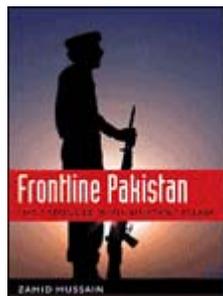




## Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam

Zahid Hussain , Joanne J. Myers

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### Introduction

**JOANNE MYERS:** Good afternoon. I'm Joanne Myers, Director of Public Affairs Programs, and on behalf of the Carnegie Council I'd like to welcome our members, guests, and C-SPAN Book TV. Today our guest is Zahid Hussain, and he will be discussing his book, [Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam](#).

Almost every day, we hear someone in the Bush Administration talking about the need for victory in Iraq. We hear them say that success is crucial for fighting the global war on terror. Yet, if you would read the [Annual Threat Assessment](#) from the intelligence community, you may reach a very different conclusion, for it seems that the country that poses the greatest danger of terrorism, the country with the real potential for a world-shattering implosion, is not Iraq or Afghanistan, or even Iran. It is Pakistan, the country where many of America's most important interests intersect.

In the post-9/11 world, under the leadership of Pakistan's President General [Pervez Musharraf](#), Pakistan emerged as a key player in the Bush Administration's war on terror. But inasmuch as this country is a critical sanctuary to some of the world's most dangerous terrorists, both the Taliban and al-Qaeda, we must keep in mind that this is a country that is also a source of major Islamic extremism.

In *Frontline Pakistan*, our speaker reveals in precise detail how difficult Musharraf's decision was to forge a partnership with America. He writes that it was not as straightforward as it may appear and argues that President Musharraf's position may be untenable.

He bases his assessment on an intimate knowledge about Pakistan's military and political structures and the longstanding incestuous relationship between Pakistani jihadists and Pakistan's military intelligence service, also known as ISI [[Inter-Services Intelligence](#)]. This intimate association dates back nearly three decades, to the time when the ISI exploited the fanaticism of these jihadi warriors to fight the war in Afghanistan. In pursuing this strategy, the military gave birth to a dangerous jihadi culture, and even though Musharraf is a master tightrope walker, the ISI loyalties are deeply divided between President Musharraf and the reemerging forces of al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

The challenges have intensified. Our speaker notes that the outcome of Pakistan's struggle with radical Islam will have implications, not only for the fate of Pakistan, but for the ideological climate of the Middle East and the security of the world.

Zahid Hussain is the personification of what a good journalist should be. If you have followed his reporting in *The Times* of London, *Newsweek*, or *The Wall Street Journal*, you know that he is informed, he is objective, and he is astute.

Over the years, Mr. Hussain has done much to explain the complexity of the situation in Pakistan, and in *Frontline Pakistan* he does so once again, this time by drawing on exclusive interviews with major players and grassroots radicals. In this work, he provides the necessary insights in respect to how this struggle will be fought and tells us what we need to know about a country which many believe is our best and only defense against Islamic extremism.

America needs Pakistan and wants Musharraf to be its partner. This afternoon, the Carnegie Council both needs and wants Zahid Hussain to explain to us the conflicting forces at work in Pakistan today.

Please join me in giving a very warm welcome to our guest this afternoon. Thank you.

## Remarks

**ZAHID HUSSAIN:** Thank you very much for inviting me to speak at the Council.

One thing about Pakistan all we journalists know, as do also some of the diplomats who might be here who have served in Pakistan: there is never a dull moment for journalists and the diplomats there. There is always something happening. We have seen the country move from one crisis to another.

It is really difficult to leave the country at any point. When I was taking my connecting flight from Heathrow to Washington, I heard the news which was very worrisome—that President Musharraf had sacked the Chief Justice. This was unprecedented. This has been unprecedented in the country's history, which has seen many things, which has seen many coups, many dictators, but it has been the first time that the President sacked the Chief Justice. That indicates a grim crisis, a political crisis, which is going to have far-reaching consequences, not only on domestic politics but also on international politics, because Pakistan is a key player in the war on terror and the war on Islamic extremists. So anything which creates instability will have a direct bearing on Pakistan's effort.

This is the year when we are going to see the elections. In October the presidential elections will take place. That will be followed by the parliamentary election. That will not only decide the fate of Musharraf, but also decide which way the country will go, whether Pakistan will remain under the military's control or indirect military control, or will it go to a democratic way.

There is a huge link between democracy and the fight against extremism. That is one thing I have discussed in my book and also will discuss here.

