

## PAK-US ALLIANCE CURSE: SOME HYPOTHESES

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### **Abstract**

*History is replete with examples where the US has influenced various countries to promote its interests and later discarded them to face the ignominy of squalor, poverty, and underdevelopment, etc. It has also been observed that various autocratic leaders and political parties were the recipients of US munificence for their undivided support which resulted in short-term benefits and long-term complications. Such autocratic leaders tend to form coalitions with other elites to legitimize their incumbency as well as to ensure the longevity of power. These coalitions come at a great cost of bad governance. This study, therefore, postulates that US interventionist policies epitomize bad governance in Pakistan. It suggests that a progressive future for Pakistan lies in moving towards alliances with those countries which do not follow interventionist policies. An alliance with common goals can result in a win-win situation, however, strategic alliance with China can serve Pakistan's interests befittingly and successful realization of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor can provide salvation to Pakistan's fledging economy.*

**Keywords:** Alliance Curse, Autocratic Regime, Democracy, Interventionist Policies, CPEC.

### **Introduction**

**D**emocratic Pakistan faces numerous impediments in its drive towards economic prosperity. To highlight, some of the problems, Pakistan is facing, are poverty, extremism, foreign debt, bad governance, inflation, corruption, injustice, energy crisis, unemployment, and food and water shortage. Such issues are decaying the economy of Pakistan. Most of these problems have one underlying cause, i.e., dysfunctional governance apparatus, which is owed to Pakistan's 'alliance curse'. Time and again, the alliance curse has hindered the growth of the institutional capacity of the country's institutions to govern properly. This study explores the concept of the "alliance curse" and attempts to map the concept's application on Pakistan's case graphically and provide recommendations for the country's way forward.

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## **Alliance Curse Literature Underpinnings**

The concept of the “alliance curse”, presented by Hilton L. Root in 2008,<sup>1</sup> explains that once asymmetric alliances between first and third world countries are agreed upon based on improving the well-being of both countries. This provides gains for both countries at first. The superpower country benefits in lieu of its political and military influence, and gains policy concessions, such as cheap oil, UN votes<sup>2</sup>, military bases or access to strategic routes from the third world country; these gains are highly lauded within the superpower country. The third world partner with an autocratic regime gains a sponsor and a strong supporter which provides protection, the much-needed economic aid, military aid, and abundant credit. This scenario, though, seems like a fair alliance of mutual benefit but as time progresses it becomes a curse for the population residing within the third world partner-country.<sup>3</sup> Within the asymmetric alliance, the leadership in the third world partner-country tends to be autocratic in nature, as autocratic leaders tend to provide quick services when it comes to the provision of benefits to the superpower partner-country.

To understand this curse, the origins of the concept of alliance curse need to be described. The concept is derived from the notion of “resource curse”, also known as the ‘paradox of plenty’. The concept discusses the irony that natural resource rich countries having large deposits of fossil fuels and precious minerals, have a tendency to exhibit lower levels of economic growth, develop lower democratic traditions, and have poorer mechanisms for development in comparison with countries having fewer natural resources.<sup>4</sup> Many reasons have been cited for the lack of democratization, lower levels of economic growth, and development. The reason which has gained most traction is that natural resource wealth within a developing country breeds corruption and corrupt leaders within these countries tend to collude with the natural resource extraction companies to supersede the country’s laws while discounting and suppressing the objections made by the public and opponents.<sup>5</sup> The wealth accumulated from the extracted natural resources which ought to be spent for developing the economy, tends to end up in the coffers of the corrupt leaders, or it is frivolously spent on the construction of grand palaces and colossal showcase projects rather than investing in those sectors which are in dire need of investments, like health, education, job creation, etc.<sup>6</sup>

