

Pakistan Scene

Liquidation

Ardeshir Cowasjee writes from Karachi

"Pakistan has become a sideshow in geopolitical terms... The Clinton administration does not shed even crocodile tears over Sharif's fate. Washington urges only a return to democracy, not restoration of a prime minister who systematically undermined Pakistan's other institutions."

LET me, however, make this clear, in case there should be any mistake about it in any quarter. I mean to hold our own. I have not become the King's first minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. For that task, if ever it were prescribed, someone else would have to be consulted.

That was Winston Spencer Churchill, at his roaring best, when he spoke at the Mansion House in London on November 10, 1942. Four years later, with Churchill out of power, someone else was consulted and the empire was lost.

In 1951, a Wykehamist friend of mine remarked, "Well, the Empire has gone, and with it a lot of chingchongs, oongabongs and nignogs. The educated and the hardworking amongst them will rise, the rest will end up eating each other." We fell in the last category.

What have our 'educated' leaders done with this nation? Where do we, 140 millions find ourselves today? In effect, those who followed Jinnah have spread the belief that the world owes us a living, that we do not have to work for ourselves, that manna will fall, if not from heaven, from the willing open hands of powerful friends. The motley leaders we have had, be they potentates, dictators, autocrats, basic-democrats or pseudo-democrats have all tried to rule by emulating the West but without making any attempt, even the feeblest, to educate the illiterate masses.

Within 25 years half the country was lost. Now, 25 years later, with the way things are going, no one can be sure for how long, or even if, the remaining half will remain intact. When great empires can be lost, so can puny weak countries. What goes in our favour is that there are no serious takers — "We will eat grass if we have to, but we will make the bomb."

How are we regarded? What is the perception the outside world has of us?

The heading of an editorial in 'The Times' of January 8, 1997, when Caretaker Farooq Leghari was supposed to be righting the wrong, was: 'Time for Pakistan — Delaying elections may be better than it appears.' It read, "... A time

limited delay of the February elections would not necessarily be as damaging to Pakistani democracy as it seems. The two leading contenders have both been dismissed from office on corruption charges; three months was always too short a time for credible choices to emerge from such polluted, political machinery. Time would also allow the interim government to toughen up its accountability law, intended to disqualify politicians guilty of corruption. It was hastily drafted and has allowed too many big fish to slip through its meshes. In particular, there is need to tighten the new rules designed to bar politicians who have damaged the country's banking system by refusing to repay massive personal loans to which nothing but their political influence entitled them. Most of the technocrats filling the political vacuum are doing a respectable job. They have made deep cuts in the size of government, reduced the scope for political patronage, advanced privatisation and introduced deep banking and tax reforms. They have also cancelled most 'development' projects, too many of which aim to buy votes with profligate public works schemes."

Leghari disqualifies nobody, wangled in Nawaz Sharif, with the aim of sitting in the saddle himself.

Two and a half years later, an editorial in 'The Times' of October 13 1999 was titled 'Distortions of democracy — the military may be a less bad option for Pakistan today.' To quote from it: "In domestic tussles with the presidency, the judiciary, the growing number of political enemies, the press, religious factions, and the military, Mr. Sharif has done little but try to extend his own powers. Mr. Sharif's sorry record may be why Washington, despite its earlier warnings, is taking an unusually soft-soled call, calling only for the swift restoration of democracy

'If a coup has taken place'. The outside world, like Pakistan's frustrated voters, may feel that a new government, even one brought in by the army, might be less bad for Pakistan than the distorted democracy it has endured until today."

On October 18, came a further editorial headed 'Time and the General', part of which reads: "His [Musharraf's] message yesterday, therefore, was simple: give Pakistan a chance. He deserves to be heard. On virtually all matters, what he said was sensible. But Pakistanis will judge him by what now follows. Many want to see the smack of firm government, especially if it hits those who have corrupted the suffering country... General Musharraf now has the chance and the determination to stamp out graft and bring in the austerity measures from which his predecessors shied away. As a member of a minority, he also made clear that the government will clamp down on religious persecution, ethnic conflict and tribal clashes that have threatened to pull Pakistan apart."

A news report in 'The Economist' of October 16 has it that: "There were spontaneous celebrations at the ousting of Mr. Sharif. The deposed prime minister had systematically undermined every institution capable of challenging or even questioning him, from the courts to the press to parliament."

