad was busy dissolving assemblies and Major General Iskender Mirza was busy conspiring with General Ayub Khan. Chief Justice Munir had put the final nail in our democracy's coffin. No wonder India has never succumbed to dictatorships or military rule as have so many other Third World countries.

Unfortunately, national decision-making in Pakistan is done behind close doors and Pakistani intellectuals as a class has been largely marginalized. The interests of the principal decision makers and the interests of the Pakistani people do not overlap. The three most important issues for the decision makers are Kashmir, Kashmir and Kashmir. A survey of a representative sample of the population will show that priorities are gainful employment, health and education (Kashmir will come out almost at the bottom). The state and its people are moving in the opposite direction.

Pakistan's military bureaucracy has been, and continues to be, the dominant political force. The military bureaucracy views Pakistan purely as a 'security state', and democracy must therefore be subordinate to country's security interests. In 1970, the dominant political force allowed 'free and fair' elections. The consequence, as viewed by our 'establishment', was disastrous. Every subsequent election was thus manipulated, results maneuvered as a matter of policy in order to safeguard the perceived security interests of Pakistan.

At more than 15 percent of all employed Pakistanis, 'Craft and related trades workers' form the second-largest occupational group. The interests of 'skilled agricultural & fishery workers' along with 'craft and related trades workers' revolve around gainful employment, health and education (and in that order). The perceived security interests of the establishment thus appear to be at odds with the interests of both 'skilled agricultural & fishery workers' and 'craft and related trades workers'.

The establishment's policy of a 'khaki-authored democracy' stands little chance of a thorough reformation. Every reform has potential gainers and losers. 'Free and fair' elections shall mean a class of potential gainers and losers. If losers happen to be the principal decision makers no such reform effort can be successful. Revolution is absolutely alien to Islamic societies. Reform must therefore be externally imposed.

Pakistan's armed forces are not only the dominant political force but have over time acquired an enormous corporate interest as well. Our soldiers are now big time into real estate, banking, baking, shrimp farming, spraying of pesticides, locust control, advertising, insurance, transportation, goods moving,

catering & decorations, stock brokering, airlines, salvaging, sugar, cereals, corn, rice, fish, TV & Radio, natural gas, education, fertilizer, cement, power generation, stud farming, pharmaceuticals, shoes, wool, hosiery, travel, leasing, security, information technology, construction, paints and housing.

The Army now operates the single-largest corporate conglomerate on the face of Pakistan's economy. Our armed forces now own and operate Fauji Corn Complex, FONGAS, Fauji Fertilizer Company, Fauji Jordan Company, Fauji Oil Terminal Company Project, Mari Gas Company, Askari Commercial Bank, Fauji Poly Propylene Products, Bahria Travel, Shaheen Airport Services, Fauji Kabirwala Power Company, Fauji Cement, Bahria Recruiting Agency, Bahria Diving, Bahria Dredging, Bahria Construction, Falah Trading Agency, Askari Insurance, Shaheen Aerotraders, Askari Stud Farms, Askari Fish Farms, Army Welfare Shoe Project, Commercial Plazas, Askari Guards, Askari Welfare Rice Mill, Askari Welfare Pharmaceutical Project, Magnetite Refineries Limited, Army Welfare Woolen Mill, Army Welfare Hosiery Unit, Askari Welfare Saving Scheme, Askari Associate Limited, Askari Information Service, Askari Power Limited and Askari Commercial Enterprises (7).

## **PAKISTANI VALUES AND DEMOCRACY**

Military-led governments and their lackeys continue to assert that democracy and Pakistani values are not compatible. They continue to reject globalization of human rights claiming that Pakistan somehow has a unique set of values and that the non-democratic Pakistani leadership ought to be judged by a different set of 'values'. They also assert that democracy because of its Western cultural origin is somehow not suited to Pakistani values.

