

Scenario 56

GEN MUSHARRAF QUILTS (2008):

During every military rule the graph of army image initially moves up but then starts declining sharply. As that rule is prolonged the institution comes under attack from all corners and the media takes lead in educating the general populace regarding the ineptness and corruption grooming in the ranks & files of all departments and state organizations. In Pakistan, the army image distorted so badly after each military rule that the next coming chief had to wash away their dirty linens with much labour, efforts and hard work.

When Gen Yahya Khan had left his mischievous rule in 1971, Gen Gul Hassan had to work hard for restoration of image of his disheartened and shocked army. When Gen Ziaul Haq got crashed in 1988, the public had mixed feelings of hatred, disappointment and dismay about the Pakistan Army for which Gen Aslam Beg was there to take up this Himalayan task.

Most of the intelligentsia think that Gen Aslam Beg was on the right track especially while he tried utmost to drag out the Pakistan Army from the sand grave of misused false notions of Islamic-phobia pushed in by Gen Ziaul Haq but Shafqat Mahmood keeps altogether a different view about him. Referring to his opinion appeared in **'the News' dated 4th September 2009**:

'In my reading of post-Zia history, there is no greater sinner than Aslam Beg. By his actions after Zia's death and indeed throughout his tenure of office, he caused great harm to this nation. He did not let democracy settle, manipulated parties and politicians and corrupted them, brought governments down.... It is easy to blame Ghulam Ishaq Khan (GIK) because he had his share of sins but without Aslam Beg goading him on, much of what GIK did would not have happened. It was Beg who asked Hameed Gul to form the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) and stop Benazir and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) from coming to power. When he could not stop it, it was he who led the media and dirty-tricks campaign to undermine it and bring it down.'

They [Gen Beg & his military friends] launched operation midnight jackal, engineered a no-confidence move against her [Benazir Bhutto], got the MQM to take on the PPP in the streets of Karachi, thwarted the Pucca Qilla operation, which was leading to the capture of a huge cache arms stored by terrorists in Hyderabad, and then prevailed upon GIK to dismiss her government; it not only hurt Pakistan but derailed democracy.

After the Benazir government had been dismissed in 1990, he distributed money and did everything to make an IJI government come into power. Nawaz Sharif had taken over in perhaps October and by December; officers of military intelligence (MI) were making contact with the PPP to instigate it against the government. Not only that, Beg deliberately started to undermine Nawaz by taking a position different from that of the government during the First Gulf War.

His [Gen Beg's] serving military officers started provoking the PPP to take on the Nawaz Sharif government through street power. Fortunately, for us, his time ran out and GIK trumped him by appointing a new army chief, two months before his term of office was to end. This was unprecedented and the only reason it was done was to make him a lame duck and thwart his ambition for power. Beg left with much regret

but a legacy of bitterness was created that tainted the entire decade of the 90s. Democracy could not settle after that.'

Coming back; the same type of image-laundry job was taken up and handled by Gen Ashfaq Kayani because Gen Musharraf's performance during his eight years as Army Chief cum Chief Executive cum President had continuously been pushing his institution (of Pakistan Army) into a sand grave of public repugnance, revulsion and disgust.

In Gen Musharraf era, the army started losing its credibility at very early stage when the sitting judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the High Courts of respective provinces were asked to take a fresh oath of office swearing allegiance to military rule and to state that they would make no decisions against the military. After 12th October 1999's coup, many people had filed petitions in the Supreme Court of Pakistan challenging the said unconstitutional act. Under The Oath of Judges Order 2000 the Chief Justice of Pakistan Mr Justice Saeeduzzaman Siddiqui refused to become a part of the new hierarchy and so did many other judges. Some of them, which were not in the good books of Gen Musharraf, were not asked to take oath.

The people felt a bad taste in their mouths when Gen Musharraf, immediately after taking over the reigns of the government, had replaced nearly all the controlling slots of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) after appointing a serving Lt Gen as its head. All the provincial NAB offices were given under the command of serving Brigadiers or Major Generals and were given a special agenda. A year after the NAB Ordinance was 'suitably' amended as per future needs of the military governance and the politicians were coerced to join his master's voice through hook or crook.