And, from a column in the 'Asian Wall Street Journal' of October 21: "... Mr. Sharif became intoxicated with the notion of running what he referred to as 'the most powerful civilian government in Pakistan's history'. To this end he secured the removal of a president, a Supreme Court chief justice... He appointed judges beholden to him... His disregard for democratic institutions became obvious when he ordered his party members

to storm the supreme court and prevent the hearing of cases of past corruption against him."

On a more frivolous note, the 'Daily Telegraph' on October 21 opined that 'Surely the Queen would rather have entertained the new leader of Pakistan... General Pervez Musharraf who seized power last Tuesday seems a more decent fellow than President Zemin. For a start, he could chat to the Queen about his dogs — General Musharraf has two Pekinese called Dot and Buddy... "The Guardian", which normally puts military dictators in the same category as fat cats, 'charming, articulate and approachable'. The US ambassador to Pakistan said he was a 'man of rectitude and sincerity'... A liberal Muslim, he has limited patience with Islamists and has promised to open his own tax returns for inspection."

Also on October 21, Jim Hoagland in the 'Washington Post' wrote: "Justifiable homicide is one way to think about the coup Pakistani General Pervez Musharraf staged against the corrupt, inept, democratically elected civilian government in Islamabad last week. Musharraf deserves no applause for what he has done. But thus far he has not earned hanging, either... We have hit rock bottom... Musharraf said in his first address to a nation that must treat that assessment as unbridled optimism. For three decades Pakistan has been ruled by charlatans, crooks, fanatics and a certifiable war criminal or two. The considerable talents and graces individual Pakistanis manifest have been relentlessly driven out of their national politics. Throughout the downward spiral — with brief respites when sober-minded technocrats were put in charge — the United States has been there to cheer on the quack of the day as the

only hope that things would not get even worse, and to welcome the next quack when things did get even worse."

I experienced the strength of the US tilt towards Pakistan in covering, from Calcutta and then Islamabad, the 1971 India-Pakistan war, a conflict in which Pakistan's leaders had authorized genocidal campaigns against the population of Bangladesh. That was not what counted in Washington. The United States sought to build up Pakistan as a counterweight to a huge headstrong Indian democracy that Washington had never been able to accommodate easily in its strategic thinking... If the Pakistanis do not draw lessons from the dead end they have reached — and history and human nature suggest they won't — the United States must nonetheless seize this opportunity to show that it has finally learned where its paramount interests lie. Washington has nothing further to gain by manipulating, cajoling or overestimating Pakistan as a regional ally, or by pretending to treat it on an equal footing with India, or as strategic bridge to China... Pakistan has become a sideshow in geopolitical terms... The Clinton administration does not shed even crocodile tears over Sharif's fate. Washington urges only a return to democracy, not restoration of a prime minister who systematically undermined Pakistan's other institutions."

Every (repeat every) institution of the state necessary for the maintenance of law and order, for the dispensation of justice, and for good governance has allowed itself to be destroyed or has recklessly and selfishly destroyed itself. We go back to 1947 and to what Jinnah said in the creed he enunciated on August 11 of that year: "The first observation I would like to make is this: you will no doubt agree with me that the first duty of a government is to maintain law and order, so that the life, property and religious beliefs of all its subjects are fully protected by the state."

To General Musharraf I say: Make haste slowly. Stand firm and excel.

Waiting for the Peace Dividend

How the Kingdom Carved out a Special Role

Dilip Hiro writes from London

With the six-year peace process between Israel and the Palestinians poised to enter its most difficult phase, focussing on the final settlement, Jordan finds itself well-placed to play an important role — just as it does in the case of Iraq. Gemini News Service looks at the kingdom's special position in the Middle East.

ONE measure of a Middle Eastern country's importance is the size of the intelligence apparatus that its neighbours and the United States maintain within its boundaries.

On that ranking, Jordan is very important indeed. United States President Bill Clinton certainly thinks so, for he has seen 37-year-old King Abdullah twice in the last three months.

Washington maintains a heavy intelligence presence in the kingdom, as do Israel, Iraq and Syria. Yet the country has barely five million inhabitants and no natural resources except cheap phosphates.

Its importance lies in its strategic location (surrounded by Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Israel), the composition of its population (a majority of whom, including Queen Raina, are Palestinians), and its recent history (particularly its commercial links with Iraq and political rapprochement with Israel).