There is another reason why Pakistan is in the focus again. Pakistan's role in the war against Islamic extremism is under new international scrutiny as the war in Afghanistan goes badly.

More than five years since the fall of their government, the Taliban are back in Afghanistan with a vengeance. They have extended their operations in the large part of eastern and southern Afghanistan inhabited by Pashtuns.

More American and NATO soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan last year than the total number of them in four years since the fall of the Taliban government in December 2001. With the resurgence of Taliban and al-Qaeda inviting U.S. air strikes on the Pakistan-Afghan border, the impossible contradiction of President Musharraf's position has intensified.

The worsening situation in Afghanistan indicates as much a failure of American policy as Pakistan's inability to contain the activities of al-Qaeda and Taliban in their border areas. If you look at 2001, when the American forces went to Afghanistan, there was a complete international consensus on that. There was no voice against that action. But one year later we saw that their attention was completely diverted from Afghanistan to Iraq. That carried a huge consequence. The consequence was that Afghanistan was almost lost. I am not saying the situation is not completely irreversible. It can be reversed, but at a very huge cost. We have already seen the cost.

I have been regularly traveling to Afghanistan and watching the situation there. There is one thing that is very, very clear: that the support base for the Taliban is expanding. The major reason for this is the policy pursued by the United States. The same warlords who were most hated have come back. They were the main reasons we saw the rise of Taliban in 1994. Afghanistan has almost become a "narco state."

So all those things indicate the failure of American policy in Afghanistan. But this also says something more about how Pakistan has handled its own war on extremism.

This situation has also exposed the inherent contradiction in the current Pakistan-United States relationship. The friction is much more visible now as we see growing criticism of Pakistan that Pakistan should do more to contain al-Qaeda and Taliban. We have also seen the recent report by the American intelligence that Pakistan has become the main source of militancy and terrorism, that al-Qaeda have regrouped and have basically turned Pakistan's tribal region into their command-and-control center.

The U.S.-Pakistan partnership, which came into being on 12 September 2001, could well be described as a shotgun marriage, and has remained an uneasy relationship throughout. I will go back a little bit to the 1980s and compare this relationship to the past.

In the 1980s, when Pakistan and America entered into a partnership, or a strategic relationship, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there was a complete convergence of interests between the two countries. The biggest covert operation was launched with the cooperation of CIA and ISI, which ultimately forced the Soviet forces to leave Afghanistan.

But this time around, the nature of the alliance was completely different. For the last ten years, Pakistan had followed or pursued a completely different policy in Afghanistan, supporting the Taliban. The country itself had become the center of Islamic militancy. What happened in the 1990s in Pakistan, can give you some idea about the nature of the Pakistan-American relationship that emerged after 9/11.

After 1990, the Pakistan-American relationship went cold. There was a feeling among Pakistani military establishment, as well as among the people, that Pakistan was dumped. We saw then Pakistan going completely in a different direction and contrary to the interests of the West and America. Pakistan supported the Taliban, who turned Afghanistan into a safe haven for al-Qaeda and international terrorism.

Just before September 11, the chief of ISI was visiting Washington. At that point, he was trying to persuade Americans to open up links with the Taliban, telling them that Taliban were not that bad people.

Two days later, we saw a completely turnaround. It was the "you are either with us or against us" mentality of the Bush administration that forced Pakistan to cooperate.

When we talk about this turnaround, the turnaround was very, very limited. The turnaround was just confined to Pakistan military establishment agreeing to withdraw its support from the Taliban and also to help provide logistic support to the Americans to launch an attack on Afghanistan. That was basically what it was for. That was the beginning of a new era of a new strategic partnership between the two countries. From being a pariah state for its support for the Taliban and also for the export of militancy to other areas, Pakistan suddenly became a key partner in the war on terror.

Ironies abound in this relationship. The country which has been the center of Islamic militancy for so long became the main partner in the U.S. war on terrorism. The Pakistani military establishment did provide America active support when it came to the hunt for al-Qaeda. Pakistani security forces captured and delivered to the United States hundreds of al-Qaeda leaders, including [Khalid Shaikh Mohammed](#) and [Ramzi bin al Shibh](#), the two alleged masterminds of 9/11.

But when it came to dealing with the Taliban who fled to Pakistan after the fall of their government, the situation was completely different. Pakistan did not do anything to stop the Taliban coming there and allowed them to settle down in the tribal area. The military government was quite reluctant to take action against the homegrown militants who were linked with the Taliban.