A PPP member Aftab Sherpao was called from London; his old NAB file was sent to cold room and was given the most important slot in cabinet, the Federal Interior Minister. Same like honours were given to Rao Sikandar of Okara, Faisal Saleh Hayat of Jhang and one Miss Neelofar Bakhtiar, politicians of the PPP who were offered key offices in the Federal Cabinet too. They were directed to form a new faction of PPP adding another P, making PPPP, for public consumption.

Similar deal was negotiated with ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his family members to send them to Saudi Arabia and former Chairman Ehtesab Bureau Saif ur Rehman through secret negotiations and the same have now become public stories. The tenures of Lt Gen M Amjad and Lt Gen Khalid Maqbool are a case study in this regard. The tales of those times are quoted as examples of arm-twisting techniques coupled with sweet pills of compromises on public expense and undermining the rule of law. All was fair to strengthen Gen Musharraf's military rule. In NAB most of the registered cases were either finished or shelved after applying 'plea-bargain' clauses of the amended NAB Laws.

After Lt Gen M Amjad, another serving Lt Gen Khalid Maqbool was pushed into the Chairman's office of the NAB. True or false, the stories of corruptions involved in dubious 'releases' during those days are still spoken in secretariat offices of Islamabad. The people still quote the ruling patterns of some serving Army Generals who were called as NAB's Chiefs to eradicate high profile corruption from state departments but ended their tenures with opening of enquiries against their own persons on same like charges of corruption or compromises in plea-bargains during their stay in NAB. The tenures of Lt Gen Khalid Maqbool and Lt Gen Shahid Aziz each may be compared going in two opposite directions under this head.

The army's image cannot be considered as positive when the people would not be able to find, see or hear even a single case of corruption opened against any army officer serving in civil capacity during eight years of Gen Musharraf's rule with an iron rod of NAB in hand. Illegal use of authority and loss of Rs:1.82 billion to the NLC by two serving Lt Generals and one Major General can be found on the other pages as a reference. One case of Admiral ® Mansoorul Haq can also be cited (penalized because he was from Pakistan Navy not Army) in which he was freed after accepting equivalent to two million Dollars in plea-bargain negotiations as against corruption charges of 95 million dollars.

The Pakistani people, after having an access to the world media, do not seem to be astray if they think that why an army officer is not answerable to the higher courts under the charges of corruption done by him in civil capacity. Army housing schemes can be quoted as an example. The uniformed establishments have been minting money since 20 years in the name of Army / Navy / PAF welfare housing schemes, doing purely private business but using military funds coupled with influence of respective forces, benefiting from the personnel and technical resources and frequent military deployments and allotting plots to their officers on special reserved prices but when some discrepancy occurs, the matter can only be referred to the Army Act 1952 where it becomes a secret disciplinary action.

A GENERAL BETRAYED THE NATION:

The serious blow to the legitimacy of army institution came after 2002 elections. The National Assembly could not start work for more than a year till December 2003, until Gen Musharraf made a deal with *Muttahida Majlis e Amal* (MMA), a six-member coalition of Islamic parties, agreeing to leave the army by 31st December 2004. With their politico-religious support, pro-Musharraf legislators were able to muster the two-third majority required to pass the 17th Amendment, which retroactively legalized Gen Musharraf's 1999 coup and many of his decrees.

The people nearly started cursing army when in late 2004, Gen Musharraf, quite contrary to the grace of Army Chief's uniform, went back on his agreement with the MMA and got a bill passed in Parliament through his stooge legislators allowing a president to keep the office of the Army Chief, too.

[*What benefits MMA got out of that deal, is another interesting story.*]

It can be traced out from newspapers that how Gen Musharraf had allegedly purchased certain Islamic minded politicians headed by Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the then leader of opposition in the National Assembly; and Mr Akram Durrani, the then Chief Minister of NWFP. The price was allegedly paid in the shape of 1200 *Kanals* military land near the city boundaries of Dera Ismail Khan, the original constituency and hometown of JUI's Chief. The lands were belonging to the Military Lands & Cantonment Department and were meant for awards to the families of retiring or dying soldiers. On behalf of Maulana Fazlur Rehman and the then CM Durrani, the pieces of 200 *Kanals* each were leased out to their brothers and other family members.

