

Is Democracy Threatened by Political Parties? The Case of Islamic Republic of Pakistan

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Abstract

In Pakistan, political parties are mechanisms instrumentalized by the military rulers and powerful elites for political manipulation and strategic circumvention. Pakistan has failed to firmly entrench a coherent and ingenuous party system. Due to lack of institutional deepening, Pakistan's macro and micro trajectory are highly dependent on the whims and fancies of the individual who happens to be in charge. Political parties suffer internal deficiencies, undemocratic structures and practices, defection, factionalism and top-heavy leadership. Yet, people of Pakistan have not given up democracy. This paper analyses why democracy has failed to establish root into the Pakistani soil and the prime hindrances in the trajectory of blossoming of democratic norms and values.

Keywords: Election, Democracy, Political Parties, Political System.

The phenomenal reality of 'Pakistan' is an illusion of a 'nation-state' which is contentious, veiled and hypnotic. The Promethean entity invites tremendous amount of debate and controversial discourse. Each and every aspect of this vivifying existence is shrouded in contest, confrontation and awakening. Her 'being' itself is 'political', her body politic is a contested arena and her survival is a never-ending pugnacity. This paper will address the debate on the characterization of democracy and political parties in Pakistan. Every political system whether democratic or semi-democratic is characterized by the existence of political parties that acts as the liaison between the citizens and the governments. Several antithetical elements often threaten the existence of political parties that tries to dispose them of or often held them responsible for breakdown of political order. In Pakistan's 68 years of history, almost 33 years have been under military dictatorship or quasi-democratic regime. In Pakistan, political parties are mechanisms that are instrumentalized by the military rulers and powerful elites for political manipulation and

strategic circumvention that ultimately legitimize their unconstitutional rule. Since independence, Pakistan has failed to firmly entrench a coherent and ingenuous party system.

The political system of Pakistan is characterized by recurrent collapse of the constitution and political order. Political system is not a fixed phenomenon. It is born, undergoes evolution, transformation and even decomposition. Political system usually is a reflection of the social forces. And any metamorphosis in the social elements invariably transforms the political system too. Heywood writes “a political system is, in effect, a subsystem of the larger social system. It is a ‘system’ in that there are interrelationships within a complex whole, and ‘political’ in that these interrelationships relate to the distribution of power, wealth and resources in society”.¹

In order to carry out the political activities, governments have specialized agencies or structures, such as parliaments, bureaucrats, administrative agencies and courts, which perform functions, in turn enable the government to formulate, implement and enforce its policies. The policies reflect the goals, and the agencies provide the means.² The policies, goals, agencies and the means in the political system of Pakistan have been reflective of a chaotic, disorderly and insidious predicament.

Political parties, from the beginning suffered internal deficiencies, undemocratic structures and practices, defection, factionalism and top-heavy leadership. Mainstream parties are sluggish with same leaders, programmes and agendas. The rulers, mostly power-mongers, business magnates or influential clerics are so engrossed in their power-play that they are least bothered about the welfare of the common people. This eventually leads to alienation at the popular level. For example, the Muslim League colluded with the elite, mostly senior bureaucrats, military officers and landlords who thrived on the vestiges of the colonial structures of the British Raj. The party became elitist in its adaptation. Consequently, it excluded the masses from engaging in the political discourse and inhibited the culture of participation in the political process. The mother party split into nine factions of which five were in the 21st century. PML(Q) in 2001, PML(Z) in 2002, PML(L) in 2010, PML(A) in 2008, PML(P) in 2010.

¹ Heywood, Andrew. (2004). *Politics*, New York: Palgrave, p. 26.

² Almond, Gabriel A., Powell, G. Bingham, Strom Kaare & Dalton Russell J. (2004). *Comparative Politics Today*, Delhi: Pearson, p. 36.

This paper will try to answer the deeper question of why democracy has failed to establish its root into the Pakistani soil, what are the prime hindrances in the trajectory of blossoming of democratic norms and values? Despite being governed by the ideology of democracy and popular representation, why the populace is under some orthodox nubilation that haunts their self through some daunted apparition! The politics of Pakistan is conjured within the matrix of sectarianism, terrorism, militancy and intolerance. The Gordian knot of violence and oppression coupled with annoyance and disenchantment towards political system reflects a complex, vacillating political dis(order). This paper will examine the reasons for the dominance of undemocratic forces and how they have succeeded in crippling the fundamental institutions of the state-the judiciary, parliament and political parties. Here, in this paper, the centriole of my discussion will be on the concept of democracy and its relational configuration with political parties. Why and how the idea of democracy captures altogether a different dimension in Pakistan's politics are the general observatory schema to be included in this forthcoming discussion.

