Pakistan Essay, Research Paper

Pakistan

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Pakistan is a country that, since its creation, has been rooted in

turmoil. The recent years are no exception to this. Since 1988, power has been

divided among the president, the prime minister and the military. Tensions

between the three, however, have led to eight changes of government and three

elections. No elected leader has ever completed a full term in office. Benazir

Bhutto, who was dismissed by the president in August 1990 after only twenty-one

months in office, is the only Pakistani leader to be given a second chance at

ruling (Newberg 19). On October 6, 1993 a general election was held in

Pakistan. The Pakistan People’s Party (or PPP) received a majority of the vote

and as a result Benazir Bhutto once again became prime minister. This time

however, she has a pliant president in the form of an old friend. On November

13, 1993, Farooq Leghari was elected the country president. Yet even with this

unique opportunity for agreement within the ruling circle reforms have not taken

place (The Europa World Year Book 2460).

Despite the PPP’s success in the 1993 election they still faced

uncertainty. They lack not only a parliamentary majority but unity within their

own ranks. One of the biggest problems was a bitter family feud between Benazir

Bhutto and her mother, Begum and brother, Murtaza. Murtaza had returned from

exile to claim a seat in the Sind provincial assembly, but was immediately

arrested for alleged terrorist activity. In late December 1993, Benazir removed

her mother as PPP co-chair after she had endorsed Murtaza’s claim that he was

the rightful heir to his father’s political legacy. However, in September 1994,

the family feud seemed to end during a visit of the prime minister to her mother

(Banks 717).

In Pakistan the end of the cold war had not brought on new, pragmatic

thinking on foreign policy that could make Pakistan less reliant on Western

support and allow it to develop closer ties with its neighbors. After the cold

war, many third world countries were abandoned by their protectorates- the U.S.

or the former soviet Union. However Pakistan’s elite has yet to fend for itself

(Rashad 158). Pakistan’s relations with India worsened. Since the creation of

Pakistan, relations with India have dominated foreign affairs. These relations

reflect a centuries old rivalry between Hindus and Muslims. The reason for the

tensions today is allegations that each side was on the verge of conducting

nuclear tests (Year Book 2462).

Much of Pakistan’s problems stem from a legacy of rule by a small group

of around 300 families. Through blood ties, marriage, and business, they have

dominated the military, the bureaucracy, and the political elite. Since 1988,

when the new era of democratic civilian rule began, patronage rather than

policies has dictated economic development, politics, and even foreign policy.

(Rashad 159)

Many political analysts and even some politicians now view the feudal

political elite as a dying class. Economists report that Pakistan can no longer

raise the necessary revenues to maintain a country in which eighty-one percent

of the budget goes to defense and the repayments of foreign debts. (Banks 718)

Since 1993 the country has undergone the deepest economic recession in its

history, with high unemployment and inflation. The economy grew only four point

seven percent between 1994 and 1995, compares to a 30 year average of six

percent. The Karachi stock exchange has lost more than fifty percent of its

value in the last eighteen months, and industrial production in Karachi (which

accounts for sixty percent of the country’s total) has fallen an estimated

twenty-five percent. Foreign exchange reserves in December fell to one point

one billion, less than half of what they were in June 1995. (Hunter 1004).

Plans to privatize many state-owned businesses have been stopped due to

the anarchy plaguing the country and to the political fighting between Bhutto

and former prime minister Sharif. Also, the feudal elite has been reluctant to

introduce much needed reforms, such as taxing itself and agriculture. Only one

percent of the total population pays income tax, and over three billion dollars

borrowed by the feudal elite from the state-run banking system has never been

repaid. (Rashad 160)

Bhutto’s promises to reform the judiciary, the bureaucracy, and the

police have not materialized. Instead, she has made these institutions more

political by making appointments based on loyalty and favoritism. For a price,

many police officer and bureaucrats can get postings, transfers, and promotions

they want. Corruption is so prominent in Pakistan that it was recently listed

by Transparency International, an international watch group, as the third most

corrupt nation in the world after China and Taiwan. (Year Book 2464) However,

not everyone can seek favors and some receive worse. Political opponents of

Bhutto will often be jail or exiled. In March of 1996, forty army officers and

civilians were arrested for ?supposedly? trying to over throw the government.

After time had gone by, only four officers were left for trial. Many in

Pakistan doubt that even the government had a right to hold these few. (Banks

A5)

However, the corruption is only seen by those who live in Pakistan.

When Mrs. Bhutto is speaking to other countries, such as the United States, she

seems to have goals. She speaks of over coming poverty, equality for women, and

free expression. Yet this is far from the truth. At home, she retains the laws

that use Islam to repress women and arrests opponents. It is the corruption of

her government that most think will thwart her dreams. (Newberg 18)

Western Diplomats admit that Pakistan is high in the list of those

countries where an Islamic movement is possible in the near future unless the

country’s ruling class mends its ways. Pakistan’s Islamic Movement is being

driven by poor social conditions and a breakdown of law and order rather than by

ideology. The growing gap between rich and poor, the economic crisis, massive

corruption, and widespread disillusionment with the major political parties are

the main problems with Pakistan today. (Rashad 161)

Pakistan’s survival into the future and into the next century depends on

a greater distribution of political and economic power from the center to the

provinces and cities. At the same time the feudal elite must be forced to

provide room to professionals from urban middle calls and allow a wider

representation in the National Assembly from the population. (Rashdad 164) It

is also this feuding political class, which has been described as ?a culture of

corruption and injustice,? that will be the downfall of Pakistan due to its

obsession with political vendettas and self-enrichment (Burns A7).

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