The full investigative stories were once published in the print media. Maulana Fazlur Rehman got angry, termed it as scandalous and threatened the newspapers for dire consequences in the court. The media welcomed Maulana's initiative and published copies of all related documents like orders of Military Office, mutation from the Revenue Department, possession letters duly signed and undertaken, statements of farmers etc who were ploughing the lands on behalf of these 'biggs'. This price was paid to the Leader of Opposition to calm down during that parliamentary session where the 17th Amendment in the constitution was debated; how cheap. That is why Gen Musharraf did not bother to do away his uniform on 31st December 2004 as per his original promise. He was sure of silence in the house and media for the price he had paid to the Maulanas.

Three years after, an enemy of the three; the army, PPP and PML(N) circulated a joke on internet; an application form for aspirants to the post of Prime Minister of Pakistan. The form asked applicants to choose from a list of reasons for applying: **'to escape court trial; to make more money; to grossly misuse power; to serve the people [if you choose the last, attach certificate of sanity from a recognized psychiatrist].'**

After implementation of the 17th Amendment, Gen Musharraf started inducting serving and retired army officers into the civil service structure. Naturally this exercise was being done at the cost of aspiring civil servants who were blocked in promotions and other benefits. Most of the army personnel were awarded key posts in lucrative departments. To cite an example, to

fill in 19 slots of ambassadors to represent Pakistan abroad, 17 were recruited from the army whereas the Foreign Office Cadre could occupy only two slots. Further, these 17 army officers were given the best choice of countries in America, Western European countries, Middle East and Saudi Arabia.

Final drop scene of Gen Musharraf's drama started on 9th March 2007 when the Chief Justice of Pakistan had refused to bow his head before the military dictator. [*In some other chapter, the whole episode has been given in detail.*] By-passing those troublesome weeks of judicial paralysis in the country, a day came when decorum was abandoned as accusations roared in Pakistan's National Assembly in last week of July 2007 sessions pointing towards the episode of Red Mosque killings of about two weeks earlier then. The government was labelled as **'Murderers! Murderers of innocent people!'** The speaker kept on shouting at the members to maintain order.

Declan Walsh, representing **'the Guardian (UK)'** in Islamabad, writes in his paper on **2nd August 2007**:

President Pervez Musharraf's rule has been 'catastrophic' but his regime could yet "turn really nasty" said Stephen Cohen of the Brookings Institution in Washington and author of The Idea of Pakistan. "The country hasn't had a crisis of this magnitude since the 1970s when East Pakistan split off and became Bangladesh". But in this case it's an Islamist movement that wants to transform the country from within'.

Secretive meeting between Gen Musharraf and the exiled opposition leader Benazir Bhutto in Abu Dhabi in mid 2007 had triggered speculation of a power-sharing deal. Neither side had confirmed the details but the supporters could understand that switch over was ahead in the name of 'controlled democracy'; in which Benazir Bhutto would take over as the Prime Minister and Gen Musharraf as President. Modalities were also worked out that how Gen Musharraf would manage to do away an important clause of 17th Amendment allowing 3rd time premiership for her. The final meeting in Dubai was welcome by a bad news that a government spokesman was assassinated in Baluchistan.

That sharp game was managed through Rehman Malik and Tariq Aziz of the President's Secretariat because of their time old acquaintance. Nawaz Sharif was also setting their billions worth property business in the central London those days [subsequently handed over to his younger son when the former left for Pakistan in 2007]; he had known all those developments between the military regime and the PPP but purposefully kept quite in the hope of getting the same fruit by default. Rather, he was going one step ahead by negotiating '*Meesaq e Jamhooriat*' with Benazir Bhutto [already successfully signed by the two in 2006].

In the fall-out of Red Mosque episode of Islamabad in July 2007, the stern reaction from the tribal belt crippled the upper part of the country. During the same month [of July 2007] alone, the suicide bombers had killed about 200 people, mostly tribal militia, FC *jawans* and some of regular members of the army. The fighting went most intense in Waziristan's tribal belt where the pro-government leaders were beheaded and their homes blasted, barbers threatened and music shops were set on fires.