That is nothing short of outright hypocrisy. Our uniformed politicians pick and choose from the West whatever is in their best political interest. At this stage, they fully subscribe to genuinely Western notions of free market and consumerism. There can be no reason that norms born in other cultures cannot be fruitfully adopted in Pakistan. If the democratic mode of governance is in the best interest of Pakistan then regardless of its place of origin that particular mode should be adopted in Pakistan.

An argument is now being fabricated that Pakistan's economic development is more important than democracy. Two-thirds of all Pakistanis who survive at under \$2 a day are being indoctrinated that a 'full belly' must be chosen over the freedom of exercising political rights. The principal fallacy in this argument is that Pakistanis don't have to choose between a 'full belly' and their political right to elect their own leaders. It doesn't have to be 'authoritarianism in exchange for food'; Pakistanis can in fact have both—a full belly and democracy.

### **Ballot as a source of legitimate political power**

In 1971, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the Head of the Government by virtue of winning a mandate from the people to govern. Bhutto yielded legitimate political power. In 1977, a gun-yielding general took over and then remained engulfed in a decade-long battle to legitimize his rule. Zia's lack of legitimate political power kept Pakistan instable and vulnerable to relentless corruption. On 17 August 1988, when Zia was no more his entire house-of-cards came tumbling down.

The army is willing neither to surrender power nor share it with a genuinely empowered elected government of civilians. There is evidence also that the current General will neither play second fiddle to any Pakistani nor would he allow the creation of a parallel power center. As long as the army does respect the ballot as the only legitimate source of political power we are going nowhere and if we are going nowhere any road will take us there.

### **De jure and de facto democracy**

Ballot establishes a relationship between citizens and policymakers. History stands witness to the fact that all Pakistani rulers who captured political power through the barrel of a gun remained engrossed in an endless struggle of legitimacy. The quest for legitimacy gives birth to a game of pretensions. Hide-and-go-seek between *de jure* and *de facto* democracy. What follows is the birth of a *faux democracy* (faux; French for being an imitation of the genuine article). We have been at it for the past five decades. All those decades have gone down the drain.

## **Barrel of a gun as a political resource**

When the barrel of a gun becomes the principal source of political power a whole class of citizens renders itself above the rule of law. From within a population of more than 162 million the Pak Army has I Corps, II Corps, IV Corps, V Corps, X Corps, XI Corps, XII Corps, XXX Corps, XXXI Corps, Northern Area Command and the Aviation Corps. That is a total strength of some 520,000 with an additional 500,000 reserves. In essence, a million Pakistanis who consider themselves above Pakistani law. Then there are a million ex-soldiers who also begin to claim a similar status. This entire constituency becomes above the law. Being above the law also means being beyond accountability. Then all their associates--the usual paraphernalia--bureaucrats and the judiciary become beyond accountability. As a result we have ex-judges of accountability courts attending weddings of people who they once tried in their accountability courts and ex-judges slapping around ex-accountability czars who were once convicted in their courts. Then we have criminals becoming lawmakers and lawmakers being slaughtered at toll plazas.

## **Democracy and poverty alleviation**

When the gun rules there is little or no citizenry-policymakers dialogue and the government is, therefore, unable to respond to the needs of the poor. There is overwhelming statistical evidence that the incidence of poverty has a strong correlation with the mode of governance. Authoritarian regimes around the world have a much larger percentage of their population living below poverty than do democratic ones. There is a definite link between democracy and poverty.

Luxembourg, Norway, United States, Switzerland, Denmark, Iceland, Austria, Canada, Ireland, Belgium, Australia, Netherlands, Japan, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Finland and Sweden are the richest countries on the face of the planet, and they all have longstanding firmly installed democratic governments. At the other end of the spectrum, East Timor, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Tanzania, Burundi, Congo, Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Niger, Yemen, Madagascar, Guinea-Bissau, Zambia, Kiribati, Nigeria and Mali all routinely appear in the most lists of the poorest of the poor. Almost all of them have had—or continue to have—authoritarian forms of governance. In Pakistan, the gap between the haves and the have-nots is increasing because a particular class of citizens has monopolized access to government services and national resources. Democracy, on the other hand, has a built-in poverty alleviation tool. India, for instance, cannot ignore its poor because poor also vote.