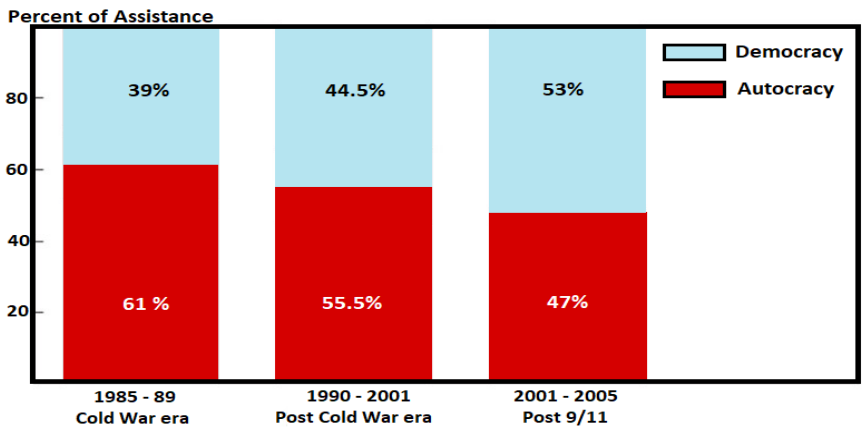
In the concept of Alliance Curse, the outcome is the same as that of the “resource curse” but the wealth gained from the extraction of natural resources have been substituted by the sponsorship of political legitimacy, economic aid, military aid, protection, and abundant credit from a super power partner. These benefits received by the autocratic leadership within the third world country pave the way for the country to enter into a “development trap”, as the legitimacy and support from a superpower partner markedly reduces the incentives for the autocratic leadership to govern the third world country for prosperity and invest in local institutions, which promote accountability and transparency. This is why the assistance received by the third world partner has also been termed as a “hypocrisy trap”.<sup>7</sup> Usually, the aid money received by these autocratic leaders plays an important role in providing concessions to a small

coalition of elites within the third world country who in return promise loyalty and provide local legitimacy to the autocratic regime in the face of opposition.<sup>8</sup> The literature mostly attributes the concept of Alliance Curse with the US and its partner developing nations.

### US Foreign Policies and Alliances

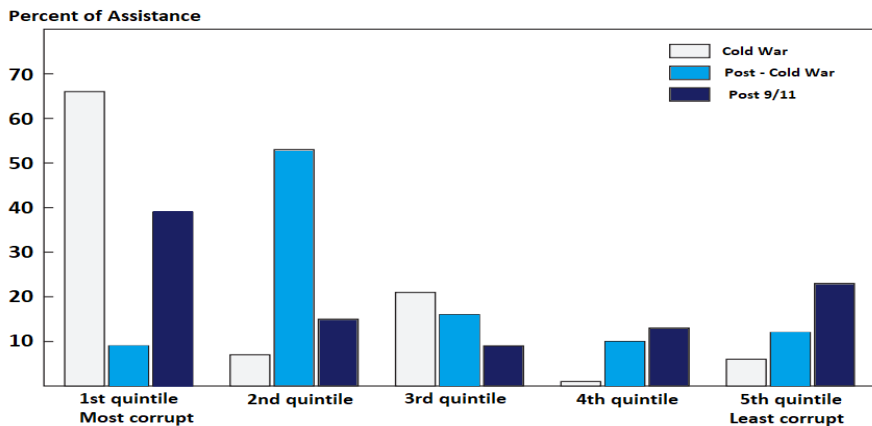
The case for the existence of Alliance Curse gains much credence from alliances formed by the US after gaining superpower status. Many third world recipients of alliance-rents from the US resultantly felt the ache of governance failures. The outcome of such failures has been exacerbated by the US interventionist policies and forming alliances with autocratic regimes. Figure-1 and Figure-2 below highlight that the US tends forming alliances with and extending aid to corrupt autocratic regimes within the developing world while touting itself as a bastion of democracy.

**Figure-1: US Aid to Autocratic Regimes and Democracies**



Source: Green Book and PRS Group International Country Risk Indicators

**Figure-2: US Aid to Autocratic Regimes and Democracies**



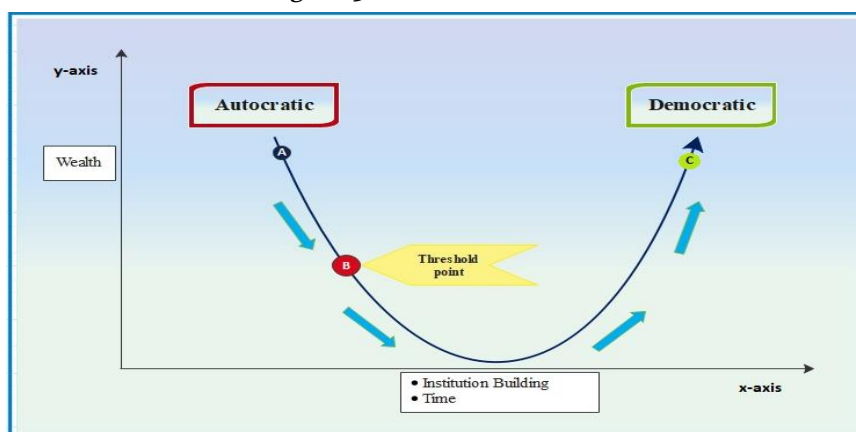
Source: Green Book and the PRS Group International Country Risk Indicators

