

WWW.IMMIGVANHEUGTEN.NL

BACKGROUNDER 1990-10

**PAKISTAN: BENAZIR BHUTTO AND
THE LEGACY OF ZIA UL HAQ**

OLIVIER IMMIG & JAN VAN HEUGTEN

OCTOBER 1990

THE NETHERLANDS

PAKISTAN: BENAZIR BHUTTO AND THE LEGACY OF ZIA UL HAQ

On August 6, 1990 the president of Pakistan, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, proclaimed the state of emergency. He dismissed the acting government led by Mrs. Benazir Bhutto, and dissolved the National Assembly. We discuss the backgrounds of the president's decision. We also present an analysis of the achievements of the Bhutto government, and why it lacked major successes.

The death of Zia ul Haq

Immediately after the attempt upon Zia ul Haq's life on August 17, 1988 causing his death as well as that of almost the entire command of the Pakistani army,¹ the state of emergency was proclaimed. According to the conditions of the constitution the acting chairman of the Senate, the 73 year old Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, was appointed interim-president. He announced that the elections, which were supposed to take place on 16 November would be held as scheduled, in spite of all the pressure that was exercised by Zia's ministers to have them postponed and to proclaim martial law. Ishaq Khan gave public notice that he would accept any verdict soon to be delivered by the Supreme Court on the right of political parties to participate in the coming elections. The PPP (Pakistan People's Party), the largest opposition party in the country, had presented this request. On October 2 the Court ruled that political parties were entitled to contest.

The new chief-of-staff, Mirza Aslam Beg, also publicly pleaded for the installation of an elected civilian government. Some observers interpreted this position as a choice made out of fear for the outbreak of large-scale unrest in the country in case martial law would be declared anew. It seems more likely that the military command had decided to remain in the background, well aware as they were of the fact that the armed forces would in any case maintain their powerful position.² Due to the policy of Zia ul Haq the army is strongly represented in many administrative bodies of state. A large number of officers before and after martial law were appointed in high offices of the federal bureaucracy of Pakistan, as well as in other government bodies.

Elections

The elections scheduled by Ul Haq were thus to take place, and for the first time since 1977 the electoral struggle would be fought by political parties. It was obvious that the PPP and the IDA (Islamic Democratic Alliance) would be the main contestants. The PPP had not tasted the privilege of power since general Ul Haq had ousted its founder, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in July 1977.

The PPP had been declared illegal and many of its members found themselves behind bars. Only after the abolishment of martial law on December 30, 1985 did the daughter of Zulfikar Bhutto re-enter the Pakistani political scene. In May 1986 she was elected chairman of the PPP, and her mother Begum Nusrat Bhutto became co-chairman. Soon Benazir Bhutto started a thorough re-organization of the party, whereby she met with strong resistance of members of "the old guard", often being founding-members. They had loyally supported Benazir Bhutto's father but felt unable to cope with the "authoritarian behaviour"³ of his daughter, who did not allow internal party elections. A number of prominent leaders decided to step out of the PPP.⁴

Benazir nominated relatively young party members on important posts. Most of them had a similar background to hers - a high foreign education and descending from rich landed or business families - or they had had leading positions in trade unions or student organizations. Under her leadership the party gradually abandoned its left-wing position, moving to the political centre. The socialist and populist rhetoric of Zulfikar Bhutto were relegated to the past. Benazir concentrated on mobilizing and tapping the large reservoir of discontent that was felt with the UI Haq regime and the rampant corruption. In the PPP-election programme it was emphasized that the ties between cadres and electorate urgently needed repair. Beside this the programme contained few concrete points.

The IDA led by Mian Mohammed Nawaz Sharif was made up of a coalition of nine conservative islamic parties. The IDA, founded in October 1988, was meant in the first place to establish a nationwide counterweight against the PPP. The most important parties taking part in it were the Muslim League (led by former prime minister Junejo) and the Jamaat-i-Islami. Both parties had long supported the UI Haq regime. Their election programs mainly furthered the introduction of conservative islamic principles, and made strong appeals to ethnic solidarity. The Jamaat-i-Islami, for instance, declared itself against any form of birth-control. Education should only be available to boys. Crime and corruption should be dealt with by public corporal punishment.⁵

As was widely expected the PPP emerged as the single largest party out of the elections. It received 39% of all votes, in spite of the remarkably low turn-out of the electorate (40%). Some PPP leaders stated that the obligation for each constituent to possess an identity card had cost the party between 15 and 20 seats in the parliament. It ended up with 93 seats on a total of 207 directly contested ones (the National Assembly has 237 seats).⁶ Candidates of IDA obtained 32% of all votes, ensuring it of 55 representatives in parliament. The third largest party was the MQM (Mohajir Quami Mahaz); it managed to win 13 seats.⁷