The general defiance triggered by Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry's refusal, caught momentum amongst the civilians at large which ultimately swelled into a powerful movement against Gen Musharraf's army rule. Since March 2007, the lawyer's community had been out on the streets and roads hurling insults at Gen Musharraf and the kindest word used to call him was 'dog'; as per 'the Guardian's narration' mentioned above. During the same era private television channels played their role to revolutionize Pakistani politics. Live debates had taken place even on road sides against state sponsored censorships.

43 deaths and dozens wounded in Karachi on 12th May 2007 had already shaken people's will to support Gen Musharraf; the July's episode of Red Mosque gave them a lead towards change in government by all means. The civilian revolt reached its climax when, against all expectations, the Supreme Court's full bench threw out Gen Musharraf's case against the de-

posed Chief Justice Mr Chaudhry and brought him back into his seat on 20th July 2007. The dents in military rule continued.

In the month of landing Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan after eight years exile, October 2007, during which our rubber-stamp parliament was also going to complete its natural tenure of five years, Gen Musharraf brought forward his last desire of extending his rule. He wanted that dying and chaotic national assembly - the product of a rigged vote in 2002 - to prefer him as president for another five years. For this he needed a serious deal with Ms Bhutto, and had promised to lift long-standing corruption charges against her and his husband Mr Zardari. The US and Britain had manoeuvred that deal by presenting themselves as the main guarantors in between because both the super powers had successfully given an impression that Gen Musharraf was still their best bet. From inside, both powers wanted to get rid of Gen Musharraf, in fact.

WINDS AGAINST GEN MUSHARRAF:

In post-election scenario; **on 10th June 2008**, while talking to Dr Shahid Masood in a **Geo News program**, Lt Gen (Rtd) Moinuddin Haider, said that:

'After becoming an American ally in 2002, Gen Musharraf had ignored the cabinet, the GHQ and the army's high command. Gen Musharraf should resign (then Gen Musharraf was sitting President of Pakistan) before impeachment proceedings are initiated against him.'

He categorically pointed out that massive rigging was committed in the elections of 2002 and military agencies & Rangers played a vital role in this regard. Gen Musharraf completely trusted Shaukat Aziz and never rejected anything said by the later. He, interalia, also told that in his view, Nawaz Sharif was not taken into confidence on the Kargil episode.

Besides, Federal Interior Minister Gen Moinuddin Haider had also served as Governor Sindh and Corps Commander Lahore. In Pakistan Army, he was considered as senior and a very close colleague of Gen Musharraf. He had been with Gen Musharraf since 1961 but:

'.... after joining hands with American allies we began to know about many things later. We believed that there was no US base in Pakistan and Gen Musharraf had also assured us about the same. However, the US Central Command revealed that their 64,000 army personnel were on the soil of Pakistan. I was the interior minister but I was kept in the dark about such a big reality and it hurt me.'

Gen Haider told that the whereabouts of those picked or arrested by the agencies were not ever known. He stated without any fear or shame that:

'We held and handed over to the US around 600 persons from all over Pakistan. The ISI played a major role in this regard. The personnel of the FBI were present in Pakistan and those picked up by the agencies were never produced before the courts but taken to the Bagram airbase in Afghanistan straightaway.'

To a question, the former interior minister said that large-scale rigging was carried out in the 2002 general elections in which the agencies played an important role. He, however, said that he did not know as to where and how these (rigging) plans were prepared.

Those were bad days for Gen Musharraf. The wind had started blowing against him. Earlier, during February to May 2008, another odd situation had cropped up for him when top brass retired Generals and influential officers of Pakistan Army started convening meetings and criticized pro-Musharraf policies in open. It was a big loss for Gen Musharraf who remained in Army Chief's uniform for nine years though allegedly on bogus footings.

Some influential retired Generals and officers, under the banner of their association, assembled in Rawalpindi in 2008 basically to condemn the most unfortunate calamity which had struck their Army's image in the second week of June when the American war planes hit the

tribal areas in Pakistan killing about 26 persons including one major and 13 security forces men. The retired officers warned that the military regime must review its post 9/11 US dictated policy of 'war against terror' to avoid confrontation between the country's army and its civilian population.