We live in the age of democracy. Today, the popular aspiration for democracy is universally recognized. Ironically, authoritarian systems also seek legitimacy under the veil of democracy. Way back in the 19th century, Tocqueville commented "that a great democratic revolution is going on among us"³. The concept of democracy has quite often been confined to the practice of periodic elections and representative government. Sometimes the idea of democracy also takes within its fold the concepts of human rights, the rule of law, independent judiciary and a free media.⁴ Pericles argued that democracy is linked to toleration.⁵ Democracy presupposes a culture that respects the ideals of equal and universal citizenship-deliberating public issues and active participation and a sense of responsibility in public affairs. This is the republican ethos of democracy which is as old as Aristotle.⁶ However, is there any 'ideal type' model of democracy

³ Tocqueville, Alexis de. (1981). *Democracy in America*, New York: Modern Library, p. 3.

⁴ Mukherjee, Sanjib. (2007). The Use and Abuse of Democracy in West Bengal, *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLII (44), November 3, p. 101.

⁵ Mc Lean, Iain and Mc Lean Alistair. (2009). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.140.

⁶ Mukherjee, Sanjib. op. cit., p.102.

applicable to all nations? Undoubtedly, most of the nations in the modern world claim and aspire to be a democracy. The appeal of democracy is so deepening in its essence that few governments would outrightly repudiate it in principle. Democracy demands a set of institutions through which its vision and mission can be expressed and materialized. The institutional parameters of democracy are diverse and changeable and tend to evolve through time. But the orientation of democracy cannot be the same for all nations as different nations bear different social order and historical legacy. Democracy not only changes the social order but also undergoes metamorphosis. Andre Beteille comments that the successful operation of democracy depends on ‘democratic reasoning’. Democratic reasoning proceeds through debate, discussion, negotiation, compromise and mutual accommodation.⁷ The attunement of diversity is the predominant condition for a successful democracy. The process of silencing permanently the voice of progressive journalists, lawyers, singers, musicians, entrepreneurs for condemning “the continuing harassment, torture and killing of progressive thinkers, journalists and activists in Pakistan” in no way circumstantiates the existence of the noumenon called ‘democracy’. The horrendous nexus of the ‘agencies’ and the militants have led to the operationalization of ‘intellecticide’.⁸ Democracy prepares the ground for better conditions for political education. Beteille emphatically writes that democracy permits citizens to make mistakes while providing opportunities for those mistakes to be corrected. Democracy does not demand silencing forever. Since 2005, many of those missing in Balochistan “have been brutally murdered and disposed off, in what Amnesty International has termed ‘kill and dump’ operations. These operations are then being used to justify the deplorable revenge-killings of non-Baloch, worsening the situation even more”.⁹

Pakistan evolved predominantly out of a Hindu India. Based on the ideological foundation of two-nation theory, it had the compulsion to reframe the country on the basis of differential parameter with India. After all, the two-nation theory had to be justified and reinforced, at every

⁷ Beteille, Andre. (2013). The Varieties of Democracy, *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVIII (8), February 23, pp. 33-34.

⁸ Sarwar, Beena. (2015). Unsilencing Pakistan, *Economic and Political Weekly*, L (20), May 16, pp. 19-20.

⁹ Ibid., p. 19.

opportunity and with force, if necessary.¹⁰ The ecstatic intoxication of creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims did not last long. The euphoria got subsumed with the immense loss of life, property and displacement and chaotic anarchical covering. The state floundered because of ideological schisms and the split within the Muslim League on the question of identity of the country: was it going to be democratic state or an Islamic State?¹¹

