

National security and corruption

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A number of rationalizations are given for the wars that take place within states, and between states. A look behind the scenes will reveal why peace is not an option in many cases. The establishment in Pakistan has its own peculiar set of rationalizations for justifying regime change through extraordinary, and not constitutional means. In Pakistan such changes in the status quo are justified by saying the situation had become intolerable because of bad governance, institutional failure, corruption, malpractice and the like. The truth usually is that when a power group within the establishment becomes strong enough to challenge authority and institutions, and wants a larger share of the pie it takes advantage of the fault lines within state structures and society to get it. After setting up shop governments established through extraordinary means tend to do exactly what previous governments were doing.

The traditional justification for army takeovers and coup d'etats in Pakistan has been corruption, poor governance and the poor state of law and order. Such conditions are created during the tenure of civilian governments because, apart from other things, civil governments do not exercise authority over the domestic political agenda of the establishment. The political wing of the establishment is careful to choose docile allies that do not threaten or challenge its authority and it systematically undermines those who can challenge its principals by using a network of interactive agencies that smother dissenters and use a staggering range of methods for doing so. The present regime has employed a multi-pronged and staggered approach



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mination of the Kashmiri people, despite the belief of some cynics that such matters are not decided on the basis of principles but for pragmatic considerations. A country that does not respect the civil and political rights of its own population will find it difficult to serve as the liberator of others. Members of the Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA) took part in the general elections after their educational qualifications were accepted as the equivalent of a Bachelor of Arts degree. This educational qualification was made mandatory for participating in the elections through the promulgation of an ordinance. Faced with opposition to the acceptance of the Legal Framework Order without debate, the government has established a precedent for the disqualification of all those MNAs who do not hold regular BA degrees but hold their previously acceptable equivalent (Kohat, June 30, 2003). This was bound to happen and that it has happened after the conclusion of Mr Musharraf's visit to the United States is not surprising.

discontinued and electricity was disconnected. The area is now under the control of armed forces personnel, not the civil authorities.

In a follow-up to the assumption of such rights householders residing in Cantonment areas have recently received phone calls about the possible requisitioning of their residences by the army. In October 2000 the military regime asked the Central Board of Revenue for the names of corrupt personnel, suspended about 1045 of them for six months to begin with, and inducted serving military personnel to take their place. It was expected that these new inductees would be able to enhance the tax base in the country. It also provided the army with information about the financial status of a broad cross section of society and this information has been used in various ways since then.

Under the circumstances it is very difficult for the military regime to substantiate claims that constitutional democracy has been restored in Pakistan. According to reports there were demonstrations against the regime and its proposed institutional arrangements for ruling Pakistan, during Mr Musharraf's visits to Western capitals, and these demonstrations displeased him. As a result the head of the political party supporting him rushed to France to arrange a more appropriate reception from compatriots there. Recently, the mystery of the reason for the intense loyalty of a number of politicians, and others, for the military regime was solved: in a written reply to a question raised in the national assembly the regime's Finance Minister listed the names of politicians, senior armed forces personnel, and others, whose loans had been written off by the government for no reason at all. A total of Rs.18.7 billion in loans have been written off since 1999. This is precisely what political governments did in order to garner support and such practises were one of the reasons cited for their forcible removal. They were also

employed a multi-pronged and staggered approach to contain political opposition to military rule.

In order to satisfy elements in the international community that cannot condone military dispensations because of their own constitutional obligations, it has used a variety of covert methods against middle rung leadership that has not sworn allegiance to the military in Pakistan. Leaders of the mainstream political opposition have either left the country voluntarily because they were unable to stand the hardship of principled opposition or, they have been compelled to accept exile, a concept of political control that re-surfaced and was institutionalised in the colonies of the West during the nineteenth and twentieth century. This practise is abhorred by Muslims who associate it with the forced hijrat of converts to Islam during the Jahiliya period. A farcical situation was recently created when the military regime began raiding residences to forcibly exterr some ladies who had followed their families into exile but were permitted to return to Pakistan for personal reasons. The situation was expected to ease for them after the head of their family issued a statement in favour of military rule (July 01, 2003).

The strategic implications of the political, social and economic environment created in Pakistan through a stunt supported by an armed force are not lost on the world and are far-reaching. They do have an impact on Pakistan's principled stand on many issues, including the issue of the right of self deter-

United States is not surprising.

The economic environment in Pakistan has been moulded in the past three years to serve the vast business empire that the armed forces have established to serve their community. Almost every day new information surfaces about the acquisition of state assets by the armed forces, for their own use and financial benefit. From the Army Heritage Parks and housing estates to be set up on land taken from the provincial governments in Sindh, Balochistan and the Punjab, to crores in funds allocated in the national budget for setting up "monuments and statues" of army men and the assumption of ownership by the army of agricultural land leased to tenants by the Punjab and Balochistan government, a pattern created during Gen Zia ul Haq's period by his junior officers, who are now in control of Pakistan, is being crudely institutionalised by them. As a result The Washington Post can run headlines that read "Fighting an Army's Empire, Pakistani Farmer's Land Battle Underscores Tension Over Military's Economic Power". The news report in The Washington Times is about changes that were made unilaterally, three years ago, in the existing contractual agreement that transformed sharecroppers on 17,000 acres of prime agricultural land into renters, with a loss in inputs, subsidies and status, the implication being that they could now be evicted at any time of the rentier's choosing. Since the sharecroppers refused to accept their changed status and pay rent instead of a share of the crop, their water supply was

cut off. Such practices were one of the reasons cited for their forcible removal. They were also the reason for the creation of the National Accountability Bureau. What that particular Bureau is doing these days, or is allowed to do these days, is any one's guess.

The implications of the balance of economic and political power in Pakistan between various segments of society and between various institutions, as well as the means of the creation of that balance through official policy measures, are not lost on any one. Without the active support of the international community and international capital such arrangements would not have been possible. The fact that such arrangements and policies have undermined national sovereignty and the strategic interests of the state in the long term is something that does not affect the international community directly, but it is something that Pakistanis need to worry about. Wars for political power and struggles for the control of resources that take place within states, and between states, have a direct impact on the economic, political and socio-cultural environment within which populations exist. Such struggles create new values and patterns that can change the ethical basis of transactions within business and social communities, between the government and civil society as well as national institutions. If nations cannot fight to preserve a set of political, social, human and cultural values they do not deserve to live in the environment such values create.

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