Musharraf tried to draw a fine line between al-Qaeda and the homegrown militants. The rise of Islamic militancy or the jihad culture in Pakistan was directly sponsored by the security forces. It did not come from without. It was not like the Islamic militancy which we see in the Middle East and other countries, where the Islamic radicals have provided a kind of platform against the corrupt and authoritarian regimes. In Pakistan the rise of Islamic militancy was owed it to the support of the military. It was patronized by the state machinery itself.

Pakistan was one country which used militancy as an instrument of policy. In fact, what happened in Afghanistan in the 1980s provided the Pakistani military establishment with the thought that the jihad could also be used in Kashmir against the Indian forces.

Both in Afghanistan and Kashmir the Pakistani military establishment discovered the effectiveness of using militancy as a method of breeding stronger adversity while maintaining an element of plausible deniability.

So that was the background. The post-September 11 international situation forced Pakistan to change its policy in Afghanistan. But it did not bring a complete breakup in the relationship between the military and the Islamic militants at home. While the Pakistani military establishment did cooperate with the United States in the war against al-Qaeda, the breakup has yet to come.

One thing more about American policy in Afghanistan too. It says a lot about it. America went with a one-point agenda in Afghanistan, to pursue [Osama bin Laden](#). I'm not saying they should not have done that—they should have done it—but they had only a one-point agenda, to go after al-Qaeda.

The United States never thought that the Taliban would pose any serious challenge to its forces, until 2004, when we saw the rising insurgency in Afghanistan. Then, suddenly, the U.S. forces found out that the Taliban were still a force to be reckoned with.

The resurgence of the Taliban was helped by the Bush administration's refusal to help in nation building. During those five years no serious effort was made to change the lot of the Afghan people. I was talking to a Taliban commander recently and he gave me a very profound analysis. I asked him how has the situation changed

His answer was basically that in 2001 when the American forces came to Afghanistan, we thought we had already lost the battle. Second, the people of Afghanistan had a lot of expectations from the international community that their lot would be changed. The third thing he said was there was awe of American might there.

But four years later, according to him, the lot of the Afghan people had not changed much; the situation remained the same. The cooperation with the warlords actually alienated the population from the Americans and the Western forces which were there. He said that the indiscriminate bombing, which killed civilian population, helped the Taliban expand its support base. So, according to him, people who had refused to provide shelter to the Taliban were now prepared to give them shelter.

So failure of American policy in Afghanistan has a direct spillover affect in Pakistan.

The Taliban were never solely an Afghan phenomenon. They have always been an Afghan-Pakistani phenomenon, a Pashtun phenomenon, which had roots on both sides of the border. That is one of the reasons how the Taliban fleeing from Afghanistan melted away into the population in the Pakistani region very easily. Ethnically they are the same people.

They got a base area where they could regroup themselves. The situation was very favorable to them because of Islamic radical government, pro-Taliban government, in the strategic North-West Frontier Province, and also in the northern part of Baluchistan Province. The entire border areas are controlled by the radical Islamic party. So that provided the Taliban with a conducive environment to develop and regroup themselves.

Pakistani authorities looked to the other side as the region became the sanctuary for the Taliban.

Now we have seen that insurgency in Afghanistan has also increased the pro-Taliban element on this side of the border. On this side, the Pakistani tribal area provided the logistical support to them, and now with the rise of insurgency in Afghanistan has also emboldened their supporters inside Pakistan.

Despite the rise of insurgency in Afghanistan, the Taliban have not been able to have a kind of area which you could call under their control, but they already have a liberated area inside the Pakistan tribal region. Waziristan has virtually become a Taliban land. Now the Taliban can easily move on both sides of the border.

It has a huge implication for the future of Pakistan also. Talibanization of tribal areas has also had a spillover effect on the other parts of the North-West Frontier Province.

Now, still, I am not saying it is wrong to say that there is no question of sincerity or not. A new al-Qaeda threat is growing in Pakistan. The militant groups which were outlawed by Musharraf after 9/11 have mutated into small cells and are much more effective. Most of the terrorist attacks which have taken place in Pakistan over the last few years were carried out by those cells.

These cells are comprised of a young generation, a young breed of militants, who have come from an educated and middle-class background rather than the students from Islamic seminaries.

Before 9/11 the agendas of al-Qaeda and the Taliban were different. There was some cooperation between them, but not complete convergence of ideology. The Taliban's agenda was to establish a conciliatory regime in their country; they did not have a worldwide agenda like al-Qaeda.