Even after 68 years of independence, the country is still grappling with ideological issues. Pakistan's political institutions have failed to develop properly over sixty years.¹² Pakistan's leaders apparently have yet to emerge from the dependent mentality they acquired during colonial rule and its wrenching aftermath. The embedded pattern of subordinate behavior profoundly shaped the psyche and the calculus, of the governing class in Pakistan.¹³ The dominant and influential elites inherited the British legacy. The partition had affected the leading political parties. Contrary to the general perception it is the political parties that has derailed the course of democracy and trampled upon the essence of it in Pakistan. The principle of election is very important in a democratic set-up. Democracies usually are based on the degree and level of participation of the citizens. Active citizen participation is the underpinning of any democracy. Amartya Sen emphatically states the freedom to participate for enhancement of development. "Participation can be seen to have intrinsic value for the quality of life. Indeed being able to do something through political action- for oneself or for others-is one of the elementary freedoms that people have reason to value".¹⁴ The best and the most defined way of citizen participation in the political process of the nation is through election. Elections are considered to be the kernel of any successful political institution. Elections are democracy in practice. Joseph Schumpeter in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942) stated 'democracy means only that the people have

¹⁰John, Wilson. (2008). *Pakistan: Four Scenarios*, New Delhi: Pentagon, p.1.

¹¹ Bennett, Jenifer. (2009). *Pakistan: Haunting Shadows of Human Security*, Dhaka: The University Press Limited, p. 22.

¹² Roy, Subroto. (2006). Understanding Pakistan-I, *The Statesman*, Kolkata, July 30.

¹³ Khan, Sayeed Hasan and Jacobsen, Kurt. (2007). Sample of democracy, *The Statesman*, Kolkata, September 26, p.6.

¹⁴ Dreze, J. and Sen, Amartya. (2002). *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 359.

the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them. In interpreting democracy as nothing more than a political method, Schumpeter identified it with elections, and specifically with competitive elections'.¹⁵ By the time Pakistan witnessed and experienced the first direct general election in 1970, it had already experienced authoritarian onslaught for 23 long years! Six decades have passed, yet Pakistanis are still searching for a national identity. Successive rounds of authoritarian rule instigated centrifugal conservative forces. Pakistani politics are ephemeral, displaying a bewildering array of shifting allegiances and alliances.¹⁶ The endeavour to carve out an identity and determine the ideological foundation of the country was entangled with authoritarian inclination from the very beginning. M.A. Jinnah, for instance, enjoyed extraordinary powers bestowed on him by the Muslim League. This chronological affirmation of centralized authoritarianism continued even after independence. He assumed his responsibilities as the Governor-General and not Prime Minister and continued to rule more as British viceroy rather than the executive of parliamentary system of government.¹⁷ Pakistan, at the beginning of the 21st century witnessed the rule of a general who usurped power non-constitutionally through a coup against a democratically elected prime minister who was deposed and exiled. Due to lack of institutional deepening, Pakistan's macro and micro trajectory and development are highly dependent on the whims and fancies of the individual who happens to be in charge, whether at the national/country level. Individuals matter more in Pakistan than they do in many countries in the region where same form of institutional constraints and 'checks and balances' are in place, whether they be in the form of Parliament. Pakistan's experience has shown that Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Zia-ul-Haq have all had their own marked influence. General Musharraf, Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, Md. Tahir-ul-Qadri and Imran Khan are part of the same tradition.¹⁸ People of Pakistan have an affiliation to incline towards strong populist

¹⁵ Heywood, Andrew, op. cit., p. 229.

¹⁶ Talbot, Ian. (2009). *Pakistan a Modern History*, London: C Hurst and Co. Publishers Limited, p.2.

¹⁷ Rizvi Hasan-Askari. (2000). *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*, New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 71.

¹⁸ Zaidi, S. Akbar. (2006). 'Civil and Uncivil Society', *Economic and Political weekly*, Vol. XLI (33), p. 3556.

personalities. This bond continues even with the descendants of the party leaders. Undoubtedly, people's affiliation to political parties is through popular and strong leaders.

The existence of democracy within political parties invariably determines the presence of democracy in the country. The development of the party as a political institution is one of the great innovations of modern democracies. Beteille argues that as institution, the political party has a name and an identity that continues over time. The party is an institution to the extent that its name and its assets and liabilities continue over time and outlive its individual members. The success of the party as a political institution depends on its ability to outlive its founders and its most important leaders, and to recruit new leaders and new members to replace the old ones. As an institution, the party operates within a system of parties. The relations among the parties in a system of parties may be relations of cooperation, competition or conflict.¹⁹ Political parties are the building blocks of a democratic structure. But when parties become sycophant to influential individuals and decisions are taken in an undemocratic manner without involving the decision-making mechanism within the party, the national democratic system becomes pawn to few individuals. Weak political party leads to weak parliament robbed off its ability to perform as the foundation of genuine representation.

