

**AUTHORITARIANISM
AND POLITICAL PARTY REFORM IN PAKISTAN**

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AUTHORITARIANISM AND POLITICAL PARTY REFORM IN PAKISTAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the dangers are evident, the international community continues to support General Pervez Musharraf because of his perceived cooperation in the war on terror, ignoring unconstitutional constraints on the civilian opposition. However, the military's refusal to cede real power to civilians and its marginalisation of moderate parties has boosted religious extremists. Instability is worsening, and sectarian conflict threatens to spin out of control. Lacking robust international support for a democratic transition, mainstream parties struggle to survive, subjected to coercion and violence. They can be the most effective safeguard against the religious lobby's manifestly anti-Western agenda, but only if allowed to function freely in a democratic environment. They need outside help but must also get more serious about reforming themselves.

Since his October 1999 coup, General Musharraf, like his military predecessors, has sought domestic and international legitimacy through a civilian façade. He has created his own party, the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam, PML-Q) and brought it to power through rigged elections. The PML-Q now heads the government in the centre and in three of Pakistan's four provinces. Yet, its reliance on the military undermines its credibility as a representative and independent party.

To offset Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N, Nawaz), as well as regional parties, Musharraf has consolidated the military's links with religious parties. This has enabled the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), a combination of six religious parties, to form the government in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and become the PML-Q's coalition partner in Balochistan, as well as gain an influential voice in the national parliament.

During the local elections, the moderate parties again bore the brunt of state coercion, particularly the PPP and PML-N, which headed Pakistan's emerging two-party system during the democratic transition of the 1990s and still present the most credible alternatives to authoritarian rule. While Musharraf has restricted their political space, his

government's tactics have also brought them together in an anti-military coalition, the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), the largest opposition group in the National Assembly.

The PPP and PML-N each formed two elected governments in the 1990s and share blame for that flawed democratic transition. Their inept governance, political vendettas and willingness to align with the military against the other stalled democratic reform and enabled the high command to oust the elected government in 1999. Both parties now acknowledge their failures, and their opposition to authoritarian rule has allowed them to regain some credibility.

Whether they can steer Pakistan towards democracy and political stability, however, will depend importantly on whether they can organise their grassroots base in a hostile environment, hampered by the continued exile of their leaders and the defection under military pressure of many senior figures. Flawed internal structures have made the PPP and PML-N, as well as other opposition parties, especially vulnerable to the military's political machinations.

Overly centralised structures have weakened communication between the leadership and lower cadres, making internal discipline and accountability elusive and hampering efforts to broaden decision making. Addressing these weaknesses through internal party reform needs to be a top priority.

To revive party machinery under the current regime, the PPP, PML-N and other moderate groups will need to reduce dependence on individual leaders and institute mechanisms aimed especially at extending ownership over party policy to grassroots workers, who have been crucial to the parties' survival, but have been largely ignored in decision-making processes. Allowing all tiers to play meaningful roles would make parties more responsive to new social and political challenges and enable them to build the durable political infrastructure necessary for a successful democratic transition.

Strengthening Pakistan's democratic parties is also crucial for the international community. The marginalisation of moderate voices has allowed religious parties to fill a political vacuum. Their increasing strength has encouraged intolerance and extremism that could erode regional stability if left unchecked.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Political Parties:

1. Promote internal discipline and accountability by:
 - (a) monitoring attendance at party meetings and making attendance mandatory for all office holders;
 - (b) establishing disciplinary committees, with elected heads, in each district with the authority to take action against district and sub-district party workers and office holders (with right of appeal to the provincial leadership);
 - (c) permitting defectors to return to the party only after a comprehensive review of their reasons for defecting and a vote in the relevant district or provincial office; and
 - (d) rewarding committed and effective party workers with greater opportunities to rise through the ranks, including to run for office, have access to funds and other resources for their candidacies, and to gain promotions to important committees.
2. Promote internal democracy by:
 - (a) holding regular elections for all leadership posts in all units up to the district level, with term limits for office holders;
 - (b) requiring every district office to elect delegates to annual provincial and national party conventions by direct vote of the district branch membership;
 - (c) holding regular elections among district delegates in the relevant province for all provincial party leadership posts; and
 - (d) electing two thirds of the central executive committee membership through delegate votes in provincial party branches, with remaining members to be selected, as at present, by the party leader.
3. Broaden participation in the decision-making process by:

- (a) enforcing the requirement that local units conduct monthly meetings;
- (b) requiring local units to submit monthly reports to district offices; district offices to hold monthly meetings and convey feedback to provincial offices; and provincial offices to send consolidated reports of these meetings, along with the reports of local and district units, on a monthly basis to the central executive committee; and
- (c) providing all necessary facilities, including research staff, to assist executive committee members tasked with preparing position papers on domestic and international issues, which should then be adopted as party policy by the central executive committee only after consultation with provincial offices.

4. Establish central and provincial party funds to enable low-income party workers to contest elections and allocate these through a transparent and accountable process.
5. Require all party workers to undergo mandatory training programs before achieving full membership, and devote particular attention to training members of special constituencies such as women and students and other young people.
6. Increase representation of women in central and provincial executive committees and other key decision-making bodies.
7. Enhance organisational and managerial capacity by professionalising party headquarters, including by hiring trained professional staff members on a merit basis and instituting efficient management structures and practices.

To the Government of Pakistan:

8. Remove immediately the discriminatory requirement that a candidate for public office must hold a bachelor's degree.
9. Amend Political Party Order 2002 (PPO-2002) by the end of 2005 to allow parties to establish their own requirements, criteria and schedules for the election of their leaders and officials.
10. Appoint an independent federal Election Commission, after consultation with all major political parties, by January 2006.
11. By March 2006, refine party finance laws, including by establishing mandatory reporting requirements and removing restrictions on corporate funding of parties, within defined limits; provide state funding to parties through a transparent, accountable

- and equitable process; and give the reconstituted Election Commission the authority and resources to monitor and enforce compliance.
12. Remove the two-term limit for a prime minister by repealing the Qualification to Hold Public Offices Order 2002 immediately.
 13. Remove the ban on student unions.

To the International Community, in particular the United States and the European Union:

14. Press the Musharraf government to resume the democratic transition by holding free and fair local, provincial and national elections and tie political, economic and aid policy towards Pakistan to tangible progress along that democratic path.
15. Help strengthen moderate democratic parties by:
 - (a) calling upon the government to stop immediately all unlawful arrests, detentions and other harassment of opposition leaders and workers;
 - (b) ensuring that high-level visitors consult with leaders of the main opposition parties; and
 - (c) enhancing financial support and capacity building activities to include technical assistance and training in professional management techniques for party headquarters and documentation of party finances.

Islamabad/Brussels, 28 September 2005

AUTHORITARIANISM AND POLITICAL PARTY REFORM IN PAKISTAN

I. INTRODUCTION

Upon seizing power in October 1999, General Pervez Musharraf embarked on an ambitious agenda of political and constitutional reforms that he claimed would steer Pakistan away from "an era of sham democracy" and towards effective democratic governance.¹ Six years on, the President-cum-Army Chief maintains that the democratic transition has been successful.² However, his political reforms have merely provided a democratic façade to authoritarian rule.³

Pakistan's moderate opposition parties have been subjected to administrative and other restrictions of their constitutional rights of expression, assembly, and association. Many of their political leaders are in exile, in prison, or disqualified from contesting elections. "The basic struggle in Pakistan", said an opposition politician, "remains between authoritarianism and democracy".⁴

The stage is once again being set, through local body elections, to ensure that the military-created ruling party, the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam, PML-Q)⁵

emerges victorious; and that the civilian opposition is neutralised, particularly the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz, PML-N), which dominated the emerging two-party system during the democratic decade of the 1990s.

The PML-Q has benefited from the curbs imposed on its political opponents but because the political order lacks popular support and legitimacy, it has at best a tenuous grip on power. President Musharraf continues to rely on the support of the religious parties, represented by the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), to prop up the system. This, combined with state suppression of the moderate opposition parties, has made Pakistan more vulnerable to religious extremism.

The President and his PML-Q depend on the MMA, their partner in the Balochistan government, to counter the Pashtun and Baloch moderate opposition parties there and in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). In the National Assembly, the military-led government continues to rely upon MMA support to counter the pro-democracy Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), spearheaded by the PPP and PML-N.

Manipulation of constitutional and other legal and political processes have strengthened the opposition's claim to legitimacy. Indeed, the PPP and PML-N struggle, within and outside parliament, for the revival of constitutional democracy has helped them recover some of the support they had lost by their lackadaisical performance in both government and opposition before October 1999.

But while the PPP, PML-N and other moderate opposition parties retain a measure of popular support, their many internal weaknesses continue to leave them vulnerable to military intervention. These include highly centralised decision-making structures, ineffective mechanisms to ensure party discipline, lack of transparency and debate, and alienation of lower party tiers. The absence of internal checks and balances has also made it easier for the military

¹ Text of Musharraf's first address to the nation, printed in *Dawn*, 30 May 2000.

² On the eve of the fifth anniversary of his coup, Musharraf declared that Pakistan was "enjoying the fruits of democracy, with local elections, functioning legislatures, freedom of speech and an independent press and empowerment of women". Vasantha Arora, "Musharraf sets all doubts at rest on his uniform", *South Asia Monitor*, September 2004.

³ For more reporting on Pakistan, see Crisis Group Asia Report N° 95, *The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan*, 18 April 2005; Crisis Group Asia Report N°86, *Building Judicial Independence in Pakistan*, 9 November 2004; Crisis Group Asia Report N°84, *Pakistan: Reforming the Education Sector*, 7 October 2004; Crisis Group Asia Report N°77, *Devolution in Pakistan: Reform or Regression?*, 22 March 2004; and Crisis Group Asia Report N°73, *Unfulfilled Promises: Pakistan's Failure to Tackle Extremism*, 16 January 2004.

⁴ Crisis Group interview with Pashtoon Khwa Milli Awami Party official, Pishin, Balochistan, February 2005.

⁵ Initially a faction of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N, Nawaz) that called itself the Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam) to distinguish itself from its parent party, the PML-Q now calls itself the Pakistan Muslim League, claiming to be the

original organisation and arguing that Nawaz Sharif's faction is in fact a splinter group. For the purposes of this report, the original name, "PML-Q", will be used for the ruling party.

to portray the mainstream parties as corrupt, unfit to govern, and in need of state imposed reform.

The moderate parties could best counter the military's attempts to marginalise them by translating grassroots support into coherent programs for change. Their interests would be best served by making internal reform an integral part of their political agenda.

This report identifies areas for reform that would enable Pakistan's parties to acquire more durable infrastructure, coherent and representative programs, stronger links between leadership and lower tiers, and a broader range of candidates and contributors to party policy. It examines the wide spectrum of parties but concentrates on those that dominate the scene, the ruling PML-Q and the opposition PPP and PML-N.

II. PARTIES BEFORE MUSHARRAF

A. AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Unrepresentative governments have plagued Pakistan's political system for most of its 58-year history. Military rule, direct and indirect, has weakened parties but they retain popular support. Yet, for the most part, they have failed to capitalise on their strengths by implementing internal reforms to rally the party base and so minimise the potential for military intervention.

Pakistan's founding party, the All-India Muslim League, failed to transform from an independence movement to a strong political movement. Lacking a base of support in the national territory, the Pakistan Muslim League's mohajir-dominated⁶ leadership soon faced domestic opposition, and became increasingly reliant on the civil-military bureaucracy to retain its hold over government. Its weaknesses enabled those bureaucracies to annex the powers of state and impede democratic development.⁷

The first decade of independence saw un-elected heads-of-state, or governors-general, practically assume the role of the British Viceroy, appointing and dismissing prime ministers at will.⁸ Yet, opposition parties soon emerged to take up the agenda of democratic reform.

Frustrated by the ruling party's failure to consolidate democracy, including its unwillingness to adopt a political formula representative of the Bengali majority, a number of politicians broke ranks with it to form opposition parties, most notably the Awami National League (renamed the Awami League) and the Krishak Sramik Party. Demanding meaningful devolution of power and resources, those two resoundingly defeated the Muslim League in East Pakistan's 1954 provincial elections under the banner of the United Front coalition.⁹ That sent "a signal to central Muslim League headquarters in Karachi that the party had not only lost its monopoly [in the East but] faced a stark reality of being defeated in the provinces

⁶ Mohajir (refugee): Urdu-speaking refugees and migrants and their descendants from India.

⁷ An analyst notes, "The inability of the Muslim League to transform itself from a movement to a vibrant, unified, and coherent political party...unleashed the divisive forces that...threatened the survival of the young nation". Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan in the Twentieth Century: A Political History* (Oxford, 1997), p. 146.

⁸ Between 1947 and 1958, Pakistan had seven prime ministers, each serving no more than two years.

⁹ East Bengal was the only province in Pakistan that had not held provincial elections by the end of 1953, in large part due to the Muslim League's fears of defeat.

of western Pakistan as well".¹⁰ Fearing that the Bengali majority could come to power democratically, the Muslim League, backed by the West Pakistan-dominated civil and military bureaucracies, nullified the results, imposed central rule on the East and suspended all political activity there.

Such tactics and justifications were later replicated in West Pakistan, where the growing popularity of a new democratic movement, the National Awami Party (NAP), which also sought regional autonomy, threatened the bureaucracies, whose instrument the ruling Muslim League had become.¹¹ As the first direct national elections approached, the military, led by Army Chief General Mohammad Ayub Khan, imposed its rule in October 1958 to prevent the opposition parties from winning power.

B. THE FIRST MILITARY GOVERNMENT

General Ayub Khan embarked on an effort, replicated now by General Musharraf, to ensure regime survival and consolidation by degrading political parties and politicians. Having banned the former after the imposition of martial law, in 1959 the military government enacted the Elective Bodies Disqualification Order (EBDO), the first systematic bid to exclude its civilian opposition from the electoral process. While officially prohibiting "anyone from holding public office who used his political position for personal advantage, or to the detriment of State", EBDO was selectively used against opposition politicians.¹² Imposing restrictions on the right to stand for political office by the Political Parties Order of 1962, Ayub also erected a local government scheme, called Basic Democracy, to serve as a democratic façade and a civilian constituency for his military government. In February 1960, the Basic Democrats confirmed Ayub as president with 95.6 per cent approval in a blatantly rigged referendum.

