

New government in Pakistan, but stability is far away

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra

Islamic Jamhoori Ittehad's (IJI's) resounding victories in the national assembly elections on Oct. 24 and provincial assembly elections three days later were no surprise, although the routing of the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA)—a coalition which is overwhelmingly dominated by Benazir Bhutto Pakistan People's Party (PPP)—in general, and in Punjab particularly, was a shocker. IJI is strongly backed by Pakistan's Army and the bureaucracy, and is in full agreement with the U.S. policy in the Gulf.

The PPP's drubbing, which became obvious when the poll results began to emerge, is a clear indicator that former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's 20-month tenure, which came to an abrupt end when President Ghulam Ishaq Khan summarily dismissed her government on Aug. 6 and called for fresh elections, was considered ineffective by the people. Bhutto, however, has claimed that the results are lopsided because the caretaker government, under whose supervision the polls were held, was involved in "massive rigging" to destroy her party's chances. Bhutto has called for a new poll of 100 out of 206 national assembly seats under new election laws. She has, on the other hand, provided little evidence of such "massive rigging." A Paris-based independent group has reported widespread irregularities, and a 16-member non-governmental South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) observer mission has, however, found "serious improprieties and violent incidents" in some polling stations it visited during polling.

Reflecting Washington's preferences, the National Democratic Institute, an arm of the U.S. "Project Democracy" which orchestrated vote fraud in favor of Corazon Aquino in the Philippines in 1986, has said little to confirm Bhutto's accusations.

As the election day neared, the battle between the Army and bureaucracy on the one hand, and Bhutto on the other, reached endgame intensity. Many believed that even if Bhutto were elected, the Army would not permit her return to power, posing the direct threat of civil war—a prospect the Pakistani population evidently did not relish.

Since Bhutto was never able, during her 20 months in office, to break the power of the Army-bureaucracy establishment of Pakistan, it is not likely that the reemergence of the IJI will result in major policy changes. As observers in India

point out, the Army was already running Pakistan's provocative policy toward the border states of Kashmir and Punjab, where terrorist-separatists are agitating against the Indian central government.

But the election results will definitely advance Pakistan's tendency toward Islamic fundamentalism, and thence into Islamic postures on foreign policy. This will tend to spark increased tensions between Pakistan and both Washington and New Delhi.

The campaign

While Bhutto's vote-rigging charges have been brushed aside by the caretaker government, there is no denying the fact that the IJI had set out to destroy the PPP. On a number of occasions, the former chief minister of Punjab and the IJI strongman, Nawaz Sharif, had threatened to "wipe out the PPP." Even President Ishaq Khan, a career diplomat who is known for his integrity, made no bones about his contempt for the PPP.

During the campaign, Bhutto and her supporters were routinely harassed and dragged to court under charges of corruption and nepotism. Bhutto's husband and a PPP candidate, Asif Ali Zardari, was arrested under kidnapping and extortion charges, and Bhutto was prevented from holding a rally at Lahore, the political heartland of Pakistan. Besides, the IJI candidates branded Bhutto as a "pro-India" politician, while IJI's Jamaat-e-Islami members made sure to extract *fatwa* (edict) from various Maulvis, claiming Bhutto's ineligibility for leadership because she is a woman.

At one point, when sample polls indicated that Bhutto's party might emerge as the single largest party, it seemed that the authorities would disqualify Bhutto by convicting her on one of many charges leveled against her. However, a reported intervention from the White House and noises from the U.S. House of Representatives stopped such a plan. Washington's insistence that a "free and fair" poll in Pakistan must be a precondition of foreign aid also seems to have played a role in keeping Bhutto free and allowing her to campaign.

On Oct. 21, the Islamabad-based English daily *The Muslim* reported a survey carried out by the Civilian Intelligence Agency, Inter-Services Intelligence, and the Provincial Special Branches. That survey showed the IJI a clear winner

with 92 seats, with the PPP winning 75 seats, including 11 marginal seats. More revealing was the fact that the survey showed that the PPP was expected to win 82 seats as against 71 of the IJI. The PPP was fast losing ground as the campaign became hotter.

