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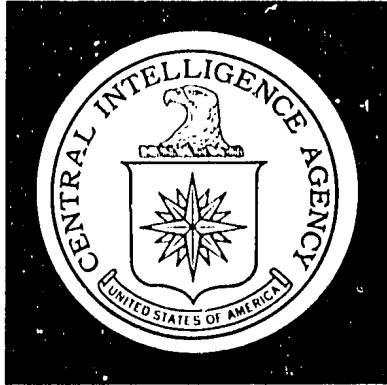
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DIRECTORATE OF
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WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Pre-Election Politics in Pakistan

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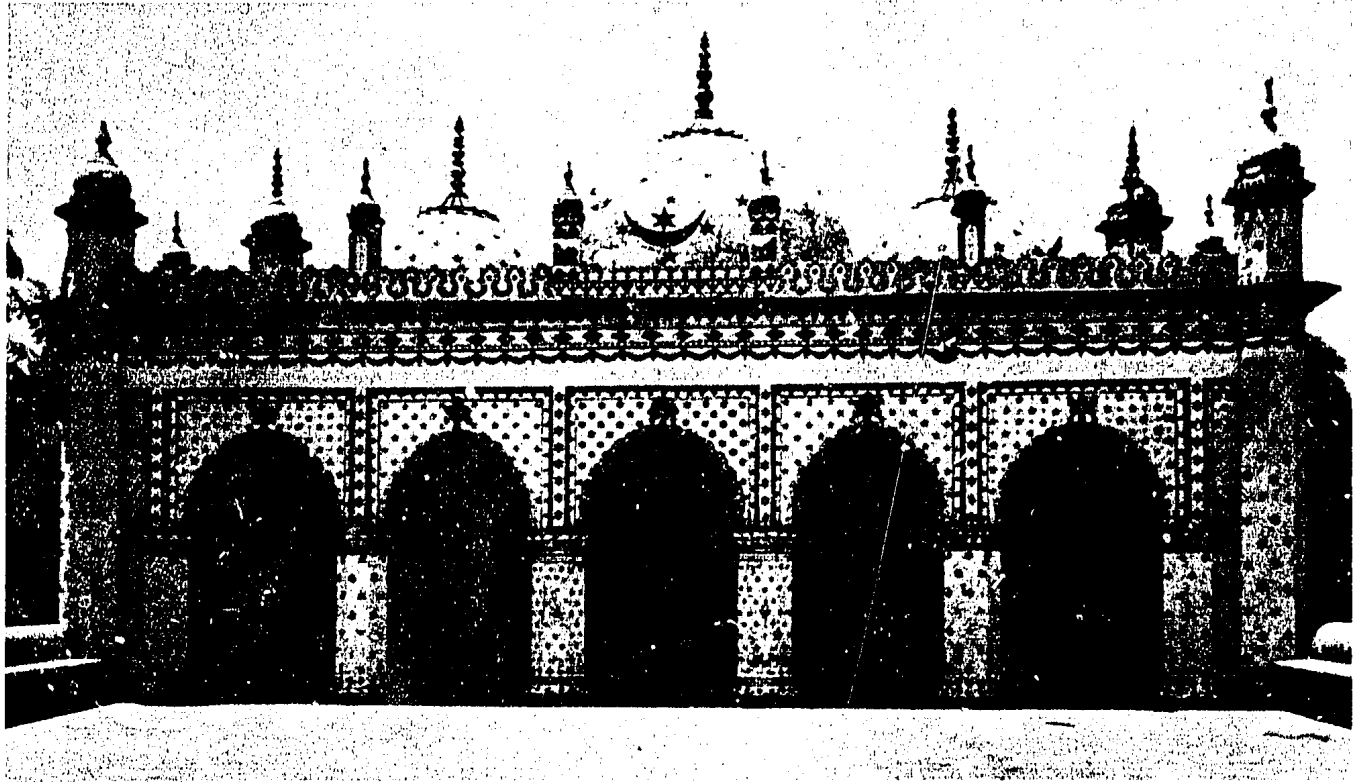
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PRE-ELECTION POLITICS IN PAKISTAN

Twenty-three years after its inception, Pakistan may at last be moving toward truly representative government. Ironically, it is also in the midst of one of its most unsettling and precarious periods, with its continuation as a viable country seriously in question.

