

Q&A: Bhutto, Musharraf and developments in Pakistan

The following is the translation of an Arabic Political Analysis Q&A issued on 26th October 2007 before the recent imposition of emergency rule by Musharraf:

Question:

What has made America, which dominates power in Pakistan, approve amnesty for Bhutto and her return to Pakistan, despite the fact that her loyalties are with the British camp where she spent the last eight years?

Secondly, where is Pakistan headed in the midst of these events?

Answer:

The answer to this question requires us to look back for a proper perspective:

1 – Changes started to take shape on the fast track in Pakistan with the arrival of Bush and the Neo-Conservatives to power in the United States and more so in the aftermath of the 9/11 blasts. The American invasion of Afghanistan was a crucial factor in the Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, America's main agent in the region siding with the Americans in their invasion of Afghanistan and, in their war against the Muslim Mujahideen within Pakistan itself. Musharraf's joining the US in its "War on Terror" (War on Islam) was in effect a declaration of a New Crusade War against the Jehadi outfits and movements in Kashmir, who used Pakistan as their stronghold and launching point.

By aligning himself with the US, Musharraf succeeded in depriving the Mujahideen their stronghold and safe bases in Pakistan. He succeeded where all previous Pakistani governments failed in their attempts to close down the Mujahideen camps. Musharraf prosecuted and arrested the Mujahideen and branded them as terrorists.

The great traitor gave India its greatest gift, which it had been seeking for decades by asking Pakistan for ceasing its support to the Mujahideen. The Hindus were delighted with this and they whole heartedly accepted the new phrase of the so-called "Islamic terrorism" which was coined by the Bush administration in its fight against Islam. The Hindus branded the Mujahideen's struggle in Kashmir as a form of terrorism. In this aspect the present Congress- led government which has its loyalties for Britain is no different to the previous right-wing government led by the BJP that was inclined towards the Americans.

2 - The American officials did not stop making further demands from Musharraf: indeed, one who does not respect himself is condemned to even greater disgrace. An official of the US CIA threatened in the New York Times on 07/23/2007 to storm the tribal areas. Director of U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Michael O'Neil said two days later that Osama Bin Laden is in the region in Pakistan on the border with Afghanistan, and urged (Musharraf) to do more to mobilise armies in the border region.

Yes indeed, the American administration is not content with the services rendered by the Pakistani army, they are demanding even more from them and asking them to do the dirty and tough job on their behalf.

The US administration has urged Musharraf to continue to the same approach towards the Islamic movements and fight such organisations as the Taliban, the Harkat ul Mujahideen, (formerly Harkat ul Ansar), the Jaish e Muhammad and other such movements and secure its 1500 km border with Afghanistan. This will prevent the Mujahideen from using Pakistani territory for launching against the American and NATO occupation in Afghanistan. The American administration is also forcing Pakistan to go for a total and decisive war against the tribes who are

unequivocally supporting the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Perhaps the July 2007 visit to Islamabad by American Deputy Secretary of State Negroponte, who is the administration's specialist in igniting and provoking civil strife and bloodshed, was aimed at achieving these goals by ensuring that Musharraf, who continues to betray the Muslims, remains in power and dedicates himself to the service of Americans. Negroponte acknowledged that he discussed the issue of launching a military strike in tribal districts during his Pakistan visit.

3 - Musharraf was conditioned by and accustomed to the ruthlessly violent policy used by the United States against it, and he happens to be faithful agent of his master, carrying out orders even if such were against the interests of his people and his country. He is an asset his masters and a sure bet who fulfils all the conditions set by his masters in such a volatile region as Pakistan.

He has severely wounded the sentiments of Muslims by supporting the US aggression in Afghanistan and by offering his country as a war front for America in carrying out its despicable designs in the region.