The forum of the retired officers had especially discussed in detail that during 2006-07, a suicide bomber had attacked a Pak-Army recruitment and training centre in Dargai (of Malakand Division), and had killed at least 42 soldiers and injured dozens. It was the first ever major offensive against Pakistan Army within the Pakistani territory and believed to be the reaction to the Bajaur missile attack during the previous month killing more than 80 civilians.

Like ordinary minds even these retired Generals, including those who headed the ISI in the past, felt that *'discredit of all the losses goes to Gen Musharraf'*. Former ISI Chief Hamid Gul demanded that Gen Musharraf must stop serving the American interests as Washington's 'hired hand'. Another ex-ISI Chief Lt Gen (retd) Asad Durrani had also passed similar remarks. Lt Gen (retd) Jamshed Gulzar, the former Corps Commander Rawalpindi lamented *'that the military regime has exceeded all limits to attain America's objectives'*. In Lt Gen (retd) Talat Masud's view the attacks on Bajaur and Dargai was an extremely dangerous sign so the government must focus on the political solutions.

In short, Gen Musharraf could not foresee that he was running out of options. Going back, a poll by the Washington-based International Republican Institute announced on 1st August 2007 that Gen Musharraf's popularity was at 34%; down 20 points since February that year. The International Crisis Group had rightly pointed out then:

*' If politics fails, he (Gen Musharraf) could impose a state of emergency. But that would accelerate the slide towards a **military-led, failing state status** prone to domestic unrest and export of Islamic radicalism domestically, regionally and beyond'.*

The subsequent events proved it was true.

AFTER GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 2008:

After February 2008's general elections, Gen Musharraf had gone mad for desperately trying to cling on to the Presidency because his King's party PML(Q) could not win majority seats. Meanwhile the new PPP coalition had manoeuvred to immediately convey a clear message that the military dictator should move out of the presidential palace. [***BBC's program "Have Your Say" dated 23rd February 2008*** is referred]

The intelligentsia held that Gen Musharraf should have quit himself then honourably instead of going through the ugly drama of impeachment by the newly elected parliament but he was perhaps waiting for green signal from the White House recalling the settled clauses of the NRO negotiated with late Benazir Bhutto [*to accept his continuity as president*]. The PPP and Mr Zardari were not willing to give him that relaxation because [firstly] Gen Musharraf had not agreed for BB's third time prime minister-ship till his presidential elections on 6th October 2007 at least; being proud of his uniform. Secondly, Benazir Bhutto was no more in the world to honour the said deal.

However, it remained a fact that Mr Bush & his associates were pleading, not pressurizing, the new PPP government to allow Gen Musharraf to stay on but was declined. [*The US is always known for promoting democracies in the world but also having likings for fighting dictators: albeit Gen Musharraf was neither a fighter then nor dictator any more.*]

'The Washington Post' of 23rd February 2008 said that:

"After six years of relying on President Pervez Musharraf to combat extremism in Pakistan, the Bush administration has begun a slow and awkward separation from its ally, reaching out to disparate new political and military leaders to ensure future coop-

eration with the United States. 'No one wants us to be involved in giving Musharraf the bum's rush, pushing him out the door,' a senior State Department official said. 'We're quite clear that we're going to work with him, but in a new role, as we'll work with new leaders in the parties, the army and civil society'.

While waiting for the new opposition coalition to form a government, the Bush administration is exploring a range of ideas, including a proposal by Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.), to triple non-military aid, sustain it for 10 years, and focus on schools, roads and health care; U.S. officials said."

Inside the US, the media and the public were still talking of Gen Musharraf as the best bet against war on terrorism. Ironically, it was Gen Musharraf who had opted to be backed by Muslim hardliners, whereas the political parties which had won in the general elections were liberal and progressive. The lack of information about the ground realities was playing havoc all around. Like today, in 2008 too, the newly elected PPP leadership had repeatedly told the world that fears about the nuclear arms falling into the hands of terrorists were highly exaggerated: a notion to allow Gen Musharraf to continue. The PPP reiterated that the same were '200 per cent safe with the army' headed by Gen Kayani and not by Musharraf. Once a soldier removes his uniform, he is gone and the troops do not obey him.

'So why is the US administration so hell-bent in supporting Musharraf? A cogent question was being discussed every where in America.