Pakistan is not unfamiliar with national instability. In its initial years, the country experienced such chaos under a series of shaky coalition governments that army commander Ayub Khan's take-over in 1958 brought a nationwide sigh of relief. In the next ten years, Pakistan moved from military to civilian rule, but the latter eventually proved to be essentially autocratic in nature, designed primarily to preserve President Ayub's supremacy.

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Ayub's gradual isolation from the opinions and needs of his people precipitated his downfall and the renewal of martial law in March 1969

In contrast with Ayub and his entourage, President Yahya Khan and his senior military colleagues apparently have no desire to continue governing. With a combination of firmness and fairness, Yahya has moved deliberately toward basic reforms and toward an orderly transfer of power to civilian leaders. Despite some skepticism, most observers believe that elections for a national constituent assembly and for provincial assemblies will take place by the end of the year. Subsequent developments—the negotiations leading to a satisfactory constitution, the viability of a government run by squabbling politicians long out of power, and the long-range outlook for a stable, united Pakistan—are far more difficult to foresee or to regard with optimism.

Background

A cursory survey of the present situation generates a disquieting feeling of *deja vu*. In a great many respects, Pakistan seems to be where it was in 1958 with a military regime, surrounded by all-too-familiar political faces and parties, issues, and problems. A closer look, however, reveals that the approach of the current regime toward the country's difficulties is considerably more enlightened than Ayub Khan's. Ayub was a military man, not a politician.

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The political system he devised was based on indirect election and, in effect, prevented the regular political parties from operating on a normal basis.

When Yahya Khan assumed control of the country and declared martial law in March 1969, he probably had no clear idea of where his regime was headed. He recognized, however, that he must avoid the mistakes that had ruined his predecessor and plunged Pakistan into chaos. His immediate task of restoring peace and order was achieved quickly. He then settled down to the troublesome job of sorting out Pakistan's myriad problems and formulating policies to solve them. The tedious process generated criticism: progres-



President Yahya Khan

sives believed he was moving too slowly and indecisively, and conservatives considered that he was moving much too fast.

From the beginning, Yahya insisted that his would be simply an "interim" administration, designed to prepare the proper conditions for a

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transfer of power to duly-elected civilian officials. His credibility as a caretaker president increased as his efforts to carry out this transfer moved steadily forward.

Constituent assembly elections, now scheduled for 5 October, will be based on a one man - one vote formula that will give more populous East Pakistan an assembly majority. Provincial elections are to follow, not later than 22 October. Prohibitions against political activity were removed on 1 January, and the breakup of West Pakistan into four ethnolinguistic provinces was carried out as promised on 1 July.

Despite some political pressure to postpone elections until after the fall monsoon floods recede in East Pakistan, Yahya has so far stuck to his original timetable lest any change be construed as a weakening of his resolve to relinquish power. In mid-August, however, he visited the flood-ravaged eastern wing. His statement that flooding had surmounted elections as his foremost concern, together with the government's failure to release the election schedule on 10 August as expected, increased speculation that Yahya might indeed postpone elections, probably until December.

In the meantime, the country has remained relatively quiet. The unrest and violence among students and laborers that marked Ayub's final days in office has virtually disappeared. The students stopped protesting almost immediately after Yahya took over, and their few public demonstrations since then have occurred primarily in East Pakistan. For the most part, these have been incidents of infighting among rival student groups rather than antigovernment agitation. Laborers have been somewhat more active, having been encouraged by the martial law regime's initial lenient and conciliatory attitude.

In recent months, however, strikes and other labor difficulties—including violent internecine clashes—have been dealt with firmly as Yahya attempted to establish a "no-nonsense" image. A

few communal disturbances in both East and West Pakistan have also been handled satisfactorily, although the tensions remain. Thus far, the electoral campaign has been relatively peaceful, despite the disruption of a number of political rallies and meetings by followers of rival politicians.