Ayub's 1962 constitution created a highly centralised presidential form of government, with the Basic Democrats serving as the Electoral College for the presidency. The Basic Democrats also elected members of the unicameral National Assembly on a non-party basis.¹³ Realising the

need for a political instrument to represent the military and neutralise its political opponents, Ayub Khan removed the ban on parties and carved out his own faction of the Muslim League, the Convention Muslim League.¹⁴ This allowed parties such as the National Awami Party, the Awami League and the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) to function openly again. It also led to the creation of new parties such as an anti-Ayub faction of the Pakistan Muslim League, the Council Muslim League, headed by former Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin, which mobilised strong opposition to military rule, supported by other parties.

In 1964, a coalition, the Combined Opposition Parties, including the Awami League, two factions of the National Awami Party, the Nizam-i-Islam Party, and the JI, fielded Fatima Jinnah, sister of the country's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, to contest the 1965 presidential election against Ayub. The election was a turning point in Pakistan's political history. Ayub won but with his legitimacy diminished, since he owed his victory to his own creation, the electoral college of the Basic Democrats.¹⁵ The military continued the clampdown on the civilian opposition, including by bringing false cases against major political leaders and harassing and arresting activists.

Nevertheless, domestic resistance to military rule grew, spearheaded by two parties: Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party in West Pakistan, which advocated a socialist revolution, including land reform and nationalisation of business and industry; and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League in the East wing, demanding provincial autonomy and democratic governance. As anti-government agitation reached threatening levels, the high command withdrew its support from Ayub but only to replace him by the army chief, General Yahya Khan,

Yahya Khan held general elections in 1970, the country's first, in the belief that the agitation would dissipate, no party would gain a parliamentary majority, and the military could continue to rule behind yet another democratic façade. To the military's dismay, however, the Awami League swept the polls. Refusing to cede power to their Bengali opponents, the high command instead launched a military operation in East Pakistan, triggering civil war, Indian military intervention and a military defeat that resulted in East Pakistan's secession and the formation of Bangladesh.

¹⁰ Ziring, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

¹¹ In September 1955, the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan were merged into a single unit, West Pakistan, in a move to counter the Bengalis' numerical majority but that alienated the Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtun, who became minorities in one Punjabi-dominated province. See Hamid Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan* (Oxford, 2001), p. 158.

¹² Approximately 6,000 politicians were disqualified from running for public office before EBDO was repealed in December 1966. Philip E. Jones, *The Pakistan People's Party: The Rise to Power* (Oxford, 2003), p. 30.

¹³ Following the 1958 coup, Ayub Khan abrogated Pakistan's

first constitution, created by an unelected forum in 1956.

¹⁴ Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁵ The electoral college of the Basic Democrats, constituted an "indirect method of elections [that] left few serious opportunities for an opposition, and...assured [Ayub of] overwhelming advantages in any future contest". Ziring, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

C. CIVILIAN RULE AND MILITARY INTERVENTION

In the truncated country, a demoralised military was forced to transfer power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whose PPP had gained a majority of parliamentary seats in West Pakistan.¹⁶ Soon after forming government, Bhutto embarked on a mission of nation building and, with the support of a majority of parties, adopted a consensus constitution that created a parliamentary form of government and placed the military under civilian control. Although the 1973 constitution remains the lode stone of regime legitimacy, it has also been distorted beyond recognition by military governments, including Musharraf's, and is increasingly questioned by many regional parties, which demand a more equitable distribution of power and resources between the centre and the four federal units.¹⁷

While Prime Minister Bhutto laid the foundations of democratic constitutional rule, his disregard for democratic functioning and unwillingness to address popular discontent through the political process undermined this achievement. The PPP's failure to commit to democratic reform and to accommodate dissent opened the way for renewed military intervention.

Unable to expand the PPP's influence in NWFP, where Khan Abdul Wali Khan's National Awami Party was dominant, and Balochistan, where NAP and a religious party, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) had formed a coalition government, Bhutto sought to coerce opponents rather than engage them.¹⁸ Such tactics strengthened opposition, especially in Balochistan where he unwisely opted to counter resistance by using the military against his opponents. As Bhutto grew more dependent on the army, an ambitious high command was given the opportunity to oust the elected government.¹⁹

Under military tutelage, the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) was formed, spearheaded by religious parties such as the JUI, JI, and the Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP), and including members of the banned NAP, and retired Air Marshal Asghar Khan's Tehrik-i-Istiqlal. PNA agitation against alleged rigging of the 1977 elections, which had

given the PPP a two-thirds majority, brought the country to a standstill. Army Chief General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq imposed martial law, justifying this on the grounds of both national security²⁰ and democratic reform. He promised elections within the constitutionally-mandated period of 90 days but his intentions became clear when he detained Bhutto and other opposition politicians and banned parties.

As Musharraf was to do almost two decades later, Zia extended his tenure as president through a rigged referendum and co-opted selected civilians into the central and provincial governments. Following Bhutto's execution in April 1979 on a false murder charge, an anti-military alliance of parties, the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, spearheaded by the PPP, confronted the military regime, undermining its efforts to obtain popular legitimacy. The military government attempted to destroy this opposition through repression and sought legitimacy through constitutional distortions and political manipulations, such as the Islamisation process and the creation of a rubber-stamp parliament in 1985, elected on a non-party basis.

General Zia's regime also saw religious parties strengthened, their ranks expanded though the madrasa sector, whose rapid growth was funded and supported by the state. While many governments, including that of the U.S., were more than willing to overlook the military's brutal suppression of democratic parties, their financial and other support for the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan contributed to the growth and political clout of Pakistani religious parties. The extremists who emerged from many of the madrasas now are the foot soldiers of the groups bent on conducting another jihad, this time against the West, as well as within Pakistan.²¹

International support was insufficient for regime consolidation. As domestic unrest increased, spurred by demands for the restoration of democracy, the military's chosen faction of the Muslim League, headed by Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo, was forced to distance itself from its creator. General Zia retaliated by dismissing the government in May 1988. He intended to create yet another civilian facade but months later was killed in a mid-air explosion, bringing Pakistan's third military government to an abrupt end.

¹⁶ For the results of the 1970 elections, see Jones, op. cit., p. 313.

¹⁷ A number of regional parties, aligned in a coalition, the Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement (PONM), have called for a new constitution that would significantly reduce the power of the centre in favour of the federating units. See "Provincial autonomy inevitable for stronger country: Speakers", *The Nation*, 8 March 2005.

¹⁸ In February 1975, Bhutto banned the NAP, seized its assets and ordered the arrest of Wali Khan, the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly.

¹⁹ Khan, op. cit.

²⁰ Ziring, op. cit., pp. 420-422.

²¹ One of the three terrorists allegedly responsible for the London attacks in July 2005 visited a Lashkar-e-Tayyaba madrasa in Pakistan. This renewed international pressure on Musharraf to crack down on radical Islamists and their madrasas. See "Foreigners will have to leave Madressahs: Law to be adopted soon: Musharraf", *Dawn*, 30 July 2005; and Paul Alexander, "Musharraf: Blast suspect was in Pakistan", *Associated Press*, 9 September 2005.

D. DISTORTED DEMOCRACY

Concerned about the military's lack of legitimacy and growing political resistance, the high command reluctantly transferred power to civilians but not before ensuring it would retain control over crucial spheres of state policy. The eleven years of civilian governments that followed were marred by the legacy of military rule and also by continued military interference. Every elected government was dismissed by the military before it completed its term of office.²²

Of the opposition political parties, the generals distrusted the PPP the most because of its long-standing resistance to military rule. It also posed the most credible threat because of its extensive support base. Concerned that the PPP would obtain an absolute majority in the 1988 elections, the military and its intelligence arm, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), helped forge an opposition alliance, the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), headed by the Muslim League of Nawaz Sharif, Zia's former finance minister and Punjab chief minister, in partnership with the military's religious allies, including the JI.

With military support, the IJI won a strong presence in the National Assembly and formed the provincial government in Punjab.²³ The PPP won the most seats in the National Assembly but rigging deprived it of a working majority and forced it to form a coalition with smaller parties. Army Chief General Mirza Aslam Beg allowed Benazir Bhutto to form a government only after she agreed to cede control over crucial subjects to the military, including foreign, security and economic policy.²⁴

The transition to democratic rule was, therefore, fundamentally flawed. By accepting military control over domestic and foreign affairs, the PPP government was unable to meet the demands of its constituents. Bent on neutralizing its key rival, the military destabilised Bhutto's government through its IJI allies and dismissed it in August 1990.²⁵ Thereafter it continued to impede the performance of elected governments, appointing and dismissing them at will.²⁶ The two main political players, Bhutto's PPP and Nawaz Sharif's PML-N, did little to help consolidate

democracy. When in government, both failed to deliver improved services and laid themselves open to charges of corruption and misgovernance. When in opposition, they resorted to undemocratic means to undermine their elected opponents. Had they strengthened their parties through internal reform and concentrated on meeting the pressing social, economic and political demands of their constituents, they could have thwarted the generals' designs. Instead, they succumbed to the temptation of seeking power through collusion with the military.²⁷

After the Muslim League won a two-thirds majority in the 1997 elections, the PML-N and the PPP unexpectedly joined hands in an attempt to end military intervention. In April 1997, the National Assembly and Senate unanimously passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This stripped the president and provincial governors of their powers, acquired through General Zia, to remove the prime minister and to dismiss national and provincial legislatures. This could have proved a turning point²⁸ but the ruling party and its political opposition soon reverted to their old behavior. While the PML-N government resorted to undemocratic means to consolidate power, including attacks on the press and the judiciary, the PPP tried to use all possible means, including appeals to the military, to undermine Prime Minister Sharif. In October 1999, Army Chief General Pervez Musharraf ousted the elected government and imposed military rule.

General Musharraf justified the coup by accusing Prime Minister Sharif of corruption, interference with the judiciary, and attempts to politicise the army.²⁹ The elected government's misdeeds or failure to deliver good governance, however, had little to do with the coup, which was motivated by the domestic and international fall out of a botched military misadventure.³⁰

²² Crisis Group Asia Report N° 40, *Pakistan: Transition to Democracy?*, 3 October 2002.

²³ Khan, op. cit., p. 763.

²⁴ Crisis Group Report, *Pakistan: Transition to Democracy?* op. cit.

²⁵ Iqbal Akhund, *Trial and Error: The Advent and Eclipse of Benazir Bhutto* (Oxford, 2000), p. 305.

²⁶ Sharif's first government, formed in November 1990, was dismissed in 1993. Bhutto's second term as prime minister lasted from October 1993 until November 1996.

²⁷ Hina Gillani, *Human Rights and Democratic Development in Pakistan* (Montreal, 1998), p. 59.

²⁸ In 1998, Sharif forced army chief Jehangir Karamat, to resign after Karamat demanded the formation of a National Security Council that would have given the military a formal role in politics.

²⁹ Text of Musharraf's first address to the nation, printed in *Dawn*, 30 May 2000.

³⁰ General Musharraf's decision to use the military in Kargil in 1999, across the Line of Control dividing Indian and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, brought the two nuclear-capable states to the brink of all-out war, forcing the U.S. to intervene diplomatically. The misadventure created resentment, within and outside military circles, because of the many casualties in a misadventure that brought Pakistan no strategic gains. Sharif blamed Musharraf and attempted to sack him; the Army chief retaliated by ousting him. See Crisis Group Asia Report N°35, *Kashmir: Confrontation and Miscalculation*, 11 July 2003.

III. POLITICAL PARTIES UNDER MUSHARRAF

A. CIVILIAN ALLIES

Following in the footsteps of his military predecessors, Musharraf has tried to justify authoritarian rule by maligning politicians and to consolidate his regime by marginalising opposition parties. Pakistan's moderate opposition parties are under siege. Many PPP and PML-N leaders, principal components of the anti-military coalition, the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy, are in exile, in prison, or disqualified from elections. Like his military predecessors, Musharraf has also created his own party, the PML-Q, to give authoritarian rule a civilian face and undermine the political opposition. He asserts absolute control over the party even as he denies having any formal links with it.

The PML-Q was forged through defections mainly from PML-N but also from PPP, with the military government playing a hands-on role in overseeing its rapid expansion during the local elections of 2000-2001 and in the run up to the national elections of October 2002. Opposition politicians and party workers were coerced and cajoled into joining by state agencies, including the ISI and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), a nominal anti-corruption watchdog,³¹ and by key officials such as Musharraf's Principal Secretary, Tariq Aziz, Punjab Governor General Khalid Maqbool, Punjab Home Secretary Ejaz Shah and Inspector General Police Punjab Asif Hayat. Tactics included promises of lucrative positions in government, threats of prosecution on false charges, and physical intimidation.³² "Some defected to the PML-Q", said a PML-N leader, "when faced with the choice of jail or a ministership. But most joined out of fear, they had no choice".³³

However, the PML-Q still faced defeat in the 2002 general elections until the military government enacted a series of executive orders to restructure the party and electoral systems in its favour.³⁴ In June 2002, General

Musharraf promulgated the Political Party Order 2002 (PPO-2002), which replaced the Political Parties Act of 1962. Purporting to "create a political environment conducive to the promotion of a federal and democratic system as enshrined in the Constitution",³⁵ it extends Article 63, which bars anyone convicted of a crime from standing for elections, to include anyone charged of a crime who fails to appear before the courts; in addition it prohibits such "absconders" from running for party posts.³⁶ These provisions were clearly aimed at PPP chairperson and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who is charged with corruption and remains in exile in Dubai. Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, the PPP's central information secretary, says, "the PPO is a negation of democracy. Parties have their own internal rules and practices. This was purely a Benazir Bhutto-specific provision".³⁷ The Order also prohibits parties from receiving contributions from public or private companies, firms, and other associations.³⁸ It initially prohibited an individual from holding both party and public office.³⁹

In July 2002, Musharraf issued the Qualification to Hold Public Offices Order 2002, which established a two-term limit on prime ministers, an anomaly in parliamentary democracy, to prevent Bhutto and Sharif from running for the office.⁴⁰ The following month, he enacted the Legal Framework Order (LFO), a set of constitutional amendments aimed at institutionalising the military's political dominance and tilting power and authority from the prime minister, the head of government in the parliamentary constitution, to the head of state, the indirectly elected president.⁴¹ The LFO also placed restrictions on joining or forming a political party, based on the dubious justification of maintaining "public order".

