



Pakistan Leadership Watch: October 2010 (U//FOUO)

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A review of the Pakistani media during October 2010 indicates that there is less talk of imminent political change. Commentators appreciated Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani's influence in governance, recognizing his stewardship of economic and national security policies, but support for an overt military coup remained low. Criticism of both President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani continued, although there is grudging appreciation of Zardari's political survival skills. Opposition leader Nawaz Sharif's proposal for a twenty-five year agenda to reform the country was widely endorsed, although some see his proposal as driven by political opportunism. (U//FOUO)

Kayani's 'Invisible Hand' Appreciated (U)

General Kayani again remained virtually immune from criticism, despite allegations of extrajudicial killings by the Pakistan Army in Swat and discontent among some Pakistanis with the outcome of the US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue. Commentators appreciated Kayani's large footprint in managing Pakistan, but key media outlets advised against direct military intervention.

- In mid-October, the Islamist daily *Jasarat* described Kayani as the "key element" representing the government in October's US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue. The liberal Dawn News TV station aired a segment on Kayani's visit to the United States, describing his visit as "successful." Commentators who were dissatisfied with the results of the meetings blamed the civilian government, not Kayani.
- A columnist in the centrist *Daily Express* praised Kayani in mid-October for restoring the military's honor, but advised him to be aware of "flattering intellectuals" who want military rule in the country.
- In early October, pro-military commentator Ikram Sehgal claimed that there is a new variant for the army to influence politics, the "Kayani model." This model, based on Kayani's interactions

with the civilian leadership, involves the army chief regularly advising politicians and pressuring them to remove controversial ministers.

- The Islamist daily *Ausaf* appealed to Kayani in late October to undertake a military operation to curb the growing political violence in Karachi and criticized the civilian government for being “helpless” in controlling the city’s “mafia.” (U//FOUO)

Pakistani Media Criticize Zardari’s Policies But Tout His Political Skill (U)

Allegations of corruption against President Zardari continued to preoccupy Pakistani commentators, but the president’s political survival skills also impressed many observers. Pakistan’s largest media conglomerate, Jang Group, hammered Zardari for his alleged corruption on nearly every talk show on Jang’s news channel. The Jang campaign precipitated a public argument with Zardari that has become increasingly personal.

- In early October, some local cable television operators took a Jang Group entertainment channel off the air, allegedly because of pressure from Zardari. Jang responded with public service announcements demanding Zardari face corruption charges in court.
- A Jang commentator reported that when he met Zardari at a diplomatic function, the President insultingly called him a “devil.” (U//FOUO)

Other journalists focused on Zardari’s failures and ineffective policies. Kamran Khan, host of a show on GEO News, railed against Zardari for much of the month, claiming that he personally gave the United States a “free hand” with drone attacks in Pakistan’s Federally-Administered Tribal Areas.

- In mid-October, the Baloch nationalist paper *Daily Intekhab* dismissed Zardari’s announcement of another development package for the Balochistan province as useless, noting that previous commitments have not been fulfilled and that key insurgents have not been engaged meaningfully.
- A columnist with the Swat-based daily *Azadi* in mid-October wrote that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) under Zardari has departed from its founding principles and should not look for future leaders from the “feudal and capitalist” class to which Zardari belongs. (U//FOUO)

By late October, however, other media outlets focused on Zardari’s ability to remain in power despite opposition from the army, judiciary, media, and his political rivals, as well as his low public support.

- Former military officer Shahzad Chaudhry wrote in the liberal English-language *Daily Times* that Zardari has cleverly managed to stay in power. According to Chaudhry, Zardari’s strategy, which includes having an ineffectual prime minister, adding a variety of feuding political parties to his coalition, pitting the federal government against the provinces, and marginalizing his primary opponent Nawaz Sharif, has neutralized his political opposition.
- The English-language daily *Dawn* noted with a sense of resignation that “the PPP-led government seems more likely to stay in power for the time being than not.” (U//FOUO)

Gilani Inept and Corrupt (U)

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani continued to come under scathing criticism for corruption and poor governance. In late October, the popular Kamran Khan Show castigated the Gilani government for growing corruption and insolvency in government-owned corporations, including the national airline. The centrist daily *Mashriq*, in early October, condemned Gilani for appointing a “controversial” and personal “favorite” as head of a national anti-corruption office and described the move as unconstitutional.

- A commentator on an Urdu-language news talk program in late October said that the Gilani government takes “sadistic pleasure” in engaging in corruption and poor governance.
- The centrist *Jang* criticized Gilani in mid-October for using Machiavellian tactics to undermine the judiciary and called on him to refrain from “playing” with the sanctity of government institutions.
- In late October, a columnist in the Swat-based *Azadi* derided Gilani as being politically impotent, stating that “a eunuch’s government would be more potent than Gilani’s rule.” The respected academic Rasul Baksh Rais criticized Gilani for not freeing himself from Zardari’s heavy-handed influence. (U//FOUO)

Sharif Gaining on the Sidelines (U)

Centrist and liberal commentators praised opposition leader Nawaz Sharif for proposing the “Charter of Pakistan,” an accord that would bring Pakistan’s major power brokers, including the army, together to develop a 25-year agenda to fix the country. Some commentators were not so taken by the proposal, however, and claimed that his proposal is driven more by political opportunism than by a desire to reverse Pakistan’s dangerous trajectory.

- In late October, prominent liberal commentator Imtiaz Alam called Sharif’s Charter of Pakistan a “statesmanlike proposal.” In previous months, Sharif also has been praised as pro-democracy by another prominent liberal commentator, Najam Sethi, who had been a major critic of him.
- A columnist in the centrist daily *Jang* lauded Sharif in early October as a “protector” of democracy and urged him to take a more aggressive posture against the present government. Another commentator in *Jang* in mid-October, however, described Sharif’s ‘good behavior’ as merely skin deep and reminded its readers that Sharif has his own fair share of corruption charges.
- Respected academic Hasan-Askari Rizvi criticized Sharif in late October for being “more interested in discrediting the government” rather than in offering solutions for the country’s “socio-economic” problems. (U//FOUO)