The Election Ground Rules

In outlining his election plan in November 1969, President Yahya made it clear that pre- and post-election activity would have to follow certain rules and that violence would not be tolerated. Yahya stipulated, for example, that the constituent assembly must formulate its constitution within 120 days or it would be dissolved and another assembly elected to finish the job. He also stated that the constitution would not go into effect until he approved it, a provision fiercely opposed by leading politicians who resented this infringement of the assembly's sovereignty.

Despite discontent with some of the ground rules, most of the parties decided to continue their plans to contest the elections. Some political leaders warned, however, that if the constituent assembly were unable to resolve grievances constitutionally, a mass movement would be initiated to obtain satisfactory redress for the people.

The Issues

The issues of primary concern to Pakistanis today are problems that have troubled them since the partition of the Indian subcontinent. These stem from the artificial nature of the state itself—its geographical division into two wings separated not only by 1,000 miles of Indian territory but also by vast ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences. As in 1947, Pakistanis are still united only by Islam and by the fear of Hindu India.

In fact, regional antagonisms have increased since independence as a direct result of various

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inequities, including discriminatory governmental policy. The Bengalis of teeming East Pakistan have suffered most under the political and economic system, which has been dominated by West Pakistanis, chiefly by the frequently arrogant Punjabis. A regional confrontation, which has been building for some years, is now imminent because the East Pakistanis appear no longer willing to accept what they regard as second-class citizenship. Their stand has been buttressed by spokesmen of some of the smaller reinstated provinces in the western wing, who are also concerned about provincial disparities and continued Punjabi domination.

The key issue of the campaign, stimulated by these regional rivalries, is the degree of provincial autonomy to be granted under the new civilian government. East Pakistanis demand extensive authority to run their own affairs, while the Punjabis advocate a powerful central administration, which they hope to control. A resolution of this basic controversy will entail the sacrifice of important regional concerns and, thus far, no spirit of compromise has emerged.

Compromise will be necessary, however, if the constituent assembly is to hammer out a national constitution. An early sign of the direction the constitutional deliberations may take could be indicated by the internal voting formula adopted by the assembly. A decision to vote by simple majority would put the East Pakistanis in a commanding position and represent a substantial concession—and possibly a spirit of compromise—on the part of the Punjabis. On the other hand, insistence on a heavily weighted vote, such as a majority from each of the five provinces could lead to an immediate and serious deadlock.

Other issues—all secondary to the autonomy question—are also being debated. The Islam versus socialism controversy has generated emotional outbursts and some violence, especially in the western wing of the country. Declarations of intentions to nationalize certain businesses and basic industries have raised worried eyebrows in

already nervous commercial circles. Both the fourth five-year plan and the annual budget have produced heated exchanges, revolving chiefly around the relative fund allocations for East Pakistan and the western provinces. Some parties have been charged with unethical campaign practices and foreign financing, with the US coming in for the lion's share of criticism for alleged intervention. Foreign affairs issues have generally been peripheral, but most parties have jumped onto the anti-CENTO/anti-SEATO bandwagon.

As the campaign moves deeper into the important phase of candidate selection, these broad national issues may slip into the background. A candidate's stature in his constituency and his stand on purely local issues will become more significant. Thus far, party spokesmen have been flinging around slogans about socialism and autonomy, but have not dealt with the bread-and-butter issues that are of daily concern to the people—hunger, poverty, flood control, prices, wages. No party has put forward a detailed economic program, and the politicians seemingly have not looked beyond constitution-making to governing. This does not augur well for eventual stability or effective civilian government.

The Campaign

Against this rather sobering backdrop, Pakistan's politicians—old-timers and fledglings alike—have taken to the hustings with vigor. With less than two months to go before the elections, there is a plethora of political parties of all imaginable ideological bents. Few have indicated any desire to form electoral alliances, however, and only one commands significant nationwide support. The recent break-up of West Pakistan has increased the provincialization of the parties.