The population of Pakistan is anything but evenly distributed over its four provinces. The Punjab is by far the most densely populated area, containing 60% of the 110 million inhabitants of the country. The province of Sind houses 22%, the North West Frontier Province 14%, and Baluchistan only 4% of the Pakistani population. A closer look at the election results shows that the PPP and IDA held a neck and neck race in the Punjab, each contestant winning about 40% of the votes. This gave the PPP 53 seats in the National Assembly,

but only 45 to the IDA. In the homeland of Benazir Bhutto, Sind, the PPP achieved a major victory over the IDA, 46 against 15 percent. That gave the PPP 31 seats in the National Assembly, but none to the IDA. The victory of the PPP thus was largely based on the results in Sind.

Formation of the Bhutto government

No party had succeeded in obtaining a single majority. Under the leadership of Ishaq Khan negotiations to form a coalition were held. The president favoured a coalition as broad as possible, one between PPP and IDA. But the IDA had mainly been founded to effectively combat the "un-islamic" PPP - for years it had been known in Pakistan that free elections would make the PPP the largest party in the country. The PPP itself viewed the Muslim League and the Jamaat-i-Islami as exponents of the repressive Ul Haq regime par excellence, collaborators that even during the state of martial law, but especially since 1985, had closely co-operated with the military. For the Pakistani political scene it would have meant a welcome breakthrough if the PPP and the IDA had been able to find ways to work together, but the wounds of the past had not yet healed.

The PPP decided to form a coalition-government with the MQM. Since most independent members of parliament supported it, the coalition could count on a majority in the assembly. Nevertheless it turned out to be a political monstrosity. The MQM supporters live mainly in the cities Karachi and Hyderabad, in the province of Sind: in Karachi the party even received 57 percent of all votes. Since the PPP had its base in Sind as well the new government formed an easy target for accusations by the opposition, especially from the oppositional forces in the powerful Punjab province. It was said that Sindi interests were favoured. The MQM was founded in the first place to further the interests of the socially and economically threatened mohajirs (immigrants from India and their offspring). The MQM thus united the mohajirs against the original Sindi population - the natural PPP-following!

On December 1, 1988 Ishaq Khan appointed Benazir Bhutto prime minister. At the same time he announced the end of the state of emergency, as well as the dissolution of the supervising Emergency Council. The next day Mrs. Bhutto was inaugurated, becoming the first female prime minister of a muslim country in modern history. In her inaugural address she thanked Ishaq Khan and chief-of-staff Aslam Beg for resisting "anti-democratic pressures", thus enabling democracy to be restored. A few days later her cabinet was sworn in.

Most ministers were newly appointed on their government posts, due to the re-organization of the party Benazir Bhutto had carried out since 1986. But there were also familiar faces. A number of ministers and advisors had already served under Zulfikar Bhutto. The important position of minister of Foreign Affairs was retained by Yakub Khan, who showed Talleyrand-like qualities. Once he co-operated with Zulfikar Bhutto; then

he functioned as Ul Haq's foreign minister for years. Mohammad Hanif Khan, who previously had been minister under Zulfikar Bhutto, now became the new minister of States, Frontier Regions and Kashmir Affairs. On December 12, 1988 the Bhutto government carried the constitutionally required vote of confidence through the National Assembly. The coalition received 148 of 237 votes. All independent members had supported the new government.

On the same day Ishaq Khan was appointed president for a term of five years by the assembled meeting of Senate, National Assembly and the provincial parliaments. His nomination was supported by Bhutto, although Ishaq Khan had been closely involved with Zia ul Haq. For one he had been minister of Finance. The newly elected chairman of the Senate, controlled by the opposition,⁸ became Wasim Sajjad Jan from the IDA.

Provincial elections and coalitions

On November 19, 1988, three days after the national elections, the population of Pakistan went to the ballot boxes once more, this time to elect representatives for the four provincial parliaments. Both PPP and IDA were less successful than they had been in the national elections.

Political parties in Pakistan are based on extensive networks of patronage. Each political organization needs to win over the most influential local figures for its policy. They might be persuaded by argument, but more often lucrative functions and large amounts of money do the job. In the national elections many Pakistani were willing to give the PPP a new chance to rule the country. In the provincial elections differentiating local interests determine the outcome. People vote on figures of local grandeur (large estate owners, factory directors, tribal leaders) since they expect immediate returns of them. The provincial elections indicate at best how successful the larger parties eventually have been in recruiting important local leaders.