Pakistan is a multi-party democracy. According to a study conducted by Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency in 2014, the Jamaat-e-Islami has been rated as the most democratic Party. It conducts regular party election. Latest intra-party election took place in 2012 and the election of Amir took place in March 2014. Members can exercise the right to object, criticize and question the decision of Amir and the Central Council but not allowed to make it public. Next is definitely the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf that holds open contested party election. However, the walking out from the *dharna* by the elected President of PTI, Mr. Javed Hashmi put the internal democracy in question. The PML (N) is the least democratic party followed by the PPP.²⁰ The basic features of these parties are absence of regular party election, lack of regular meetings of CWC and NC, presence of strong dynastic party leadership and status quo in top party leadership.

¹⁹ Beteille, Andre, op. cit., p. 36.

²⁰ Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency. (2014). *Assessing Internal Democracy of Major Political Parties of Pakistan*, Islamabad. Retrieved September 27, 2015 from <http://www.pildat.org>

According to Anatol Lieven, patronage and kinship form the basic elements of the Pakistani political system. However, there does not exist enough patronage to go around. Large part of the favours that governments hand out are meaningless but expensive ministerial posts (more than sixty in the civilian governments of the 1990s and after 2008), tax breaks, corrupt ontracts, state loans and amnesties for tax evasion and embezzlement-all of which helps keep the state poor.²¹ Loyalty towards party means little when compared to personal advantage and clan loyalty. Barring to some extent, most of Pakistan's 'democratic' political parties are conglomeration of landlords, clan chieftains and urban lords. Even when new individuals gain political power, they indubitably establish political dynasties of their own. The smaller building blocks of the giant political parties are also local political families. The break-away groups often form new alliances based on one leader and his family like the PPP (Sherpao) from the Frontier. The PML(Q) was created by Musharraf but controlled by two Chaudhry brothers from Gujrat. Ideology plays a minimal role in party loyalties, and outside the Jamaat-e-Islami it is not dominant.²² From 1951 to 1958, seven prime ministers have been sacked. From 1985 to 1999 all five prime ministerial terms were aborted through premature dismissal of governments. Nine national legislatures have been aborted prematurely. The situation hindered the political parties to groom and attain maturity. By the time they could be into the process of gaining some experience, they were sacked. Both the ruling and the opposition parties require a democratic setting to play their respective roles. Strangulation of political parties and undemocratic party system are some of the primary reasons for the undemocratic political culture and unendurable parliamentary democracy. The constitution of Pakistan of 1956 and 1962 though contradictory in nature recognized the existence of political parties and public representation. But from the beginning, political upheavals during 50s and anti-political harsh laws/regulations in the Martial Law such as 'Elected Bodies Disqualification Order (EBDO) kept the political parties under tremendous pressure that resulted in lack of institutional astuteness and chronic problem of defection. Pakistan's rulers portrayed an indifferent attitude towards democratization of the political system. While the country was preparing to cope with administrative and humanitarian problems, Md. Ali Jinnah died in September 1948 keeping the infant country on the brink of instability. This incident led to undermining the political institutions and demoralized the political process.

²¹ Lieven, Anatol. (2012). *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, London: Penguin Books, pp. 204-206.

²² Ibid., pp. 2017-208.

Leaders of post-Jinnah genre mostly belonged to regional and local sites and as such lacked a national vision and mission. Maleeha Lodhi most aptly commented “personalized nature of politics is closely related to the dominant position enjoyed throughout Pakistan’s history by narrowly-based political elite that was feudal and tribal in origin and has remained so in outlook even as it gradually came to share power with well-to-do urban groups. The latter is epitomized by the rise of Mian Nawaz Sharif who came from a mercantile background. Clientilism has been the principal hallmark of Pakistani politics”.²³ Factions and client groups were encouraged from the beginning to weaken larger parties with nationwide following, resulting in localization of politics founded on *biraderi* (family and kinship network) caste and ethnic groups at the cost of nationwide and all-inclusive political formation. The tickets distributed by the three chief parties contesting for power in 2008 reflected an overwhelming number of tickets passed on to efficacious and affluent rural and urban families.