Nevertheless, many politicians have privately revealed their awareness that this may be their last opportunity to establish a democratic, civilian government. Their overriding interest in achieving this goal and of personally gaining political office

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Crowds at Political Rally

may soon stimulate serious coalition negotiations. Difficulties in finding attractive candidates to contest the country's 313 constituencies may also encourage interparty cooperation. Behind the scenes, some talks have already begun, but recent efforts among likeminded conservative parties to form an Islamic United Front have apparently ended inconclusively.

Although Yahya himself has remained discreetly on the sidelines, recent weeks have brought increasing rumors of governmental attempts to influence the outcome. Some political leaders suggest that the regime is not only backing certain rightist parties but is also seeking a fragmented constituent assembly in order to impose a constitution based on a strong central government. At the heart of the matter is a growing feeling that the martial law administration, dominated by Punjabis, will be unwilling finally to accept the degree of provincial autonomy demanded by East Pakistani spokesmen.

Parties and Personalities—East

Mujibur Rahman, charismatic leader of the moderate-left Awami League, dominates the political arena in East Pakistan. Extremely popular throughout the province, 50-year-old Mujib has become the acknowledged spokesman of the East Pakistani autonomy movement and a hero to "sons-of-the-soil" Bengalis for his relentless championing of their cause.

His "Six Point Program"—a Bengali plan for provincial autonomy—has broad appeal among East Pakistan's 73 million people. Their enthusiastic response to his vigorous campaign through the eastern wing has convinced Mujib that his party will emerge from the elections with an overwhelming majority of the seats from East Pakistan—he boasts 80 percent, but most others are more willing to concede only 50-60 percent. His several forays into western Pakistan have attracted a good deal of attention but have probably won him few votes in that alien territory. Mujib's present worry is that if elections are

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Mujibur Rahman

postponed, his Awami League campaign may peak too early and lose some of its support by election day.

Mujib's ability to draw crowds and to hold them spellbound is undeniable, but his potential as a national policy maker and administrator is less evident. He has never held a governing post,

Nevertheless, if he makes his anticipated strong showing in the elections, Mujib will be courted by all manner of West Pakistani politicians.

Whether he will then be any more willing to compromise on his "Six Points" and join a coalition is difficult to say. It is generally believed, however, that Mujib is extremely ambitious for national office and therefore has a strong stake in

preserving a united country. He is frequently mentioned as the man likeliest to be designated prime minister in a new civilian government.

Maulana Abdul Hamid Bhashani, a legend in his own time, is the octogenarian leader of the pro-Peking, Communist-infiltrated National Awami Party/Left (NAP/L). Bhashani's life-long battle for the rights of the peasantry has endeared him to millions of Bengalis. Although he himself is highly revered throughout East Pakistan, his party is so seriously fragmented that its participation in the elections remains in question. In any case, it would be surprising if the NAP/L could pull itself together in time to make any significant electoral showing, despite Bhashani's personal appeal.

The NAP/L's calls for provincial autonomy and nationalization of basic industries appear to echo Awami League demands, but NAP/L supporters have traditionally been more ready than Awami Leaguers to use violence to accomplish their goals. Some breakaway factions of the NAP/L are still reportedly planning to sabotage election activities but little organized disruption has yet taken place.

East Pakistan has a number of small parties which, by comparison with the Awami League and NAP/L, appear insignificant. The Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP) deserves mention, however, because of its leader, Nurul Amin, a Bengali elder statesman who headed the so-called parliamentary opposition during Avub's rule. Although

Nurul Amin has been popular among Bengalis. His party, an alliance among some long-time conservative and rather lackluster politicians of both East and West Pakistan advocates a strong central government and lays great emphasis on Islam as the basis for the state. A plus in the PDP column is the support it enjoys from one of East Pakistan's most prestigious newspapers, the *Pakistan Observer*. Nevertheless, the PDP is expected to make only a meager showing.

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Parties and Personalities—West

Politics in West Pakistan is far more fragmented than in the eastern wing, and innumerable splinter groups exist. Even the significant parties have a strong base in only one of the four provinces—Punjab, Sind, Northwest Frontier, and Baluchistan—and no more than marginal support in the others; some have scattered support in East Pakistan. Although some politicians have been whistle-stopping outside their own strongholds, most have not succeeded in substantially expanding their support.

Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi's orthodox Muslim party, the Jamaat-i-Islam (Jamaat), is at the extreme right of the political spectrum. The Jamaat is the only party that can legitimately claim significant strength in both wings of the country. Its members' rhetoric has stimulated some of the most emotional issues of the campaign and has helped polarize the political scene into Islamic and socialist camps. Although well-financed and well-organized, the Jamaat has been unable to broaden its scattered support and is not expected to do well in the elections. Nevertheless, the Jamaat has announced that it plans to contest a substantial number of seats including all of those in the Sind. It is also negotiating with several smaller right-wing, Islamic parties for possible joint support of other candidates.

Qaiyum Khan's Pakistan Muslim League (PML/Qaiyum) is making itself heard among the right-of-center parties. Although his home base is the Northwest Frontier, the peripatetic Qaiyum has also campaigned vigorously elsewhere, advocating a strong central government and charging rival politicians with willfully undermining the solidarity and integrity of Pakistan.

Qaiyum attained his party leadership by engineering a large-scale defection from the ranks of former president Ayub Khan's badly shaken Pakistan Muslim League. Those who remained loyal to Ayub are continuing to struggle along under the leadership of Ayub's chosen successor, Fazlul Quader Chaudhury. Already damaged by the exodus to Qaiyum, the PML/Quader's electoral prospects, however small, have been practically destroyed by the government's decision to freeze PML funds because of alleged misuse and misappropriation. Although floundering, the PML/Quader may still salvage something by allying with other parties.

Mian Muntaz Daultana heads the Council Muslim League (CML), which occupies the center of the political spectrum in West Pakistan and dominates the Punjab. With about 62 percent of the western wing's population, the Punjab has traditionally controlled West Pakistan's—and the nation's—political, economic, and military life. Although East Pakistan and the other provinces of the western wing are finally rebelling against



Mian Muntaz Daultana

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this domination, the Punjab and the CML continue to wield far-reaching influence and political clout.

Daultana, a wily veteran politician, is expected to play an important part in any national government. Recently there have been some indications that he is trying to temper his rather conservative image in order to reach an accommodation with Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League. On paper, the programs advocated by the two groups are strikingly similar, and a post-election coalition appears possible.

CML forces were given a boost in July when Air Marshal Nur Khan, former commander of the Pakistani Air Force, announced his decision to join the party. He is among an increasing number of retired military men who have recently entered the political arena. Nur Khan played a significant role in formulating the controversial labor and education reforms in the early days of Yahya's regime, but he subsequently had a falling out with the President. He is a dynamic—although somewhat unapproachable—personality who may be called upon for leadership in future Pakistani governments.

The National Awami Party/Requisitionist (NAP/R), which broke with Bhashani's faction of the NAP in 1968, is to the left of center on the political spectrum. The party claims the Northwest Frontier as its stronghold, and is led by *Abdul Wali Khan*, son of the legendary Pathan leader, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, the "Frontier Gandhi." Although locked in a political struggle with Qaiyum Khan, Wali Khan's party appears to be slightly ahead in the fight for the Northwest Frontier seats. Initially also leading in sparsely populated Baluchistan, the NAP/R now is facing stiff competition for that province's five assembly seats. The NAP/R's program of extensive provincial autonomy and other progressive measures makes it a potential postelection ally of Mujibur Rahman's Awami League and perhaps of *Daultana's* Council Muslim League.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), a tenuous leftist group that revolves around the fiery and controversial former foreign minister, rounds out the list of important parties. Bhutto's regional strength lies in the Sind, but Sindhi politics is so factionalized that the PPP may not gain any great number of seats there. Elsewhere, Bhutto remains an extremely popular figure with students and young people, who are drawn to his program of "Islamic Socialism"—with an emphasis on socialism—and close relations with Communist China. He attracts large, enthusiastic crowds nearly everywhere he goes, but observers doubt that his personal charisma can be turned into many solid votes or can be transferred to other PPP candidates. Nevertheless, Bhutto is young, opportunistic, and ambitious and he will certainly be a familiar figure in Pakistan politics for some time to come. Interestingly enough, Bhutto continues to enjoy good personal relations with many influential members of the establishment of which he was once a part; these friends generally believe that Bhutto has gone off the deep end in politics, but they do not take his activities very seriously.