Khan, "For the 'General' good", *Newsline*, January 2003.

³⁵ Text of Chief Executive's Order No. 18 of 2002, 28 June 2002. Available at <http://www.nrb.gov.pk>.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, January 2004.

³⁸ PPO-2002 defines a contribution as any donation "made in cash, kind, stocks, hospitality, accommodation, transport, fuel, and provision of other such facilities".

³⁹ This provision was repealed in July 2004 as many PML-Q leaders continued to hold both party and public offices.

⁴⁰ Text of Chief Executive's Order, No. 24 of 2002, 21 August 2002.

⁴¹ The LFO nullified the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, granting the president the power to dismiss the National Assembly, appoint service chiefs, and approve superior court appointments; it gave similar powers over provincial assemblies to provincial governors, appointed by the president. It also created a National Security Council, dominated by military officials and military-appointed civilians, to oversee international and internal security. See Crisis Group Report, *Pakistan: Transition to Democracy?*, op. cit.

³¹ According to one analyst, "never before had the [intelligence] agencies been used so rampantly for political manipulation". Zahid Hussain, "How to steal an election", *Newsline*, September 2001.

³² Hasan Akbar, "The rise of the king's party", *Newsline*, October 2002. Akbar estimated that "at least two-thirds of the candidates fielded by the PML-Q are either former PPP or PML-N legislators".

³³ Crisis Group interview with Haji Mohammad Boota, National Assembly Member, Multan, January 2004.

³⁴ President Musharraf issued 127 presidential ordinances in the ten months leading up to the 2002 elections. Sairah Irshad

The Conduct of General Elections Order 2002 contained a clause requiring a candidate for elective office to hold a bachelor's degree or its equivalent, thus disqualifying hundreds of party leaders and office holders,⁴² and severely damaging parties, particularly the PPP and the PML-N.⁴³ In a resolution on the 2002 elections, the European Parliament declared that it: "Deplores the introduction of arbitrary criteria for nomination, particularly the requirement to have a BA degree, which deprive 96 per cent of Pakistani citizens (including 41 per cent of existing legislators) of the right to run for office, thereby diluting the representative nature of democracy in Pakistan".⁴⁴

The military's constitutional and legal manipulations were aimed not just at securing a PML-Q-led government, but also at creating a loyal opposition from the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal, composed mainly of religious parties that historically owed their political clout less to popular support than to the military's patronage.⁴⁵ While the education requirement disqualified a significant number of former legislators from the opposition parties, the Election Commission's decision to recognise madrasa certificates as the equivalent of mainstream degrees enabled the JUI-F's mainly madrasa graduates to contest the polls.⁴⁶

Religious parties also benefited from the military government's ban on student unions and public rallies, since mosques and madrasas provided alternative bases for campaigning.⁴⁷ While false cases were brought against PPP and PML-N leaders and workers, provincial home departments were told to withdraw criminal cases against

religious leaders and activists.⁴⁸ Azam Tariq, leader of a banned Sunni extremist party, Sipah Sahaba Pakistan, and facing sectarian murder charges, was allowed to contest a National Assembly seat from prison, was released on bail shortly after winning, and sat on the government bench in parliament.⁴⁹

B. MANIPULATING SEATS

Nevertheless, the PML-Q could not win even a simple parliamentary majority, and was left scrambling to form a coalition government. Even with Benazir Bhutto in exile and many other party leaders disqualified from running, the PPP won the largest segment of the popular vote nationally and a majority of seats in the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, the most populous province after Punjab.

To neutralise the PPP and to secure a majority for a PML-Q-led coalition, the constitutional bar on floor-crossing in parliament was held in abeyance, after the constitution was partially revived in November 2002, to allow the defections of ten PPP Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) to the PML-Q-led coalition. Six of the ten obtained major portfolios in Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali's cabinet. Commenting on one, Faisal Saleh Hayat, who became interior minister, an analyst observed: "(Hayat), a former federal minister, has been charged by NAB (National Accountability Bureau) of defaulting on the repayment of loans worth millions of rupees from nationalised banks and had spent months in jail, making him extremely vulnerable to pressure; a senior general walked up to him during the oath-taking ceremony to congratulate the 'loan defaulter' for what he described as a "courageous move in the national interest!"⁵⁰

Another former PPP leader, Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, who had been charged with corruption and forced into exile after Musharraf's coup, was allowed back into the country after agreeing to join the military-backed government.⁵¹ He became water and power minister and later Hayat's successor as interior minister.

Even in Sindh, where the PML-Q won only fourteen of 130 general seats (compared to the PPP's 51) carrot-and-stick tactics enabled it to form a coalition government, with the support of likeminded parties such as the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM). As in the National

⁴² An equivalent precondition is found in only three countries, none known for their democratic record: Indonesia, Uganda and Rwanda.

⁴³ Ashraf Mumtaz, "Graduation: Record number of politicians out", *Dawn*, 19 July 2005. See also Massoud Ansari, "A foregone conclusion?", *Newsline*, October 2002.

⁴⁴ A European Union Election Observation Mission to Pakistan concluded that the October 2002 elections were "seriously flawed". Based on this report, the EU Parliament adopted a resolution severely criticising their conduct. Text of the European Parliament Resolution on Pakistan Election, 21 November 2002, available at its official website, <http://www.europarl.eu.int/>.

⁴⁵ The six MMA parties include the Jamaat-i-Islami, Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan, JUI-S (Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, led by Samiul Haq), JUI-F (Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam led by Fazlur Rehman), Islami Tehrik Pakistan and the Jamiat Ahle Hadith.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group Asia Report N°49, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, 20 March 2003.

⁴⁷ Before lifting the ban on public rallies, the government also turned a blind eye to MMA public meetings while stringently enforcing the injunction on the ARD.

⁴⁸ Shamimur Rehman, "Did the govt. strike a deal with the MMA?", *Dawn*, 30 December 2002.

⁴⁹ Tariq was assassinated in October 2003.

⁵⁰ Zahid Hussain, "House of cards", *Newsline*, December 2002.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Assembly, coercion and intimidation were used to pressure PPP Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) to join the ruling party. Zahid Bhurgari, from Hyderabad district, was kidnapped and tortured by intelligence officials when he refused to switch.⁵² While most party representatives remained loyal, four defected, two of whom were facing trials for murder and two for corruption. All charges were dropped after they joined the PML-Q coalition.⁵³

While the government failed to sideline the moderate opposition parties altogether, its electoral engineering helped the MMA win an unprecedented number of parliamentary seats. Although it took only 11 per cent of the popular vote, it achieved an absolute majority in the NWFP Assembly (where the religious parties won 52 out of 99 seats), a strong presence in Balochistan (14 of 51 seats), and initially the third largest number of seats in the National Assembly, behind the PML-Q and the PPP.⁵⁴ In Balochistan, the military moved quickly to secure a PML-Q/MMA government, complying with a number of MMA preconditions, including the release of two former JUI-F ministers, Sardar Hafiz Luni and Haji Bechram Achakzai, who had been convicted of corruption and forgery. MMA representatives were also given the most attractive ministries in the provincial cabinet.⁵⁵ In the National Assembly, engineered defections from the PPP transformed the MMA into the second largest party.

The MMA, like the military-created PML-Q, continues to depend on the high command to maintain its political clout. In return and belying its aggressive, anti-government rhetoric, it has legitimised Musharraf's political order by giving him the votes he needed to make his Legal Framework Order (LFO) part of the constitution in December 2003. This was done by the Seventeenth Amendment, which validates the October 1999 coup and the subsequent constitutional and political distortions; legislation, proceedings and appointments by the military government cannot be "called (into) question in any court or forum on any ground whatsoever".⁵⁶ The president's power to dismiss an elected parliament, obtained by General Zia in 1985 under the Eighth Amendment but subsequently repealed by an elected parliament, has been restored.

To retain a semblance of credibility as opposition, the MMA had insisted, in the deal it made with Musharraf,

that he step down as army chief by 2005, though it knew well that this was unlikely.⁵⁷ On 30 November 2004, the ruling party's representative, the chairman and acting president of the Senate, Mohammadmian Soomro, signed the President to Hold Another Office Bill 2004, providing President Musharraf the legal cover he needed to continue as army chief. Citing national interest in the face of domestic and international security threats, the legislation has secured Musharraf's dual role until at least 2007.⁵⁸

Rewarding the MMA for its cooperation, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Chaudhry Amir Hussain, named JUI leader Fazlur Rehman as Leader of the Opposition, rejecting the candidate of the ARD although the Alliance was the largest opposition group in the lower house.⁵⁹

Just as Musharraf continues to rely on coercion to neutralise his political opposition, he is likely to continue to rely on the MMA to counter the PPP and PML-N as well as regional opposition parties in NWFP and Balochistan.⁶⁰

C. SETTING THE STAGE

In the 2005 local elections, the government embarked on an all-out effort, including rigging, to ensure that the PML-Q won. This was necessary because the ruling party has failed to transform itself from a disparate group of defectors and factions into an independent political entity. Taking no chances, General Musharraf had opted to conduct the elections on a non-party basis, restricting parties from organising openly at the local level and using party flags, posters or other symbols to mobilise their voters. Candidates had to declare that they had no connection to any party, and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)'s rules called for the disqualification of any candidate who revealed such a link.

⁵⁷ Article 63 (1) (d) prohibits a person from holding two public offices. It came into effect on 31 December 2004.

⁵⁸ Commenting on the President to Hold Another Office Bill, columnist Tanvir Zahid wrote: "The peoples' elected representatives sitting on the treasury benches have proved their loyalty and allegiance not to the state and the Constitution but to the person adorning the uniform of COAS [Chief of Army Staff]". Tanvir Zahid, "Kudos for all the King's men", *The Nation*, 30 October 2004.

⁵⁹ Crisis Group Report, *Pakistan: Mullahs and the Military*, op. cit.

⁶⁰ In October 2003, the government arrested Javed Hashmi, PML-N's acting president and ARD's president, after he made public a letter, purportedly written by an army officer that criticised the army's interference in politics. The Islamabad District and Sessions Court sentenced Hashmi to 23 years in prison on charges of sedition, forgery and inciting mutiny.

⁵² Senior officials of the PML-Q's Sindh chapter confirmed this and other such incidents to Crisis Group in interviews in Karachi, April 2005.

⁵³ Massoud Ansari, "Sinned against again", *Newsline*, January 2003.

⁵⁴ Crisis Group Report, *Pakistan: Mullahs and the Military*, op. cit.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Text of Executive's Order No. 19 of 2002.

Criticising the decision to hold non-party elections, an opposition party worker commented, "How do you take a political issue and address it through a non-political system?"⁶¹ According to analyst Zafarullah Khan, "the (PML-Q's) failure to organise itself at the grassroots level is the reason the nation must suffer party-less polls for another term of local bodies".⁶² Calling for local body elections on a non-party basis, a PML-Q leader admitted, "we can then be safe for two years. We are in no position to fight the elections on a party basis".⁶³

Yet, while the polls were nominally non-party, all major parties contested through proxy associations, such as PML-Q's "Khushal Pakistan", PPP's "Awam Dost", PML-N's "Jamhooriat Nawaz", MQM's "Haq Parast", and MMA's "Muttahida Millat-e-Amal". Well aware that the decks were stacked against them, the opposition parties still decided to participate lest they cede all political space to the military's allies. Said Khawaja Mohammad Asif, a PML-N MNA, "it's about staying in the fight, and preparing the ground for national elections".⁶⁴

The government tilted the playing field particularly against the PPP in Sindh and the PML-N in Punjab. In the former, where, despite widespread official interference, the PPP's local support base remained intact, it relied on gerrymandering, creating new electoral areas to increase the PML-Q's chances. Redistricting was also intended to improve the prospects of the MQM, the ruling party's coalition partner in the provincial government and the PPP's main opposition in urban Sindh. Thus, in December 2004 the Sindh government created four new districts, Kashmore, Shadadkot, Jamshoro and Umerkot, out of the PPP-dominated districts of Jacobabad, Larkana, Dadu and Mirpurkhas. On 5 April 2005, three new districts, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tando Allahyar and Matiari, were created out of Hyderabad, another PPP-dominated district.⁶⁵

Most observers, including members of the PML-Q in Sindh, believe that Hyderabad's bifurcation exploited the district's demographic and ethnic makeup, separating the district's predominantly pro-MQM mohajir-majority urban centre, Hyderabad City, from its predominantly Sindhi pro-PPP periphery. Haleem Siddiqui, the PML-Q's former general secretary in Sindh and a member of the party's Central Working Committee, said, "This was a request by the MQM, and we are agreeing to it for political expediency".⁶⁶ The two new districts carved from Hyderabad City and Latifabad *tehsil* (sub-district), have majority mohajir populations.⁶⁷

In the run-up to and during the polls, the government targeted opposition political party leaders and workers. For example, Nadeem Qaira, a PPP *tehsil nazim* (mayor) and brother of a PPP MNA from Gujarat, Qamar Qaira, was arrested under the Anti-Terrorism Act.⁶⁸ On 4 April, Ghulam Qadir Chandio, a PPP MPA in Sindh, was arrested on kidnapping charges and denied bail until the alleged victim stated publicly that he had not been kidnapped.⁶⁹ Chandio was later rearrested for robbery.⁷⁰ There were numerous reports of kidnappings of PPP and PML-N leaders and workers as well as false charges to prevent their candidates from contesting the polls.⁷¹ Opposition candidates and supporters were systematically targeted, with many, particularly from PML-N, coerced or persuaded to defect to PML-Q.⁷²

government, Karachi's population could rise to seventeen million by 2010. See <http://www.karachicity.gov.pk/eip-main.htm>.