The US has meddled in the internal affairs of its partner countries as well. History is testimony of US tendency of meddling in affairs of other countries through orchestrating regime changes in its favor. Some examples from contemporary history comprise: March-1949 Syrian coup d'état and 2012 to present attempts at regime change; 1953-Iranian coup d'état and 2005 to present; 1954-Guatemalan coup d'état; CIA's Tibetan Program (although it failed but Dalai Lama and Tibetan insurgents in Nepal continue to receive subsidies); 1956-58 US meddling in Indonesia; 1959-Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba; 1960-1963 interference in Iraq, later in 1992-96 and the 2003 invasion; 1960-65 Congo Crisis engineered by the US; 1961-Regime change in Dominican Republic; 1963-CIA backed coup in South Vietnam; 1964-Brazilian coup d'état; 1966-military coup in Ghana; 1973-Chilean coup d'état; 1976-Argentine coup d'état; 1979-89 interference in Afghanistan; 1980-Turkish coup d'état; Poland 1980-89; Nicaragua 1981-90; Venezuela 2002 coup d'état attempt; Somalia 2006-7.<sup>9</sup>

### Graphical Explanation of the Alliance Curse

It has been explained above that once a superpower and an autocratic underdeveloped country forms an alliance of mutual benefit, this alliance eventually transforms into a curse for the latter. This phenomenon can be explained in Figure-3 below. The graph shows that on the horizontal x-axis the variables "Institution Building" and "Time" are mapped. On the vertical y-axis "wealth" is shown. The graph is U-shaped with its starting point A and ending point C. The curve formed between point A and C showcases the path of transition from Autocracy to Democracy. The slope of the line from point A to point B marks the Alliance with the US. At point B the slope of the line reaches a value where it is no longer feasible for the US to continue its Alliance, which is why the Alliance either ends or significantly weakens. Point B is labeled as the threshold point where a country transitions into a weak and nascent democracy. The concept of Alliance Curse suggests, once an underdeveloped autocratic country enters into an alliance with a superpower it is at point A, where most of the country's wealth is under the control of autocratic leadership.

**Figure-3:** Alliance Curse Curve



**Source:** Authors' Compilation based on Hilton Root's Book "Alliance Curse"

The asymmetric alliance tends to last until the country remains autocratic. Once the underdeveloped country crosses the threshold point on the curve, the alliance tends to end or severely weaken. The bulk of the damage done to the developing country and concessions gained by both partners usually lie on the journey from point A to B. As time progresses on the x-axis, the country travels across the curved path, this occurs due to the nature of autocratic regimes in underdeveloped countries where resources are scarce and autocratic leaders face the challenges of remaining in power. The alliance with a superpower translates in to legitimacy, aid money, and protection for the autocratic leaders. However, once these leaders begin reciprocating favors to the superpower partner, most of the times these favors go against indigenous public opinions resulting in widespread opposition. To calm the public, the autocratic leaders seek refuge by giving concessions to the elite within the country. This is usually where the aid money from the superpower comes into use. These power sharing arrangements with the elite, momentarily curb public outcry as the elites in lieu of concessions and gaining their share of power pacify masses under their control.

The power sharing arrangements propagate the country on the path of the curve towards the threshold point as sharing power is constituted as democratic.<sup>10</sup> The superpower country in its bid to gain more concessions; UN votes or military support usually grants debt to the underdeveloped partner. The liquidity achieved from these debts is invested in some much-needed infrastructure projects along with many nonessential projects which are carried out directly or indirectly by the elites breeding corruption. The development of the essential infrastructure projects tends to win the autocratic regime momentary respite from indigenous opposition.<sup>11</sup> The cycle of granting debts and foreign aid by the superpower partner in lieu of concessions keeps indigenous outcry alive, destroys transparency, and breeds corruption<sup>12</sup> in the wake of which foreign investors demand democratic institutions and practices to minimize risk. This forces the autocratic leaders to further the power sharing arrangements with elites to create a facade of a sham democracy.<sup>13</sup> Which brings the country closer to the threshold point with rampant corruption devouring most of the country's wealth including the economic aid and liquidity achieved through foreign debts. Very little efforts are usually made for tax collection owing to the reliance on foreign debt and economic aid packages.

