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Democratization Process and Role of Opposition Political Parties: A Case Study of Musharraf Regime

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Abstract

The study examines the Musharraf regime's democratization process and opposition political parties' challenges to the government from 1999 to 2008. The government has implemented numerous new reforms for the country and political parties. Some were well-received both inside and outside the country, while others were highly criticized. To keep parliament in control, Musharraf established the National Security Council (NSC). To achieve goals that were contrary to democratic norms and principles, the government used coercion. The purpose of this study is to explore how political forces, particularly opposition political parties, performed their roles and challenged the Musharraf government from 1999 to 2008. This paper used descriptive-analytical methodology to describe the historical events and then examine them with reasoning. This study also concludes that Pakistani political parties rejected Musharraf and his allies in the 2008 general elections by establishing a civil democratic political framework in the country.

Keywords: *Politics, Parties, Process, Regime, Pakistan.*

Arrival of Pervez Musharraf

Pakistan's history has been marked by eras of military government and political instability but it is a reality that in Pakistan, the civilian government cannot continue without the help of the Army. (Brian, 2006) After the *Kargil* crisis, military worsened with the political leadership. Nawaz Sharif held Army Chief responsible for war. Nawaz Sharif planned to isolate General Pervez Musharraf from power when he was on the tour to Sri-Lanka and at that time; Nawaz Sharif appointed General Zia Ud Din as Chief of Army Staff (COAS). On that attempt, General Pervez Musharraf dismissed Nawaz Sharif's government on October 12, 1999, as well as all provincial governments. Army got the control over media, airports, Prime Minister (PM) House, and Governor House. (Jalal, 1999) General Musharraf adjourned the constitution. Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) was enforced, however; it was also applied that the affairs of the state would be carried out to the Constitution. (Hassan, 2000).

On October 13, in his address, Pervez Musharraf asked for the sustenance of the army for the stability of Pakistan. On October 17, he made a council consisting of seven members to move the system of the state. Pervez Musharraf dissolved the civilian government and got all the authorities. It was not a good way to control the charge and political development in the country could not take place because of this step of the military ruler. (Pervaiz Iqba, 2002).

Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) which was established in 1994 against Nawaz Sharif, showed pleasure in the dismissal of Nawaz Sharif's government and welcomed Pervez Musharraf. But they soon realized the army would take over the complete charge of the country. GDA considered the army as a more dangerous enemy. GDA appealed to all political parties to stand united against military rule. Against the military rule, GDA decided to become united with Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) to restore democracy. The alliance, which was made against Nawaz Sharif, now become united with him against military rule (Ahmed M. , 2007). PML (N) joined GDA on December 3, 2000, and they changed the alliance with the new name Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD). ARD consisted of the following parties, Pakistan People's Party (PPP), PMLN, MQM, ANP, and *Jamiat Ahle Hadith*. Nawabzada Nasarullah Khan became its head. ARD presented their demands for free elections and restoration of democracy, constitution, and concentrated autonomy for the provinces. Nawaz Sharif was sent to deportee to Saudi Arabia On December 10, 2000 and this step was strongly destined by ARD. After Nawaz Sharif, the next president of PMLN was Javed Hashmi, but he was arrested by the Musharraf government. ARD still demanded for the renewal of democracy in the country and the return of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. But ARD could not become a serious challenge for the Musharraf government, because Choudhary Pervez Elahi and Chaudhry Shujat Hussain of Gujrat persuaded their followers in the Muslim League (N) to launch a new party named PML (Q). Another reason for the failure of ARD was the death of its president Nawabzada Nsrullah Khan on September 27, 2003, and ARD was deprived of a capable leader. (Chaudhury, 2006).