Similarly, Pakistani militant groups, which definitely have some kind of link with al-Qaeda—I am not saying that they had no ideological link; they had—but their agenda was also confined to fighting Pakistan's regional battle. All the militant groups served as an instrument to pursue Pakistan's regional agenda. But after 9/11 things have changed completely. They have merged together and they present a much more serious threat now.

When we say that al-Qaeda is regrouping in Pakistan, it means that the Pakistani militant groups, the cells, have become a part of al-Qaeda. So because of this emerging nexus the al-Qaeda operation and network in Pakistan has expanded hugely.

Their activities are not only confined to Pakistan, but are also in other areas. For example, in Britain where two or three terrorist attacks have been carried out, they had a direct link with the militancy in Pakistan.

The emergence of new al-Qaeda is not only a serious threat to Pakistan, but to the entire regional security. So, five years after the fall of Taliban government in Afghanistan, we see the threat of al-Qaeda and Islamic militancy growing.

It is very difficult for the military, which had for so long, for decades, been sponsoring militancy, to cut of their links with their erstwhile clients.

The United States has also probably never given a thought that Islamic militancy can be best fought under a liberal democracy, where the people are involved, where the people are mobilized.

When we talk about the struggle against Islamic militancy, it is not a military battle. It has to be a kind of battle of ideology, and it can only be fought when the people are mobilized.

So if you really want to fight militancy, it has to be a battle for minds and ideology, and it can be best won under a democracy. The irony is that the United States has always supported military rule in Pakistan. Almost all the military dictators in Pakistan have perpetuated their rule because of the support of the United States.

Thank you.

**JOANNE MYERS:** Thank you very much.

It has been said that as Pakistan goes, so goes the war on terror. So as these thoughts have been in the minds of many, I thank you for giving clarity to this complex situation.

### Questions and Answers

**QUESTION:** My question to you, Mr. Hussain, is you seemed to indicate in your conclusion that Mr. Musharraf is not the solution for Pakistan. You advocate for democracy. In fact, yesterday *The New York Times* had a major article in the Week in Review section that speculated if Musharraf were assassinated basically his second in command would come in, and it wouldn't change much in terms of what is over there. But on the other hand, what is pushing for democracy? Is that your position, that Pakistan should really be a democracy and not be a dictatorship?

**ZAHID HUSSAIN:** I feel that for Pakistan to be a moderate Muslim country it ought to be a democratic country. Under a military government I don't think we can fight extremism. I think the best solution for Pakistan is to be a democracy rather than a military dictatorship.

**QUESTIONER:** I actually served at the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan from 1981 to 1984. Before I went, there was a book I read, called *Pakistan, Try Democracy*, and the theme of the book as I remember it was that there had never been a democracy in Pakistan; there had been either military governments or civilian oligarchies—basically, [Zulfikar Ali Bhutto](#), and later on his daughter. Do you believe that view, that Pakistan has failed to have democratic institutions, there have really just been civilian oligarchies or military dictatorships, particularly with your emphasis just this minute on democracy as a way to combat terrorism?

**ZAHID HUSSAIN:** Democracy cannot be built in a day. It is a process. When we talk about democracy, it is not a solution to everything, but it still is the best form of government compared to any other form.

The main problem for Pakistan is that since its creation the democratic process has never been allowed to take root. The brief periods of civilian rule have failed because the institutions had not developed. Before they could take root there would be another military intervention. How can you expect a country to build strong democratic institutions when you have a military takeover after every five years or six years?

For example, in 1988, when we returned to a civilian rule, it was not really a transition to democracy. The army remained a power, behind the scenes. Because the democratic civil institutions were so weak the army continued to cast its shadow and the generals continued to have control over the major foreign policy issues. The civilian government never had control over the country's foreign policy. They have never had any say when it came to the relations with India. They did not have any role even as far as relations with America was concerned.

During the seven years of the Musharraf government the military has become much more deeply entrenched in Pakistani society than ever. Civil society and civil institutions have been destroyed. The civil institutions are completely dominated by the military. The commercial and business interests of the army have expanded so much that the general would never like to cede power.

Even if the army ever goes back to the barracks, it would continue to remain a power behind the scenes. And that is the worst thing. For democracy to take root, the power of the army has to be curtailed.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Hussain, this diverges a little bit from your main point, which is geopolitical, but I think it is relevant. My guess is that just about everybody in this room has heard many speakers from the Islamic world who are, in Ms. Myers' terms, "intelligent, informed, astute people," who have told people like us that Islam is a tolerant religion, that the people who are the jihadists, the more violent ones, have effectively stolen the religion for their own purposes. There is even a book called *The Great Theft*, which I am sure you are familiar with. So people like us go home feeling comforted, persuaded that Islam at its root is not violent, that it is only a small portion of Moslems who are that prone to violence and extremism.