As the underdeveloped partner nears the threshold point, it is more difficult for it to provide concessions to the superpower partner. This occurs because now decisions on granting concessions to the partner-country have to pass through a legislature of elites. This weakens the alliance resulting in curtailing aid packages and mounting foreign debts for the underdeveloped country. With depleting tools to appease the masses as well as means to uphold its ends of bargain within the alliance, the alliance ends and paves the way for extreme public outcry leading to the ouster of the autocratic leaders. The country tends to experience democratic elections and crosses the threshold point. With weak institutions, compounding foreign debt, little or no social programs, rampant corruption, extremely low tax revenues, a small tax base and a handful of assets, and infrastructure developments. This can be seen in the curve that beyond point B it is a sharp decline despite democratic transition and dismal wealth or foreign

reserves. Usually, after this point, numerous developing nations face many years of stringent economic and political reforms before they reach the upward trend in the curve or they propagate in the reverse direction towards autocracy.

### Hypothetical Assumptions

This study hypothesises that:

- **H<sub>1</sub>:** An alliance with the US in the long-run weakens democratic transition in Pakistan.
- **H<sub>2</sub>:** An Alliance with the US leads to weakened government institutions in Pakistan.
- **H<sub>3</sub>:** An Alliance with the US curbs sustainable economic growth in Pakistan.

### Pakistan and Its Alliance with the US

Pakistan is among the top-ten highest recipients of US aid.<sup>14</sup> Pakistan has factored into US regional plans many times; at first, as an ally to protect US interests in the Middle East and later, as a provider of a spy base to keep a close check on the Soviet Union which triggered the infamous 1962-U2 crisis. Pakistan's inclusion into the SEATO and CENTO military pacts was on the pretext of blocking Communism. Later, as an ally to fight a proxy war against Soviets in Afghanistan and recently as a frontline ally in the war on terror. Most of Pakistan's notable infrastructure projects were undertaken during these times, trade quotas were granted and gained adequate assets during these times. However, the situation for social programs and other important sectors, like education and health sectors, remained bleak.

### Pakistan's Asymmetric Alliances

Pak-US asymmetric relations have been formed based on short-term mutual gain, where Pakistan being a weaker partner has to endure the brunt of the problems; "what may at first seem a fair and cooperative mutuality of interests invariably turns out to be unfair to the marginalized population within Pakistan."<sup>15</sup> This is the reason why roughly three-in-four Pakistanis (74%) consider the US an enemy.<sup>16</sup> At one hand, Pakistan is among the top-ten recipients of US aid, contiguously, there is a disdain towards the US from Pakistani public. This study attempts at answering this confounding anomaly by framing the pictures of Pak-US alliances in the frame of "Alliance Curse," explained above.

If we observe the curve in Figure-3 and apply it to the case of Pakistan, we see that whenever Pakistan has been in the ambit of US interests, it lies on the left-hand side of the curve at point A, with an autocratic form of government receiving such support. There have been three major long-reigning autocratic regimes in the history of Pakistan: Ayub's regime, Zia's regime, and Musharraf's regime. The current study

discusses the case of Ayub's and Zia's regimes generally. However, the study discusses the case of Musharraf's regime and post-Musharraf era in detail.