The incident of September 11, in the United States also became the cause of insanity in the country. It was an event that gave the path to the U.S government to invade Afghanistan. The attack of U.S on Afghanistan was the main contributing factor in evolving the anti-American feelings in Pakistani society. Pervez Musharraf's crackdown against the Madrasa education and *Jihadi*, after the nine eleven attacks, were also the reasons for fueling the anti-American stance within the Pakistani society. Another alliance formed against the Musharraf government was *Muttahida Majlis -e- Amal* (MMA). When Musharraf overthrew Nawaz Sharif's elected government, the Islamic parties wanted to secure their own interests. (Javaid, 2017). Six religious parties became united to boost up their electoral fortunate called MMA consisted the political parties like *Jamiat Ulema-e- Islam* (Faza-ur-Rehman), *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* (Sami ul Haq), *Jamiat Ulema-e-* Pakistan (Shah Ahmad Noorani), *Jmaat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith* and *Islmi Tehreek* Pakistan. MMA emerged as a sound voice against America. The emergence of MMA was due to the U.S increasing interference in the country. The main demand of MMA was the application of Sharia in the country. They also demanded provincial autonomy. MMA refused to accept the President of Pakistan in army uniform (Sayeed, 2015).

Referendum

In April 2002, Musharraf made himself legitimize, by referendum granting himself as president for next five years (www.ecp.gov.pk, 2002). In the previous referendum, there were proper system and voters were informed about their location of voting, but at the time of this referendum, all the voters were free to cast their vote at ant polling stations.

In the Election Commission the responsibility for holding the referendum was granted. Billions of rupees were spent on this wasted activity. MMA opposed referendum to elect the Pervez Musharraf as president. Opposition political parties challenged the referendum before Supreme Court because referendum could not be used as an election tool for the office of president. Musharraf gave a document which restored the constitution of 1973 in a previous condition called "Legal framework order" (LFO). Through LFO Musharraf introduced the system of accountability among the members of political parties and restricted them to attend all the conferences and meetings of parties. (Ahmed M. , 2007).

LFO was rejected by some opposition parties like PML (N), PPP, and ARD. Some political parties opposed the LFO while some were supporting the government like MMA which was indirectly helping the

government to bring stability through LFO (Moskalenko, 2013). ARD and some opposition parties like PML (N) and PPP rejected LFO.

Formation of PML (Q)

Shujat Hussein established the PML in 2002 with a focus on Musharraf's general military order (Nazir, 2004). Shujat Hussain was the head of the party, while the party began the same pattern as the Muslim League (N)'s. Before the 2002 general elections, a national security adviser Tariq Aziz did efforts to transform the Muslim League (N) into the Muslim League (PM) (Q). ". (Chaudhury, 2006). In May 2004, many politicians from PML (N) and other political parties joined PML (Q). Among them were the party of former President Farooq Lghari, Mr. Jahan Zeb Awan, the National People's Party, the PML Movement of Manzoor Watto (Jinnah Party), Hamid Nasser Naseer, the Muslim League (Gunejo), the Arbab Ghulam Rahim Alliance, the Sindh Democratic Party and party of Pir Pagara. (Moskalenko, 2013).

All were prominent enthusiasts of General Pervez Musharraf, and although Pervez Musharraf did not join PML (Q) they all considered him as their leader. General Pervez Musharraf formulated this PML faction before the 2002 elections when PML (N) was very weak due to the trial of Nawaz Sharif (Hamid, 2013). Many members of PML (N) were against to Nawaz Sharif's policies and wanted to leave the party and they were also afraid of the trials from the military government, joined PML(Q) on the first call of Pervez Musharraf (Brian, 2006) .

Throughout Musharraf's time, the PML (Q) was a dominant party and enjoyed important position in parliament. The PML (Q) became a great support for Pervez Musharraf's government in all ups and downs and became the cause of stability in the country. Due to the wide support of PML (Q) Pervez Musharraf claimed to have the democracy in the country. Although the Party origins were not pure democratic, it got the leadership of military ruler at the time of establishment of the party. (Nazeer, 2004).

ARD played a role of opposition party of the government and rejected all the policies and principles of government completely. However, it was unable to create instability in the country. Musharraf government had complete pressure over all the parties.(M, 2005). This entire situation became the cause of instability. ARD, despite its opposition, did not adopt the full rejection path, and the system was allowed to operate as it was. The conflict remained within the regime and the regime was completely deprived of the policies of ARD that did not endanger stability (Sayeed, 2015).