⁶⁶ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

⁶⁷ Although the MQM opposed the devolution plan in 2001, arguing for instance that it would divide Karachi along ethnic and linguistic lines, it supported the bifurcation of Hyderabad.

⁶⁸ Crisis Group interview with Qamar Zaman Qaira, Islamabad, June 2005. See also Mehtab Haider, "No political vengeance, assures PM", *The Nation*, 18 June 2005.

⁶⁹ Crisis Group interviews with senior PPP officials, Islamabad, June 2005.

⁷⁰ The opposition's leader in the Senate, the PPP's Raza Rabbani, told Crisis Group: "Such cases are used to intimidate not only the people who've been arrested, but also other workers and activists and those thinking of helping an opposition party who have little protection from the law". Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, June 2005.

⁷¹ "Chaotic and rigged polls ominous signs: HRCP", press release by Asma Jahangir, Chairperson, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 26 August 2005. See also Assad Hamed, "Thousands file LB papers", *The Nation*, 27 July 2005; and "PPP-backed contestants being kidnapped and harassed", *Daily Times*, 25 July 2005.

⁷² Crisis Group observations, Sindh, Punjab, August 2005. The elections were divided into three phases; the first two rounds were held on 18 and 25 August, the last is due on 6 October. Results will be announced on 10 October but the first two phases have determined the outcome of the last, an indirect

⁶¹ Crisis Group interview, Abbotabad, December 2004.

⁶² Zafarullah Khan, "A case for party based local elections", *Daily Times*, 9 January 2005.

⁶³ Crisis Group interview with Jafer Khan Mandokhel, Provincial General Secretary, PML-Q, Balochistan, Quetta, 22 November 2004. Some PML-Q federal ministers and party officials even suggested that the local elections should not be held at all, given the party's weak presence at the local level. "Fate of local council polls hangs in the balance", *Daily Times*, 13 April 2005.

⁶⁴ Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, June 2005.

⁶⁵ "Three new districts carved out of Hyderabad", *Dawn*, 5 April 2005. The justification given was that the original district had a population of three million, though the MQM's stronghold of Karachi, the province's largest district with a population of thirteen million, was not divided. According to the city

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) chose to overlook the massive abuse of state resources by the ruling party.⁷³ Although violence during the first two phases of the elections, on 18 and 25 August 2005, claimed at least 45 lives, with hundreds injured in scuffles, the ECP did nothing, while General Musharraf congratulated the ruling party for its massive and unsurprising victory.⁷⁴ However, the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) concluded that, "large scale pre-poll rigging and manipulation of the polls over large parts of the country have struck a grievous blow to the concept of multi-party and pluralistic democracy".⁷⁵

An opposition politician commented: "It is a hoax to call these non-party elections, but by conducting them at least officially on a non-party basis, it has made it that much easier to manipulate the process".⁷⁶ It also made it easier for candidates, backed by political parties, to switch loyalties. Individual candidates, and even the local and provincial leaders of the parties backing them, opted for opportunistic alliances, ignoring party manifestos and platforms and so helping the military to discredit politicians and parties.⁷⁷

Because the 2005 polls, like the 2000-2001 local elections and the 2002 general elections, were so blatantly rigged, there is danger that voters might lose faith in the electoral process altogether and hence in democratic change. According to a PPP politician, "the real danger lies in voters believing that the vote doesn't count -- that only those persons would win who have the backing of the military".⁷⁸ Stressing that the elections demonstrated the "establishment's contempt for free democratic choice", the HRCP concluded that, "as things stand, no one can hope

election for district mayors and deputy mayors. For all practical purposes, the results are already known. But, to play it safe, the government is resorting to more rigging and coercion to consolidate the position of the PML-Q and its allied parties.

⁷³ Even a member on the government benches in parliament, Riaz Hussain Piracha admitted, in the National Assembly, "massive rigging took place in the local government elections, and state machinery was used for this purpose". "War of words", *the News*, 7 September 2005.

⁷⁴ In fact, even setting aside the irregularities, the PML-Q cannot be considered to have shown real electoral strength since politics in these local elections was largely conducted along *biradari* (clan), caste, ethnic and sectarian lines, with local rivalries taking precedence over party loyalty. "We're contesting the polls because of local rivalries", said the supporter of one candidate. Crisis Group interview, Nowshera district, NWFP, August 2005.

⁷⁵ Jahangir press statement, op. cit.

⁷⁶ Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, August 2005.

⁷⁷ In the NWFP, for instance, the local leadership of the PPP entered into electoral alliances with the JUI-F and the Awami National Party with the Jamaat-i-Islami.

⁷⁸ Crisis Group interview, Multan, January 2004.

for a free and fair general election in 2007" or whenever it is held.⁷⁹ Yet, the U.S. has failed to comment, apparently basing its hopes, against all evidence, on a peaceful transfer of power to democratic hands in 2007 by the military ruler.⁸⁰ This silence may be motivated by the belief that only Musharraf and the military can deliver in the war against terrorism. But it should realise that the only truly effective way to counter terrorism in Pakistan is by backing a democratic transition and political freedoms for its moderate democratic parties.

While visiting EU leaders and parliamentarians have at least made an effort to interact with Pakistani opposition leaders, such meetings between senior visiting U.S. officials or congressional delegations with the democratic opposition have tended to be cursory. Visiting senior Pakistani party leaders have, more often than not, failed to obtain a hearing with top U.S. officials or in Congress. Engagement with the moderate parties would pay dividends: by signalling U.S. commitment for a democratic transition and by helping moderate political forces to counter the influence of the country's anti-Western religious lobby.

While the international community, including the U.S. and the EU could help stabilise Pakistan by working to build the capacity of its moderate democratic parties, the parties must also themselves devise and implement coherent and long overdue internal reform programs. Acknowledging the need, a PPP leader said: "We've reached the point that internal political reforms are essential to carry us further. But the compulsion that blocks this is survival in a military regime. They are out to break our party, to buy and bully our members".⁸¹ While the moderate democratic parties are indeed struggling to survive, their leadership should understand that reform would strengthen their ability to mobilise a strong grassroots base that is critical to their survival. By doing so, the democratic forces would also reclaim an agenda the military is trying to hijack.

⁷⁹ Jahangir press release, op. cit.

⁸⁰ Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, "we look forward to the evolution of a democratic path towards elections in 2007 for Pakistan". Transcript of Rice's remarks at <http://usinfo.state.eap/Archive/2005/Mar/17-626121.html>.

⁸¹ Crisis Group interview with Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, National Assembly Member, Multan, 17 January 2005. A PML-N leader disclosed that two party MNAs had been tortured in prison to switch loyalties. Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, August 2004.

IV. A PARTY OVERVIEW

A. THE MAINSTREAM:

Pakistan's various parties reflect the shifts and developments in its body politic. Historically the parties with a national-level presence, the PPP and the Muslim League, have embodied the two traditional sides of the political spectrum, with the PPP widely characterised by a moderate, left-of-centre philosophy, and the Muslim League by a more conservative, pro-business program. Both parties have ideological roots that resonate with the Pakistani electorate, and their various splinter groups frequently keep the original party name to identify themselves with their parent party's ideology and political legacy.

1. Pakistan Muslim League

The "Muslim League" label continues to be evocative, associated with the All-India Muslim League that is generally credited with having won Pakistan's independence. A variety of right-of-centre parties have used variations of the name, each claiming to be the rightful political heir, including Ayub Khan's Convention Muslim League and Fatima Jinnah's Council Muslim League in the 1965 elections. In the 2002 elections six parties entered parliament on Muslim League platforms.

Today, the two largest parties taking up the Muslim League mantle are the PML-N, a faction formed under Nawaz Sharif's leadership in 1993, and its Musharraf-era offshoot, the PML-Q. Both advocate moderate economic policies centred on privatisation and deregulation. In the past the PML-N benefited from the military, corporate and bureaucratic patronage the PML-Q now enjoys. Party activists from both factions stress ideological attachments to the All-India Muslim League and its leader, Mohammed Ali Jinnah.⁸²

According to the PML-N's manifesto:

PML-N represents the continuing flow of Muslims' historic struggle and role in South Asia that is spread over several centuries....After winning independence, All-India Muslim League became "Pakistan Muslim League". The PML leadership steered the country successfully through the initial period of great difficulties....[U]nder the dynamic leadership of Mr Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, it re-emerged as the largest political party of the country in October 1993...⁸³

⁸² Crisis Group interviews with PML-Q and PML-N party workers across the country, January-July 2005.

⁸³ "Pledge with Pakistan: PML(N) Manifesto".

By its opposition to the military during its last term (1997-1999), the PML-N became the target of its former ally, and by joining forces with the PPP and other like-minded parties in the anti-military Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy, the party hopes to use democratic credentials to regain ground lost to the PML-Q.⁸⁴

The military-created PML-Q also claims the All-India Muslim League's legacy. Its leadership is composed largely of former members of PML-N who joined the splinter group after the army ousted Sharif's government in 1999.⁸⁵ The new faction also usurped PML-N offices in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore. The PML-Q is currently in power in the centre, the ruling party in Punjab, and a coalition partner in the Sindh and Balochistan provincial administrations. Dependent as it is on the military, however, it has had to dilute its party ideology, a topic discussed in greater detail below.

2. Pakistan People's Party

The centre-left PPP emerged in 1967 in opposition to Ayub Khan's military government. Its initial, rapid ascent to national prominence was anchored in the socialist program of its founder and leader, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, which called for social justice, economic equality and land redistribution. While the party has moved closer to the centre, it remains wedded to social democracy. According to its 2002 Manifesto, its four basic principles are democracy, religious tolerance, equal economic opportunity, and "people power".⁸⁶

Since Pakistan's first general election in 1970, the PPP has formed four of six governments elected on a party basis. Rural voters are attracted by its left-leaning, social welfare philosophy, including pledges of land reform. In the 1970s, the party appealed to urban working class voters with an ambitious nationalisation drive. This alienated powerful business and industrial groups that backed, as they still do, the Muslim League. Adapting to economic needs in the 1990s, the party adopted a more business-friendly agenda under Benazir Bhutto that closely resembled the PML's.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the PPP continues to advocate government regulation intended to favour farmers, labour groups, minorities and women.

⁸⁴ On 7 July 2003, the PML-N formally apologised in the National Assembly for cooperating with the military during the 1990s.

⁸⁵ The PML-Q's first president, Mian Mohammad Azhar, was Punjab's governor during the Nawaz Sharif government. The party's current president, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, was interior minister and Punjab party president at the time.

⁸⁶ PPP Manifesto 2002, "For a Just, Equitable and Egalitarian Pakistan", 30 September 2002; at <http://www.ppp.org.pk/manifesto/2002.html>.

⁸⁷ See Ziring, op.cit., p. 563.

The PPP is the largest single opposition party in Sindh, Punjab, and the centre, and operates in partnership with its erstwhile political foe, the PML-N, in the pro-democracy ARD coalition. Splinter groups, all claiming to be Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's successors, have kept the party name, with personalised suffixes, including PPP-Sherpao, PPP-Hoti, PPP (Shaheed Bhutto), and the PPP-Patriots.

B. REGIONAL POLITICS

Ethnic relations have left a sizeable imprint on Pakistani politics, as state policies have suppressed, rather than accommodated, the country's ethnic and regional groups.⁸⁸ Most regional parties reflect these concerns, highlighting ethnic discontent and alienation arising from inequitable distribution of power and authority between the centre and the four federating units. These include Baloch and Pashtun regional parties such as the Awami National Party (ANP), Balochistan National Party (BNP), Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) and Pashtoon Khwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP). Others, such as the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (United National Movement, MQM) claim to represent minorities but have historically maintained closer links to the military.

1. Sindh

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement represents mohajirs, who are mainly based in urban Sindh. The party has a middle and lower middle class base but receives financial support from mohajir traders and business houses in Sindh. Emerging as a mohajir response to Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's⁸⁹ bid to redress Sindhi perceptions of discrimination, the mohajir student movement of the 1970s transformed into a political party, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (Mohajir National Movement) in 1984, renamed Muttahida (United) Qaumi Movement in 1997. Supported by the Zia regime in a bid to counter its mainly Sindhi PPP opposition, the MQM again receives military's patronage. It is a partner in the PML-Q-led ruling coalition in Sindh and sits on the government benches in the national parliament.

In response to the perceived economic and political dominance of mohajirs in Sindh and the Punjabi-dominated military, other Sindhi regional parties initially rallied around calls for 'Sindhu Desh' -- an independent

state for Sindhis -- and now stand for the devolution of political, fiscal and administrative power. They include Rasul Bux Palejo's Sindhi Awami Tehrik; G.M. Sayed's Jiya Sindh; Mumtaz Bhutto's Sindh National Front and the Sindh Taraqi Pasand Party.⁹⁰ Like their NWFP and Balochistan counterparts, these parties have been able to mobilise a degree of popular support against central government encroachments on provincial autonomy. They oppose the centre's projects such as Kalabagh Dam and the Thal Canal, which they believe would deprive Sindh of its proper share of water resources to the benefit of the Punjab.

2. Balochistan

Competition for power and resources between the Baloch and the Pashtuns, the two main ethnic communities in resource-rich Balochistan, Pakistan's physically largest province but its least populated, are reflected in the political landscape.⁹¹ Parties representing Baloch and Pashtun rights, however, share a common interest in protecting their province's autonomy against central government encroachments. They oppose the centre's appropriation of natural resources and demand maximum political, administrative and economic autonomy.⁹² "The burning question in Balochistan is one of provincial autonomy", said the leader of a Baloch party. "We want the sharing of power, authority and resources on an equal basis for all four provinces".⁹³

To neutralise this growing opposition, which has become a low-level insurgency in the Baloch majority regions,⁹⁴ the Musharraf government has forged an alliance with the MMA, in particular with JUI-F, the PML-Q's coalition partner in the provincial government. With preferential access to state resources, the JUI-F has expanded its reach at the cost of the moderate Baloch and Pashtun parties. But mounting resentment would translate into electoral support for the regional parties in a free and fair election.