Since 1985, it has been observed that public campaigns were largely devoid of national issues and based on community resulting in *biraderi*-based voting as the major determinant of national and local elections. Under this situation, patronage is the only option that secures party cohesion and stability. *Biraderi*-rivalries were particularly significant in the ‘partyless’ February 1985 and April 1962 elections.²⁴

Successive military regimes pursued a policy of de-institutionalization of political parties.²⁵ The military have profusely instrumentalised political parties for maneuverings and political legitimacy. The institutional core of the political parties resulted in a non-institutional approach to politics where a noticeable number of party workers joined hand with the military leadership for political dividend. Members of the political elite have frequently split off to join or serve as junior partners in military governments in return for the accretion of their power by entry into the spoils system.²⁶ For instance, Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam) was a faction of PML-

²³ Lodhi, Maleeha. (2011). *Pakistan : Beyond the ‘Crisis State’*, New Delhi: Rupa & Co., pp. 54-55.

²⁴ Talbot., op. cit., pp.9-10.

²⁵ Khan, Hamid. (2005). *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, pp. 356-358.

²⁶ Lodhi., op.cit., p. 56.

Pakistan Muslim League formed by General Pervez Musharraf before the elections of 2002. Opposition politicians and party workers were coerced and coaxed into joining by state agencies, including the ISI and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), a nominal anti-corruption watchdog.²⁷ Tactics employed were promises of lucrative positions in governments, threats of prosecution on false charges and physical intimidation.²⁸ General Musharraf, in June 2002, promulgated the Political Party Order 2002 that replaced the Political Parties Act of 1962. This order extended Article 63 that restricts anyone convicted of a crime from contesting elections, including anyone charged of a crime who fails to appear before the courts. PPP's central information secretary Raja Pervaiz Ashraf stated that this act was purely a Benazir Bhutto – specific provision. Again in July 2002, Musharraf issued the Qualification to Hold Public Offices Order 2002 that established a two-term limit on prime ministers. This was meant to prevent Bhutto and Sharif for contesting the office.

Corollary to the intervention of the military, civil bureaucracy and intelligence operatives in the political system of Pakistan, factionalism has also rendered another service to its political culture. The breakaway factions adversely affect national integration. Political parties were ought to be the backbone of a democratic political system but in the political set-up of Pakistan, political parties instigates ethnic and sub-national elements rendering space to local, communal, sectarian, parochial based pattern of politics. Mostly they are area-specific and agenda-centric. PML(N) is Punjab-based and the PPP is Sindh-based. National outlook and broader sensitivity is utterly lacking in their agenda, visionary goal and missionary zeal.

Tradition of holding periodic and transparent elections within the political parties is not yet established in Pakistan.²⁹ Recruitment of the political leaders is not based on election. The political baton has been passed on to scions of specific families- the Gilanis, Qureshis, Tamans, Mehers, Bijranis, Rinds, Raisins, Jhakaranis, Makhdums of Hala, Shahs of Nawabpur, the Khan of Kalabagh's family and others.³⁰

²⁷ Hussain, Zahid. (2001). How to Steal an election, *Newsline*, September.

²⁸ Hasan, Akbar. (2002, October). The Rise of the King's Party, *Newsline*.

²⁹ Sayeed, Shafaqat. (1997). *Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan: From Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to Benazir Bhutto*, Colorado: Westview Press, p. 21.

³⁰ Lodhi., op.cit., p. 57.

It was the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI) that announced on March 2012 to conduct intra-party election according to US-style of candidate nomination and ticket-awarding procedure. In fact, PTI became the first party in Pakistan to conduct the largest intra-party election from the general electoral base.

The tragic example of family politics has been initiated by the leaders of the two historically famous political parties-Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, after assuming power could not abandon his feudal mindset. Instead of strengthening the political party, he focused on his own personal charisma. This resulted in a despotic rule in the garb of an elected democracy. The PPP became a dynastical party and leadership was transferred to Mrs. Nusrat Bhutto and then Benazir Bhutto. Benazir was elected lifetime chairperson of PPP. After her demise, it was at least presumed that the reigns of the party would now be transferred to the senior most leader of the PPP, Makhdoom Amin Fahim. But all predictions were shattered when Bilawal Bhutto was accepted and selected as the chairman of the party. As he was a student, his father Asif Ali Zardari became the co-chairman to handle the affairs of the party. Asif Ali Zardari's occupation of two posts, the President of the Republic and the President of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) exemplified a duality unheard of in any democracy.³¹ Like the PPP, the PML(N) from the very beginning of its rule has been a party of Sharif family. The presence of Mian Sharif, father of Nawaz, his brother Shahbaz Sharif and presently their sons Hassan Nawaz and Hamza Shahbaz and daughter Maryam Nawaz and son-in-law Capt. (R) Safdar in leadership substantiates the existence of hereditary dynasty in the politics of Pakistan.