Local Government Elections

Pakistan's military rulers used local government system in their tenure to enhance their own political crew. Ayub Khan introduced this system of local bodies through the "Basic Democratic System" in 1959. Military rulers used these elected candidates of local bodies to legitimize themselves and for the increment of their tenure. These elected members also became the part of Electoral College for the election of the President and members of National and Provincial assemblies. Zia also used the system of local bodies which were selected on a non-partisan basis. (Javaid, 2017). Pervez Musharraf also carried this system of local government before the general elections for National and Provincial assemblies. He brought some techniques in local government elections based on provincial governments. Provinces were divided into different areas and all the areas were headed by deputy mayors of their own council. (M, 2005). The election process deteriorated into the selection process. Few members of the PPP and PML (N) were elected in the elections, and they also faced troubles from the military government.

The second round of local council elections was held in October 2005. The PML-Q party swept elections in Punjab and Sindh in the last phase of local council elections in 2005, while the ruling coalition got maximum numbers of seats in the other two provinces. (Nazeer, 2004). The MMA got defeated in both provinces. In Balochistan, opposition parties emerged as the second-largest bloc. But the main opposition

leaders from the ARD and MMA accused the government of interference and fraud and refused to accept the results.

General Elections 2002

On February 27, 2002, the 2002 General Election Administration Order was issued. On August 16, 2002, the Election Commission announced the date of the elections and October 10 was set for elections day in the National and Local Councils. (Javaid, 2017). General Pervez Musharraf held the 2002 elections on the instructions of the decision Supreme Court that elections must be hold on in three years as follows on the date of the military takeover in October 1999. All political parties decided to participate in the elections. Almost seventy parties took part in these elections. Pakistan, *Jamiat Ahle Hadith*, has managed to popularly support the prime minister's nomination (Chaudhury, 2006).

It was announced from the Election Commissioner that the election for National assembly would be held in 2002 and senate's elections would be held in 2003. (www.ecp.gov.pk, 2002). But these elections were criticized by different factions that elections were not fair and free and based on intense rigging, and these were called a "serious flaw" due to the interference of government in the election system. Due to the mounting pressure of military government on political parties, many parties are deprived of the real power of the political party. Opposition political parties considered military government for unfair elections (Sayeed, 2015).

Many political parties lost their substantial positions. The PML (N) and PPP also became weak and splinted into many parties (Sayeed, 2015).

In the elections, PML (Q) got 76 seats while MMA won 51 and PPP won 62 seats. PML (Q) formed its government in the Centre. In Punjab and Sindh, no party got a majority and coalition governments were formed. In KP And Balochistan, MMA formed its government. and Punjab and Sindh. PML (Q) was the right hand of the military government, and it had more funding resources and got more electoral support throughout the election process than other parties. It was one of the reasons of its victory. No party was able to get a clear majority and shin showed that people did not want to see them again (Nazeer, 2004).

Many political parties refused to accept the result of elections and claimed that there was support of government behind the winning party (Moskalenko, 2013). Although PPP and PML (N) lost the elections but both parties decided to continue with the system. That decision of opposition parties also provided stability to the government that opposition accepted the results of the election. . On November 24, 2002, Zafarullah Jamali of Balochistan assumed the office of Prime Minister of the country. Thus, it has not been decided for more than a year who would be the opposition leader in the National Assembly. The 17th Amendment was ratified with the assistance of the MMA, and its secretary Maulana Fazlur Rahman was declared by the President of the National Societies as leader of the opposition (Ahmed M. , 2007).

17th Constitutional Amendment

General Parvaiz Musharraf promulgated the LFO 2002 on August 21, 2002. In this order, 29 articles of the constitution were amended. Significant points of LFO are given below:

I. There was a need to hold elections in parties to choose these leaders of parties.
II. Seats in National Assembly increased to 342, 60 for women and 10 for non-Muslims. In the provinces, the seats also increased. In Balochistan the first 65 seats increased, KP seats increased to 144 seats, Punjab seats were increased to 371 seats, the bond seats were increased to 168. In the Senate seats also increased to 100 seats and 16 seats were reserved for women.
III. Article 58 (2) (b) of constitution was revived. The President gave the power of dissolution of the National Assembly.

IV. In the case of a conflict in any bicameral bill, it will be referred to a committee of 16 members who are equally elected by both houses.
V. The President would appoint the Provincial Governors with the consultation of Prime Minister. If the bill passed by both houses then it will be submitted to the president for his approval. The President could send back the bill to Parliament for reexamination. The bill can be only passed only after the arbitration committee. Four judges of High Court of each province were included to the Election Commission.
VI. Article 140A would be supplementary to grant constitutional status to the local government system.
VII. The President will appoint a transitional government on resolving patriotism Assembly. (www.na.gov.pk, 2002).