In the province of Punjab a neck and neck race again took place between PPP and IDA. Each contestant now received 33% of the votes, but this time that resulted in 108 seats for the IDA and 94 seats for the PPP in the 240 seats Punjab parliament. The remaining 38 seats were won by independent candidates. These unanimously supported the IDA, enabling it to form the Punjab government. National opposition leader Nawaz Sharif subsequently became its prime minister. In the NWFP the IDA became the single largest party as well, winning 28 of the 80 available seats. The PPP obtained 20 seats, and after agreeing to form a coalition with the third largest leftwing Awami National Party (12 seats) and receiving the support of some independent members, it made up the NWFP government. In Sind the PPP established an outright majority (winning 67 out of 100 seats), but nevertheless started a coalition government there with the MQM. In Baluchistan the PPP won only 4 out of 40 seats. Here it even tried to form a coalition government with the IDA, its arch-rival in

national politics. This coalition only lasted for a short while, whereafter the PPP became an opposition party. In 1989 the coalitions with the Awami National Party and the MQM would be dissolved as well.

The Bhutto government policy

Since the PPP had not been able to win a majority in the national elections, it formed, even together with the MQM, a minority government only. The PPP-MQM government could not survive without the support of the independent members of parliament. Government bills that implied an amendment of the constitution needed a twothird majority, which the government lacked. Amendments of the constitution could only be executed with the support of the oppositional IDA. The provincial elections had resulted in PPP governments in only two out of four provinces. In the most important province, Punjab, the national government saw itself confronted for the first time in Pakistan history by an oppositional provincial government.

After the altogether not very successful elections some members of the PPP argued that it would be preferable for the PPP to stay out of government and become an opposition party.⁹ But such a decision was far from Benazir's mind, the road to national power now finally being open to the PPP. Her new cabinet did make an energetic start. Thousands of political prisoners were released, trade unions and student organizations were legally acknowledged, and the media no longer were censored. Unfortunately, these have remained the most important measures the government took. It managed to stay in power for twenty months, which can be considered a major achievement.

Already by the end of November 1988 the new prime minister of the Punjab, Nawaz Sharif, announced that he would not allow the Bhutto government to actually govern, and he kept his word. Political democracy in Pakistan has not been firmly established. Since the creation of the country in 1947 it was more often led by the military than by civilian politicians. Organized opposition was hardly tolerated by the military command. The same process takes place again nowadays. The Jamaat-i-Islami party considers itself the true heir of Ul Haq's policy. It calls PPP members "terrorists", precisely as it did during the days of martial law. The PPP still was not prepared to accept the legal existence of the IDA and to recognize the validity of the political claims it made. Government and opposition incessantly tried to eliminate each other, using all available methods.

A major stumbling-block to the Bhutto government turned out to be the existence of the constitution as amended by Zia ul Haq. Before the general had ended the state of martial law he had forced the National Assembly (elected in February 1985) to accept a number of amendments that radically altered the constitution of 1973. Thus the powers of the president were considerably enhanced, who at that time happened to be Ul Haq himself. In the notorious Eight Amendment the president received unlimited executive power. He appointed the prime minister and all ministers who were supposed to form an advisory body only. The presi-

dent also appointed the provincial governors, to whom the provincial parliaments were made subordinate, as well as judges and a number of civil servants. He could also veto decisions by parliament for a period of 45 days.¹⁰

In 1985 a heavily debated amendment that granted future immunity to the executives of martial law was passed as well. It meant that no court had the authority to question the legality of the measures taken by the appropriate martial law authorities. The Bhutto government was unable to undo this amendment, since it could not muster the required twothird majority to do so. This also kept existing fiscal and political relations between national and provincial governments unchanged. It also turned out to be quite difficult to make any change in the authority or rulings of judges who had been appointed by Ul Haq. Laws that curtailed the civil rights of females and minorities could not be changed either.

Co-operation with the IDA would have been the only possible road to create a truly governable Pakistan. But the IDA viewed the constitutional problems to the PPP-government as useful obstacles in limiting its powers. Former prime minister Junejo who described the Eight Amendment in 1985 as "a bitter pill", now considered it to be "a constructive measure". And the secretary-general of the Muslim League, former minister of Justice Iqbal Ahmed Khan, characterized the constitution as "a sacred trust".¹¹

An attempt by the PPP to have the constitutional changes of 1985 declared null and void by the Supreme Court, failed. On October 23, 1989 the Supreme Court declared itself to be incompetent on the matter. Ishaq Khan thus received the same extensive authority that Ul Haq had possessed, causing many conflicts of competence between president and prime minister. Both tried to extend the limits of their authority. Ishaq Khan, who claimed to be fully impartial in interpreting and applying his constitutional rights, soon disputed the right of the prime minister to appoint higher judges and military officers.