Musharraf has mobilised his troops in the tribal areas on the Afghan border in Waziristan and Baluchistan and further increased the troops to 80 to 90 thousand along the Afghan border. Today (26/10/2007) he has launched a violent blitz on Muslims in the valley of Swat northeast of Peshawar only because the Muslims in the region want to implement the laws of Islam. All this is done to ignite a bloody war at the instance of Washington which wants its paid agent Musharraf to remain in power among the Muslims: Pakistani army on one hand and Muslim tribes on the other, and keep a provocative posture to keep the fire burning. He has dealt with movements protesting his allegiance to America in a manner designed to further aggravate the situation rather than to calm the atmosphere. This is what he did when he deliberately ordered the killing of senior Baloch leader Akbar Khan Bugti who was 79 years old in August 2006. This further fuelled and worsened the crisis. Bugti was known as the "Old Lion" and had occupied senior government posts of governor and minister in the late 1970s.

4 – In the aftermath of Bugti's killing, the Pakistani army had pressurised Musharraf to reach an agreement with the tribes in order to contain the escalating violence and avoid a civil war in September 2006. The US was opposed to Pakistan reaching an agreement with the tribals because it was in the US interest to keep the violence alive. America under the NATO launched bloody attacks in the area of Bajour border in November 2006 in order to spoil the agreement with the tribes. The US officials then made several statements criticising the agreement, and urged Musharraf to mobilise his army in the tribal areas, all for nullifying the agreement. This is how it was: Rice criticised the agreement in her speech before Congress on 16/2/2007, and on the same day the American Vice President Dick Cheney spoke against it during his visit to Pakistan. On his part, Musharraf fulfilled his master's desire by provocatively mobilising Pakistani army along the border in the tribal region in order to escalate tensions thereby paving the way for annulment of the agreement. This decisively demonstrates that America does not wish for calming of tensions, it would rather prefer to have an escalation in warfare in the region so that the Muslims are kept pre-occupied with it and do not resist the US occupation in Afghanistan. The US thus finds Musharraf to be an asset because he implements their agenda in the region faithfully.

Then, as a matter of preparing Pakistan for further attacks on Al-Qaeda and tribal hideouts, the White House spokesman Tony Snow asserted that Al-Qaeda poses a significant threat to Pakistan and they are studying possibilities of launching attacks against specific targets of Al-Qaeda inside Pakistan.

This prompted Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz to state that Pakistan is capable of undertaking such an operation by itself and he categorically said that his country will not allow anyone to use Pakistani territory to launch an attack against the activities of any terrorist

organisation. Thus, by giving the impression that Pakistan had bravely refused to allow US to carry out attacks inside its territory, Pakistan had committed itself to launch such attacks against specific targets on the pretext that if it does not do so, then the US will intervene and carry out such attacks!

5 - Following this sequence of events, a heinous attack was launched on the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in the middle of July 2007, as a result of which the Army's agreement with the tribals was finished and a situation of real war existed. But this war-like situation was not between the US and the Muslims as it should have been, but between Muslim tribes. The Pakistani army, which has, under orders from the traitor Musharraf and his regime, strengthened its forces confronting the tribals. Bush's National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley announced that they were considering military reinforcements, and they see this as a positive development which they support.

Thus Musharraf's hostility for the tribals was manifest. It was further demonstrated during the attack on the Red Mosque where he massacred the 'Ulama brutally and rejected all mediatory efforts which were most likely to bear fruit. He subjected the 'Ulama and the Maulavis there to utter humiliation during the raid as well as after their arrest.

Such has been his animosity and hostility for the tribes!

