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Ayub Khan's Situation

[REDACTED] In the short-run Ayub, backed by the army, should be able to restore order, but these troubles reflect widespread dissatisfaction which could eventually topple his regime. The intelligence community feels that it is more likely that Ayub will survive and that he will win the elections scheduled to begin late this year, but he will have to move carefully to avoid further trouble.

There are many reasons for the riots.

1. The worst trouble has been in East Pakistan where most people have long felt the government has discriminated in favor of West Pakistan. Recent dissatisfaction has given new impetus to the separatist movement, and almost all opposition politicians advocate some degree of autonomy.

2. In West Pakistan there is much the same feeling--although less strong--against the Punjabis and Pathans from the northern part of the province who under Ayub have dominated Pakistani politics.

3. Ayub's policy towards India is unpopular because he has been unable to make any progress on Kashmir. There is little agreement as to what the policy should be, but many of the opposition tend to be hawkish.

4. There is widespread feeling that Ayub's regime is corrupt. Ayub has removed his son--the prime example--from the limelight, but few of those in power have spotless reputations. The Governor of East Pakistan is among those most often criticized.

5. Many Pakistanis--including former Air Force Commander Asghar Khan--feel that only a more democratic government can solve Pakistan's problems. One of the opposition's most important tactics is to call for direct elections.

6. Behind all of these is a feeling that more could and should have been done to improve the living standard of the Pakistanis. Pakistan's progress by macroeconomic measures has been impressive, but it will take more time for these gains to seep down for Pakistan is still a poor country.

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So far, violent opposition has been confined mainly to urban groups--especially the students--with the politicians Ayub threw out in 1958 doing what they can to profit from the situation.

To meet this problem, Ayub still has a strong position.

1. The military--despite some grumbling among middle-grade officers and Asghar Khan's defection to the opposition-- is still loyal to Ayub.

2. Many Pakistanis still see Ayub as the only alternative to the same kind of chaos that led him to take over from the politicians in 1958.

3. Despite their attacks on corruption, most opposition politicians have reputations as bad--or worse--than Ayub's friends. Bhutto--the leftist ex-foreign minister Ayub jailed--is a drunkard. Asghar Khan is an exception, but he is inexperienced in politics.

4. The indirect electoral system works in Ayub's favor, and he is in a position to control it.

5. The opposition is disunited. They all agree that Ayub must go, but a group which includes those who feel Pakistan should be ruled according to the Koran and those who advocate much closer relations with Peking will have trouble getting together on a program or a candidate. Moreover, the internal regional problems (rivalry between the two provinces and regional rivalry in West Pakistan) which hurt Ayub will also hurt his enemies.

One further factor is Ayub's health. He had a severe lung ailment erupt earlier this year and now seems to have recovered but no one can be sure how long he will be physically able to rule Pakistan.

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