⁸⁸ See Samina Ahmed, "Centralisation, Authoritarianism, and the Mismanagement of Ethnic Relations in Pakistan", in Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (eds.), *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific* (Cambridge, U.S., 1997).

⁸⁹ Bhutto was the first ethnic Sindhi to become head of government.

⁹⁰ While an independent Sindh is no longer a general demand, Sindhi nationalist leaders still evoke the threat for political leverage.

⁹¹ Balochistan, 43.6 per cent of Pakistan's total area, has only 5 per cent of its population.

⁹² Balochistan's gas fields and coal mines meet the needs of most of Pakistan's industry, as well as of consumers in Sindh and the Punjab but the province gets little back in terms of revenue or even access to its natural resources.

⁹³ Crisis Group interview with Tahir Bizenjo, Secretary General, National Party, Quetta, February 2005.

⁹⁴ "When the government and state bodies have blocked political struggle, then another form of struggle has to be adopted", said a Baloch leader. Crisis Group interview, Quetta, November 2005.

The two major Baloch parties, the Balochistan National Party which governed the province in 1997-1998, led by Sardar Ataullah Mengal, and the National Party, headed by Abdul Hayee Baloch, are both left-leaning. A third moderate party, the Jamhoori Watan Party, headed by former Balochistan governor Nawab Akbar Bugti, also is in opposition in parliament. Two moderate parties, Mahmood Khan Achakzai's Pashtoon Khwa Milli Awami Party and the Awami National Party, represent Pashtun interests.

3. NWFP

The Awami National Party (ANP) is the latest incarnation of the National Awami Party (NAP).⁹⁵ Reflecting Pashtun demands and grievances, its agenda focuses on maximum provincial autonomy -- political, social and economic -- limiting the federal government's jurisdiction to foreign policy, currency, communications and defence. Its key goals include renaming NWFP as Pakhtunkhwa (Land of the Pakhtuns) and opposition to the construction of the Kalabagh Dam.⁹⁶ The ANP's traditional power base was eroded in the 2002 elections as NWFP-based religious parties capitalised on Pashtun resentment of U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan's Pashtun-majority areas. Given the MMA government's failure to deliver on its promises, however, the ANP could regain lost ground by revitalising its party apparatus. It could also capitalise on growing Pashtun alienation over the MMA's alliance with General Musharraf, whose government is conducting military operations in the province's tribal belt.⁹⁷

C. POLITICAL ISLAM

1. Jamaat-i-Islami

In many ways the JI is the main architect of official Islam in Pakistan. The party's founder, Abul A'ala Maududi, was South Asia's most prominent Islamic scholar, whose influence is visible in revivalist movements across the Muslim world. It has wide international contacts, with

branches in Bangladesh and India and ties to the Ikhwanul Muslimeen, the Islamic Brotherhood of Egypt.

Although the JI's popular support is limited, it gains clout from close ties to the military, first established in the 1960s with the Ayub regime,⁹⁸ then strengthened during the Yahya Khan interregnum, when the JI's front organisations, such as Al-Badar and Al-Shams, and its student wing, Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (IJT), targeted Bengali dissidents on behalf of the military. During the 1970s, the JI was a key component of the Pakistan National Alliance, whose agitation gave General Zia the pretext to overthrow Bhutto's PPP government and then became his surrogate party in domestic politics and its closest partner in the U.S.-sponsored jihad in Afghanistan. However, in the 1980s the JI lost much of its largely urban, predominantly mohajir constituency to the MQM in Sindh. After modest electoral showings in the 1990s, it regained some ground as part of the MMA in 2002. Its constituency remains largely urban, and includes Western-educated intellectuals and social scientists with affiliations to JI-run research organisations such as the Islamabad-based Institute of Policy Studies.

2. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam

Divided into two factions, led by Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F) and Samiul Haq (JUI-S), the JUI represents a more puritanical streak of political Islam, with roots in the Deobandi movement under the British Raj, and its political offshoot, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH). Like the JI, the JUH opposed the formation of Pakistan. A small but powerful faction left the JUH to support the pro-independence Muslim League and give rise to the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI). The party's agenda focuses on establishment of a pan-Islamic state resembling the caliphate of the seventh century. The madrasa and the mosque are its main forum for political mobilisation.⁹⁹ The JUI-F has become almost exclusively Pashtun, whose interests it vocally supports. JUI-F, the biggest faction, emerged as the largest party in the MMA, winning 41 seats in the National Assembly and 29 of the MMA's 48 seats in NWFP.

D. COALITION POLITICS

1. MMA

The MMA evolved from the Pak-Afghan Defence Council, established in October 2001 by 26 religious parties and some smaller groups, across the sectarian

⁹⁵ Banned by the Bhutto government in the 1970s, NAP changed its name to ANP.

⁹⁶ See Awami National Party Manifesto, available at: <http://www.anp.org.pk/manifesto.htm>.

⁹⁷ A disgruntled Pashtun pointed out that, "the MMA has pursued issues that are not important to us. They first supported Musharraf's LFO, and now they're campaigning against his uniform. But they haven't addressed the issues that people care about, like education and health and employment". Another asked, "What did the MMA do during [the army operations against alleged Pashtun militants in] WANA [agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas]?" Crisis Group interviews, Malakand, January 2005.

⁹⁸ During Pakistan's second war with India in 1965, the JI declared a jihad and ran a public campaign to complement the army's effort.

⁹⁹ The JUI's madrasa network is among the largest in Pakistan.

divide, which were united in their opposition to Pakistan's role in the U.S.-led military campaign in Afghanistan. Failing to galvanise much popular support, the council disbanded shortly after the fall of the Taliban. Six of its major parties then formed the MMA in January 2002 to contest general elections in October. Its two largest components are the JUI-F and the JI.

While the military's manoeuvres helped it become the second largest party in the National Assembly,¹⁰⁰ internal disputes have made the MMA an unstable coalition whose smaller components, including the JUI-S, Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan, Jamiat Ahle Hadith and the Shia party, Islami Tehrik Pakistan, are increasingly resentful of JUI-F and JI dominance. The JI is equally resentful of the JUI-F's control of the NWFP and Balochistan governments.

2. ARD

Led by the PPP and the PML-N, this sixteen-party alliance was formed in December 2000 and is the largest opposition group in the National Assembly. However, the National Assembly did not appoint an opposition leader until well over a year and a half after the legislators were sworn in -- a delay which one editorial characterised as "nothing short of being ludicrous considering the constitutional necessity of having the post filled as early as possible".¹⁰¹ As noted above, Fazlur Rehman was ultimately selected, despite the ARD's parliamentary strength, so as to ensure the MMA's continued support for the government.

The coalition has become a symbol of PPP/PML-N cooperation. The two parties have developed a "code of conduct" for collaboration, which includes pledges to accept the right of elected governments to govern and refusal of any political role for the military.¹⁰² They are also drafting a "charter of democracy", aimed at revamping the political system to enhance the powers of the prime minister, place the intelligence agencies under civilian control, and strengthen judicial independence.¹⁰³

3. PONM

The Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement (PONM) is an alliance of regional parties, including the Balochistan National Party, Pashtoon Khwa Milli Awami Party, Pakhtunkhwa Qaumi Party, Sindh Thinkers Forum, Sindh Taraqi Pasand Party, Sindh Hari Committee and

the Sindh National Front. Like other regional groups and movements described above, it opposes military rule and centralised power structures and advocates a new constitution that would guarantee regional autonomy. It also maintains that the Siraiki belt of southern Punjab, with its own language and culture, has a legitimate claim to separate provincial status.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Crisis Group Report, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, op. cit.

¹⁰¹ "Leader of opposition", *The News*, 29 May 2004.

¹⁰² Crisis Group interview with Siddiqui Farooq, PML-N Central Information Secretary, Islamabad, June 2005.

¹⁰³ Ashraf Mumtaz, "PPP, PML-N working on plan to revamp political system", *Dawn*, 7 July 2005.

¹⁰⁴ See "ANP, JSQM not to join PONM", *Daily Times*, 29 September 2004.

V. RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES

In six years of Musharraf's rule, the military's manipulations have weakened almost all opposition parties. Their disarray can be attributed primarily to divide-and-rule policies, motivated by the dual objectives of creating a civilian façade for authoritarian government and neutralising civilian opposition.

A. POLITICAL INTERFERENCE, INTERNAL DEFECTIONS, AND PARTY DISCIPLINE

1. Retarded development

For most of Pakistan's history, the military has followed a systematic policy of engineering defections to limit the influence of parties, ensure its own political supremacy, and derail democratic progress. While party defections and splinter groups have long been part of the country's political development, they are today integral to the army's tactics, evident in the efforts to pressure or cajole politicians to join the PML-Q.

The state and bureaucratic machinery, including the National Accountability Bureau, nominally an anti-corruption watchdog, is the military's main instrument for forcing opposition figures to join the ruling coalition or punishing them for staying loyal to their political base. Haleem Siddiqui, the PML-Q's former general secretary in Sindh and now member of its central working committee, said:

The process (of engineering a defection) is to file corruption charges with the NAB, offer to drop the charges and, in some cases, offer an attractive ministry, if the person comes on board.¹⁰⁵

This has weakened the political system, adversely affecting not only the targeted opposition parties, but also the ruling PML-Q. Siddiqui added:

Our partners in power feel that the more people join us, the stronger the party will become. But the strength of a party does not come from getting leaders of other parties to join us. The basket gets too heavy, and the newcomers are looking to cash in....When positions are obtained not due to the member's history in the party, but because he's being rewarded for defecting, this weakens the party more than it strengthens it, and blocks out people more committed to the party.¹⁰⁶

The PML-Q also includes any number of minor parties headed by leaders with little popular support, including Farooq Leghari's Millat Party and Hamid Nasir Chatta's PML-Jinnah. These and most PML factions -- with the exceptions of PML-N and Pir Pagaro's Pakistan Muslim League (Functional) -- have been amalgamated into one party. Instead of strengthening the PML-Q, this has resulted only in a new wave of political favours and, by the government's own standards, illegal appointments.¹⁰⁷

The current federal cabinet is the largest in Pakistan's history, presided over by a prime minister, Shaukat Aziz, who is a technocrat without a political constituency or past links with a party.¹⁰⁸ The PML-Q's central secretariat now includes at least 30 joint secretaries, 25 vice presidents and a constantly expanding central working committee.¹⁰⁹ Said Azeem Chaudhry, the party's former organising secretary, "we created so many party posts to enable as many people to get in and accommodate as many people who'd come to our side as possible".¹¹⁰

While the PML-Q claims to operate independently on party matters, including nomination of officials and candidates, senior members told Crisis Group that the military is heavily involved in the screening process for important appointments to party, government and parliamentary posts.¹¹¹ All major central leaders, including the PML-Q president, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, have been handpicked and serve at the military's pleasure. PML-Q provincial chief ministers are selected by the military and then automatically given the office of provincial party president.¹¹² Other senior party officials have been given major cabinet posts, widening the gap in the process between its leadership and ordinary members.

Since the PML-Q is composed of diverse, often quarrelling factions, its leaders, in any case, are more interested in consolidating their personal standing than in establishing significant links with the party's local and regional base, or even with the central and provincial secretariats. "They don't know who the party's workers are", Siddiqui

¹⁰⁷ According to the Political Party Order-2002, parties must elect their office holders.

¹⁰⁸ The cabinet of 59 ministers is supplemented by three constitutional experts and eleven other officials who also have the status of federal minister. Naveed Ahmad, "The mother of all cabinets", *Newsline*, October 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Crisis Group interviews with PML-Q leaders in Islamabad and Karachi, January-February 2005.

¹¹⁰ Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, January 2005.

¹¹¹ Crisis Group interviews, Karachi, February 2005.

¹¹² For example, Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervez Elahi is also president of the PML-Q in the province, while Sindh Chief Minister Arbab Rahim is the party's president in that province.

¹⁰⁵ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

argued, "so how will they organise the party, or identify good electoral candidates for the party?"¹¹³

While the Independent Democratic Group, a new faction led by former PML-Q leaders, including Mian Azhar, Fakhar Imam, Abida Hussain, Iftikhar Gillani and others, has yet to acquire a presence at the national or regional levels, some PML-Q members interpret its emergence as a warning of discontent within the party's lower tiers. Khanzada Emran Khan, the PML-Q's president of policy and planning in Sindh, warned that, "a group like this cannot come into existence in a vacuum. There has to be some discontent at the worker level, and our party leaders should see the writing on the wall".¹¹⁴

Having created the PML-Q, the military is understandably bent on controlling it, further diluting its message and retarding its organisational development. "The [PML-Q] is in an ideological vacuum because that's the best way the military can keep control of it", said Khanzada Emran Khan.¹¹⁵ The PML-Q's military benefactors decide party policy in all key areas, domestic or foreign.¹¹⁶ The relationship was aptly symbolised in May 2005 when Musharraf chaired a PML-Q central executive meeting, violating a constitutional prohibition against an army chief attending a party meeting.¹¹⁷

Disunity and recurring rivalries among its leaders and reliance on the military to consolidate their positions have had far-reaching consequences on the party. This was demonstrated by the standoff between Sindh Chief Minister and PML-Q Sindh President Arbab Ghulam Rahim and Sindh Minister for Revenue and Political Affairs Imtiaz Sheikh and the PML-Q's provincial general secretary before Rahim dismissed him in February 2005. They have levied serious criminal charges against each other, including corruption, kidnapping and murder and have publicly offered to present documentary evidence. According to a senior provincial party official, "neither Sheikh nor Rahim have any roots in the PML. They only joined the party to become ministers, so what do you expect?"¹¹⁸ By splitting the party into pro-Arbab and pro-Imtiaz groups, their rivalry has undermined the party's prospects in any free and fair election in Sindh.¹¹⁹ PML-Q

leaders themselves refute the president's disclaimers of political neutrality. Arbab Rahim, for instance, confronting his detractors, stated that General Musharraf had appointed him, implying that this continued patronage made his position unassailable.¹²⁰ Federal Commerce Minister and senior Vice President Humayun Akhtar Khan attacked Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, the party president, for incompetence and failure to "meet President Musharraf's expectations", part of an internal struggle that has been temporarily quelled only by Musharraf's personal intervention.¹²¹

The PML-Q leadership is understandably unwilling to challenge the military's preferences or directions, well aware that the patronage it enjoys will continue only while it serves the military's interests.¹²² This acceptance of military-dictated constraints in return for bits of power rules out any meaningful, sustained party reform.