Other Factors in the Campaign

With constituencies delimited and elections approaching, all Pakistani political parties are frantically searching their ranks for attractive candidates. Having been out of power and restricted in operation for many years, the parties lack the local talent and organization on which successful campaigns are built. Aggravating this problem is the image of corruption and incompetence associated with several of the traditional parties, which may be a factor encouraging potential candidates to seek election as independents.

The strength of the independents, of whom there are likely to be a substantial number, is one of the important unknowns that must be cranked into any prediction of election results. Some of them conceivably could play an important role in

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the constituent assembly. The most notable of the already-announced independent candidates is another former commander of the Pakistani Air Force, Asghar Khan, who first involved himself in politics in the waning days of the Ayub regime. Asghar is widely respected for his integrity, but

attention to constitution-making with no worries about campaigning. Presumably, if Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League receive a strong East Pakistani majority, Mujib may be more willing to negotiate his "Six Points" than if he were still under political pressure to prove his credentials as a loyal Bengali.

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A Polling Place in the Punjab

Another unknown factor clouding the election scene is the potentially enormous peasant vote. It is widely believed that in East Pakistan, Mujibur Rahman has successfully captured the local peasantry under his popular banner of provincial autonomy and "Bengal first." The situation is more complicated in the western wing. Most observers are predicting that ideology will have little influence on Punjabi and Sindhi peasants, who will probably follow traditional voting patterns, i.e., they will vote according to landlord instructions. In other areas of West Pakistan, caste, tribal affiliations, and local issues are expected to be the determining factors. Should these observations be accurate, the traditional, regional parties will emerge victorious, with the Council Muslim League the strongest because it represents the Punjab.

Outlook

Although no date has been set for the convening of the constituent assembly, it is unlikely to precede the provincial elections. Disposing of provincial elections before the first assembly meeting will allow the members to devote full

The newly elected members of the constituent assembly will probably spend the interval between the elections and their first meeting jockeying for position and bargaining to form alliances. Loose, temporary coalitions will probably be formed. In any case, it is generally recognized that success for the constituent assembly hinges on some compromise of East and West Pakistani interests. An Awami League - Council Muslim League axis appears to offer the best hope of a satisfactory agreement. Should this be achieved, a constitution would have one final hurdle: it must pass muster with Yahya and the army.

The representatives, on the other hand, may not be able to come up with a constitution agreeable to a majority. Pakistan's first constituent assembly deliberated nine years before reaching an accord. Should the 120 days expire without agreement, President Yahya will have several options. He may do as he has already suggested—dissolve the assembly and hold new elections. It seems just as likely, however, that he will propose a constitution of his own and demand acceptance. In fact, it is widely rumored that a constitution has already been drafted by Yahya and some of his closest advisers. Such a constitution, while providing for substantial provincial autonomy, would certainly reserve sufficient federal powers to ensure a strong central government.

In any case, any new constitution will probably set up a federal republic of the parliamentary type, with the president and prime minister coming from different parts of the country, the latter probably being a Bengali and the former a Punjabi or a Pathan from the Northwest Frontier.

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Even if the political processes should progress this far, such a marriage of hostile regional elements might fall apart within a few years if it failed effectively to solve Pakistan's overwhelming economic, political, and social problems. The similar formula that was the basis of coalition governments before Ayub Khan failed to produce stability, and the politicians do not appear to have changed much in the meantime.

In the long run, then, regional interests and cultural differences may prove stronger than the

ties of religion and common antipathy toward India. Conceivably, the present Pakistan could eventually dissolve into two sovereign states. If secessionist tendencies do grow stronger, the army probably would go only so far in an attempt to counter them. During the chaos of Ayub Khan's final days, the army fully recognized that it would not be able to control a province-wide uprising in East Pakistan. At this point, it would probably not even be willing to pay the tremendous cost of trying.

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