Bhutto and Ishaq Khan even refused to hold formal consultations for a period of four months. They only arranged a meeting shortly before an oppositional vote of no-confidence against the government was tabled. They succeeded in finding a compromise. Bhutto probably had acutely become aware of her political vulnerability. Only shortly before, the MQM had decided to leave the coalition government in order to form a coalition with the IDA, under the name of Combined Opposition Party (COP). The president wished to avoid a national political crisis in a period of rapidly deteriorating relations with India.¹²

Central authority versus provincial autonomy

Before ending their rule over the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the British held a referendum, giving the population the opportunity to choose between living in a moslem- (Pakistan) or in a hindustate (India). A basic problem of the federal state Pakistan ever since is that the country lacks national coherence. As often is the

case, the common denominator of Islam was not enough to bridge ethnic differences. In 1971 East Pakistan fought a war of secession with the military support of India, and became independent. In Pakistan today great tensions exist between the large ethnic groups - the Punjabi, Pashtuns, Baluch, Sindi and Mohajirs. The Mohajirs do not have a specific territory of their own. Zia ul Haq tried to overcome the ethnic differences by means of an Islamization policy. This, however, did not lead to the intended result - on the contrary: the existing contrasts were even aggravated. For within the Islamic religion there are many creeds. There are the Shi'ite and Sunni interpretations, and within every interpretation there exists a diversification in orthodox, fundamentalistic and moderate trends. Therefore many Pakistani did not accept Zia's (in fact rather moderate) interpretation to be the correct one.¹³

There is no solution yet either to the problem of the interrelationship between the national, federal government and the provincial governments. This relationship was described in the 1973 Constitution, and also in "Zia's Constitution" of 1985. The provinces were granted autonomy to a large extent. The federal government would deal only with a limited number of affairs such as national defence and foreign affairs. In other fields - such as education, health, industrial development and infrastructure - the governments ought to cooperate. The problem is that neither the form of this co-operation nor the competence of the participating authorities has ever been settled in detail.

Already under the reign of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977), for example, a Council of Common Interests (CCI) was to have been founded. The members of this council should have been the four prime ministers of the provinces and four ministers of the federal government. Among other things the CCI should have taken care of a more equal distribution of the revenues of gas and the production of electricity among the producing provinces of Sind, the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Provinces would be able to appeal against decisions of the CCI to a joint session of the National Assembly and the Senate.

However, the CCI was never formally established. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was confronted with a strong secession movement in Baluchistan. Shortly after the constitution was accepted he declared the state of emergency. Under Zia ul Haq the constitution was even entirely suspended till 1986. Ever since, the federal government decides on the destination of all public revenue.¹⁴ The government of Benazir Bhutto too refused to found the CCI. The main reason for this refusal seems to have been that the PPP would have no majority in a joint session of National Assembly and Senate.

During the election campaign the PPP was in favour of more provincial autonomy, the IDA on the other hand opted for a stronger central authority. After the electoral victory by the PPP both parties changed their points of view drastically. The PPP now wanted a strong central government. And the wealthy businessman Nawaz Sharif, who became prime minister of the Punjab in December 1988, wanted a large measure of autonomy for his provincial government. Since, Sharif has been complaining that the Pakistani state is dominated by the Sindi. This made no sense at all because the Punjabi control the armed forces and the

bureaucracy. But Sharif's verbal activities were highly dangerous to the Bhutto government and undermined the fragile political stability of Pakistan. Of course, Sharif wanted the CCI to be founded, and in his efforts he was backed by the prime minister of Baluchistan. By now Sharif has founded a provincial bank and plans to found a provincial television station, both matters which were the monopoly of the federal government.

Violence in Sind

A major threat to the Bhutto government was posed by the unabated violence in Sind. After the partition of British India large groups of moslems migrated from India to Pakistan. Most of them settled down in Sind, particularly in the cities of Karachi and Hyderabad. These Urdu-speaking immigrants ("mohajirs") had a better education than the local population and they soon held leading positions. The Sindi began to feel discriminated because of this. In the 1970's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto tried to restore the balance by giving the Sindi an easier access to the universities. Also he made the Sindi language obligatory. As a result of these measures now the mohajirs for their part felt discriminated, and they organized themselves in the MQM. This party demands the recognition of the mohajirs as a distinct ethnic group which is entitled to a province in Pakistan of its own. In order to achieve this Karachi should be seperated from the rest of Sind. This, in turn, has led to nationalist movements amongst the Sindi.