When the elections were over, the IJI had romped home with 105 seats out of 206 seats for which polls were held. PPP came in a poor second with 45 seats—24 of which came from Sindh, 14 from Punjab, 5 from North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and 2 from Baluchistan. The IJI, which swept the crucial province of Punjab, winning 91 of 115 seats, got eight in the NWFP, 3 in Sindh, 2 in Baluchistan, and 1 in the federally administered capital, Islamabad.

In the provincial elections that followed, the IJI won Punjab and the NWFP, leaving an allied anti-PPP coalition of parties to emerge as majority in Baluchistan and Sindh. The PPP, which had always done well in rural Sindh, could manage to win 43 out of 100 seats in Sindh—a drop of 27 seats from 1988. But, it was in Punjab that the PPP was thoroughly humiliated, winning only 10 seats as opposed to the IJI's tally of 208 seats.

What happened?

Putting aside Bhutto's as-yet-unsubstantiated charges of "massive rigging," a number of factors had worked in consonance to bring about such a lopsided result. First, the ineffectiveness of the PPP government. There were also widespread accusations, by the media, the opposition, and independent observers, that the PPP government was dishing out favors, often in the form of unsecured bank loans, to its friends and backers. The corruption charges against the Bhutto family members, Asif Ali Zardari in particular, made things worse. During her campaign, Bhutto's reluctance to address these charges and her exhortations that she would answer them in "people's courts" did little to allay suspicions.

Second, the IJI succeeded in branding Bhutto as "pro-India." India, which has remained a subject in Pakistan's elections, whereas Pakistan does not figure any more in Indian elections, had, no doubt, showed signs of relief when Bhutto was elected in 1988, but was fully aware that Bhutto was not in control of Indo-Pakistan foreign policy. Nonetheless, one poster put up by the IJI in various campaign rallies showing Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi addressing a joint press conference, bore the caption: "Will you vote for a person who permitted the Indian prime minister to declare on Pakistani soil that Kashmir is an integral part of his country?" This IJI tactic worked particularly well in Punjab, which had been partitioned in 1947 and has suffered three India-Pakistan wars. IJI's accusation that Bhutto did not do enough for the Kashmiris who are fighting for their "liberation" from India, also made an impact in rural Punjab.

Third, in Pakistan, the Army and bureaucracy are considered the most disciplined institutions and by far the most powerful. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan's repeated accusa-

tions of the PPP government's "destructive policies" and "looting of public exchequers" made many voters apprehensive about giving Bhutto yet another term.

Fourth, the breakdown of law and order took a turn for the worse in Sindh, and there are reasons to believe that the PPP was less than sincere in dealing with the crisis. Bhutto's open condemnation of the Mohajir Qaum Movement (MQM)—an ethnic grouping of Urdu-speaking Muslims who emigrated from India following the partition of the sub-continent in 1947—as a terrorist organization, following the riots in Karachi and Hyderabad involving the PPP, was considered a biased statement. It is well known in Pakistan that the PPP and the MQM are vying for political power in urban Sindh. Both are involved in violent activities.

Fifth, Bhutto's economic policies turned out to be a direct contradiction to what she had promised the electorate in 1988. After garnering political power with poor people's votes in 1988, Bhutto had put the promised poverty program on the back burner and acceded to International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity policies. She managed to surround herself with economic advisers who worked hand-in-glove with the IMF-World Bank. Even when a truncated poverty-alleviation program was approved by the IMF, there were widespread allegations that the beneficiaries were mostly PPP workers. The poor were judged eligible for benefits by their political affiliations.

Sixth was Washington: In 1988, when the long-lost democracy in Pakistan was reestablished, Washington chose to back Bhutto and the PPP. At that time, Washington was uneasy about the Pakistani establishment's single-minded approach toward Afghanistan. President Mohammed Zia ul-haq and his men were zealously pursuing a policy to defeat the pro-Soviet Kabul regime and install an Islamic fundamentalist, pro-Pakistani government. Washington, by then, had switched its policy from confrontation to détente with the Soviet Union. Both Washington and Moscow were working toward moving the Afghan issue to the back burner. Bhutto, who is undoubtedly an anti-fundamentalist, was backed by Washington, to help cool the Pakistani generals' heels.