2. Opposition challenges

Military-engineered defections present a particularly significant challenge for opposition parties, especially the PPP and PML-N, which have been singled out. However, both major opposition parties are also vulnerable to the military's tactics because of their own internal weaknesses, notably lack of discipline.

Despite a new policy that is supposed to prevent defectors from returning to the party,¹²³ the PPP still welcomes them back, thus demoralising loyal members who have resisted state pressure, often at great personal risk.¹²⁴ Similarly, in a major change made since being thrown out of power in the 1999 coup, the PML-N formed a committee to enforce party discipline, but it has yet to shut its door to returning defectors.¹²⁵

Crisis Group interviews revealed numerous cases of PPP and PML-N officials defying party directives, including

uncertainty grips Karachi", *The Friday Times*, 25-31 March 2005; M. Ilyas Khan and Idrees Bakhtiar, "Indecent exposure", *Herald*, March 2005.

¹²⁰ "Arbab and Imtiaz come to blows again", *Daily Times*, 26 February 2005.

¹²¹ "Old rivals Jamali and Humayun mend fences", *Dawn*, 20 May 2005. See also Ahmed Hassan, "Musharraf rules out change in PML", *Dawn*, 17 May 2005.

¹²² "The Army is the reality, the force to be reckoned with", said the then-PML-Q Secretary General in Sindh. "We can say that parliament should be supreme but we have to deal with the army". Crisis Group interview with Imtiaz Sheikh, Karachi, November 2004.

¹²³ Crisis Group interview with Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, PPP Central General Secretary, Islamabad, December 2004.

¹²⁴ "Former PPP leader rejoins party", *Dawn*, 18 January 2005.

¹²⁵ Crisis Group interview with Siddiq-ul-Farooq, Central Secretary of Information, PML-N, Islamabad, January 2005.

¹¹³ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹¹⁴ Crisis Group interview with Khanzada Emran Khan, Karachi, February 2005.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Asim Yasin, "Opposition questions chairing of PML meeting by president", *The News*, 18 May 2005.

¹¹⁸ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005. In June 2004, then-Prime Minister Jamali was forced to resign, allegedly due to personal conflicts with senior PML-Q leaders, including Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain.

¹¹⁹ See Mazhar Abbas, "Businessmen grow wary as political

campaigning against their own candidates, without facing party discipline.¹²⁶ Already weakened by military-inspired defections, both parties have been particularly hesitant to act against national and provincial assembly members.¹²⁷ However, such incidents hamper the organisational effectiveness of their parties. The challenge of maintaining party discipline extends from the senior ranks down to the wards.

Both parties must also address members' commitment to the party programs. According to the PPP's Nisar Khuro, leader of the opposition in the Sindh Assembly, "we have rules [relating to party discipline] but often they are not implemented. Generally we'd rather wait for a member to leave us, rather than having to force him out....[Parties] feel they can't just hack their own people".¹²⁸

Measures to enforce party discipline as well as institutional mechanisms to accommodate differences of opinion on policy are badly needed. While the PPP's district and *tehsil* (sub-district) presidents can officially discipline party workers, only the chairperson can revoke membership.¹²⁹ This highly centralised system prevents effective accountability, especially as the chairperson, Benazir Bhutto, remains in exile. The PML-N, whose leader, Nawaz Sharif, is also in exile, has a similarly centralised system. Decentralising authority to elected disciplinary committees at the district levels, while permitting appeals to the provincial leadership, would improve oversight. Such committees could monitor attendance at party meetings and events, as well as party members' performance.

All parties would be best served by excluding political opportunists from their ranks. Accepting the return of a defector should be subject to a vote by the relevant provincial and district offices, but only if the defection resulted from state coercion and did not involve acceptance of state inducements.

B. INTERNAL DEMOCRACY

1. Personalised politics

Even the mainstream opposition parties, let alone the military-created PML-Q, place an inordinate emphasis on personalised politics and individual leaders. As a result,

political workers at the lower tiers often have little role in the making of party policies. While charismatic personalities have been vital to rallying grassroots support, it is equally important that parties integrate members better into an organisational framework, particularly at local levels. Too often there are no accurate membership lists and no effective communication with the lower tiers, largely due to poorly run headquarters that lack professionally trained staff familiar with modern managerial techniques. As a result, parties tend to rely on their leaders to maintain links between the centre and lower cadres.

The PPP's reliance on Benazir Bhutto and the centralisation of policy at the top is understandable since they act as hedges against the hijacking of the party by coopted opportunists.¹³⁰ However, since she is in exile, Bhutto cannot consult directly with party workers and office holders, particularly at the lower levels. The PML-N faces a similar dilemma. Nawaz Sharif and his brother, Shahbaz, were forced into exile in Saudi Arabia.¹³¹ A former PML-N district president commented, "If Nawaz Sharif was in Pakistan, he would be able to mobilise the base. But he's not here, and there's nobody to take his place".¹³²

Since party headquarters are disorganised and local structures are weak, individuals with little ideological commitment but with access to resources are more often than not given the opportunity to rise in the party, demoralising its workers. These individuals build a personal support base. According to Rahimdad Khan, the PPP's provincial president in NWFP, "[the landlords] think, 'I'm number one', and so they refuse to obey party directives which don't suit their personal interests".¹³³ Because their party affiliation is based more on personal than ideological interests, such leaders are also the first to defect when these interests are threatened.

According to Khalid Anwar, a former law minister in Nawaz Sharif's government, "it is very important for the landlord to remain in the government's favour. Establishment support keeps him alive politically. So, many of the landlords who left the PML-N and joined the ruling party did so for their personal survival".¹³⁴ Many members of the business community in the Punjab were also PML-N supporters, an observer noted, "but after the

¹²⁶ Crisis Group interviews, countrywide, December 2004–July 2005.

¹²⁷ While this is generally the case with most parties, there have been exceptions. For example, in 2004 the MQM asked three MNAs to resign their seats, prompting by-elections.

¹²⁸ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹²⁹ Crisis Group interviews with senior PPP officials, Islamabad and Karachi, January–February 2005.

¹³⁰ Benazir Bhutto had herself nominated PPP's "chairperson-for-life" in 1999, at a time when her party was under attack by the military and its then civilian ally, the PML-N.

¹³¹ Disqualified by the military government from contesting party elections, Nawaz Sharif holds the vague title of "Supreme Leader", while brother Shahbaz is the party president.

¹³² Crisis Group interview, Mardan, January 2005.

¹³³ Crisis Group interview, Peshawar, January 2005.

¹³⁴ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

(1999) military takeover, they had to join the PML-Q to protect their business interests".¹³⁵

Such defections can leave sizeable vacuums within the organisation. Both PML-N and PPP officials identified the response to defections as a principal weakness.¹³⁶ An Abbottabad-based worker, Abdul Hai, said: "Workers latch on to an individual. Their success depends on his patronage. So when there's a change of leadership, the worker often has no place to go".¹³⁷ For example, after the PPP's NWFP president, Aftab Sherpao, formed his own faction in 1999, PPP-S(herpao), the central leadership replaced him with a string of successors, including Masood Kausar, Khwaja Mohamed Hoti and Rahimdad Khan, who were unable to establish the same links with the party's provincial base.¹³⁸ "Sherpao", said the PPP's current president in NWFP, Rahimdad Khan "had become the symbol of the PPP in NWFP, and when he left, it became difficult to find somebody to take his place. This reinforced Sherpao's position after he defected, and many workers later joined him because we couldn't hold our (base) together".¹³⁹

Parties need to remove this over-dependence on personalities in order to stimulate greater organisational development. This is especially important for the PML-N and the PPP, whose leaders are in exile. According to the PPP's Nisar Khuro, leader of the opposition in the Sindh Assembly, "our party workers tend to wait for the party leaders to return from prison or exile, rather than rallying around the second team".¹⁴⁰

The PPP and PML-N's structures resemble inverted pyramids, with authority concentrated at (and dependent on) the top, and increasingly attenuated at lower levels. They need to reorder these inverted pyramids to counter the threat of factionalism and create a wider, more stable base. Acknowledging internal discontent and the need to integrate workers better, Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, said that "factional politics is rife in the PPP. PPP workers have also complained that they are not rewarded for their long affiliation and sacrifices when it comes to, for instance, giving party responsibilities and party tickets for elections".¹⁴¹

Similarly, according to Sharafat Ali Mubarak, the PML-N's NWFP vice president, "the PML-N is in a crisis....We are

struggling for survival. The main problem we have is a lack of response from the party's leaders to the workers".¹⁴²

Highly centralised and inefficient administrative systems have also aggravated feelings of exclusion among the local branches of most other parties. For example, the ANP traces its leadership to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a prominent pre-independence Pashtun leader, who founded the National Awami Party in 1956. Following Khan's exile in Afghanistan, his son, Khan Abdul Wali Khan, took over the leadership and dominated the renamed party along with his wife, Nasim Wali Khan. A parliamentarian told Crisis Group that "the family factor [restrained] the ANP from becoming more democratic and effective".¹⁴³ Infighting between Nasim and her stepson, Asfandiyar Wali Khan, has resulted in a wave of resignations and dismissals and sweeping party restructuring.

Parties such as the MQM are even more wedded to the concept of the single leader and hence far less amenable to reform. MQM leader (in London exile) Altaf Hussain has become his party's predominant symbol. His speeches and writings are widely distributed within the party, and activists post his portrait outside offices, market places and other buildings in its Karachi stronghold, with the slogan "Only Altaf".¹⁴⁴ His control of policy and personnel is absolute, and he regularly rotates leadership positions to prevent others from establishing lasting ties with party workers. The MQM requires members to pass exams not just related to party policy and ideology but also loyalty to Altaf Hussain. According to a Karachi-based journalist Mazhar Abbas who has extensively covered the party, "loyalty to Altaf Hussain is one of the basic requirements for membership and position within the party". Said Abbas, "in the MQM there's a 'You have to follow Altaf Hussain' mantra".¹⁴⁵ A party insider said, "thinking against Altaf Hussain is not tolerated....Most within the MQM believe the party would fall apart without him".¹⁴⁶

Some MQM insiders have described physical intimidation against potential and actual MQM defectors.¹⁴⁷ Such tactics may help maintain a unified organisation but they have stifled debate and hence the party's potential for development.

Other parties such as the JI and the two JUI factions attempt to project a democratic image, claiming they, unlike the moderate parties, elect their leaders. While the

¹³⁵ Crisis Group interview, Multan, 16 January 2004.

¹³⁶ Crisis Group interviews, country-wide, January-July 2005.

¹³⁷ Crisis Group interview, Abbottabad, NWFP, January 2005.

¹³⁸ Hoti formed a new faction (PPP-Hoti) after resigning from the PPP.

¹³⁹ Crisis Group interview, Peshawar, January 2005.

¹⁴⁰ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹⁴¹ Mohammad Abdul Qudoos, "Zardari returns a hardened politician", *Khaleej Times*, 15 March 2005.

¹⁴² Crisis Group interview, Peshawar, January 2005.

¹⁴³ Crisis Group interview, Peshawar, January 2005.

¹⁴⁴ Crisis Group interviews and observations, Karachi, February-March 2005.

¹⁴⁵ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

JI does elect its *Amir-i-Jamaat* (president, leader of the party), the contest is uneven; Qazi Hussain Ahmad has held that position since 1987 and is only its third leader since Pakistan's creation. Likewise, Maulanas Fazlur Rehman and Samiul Haq are undisputed leaders of their party factions.

The JI and JUI criticism of family dynasties in the PPP, PML-N and ANP wear thin since Qazi Hussain Ahmed, Fazlur Rehman and Samiul Haq's close relatives have been given key posts in their parties as well as parliamentary seats. Samiul Haq's son, Hamidul Haq, and Qazi Hussain Ahmed's daughter, Samia Raheel Qazi, are MNAs. One of Fazlur Rahman's brothers, Atta-ur-Rahman, is an MNA, and another, Maulana Lutfur Rahman, an MPA; two of Rahman's sisters-in-law are also MPAs.¹⁴⁸

Nor do the religious parties brook internal criticism or debate. On the contrary, the leadership demands unquestioning obedience to the party manifesto. Party workers have little role in devising the policy. The JI, for instance, demands a "firm ideological commitment, high character and total dedication", determined through rigorous tests and scrutiny of members' personal behaviour.¹⁴⁹ Membership is restricted: recruits must "understand the meaning and implications of the Kalima [declaration of faith in one God and His last Prophet]... and must fulfil the minimum requirements of Islam".¹⁵⁰ Full membership is only possible after passing tests of knowledge, morality and character. It is not unusual for candidates to remain under observation and trial for months, if not years. Deviation from party standards warrants cancellation of membership or demotion. While the JI might be, as a result, an extremely organised and coherent party, this also explains the failure to expand its popular base and hence its reliance on the military's patronage.

As noted, Musharraf's party, the PML-Q, lacks even a semblance of consultation on the appointment of leaders. While it has expanded its national presence through state patronage, the absence of consultation and consensus will continue to retard internal reform.

2. Party elections

Not surprisingly, opposition parties, particularly the PPP and the PML-N, have refused to abide by Musharraf's Political Party Order-2002 that calls for parties to hold

elections for all party offices, including party leader.¹⁵¹ Instead, they pay lip service while holding internal elections that mostly resemble the old systems of selection and appointment. The mainstream parties have yet to institutionalise processes for competitive internal elections at lower tier positions.