## **Democratic deficit in democracy-seeking political parties**

Pakistan's civilian political entities are internally non-democratic and, as a consequence, lack the institutional capability to learn from their past blunders. The 'most disciplined institution', at the same time, has its intrinsic faculty to capitalize on the weaknesses of its adversaries intact. Weaknesses, they have plenty.

'Divide and rule' is how Pakistan's uniformed politicians rule Pakistan. The invisible agents of the current military-led regime are constantly engaged into creating rifts within the Alliance for the Restoration of

Democracy (ARD). The PML(Q) continues to be the General's A-team but has no legs of its own to stand on. Under American pressure, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), long the General's B-team, now has to be abandoned. Peace with India and the General's bastion of support in the West means the B-team is now excess baggage. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is now being enticed to replace the MMA. Unless all major civilian political entities first become internally democratic and then join hands civilian supremacy shall remain a distant dream.

## **Sovereignty and democracy**

After more than five decades of independence and we are once again wondering whether democracy is appropriate for Pakistan. It is quite in style, once again, to blame politicians for all of Pakistan's ills. After fifty-three years, of what has been a miserable existence, we don't exactly know where sovereignty actually lies. Is the parliament sovereign or is it the Constitution? Is it the people or is it the coercive forces? Is the Prime Minister sovereign or is it the President? Could it be the Chief of the Army Staff?

A formal resolution of the issue of sovereignty is of paramount importance (secular sovereignty that is). Until we do that our prime ministers shall continue to collide with the army high command and the Constitution shall intermittently be held in abeyance without its own will. If the parliament is sovereign then it cannot be dissolved without its own act. If the Constitution is sovereign then its fundamentals cannot be tampered with. As long as the issue of sovereignty is not settled every force on the face of this country shall continue to hunt for it, attempting to hold it and to monopolize it forever. In the UK, the parliament is sovereign. In the US, the Constitution is.

In Pakistan, we have the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment. In 1985, General Zia-ul-Haq managed to amend the Constitution by virtue of which Pakistan's National Assembly (the lower house of the Parliament) lost its sovereignty. The 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment changed Pakistan from a parliamentary form of governance to a semi-presidential setup. Under the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the indirectly elected president could dissolve the elected National Assembly if, in his opinion, "a situation has arisen in which the Government of the Federation cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and an appeal to the electorate is necessary (Constitution of Pakistan, Article 58)." The 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment has already been invoked four times to send four elected National Assemblies packing.

## **Judiciary and democracy**

The question of sovereignty is a political one. In 1954, sovereignty was dragged into the Chief Court of Sind (this is when the Constituent Assembly was dissolved by a half-paralyzed governor-general, Ghulam Mohammed, who perhaps had the backing of Auyb. Tamizuddin had challenged the dissolution). Chief Justice Sir George Constantine, along with his court, unanimously decided that the "Constituent Assembly was a sovereign" and that the "governor-general had no power of any kind to dissolve the Constituent Assembly."

Ghulam Mohammad appealed to the Federal Court (the present Supreme Court). Chief Justice Mohammad Munir, writing for the majority, said that "Pakistan remained subject to the prerogative rights of the Crown" adding that the "governor-general, as representative of the Crown" had the right to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. Justice A.R. Cornelius (a non-Muslim), also of the Federal Court, dissented. Cornelius opined that the Constituent Assembly was "sovereign", the governor-general's dissolution was illegal and that "Pakistan owed no allegiance to the Crown."

Justice Munir, with a stroke of his pen, perhaps not fully realizing at the time, had managed to wreck the basis of all future constitutional governments in Pakistan. Along the way, Munir had made a mockery of what the Quaid stood for (Quaid-i-Azam had gone as far as changing the oath of the governor-general from "allegiance to Her Majesty" to "allegiance to the Constitution of Pakistan"). Munir, in effect, asserted that the "independence that the Quaid had won was a restricted one..." somehow incomplete and that Pakistan wasn't yet independent of the Crown. The Federal Court's order back then ridiculed the sacrifices of a million Muslims who gave their lives for independence.