Under the Seventeenth Amendment, the President's powers were strengthened and the President could then dissolve the National Assembly. Opposition members of parliament continued to protest the LFO and could not handle any serious work for more than a year (Chaudhury, 2006). They continued to hit their offices and raise mottoes. Due to the protests from opposition, government decided to negotiate with opposition. So, in May 2003 a meeting was held between government and opposition, but they did not reach on any consequence.

On December 24, 2003, the Muslim League (PM) and its allies retained a settlement with the MMA on the constitutional amendments. The government passed a bill (Amendment 17) on December 26, 2003, in the National Assembly (Hamid, 2013). Aitzaz Ahsan a member of PPP elevated the criticism that the draft amendment contradicts the common position of ARD; MMA also rejected the draft amendment and requested to redraft the amendment according to the convention. Prime Minister accepted their request to redraft the 17th amendment in the parliament. On December 27, 2003another bill was presented in parliament with the applicable changes according to the demands of MMA. On December 29, 2003, the National Assembly passed the revised 17th Amendment Bill, but ARD and other opposition parties boycotted the session of N.A because they claimed that the new drafted bill would be the demand of only MMA. ARD and other opposition parties also boycotted the senate session (Javaid, 2017).

National Security Council

Musharraf permitted the formation of the NSC through a legislative rather than a constitutional process, implying that Parliament will have at least notional power to amend or dissolve the organisation. In January 2004, the draft legislation was finalized. Opposition parties vowed to fight the bill, claiming that an NSC would limit Parliament's authority, but their vigorous opposition failed to convince the ruling party, and they skipped voting when the bill was enacted in April. The National Security Council's first formal meeting focused on Pakistan's deteriorating law-and-order situation. Maulana Fazlur Rehman as Leader of the Opposition did not attend it. Musharraf and his allies claim that the NSC will lessen the probability of future military coups by creating a "safety valve" — a venue in which the army can have a role without dissolving the National Assembly. Opponents continue to argue that a military-dominated body led by the President will erode Parliament's already shaky authority.

Charter of Democracy

On May 15, 2006, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif signed the Charter for Democracy (COD) in London. This was a very important step for both parties because it signaled the gathering of two prominent parties. All the opposition political parties showed their pleasure and welcomed the COD. The government showed its anger and highly criticized the alliance and said that it was a political pretends for the parties to bring the people against the government. Leaders of both parties were barred and restricted to take part in political activities (Moskalenko, 2013).

The main objectives of the Charter were as follows;

1. The main features of the 1973 Constitution should be revitalized.
2. The political parties will not sign any agreement with the nominated party.
3. The judiciary, law and elections would be impartial. The LFO would be annulled, and the values, which state that the minimum age for voters must be 18, women may be members of parliament, and parliamentary seats can be increased unchanged or modified.
4. Establish friendly relations between the civil and military administration. COD covered all expected aspects, and did not carry any such point about which it could be said that this one had no mean to be here. COD was considered to be essential for the establishment of democracy, rights of judiciary,, renewal of the structure of federation and provinces, freedom of press and good relations with neighboring countries (Moskalenko, 2013). All those aspects that were necessary for good governance were presented directly or indirectly in the charter.

COD devoted the two parties to struggle against dictatorship and to get to power get rid of the distortion that took place in the Constitution after the demise of the PML government. The National Security Council was also dissolved by COD. Both leaders demanded a free and fair election in the country (Hamid, 2013). At the beginning of the Musharraf regime, Pakistan faced a condition that could be called variability in every way. Political parties of that time faced many challenges from military government. Like previous dictators, Pervez Musharraf also imposed much restriction on the activities of optical parties. Many leaders and politicians were detained or exiled from the country. In spite of these restrictions, Musharraf introduced many reforms among political parties. But during that time period opposition continued its agitation or protest against military government and formation of alliances.

