

## Pakistani dictators Zia and Musharraf had much in common

Pakistan's two former military dictators - Gen. Ziaul Haq and Gen. Pervez Musharraf - had much in common, besides the fact that both were born in India and moved to Pakistan after the subcontinent was partitioned in 1947. Zia died 20 years and a day before Musharraf's rule ended.

Both were born in August - Zia on Aug 12, 1924 at Jalandhar and Musharraf on Aug 11, 1943 in Delhi. Both overthrew the governments of the prime ministers who had appointed them army chiefs out of turn and bypassing five senior generals.

Former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto appointed Zia as the army chief by superseding five generals, hoping that Zia would prove loyal to him as he was from amongst the Punjabi people settled in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Unconfirmed reports say that Bhutto used to refer to Zia as a 'monkey general'.

Nawaz Sharif appointed Musharraf the army chief superseding five generals and thought he would remain loyal as he belonged to a minority ethnic group.

Both Zia and Musharraf were removed from power in August - Zia after his plane crashed Aug 17, 1988 while Musharraf was forced to resign Aug 18, 2008.

The fathers of both military dictators were government employees in undivided India and moved to Pakistan after partition. Both Zia and Musharraf were identified as mohajirs (refugees) in Pakistan and not as sons of the soil.

Among generals both were considered to be extremely lucky who got promoted to the top position in the army despite several negative remarks against them in the annual confidential reports.

'Usually, with such remarks, no officer goes beyond major,' said Usman Khan, a retired brigadier.

Both were under scrutiny when the 1965 war broke out between India and Pakistan but their cases were closed because of the emergency situation.

Zia joined the British Indian Army in [New Delhi](#) in 1943, the year when Musharraf was born and both had fought the 1965 and 1971 wars against India.

Both military dictators started the local bodies system in the country. Zia's initiative was abandoned by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government that came to power after his death. The one started by Musharraf is already under scrutiny by the current PPP-led coalition government.

Both military generals cobbled together a political group of opportunists and formed a political party known as Pakistan Muslim League.

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