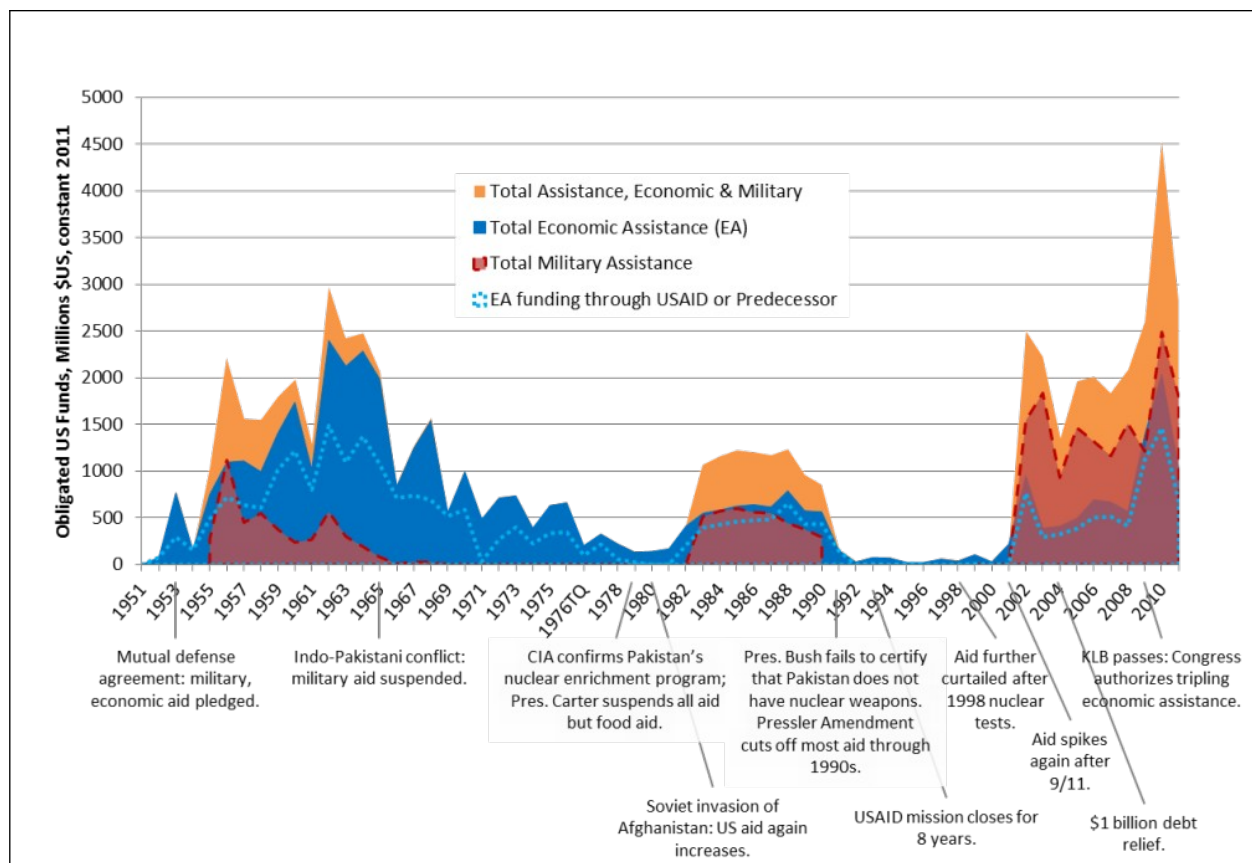


## Foreign Aid and International Financial Institutions' impact on Parliamentary Democracy in Pakistan

By Amjed Pervez Malik

*The literature about democracy in Pakistan, focusing on civil-military relations, has not tried to study and analyze the underdevelopment and undermining of democratic and Parliamentary institutions as a mix or blend of multiple factors and actors. There is not much work and effort put into studying the plight of these institutions by intertwining the local factors and international powers and institutions.*

*A few studies and Papers have examined the role of US government and aid provided to Pakistan during different regimes. Samad (2020) opines that "Washington has a long history of tacitly supporting the Pakistan Army's unrevealed political power while publicly espousing the ideal of democracy and political pluralism". The Center for Global Development in its study / data tabulation concludes that "US aid to Pakistan skyrocketed under Generals Muhammad Ayub Khan, Muhammad Zia ul Haq and Pervez Musharraf".*



**Table from Center for Global Development data based study "Aid to Pakistan by the numbers"**

Source: US Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations (aka the Green book).