The daily '**Dawn**' of **24th February 2008** had stated that:

'US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has backed President Pervez Musharraf in the strongest possible term, calling him the man the United States has been dealing with as the president and wants to continue to do so. Her endorsement comes three days after President Bush telephoned his Pakistani counterpart, apparently to assure him that his administration still recognises Mr Musharraf as the president of Pakistan despite the changes that followed the elections.'

However, the world media had openly discussed that Gen Musharraf was going to resign soon to avoid being pushed out by the new coalition of the PML(N) and the PPP which would be assuming power shortly. '**The Hindustan Times**' (HT) of the same day (**24th February 2008**) had given a detailed analysis saying that:

'A senior political analyst close to the establishment also confirmed to HT that Musharraf's departure was very much a possibility. Asif Zardari and Nawaz Sharif agreed on Saturday to work together to oust the President, so chances are that he will go voluntarily instead of risking impeachment. The analyst even named Aitzaz Ahsan, who led the lawyers' campaign against Musharraf's dismissal of the former CJ Iftikhar Chaudhry as the likely nominee for the next President. Ahsan is currently under house arrest. Other names doing the rounds as possible contenders for the post of President are those of Asif Zardari himself and Yusuf Raza Gilliani, who was the speaker of the national assembly during Benazir Bhutto's second term.'

Pakistan's 'Daily Times' of 25th February 2008 opined that:

'The fourth major player (apart from Zardari, Sharif and Musharraf) is the Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Kayani. General Kayani seems to have put the integrity and reputation of the institution he commands above the political interests of the former COAS (Musharraf). As the new chief, General Kayani has so far fulfilled John Milton's prayer that: 'They also serve who only stand and wait.' How long and what he is willing to wait for is the question that only he can answer.'

In an article titled '**Time Over to Quit Honourably**' written by *Dr Ijaz Shafi Gilani*, then available with media told that many observers had counselled Gen Musharraf to quit honourably after he made the fatal mistake of imposing Emergency rule on 3rd November 2007 but he had gone too late afterwards. Mr Gilani held that:

'Seven months later he has been publicly disgraced more than any sitting ruler in Pakistan's history. But he has persisted stubbornly, apparently without much remorse for the repercussions to the nation as well as his own person. Both have bled profusely. According to the latest survey findings [done in May 2008 before his quit in August] 61% of the Pakistanis believe that Musharraf should be punished for violating the Constitution of the country, only 21 % are in favour of the "forgive and forget" option, while the remaining 18 % did not give any answer.

In a question over imposing 3rd November's Emergency, only 11% believed it was not a mistake, the remaining were split between the "forgive and forget option", favoured by 23%, and the impeachment and dismissal option favoured by 64% and only 2% in this case did not give an answer.'

'The Wall Street Journal' of 15th August 2008 had later mentioned that *'ordinary Pakistanis have been growing more dissatisfied with their president. A recent opinion survey found that 75% of Pakistanis disapproved of his performance, according to the poll, by the International Republican Institute, based in Washington. Two years ago, the president's approval rating was 60%, the survey indicated.'*

When Gen Musharraf imposed his first Martial Law in October 1999, around 70% had favoured his unlawful act according to survey findings of Gallup Pakistan. Till ending 2007 there was a dramatic shift in popular mood since then.

Notwithstanding whom the general populace of Pakistan had voted for in February 2008, the popularity rating was decisively influenced by the divide on the issue of independent judiciary. On the unfavourable ladder (Bad Rating) Gen Musharraf was on the top at 59 % followed closely by Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Altaf Hussain both at 53 %. It can be assumed that perhaps Gen Musharraf wanted to quit honourably, but his so called companions had misled him with false hopes and encouraged him to remain in tact with the power game without merit. Against another question about the General's perceived source of strength, the 47 % of the sample [of the people] opted for 'the United States', 26 % opted for 'the Armed Forces', 8 % opted for 'the people of Pakistan', 14 % opted to choose *'He has no power any longer'* and the remaining 5% did not answer.

It was an irony of fate that Pakistan's army dictator had no acumen to read the message [of the public opinion] though it was clearly written on the front wall.