Now, with the six-year peace process between Israel and the Palestinians about to enter its most difficult phase, and Iraq at continuing odds with Washington, Jordan is well-placed to play a pivotal role — as was shown when, on the eve of King Abdullah's departure for the US, Israel's President Saddam Hussein sent deputy premier Tariq Aziz to Amman to convey a message of reconciliation to Clinton.

Close economic cooperation between Amman and Baghdad came about during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War when Iraq lost access to the sea as a result of a blockade of its short shoreline. Iraq funded expansion of the Jordanian port of Aqaba and the Jordan-Iraq highway. Aqaba became a major port for Iraq, which supplied Jordan's precarious economy with oil at discount prices.

This was partly why the late King Hussein of Jordan refused to join the anti-Baghdad coalition, and why, together with Washington after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the other reason was that the Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin were pro-Iraq, especially after Saddam linked Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait with the two countries.

President Clinton himself admitted that he was pleased by what he described as "conciliatory tone" Pakistan's new military ruler took towards India. The US Ambassador in Islamabad William Milam was more direct and thought that General Musharraf should be given a chance.

He said the United States was heartened by the military ruler's pledge to "usher in real democracy" in Pakistan. The World Bank South Asian regional chief whose organisation is currently negotiating a fifty million US Dollar 'bailout' loan for Pakistan reportedly said it was not the Bank's lookout what type of government a particular country has, but how efficiently and in which sector it uses the loans it receives. The World Bank is largely controlled by the United States and from the Bank's position vis-a-vis the army take-over in Pakistan it can stand well be visualised what the US will eventually take. The Clinton administration, to quote an observer, has rightly understood that Pakistan cannot be internally isolated nor will imposition of any sanction or moratorium of aid or loan on it effectively work. Pakistan has strong moorings and connections in the Muslim countries, particularly among the oil-rich Arab nations. Saudi Arabia has already extended its recognition to the new military ruler.

Other Arab and Persian Gulf countries are likely to follow suit. Any attempt to isolate Pakistan by western countries will, in all likelihood, draw the sympathy of the Middle Eastern countries and in its turn trigger a clash of interests between the western democracies and Muslim countries. Already a nuclear power, in fact the lone Muslim country to possess nuclear capability, Pakistan might take a more hard-line attitude, assume the leadership of the Islamic world and pose a threat to the west including continued supply of oil via the Persian Gulf. To avoid such a possibility the Clinton administration is likely to opt for what is called in diplomatic jargon "constructive engagement" like the ASEAN countries with regard to army junta in Myanmar. Against this backdrop other development partners of Pakistan like Japan and European countries will also gradually toe the US line.

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Jordan	Population: 5m
Area: 89,000 sq.km	GNP per head: \$1,520
Life expectancy: 71	Adult literacy: 92%(m), 82%(f)
Under-5 malnutrition: 10%	Pop. below poverty line: 15%

More than half the population is of Palestinian origin

King Abdullah

Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

About 40 per cent of Jordan's parliamentary deputies were also pro-Baghdad.

After the 1991 Gulf War, the UN Sanctions Review Committee recognised Jordan's special position, and allowed Baghdad to continue supplying it with 67,000 barrels of oil a day at a discount. This continues.

The post-1990 ban on flights in and out of Iraq has left Jordan as Iraq's only travel link with the rest of the world.

Saddam believes Abdullah has been comparatively open minded, so the king was a natural choice of conduit to Clinton. Nevertheless, the chances of a breakthrough in Baghdad-Washington relations are minimal.

"Iraqis regularly seek talks with American officials, but the US is not interested as long as Iraq is in violation of UN Security Council resolutions," said US State Department spokesman James Rubin before Abdullah met US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in mid-October. "We see no reason for dialogue," he commented after the meeting.

This is unlikely to worry Saddam. He will flaunt his spurned gesture of goodwill toward Washington as evidence of his peaceful intentions. If he succeeds, King Abdullah would have played a role, albeit inadvertently, in Saddam's rehabilitation in the Arab world.

Then there is Israel. While committed to maintaining the peace treaty with

Israel (signed on 26 October 1994) the young monarch has not displayed his late father's warm support for Israel.

His recent warning that "Israel will face Palestinian violence if it does not move faster to cement peace with the Palestinians," boosted his popularity among Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin.