In essence, Munir used “law as a servant” to “service an all-powerful” governor-general (the practice hasn’t stopped since). The dissolved Constituent Assembly was denied a judicial remedy and Munir’s court was the first one that laid down the foundation of a dictatorial regime by letting executive as well as legislative power accumulate in the governor-general’s office. That was also the beginning of governing through ordinances. Munir rationalized his judicial grant of an autocratic government on his Law of Civil Necessity.

## CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Pakistan has a Constitution. The Constitution prescribes the procedure for choosing rulers, demarcating electoral constituencies, as to who should rule along with the responsibilities of each organ of the state and how the Constitution itself ought to be amended. For a country to be called a *de facto* democracy there first have to be laws—whether customary or statutory—and then those laws have to be observed by all citizens. Willing compliance to law in a *de facto* democracy is all that differentiates a *de facto* democracy from a *de jure* one.

Our Constitution says that army officers are all civil servants. The same civil servants somehow want to be the rulers as well (the will to comply is missing). When they become rulers they have their own constituencies to satisfy. When soldiers become rulers the message they send out is that soldiers are above the law. As a consequence, we have Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz as the *de jure* ruler and General Pervez Musharraf the *de facto* ruler. That in effect is the root of all problems.

Customary or statutory law limits authority. Military takeovers must be followed up by a game of pretensions. Hide-and-go-seek between *de jure* and *de facto* democracy. What follows is the birth of a *faux democracy* (*faux*; French for being an imitation of the genuine article). We have been at it for the past five decades. All those decades have gone down the drain.

Have the generals been good for Pakistan? Have the politicians been bad for Pakistan? Both the questions are the wrong kind of questions. The real question is that of governance; what really is the best form of governance or which is the best political system to govern a country. The debate on various forms of governance has indeed been going on for the last two thousand years. In Pakistan, once again, a tug-of-war is underway between the Pakistani people and governing ideologies. The world outside of Pakistan seems to have reached a conclusion. We are yet to. We continue to debate--generals or politicians?

Pakistan’s powerful military and the religious right have long been in partnership to defeat democracy. They have largely been successful. In the post-September 11 era the uni-polar world demanded a break in the mullah-military partnership. In the post mullah-military partnership era the name of the game is politics of co-option. Unfortunately, Pakistan’s liberal political entities have long been in a state of institutional liquidation and are thus not in a position to benefit from the mullah-military split.

In 2004, more than 10 million Afghans registered to vote. On 9 October 2004, multi-candidate, multi-party national elections were held. Hamid Karzai won 55.4 percent of the vote. The new Constitution has a bicameral National Assembly comprising a directly elected Wolesi Jirga or House of People and Meshrano Jirga or House of Elders (8). The new Constitution also establishes Stera Mahkama a 9-member Supreme Court (the President appoints the nine justices with the approval of the Wolesi Jirga).

On 30 January 2005, Iraqis voted for a 275-member Transitional National Assembly (TNA). Around 120 international monitors were in Iraq to supervise the election. A total of 280,303 Iraqis living in exile also registered to vote. Iraq’s International Office of Migration had set up voting booths in 14 countries (9). On January 30, Iraq entered a new phase in history.

The TNA will elect a state Presidency Council, which will be made up of a president and two deputy presidents. The Presidency Council will decide on a prime minister who in turn will select ministers. The civilian prime minister will have complete control over the armed forces. TNA’s deadline to write a draft Constitution is August 15. The draft Constitution will then be submitted to a referendum.

Afghanis and Iraqis must have been dreaming of actually being able to vote and bring in representative governments of their own (during Saddam Hussein there was an election where he got 100 percent of the vote). Those who support dictatorships don't want that dream to come true. Supporters of violence have been defeated both in Afghanistan and in Iraq. The Afghani and the Iraqi dreams are coming true.