Since the war in Afghanistan a huge black market for weaponry and drugs has come into existence. The conflict in Sind has escalated. Frequently there are outbursts of violence between the heavily-armed youth movements of the PPP and the MQM. In this climate crime is prospering, and kidnappings of wealthy captains of industry and landowners have become an everyday feature. The police could not do much against this, assumingly because they are corrupt themselves or take sides in the political conflict.

Under Benazir Bhutto there were new outbursts of violence, and she felt compelled to call on the help of the army chief-of-staff Mirza Aslam Beg (a mohajir himself), who wanted to have free scope to deal with the violence, that is by declaring martial law in the province. However, the Bhutto government did not allow him the permission to do so, for fear that the army would become too powerful again.¹⁵

Economic problems

Perhaps the problems facing the Bhutto government would have been easier to deal with if the economic situation had been better. But in this regard Zia ul Haq's legacy was a foreign debt of 14 billion dollars and a structurally weak economy.

Still, Pakistan under Zia ul Haq experienced a continuing economic growth of 6 to 7 percent each year, exceeding by far the high increase in population (3 percent). Therefore, the income per capita increased substantially, during the years 1983-1988 up to 4 percent annually. The agricultural production increased steadily because of a well functioning system of subsidies. Minimum prices for farmers were guaranteed by the government, and at the same time maximum prices for the consumer were fixed. Under Ul Haq there was also a growth in industrial production. In order to stimulate the development of the still young industrial sector, the government tried to limit imports by means of import barriers and -since 1983- tariffs. Companies were allowed credits under favourable terms, and more often than not they were exempted from taxation.

For a great deal the economic growth under Ul Haq had been possible only by acquiring foreign capital. The Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in particular brought about an enormous increase in development funds. Also exports increased. And Pakistani working in the oil states (10 percent of working population) sent their money to their relatives in Pakistan. Most of them are working in the oil-industry. Furthermore, there are several thousands of Pakistani troops detached in the armies of the Gulf states. Shortly after the outbreak of the Kuwait-crisis the interim-government of Jatoi took the initiative to send 5000 soldiers extra to Saudi Arabia, as the Pakistani contribution to the Arab peace force there. Also Islamabad decided to meet with the request of the Iraqi regime to send food to the 130.000 Pakistani in Iraq and Kuwait.

Imports however, of luxury items in particular, easily exceeded exports. The current account deficit therefore grew and national debt increased. At the end of 1988 the national debt of Pakistan amounted to 17,5 billion dollars. The overall fiscal deficit was 7,5 percent of the GDP, which is not an extreme high rate. In 1989 the current account deficit was 1,7 billion dollars, a slight improvement compared to 1988 (1,9 billion dollars). This had been brought about by much higher export income (plus 23 percent!) and by a rise in home remittances by migrant-workers.¹⁶

Under Ul Haq about 40 percent of the budget was devoted to military expenditures. An equal share was devoted to debt repayment. Also in the fiscal year 1989-1990 under the Bhutto government 80 percent of the budget was spent this way. What remained was spent on development projects and production subsidies. Health and education were used again to balance the budget. A basic problem is that revenues from taxation are very small. The big landlords are exempted from taxation. Still the agrarian sector is the single largest one in the Pakistani economy. Only a quarter of just 4 million tax payers actually do pay taxes. There are few companies which are not exempted from taxation. What remained to the government were the revenues from indirect taxation and high import duties.

Shortly after the death of Zia ul Haq there had been negotiations on a new loan with the IMF. In full awareness of the serious economic problems, the interim-government decided to embark on a structural re-adjustment plan for the years 1988-1991. By its agreement with the IMF, in October 1988, the government engaged to restrain the growth of domestic credit, and to reduce the budget deficit by lowering subsidies and

imposing higher direct and indirect taxation.¹⁷ Belt-tightening and increasing revenues ought to reduce inflation; the budget deficit (8,4 percent) had to be brought back to 4,8 percent of the GDP. Also the economic growth had to be maintained at at least 5 percent. The Bhutto government agreed to continue the IMF-program but it succeeded in bargaining some less harsh conditions. The agreement was extended to four years. Adjustments were necessary. At the end of 1988 the agricultural production appeared to be less than expected because of floods, and also the industrial production stayed behind, mainly because of the ethnic violence in Sind. In particular Karachi, the most important industrial centre of the country, and Hyderabad suffered from a drop in investments, due to the disturbances.