*The above data / table shows a strong correlation between US Aid and military takeovers in Pakistan. It also shows (except for 2010) drying of Aid and imposition of*

*sanctions during civilian democratic rules. Another correlation can be studied in the Global doctrines of the time and geo-strategic interests of the super powers. Samad (2020) states that “General Zia’s military rules of Pakistan (1977-1988) saw it enlisted it by Washington as a conduit to arm religious experience. Comparatively, Pakistan’s Civilian run democratic governments suffered significant reductions in US support, particularly in 1990’s when the Soviet Union’s collapse lessened the need for a Western proxy in South Asia”.*

*Similar, correlations can be found between global doctrines of the time and the local political democratic developments in Pakistan. Marshal plan and Harvard Economic Development model coincided with the General Ayub era in 1950’s. Fight against terrorism or global war against terrorism saw Parliament of Pakistan dissolved and Martial Law imposed by General Musharraf, sanctions lifted and aid pumped to stabilize and prolong the regime.*

*Murad Ali in “US Aid to Pakistan and Democracy” (2009) has tabulated the correlation between the Civil or Military regime, the aid patterns and global or block doctrines of different times.*

<b>Ruling regime</b>	<b>Overall US Aid Flow</b>	<b>Significant Events</b>	<b>US Aid Details</b>
<i>Civilian regimes, 1947-58</i>	<i>Modest economic Aid; little military assistance</i>	<i>Pakistan becomes member of South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO); therefore, ample US aid, both economic and military</i>	
<i>1<sup>st</sup> military Group, 1958. Geneal Ayub becomes CMLA) / President</i>	<i>Ample economic and military aid in Ayub’s tenure</i>	<i>Good bilateral relations despite military rule Pakistan-India war, 1965</i>	<i>No/ little military assistance despite SEATO/CENTO membership</i>
<i>General Yahua repiaces Ayub as CMLA/President 1969</i>	<i>Sufficient economic aid; negligible military aid</i>	<i>Pakistan-India war, 1971 East Pakistan breaks away to become independent Bangladesh, 1971</i>	<i>Low US aid</i>
<i>Civilian rule, 1971-1977</i>	<i>Modest economic aid; no military aid</i>	<i>Pakistan’s constitution takes final shape, laying foundation of parliamentary democracy in country</i>	<i>Low US aid</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> military coup: General Zia leads country as CMLA/President, 1977-1988</i>	<i>Little economic/ military assistance till 1982; substantial aid thereafter</i>	<i>Fall of Shah of Iran, 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979</i>	<i>US imposes sanctions in April 1979 due to Pakistan’s secret nuclear program US lifts sanctions in December, 1979 commencement of huge bilateral aid due to Pakistan’s strategic significance for the US</i>
<i>Civilian/democratic regimes, 1988-99</i>	<i>Low economic/military aid</i>	<i>Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989</i>	<i>US imposition of sanctions against Pakistan for its nuclear programme; little or no aid</i>
		<i>Pakistan conducts nuclear tests to counterbalance India’s tests, May 1998</i>	<i>US imposes severe sanctions; little or no aid</i>
<i>Military rule under General Musharraf, 1999-2008</i>	<i>Little economic /military aid till 2001: Generous aid since 2002</i>	<i>9/11 Pakistan joins US War or Terror</i>	<i>All US sanctions lifted; increased US aid, both economic and military</i>

**Source.** Table “Summary of US Aid polices towards Democratic Regimes and Dictatorship in Pakistan”. Murad Ali, Policy Perspectives Vol-6 No-2 (July-December 2009)

## **International financial institutions (IFIs) and Parliamentary Sovereignty**

*While main factors impacting Parliamentary authority or sovereignty in any country including Pakistan are internal, the role of external factors and international institutions is being studied and discussed. A correlation or coincidence being hinted to is the role of International Financial Institutions in affecting the relative power or autonomy of the Parliamentary institutions. Kapur, D., and M. Naim (2005) are of the view that “The IMF and its fellow Bretton Woods Financial Institutions not only play many roles in the Global Economy but also affect a democratic prospect in many corners of the world”. Many studies suggest that IMF lending program undermine the quality of democracy in the countries which make use of the Institution’s resources. While there are different opinions and findings about the role of IMF and other financial institutions, it is generally agreed that negative or positive impact depends on the relative strength and weakness both in hard and soft power especially economic power of the negotiating country.*