6 - As for the Kashmir, the US is keen to maintain a status-quo on its borders, and this is to keep India in good humour because the US wants to position India to check the rise of China in the far-east and South Asia. Musharraf has taken several steps to normalise the relations after the two countries agreed to cease - fire in Kashmir in November 2003, and resumed peace negotiations in January 2004. This paved the way for reopening crossings for buses crossing between the two countries as special symbolic gesture to promote economic trade relations and thereby to normalise the situation. This solution was proposed by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who stated on 15th July, 2007 that the divided Kashmir region could become a symbol of cooperation between India and Pakistan, and asserted that talks aimed at ending 60 years of conflict will continue. Manmohan Singh then reiterated his position on the Kashmir border and said: "... the borders can not be changed but can be made irrelevant". He said in a speech during a ceremony while receiving an honorary degree in Jammu, the winter capital of the Jammu and Kashmir province, a copy of which was sent to Reuters via e-mail, said: «There should be no doubt that divisions and barriers exist, but the Line-of-Control could become a line for peace for the free-flow of goods, services for the people and freedom of thought." Singh added: «I hope and I am confident that the Jammu and Kashmir could one day become a symbol of cooperation between India and Pakistan rather than a symbol of conflict.

The current situation bears testimony that this solution is applied by Musharraf with India and all statements relating to Kashmir from the Pakistani side in the recent period are within this framework. Ever since the 2004 negotiations, the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir is abandoned and all negotiations are held outside of its ambit. The Musharraf government no longer demands a settlement on the basis of international resolutions. And of course the issue the Kashmir jihad is for all practical purposes, stands abandoned. This implies that things are moving towards a settlement that accepts the status quo as the final solution on Kashmir.

7 - Thus, Musharraf has cut his ties to Islam and Muslims:

He has stood side by side with America in its aggression against Afghanistan, mobilised his troops for bloodshed in the tribal areas, committed massacres in Waziristan and Baluchistan, and raided the Red Mosque Red with weapons of destruction, surrendered Kashmir, humiliated scholars and students of Islamic schools, and tried to stop the Islamic da'wah. This list is endless!

Musharraf has been rejected and has become an untouchable for Muslims, and finds no popular support for his bid for a second term of presidency. Thus America has no option but to seek the

support of the secularists loyal to the British in its bid to keep its stooge in power and that means reaching an accord with Benazir Bhutto and her party. After this agreement she has suddenly become clean and is being projected as a leader with integrity, while conveniently forgetting that she has been accused of corruption and wrong-doings by Musharraf himself, and banished from the country. As required under the deal, Musharraf has issued an ordinance on 5/10/2007 granting her pardon just before the presidential elections which were advanced to 6th Oct, 2007 instead of being held after the parliamentary elections in January 2008. He had actually feared that his supporters might not be able to get elected in the forthcoming parliamentary elections in January 2008, and hence he will not be in a position to ensure his own election as president. This is why he advanced the presidential poll over the forthcoming parliamentary elections. This prompted some to vote in his favour in previous elections which he 'won'!

8 - The split in the Pakistani government became evident on the issue of granting amnesty for Bhutto, when a number of members of the ruling alliance objected to the amnesty and termed it "unfair". The Minister of Religious Affairs 'Aijaz ul Haq, son of the former military dictator who executed Benazir's father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1979, said: "We have expressed our reservations on the proposed amnesty offer, we do not support it". In a clear reference to the opposition leader, the minister stressed 'not granting amnesty to corrupt politicians, especially those of a \$ 1.5 billion fraud".

Such an opposition within Musharraf's ruling coalition is not strange or unexpected. The very structure of Musharraf's ruling Pakistan Muslim League (Q) was created by combining the deserters of Nawaz Shareef's Pakistan Muslim League and the Pakistan Peoples Party of Benazir Bhutto. Musharraf had used the threat of dire consequences and bringing corruption charges against these people if they did not obey him. Obviously conflicting views in times of crises in such a party is hardly surprising.

But the issue is larger than simply Musharraf's party and that is why the internal opposition in his camp was inconsequential. Despite this resistance, Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto concluded an accord to share power on 4th October, 2007 which was prompted by the US administration and the Britain which was followed by the amnesty ordinance on 5th October, 2007 i.e. barely 24 hours before the presidential elections which the Court allowed to be held as scheduled. This is the reason that unlike other opposition members, Benazir's PPP members did not boycott the elections thus ensuring the quorum and a second presidential term for Musharraf! That amnesty was part of an ordinance for 'National Reconciliation' which provides for dropping of corruption charges against politicians accused of misdeeds. This ordinance was approved by the government before being signed by the president.