Among Pakistani politicians and economists there was a broad consensus about the necessity of the IMF-program. The rupee was devaluated, import duties were lowered, and the export of agricultural products was strongly stimulated. Price supports were reduced drastically. Despite a measure to increase minimum wages, most Pakistani saw their real income falling behind because of the higher prices on essential goods. The privatisation of state-owned companies, which had started under Zia ul Haq, was continued by the Bhutto government. The report on the fiscal year 1989-1990 showed that the government had succeeded in maintaining economic growth on a rate of more than 5 percent, and that inflation was reduced from 10,7 to 5,7 percent.¹⁸

After the agreement with the IMF and the World Bank it was virtually impossible for the government to negotiate new loans. In order to reduce the budget deficit in 1990 the only thing left to do was in fact to introduce a drastic reform of the tax system. Such a reform was not presented by the government, however. In the 1990-1991 budget the government hoped to increase revenue by improving the collection of taxes. Indirect taxation had to increase, partly by the introduction of a General Sales Tax on July 1, 1990. For the fiscal year 1990-1991 the government continued to aim at real GDP growth at 5,5 percent.

Afghanistan and Kashmir

From the start the Bhutto government had to deal with some serious problems in the foreign policy field. At the end of 1988 Soviet troops were preparing to leave neighbouring Afghanistan. Not so the secret services of the Pakistan army, ISI (Inter Services Intelligence), however. The ISI was in fact getting ever more involved in operations of the Afghan resistance groups against the communist regime in Kabul. The ISI had pre-eminently been the organization within the army which strongly supported Ul Haq. Therefore, it was considered a serious threat to the new PPP-government, particularly if the latter should decide to reduce the power of the ISI in any respect -either people or rupies.

On the other hand the PPP had changed its official policy regarding the conflict in Afghanistan and the contending parties. Before the PPP was led by Benazir and Nusrat Bhutto it was in favour of expelling all Afghan resistance groups and all three million refugees, and of closing the Pakistan-Afghan border. During those years the PPP was still part of the MRD (Movement for the Restoration of Democracy). The Afghan capital Kabul was one of the bases from where the MRD was operating against the regime of UL Haq. Since 1986 the Afghanistan policy of the PPP has become much more moderate, and it even resembles the policy of Zia ul Haq. In the meantime the co-operation between the parties making up the MRD had already become very loose.

By February 1989 the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan had been completed. Ever since, it has been more quiet on Pakistan's Western border. In the course of 1989 the Bhutto government succeeded in diminishing the ISI as a threatening political force. Contributing to this was the fact that the attempts of the Afghan resistance to recapture, with the support of the ISI, a major town in Afghanistan, failed completely. Besides, both the Bhutto government and the Bush Administration thought it high time to reconsider the destination of the weaponry sent to a number of Afghan resistance groups. The fundamentalistic resistance group Hezb-i-Islami had been the absolute favourite of Zia ul Haq for taking over power in Kabul. Now more U.S.-weapons started to flow to its main rival, the more moderate Jamiyat-i-Islami. Afghanistan had been a predominant factor during the years of the UL Haq regime; since 1989 its importance began to wane.

In the meantime the United States and the Soviet Union came to the agreement that only free elections in Afghanistan can put an end to the continuing war.¹⁹ Baker and Shevardnadze did not decide, however, to stop the deliverances of huge quantities of weapons to their respective clients. And so far the United Nations program of repatriating the Afghan refugees has hardly produced any results. Therefore, the millions of Afghan "guests" will probably stay in Pakistan a long time yet.²⁰

Another problem in the foreign policy field Bhutto had to deal with, is of a more permanent nature than the Afghan problem. By the end of 1989 it appeared that Kashmir would become a casus belli again between India and Pakistan. The latest outbursts of violence in Jammu & Kashmir, the Indian part, led to reciprocal accusations and brought the armies of both countries in a state of alarm. A fourth war about Kashmir seemed impending, but it was avoided after consultations between Bhutto and the Indian prime minister Singh. A new war between India and Pakistan might even develop into a nuclear confrontation. Military experts believe that both countries possess nuclear devices. Pakistan has always denied that it possesses nuclear weapons. The American government is committed to stop all economic and military aid to Islamabad should it be proved that Pakistan does possess nuclear weapons.²¹

Since July 1949 Kashmir is divided by a cease fire line between Pakistan and India. This line had been imposed by the United Nations awaiting the outcome of a plebiscite. The population would be given the choice of joining either India or Pakistan. Both countries had agreed to hold such a plebiscite. After having fought the last of the three "non-declared" wars about Kashmir, Pakistan and India agreed in Simla that the issue would be

solved bilaterally and in a peaceful manner. However, since 1984 there have been thousands of Pakistani and Indian troops on the Siachen glacier. Despite temperatures that can fall to minus 60 degree C and altitudes of over 8000 metres there have been skirmishes regularly.