However, the developments in the Persian Gulf have brought about a sea-change in the relationship between the Pakistani establishment and Washington. Pakistan has already sent 20,000 troops to Saudi Arabia to defend Washington's interests, violating the provisions of Pakistan's Constitution. There was distinct uneasiness in Washington about Bhutto's objections to this grand plan. The IJI, the political arm of the Pakistani establishment, on the other hand, will be bending over backwards to pursue this policy. Hence, Washington has little use for Bhutto, at least for the time being.

Beside the issues, fundamentalists' refusal to accept leadership of a woman and Bhutto's style of functioning, which consistently isolated her from the electorate, also helped to shrink her vote further.

Rwanda targeted for World Bank genocide

On Oct. 26, the Presidents of the central African nations of Rwanda, Uganda, Zaire, and Burundi agreed on measures to enforce a ceasefire between Rwandan government troops and an invading force of Rwandan refugees of the minority Tutsi tribe bent on overthrowing the government.

The agreement, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), calls for the posting of a small interim force of approximately 45 peacekeeping troops from Rwanda's three neighbors until a larger force of 200-300 troops can be assembled and financed with the backing of Belgium. Their task will be to monitor the border between Uganda and Rwanda, which the invading force of 10,000 crossed on Sept. 30.

Over the past 30 years since the independence struggle from Belgium, more than 250,000 Rwandans of the Tutsi tribe have fled their homeland following their overthrow by the majority Hutus. Since approximately the 13th century, the cattle-rearing Tutsis from the Nile had dominated the agricultural Hutus, with continual inter-tribal conflict between the two over centuries.

The central African region has never broken out of what has been described as "cyclical massacres." One of the most horrible was the 1972 murder of hundreds of thousands of Hutus by the minority Tutsis in Burundi, where the Tutsis still rule. The late-September invasion of Rwanda by Tutsi refugees, against the government of the Hutu and Catholic President Habyarimana, raised the

specter of rekindled tribal warfare.

The Rwandan government responded to the invasion by requesting military support from Belgium, France, and Zaire to help repel the attack. A combined force of more than 1,500 troops was deployed, with the Zairean forces becoming heavily engaged in fighting, while the others took up positions around crucial transportation arteries and the airport in Kigali, Rwanda's capital. France and Belgium emphasized that their mission in Rwanda was to ensure the safety of their citizens living there. At this time, all but the French troops have left, and the government has declared the military aspect of the conflict at an end.

Though Uganda has been one of the parties engaged in ceasefire talks, its attitude in the conflict is highly suspect. As recently as the second week of September, Ugandan President Museveni met with the leadership of Zaire and Rwanda, assuring them that no invasion would occur from Uganda, in whose army 20,000 Rwandan Tutsis have enlisted over the years. But the soldiers who invaded were led by a member of the Ugandan Armed Forces who was originally a Rwandan Tutsi. Museveni, from a Rwandan Tutsi family himself, was put into power with the backing of Tutsi guerrillas. He had also promised in 1989 that there would never be an invasion of Rwanda from Uganda. Rwanda had suspected that an invasion was being planned since 1987, at which time the government requested assistance from the CIA to evaluate the invasion potential. But in 1988, the CIA also assured Rwanda that there was no threat.

Tribalism aids the World Bank

Two circumstances appear to have played a role in precipitating this most recent crisis. The first was the total collapse of the Rwandan economy and the collapse of intensive negotiations with the World Bank, which had been ongoing since January of this year and reached a climax in May with 15-hour-a-day sessions. A prelimi-

What now?

The IJI campaign was studded with anti-U.S. rhetoric. Repeatedly, Nawaz Sharif has condemned Pakistan's overdependence on the United States. The reason behind such attacks was Capitol Hill's holding up of the \$500 million-plus aid package earmarked for Pakistan. The U.S. Congress has stipulated that the aid package be released as soon as President Bush produces documents which can prove that Pakistan is not pursuing its efforts to make nuclear weapons. So far, Bush has not come up with the required documents.

Besides, the IMF is sitting on Pakistan's back, demanding to get its conditionalities implemented. The draco-

nian Structural Adjustment Facility (SAF) program signed between the IMF and Pakistan when another caretaker government under President Ishaq Khan was ruling the country, has virtually handed over Pakistan's economic management to the IMF. Since then, the IMF has succeeded in forcing "conditionalities" down Pakistan's throat and forced the country to impose austerity (see *EIR*, Nov. 2, p. 7). However, the fourth and final tranche, amounting to \$248 million, scheduled for delivery last June, has been withheld, because the IMF, in the wake of rising oil prices, wants Pakistan to implement additional structural adjustments—raising the imported oil and natural gas prices by 41% and hiking the

nary agreement was reached in late September, days before the invasion. The second was a visit by Pope John Paul II to the region, and Rwanda specifically, whose population is 80% Christian, the vast majority of whom are Hutus. The Pope's intervention provided the spiritual strength which could lift the population out of its destitution.