The Awami National Party has a tradition of holding election after every four years. However, it is Wali Khan's family that dominated the ANP history. Same is the case with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

Jeremy Paxman of the BBC astonished Bilawal Bhutto into silence by asking him-is the life chairmanship of a political party a piece of furniture to be inherited on the death of a parent? In a democratic system, the monopoly of a royal dynasty over political power gradually comes to an end. Democracy opens the venue to all classes of society to contest power and display their talent to govern the country. Dynastic rule necessarily, survives on the personality cult. However, the

³¹ Noorani, A.G. (2012) Zardari's Two Hats, *Frontline*, 29 (7), April 20, p. 38.

threat lies not in the dynastic principle alone. It can emanate from any person who acquires power and proceeds to amass it further assisted by servile colleagues and supine media.³²

Political parties with its dynastic lineage pose a grave threat to democracy. John Stuart Mill gave a warning to all who are interested in the maintenance of democracy. He suggested not 'to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institution'. Daniel O' Connell, the Irish patriot rightly said that no man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty.³³

Political parties in Pakistan also suffer from leadership void. Parties do not encourage their workers and volunteers from lower ranks to groom and uplift themselves to the position of leaders and politicians. Most of the policies related to party affairs are formulated at the top level in a highly personalized and individualized mode. In-house training and research facilities are absent in the working programmes of the party.

Opposition parties mainly suffer ban on their activities, dismissals, victimization, and persecution through draconian measures and so on. Asif Ali Zardari had promised to avoid the politics of revenge, but his dismissal of the PML(N) government in Punjab ushered in a new crisis and belied his earlier claims. Opposition parties on their part are always assertive to destabilize the government. They pose opposition only to weaken the government of the ruling party in order to extract the opportunity to form a government. Elected parties also rule in an autocratic manner. When after widespread agitation, election was organized around 1990; Pakistan floundered under the inefficient, corrupt and undemocratic regimes of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif.³⁴

In October 1999, when Musharraf overthrew a democratically elected prime minister, many of Pakistan's "civil society" representatives rushed to welcome him with open arms. However, all enthusiasm subsided following the 9/11 attacks. In April 2002, Musharraf elevated himself to the position of President through a referendum. After the Musharraf takeover, three new

³² Noorani, A.G. (2015) *Dynasty in Democracy*, *Frontline*, 32 (6), April 3, pp. 36-40.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Lieten, G.k. (2007). *Local Power in Pakistan*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLII (51), December 22, p. 25.

developments regarding political parties took place. First was the formation of the new political party Pakistan Muslim League (Q); second was the formation of an alliance of the religious parties Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) and the third was on May 14th 2006 an alliance for democracy (ARD) that signed the Charter of Democracy (CoD) that was agreed on earlier between two pre-eminent Pakistani opposition politicians, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif.³⁵ Musharraf from the beginning tried to consolidate his position by clipping the wings of the opposition. Following the footsteps of his predecessors, Musharraf also created his own party, the PML(Q) to legitimize his authoritarian rule rendering it a civilian face. In the general elections of 2002, the religious alliance of political parties known as Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) secured 51 seats. PML(Q) 76 seats and PPP 62 seats in the National Assembly. Islamic parties won majority through coalition. Following 9/11 incident, instability knocked at the doors of Pakistan. Musharraf's government had been combating religious extremism at home and also at the frontier.³⁶ The Charter of Democracy agreed upon between the Pakistan's People's Party (PPP) and the Nawaz Sharif-led Muslim League (PML-N) on May 15th was a landmark document that created the basis for a transition to durable civilian democracy.³⁷ However, practically speaking political parties could not play their due role in protecting democracy. On 9th March 2007, the Chief Justice Iftikhar Chowdhury was removed. The main opposition Musharraf faced was from lawyers. The protest from March to September was organized against Musharraf's interference in the affairs of the Supreme Court. Political parties did not play any significant role in Lawyers' protest.³⁸

Trampling upon all aspiration for a 'democratic revenge', Benazir Bhutto secretly entered into a secret power-sharing deal with Musharraf in 2007. It provided her the opportunity to return to

³⁵ Azad, Arif. (2006). General in His Labyrinth, *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLI (37), September 16, p. 3941.