There was a recent article by a young woman named [Ayann Hirsi Ali](#), an interview in *The New York Times*, in which she said that whenever there is an argument between the jihadists and the moderates the jihadists always win because they know the Qur'an better.

We are not the people who need to be persuaded. Where is there going to be in Pakistan, in Afghanistan, in any other Moslem country, the speakers who will try to persuade the mothers that maybe it's not a good idea to have their children blow themselves up to kill other people, maybe it's not a good idea for the Sunnis to blow up the Shiites and their mosques and so on? Where are the speakers of the Islamic world who will be forceful and articulate enough to persuade people that the cause of Islam is not being advanced by that kind of extremist activity? As long as there is not such a force, we will just have to live constantly with more people being persuaded to be extremists.

**ZAHID HUSSAIN:** One cannot link terrorism with a particular religion. People exploit religion for their own vested interests. I believe that extremism and terrorism destroy one's own society and affect one's own life.

I will give you an example of Pakistan. The state's policy of sponsoring militancy, had a blow-back in Pakistan. It has affected the country most.

But saying all that, one has to see the role of the international environment as well. We have to see the root cause of the terrorism. I am not giving any justification or excuse for terrorism, but one has to also see the environment which fuels extremism and terrorism.

When the rights of the people are not given, that actually provides a conducive environment for those who preach militancy and extremism and the sane voices get buried.

So it is also the responsibility of the international community to address the causes which fuel terrorism. I am not saying that it provides any justification for what is happening—suicide bombers blowing themselves up, killing people. No.

For example, invasion of Iraq or the attack on Iraq has provided the most conducive environment for the militancy. I think that probably al-Qaeda is much stronger than it was before 9/11 because of Iraq. So that also has to be seen in the context, the root cause of militancy, why the extremists are winning the war and not the moderates.

**QUESTION:** Sir, you mentioned the military, but Pakistan's intelligence service, the ISI, was very much involved with the Islamic militants in the past, with al-Qaeda. So my question really is: at this point in time, five years after the war began against the al-Qaeda people, what is Pakistan's ISI's relationship now with the militants? And second, what is its relationship with Musharraf?

**ZAHID HUSSAIN:** Those are two questions.

Yes, my point that I was trying to explain is that this was a very different situation and militancy was sponsored by the intelligence agency in Pakistan. When 9/11 took place, this turnaround took place, it does not mean complete breaking of the ties with the military, for obvious reasons—they still needed them to fight—although things have changed hugely after 9/11.

But still actually, like for Kashmir, for example, although the peace process has started within the two countries, definitely there is a thinking that if this militancy is completely eliminated, then they will have no leverage. So the ties are still there, but basically they do not go to the same extent, the same level, as they did before 9/11.

Before 9/11, there was a holy alliance between the military and the militants. They were the product of that. And Pakistan is a classic example. It was all because of the state sponsorship. The militancy did not have roots among the people, like in other countries. This is saying that yes, there has not been a complete breakup in the relationship, but, on the other hand, I would not say that it is going to the extent that it is still continuing the same kind of relationship.

Now, talking about Musharraf's control of the ISI, I think probably there is a misconception about how the ISI functions. ISI is basically an extension of the army. It is very different from how other intelligence agencies could be organized in other countries.

Eighty percent of the ISI officials come from the army, and they come on a rotation basis. So whenever there is a civilian government, ISI becomes completely autonomous, because it serves the interests or pursues the interests of the military. But under the military government it basically serves the interests of the military rulers.

**QUESTION:** Along with a lot of other people here in the West who seem to applaud Musharraf's overtures particularly to this part of the world, we were extraordinarily disenchanted. I mean when you essentially fire the Chief Justice of your Supreme Court, you undermine the independence of the judiciary. I think that, regardless of how many cheerleaders he may have had, that certainly did not serve him well, which is disappointing.

My question essentially is: to what extent can a country like Pakistan hope to have a leader that, in order to really achieve democracy as we would understand it, would be willing to gradually abdicate, knowingly and deliberately,

power and his or her party's power in order to achieve real democracy—some examples would include [Gorbachev](#) in the former Soviet Union, [de Klerk](#) in South Africa—where you recognize that you are not dealing with a democratic country, even though you call yourself a leader of a democratic country, and you take steps to accomplish that and in some cases stay in power?