In interviews with Crisis Group, party workers at both national and regional levels expressed dissatisfaction with unelected local leaderships, even as they as they strongly asserted loyalty to their central leaders and their political base. Their main demands included regular, institutionalised and transparent party elections at ward, *tehsil* and district levels and a role for elected officials in selecting the party leadership at the provincial level. The central leadership should accept debate as their party's greatest strength and heed workers' calls for internal democracy if they do not want to alienate them further. Making provincial leaders accountable to elected district delegates through periodic provincial polls would help foster hitherto missing links between the provincial leadership and local units. By electing two thirds of central executive committee members through delegate votes of provincial units, the highest tier of the party would become accountable, while the party leader could still provide direction and discipline.

In the last five years, the PPP has had four different unelected provincial presidents in its NWFP chapter. Its Kohat Division president, Nadir Khattak, said that:

We saw constant changes in the provincial leadership, but the workers had no input in deciding the new leader. So it became difficult for the new provincial president to continue [his predecessor's] policies and gain credibility with the workers. If the lower cadres were consulted, they would accept the new leadership. They would have had ownership over the process, and seen the person as *their* leader.¹⁵²

The PML-N's provincial presidents have traditionally appointed district presidents, who in turn appoint local officials. This lack of internal democracy at the level that is most important for them has only served to alienate party workers and provoke leadership crises. District officials have smaller constituencies to manage than provincial presidents but inevitably more contact with party workers. They must, therefore, be held accountable by elections not just to the provincial and central levels but above all to the lowest tiers.

¹⁴⁸ Rahimullah Yusufzai, "All in the family", *The News*, 18 June 2005.

¹⁴⁹ Kalim Bahadur, *The Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan: Political Thought and Political Action* (Lahore, 1983), p. 27.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁵¹ Said a political party worker, "there's a fear that parties holding internal elections will see a lot of infighting and personality clashes and will fall apart as a party". Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹⁵² Crisis Group interview, Kohat, January 2005.

Some parties already implement this policy. The ANP's constitution calls for members to elect officials of "national units" in NWFP, Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab and the Seraiki Belt, who in turn elect committee and executive members at the *tehsil* and district levels. In the BNP, an elected National Council elects central cabinet members and approves elections of union, district and central leaders. Councillors of party units in each ward elect ward cabinets. Other parties should institute similar procedures.

3. Party finances

The Musharraf government's financial regulations have further limited parties' capacities. The Political Party Ordinance-2002 allows only individual contributions and prohibits those from companies, associations or foreign governments. This imposes serious pressure on travel and production of campaign materials and leaves little scope for candidates who are not personally well off.

Most candidates finance their own campaigns, a system that inevitably benefits the rich. As a result, personal wealth is often a key factor to obtaining office, increasing the risk of personal interests taking preference over those of the party. A PPP worker pointed out that, "when such people are chosen [over committed party workers] and elected, they don't care about the party; all they want to do is to recoup their money".¹⁵³

While several party members interviewed by Crisis Group claimed that loyalty was crucial to a candidacy, they also revealed that a potential nominee's capability of winning was often considered more important than a track record within the party.¹⁵⁴ The PPP's Nisar Khuro said, "There is a general perception in this country that a candidate in a forty-car *jaloos* (public rally) is a good candidate".¹⁵⁵ Lacking an adequate financial base, parties tend to raise funds through means such as application fees to run as their candidates, which vary for Senate, National Assembly and Provincial Assembly seats, further disadvantaging poorer candidates. According to one study, the ruling PML-Q charges \$515 for senatorial tickets, compared to \$430 by the PPP and PML-N.¹⁵⁶ Intense competition for party tickets in coveted constituencies frequently leads to what a PML-Q provincial general secretary called "a bidding war" that escalates the fee well over \$1,000.¹⁵⁷

Financial support is far less an issue for the ruling party and its allies, whose activities are subsidised by the state. Votes have been bought, as well as defectors from rival parties, through public funds,¹⁵⁸ an abuse that should end immediately. Instead, the state might fund all parties through an accountable, transparent and equitable process. But this should be accompanied by effective mechanisms to regulate party finances, including certification by the Election Commission of annual party financial reports. Corporate donations should also be legalised but with an upper limit, to prevent undue influence.

The Election Commission's legitimacy has been gravely marred by its endorsement of Musharraf's flawed and unconstitutional presidential referendum and the equally flawed October 2002 general elections and 2005 local elections.¹⁵⁹ It should be reconstituted, after consultation with all major political parties, as an independent, autonomous and impartial body, with legal authority and resources to monitor party finances and enforce its writ, including disclosure and reporting rules for large corporate and individual donations and campaign spending limits agreed by the parties. Parties are legally bound to publish annual audits of income and expenditures but the Election Commission lacks both the means and the political will to investigate and verify them. This needs to be remedied urgently.¹⁶⁰ The Commission also needs the authority and capacity to act against any official or agency using or pledging state resources to support the ruling party.

Since most parties lack the capacity to manage their finances professionally, the international community could help make them more accountable and transparent by providing technical assistance and training. The parties should realise that fiscal transparency and accountability would raise their democratic credentials with constituents as well as abroad.

Most parties believe state funding would reduce their dependence on large donors and help create an even electoral playing field but they would be best served by focussing on grassroots activities. "The real asset of the

¹⁵³ Crisis Group interview, Multan, January 2004.

¹⁵⁴ Crisis Group interviews, countrywide, December 2004-July 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹⁵⁶ Zafarullah Khan, *Political Parties in Pakistan: Disabled by Design* (Freedom Publishers, 2004).

¹⁵⁷ Crisis Group interview, February 2005.

¹⁵⁸ Zakat funds [Islamic tithe] were disbursed and social sector projects pledged by ruling party candidates and incumbent cabinet ministers and chief ministers during the 2005 local elections.

¹⁵⁹ Headed by an acting chief election commissioner, appointed by President Musharraf, the Election Commission of Pakistan has become, for all practical purposes, an extension of the executive.

¹⁶⁰ Under PPO-2002, political parties have to submit an annual and audited statement of accounts to the Election Commission. While parties submit such accounts, their veracity is doubtful. However, the Commission lacks the means to investigate them and the political will to ensure across-the-board accountability and transparency.

party is the worker. Party workers have in the past raised money... for elections, and could do so again, if properly motivated", said a party activist.¹⁶¹ Moreover, absence of state support should not excuse parties from encouraging district offices to raise funds through membership drives and public outreach. "Our main weakness in organising at the grassroots is that district [officers] and workers at the ward level cannot finance the things they want to do for the party", said Mamoon Hussain, the PML-N's chief organiser in Sindh and a former governor there.¹⁶² Inadequate finances translate into weak local infrastructure. In Abbottabad (NWFP), for example, the PML-N and PPP have no permanent offices, forcing them to rent hotel rooms and make ad hoc arrangements for meetings.¹⁶³ Resource limitations hinder workers' ability to spread the message and turn out the vote, especially in an intensely hostile environment. The organisational capacity of most party headquarters is no better, a situation that requires not only more money but also trained, professional and competent staff and efficient management structures and practices.

Despite a bar in PPO-2002, members of most major parties, including the PML-N, PPP and PML-Q, have admitted to receiving contributions from companies, associations and other organisations. However, Crisis Group interviews indicate that most such funds remain at the centre. "The parties get a lot of money when it's election time, but that money goes straight to the party bosses", said a senior PML-N official.¹⁶⁴ Parties should take immediate steps to ensure that funds are redistributed, through an equitable process, to lower tiers. Siraj Ahmed, an NGO director and ANP activist, said, "the worker's success depends entirely on financial solvency, so a worker's survival at his current level is itself a major challenge".¹⁶⁵ Crisis Group interviews indicated scores of party workers are forced to retire from politics due to financial constraints.

Party funding earmarked and allocated in a transparent and accountable manner to permit low-income party workers to run for office would produce more representative candidates. According to Umer Hoti, a former PPP provincial vice president, "the parties need new blood. In so many constituencies they've been fielding the same candidates, or candidates from the same family, because these are the people with money and capital".¹⁶⁶ Party financing would also likely make the leadership more

conscientious about choosing candidates according to their track records.¹⁶⁷ As Zafar Iqbal Jhagra, the ARD's general secretary, said, "the traditional view is that the individual wins the seat, but there's a growing realisation that it is the party that wins them the seats...So it is the party's responsibility to weed out the bad candidates and support the committed ones".¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ Crisis Group interview, Multan, January 2005.

¹⁶² Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹⁶³ Only one party, the Quami Jamhoori Party, has offices in this district. Crisis Group interviews, December 2004.

¹⁶⁴ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, Malakand, January 2005.

¹⁶⁶ Crisis Group interview, Peshawar, December 2004.

¹⁶⁷ Crisis Group interviews, countrywide, December 2004-June 2005.

¹⁶⁸ Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, January 2005.

VI. RALLYING THE PARTY BASE

A. EMPOWERING CONSTITUENCIES

Parties will only be able to expand their support base within particular constituencies if they are better integrated into the mainstream and can inform the policy process, while still concentrating on the issues of their particular concern. Two groups in particular merit attention -- women and youth -- both of whom can have a powerful impact on elections but have been marginalised politically, for different reasons.

1. Women

Women's direct participation in politics has increased only nominally during Musharraf's tenure. His devolution of power scheme reserved one third of union council seats for women, and the Legal Framework Order also reserved seats in the national and provincial legislatures.¹⁶⁹ Although these measures raised expectations of an enhanced role, Crisis Group interviews with women elected to both reserved and general seats indicated that their effective participation in parties remained minimal. Farah Aqil Shah, an ANP member on a reserved seat in the NWFP Assembly, said, "people in the parties and in the assemblies feel that the parliamentarians on reserved seats aren't legitimately elected..., so there is a bias against them....They're called to party meetings as a formality".¹⁷⁰

Some party leaders exploited reserved seats to expand their own clout, depriving women of an opportunity to broaden debate. A PML-Q female worker said, "many of the women assigned to the reserved seats in the [PML-Q] have come through the will of a chief minister, or the party president, and not on merit....This is not what reserved seats are for".¹⁷¹

Most parties have isolated women's activities from the party's mainstream, alienating a potentially powerful constituency.¹⁷² Nuzhat Amir, a former president of the PML-N's Islamabad women's wing, said that:

More and more women are getting involved in politics. They're showing up to party meetings, and even bringing their young daughters. The party has

[to respond] to this. [However,] women's wings will be seen as just "drawing room" politics unless they're properly integrated with the [male-dominated] wings of the party.¹⁷³

In some more conservative areas, women wings are virtually non-existent,¹⁷⁴ and some local leaders have taken more overt steps to exclude women from the political process. For example, in a provincial by-election in the NWFP's Dera Ismail Khan district in June 2005, leaders in a number of localities reportedly barred women from voting.¹⁷⁵ In the 2005 local body elections, women were prevented from participating in a number of NWFP districts, including Dir.¹⁷⁶

The failure of most parties to empower women at all levels of their organisation is counterproductive since the increasing number of female participants in politics constitute a large and potentially powerful constituency, in both rural and urban areas. Parties should aim at increasing female membership, tailor training programs for them in important activities such as fundraising, production and dissemination of party literature, membership and voter registration drives, and door-to-door canvassing during campaigns. Coordinating such activities by both male and female groups would likely increase turnout at events and encourage greater intra-party harmony.

Stimulating women's effective participation within the party mainstream by including them in key decision making committees,¹⁷⁷ including provincial offices and central executive committees, selecting credible female candidates, and giving their campaigns resources, would increase party appeal and credibility among female voters, who are likely to become a powerful voting bloc in future elections.

2. Students and youth

Student groups have played an important and constructive role in Pakistan's political history. However, youth participation in politics has declined dramatically from its heyday in the late 1960s, when student groups spearheaded

¹⁶⁹ These included: 60 in the National Assembly; 66 in Punjab Assembly; 29 in Sindh; 22 in NWFP; and eleven in Balochistan. See Mohammad Kamran, "Rules for election to reserved seats likely to be amended", *Daily Times*, 15 October 2002.

¹⁷⁰ Crisis Group interview, Peshawar, January 2005.

¹⁷¹ Crisis Group telephone interview, July 2005.

¹⁷² Crisis Group interviews with PML-N, PPP and PML-Q female representatives, countrywide, February-July 2005.

¹⁷³ Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, July 2005.

¹⁷⁴ "Our society is backward; women have no liberty to join parties or work independently", admitted the leader of a moderate Baloch party. Crisis Group interview, Quetta, November 2005.

¹⁷⁵ As a result, nineteen polling stations for women remained inactive on election day. "Fazl's brother wins DIK seat in by-election", *Dawn*, 20 June 2005.

¹⁷⁶ "Few women voters in NWFP districts", *Daily Times*, 9 September 2005.

¹⁷⁷ For example, only three women are on the PML-N's 23-member central working committee.

the protests that led to General Ayub Khan's downfall. Military rulers have since tried to neutralise this potentially powerful pro-democracy lobby. Following countrywide student demonstrations against army rule, for instance, General Zia banned student unions in 1984, in violation of Article 17 (1) of the 1973 Constitution (freedom of association). General Musharraf has reduced the voting age to eighteen but has also banned student unions. As Abdul Rauf, a Kohat-based former member of the PPP's student wing, People's Student Federation, and later a city and district general secretary of its People's Youth Organisation, says, "students used to be an enormous power base in Pakistan. They've led campaigns against two dictatorships. *This dictatorship knows that*".¹⁷⁸

Student activists have provided a traditional base of party recruitment. Most political leaders gained experience through student politics. Today, college students have to sign affidavits declaring they will not participate in any political activity. This deprives parties of an invaluable source of workers and further alienates youth from the political process. Critics include some disgruntled ruling party members. The PML-Q's Azeem Chaudhry said, "you're giving youth a right to vote but at the same time you're saying they shouldn't be involved in politics....So many decision makers in the PML-Q have no history in student politics. They are leaders by default so they don't see the value of student unions".¹⁷⁹

The government's curbs are a significant impediment to the grooming of a new generation of party activists and would-be political leaders. "Student unions are the nursery of politics. Students are the ones who are going to enter the political system in the future, and student unions teach them about group formation, channelling energy, organisation", said Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, the PPP's central information secretary and deputy parliamentary leader.¹⁸⁰

The religious parties are the main beneficiaries of the ban on student unions and political activity within educational institutions. The JUI-F, for instance, has a steady flow of party workers who have gained their political experience in its extensive madrasa network, which operates outside state control, so is unaffected by the official ban on such activity.