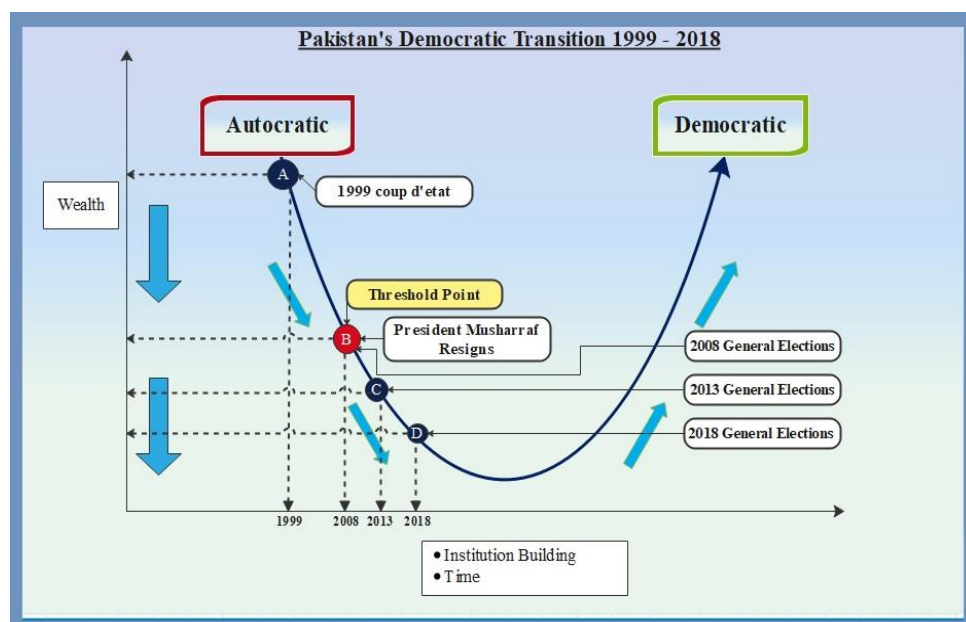
During the time of autocratic regimes, US interests in Pakistan have spiked and rightly so from the perspective of the US, as autocratic regimes can provide the US with which ever assistance they need through "one-window-operation", whether it may be in the form of UN votes, policy support, trade or military support. Each autocratic ruler started at point A and in their bid to remain in power, Pakistan started its downward slide from point A to B and democracy was allowed to sprout. To survive in office, each of the autocratic leaders in Pakistan started as purely autocratic but later established power-sharing arrangements with the ruling coalitions and cultivated political protégé who themselves may have been corrupt to the core and lacked credibility.<sup>17</sup> These coalitions unfolded in the country due to various reasons; international pressures, to appease the public, and to appease the elites who in return promised legitimacy, etc. In the case of each leader these coalitions sparked the journey down the curve from point A towards point C. Each time, Figure-3 shows that due to power-sharing, the wealth was shared and misspent because of the lack of credibility of the coalition and its constituents, massive corruption set in leading to the country's wealth or foreign reserves to deplete when crossing point B; leaving very little room, the climate and sometimes the political will to govern for Pakistan's prosperity. Thus, they succumbed to failures resulting in Pakistan moving back to point A. This reversal highlights an important point; each time, an autocratic regime governed Pakistan, Pakistan was at point A on the graph. The US had a significant interest in Pakistan and aid flow to Pakistan was substantial. This is the reason why the Alliance Curse curve is 'U' shaped; at the lowest point the slope of the line turns to zero. Beyond point B the slope of the line lessens that is when the alliance also tends to end and Pakistan's history presents evidences of this recurring phenomenon. Hence, it can be inferred that  $H_1$  holds.

### **Alliance Curse during Musharraf Era**

General Musharraf assumed power as the Chief Executive of Pakistan in 1999 after Nawaz Sharif's corruption and self-serving undemocratic measures to weaken state institutions crossed the limits.<sup>18</sup> Before the Musharraf era was a time of severe political instability. Four general elections had taken place in a span of 11 years with no politically elected government completing its full term in office. The Musharraf era began with endeavors to rally support with the announcement of his ambitious agenda of political and constitutional reforms which, in his words, would propagate Pakistan away from "an era of sham democracy" and towards effective democratic governance.<sup>19</sup> The economic conditions of Pakistan did not fare any better during the start of the Musharraf era; he was only able to consolidate control and curb corruption. Because of his upsetting the applecart of democracy, Musharraf was treated as a social pariah and economic sanctions were imposed upon Pakistan by the US. However, fortunes changed due to global events. Post-September 11, 2001 terror attacks resulted in Pakistan joining the Global War on Terror as a non-NATO ally translating into economic and military aid packages along with rescheduling of state debts and trade deals which propelled Pakistan's economic growth from 1.9% in the FY 2000-01 to 7.6% in the FY 2004-05.<sup>20</sup>

Pakistan was back at point A on the left-hand side of the Alliance Curse curve which is highlighted in Figure-4 below. General Musharraf started to move the country towards point B in his bid to achieve longevity and legitimacy. Usually, this downward slide is quick and this is evident in the curve, if we observe the x-axis where we have “time” as a variable. Every step he took to appease the public and the elites was democratic in nature and each step got the country closer and closer to the threshold point. He first came to power in 1999, and in 2002, he stated “elections will take place and 100% true democracy will set in Pakistan.”<sup>21</sup> In 2002, the government-backed Pakistan Muslim League PML (Quaid-i-Azam) or PML-(Q) formed the government. This road to victory was possible because it benefited from the curbs imposed on its political opponents.<sup>22</sup> This act of creating and backing new political parties out of thin air; based upon loyal elites is what has, time and again, tarnished the fabric of democratic and governance institutions in Pakistan. President Ayub created the Convention Muslim League (CML) which won the 1965-elections by massive rigging.<sup>23</sup> While President Zia decided to hold general elections without the participation of political parties, because he was well-aware of the fact that nonpolitical people are easier to bridle as compared to politically allied people. This sparked major political parties boycotted the elections of 1985.<sup>24</sup> These acts are echoes of the same tune of dismantling democratic institutions in the country and provide the historical evidences for the acceptance of H<sub>2</sub>.

