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Musharraf's success story

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Imtiaz Alam

With \$3 billion in grant, two agreements on economic framework and science and technology and a full US backing for the reforms he is undertaking as the most favoured US partner, COAS-President General Pervez Musharraf will be coming home as our viceroy who have secured all his flanks but a noisy opposition. The economy is not doing bad, law and order is in manageable limits, parliamentary majority too docile, judiciary on the wages of extension and talks with India on the cards as our great General had desired. What else is needed to be a successful ruler while armed forces are too obedient in following their chief? Silencing or co-opting the opposition, if not so what?

This is just not the irony of history, but the history of real politic that Pakistan has had always enjoyed warm relationship with the US under the men in uniform. Not incidental as it may seem since there is a discernible pattern of client/patron relationship that have kept the dependent state in its right place and under the military lead

led to the democratisation of Pakistan only when the armed forces were also sufficiently weakened, as it happened after the defeat in 1971 war.

Second, the extended and over-developed security structures abandoned by the patron in the aftermath of the Afghan jihad had to struggle for the alternative modes of survival and compensate for the security deficit created by the neglect of the US. Creating a "strategic depth" in Afghanistan, extending the jihadi mission or a low-cost and low-intensity conflict to Kashmir against a five-time bigger adversary were some of the substitutes that the military strategists found to compensate for the loss of US patronage. During this period, when the security structures had become too powerful, Pakistan failed to consolidate its republican basis and all five elected governments became a victim of the machinations of autonomous security structures. Although the advantage of Jihadi paradigm turned into a big disadvantage for Pakistan in the late 90s, it was cashed into an advantage after the 9/11 when the forgotten client was brought back into the client-patron relationship.

erals might misconstrue. There is no better ally of the US in its war against terrorism than General Musharraf, as stated by President Bush. Even though the constitutional opposition may resent, it helps Islamabad while it prepares to engage India into negotiations backed by the US and the whole international community. By going and taking along the international community, General Musharraf has secured and consolidated his position for the current tenure, if not more.

The real problem that dogs the establishment is alienation and the opposition at home. The opposition's fight for the restoration of 1973 Constitution and its rejection of Legal Framework Order (LFO) finds no and will not find sympathetic ears in the world capitals until the job of cleansing terrorism remains unfinished. The General defended wearing his uniform, keeping 58-2(b) and National Security Council while rejecting democracy that is not "sustainable" in Washington before his 'freedom-loving' American hosts. It may be a matter of shame for the US administration, but not for the plain-speaking General. He says what he is and without pretensions. This is quite incidental that he keeps both the

its side to become an alternative to General Musharraf. Both of its main planks of liberalism and a moderate foreign policy have been hijacked by General Musharraf who has shown a greater distaste to accommodate its leader in exile than embracing *mulahs*. Unlike the PPP, the Nawaz league while in wilderness sees no hesitation in joining hands with the MMA.

After his successful visit to the US, a strengthened General Musharraf can, at best, talk to the opposition with a position of strength or simply ignore it and, even worse, crush it. Yet, he will have to realize that political destabilization at home, which is bound to increase, can cost him heavily since he will not be able to deliver on the counts he is considered useful by the international community. The opposition can, at least, spoil his prospects, if not wreck the boat. His added strength should allow him to concede some space to the opposition to keep his "sustainable democracy" going. What is quite disturbing is that General Musharraf's half-baked liberalism and a reluctant moderation in foreign policy will preempt the emergence of a genuine liberal platform as an alternative to the religious extremists, on the

right place and under the military leadership that matters in a national security state. Starting with F. M. Ayub Khan, when Pakistan became a "most allied ally" to Gen Yahya Khan, who became the bridge for Sino-US thaw, and Gen Ziaul Haq, who fought for the 'free word' in Afghanistan against the bulwark of a bipolar world — the former USSR. Under General Musharraf, Pakistan has been performing a good job of eliminating the children of United States' Afghan jihad — the al-Qaeda, the Taliban and of their likes.

In theoretical terms, it may look iniquitous, as a client state Pakistan remained in the orbit of a 'responsible state' when embedded with the imperial power structures of US. As and when this relationship loosened and the most allied ally forgotten, it either took the path of a republic, as under Z. A. Bhutto, or got closer to be dubbed as a "rogue/failed state", prior to 9/11. Two opposite consequences emerged from the same reason (of loosening of client/patron relationship): First, the "attention deficit" on the part of the US

The difference this time, however, is that the religious right, who had been an ally of the US jihad against the satanic USSR in Afghanistan, broke ranks, and the khaki-mullah axis that had been strengthened since 1977 was disturbed after jihadi paradigm that combined the two was replaced with pragmatic partnership in a new war against the surrogates of yesteryear — the veterans of Afghan jihad. Regardless of democratic pretensions that were at their peak during former US President Clinton's visit to Pakistan, who even refused to be photographed with the host, the same General Musharraf has been given a protocol by the sitting US President no other South Asian leader has ever been given by inviting him to the Camp David.

Although there are certain strings attached to the \$3 billion fresh package, as stated by the US officials, they are just to keep the General on track and not to disrupt his version of "sustainable democracy" some fate-less lib-

quite incidental that he keeps both the time-frames open-ended: for the elimination of terrorism and keeping his uniform since both are interlinked.

On the other hand, the opposition, especially the privileged religious opposition, plays into the hands of General Musharraf by raising those issues that make him even more popular with the international community. Although the opposition is right in its opposition to the LFO, but it is — the Mutahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) in particular — almost entirely wrong on national security issues. The religious opposition is fighting for a cause that has already been lost just not on one front. While knowing it too well, it is doing so to keep its constituency growing without losing the stakes it has got in keeping the system going. Despite its hue and cry on foreign policy issues, the MMA will keep its share in power while providing General Musharraf the 'necessary support' with its opposition of his pragmatic foreign policy.

Although the liberal PPP understands this dilemma, the time is not on

germane liberal platform as an alternative to the religious extremists, on the one hand, and reinforce the religious right, on the other.

However, it will be fatal to exclude the MMA who should be sucked into the system. The religious forces have entered the mainstream for the first time and will take time to adjust with the system as they taste the fruits of power. Similarly, the liberal opposition should be allowed space to play its role, rather than push it into the lap of the religious right. A compromise is still possible. But for that to happen, General Musharraf should be contended with No. 1 position, instead of grabbing No. 2, No. 3 and No. 4 positions at the same time. Such a total concentration of power in his hands will not only be lethal for him, but also for the state and its institutions. There can be a give and take within a time-frame over all provisions of LFO. But the question is: Will he look beyond his nose?

The writer is a staff member
imtiazalampak@yahoo.com