Referring to ***'Thaindian News' dated 28th May 2008***, Gen Musharraf was seen under pressure to quit from almost all quarters including his former aides in the army. Former Gen Jamshed G Kiani and Gen Majid appearing on TV debates had blatantly criticised Musharraf's policies as president and chief of the army staff and demanded his resignation. Till then 26 former Generals in various meetings had issued the same like demands. The same week Asif Ali Zardari had openly said that *'it would be better if Musharraf quits himself otherwise he may be impeached.'*

In November 2007, Gen Musharraf had taken oath as the 'civilian president' but declared the Army House Rawalpindi as his Camp Office. During May 2008, a petition was filed by one Farooq Hassan under Article 184 A in the Supreme Court urging to get vacated the Army House. *'He has illegally occupied the Army House,'* the petitioner urged. The Defence ministry had already moved the PM Office to get it vacated. The only hope for Gen Musharraf was from the US admin to persuade the PPP, the then ruling party, to allow him to continue as president and for this purpose Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte and two US Senators were also called in Pakistan but Mr Zardari had told the US team quite openly that *'given the opinion of the Pakistani people, there is no room to allow Gen Musharraf to stay on.'*

Gen Musharraf had to quit anyway.

Wikileaks disclosed in the first week of **December 2010** that Mr Zardari and the Army Chief Gen Kayani had worked separately for the 'honourable exit' of Gen Musharraf and ultimately had agreed to give at least Guard of Honour for the later on his departure. However,

both Mr Zardari and Gen Kayani had started distancing themselves from Gen Musharraf in a very calculated way. During the US Admiral Mike Mullen's visit to Pakistan in early 2008, the US Ambassador Anne Patterson had briefed him that:

'..... As expected, Gen Kayani is taking slow but deliberate steps to distance the Army from now civilian President Musharraf. The army Generals would need his permission to meet the President [a move apparently aimed at denying the beleaguered former military ruler from lobbying for his further extension as head of state].

..... Zardari blamed President Musharraf for not taking enough responsibility for the war on terrorism in Pakistan which resulted in a marked increase in anti-American sentiments in the country. Anti-US feeling will go away when the old faces go away adding that the US government should no longer rely on just Musharraf in fighting terrorism.'

Detailed reading of some of these [Wikileaks] cables had suggested that by that time all three major players, Mr Zardari, Gen Kayani and the US Ambassador, had made up their minds that *'the time was up for the former military ruler'*. The cables also hinted that Gen Kayani had been drawing benefits from Gen Musharraf's mistakes while dealing with the Parliament and PPP's government on issues pertaining to the Tribal areas and Pak-Afghan borders.

DROP SCENE OF A GENERAL'S DRAMA:

'The Economic Times' of 29th May 2008 had also brought the facts to the lime light that Gen Musharraf had made up his mind to quit Presidency in few days in order to avail a safe passage and to avoid pre-empted moves from the PPP government to impeach him. Even his close aides were expecting an announcement in that regard any time. They were of the view that after losing all hopes of survival in power, the President had made up his mind to lead a retired life. One of the closest officers told that:

'There is no question of any extra-constitutional step by him or on his behalf. The President has lost the capacity to invoke constitutional provisions like 58(2)(b), dissolving the assembly and the government. The question of introducing an impeachment motion would not come as the President will leave office and get a safe passage. The drop scene of the drama that started on 9th March 2007 is bound to appear any time soon. Gen Musharraf has consented to leave the Army House immediately [when the petition of Barrister Farooq Hasan was accepted by the Supreme Court] and he may move to the President House within 48 hours before calling it a day.'

In ending May 2008, Gen Musharraf held a marathon meeting with the Army Chief Gen Kayani in urgency; described as an 'extremely important', at the Army House Rawalpindi which continued till after midnight lasting for about four hours. This was their longest 'one on one' encounter, and it assumed significance in view of the then political and security situation in the country. Gen Musharraf was left with no option but to quit. He had already been briefed by 'important officials' not to think about any step that may further aggravate the fragile political situation in the country.

