

Pakistan: A Select Political Chronology, 1947-2008

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1947 -- (August 14th) Birth of Pakistan; Muhammad Ali Jinnah becomes the first head of state; Fighting erupts between Pakistan and India

1948 – Agreement signed between Liaquat Ali Khan, first Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian Prime Minister, to protect minorities; (September) Death of Jinnah; Dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir goes to the United Nations

1949 – (January 1st) Ceasefire between India and Pakistan

1951 – Liaquat Ali Khan, first Prime Minister of Pakistan, assassinated in Rawalpindi Park

1954 – Urdu and Bengali declared as official languages of Pakistan; (May) Pakistan signs defence agreement with the United States

1955 – Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq and Britain sign a mutual defence agreement known as the Baghdad Pact

1956 – Constitution promulgated and country renamed the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

1958 – Army takes over and Pakistan turned into a military state under General Ayub Khan, who takes over as chief martial law administrator and Prime Minister

1960 – Ayub elected as Pakistan's first President

1962 – Talks commence between India and Pakistan, under the auspices of the US and UK, over the future of Kashmir

1963 – Zulfikar Ali Bhutto appointed Foreign Minister of Pakistan. He signs the Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement on March 2, which transfers 750 sq. km. of territory from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (or Azad Kashmir, as it is called in Pakistan) to China

1965 – War breaks out between India and Pakistan; Peace treaty signed between Pakistan, represented by Ayub and Bhutto, and India (represented by Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri)

1967 – (November 30th) Pakistan People's Party (PPP) founded by Bhutto and others; its creed is: "Islam is our faith; democracy is our politics; socialism is our economy; all power to the people."

1968 – Pakistan also swept by the worldwide revolt of university students; mass movement of students, peasants, and workers, led in part by Bhutto and PPP functionaries, agitates for political and social reforms

1969 – Ayub replaced by General Yahya Khan, who imposes martial law and dissolves national and provincial assemblies

1971 – Political dissent in East Pakistan; refugees from East Pakistan stream into India; occupation of East Pakistan by military from West Pakistan; Bhutto takes over from Yahya Khan as chief martial law administrator of West Pakistan; war breaks out between India and Pakistan; secession of East Pakistan and birth of Bangladesh

1972 – Simla Accord signed between Bhutto and Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India. Bhutto is accompanied by his daughter, Benazir. Z. A. Bhutto returns to Lahore and declares at once: “On the vital question of Kashmir we have made no compromise.”

1973 (New) Constitution of Pakistan, promulgated in April and brought into effect on Aug 14th, twenty-sixth anniversary of the founding of Pakistan; (July) Bhutto officially recognizes Bangladesh

1974 – Bhutto reportedly says that “we will eat grass but make our bomb” when India detonates a so-called “peaceful nuclear device” at Pokharan in western India

1977 – (July 5th) General Zia-ul Haq stages a coup; Bhutto is arrested, released, and again arrested; trial of Bhutto on charges of assassinating a political opponent takes place and lasts six months

1978 – (March 18th) Bhutto convicted and sentenced to death; (September 16th) Gen. Zia-ul Haq takes over as President of Pakistan; the opening of the Karkoram Highway furnishes new links to China and Central Asia

1979 – (April 4th) Bhutto hanged at Adiyala jail, Rawalpindi; Nusrat Bhutto, Benazir’s mother and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s widow, becomes Chairperson of PPP; Zia-ul Haq initiates the policy of “Islamicization”, as signified, for example, by the passage of the Hudood Ordinance and the introduction of the Sharia

1980 – Zia-ul Haq forms the Majlis-e-Shoora, in lieu of Parliament

1983 -- Benazir takes over from Nusrat as Chairperson of PPP; will later declare herself as Chairperson of PPP for life

1987 – (Dec 10th) Marriage of Benazir to Asif Ali Zardari, scion of a powerful business family

1988 – Gen. Zia-ul Haq killed in a mysterious plane crash; Benazir elected as Prime Minister; Pakistan under Benazir withdraws some support to separatists in the Indian Punjab agitating for a Khalistan homeland for Sikhs, but diverts aid to insurgents in Kashmir

1989 – Insurgency commenced in Jammu & Kashmir with push from jihadis from PoK [Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir]; bilateral talks between Benazir and Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi

1990 – Benazir removed from office on charges of corruption; Nawaz Sharif commences his first term of office; Asif Ali Zardari, Benazir's husband known popularly as "Mr. Ten Percent" for allegedly extracting a 10% commission on contracts, jailed on numerous charges, including murder, extortion, and corruption

1993 – Nawaz Sharif is replaced with Benazir as Prime Minister, who commences her second term in office; Zardari released from jail; Dawood Ibrahim, wanted in India as the mastermind of the Bombay bomb blasts, arrives in Karachi from Dubai and is furnished with a Pakistani passport

1996 – Benazir directs Pervez Musharraf, Director-General of Military Operations, to rehabilitate Osama bin Laden, later to be known as America's Number One Enemy, and bring him to Jalalabad from Sudan; Benazir is dismissed on charges of corruption; Nawaz Sharif restored to the Prime Ministership

1997 – Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and India meet in Delhi

1998 – India carries out nuclear tests and becomes an openly declared nuclear state; Pakistan follows suit; sanctions imposed on both countries by the United States; Pakistan tests its Ghauri missile (range of 1,500 kms or 932 miles)

1999 – Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee travels to Pakistan to meet Sharif; Pakistan initiates the ill-fated excursions into Kargil; Gen. Pervez Musharraf engineers coup in October and becomes head of state; Nawaz Sharif sent into exile

2000 – Pakistan's Supreme Court validates Musharraf's coup and grants him executive powers

2001 – (September 11th) Terrorist attacks on World Trade Center (New York) and the Pentagon; Pakistan under Musharraf declares its support for the US-initiated "War on Terror"; (December 13th) Attack on the Indian Parliament, for which India holds Pakistan-backed militants responsible; massive build of troops on both sides of the border

2002 – Pakistan's constitution restored; referendum extends Musharraf's Presidency by five years

2003 – Musharraf survives two assassination attempts

2004 – Resumption of talks between India and Pakistan; series of bombings in Pakistan

2007 – (March) removal of popular Chief Justice of Pakistan by Musharraf; Lawyers' agitation; (June) Chaudhary, who had been under house arrest, reinstated as Chief Justice; (November

11th) so-called second coup by Musharraf, who sacks Chaudhary and a number of other justices, and imposes Emergency; Nawaz Sharif attempts to return to Pakistan but is sent back from the airport; Benazir returns to Pakistan from exile, and so does, on his second attempt, Nawaz Sharif; Musharraf calls for elections, and steps down as Martial Law commander and chief of the armed forces

2007 – (December 27th): assassination of Benazir Bhutto at Rawalpindi Park; (December 30th) Benazir's son, Bilawal, named as head of PPP, with her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, acting as 'regent'

2008 – (February 18th) Elections in Pakistan: no party has a majority, but PPP gains more seats than any other party; Musharraf retains the Presidency but his allies suffer a huge electoral setback; religious parties trounced at the polls