Figure-4: Alliance Curse Curve of Musharraf Era



Source: Authors' Compilation based on Hilton Root's Book "Alliance Curse"

Figure-4 highlights that during the Musharraf era, the country kept propagating on the path towards democracy and various steps were taken to appease not only the public but also foreign skeptics of the regime. One of the most drastic steps



was to free the media of Pakistan. Musharraf stated: "I am for total freedom of media, which is the fourth pillar of the state and is the first line of defence in today's democratic world."<sup>25</sup> During his era, Pakistan received many benefits from its alliance with the US and tried to use these funds and concessions for many developmental projects and the list of achievements is quite long as all sectors of the economy experienced tremendous growth. The health spending doubled; 81 new universities and degree awarding institutions were created; 102 mega infrastructure projects were initiated including highways, motorways, power plants, and development of water canals, etc.<sup>26</sup> All these efforts garnered public support at that time. However, despite such massive endeavors, economists in Pakistan remained skeptical, highlighting that without deep economic structural reforms, economic growth is like a house of cards.<sup>27</sup>

The achievements were a result of foreign inflows either as a result of Pakistan's alliance or in the form of foreign direct investments, like acquisition of domestic cigarette manufacturing by America's Altria Group, or through an expansion by existing food and beverage companies, like Pepsi Co, and McDonalds. Major contributions came from the Middle East and China in the telecom sector. These investments did not help in alleviating poverty as none of these sectors employ the poor. It is a known macroeconomic fact that investment in consumer goods and services industry alone cannot lay the foundations for long-term sustainable growth. This is exactly why due to post-2008 global financial crisis, heightened terrorism, and the drastic cuts in foreign aid, Pakistan's economic growth plummeted from 4.8% in 2007 to 1.7% in 2008.<sup>28</sup> The removal of the artificial props brought the unstable house of cards tumbling down. These unsustainable economic policies were not only the hallmark of Musharraf's regime alone. During Ayub's and Zia's regime, Pakistan experienced high economic growth. During the Ayub era, the average annual economic growth was an unprecedented 5.8%, while during Zia's regime, it was 6.5%.<sup>29</sup> However, the economy crumbled each time the regime ended, which is owed to cutoff of US aid packages and unsustainable economic policies. These repeat performances provide clear historical evidences for the acceptance of H<sub>3</sub>.

The seeds of the economic decline during the Musharraf era were hydrated early into Pakistan's alliance with the US. In 2003, Pakistan started to bear the cost of its contributions in alliance with the US. Terrorist attacks became rampant in the country between the years 2000 and 2008. A total of 13,706 fatalities occurred owing to terror attacks in Pakistan.<sup>30</sup> These terrorist attacks started to dry up foreign investment in Pakistan and negative sentiments in the public picked up steam. At the same time, Musharraf's each step towards democracy brought the country closer to the threshold point B in Figure-4, which meant lessening US support. When President Musharraf decided to make a deal with the exiled political leaders to return, it led to free and fair elections to be held in Pakistan. This "was the point of departure ... there were conflicts, of values and interests, electing rulers appears nothing short of miraculous."<sup>31</sup> This is when Pakistan reached the threshold point on the Alliance Curse curve while fulfilling the "minimalist concept of democracy"<sup>32</sup> and soon after President Musharraf resigned from office at the threat of impeachment, which is highlighted in Figure-4.

## **Post-Musharraf Era**

It can be observed in Figure-4 that after crossing the threshold point B, the Pakistan's People's Party (PPP) had gained majority seats in the 2008-elections. The conditions to govern became miserable with a crippling economy, rampant terrorist attacks, fleeing foreign investments, corruption and the alliance with the US was treading on shaky ground. The average GDP growth for a developing country hovers around the 3% mark globally owing to population rises.<sup>33</sup> During the PPP government, Pakistan's economy grew at an average of merely 2.46% which was far below the requirements to cater for unemployment in a developing country.<sup>34</sup> Despite such conditions, PPP was able to complete its 5-year term and for this miraculous success much is owed to two main factors which differed from that of previous regimes in Pakistan. First, credit goes to Musharraf era's political reforms as Pakistan cultivated various essentials of democracy, like freedom of press, local elections at the grass root level and women empowerment, which provided a better political climate. Secondly, alliance with the US did not completely end beyond point B in Figure-4. The US was still actively involved in its Global War on Terror and needed Pakistan's assistance. Though aid packages had witnessed significant cuts but were still being received by the country.