I am curious as to your reflections on Turkey, which probably in some senses looks very different from Pakistan but in some senses is a little bit similar, where [Ataturk](#) had the ability to distinguish between the state and its predominant religion, and whether or not it is at all likely that Pakistanis and other residents in that part of the world could enjoy that kind of freedom in the foreseeable future.

**ZAHID HUSSAIN:** I will again repeat my earlier comment that democracy is a process. We cannot say how long will it be before we have a democracy that will actually stop supporting the military and just allow the elections to take place and allow a civilian government.

Pakistan is one country where we did not always have a dictatorship. We had periods of civilian government also. That showed that Pakistan can be a democratic country.

But basically what is happening, again, is that when you destroy the institutions, if tomorrow democracy is restored, it will not be an ideal government, it will not be a very strong democratic government, because it will take some time to rebuild the civilian institutions. So that is a problem with Pakistan, because military interventions have left this kind of lack of institutions.

How long will it take for democracy, whether Pakistan is fit for democracy? It is wrong to say that one country is fit for democracy and another is not. For example, India and Pakistan were part of the same continent. If India can have democracy, why can't we have democracy too?

Pakistan is very fit for democracy. How long did it take for democratic institutions to take root in the Western world? It is a process of hundreds of years. I am not saying that we have to go through that same route. I think Pakistan is in a better position to have democracy. Some of the political leaders might have been disappointed people, but it does not mean that we do not have the people who can run the government. The political parties are still functioning, they are still operating. So just allow them to rule and then there will be a process of accountability.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Hussain, I wonder if you could comment on the sources of manpower for the Taliban. That is, is the Taliban still composed entirely of Afghans, or has the recruiting extended to some of the jihadists in Syria or Egypt or Saudi Arabia? In other words, has it been internationalized or is it still basically made up of Afghans?

**ZAHID HUSSAIN:** Actually, the Taliban is both an Afghan and a Pakistani phenomenon, so we have Taliban on both sides of the border. A large number of Taliban commanders came from the Pakistani side. They were Pashtuns. But they don't have any international cadre as such.

But a new alignment is taking place, has taken place in fact, in the last few years between al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Still I feel they are separate in some ways. So when you talk about al-Qaeda, yes they have cadres from different Muslim countries, but it is not relevant for the Taliban.

**QUESTION:** I think the feeling in this country is that Musharraf is so vital to us right now because if he steps aside you won't have a chance for this weak democracy to take place, that the militants and the Islamic group will take over. So you don't have that window of opportunity right now to even give a trial to a democratic government.

**ZAHID HUSSAIN:** Well, this is very interesting, because it is always a shortsighted policy to support a military dictator because they will deliver. That actually completely ignores the long term.

Actually, the same thing happened with General [Zia-ul-Haq](#). Americans did support him, with the drastic effect on the Pakistani society that we are still reeling from. The rise of Islamic extremism is the product of General Zia-ul-Haq's era, which was basically at that point I think probably completely different. Jihad was a slogan used by Zia-ul-Haq and by [Charlie Wilson](#). So basically that was different. And actually what we are witnessing today is the result of that.

Number two, actually if you look at Pakistani history, whenever there was a democratic process, whenever there was an electoral process, the Islamic parties could not have had any large percentage of the vote.

If you look at the last election, despite the support from the military, their share of votes was only 11 percent. [The Peoples Party](#), which is a liberal party, had about 26 percent of the vote. [The Muslim League](#), which is not an Islamic party as such, got 25 percent of the votes. But since their vote was concentrated among one ethnic group, the Pashtuns, the Islamists had a much greater bloc of members in the Parliament. If you just set aside the frontier area and Pashtun area, their total share of votes was even less than 2 percent. So there is no threat of a fundamentalist takeover in Pakistan. The real danger is fragmentation of the country on ethnic lines, religious lines. That is the real danger. That has come because of the military rule.

**QUESTION:** We have talked about military government and civilian government and the need for democracy. Is there any country in the world which has a tribal system, a feudal system, in the rural areas and strong democratic institutions? And what role has feudalism and the feudal lords played in the demise or the failure of initiating the democratic process in Pakistan?

**ZAHID HUSSAIN:** You are right. Actually it is an antithesis, the feudal system and democracy. But one thing I will ask you: Who has protected those vested interests? And don't forget about the military feudal alliance. That has always ruled the country.

**JOANNE MYERS:** Zahid, you have come a long way and you have shared with us what is happening in your country. We really appreciate it.

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