In 1995, The Heritage Foundation—a think-tank, a research and an educational institute—raised a very pertinent question. Why does poverty persist? In order to find answers, the Foundation developed the 'Index of Economic Freedom'. The Index has been published annually ever since (<http://www.heritage.org/>).

In 2005, the Index of Economic Freedom measured "161 countries against a list of 50 independent variables divided into 10 broad factors of economic freedom." The factors are trade policy, fiscal burden of government, government intervention, monetary policy, capital flows, banking, wages, property rights, regulation and informal market activity.

As per the Index, Pakistan, with a score of 3.73, is at number 134 meaning that there are 133 countries where economic freedom is better than us and only 27 where economic freedom is worse. The Heritage Foundation considers Pakistan a country suffering from 'economic repression'. Pakistan's best accumulative score of 3.26 was for the year 1995 when Benazir Bhutto was the prime minister. At an accumulative score of 3.73, the year 2004 was economically the most repressed period.

Why are we poor? Answer: We are poor because we lack economic freedom. The Heritage Foundation has a formula: Desires + Abilities - Roadblocks = Success. We have both the desire to succeed and the ability. Then why have we been unsuccessful? Roadblocks are heavier than the sum of our desires plus abilities.

A.T. Kearney--the global management-consulting firm--has been surveying Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) of the world's largest 1,000 firms about their "opinions of various Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) destinations (the companies surveyed are responsible for about 70 percent of global FDI flows and generate more than \$20 trillion in annual revenues)." The result of the survey is published as the 'FDI Confidence Index' ([www.atkearney.com](http://www.atkearney.com)).

According to A.T. Kearney's latest survey: "China maintained its position as the number one most attractive FDI destination in the world, while India rose from sixth to third most likely FDI location globally—the country's highest ranking ever just behind the U.S. Although the United States remained the second most attractive FDI location in the world the perception gap between the U.S. and India is closing ((Pakistan is not on the list)."

Not too long ago, the United Nations, the representative body of 191 Sovereign Member States, had requested the Election Commission of India to assist the UN in the holding of elections in *Al Jumhuriyah al Iraqiyah* and *Dowlat-e Eslami-ye Afghanistan*.

The UN's request is a great tribute to India's democracy, and in the midst of it all lays the secret to India's territorial integrity. Over a billion people spread over 2,973,190 sq km of land mass; 28 states and 7 union territories. A total of fifteen official languages: Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi, and Sanskrit.

There is only one India. The only dissident that Pakistan's General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan was up against was Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman. On 26 March 2005, the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh shall be celebrating her 34<sup>th</sup> Independence Day. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of every December, Bangladesh celebrates "Victory Day".

Why the Election Commission of India and not the Election Commission of Pakistan? After all, Islamabad is closer to Kabul than is Delhi. To be certain, India's parliamentary election is the biggest on the face of the planet. Holding elections in India is like holding elections in the United States, Canada, Australia and the whole of Europe all at once.

Over the past 53 years, the Election Commission of India has conducted 16 Lok Sabha and some 300 Assembly elections. On 29 July 2003, the Election Commission of India announced that "every vote in its 2004 national election will be registered and counted using electronic ballot machines."

India has 853 million Hindus, 125 million Muslims and 24 million Christians (plus Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis). Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam is the President of India. Abdul Kalam is a Muslim. Abdul Kalam is a vegetarian, and Abdul Kalam was awarded the *Bharat Ratna*, India's highest civilian award.

For the record, more than 600 million registered voters 380 million of whom showed up to vote (in the 2004 election). A total of 700,000 polling stations, some 4.5 million election staff and 2 million security personnel. Imagine, Outer Delhi is the largest parliamentary constituency with 30 million electors. Expenditure on the conduct of election: Rs800 crores. Imagine, paper used for printing ballot paper: 8,000 metric ton. Ladakh was the largest parliamentary constituency spread over 173,266 square km while Delhi Sadr was a mere 28 sq km.