Rwanda, with the highest population density in Africa—700 people per square mile, compared to Belgium's 840—has long been a target of malthusian population reductionists. Other than the availability of precious metals, Africa, let alone Rwanda, is, in the words of one U.S. AID official, "of no strategic interest." If these people can be induced to butcher each other in regional power struggles, the malthusians say, so much the better for population control. As Bertrand Russell, one of the architects of 20th century genocide, happily noted in 1963, the inter-tribal warfare was "the most systematic human massacre . . . since the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis."

The invasion was timed at a moment when Rwanda's economy was at its nadir. After four years of collapsing prices for coffee and tin, Rwanda's major exports, the regime was vulnerable to destabilization. Earnings from coffee exports, which make up 75% of the nation's hard currency revenue, dropped to one-third of the 1986 high. After years of trying to avoid World Bank and IMF "structural adjustment" programs, a desperate Rwanda was forced to come to an agreement in a state of desperation. This was an opportune time to destroy the Habyarimana government.

Pope urges regional economic projects

Pope John Paul II arrived in Rwanda on Sept. 7 in the course of his seventh tour of Africa, undertaken in part to provide a source of strength to overcome the region's periodical descent into fratricidal warfare. The Pope first challenged the regional and international diplomats. "But

is it sufficiently estimated that a decent existence, with a minimum of security, constitutes a common right, and that it is a common duty to guarantee it to everyone in all the countries of the world?" he asked. "In the first place, I am thinking of problems still extant as a result of the shifting populations which occurred after the painful confrontations of these last decades. I hope with all my heart that through open and sincere dialogue it will be possible to heal ancient wounds and find an equitable solution to a problem whose complexity is common knowledge. And I have good reason to hope Rwanda will not lack help from friendly countries."

The Pope proposed that "an emphasis on regional cooperation would be profitable to the economic development of the various countries. The concrete implementation of projects conceived in common will support everybody's activity, whether in technical fields of transportation, the commercialization of basic commodities, credit, or scientific research programs adapted to the necessary programs of agricultural production, to the struggle against diseases and their prevention, to mention only the most urgent examples." Transportation and disease are two of the most crucial questions of survival for this landlocked country so afflicted by the AIDS pandemic.

But Pope John Paul II made absolutely clear his opposition to the use of foreign aid as a weapon for population reduction. The Catholic News Service reported that he "cautioned that aid agreements must not pressure the people on family matters—an apparent reference to birth control programs promoted by development agencies." The Pope said, "Through mutual cooperation and understanding, people must be assured that their rights will be respected and that they will enjoy a peace inseparable from justice. Equal partners in dignity, it is right that they expect true support from their brothers and sisters in the world, free from any threat to their own spirituality . . . and to the free exercise of their rightful responsibilities, notably at the family level."—*Michael Gelber*

electricity and mass transit tariffs. It has since been reported that the new government will deal with the IMF demands and an agreement with the IMF has been assured before Nov. 30, the day the SAF agreement lapses.

There is no question in anyone's mind that the IJI government will satisfy the IMF in order to get the \$248 million, at a time when Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have reached a crisis level. Facing the possibility of a debt default, one caretaker cabinet member has said that Pakistan would default if Washington did not release the \$500 million-plus aid package. In the coming days, the new government will be subjected to the IMF's ruthless screw-tightening, and in

the long run, complying with such an economic policy will create economic chaos. It is unlikely that the government has either the gumption or capability to bring any order out of such chaos.

In addition, the IJI cannot rule out the possibility of the PPP exploiting every political scandal that surfaces and each economic debacle. Although the IJI has won the elections handsomely, the street power rests with the PPP, and Benazir Bhutto may turn out to be much tougher when in the opposition than when in power. Pakistani people, who have seen many self-proclaimed messiahs come and go, may not remain as docile as the power elite would like them to be.