In 2013, general elections were held in Pakistan after the successful completion of the PPP government's 5-year term in power. This is highlighted in Figure-4 at point C. Yet, it can be observed in Figure-4 that the wealth and economic conditions have worsened between points B and C. Later, we see at point D that another 5-year term of a politically elected government completed with a peaceful transition of power. However, the economic conditions remained worsened as the decline is evident between points C and D on the curve. Despite this decline, these successful transitions between politically elected governments is a major democratic achievement as it can be viewed in Figure-4 that Pakistan is inching towards the rise as time is progressing and institutions are gaining strength.

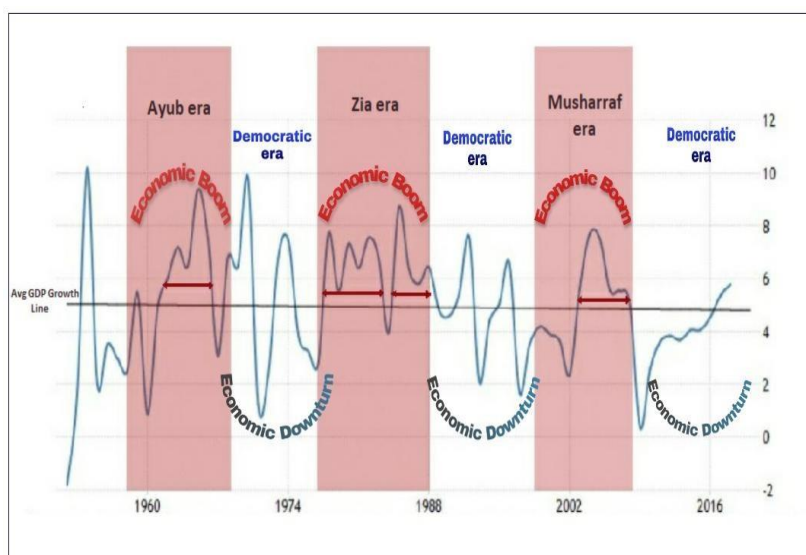
The continued decline beyond point B carrying forward through points C and D in Figure-4 is owed to lower levels of wealth and weak government institutions, which hinder the politically elected governments to operate at full capacity. The capacity of democracies to take difficult and pressing decisions in critical times is limited due to the complexities of reaching a consensus. The politically elected governments in Pakistan being weak tend to put off hard decisions and resort to fractional solutions instead of long-term solutions. Such temporary and half-hearted measures further escalate the problems and pile on additional problems resulting in a rapid depletion of wealth. This case of draining of wealth and bad governance spreads social unrest and loss of confidence in the government. Once the situation gets worse, people also lose faith in democracy, which is why, in the past, Pakistan underwent elections before their stipulated time or the situation had worsened to a point where the military had to take over and salvage the situation. Pakistan has experienced four periods of military rule which have consumed 35 out of its 73 years of independence. Since independence, the

country has been playing hide-and-seek with democracy,<sup>35</sup> thus, suffering from a development trap.

### What is the Development Trap?

The development trap is explained within the concept of the Alliance Curse as the predicament, which the underdeveloped partner-country enters into at the cost of its alliance with a superpower.<sup>36</sup> In Pakistan, it has been observed that democracy has failed repeatedly, thus, paving the way for rekindling an alliance with the US. This phenomenon is evident in Figure-5 below. During autocratic regimes, Pakistan has a strong alliance with the US because of which aid money sparks a short-term economic revival and these economic appreciations are highlighted in the red shaded areas of the graph. Soon after such regimes end, the aid money disappears and economic downturns are experienced which are labeled in Figure-5.

**Figure-5:** Pakistan's GDP Growth in Different Regimes



Source: Authors' Compilation

This cycle of the development trap can be explained by its four characteristics: firstly, the aid money weakens incentives for Pakistan to lay the foundations for serious policy reforms; secondly, the aid money is substituted for domestic resources, which is why no real efforts have been made to widen the tax net (currently only 0.3% of Pakistanis pay direct tax<sup>37</sup>); thirdly, the leaders of Pakistan spend their time firefighting rather than governing for prosperity; and fourth, characteristic is that, once a new government is formed and attempts to bring positive change, these efforts are halted by frail institutional capacity resulting in compelling the leaders to resort to saving face and buying time to complete their terms at the cost of foreign debts.