The Islamic world has seen more than its share of violence and less of democracy. At least 30 OIC-member states are classified as "Not Free" and 18 as "Partially Free". Mali, Benin, Guyana and Suriname are the only OIC-member countries that are "Free". At least 22 Muslim-majority states are 'Authoritarian Regimes', 8 are 'Traditional Monarchies' and 9 are 'Restricted Democratic Practices'. Incidentally, 50 of the 57 OIC-members have per capita incomes that are below \$5,000 a year. The only ones with higher per capita incomes—Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Brunei, Oman and Qatar—are all rentier states where oil is the only export and almost all state revenues accrue from abroad.

There is overwhelming evidence of a correlation between democracy and social justice. There also exists a strong correlation between democracy and economic progress. Within the OIC there is little or no social justice, no political reform and no meaningful economic progress. The entire OIC is overwhelmed by social, political and economic ills.

Pakistanis are deeply committed to Islam. Is democracy compatible with Islam? Can democracy remedy our social, political and economic ills? The first thing we need to do is to make a distinction between Islam and Islamic history. Islamic history is full of authoritarian regimes in tandem with tyranny. Islam, on the other hand, explicitly prescribes firm equality and justice.

If there has to be equality among all subjects of an Islamic state then by extension no man (or woman) can have more than one vote. Similarly, Islamic justice unequivocally translates into 'rule of law' as oppose to 'rule of man'. If there has to be 'rule of law' then there cannot be 'rule of man'. If there cannot be 'rule of man' then by extension dictatorship is against the prescription of Islam.

According to Freedom House, *"the lack of progress on democratic reform in large swaths of the world populated by Muslim majorities can be attributed to many factors, none of them directly related to religious beliefs as such. One crucial factor is the persistent influence of regimes that came into power through military coups. Another key factor influencing political life in the Islamic world has been the persistence of monarchies that have resisted the devolution of power to democratically accountable governments."*

On 9 April 2003, a report titled "Most repressive regimes" was presented to the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The Report has a total of 16 countries spread over the Americas, the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa, and East Asia. They are: Saudi Arabia, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Burma, China, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam (10). Incidentally, 8 of the 16 members of the 'most repressive club' are also member-states of the OIC.

## ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

Repression and lack of democracy are also correlated. Islamic history may be full of repression but Islam is overtly against repression. At least 40 members of the OIC, 70% of the entire membership, are at variance

with Quranic prescriptions of 'rule of law' and 'equality of citizens'. Authoritarianism may have a lot to do with Islamic history but has almost nothing to do with Islam.

In 42:38, the Quran states, "Those who respond to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation..." Brigadier Nazir Ahmed, in 'Quranic and non-Quranic Islam' writes, "The Quran prescribes 'mutual consultation' as the only way to deal with matters of common interest. This injunction is bracketed here with regular prayers and Zakat (11)."

Then there also is 'Ijtihad', the most neglected pillar of Islam. Ijtihad is essentially a "*re-interpretation of Islamic text and teachings according to the changing needs of the society.*" If Pakistan only had a thousand citizens then they could all form a *shoora*. That would be the most direct form of democracy. If there are 151.60 million Pakistanis then there has to be a representative democracy where *shoora* becomes the exercising agent of God's sovereignty (3). If *shoora* must be consulted and equality must be practiced then *shoora* has to be representative. Almost by extension, any attempt to manipulate the representative nature of the *shoora* ought to be considered against the prescriptions of Islam.

Sovereignty in Islam belongs to Almighty Allah (as it does in the Preamble of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan). Operational sovereignty—whether in the hands of a dictator or a *shoora*--is always a human domain. Islam, at the same time, strictly professes the limiting of 'individual sovereignty' and this limiting actually precedes the now well-established democratic notion of checks and balances. Limiting individual sovereignty also means discouraging lust for power.