Under the decree, pardon is to be granted to politicians who are accused of corruption charges during the period from 1988 to 1999. This drafted was crafted cleverly to expressly exclude amnesty for the former Prime Minister Nawaz Shareef, who was ousted in a bloodless coup by Musharraf in 1999, because the criminal cases filed against him date back to 2000.

Thus a specific formula was worked out to exclude pardon for Nawaz Shareef although formerly he was also an American stooge. This was because Nawaz Shareef earned the US ire for failing to control the Pakistani army's mobilisation in the Kargil region of Kashmir in 1999, when they were poised to win against the Indian army. Such a victory would have undermined the continuing in office of Vajpayee, who was pro- US. America was upset over this and therefore prompted Musharraf to remove Nawaz Shareef and seize power in 1999. Musharraf carried out the US orders and withdrew Pakistani troops from the Kargil height without occupying them. America did not pardon Nawaz Shareef for his 'oversight' despite his years of service to them. If only other stooges paid heed to and learnt from this that the colonial powers only use their agents for their interest and discard them at the first opportunity when they have served their purpose!

After this amnesty decision of 5th October, 2007, after ensuring Musharraf's re-election on 6th October, the Supreme Court considered the validity of the presidential elections on 17th October,

2007 and though it has met repeatedly since then, it is yet to pronounce its judgement on the issue. Meanwhile Bhutto returned to Pakistan on 18th October, 2007 in the hope of a third term as prime minister. She had earlier held the office of Prime Minister twice from 1988 to 1990 and 1993 to 1996.

10 – Americans have made their best efforts to work out the deal with Bhutto, though only to ensure the survival of Musharraf in power, even if Bhutto starts to change her ways like the opposition did, once he occupies a second term.

American had begun talks several months back in London with the British and Bhutto, until the broad outline were worked out to share power with Musharraf as President and Bhutto as Prime Minister. All the while America was aware that Bhutto will not accept the Prime Minister's office with its powers curtailed as is the situation presently. They knew that she would seek real sharing of power with the President of the Republic, yet they also realized that it was better that Musharraf remains in power even if he loses some authority, that would be better than losing him altogether and thereby losing influence in Pakistan!

Then, in the light of these basic broad lines prepared by the US, talks began between Musharraf and Bhutto sometimes directly, and another between the envoys, sometimes in London and at times in the UAE. After some give-and-take of concessions and bargains by either side, Musharraf agreed to remove any legal obstacles to the return of Bhutto and cleared her of all charges of corruption by legislative means - if necessary - to facilitate Bhutto to take over the premiership for the third time, while she agreed not to boycott the parliament like the opposition parties. She also agreed that no member of her party will approach the Supreme Court against Musharraf's decision to shed military uniform only after being declared elected for the presidency.

And the subsequent events have followed the agreed course:

The People's Party deputies led by Bhutto did not abstain from voting in parliament like the representatives of other parties.

The Election Commission passed the amendment to election laws pertaining to the election of the Head of State wherein the commission's head who was pro Bhutto's party and opposed to Musharraf abstained thereby paving the way for repeal of article 63, which was an obstacle to Musharraf's election while in uniform. At the same time, the Pakistan Muslim League secretary told the press in his statement that the president will shed his military uniform only after his re-election.

On September 27, when he began his re-election bid, Musharraf said that he will abide by the Supreme Court's ruling on the uniform issue, though it had already been assured by the repeal of article 63 by the Election Commission. On September 29 the Election Commission examined 43 applications for nomination and selected 6 of these including Musharraf and Amin Fahim, a Bhutto confidante who said that he will withdraw his application if Musharraf's application is accepted! Thus Musharraf, his rival Wajeehuddin Ahmed, and three other candidates remained in the fray.