He has also reversed his father's stance, and said that the Palestinian Authority should take charge of the Al Aqsa Mosque complex in Jerusalem's Old City, the third holiest shrine in Islam, whose custody has been vested in Jordanian royalty by Israel.

Unlike his father, the new monarch has not tried to play an active role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and has been deferential to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

In contrast, on 30 August King Abdullah ordered raids on the offices of Hamas, a radical Palestinian Islamist group. Twenty-four of its leaders were arrested. The move went down well with the US, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which had earlier arrested dozens of Hamas activists in areas under its control.

He clearly wanted to impress the US president and Congress, which includes Hamas in its list of terrorist organisations. Congress has been reluctant to approve the \$300 million aid that Clinton pledged for Jordan to reward King Hussein's role in getting the Palestinians and Israelis to reach an accord.

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Menu Still Lacks Milk, Honey and the Fruits of Peace

Marwan Asmar and Ibtisam Awadat writes from Amman

Five years after King Hussein proclaimed an "honourable peace" with Israel, public opinion in Jordan remains unenthusiastic. Even the government is disappointed with the results. Gemini News Service assesses the mood in Amman.

THERE has been little celebration to mark the fifth anniversary of Jordan's "honourable peace" with Israel — the 26 October accord that formally ended 46 years of hostilities and was supposed to usher in a new era of milk and honey.

Today, the milk tastes sour and the honey has lost its sweetness.

Only days before the anniversary, a Jordanian parliamentary delegation in Hebron, was booed and attacked by right-wing Jewish settlers outside the Al Ibrahim Mosque. Normalisation clearly has a long way to go.

It looked so different in 1994. Jordanians were promised the fruits of peace by way of outside investments that would create industries, jobs, and higher wages and improve living standards.

Overnight, diplomatic relations were opened and protocols signed. Areas covered included commerce, transport, and the movement of people.

Expectations were heightened by hype. The anticipated business boom was heralded by the Middle East and North Africa Summit in October 1995, under the banner: "Jordan is open for business." It promised investment opportunities and the setting up of joint projects not only for Jordan but for the whole region.

Peace there has been, but the economy remains in the doldrums with productivity low, wages depressed, unemployment rife and prices sky-high. As a result, experts, party activists and some politicians are giving the treaty the thumbs down. Even those who supported the treaty are having second thoughts.

All Abu Al Ragheb, for instance, a member of parliament who backed the treaty in the debate on its ratification, is now sombre.

As a bilateral treaty, it established new relations between Jordan and Israel and created regional stability by the recognition of mutual security

and the establishment of well-defined borders," says the former industry and Trade Minister. However, he adds, the treaty failed to benefit the country economically.

"This was because the political objective was to create a state of peace between Jordan and Israel, and this view overrode all other considerations," points out Labeed Gumhaw, a prominent political scientist in Amman.

This view was not shared on the streets. The normalisation of relations even today is limited to the official level and is virtually non-existent in civil society institutions. Says political analyst Dr Abu Meizer, "The treaty will not end the bitter decades of hostility and Israeli stubbornness and achieve peace in the region, he adds.

The central problem remains the Palestinians who were turned into refugees when Israel was established in 1948. "Palestine is the core of the debate in the region, and it is important to find a solution for its people who are under occupation," says Dr Husni Shayya, a political science professor.

At least 60 per cent of Jordan's four million people are Palestinians — a breeding ground for a growing anti-normalisation movement. Most political parties, professional associations and some non-governmental organisations saw the treaty as a sell-out, as did the Islamists, directed by the Muslim Brotherhood, an organisation that today boasts 14,000 members.

Opposition may have held back the development of normalisation. Business has not responded. Only 25 joint projects have been set up, mostly because of government encouragement. An Israeli products exhibition in Amman in 1997 was boycotted by Jordan's Federation of Chambers of Commerce and the Chamber of Industry. The few visitors had to walk a gauntlet of demonstrators.

The fact that the demon-

strators got a good hiding from the police didn't dampen tempers," says Hamza Mansour, a Muslim Brotherhood member. The episode showed that the normalisers were gaining the upper hand, and had popular support.

The protesters' anger must be understood in a regional context. Already the peace process was going badly with the parliamentary election and Benjamin Netanyahu to power in Israel in 1996.