*In case of countries like Pakistan where internal power distribution is already unequal and lopsided, the ultimate or maximum sufferer are the civilian elected democratic institutions. The Parliamentary sovereignty, supremacy or autonomy is highly compromised when a Parliament is asked to pass legislation including Annual Budget as per Executive’s agreement with the IMF. Parliament becomes a spectator and mere rubber stamp. Pakistan has entered into a number of programs with IMF, the terms and relative negotiation power have consistently got adverse with deteriorating economic conditions of the country. At the end it is not an issue of Parliamentary sovereignty alone but the financial sovereignty or overall sovereignty of the country. But the manner in which “Power of Purse” of the Parliament is taken away and a number of laws are got enacted without debates and as drafted or dictated, clearly undermines the Parliamentary process and procedures along with Parliamentary sovereignty and autonomy.*

## **Conclusions and lessons**

*On the basis of lessons so far, it can be said that the struggle for Parliamentary supremacy, authority or mere strengthening is a losing game in Pakistan. Without denying the gaps and loopholes in the structures, organizations and functioning of political parties and elected institutions, of their own making or implanted, it can be said that efforts for reforms and strengthening are nipped in the bud. A strong correlation between onslaught on Parliamentary democracy in Pakistan with constantly changing global paradigms and doctrines, apparently for the advancement of democracy and freedom, going in support of adventurers is ironic. So is correlation between generous foreign aid in times of Martial law compared to low aid and restrictions in democratic eras.*

*The root cause of eroded Parliamentary Sovereignty and Supremacy in Pakistan, however remains the internal structural imbalance in Civil Military relations. The degree and extent of this imbalance is so lopsided that one department of Government has not only self-assumed the role of an Institution or Pillar of State, it considers itself and behaves as a Supra-constitutional institution much above and beyond the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, the three pillars provided in the Constitution Book. A subservient or guided role by the Judiciary had kept Parliamentary Institutions at great disadvantage in the struggle for regaining the last space in its supremacy and sovereignty.*

*The Struggle for Parliamentary supremacy or authority in Pakistan continues as the Parliament continues facing not only traditional or structural challenges but is at the same time confronted with recent challenges of Post Truth Age and a growing wave of Populism. Recent challenges coincide with the current Era of Populist and Demagogue leaders, undermining the Parliamentary supremacy, practice and procedures.*

*The wave of populism coinciding with the dominant role of new social media in political agenda setting is adding a new dimension to the challenges being faced by Parliamentary Institutions. However, the combination of these two new elements has posed some challenges to Establishment in its traditional dominance of public discourse and narrative building. The covert nexus between the establishment and judiciary, the embedded propaganda against elected Politian's and institutions, mistreatment to the holder of highest elected office holders are being openly pointed out, discussed and debated. Where will this lead to cannot be predicted but on the basis of past historic lessons and the continuing lack of proper organization, structure, strategizing abilities of political parties, old and new, the fate will not be different.*

---

## References

Hussain, E. (2012). *Pakistan: Civil Military Relations in a Post Colonial State*. PCD Journal Vol. IV No.1, 115-116.

Jalal, A. (1991). *The State of Material Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence*. Lahore: Vangaurd Books Ltd.

Khan, H. (2001). *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan*. Karachi: Oxford Univeristy Press.

Malik, A. P. (2017). *Parliamentary Development and Reforms*. Islamabad: Senate of Pakistan, Library and Research Services.

Malik, A. P. (2017). *The Role and Workings of Parliament in Crisis Situations*. Islamabad: Senate of Pakitan, Library and Reserch Services.

Siddiq, A. (2007). *MilitaryInc: Inside Pakistan's Minitary Economy*. Karachi: Oxford Univeristy Press.

Yousaf, H. (1999). *Pakistan: A study of Political Developments, 1947-97*. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications.

Ziring, L. (1997). *Pakistan in the twentieth century*. Kaachi: Oxford University Press.