Meanwhile, Brig Aasim Salim Bajwa [*who had served Gen Musharraf as his military secretary in his initial days and was made commander of the Triple-One Brigade by the General himself before relinquishing the office of the Army Chief*] had been ordered to 'take care' of the presidency and its occupant. 111 Brigade of 10 Corps is responsible for the security of the president, federal capital and Rawalpindi. This Brigade has always played a main role in staging coups in the past including that of 12th October 1999.

'The Wall Street Journal' of 15th August 2008 had finally broken the news that Gen Musharraf, a close US ally, was likely to resign [soon] following secret talks aimed at easing his departure. Pakistan's Parliament was expected to take up impeachment proceedings against him. Gen Musharraf continued to tell his supporters that he would fight the impeach-

ment charges but, broken within himself, he had decided to depart. He was waiting for the final signal: guarantee of safe passage and immunity from prosecution. There were only 48 hours in between.

The US was only concerned that how Pakistan would behave in post-Musharraf era. The changing activities of the ISI had increased the American's worries. They were not much anxious about Gen Musharraf who was undergoing intensifying political pressure to leave his Presidential office. Pakistan's coalition government, led by his political opponents, was preparing a list of impeachment charges, mainly based on his declaration of 3rd November 2007's Emergency. Before that he was re-elected to a five-year term as president in a controversial vote by an electoral college.

Federal Information Minister Sherry Rehman had admitted that the coalition had finalised the charge sheet against Gen Musharraf and handed over to the Law Ministry for preparation as a legal document. The President could exercise his 'constitutional right' to resign and ultimately he used that option to save his skin and to avoid embarrassment.

Under Gen Musharraf's leadership, strong economic growth helped create a broad and politically demanding middle class; a plus point. His relaxation of government controls over television media was also appreciated but it created political dissent in the people who wanted democracy. His failure to deal decisively with Muslim extremists had undermined his authority with many voters. All negative aspects were ignored because of good economic achievements but a fatal mistake, cracking down on Pakistan's judicial system, took him to horns and ultimately he lost the whole game. *'The leaders of this country will have to realize that something has changed in the country, if they don't perform, the people will agitate. The old ways are no longer appropriate,'* a parliamentary watchdog group had commented.

Gen Musharraf's supporters like PML(Q) openly and the MQM secretly continued to suggest him that he should resist being driven out. He had told a group of about 40 officials to *'fight back the impeachment'* believing that he still had the votes to prevail. *'No, he's not going to quit'*, the former Railways Minister Sh Rashid Ahmed had told after meeting the General. *'He's not going to give in to this pressure; he has the ability to resist.'* Sh Rashid pressed, however, Gen Musharraf's resistance went weakened. Perhaps he got more disappointed when many of his former supporters had joined a series of resolutions in provincial assemblies calling on him to hold a no confidence vote in the Parliament, or to resign. Gen Musharraf's narrowing corner was apparent when the Balochistan Assembly adopted a unanimous resolution similar to the country's other three provincial Assemblies, asking him to quit or face a vote of confidence.

India's leading newspaper *'The Hindu'* had reported **on 16th August 2008** that Pakistan's ruling coalition kept up the pressure on Gen Musharraf to resign before it moved an impeachment motion against him while a senior prince of the Saudi royal family had also visited Pakistan to negotiate Gen Musharraf's safe exit otherwise he would have been kept there for accountability and prosecution by the PPP & PML(N) jointly.

According to TV reports, Prince Muqrin bin Abdul Aziz, the head of Saudi intelligence, who had played a lead role in preventing PML(N) leader Nawaz Sharif's return in September 2007, was back in Pakistan this time to negotiate a safe exit for Gen Musharraf. He met the President during his one-day visit and also Mr Sharif in Lahore to convince the PML(N) leader to give the embattled Gen Musharraf a "safe exit." Nawaz Sharif had agreed but on condition that Gen Musharraf would not speak to the media for four months. Major Gen Rashid Qureshi, however like a good subordinate, kept on denying Gen Musharraf's meeting with the Saudi Prince and at the same time urging that *'he was guilty of nothing so why quit'*.

Pakistan's army also remained aloof. The Army Chief Gen Kayani had taken the military out of politics although he had made it clear to the government that they would not see their former chief humiliated or disgraced.

Finally, ***on 18th August 2008***, Gen Musharraf had to resign from the office of the President to avoid his impeachment which was on cards then.