Political scientists believe that democracy's survival and endurance depend upon affluence, growth with moderate inflation, declining inequality, favorable

international climate, and parliamentary institutions.<sup>38</sup> However, each time, Pakistan crossed the threshold point B before the Musharraf era; none of the above conditions were met. It is believed that “the more well-to-do a country, the greater the chance for it to sustain democracy.”<sup>39</sup> In 2008, the per capita income in Pakistan was \$1010<sup>40</sup> and has been on a rise every year, thus, keeping alive the hope of sustaining democracy. “Newly formed democracies with per capita income at \$1,000 have a 0.22 probability of falling apart within a year after their income falls (giving them a life expectancy of less than five years) and 0.08 probability (or expected life of 12.5 years), if their income rises.”<sup>41</sup> If we look at the past, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the head of state in 1973, the per capita income in Pakistan was well below \$1000 and same was the case after General Zia’s death, thus, rendering the situation uncondusive for sustainable democracy.

Figures 3 and 4 not only highlight the forward downward trajectory but also indicate a way forward leading to prosperity as every bust paves the way for a boom. The graph explains that, with every passing year, on the x-axis, institutions are postulated to get stronger and in the event of enduring these hard times beyond point B in Figure-4. Many political scientists like Scott Mainwaring argue that parliamentary democracies that meet the 25-year minimum of consecutive peaceful transitions tend to become stable democracies.<sup>42</sup> In Pakistan, two consecutive terms of politically elected governments have already completed and is getting closer towards achieving sustainable democracy. This is also evident in Figure-4 where the completion of consecutive 5<sup>th</sup> term would lie; that is where the curve is moving towards a sharp incline. In the recent past, Pakistan witnessed that though the 7-8% annual economic growth of President Musharraf’s era has dwindled, democratic norms have started to take root.

## **Pakistan-China Relations**

The people of Pakistan view their salvation in stronger ties with China, as 78% of the people of Pakistan think this to be true.<sup>43</sup> Since Pakistan is weary of foreign interventions, especially from the US, the masses see in their neighborhood a country, China, which commenced its journey at the same time when Pakistan did and has transformed itself in the second-largest economy of the world without any intervention. Building stronger relations with China appeals Pakistan concerning Chinese foreign policy based on five guiding principles:<sup>44</sup> equality, mutual benefit, mutual respect, respect for territorial integrity, and respect of sovereignty. It is only in the past three decades that China has been able to exert its foreign policy options on other countries owing to its massive economic growth and expansion of trade across the world.

CPEC is a part of the larger Chinese plan to build a network over land and sea with a string of projects connecting the Baltic Sea with the Pacific Ocean via roads, rails and sea lines for free trade. This transnational vision of free trade of the Chinese is supported by their policy framework of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). CPEC promises brighter future relationship between Pakistan and China along with sustainable economic prosperity as it emphasizes greater measures across the board in all sectors of inter-government relations ranging from security,

foreign policy, energy, industry and infrastructure<sup>45</sup>. China's resolve to uphold its promises was made real by President Xi-Jinping's visit to Islamabad on April 20-21, 2015, which set the tone of the Pakistan-China relations for the future. Pakistan and China signed 51 Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) during President Xi-Jinping's visit to Islamabad.<sup>46</sup> These MOU will yield new roads and movement of goods and services between the two countries. They assure projects regarding public service, infrastructure development, linking Pakistan with other countries like the central Asian states and the development of Gwadar port which can transform Pakistan into a trade hub. CPEC is the answer for sustaining democracy in Pakistan past the threshold point illustrated in Figures 3 and 4.

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan's democracy is still evolving and faces tremendous threats and challenges. In this ever-changing world where new economic and military powers are emerging in the world, Pakistan needs to set its priorities straight and choose its allies with care. It has been amply argued in the study that US aid is a "hypocrisy trap" which brought more harm than prosperity in Pakistan. The study provides evidence for the acceptance of all three hypotheses. The US despite its strategic failure in Afghanistan puts the onus of the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan on Pakistan, which is a serious concern for Pakistan, thus, resulting into a clear shift of Pakistan foreign policy towards China, who has taken a keen interest in investing in the region for promoting peace, trade, and prosperity. Pakistan is now a budding democracy; the only thing lacking is economic growth, which is hindering its capacity to reach its true potential. Various governments in Pakistan have indulged in the rhetoric to break the begging bowl and seek trade, not aid. Such claims proved hollow since Pakistan lacks the requisite infrastructure to seek its industrial goals and establishment of energy projects including those tapping the nature for alternate sources of power. China is the natural partner for the way forward.

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