No Indian government will organize a plebiscite. Still, the large majority of Jammu & Kashmir is moslem. Because of this the successive Pakistani governments have insisted that a plebiscite should be held. For the outcome seems to be clear in advance.

The governments in Islamabad have called this the "right of self-determination". Indian accusations that Pakistan is arming and training moslem-guerillas were strongly denied by the Bhutto government. No Pakistani government, however, has ever denied that it morally supports the fight for independence of the population of Kashmir.

The Kashmir issue is a sensitive one for the Pakistani. The "k" in Pakistan stands for "Kashmir". The founders of the Pakistani state did not foresee that the maharaja of Kashmir, a hindu, would decide to join his kingdom to India. The treaty of October 26, 1947 which stipulates this step, has never been recognized by Pakistan.

Perspectives

In an official reaction to the death of Zia ul Haq the PPP issued a short statement: "Internationally, Zia may be remembered as the man who stood up to the Soviets after they entered Afghanistan, but in Pakistan he will be remembered as the man who illegally seized power, and after eleven and a half years of repressive rule, left nothing behind: debt and mortgages, hunger and unemployment, exploitation and discrimination, drugs and corruption."²² Indeed, Zia ul Haq may be held at least partly responsible for this, but after governing Pakistan for a year and a half the PPP itself is responsible for some abuse. This is particularly true for the relationship with other political parties, not only with the IDA but also with "partners" like the MQM and the NAP.

The reasons president Ghulam Ishaq Khan mentioned on August 6 for dismissing the Bhutto government, were quite similar to the accusations stated in the vote of no-confidence on November 1, 1989 - corruption of government officials, and a government which is responsible for ethnic violence and growing unemployment. Ishaq Khan also mentioned "nepotism". Because of these observations he came to the conclusion that the PPP-government no longer enjoyed the confidence of the majority of the people of Pakistan.

Although the Bhutto government had been able to survive the frontal attack by the Combined Opposition Parties (COP) in November 1989, this had been a sign of things to come. Even earlier, in July of that year, the present interim-prime minister Jatoi had spoken of "the continuing corruption and nepotism". Which

he had called "a major blow to those who had welcomed a democratic government after eleven years of military rule".²³

However, Benazir Bhutto calls all accusations against her government and her husband "untrue" and "made-up". She said she would welcome the legal proceedings as had been announced by Jatoi. Corrupt people, she said, should not take part in governments.²⁴ It was striking that she did not blame president Ishaq Khan for the dismissal of the government. She said the president, who was under pressure by the army and the opposition, could not have acted otherwise. For this reason she qualified her dismissal as "a constitutional coup".

It is very unlikely that the charges brought against the PPP government and Bhutto's husband Asif Zardari, are completely unfounded. Unfortunately, similar accusations could probably be made against the leaders of the IDA. Lawsuits might develop into spectacular confrontations between members of the various political parties.

The question remains what the army and the islamic parties will do if the PPP wins the elections of October 24. Chief-of-Staff Mirza Aslam Beg has repeatedly stated that the army will "stay where it belongs, in the barracks". The military would no longer aspire to play a role in the political process. There is enough reason, however, to doubt these words. Ishaq Khan has told senior diplomats that in reality he had to dismiss the government in order "to prevent extra-constitutional actions and to preserve democracy", in other words: to prevent a military coup!²⁵ Benazir Bhutto was already in dispute with Aslam Beg over how to deal with the ethnic violence in Sind, and she seemed to have infuriated the general when she attempted to interfere in promotions of senior officers.²⁶

Both president Ishaq Khan and interim-prime minister Jatoi have declared in public that they will respect the outcome of the elections, whatever the result. Both Pakistani democracy and the Pakistan people would gain a lot if this principle is lived up to by all political parties and in particular by the army. A real breakthrough would be if the political parties treated each other no longer as enemies but as political opponents. Only the willingness of the major political parties to arrive at some form of co-operation will turn Pakistan into a country which really can be governed.