If there has to be 'rule of law' then human whim cannot be the source of law (there goes the LFO). In a more theological sense, 'rule of law' is indeed 'rule of God'. If the Quranic prescription of "consultation" is obligatory then monopolization of sovereignty by any one individual is against the teachings of Islam. 'One-man-rule' over countries populated by Muslims has nothing to do with Islam but may have a lot to do with Islamic history. The choice for us is not between Islam or democracy but between democracy or authoritarianism. As we are, we are not a democracy neither are we Islamic nor a republic.

## PARTY POLITICAL DOMAIN

Pakistan's elected democrats haven't performed that well either. Our democrats have been driven more by considerations of power and authority rather than the economic well being of their constituents. Our democrats still show no signs of being capable of reforming and building their political entities into institutions. For Pakistan's long-term political stability the establishments 'security imperatives' and the interests of 'skilled agricultural & fishery workers' along with 'craft and related trades workers'—two of the largest occupational groups—would have to be reconciled.

Pakistani Muslims don't have to pick between Islam and democracy. Democracy is fully compatible with Islam. Democracy is not only compatible with Islam but, in essence, Islam requires democracy as God's preferable form of governance.

Is Pakistan on her way to democratization? President General Musharraf held general elections in 2002. There can be no democracy without elections. But, there can be elections without democracy. Pakistan is a case in point.

In absence of democracy political stability shall continue to elude Pakistan. Both the political and the corporate role of Pakistan's armed forces would have to be defined, re-defined and re-invented. Overall parameters for the operation of various intelligence agencies would have to be laid down, drafted and re-drafted.

The world is now left with less than three-dozen authoritarian regimes. These include China, Burma, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Algeria and Ethiopia. All authoritarian regimes—with the sole exception of Singapore--are desperately poor and illiterate. Would

poverty and illiteracy go away if all these authoritarian regimes all of a sudden decided to become electoral democracies?

Democracy does not promise prosperity. One thing democracy is not is instant coffee. No one can achieve democracy because it is a process not a thing and every functioning democracy is continuously evolving becoming either less or more democratic. Empirical evidence suggests that not all democracies are prosperous and literate but all prosperous and literate countries are democracies. Democracy, therefore, is not a guarantee to prosperity but democracy remains the essential prerequisite to every kind of human development including national opulence and education.

Do we now have a democratic setup? Let us just stick to universal suffrage and multi-party, multi-candidate competitive elections. We don't have a problem meeting the criteria of universal suffrage. We did have multi-party elections but the elections lacked competition in at least three important aspects. First, Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif and Altaf Hussain were not allowed to compete. Secondly, whatever competition we did have it was tilted in favor of one political entity at the cost of others. Lastly, and most importantly, the elections were not meant to elect real decision makers (the so-called 'presidential referendum' was not a multi-candidate affair).

## CONCLUSION & FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

Do we have an authoritarian regime in Pakistan? I would not classify post-October 2002 Pakistan as an authoritarian regime (an authoritarian regime is typically defined as a one-party state or a military dictatorship in which there are significant human rights violations). We are not a nation in transit moving towards democracy either (as PML-Q apologists like to claim). We are now some sort of a hybrid engaged in a vicious cycle of what's come to be known as a 'reform game' where a facade of reforms—including elections—is erected designed merely to prolong the status quo.

According to Saeed Shafqat of Columbia University's School of International Affairs and Public Policy: "The future of democracy and consolidation of democratic institutions in the country hinges on the disengagement of the military from civil sectors; revival, sustenance and restoring the legitimacy of mainstream political parties and professionalization of civil bureaucracy. A process of disengagement now would contribute towards resuscitating the already shrunk and torn liberal social and political space in Pakistani society."