Conclusion

Throughout Pakistan's history, we could not establish a strong a viable political system because politicians of Pakistan always supported negative and undemocratic trends. The crux features of our political history have lacked of consistency and failed to produce a collective expression of democracy. It is because after the creation of Pakistan, those who had authority or power explained or defined morality, religion, education, freedom of expression and democracy in accordance with their own demands and will. In this way they pushed their opponents toward the world of insecurity, helpless and powerlessness. Thus, the politicians particularly, opposition leaders have always followed undemocratic trends.

The result of negative thinking and self-seeking activities first emerged in the form of political dictatorship and then army dictatorship. The political scenario of the country represents that, it has democracy, but still, the opposition failed to play any kind of decisive role. The reason is that opposition parties are faction-ridden, personality-oriented, and with parochial interests. The opposition parties are only interested in their certain specific end and functioned autonomously in the pursuit of their own limited objectives that are in nature parochial, ethnic, provincial issues. This could only spell dissension and conflict. In this way, the opposition failed to work out a united plate form of a more cohesive structure and program with each other and so divided each remained ineffective. There is always a lack of intra-party structure and inter-party agreements among oppositions. Opposition always failed to arrive at a consensus on fundamental issues. So, there is constant quarrel among different opposition parties and every attempt against the ruling party had been frustrated.

Unfortunately, in Pakistan, opposition has raised invariably slogan of democracy but adopted negative methods to oust the ruling party. It is a fact that opposition leaders have not fought for the cause of democracy because they have personal rivalries and grudges. They try to humiliate their opponents to take revenge because in their opinion other has ousted them by place intrigues so they cannot let them go free. Another reason of failure of opposition in Pakistan is that in the early years of Pakistan, the political environment was not suitable for the healthy growth of opposition. Any kind of opposition that criticized

the policies and actions of ruling party was labeled as anti-Pakistan and its ideology. The political opponents were given the tittles of traitors or agents of enemies of Pakistan. Those politicians who failed to gained personal benefits or had personality clashes and difference of views with the ruling party leaders began to form their own political parties. In other words, dissensions with the Muslim League contributed to the lopsided growth of opposition parties. Thus parties formed under such circumstances were unstable, with no integrated organization and there was hardly any difference between their manifestos. From the inspection of Pakistan to date our politics is the politics of confrontation. The ruling party always tried its best to eliminate the opposition at any cost.

In Pakistan, politicians particularly opposition leaders are prone to shift their parties and their principles for the sake of protecting and promoting their vested interests. In Pakistan, the opposition has developed the kind of ideology that constitutes great problems to the political party system. The main reason is that there is a deficiency of rule of law in the country. Politicians especially opposition politicians, like their predecessors, do not really believe in rule of law. Opposition as well as the ruling party has no political will to enforce the rule of law.

The growth of mushrooms from political parties is another obstacle in the positive role of the opposition. At present more than one hundred political parties are in the country and many parties do not have root in masses. These political parties and their leaders exploited the innocent masses on various issues and misguided them to get political power. In this way, they gave birth to provincialism and destabilize the political institutions and hampered the political system.

Pakistan is an ideological state which created in the name of Islam. Religion was the great factor the political journey. There is lots of Islamist parties working in the country and want to implement Islamic principles in all walks of life, but never get to gather on one platform. The controversy among Islamists parties and other political parties on different issues is also a big hurdle in the way of opposition to performing its role constructively.

Our political history also shows that opposition itself invited the military to intervene in political process. Army generals are always ready to intervene as the final arbiter of the country. It is a sad reality in our political history that whenever martial law is imposed, it has been warmly welcomed by opposition parties. Throughout the history of Pakistan, a weak political system has given the chance to military to snatch s power. In Hasan Askari's words, the role of the military, paved grounds which were not favoring the growth of strong political system. The involvement of military in civil administration leads toward the blocking of political stability in Pakistan. The weak political system of Pakistan has made possible three military seizures of power, and a long period of military rule that have followed. From 1947 to 1999, four times military intervened in the system and dismissed elected and civilian governments. During the time of military rule, political parties faced many restrictions and harassment. In the time period of Pervez Musharraf, political parties faced many challenges which further led to the political instability of the country. During this time, opposition parties especially religious opposition parties formed alliances against the military government and gave a tough time to the government. Weak opposition parties not only deteriorated and damaged the social fabric of society but political institutions and political systems too. So, from the early history of Pakistan, opposition parties were given a proper chance to play its active role.

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