Although party officials regularly tour campuses and recruit students to form like-minded groups, the ban on student politics and unions has resulted in institutionalised

politics giving way to ad hoc activity.¹⁸¹ And although the student groups of most parties do retain a presence within educational institutions, a selective application of the ban on political activity has two implications:

First, reflecting the military's preferences at the national level, security agencies only act against students affiliated with opposition parties. Their activities are closely monitored, and they are regularly harassed.¹⁸² Secondly, the more militant organisations, such as the Jamaat-i-Islami's student wing, the Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (IJT), and the MQM's All-Pakistan Mohajir Students' Organisation (APMSO), have been allowed to overshadow moderate student groups, even as they conduct a bitter and violent rivalry to control campuses in urban centres like Karachi. In February 2005, violent clashes between the IJT and APMSO led to closure of two colleges there and the arrest of 26 students.¹⁸³ Earlier a Pashtun Students Federation activist was killed in a clash with the APMSO, also in Karachi.¹⁸⁴

The military's suppression of elected student unions reflects its national political tactics, with similarly adverse consequences. A prominent newspaper editorialised:

... prolonged restrictions on student unions have [not] succeeded in altogether controlling campus politics. This has merely taken more invidious forms and created new unelected pressure groups, often of the more intolerant kind.¹⁸⁵

Moderate, democratic parties must work to overcome this constraint by reaching out more forcefully to youth and taking greater responsibility for training workers in their youth wings, providing opportunities that would otherwise be available in student unions, such as public speaking, debate, group formation and leadership. If the parties activated their youth wings, tapping young people for membership now, these new workers would, in the words of one political leader, "sustain the party for the next twenty years".¹⁸⁶ Youth wings must be empowered, not just used to advance the agendas of party leaders, as they commonly do.¹⁸⁷ They should shape party policy on

¹⁸¹ Crisis Group interview with Khan Ghawas Khan, PPP Mardan district president, Mardan, January 2005.

¹⁸² Crisis Group interview with Arshad Hussain Naqvi, Karachi division president, People's Student's Federation, Karachi, February 2005.

¹⁸³ See "College violence", *Dawn*, 17 February 2005.

¹⁸⁴ "Political activities at Urdu University banned", *Dawn*, 8 April 2005.

¹⁸⁵ Editorial, "Campus politics", *Dawn*, 2 January 2005.

¹⁸⁶ Crisis Group interview, Multan, January 2004.

¹⁸⁷ The PPP's Ghani Mohammad said, "youth are often used as instruments for political leaders". Crisis Group interview, Malakand, February 2005

¹⁷⁸ Crisis Group interview, Kohat, February 2005.

¹⁷⁹ Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, December 2004.

¹⁸⁰ Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, January 2005.

issues of particular concern to the country's young citizens, including education and employment opportunities. As with women's wings, parties should close the gap between policymakers and youth groups by including their representatives in important mainstream decision-making bodies.

B. MEANINGFUL DECISION MAKING

Political leaders need to realise that their parties would gain by adopting mechanisms to ensure the participation of party workers in decision-making processes. The parties must take care that the interests of their workers are reflected in their programs and platforms or risk losing public support. They would equally benefit from giving their workers the opportunity to voice views and grievances through formal, directly accessible routes. "All workers want", said an activist, "is respect and that their concerns and priorities are raised within and taken seriously by the party".¹⁸⁸ A PPP official pointed out, "Those who win elections do so because the workers obey party commands and support them. It is this loyalty that keeps the party intact".¹⁸⁹

Establishing direct contacts with workers is an important way of maintaining ties to the party's base. Even in exile, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto have continued to make themselves available to party workers by phone, the internet, and meetings. Sharif, for instance, frequently meets with PML-N workers in Saudi Arabia during the *Haj* to Mecca. These contacts have become integral to the party leaders' links with their base but strengthening centre-worker links and ensuring an upward flow of information needs a more formal and institutional approach.

Most parties hold general conventions and regular meetings at all tiers to allow members to articulate their positions on policies and decisions. However, in a number of parties Crisis Group surveyed, these conventions and meetings were seldom held on schedule. Workers from a range of parties said that the issues raised were rarely substantially reflected in any subsequent party policy. Mohamed Fayaz, a party worker in the Thana agency of the NWFP, said, "the parties still have their workers, but their leadership too often ignores them and their contributions to the party. So you have workers working against the party leadership at times. Having a meeting once every year is just not enough".¹⁹⁰

The rules of most parties call for local units to hold regular -- usually monthly -- meetings. They should be stringently followed. Each meeting should give participants an opportunity to consult constituents, identifying issues of concern. Monthly reports of local units should be provided to district offices, which should, in turn, hold monthly meetings and give feedback to provincial offices, which then should send consolidated reports to the central executive committee.

Annual conventions should have a more central place on the party calendar and provide impetus for a yearly work plan. The work plan should include rules and manifestos and integrate policy papers on issues such as health, education and economic reform which are prepared by designated central executive committee members, with the help of professional research staff, and adopted after debate in provincial and central executive committees. Attendance and active participation of elected district delegates should be mandatory. In this way, every tier of the party would be meaningfully represented in its decision making.

Effective local and regional participation ultimately depends on the ability of party headquarters to give organisational direction to the party apparatus. Parties must, therefore, ensure that their national headquarters have adequate professional, managerial staff, hired on merit. They should also ensure that their workers have the capacity to contribute meaningfully to decision making. "For years, we've been telling our party leaders to form trained focus groups at the ward level", said Malik Sayeed Akhtar, a PPP district general secretary. "There is no grooming system for the workers. We're left with... untrained workers who get no assistance from higher levels".¹⁹¹

The ANP has stronger centre-worker links than many other parties, and its members' ideological commitment to the party program remains strong.¹⁹² However, it lacks adequate training facilities for both leaders and workers. In contrast, the JI, after registration drives, requires new recruits to go through intensive training and then apply to a central committee for full, paying membership, subject to the rigid criteria described above. Sometimes full membership is awarded years after initial recruitment and training. Other parties should place similar importance on political training. Said the PPP's Nisar Khuro, "training

¹⁸⁸ Crisis Group interview, Multan, January 2004.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Crisis Group interview, Thana, January 2005.

¹⁹¹ Crisis Group interview, Kohat, January 2005.

¹⁹² According to Mian Manzoor, a former ANP district president in Kohat, "Without the approval of local *tanzeems* (organisations), it is very difficult for the party to make decisions". ANP activists and local officeholders echoed this sentiment in interviews throughout the province. Crisis Group interviews, Kohat, January 2005.

units for union councillors and workers should be the party's most basic unit".¹⁹³

Trained workers could then join focus groups in their wards, answerable to elected district committees, with tasks that would include circulating party literature and otherwise spreading the party message; membership and registration drives; seeking financial and other contributions; establishing contacts with local media; selecting candidates for local public office and providing advice on candidates at the provincial and national levels; and conducting election-day monitoring.

Trained workers could also be motivated by the prospect of rising through the ranks, which in turn would be an incentive to demonstrate commitment to the party program. Anticipating return to power in a free and fair election, the opposition parties should use the current period in opposition to establish viable party machinery and train their parliamentarians for the challenges of governing. In September 2004, the PPP formed a 30-member shadow cabinet in the Punjab Assembly and later did the same in the Sindh Assembly.¹⁹⁴ Similar shadow cabinets in the National Assembly would familiarise parliamentarians with the processes of government, as well as help them formulate policies and devise legislation on issues of particular interest to their constituents.

The opposition should heed the advice of a leader who, admitting that his party had been weakened by the military's intervention, emphasised that the only way forward is "to renew the party program according to the new challenges today, and to be better organised as a party".¹⁹⁵

VII. CONCLUSION

The local elections in 2005 provided fresh evidence of the Musharraf regime's unwillingness to implement democratic reform or share power with the political mainstream. With the decks stacked against the opposition, Musharraf's civilian allies, including the ruling PML-Q and the MQM, have retained and even expanded their political presence at the local levels of government. Yet, widespread rigging undermined the exercise and hence their domestic legitimacy. This, along with the evident lack of internal cohesion during the local polls, means the PML-Q will remain dependent on military patronage for survival. So long as Musharraf and his military-created order also lack popular support, the curbs on the opposition parties will remain. The implications are especially significant for the PPP and PML-N -- the only credible alternatives to Musharraf and his ruling party.

Continued authoritarian rule also has significant international implications since the moderate parties could play a crucial role in promoting domestic and regional stability. But an authoritarian government remains bent on marginalising them, capitalising on outside support, including from the U.S., which is giving priority to short-term strategic goals over a sustained democratic transition in Pakistan. Yet the international community could help to roll back the increasing strength of religious extremists by strengthening the moderate parties.

However, much will depend as well on the parties' own willingness to implement internal reforms. While a strong grassroots base has enabled them to remain viable, their success will ultimately be determined by their ability to expand this base and integrate it into the party apparatus, a goal that has so far eluded them. Centralised power and the lack of transparency and accountability have made the parties more vulnerable to military intervention and undermined their public credibility. Such structures have also provoked discontent among their own supporters reflected in defections and violations of discipline among party workers and office holders, and weak showings in traditional electoral strongholds.

As a new generation of voters and politicians enters the political system, including women and youth, the PPP, PML-N and other moderate parties have an opportunity to build new constituencies. As they attempt to rebuild their political machinery in the hope of regaining power, they must tackle in earnest the internal weaknesses that previously impeded them in governance. Preoccupied with their political survival, the parties have also often ignored pressing issues that resonate with the electorate and their own base, such as unemployment, inflation, education and other barriers to social mobility. They must

¹⁹³ Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2005.

¹⁹⁴ "If we had shadow governments, if we trained our parliamentarians for portfolios, we'd have trained ministers available when we formed government", said a political leader. Crisis Group interview, Multan, January 2004.

¹⁹⁵ Crisis Group interview with former PPP MPA Ghani Mohammad, Malakand, January 2005.

urgently develop programs that are responsive to the needs and priorities of their constituents. Their manifestos, campaigns and voting records within parliament should project a clear vision of how to govern the country.

Throughout Pakistan's history, a weak and polarised political system has enabled the military to seize and maintain power. A successful transition to democracy, therefore, will require the PPP and the PML-N to renounce the vendettas that characterised their rivalry during the flawed democratic transition of the 1990s. Both have publicly acknowledged the failures that undermined the reforms their governments promised, including their cooperation with the military to sabotage each other's agendas. If and when democracy is restored, they must understand the importance of respecting democratic norms, whether in government or opposition, to ensure that it is not derailed yet again by an interventionist military. Successful democratic transition depends as much on the parties' willingness to sustain their own reform, as on the military's acceptance of civilian supremacy.

Islamabad/Brussels, 28 September 2005

APPENDIX A

MAP OF PAKISTAN



APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY

ANP	Awami National Party, the main moderate Pashtun party in the NWFP.
ARD	Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy, the single largest opposition coalition in the National Assembly, spearheaded by the PPP and the PML-N.
<i>Biradari</i>	Clan.
BNP	Balochistan National Party.
EBDO	Elective Bodies Disqualification Order, enacted by the Ayub Khan regime in 1959 and used to exclude civilian opposition figures from the electoral process.
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan.
HRCP	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.
IJI	Islami Jamhoori Ittehad, an electoral alliance forged through army patronage and headed by Nawaz Sharif's PML as the main opposition party to Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party in 1988.
IJT	Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba, the Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing.
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate.
JI	Jamaat-i-Islami, the vanguard of modernist political Islam.
JUI	Jamiatul Ulema-e-Islam, the main Sunni-Deobandi political party and successor in Pakistan to the Jamiatul Ulema-e-Hind in pre-partition India. The party is divided into three factions, denoted by the initials of their leaders: JUI-Samiul Haq (JUI-S), JUI-Fazlur Rahman (F), and JUI-Ajmal Qadri (Q).
JUP	Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan, the Bareilvi component of the MMA and rival of the Deobandi Sunni school.
JWP	Jamhoori Watan Party.
MMA	Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, an alliance of six major religio-political parties, dominated by the JUI-F and JI, that runs the NWFP provincial government and is the major partner in the pro-Musharraf ruling coalition in Balochistan.
MNA	Member of the National Assembly.
Mohajir	Urdu-speaking migrants and their descendants from India.
MPA	Member of the Provincial Assembly.
MQM	Muttahida Qaumi Movement (United National Movement), a party representing mohajirs, with its main powerbase in Sindh's urban centres, including Hyderabad and Karachi.
NAB	National Accountability Bureau.
Naib Nazim	Deputy Mayor.
Nazim	Mayor.
NWFP	North West Frontier Province.
PKMAP	Pashtoon Khwa Milli Awami Party.
PML	Pakistan Muslim League, the country's founder party, originally called the All-India Muslim League. Many politicians claim to be leaders of the "real" Muslim League and have their own factions. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif heads PML-N (Nawaz). PML-Q (Quaid-i-Azam group) is the pro-Musharraf ruling party.
PMAP	Pashtoon Kwa Milli Awami Party
PONM	Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement, a coalition of regional parties.
PPO	Political Party Order (2002), promulgated in June 2002 by the Musharraf government.
PPP	The Pakistan People's Party. Founded by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1967 with a socialist, egalitarian agenda and now headed by his daughter, Benazir Bhutto, twice prime minister, currently in exile.
Tehsil	Sub-district.
TIP	Tehrik-e-Islami Pakistan, the Shia component of the MMA, earlier known as Tehrik-e-Jafaria Pakistan.