America, it seems, convinced itself that supporting repressive regimes in Muslim countries is the way to forestall any Islamic threat to US interests. To begin with, Islam is not a threat to anyone. Secondly, America's long-held conviction has clearly backfired. Repression and radicalization are deeply linked. All of the 19 alleged hijackers of the September 11 tragedy came from US-supported authoritarian regimes; 15 from Saudi Arabia, 2 from UAE and 1 each from Egypt and Lebanon. None from the democracies of Albania, Bangladesh, Benin, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Indonesia, Khrghyz, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Suriname, Togo or Turkey. For the US, the way out is to support 'rule of law' and political equality of citizens not just within America but around the world.

An America supporting authoritarian regimes in Pakistan is against America's own long-term interests. Democracy in Pakistan—as America's counterterrorism strategy--actually has the potential of making leaders out of Muslim reformers who do not endorse the extremist agenda. Sans democracy, Pakistan's population bomb, a slow economy and religious extremism are the ideal ingredients of a cocktail fomenting internal conflict.

Democracy does not by definition means religious neutrality. Not many political philosophers have actually ventured into the arena of a 'religious democracy'. Abdolkarim Soroush's *"The Idea of Democratic Religious Government"* (Oxford University Press, 2000) is a genuine effort in that direction. Soroush brings up the notion of a "religious democratic government as an alternative both to clerical/jurisprudential dominance or tutelage and liberal neutrality or indifference." According to Soroush, "Islam emerges not as the enemy of democracy but rather as its ally and sometimes prophetic witness..."

For the half a century Pakistan has been going nowhere. Remember, if you are going nowhere any road will take you there. Since inception, it seems, Pakistan has been at crossroads. From SEATO to CENTO and on to the 'most allied of allies'. From the 'front line state' to a nuclear pariah and on to a 'partner in the war on terror'. From Sher Baz Mazari's 'Journey to disillusionment' to General K.M. Arif's 'Khaki Shadows' and on to Hassan Abbas' 'Pakistan's drift into extremism'.

Seven hundred seventy-eight thousand seven hundred and twenty square kilometers of landmass called Pakistan continues to be in search of a soul. Are we a Muslim state? Are we an Islamic state or are we merely a refuge for Indian Muslims? Does Pakistan exist to benefit Pakistanis or is the sole mission of our State to safeguard the interests of Kashmiris, Taliban, Palestinians, Chechnyans, Bosnians, Kosovians, Uzbeks and Iraqis?

Pakistan has spent a total of 59 days fighting actual wars and 57 years preparing for a full spectrum conflict. That amounts to spending 0.28 percent of our entire lifespan in actual combat and 99.72 percent of our existence just preparing for a war.

In 1947, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan allocated Rs236 million for defense. Ten years later, Prime Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy took the defence budget to almost a billion rupees. The Federal Budget 2004-05 allocated Rs193 billion for defence--a 57-year average compounded growth rate of 12.5 percent a year.

Do we want democracy? We really have two choices. First, join 4 billion people residing in 140 other countries who have reached a consensus on the best form of governance. Second, wait for another 50 years to see if any of the three-dozen authoritarian regimes do actually produce something worthwhile. In the foreseeable future, under the most favorable of scenarios, the best that Pakistan can become is a religiously hyphenated, khaki-influenced electoral democracy.

## End Notes

- (1) 'World Rulers: Heads of State and Prime Ministers'; <http://www.info-regenten.de/regent/regent-e/>
- (2) The Organization of Islamic Conference; <http://www.oic-oci.org/>
- (3) Freedom House; <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>
- (4) Labor Force Survey 2001-2002
- (5) Population Census Organization; Planning Commission, Islamabad; Economic Survey Table 11.2
- (6) Heritage Foundation; 2005 Index of Economic Freedom
- (7) "Soldiers in Business"; The News- Sunday May 25, 2003
- (8) "Uncle Sam, Afghanistan and Iraq"; The News-Sunday February 6, 2005
- (9) CNN-Q&A; Elections in Iraq
- (10) "The World's Most Repressive Regimes"; [www.freedomhouse.org/research/mrr2003.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/mrr2003.pdf)
- (11) "Quranic and non-Quranic Islam"; Brigadier Nazir Ahmed