Notes

1. The Pakistan-American fact-finding commission that investigated the course of the disaster, produced a voluminous report that unfortunately has not been published to this day. Interim-minister of Defence Mahmood Haroon stated that he could not guarantee the publication of the report, since it might "damage Pakistan's national interests". Its most important conclusion was made public, however: the crash had been the result of an act of criminal sabotage in the plane. Also consult the article in the magazine *Vanity Fair* by the American journalist Edward Jay Epstein, "God's Will or Sabotage? The last flight of Zia ul Haq". In the Netherlands it was published in the weekly *Intermediair*, August 11, 1989, pp. 5-15 + 43.
2. Compare Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "The legacy of military rule in Pakistan", *Survival*, vol 31, no 3 (May-June 1989), pp. 256-257; Rodney W. Jones, "Pakistan and the United States: partners after Afghanistan", *The Washington Quarterly*, vol 12, no 3 (Summer 1989), p. 69; and Paula R. Newberg, "Pakistan at the edge of democracy", *World Policy Journal*, Summer 1989, p. 366.
3. Jatoi on August 28, 1986. Also in Jones, o.c., p. 68.
4. Important leaders stepping out of the PPP in Sind were Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, Abdul Hafiz Pirzada and Benazir's uncle Mumtaz Bhutto. Among the departing leaders in the Punjab were Ghulam Mustafa Khar and Haneef Ramay. They all began their own political parties, or joined existing ones.
5. See on corporal punishment under the Ul Haq regime: Charles H. Kennedy, "Islamization in Pakistan: implementation of the Hudood Ordinances", *Asian Survey*, vol 28, no 3 (March 1988), pp. 307-316.
6. The National Assembly contains 207 seats for directly elected members. Next to those there are 20 reserved seats for women - to be elected by the other members of the Assembly - and 10 seats for religious minorities, that bring out their vote for their candidates separately.
7. In by-elections held on January 28, 1989, the MQM won another seat.
8. The Senate has 87 members. Senate elections take place every six years. The last elections were held in March 1985 - which were boycotted by the PPP because political parties were not allowed to take part. The next election is scheduled for March 1991. Then half of the number of seats will be contested.
9. Compare with John Bray, "Pakistan: the democratic balance-sheet", *The World Today*, vol 46, no 6 (June 1990), p. 111.
10. Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "The civilianization of military rule in Pakistan", *Asian Survey*, vol 26, no 10 (October 1986), pp. 1070-1071; see also Newberg, o.c., pp. 368-369. For an overview of constitutional amendments made by the Ul Haq regime, consult: Directorate of Films and Publications, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of Pakistan, *Pakistan 1986. An official handbook*, Islamabad, September 1986, pp. 35-44.
11. In: Newberg, o.c., p. 369.
12. Bray, o.c., p. 111.
13. See Lawrence Ziring, "Public policy dilemmas and Pakistan's nationality problem: the legacy of Zia ul-Haq", *Asian Survey*, vol 28, no 8 (August 1988), pp. 795-812.
14. See also *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 4, 1990, p. 12.
15. See *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 9, 1990, pp. 17-18.

16. *Pakistan & Gulf Economist*, June 16-22, 1990, p. 14.
17. See for example Alexandre Dastarac en M. Levent, "Le Pakistan à hue et à dia", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1990, p. 20; and *Pakistan & Gulf Economist*, February 3-9, 1990, pp. 22-25.
18. *Pakistan & Gulf Economist*, June 16-22, 1990, p. 10.
19. *NRC Handelsblad*, August 2, 1990.
20. In the domestic policy area Bhutto's Afghanistan policy led to the breaking up of the provincial coalition in the North-West Frontier Province. The PPP's coalition partner, the leftist ANP (Awami National Party), criticized Bhutto's Afghanistan policy and it demanded that an ANP-governor should be appointed in the NWFP. Because of the important role of the governor in this area at the Pakistan-Afghan border, the Pakistan army staff and reputedly also the United States did not want such an appointment. Therefore, the PPP refused. After which the ANP withdrew from the coalition and joined the IDA.
21. Compare Thomas P. Thornton, "The new phase in U.S.-Pakistani relations", *Foreign Affairs*, vol 68, no 1 (Autumn 1989), pp. 154-155; and Iftikhar H. Malik, "The Pakistan-U.S. security relationship: testing bilateralism", *Asian Survey*, vol 30, no 3 (March 1990), pp. 293-298.
22. *The Washington Post*, August 20, 1988. Also in: Shahid Javed Burki, "Pakistan under Zia, 1977-1988", *Asian Survey*, vol 28, no 10 (October 1988), p. 1082.
23. *Middle East Economic Digest*, August 4, 1989, p. 9.
24. Interview with Benazir Bhutto in the programme "Newsdesk", BBC Worldservice August 8, 1990.
25. *The Times*, August 10, 1990.
26. *The Times*, August 14, 1990.

Published on this site: March 2009



Published previously as:

Jan van Heugten & Olivier Immig, *Pakistan: Benazir Bhutto and the legacy of Zia ul Haq*,
Amsterdam [SCAR Foundation] October 1990