On 1st October, when the final list of official candidates was announced, 85 members of parliament resigned, including supporters of Nawaz Shareef, but representatives of Bhutto's PPP remained in parliament! On 02nd October one of Musharraf's ministers announced that criminal charges will not be pressed against Benazir Bhutto, and then immediately added that in the event of Musharraf being elected president of the state he will resign as chief of army. Ashfaq Kiyani, a close confidante of Musharraf and former ISI head was meanwhile already promoted as Vice Chief of Staff thereby ensuring that only he succeeds him as Army chief! Musharraf believed Bhutto will accept him as army chief when she becomes the prime minister, or at least will not object. It may be mentioned that Ashfaq Kiyani was the one who headed the official delegation for talks with her on Musharraf's behalf.

Then and things went smoothly, the amnesty decree was issued on 5th October, 2007, Musharraf won in the elections on 6th October, 2007 the official results though were not declared on the directions of the Supreme Court and Bhutto arrived in Pakistan on 18th October, 2007, except that there was an assassination attempt on Bhutto during the course of her motorcade rally. It is unlikely that Musharraf be behind this attempt as he needs her at least at this stage and until the new elections at the beginning of next year, however, as we have stated, some wings of government, particularly those loyal to the Zia ul Haq, who were opposed to amnesty for Bhutto. But for the fact that the deal is critical to the United States and Musharraf at the present time, it could be either.

From the above, it becomes clear why the US is accepting Bhutto despite her British loyalties which she assumed during her stay there while in exile.

As for the path Pakistan is to tread from here in the midst of these events, Pakistan ever since its inception nearly sixty years ago has had government of one loyalty: Men loyal to Britain and men loyal to America, now for the first time in its history, it will have two heads: Musharraf loyal to America, and Bhutto to Britain, that is if they continued their commitment to implement the deal, and this makes the situation in Pakistan susceptible to confrontation and conflict in the not-too-distant future.

As has been previously stated, America had no option but to strike a deal with Bhutto in order to save Musharraf from falling and thus to sustain its influence in Pakistan, even if it is diluted to an extent due to the transfer some authority to her and thereby to the British.

It is expected that both will continue to honour the deal at least until the next elections, as both Musharraf and Bhutto need that:

Musharraf needs to have a coalition in the parliament of his party and Bhutto in order to ensure ratification of laws by the parliament, while Bhutto needs support of parliament to survive in office as leader of the majority coalition.

And though both are the secular and are waging war on Islam and Muslims, and statements demonstrate that amply, though what they conceal in their chest in greater, yet the two agents and stooges of their respective masters have loyalties that are conflicting, and this implies that their honeymoon will not last long.

This is because the major powers clash for influence does not accept such hurdles in the middle of the road, especially when one of the parties happens to be America, complete with its hegemonistic and arrogant tendencies. It is therefore plausible that America and Musharraf will pose serious legal and physical hurdles to cut her to size and even banish her into another exile if they could!

At the same time, the Bhutto typical English wickedness, as well as political acumen, may be able to maneuver things against Musharraf in order to undermine the his credibility and survival at the Presidential Palace, and even remove him if they could- either by political manipulation or through judiciary by prompting her men to move the courts against Musharraf.

Thus, a clash is expected between the parties, politically and physically, and this has two aspects:

A negative aspect: since the unrest and instability as a result of conflict will make people's lives difficult and miserable.

The positive aspect is that Allah will drain their strengths fighting each other, and He will make one oppressor take revenge on another before Allah Himself punishes them both, He (swt) is all powerful and wise.

Allah (swt) willing, this will have goodness for victory and the people, And Allâh has full power and control over His Affairs, but most of men know not.

15th Shawwal 1428 A.H
26th October 2007 C.E