After the late King Hussein himself was disavowed. He warned that the Israeli leader was pushing Arabs and Israelis into further bloodshed and disaster.

Although the number of Israeli tourists reached about 100,000 a year, the trend angered many Jordanians and businesses who claimed the visitors brought no economic benefits, refusing even to buy a sandwich.

After the attempted assassination of Hamas leader Khalid Misha' by the Israeli secret service, Mossad, in Amman in September 1997, opposition groups said the government had only itself to blame.

The treaty caused a rupture in relations between the government and people, one which was made worse by turning away from our Arab strategic depth," says Hamza Mansour. Labeed Gumhaw shares a similar view. "The treaty caused a schism with Arab countries, and made us turn more and more towards Israel."

However, in 1999 things appeared to be taking a new course. While commitment to the peace treaty continued to be "unshakeable" under the new king, Abdullah, a greater emphasis on Arab relations was beginning to take hold in Jordanian foreign policy.

At the start of the sixth year of the treaty, the future looks fraught.

The authors Marwan Asmar is the Managing Editor of 'The Star' English-language weekly in Amman and Ibtisam Awadat is a political reporter at 'The Star'.

US Attitude towards the Army Take-over

by Mansoor Mamoon

The Clinton administration, to quote an observer, has rightly understood that Pakistan cannot be internally isolated nor will imposition of any sanction or moratorium of aid or loan on it effectively work. Pakistan has strong moorings and connections in the Muslim countries, particularly among the oil-rich Arab nations. Saudi Arabia has already extended its recognition to the new military ruler.

of the generals conceding a political victory to India capitalising on which the BJP government drummed up support during the recent elections paving the way for its smooth sail and return to power with increased majority. The Pakistan army genuinely felt that they have been badly let down and that the blame of the Kargil fiasco has been laid on them. The army also took advantage of Nawaz Sharif's alienation from the power base and unpopularity with the masses due to his largely autocratic and highhanded rule — his successive ousting of the President of the Republic, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and former Chief of Army Staff General Jehangir Keramat, his crackdown on the voices of dissent — political as well as press, his unabashed cronyism, sectarian feuds and violence, economic doldrums and widespread corruption. The army could well understand the mood of the nation and knew full well that they would be welcome as the saviour of the country. It is, therefore, no wonder that over seventy-five percent of the people in Pakistan supported the army take-over.

After tightening his grip over the state of affairs in Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf made it amply clear that he would have to set the

country's economy right and deal with the massive corruption. He also declared that "real" democracy would be established in Pakistan with provision for the accountability of the politicians and devolution of power to Pakistan's four provinces and that the army would stay "in power as long as it was absolutely necessary" for putting the country on the right track. He did not give any time-frame for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan as well as the completion of the tasks he has set for his administration. Former Chief of the caretaker government in Pakistan and World Bank official Moin Qureshi supporting General Musharraf's stand said that at this stage it would be difficult to give a definite time-table in view of the existing realities in the country. Probably he hinted at the absence of an acceptable leadership as former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, now in self-exile in London, stands equally discredited. The Army also does not want to lean towards any political group right at this moment to avoid any possible divide and controversy among the people.

There are indications that General Pervez Musharraf is going to stay as the Chief Executive of Pakistan for a much longer time than expected. Revamping the economy

and dealing with corruption in a country like Pakistan are not easy tasks. It may take years. But what is of utmost concern to General Musharraf is to deal squarely with Nawaz Sharif before giving up power. Return to civilian rule and restoration of constitution with Nawaz Sharif intact in the field will automatically invite a severe backlash for the coup leaders. The constitution, kept in abeyance, provides for mandatory death sentence for overthrowing the government through extra-constitutional means. The military administration has already started framing serious charges against Nawaz Sharif including the attempt to kill General Musharraf and two hundred other passengers of the PIA flight by refusing to land at the Karachi airport. If Nawaz meets the fate of late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto it will not surprise many.

Physical or political liquidation or marginalisation of Nawaz might be necessary for a safe bail-out of the junta from Pakistan's cockpit of power. Islamabad has already brushed aside the criticism of the Commonwealth and suspension of its membership. While European countries and Japan appear to be extra-critical, the Clinton administration has somewhat softened its stand towards the military rulers in

TOM & JERRY



MUSH!



By Hanna-Barbera

