In August 2008, Pervez Musharraf stood down as Pakistan's president after having already resigned the posts of Chief of Army Staff and Prime Minister. It was a final end to a dictatorial rule that started when he seized power in a military coup in 1999, and seemed to many to be the inevitable conclusion to a government that had started in idealism but had ended in corruption - another example of the cycle of army intervention-idealism-corruption-failure-coup that has blighted Pakistan's political history. In this book, Asian politics and Islamic expert Ifikhar Malik discusses why this pattern has such a hold on Pakistan's government and sets out to discover if this cycle is one that can be broken and if so, where hope for the future lies. Following an in-depth look at Pakistan's political and social history and current situation, the book considers: the power of individual personalities and dynasties such as the Bhuttos in party politics; the different priorities of democracy and liberalism; Pakistan's external relations with neighbours such as India and Afghanistan; Pakistan's role in the ‘war on terror’ and the tensions between Western security priorities and those of ordinary Pakistanis; Muslim perceptions of global alienation fuelling the rise of political Islam within Pakistan and consequences of this move; and, opportunities for democracy and nation-building presented by factors such as the expanding, liberal middle class and devolution of power within the country. Opinionated and critical, Professor Malik's book discusses the issues and challenges facing Pakistan at this critical juncture in its history.