³⁶ Shahzad, Muhammad Nawaz and Kokab, Rizwan Ullah. (2013). Political Parties: A Factor of Stability in Pakistan 1999-2008, *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2 (4), November, p. 354.

³⁷ Gazdar, Haris. (2006). Thinking about Regime change, *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLI (32), August 12, p. 3455.

³⁸ Zaidi, S. Akbar. (2007). Musharraf and His Collaborators, *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLII (45 & 46), November 17, p. 8.

Pakistan in October 2007 from almost a decade-long self-imposed exile. Her ‘democracy as revenge’ was however attained after her untimely tragic assassination at Liaquat Ali Bagh on 27th December 2007. The elections of 18th February 2008 brought back the Pakistan’s People’s Party by a clear majority. Asif Ali Zardari became the President of the Republic. However, Zardari became an increasingly unpopular head of the state. Public demands were not met. Restoration of senior judges, removal of discretionary constitutional amendments and more transparent governance system were halted. When Pakistanis were bleeding, President was busy in his foreign trips. The PPP Prime Minister Gilani also proved incapable of bringing about any overhauling changes. For five years, the PPP marched on with anti-people policies regardless of public opinion. The ANP also failed to deliver on even the most basic promises to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). PTI brought a mini-revolution in Pakistan politics by carrying out free and fair intra-party elections, electing party officials rather than appointing them by decree.

Pakistani *awam* being fed up with a subservient foreign policy, anti-development and neo-liberal economic policy that left the vast majority in sheer misery turned the incumbent out of office. The 11th May 2013 election showed a remarkably high voter turnout. Recent elections showed turnouts of 30-40% but this election involved the participation of 60%.³⁹ The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), formed in 2006 to monitor elections, worsened the situation by stating that 49 polling stations had recorded over 100 per cent polling. This incident eventually brought back memories of the post-1977 elections when the opposition coalition, the Pakistan National Alliance, accused the Pakistan’s People’s Party (PPP) government of manipulating and rigging the elections. “The inability of the government of that time and the opposition to handle the rigging issues enabled the military to assume power under General Zia-ul-Haq,” stated political analyst Hasan Askari Rizvi.⁴⁰

However, the sit-in demonstration launched on 14th August 2014 by the Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan and the Canadian cleric Tahir-ul-Qadri of Pakistan Awami Tehrik (PAT) signaled a sinister implication according to many political observers. According to them it projects such a situation that puts democracy at check. In the battle for supremacy, the Army had

³⁹ Iqtidar and Munir, (2013). Pakistan’s Elections – I, More Rejection, Less Election, *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVIII (22), pp. 10-11.

⁴⁰ Joshua, Anita. (2013). The Road Ahead, *Frontline*, 30 (11), June 14, pp. 5-6.

been trying to retrench the power of the civilian government led by Nawaz Sharif and the opposition leaders Imran Khan and Qadri became a part of this strategy.⁴¹

Regular public funding provides authenticity and genuinity to the political parties. Instead of hereditary and autocratic orientation, modernization and professional outlook render trust and enhance capacity building. Needless to say, political parties in Pakistan should entrench within the system the mechanism of internal democracy and transparency in the party structure. Conducting periodic elections where party members can freely and independently elect their leaders at local, provincial and national level is of utmost necessity. Ordinary office bearers and party members should be encouraged to express their opinion. It has been alleged that PTI leadership overshadowed the opinions of his fellow colleagues during the Tehreek-e-Square demonstration. Political parties should engage strictly in the process of devolution of authority, from party headquarters to local branch offices in order to enhance democratization. In case of PML(N), the provincial Presidents are ought to be elected through secret ballot according to the party constitution but presently all the provincial chiefs are nominated. Written regulations, strict code of conduct, disciplinary process, mandatory internal election, devolution of power, encouragement to party workers, transparency in party funding are the basic ingredient to make a party more people-friendly and oriented towards promoting democratic ethos.

The retrenchment of an elected body, shoving off its powers, and humiliation of political forces leads to the rule of the army who in turn import religious parties into the political arena.

The demand for Pakistan was considered essential to preserve the identity of the Muslims and protect Islam. The leadership of Pakistan from the very beginning emphasized the official inclusion of the term in identifying the state. This resulted in the Objective Resolution of 1949, formulated by Liaquat Ali Khan. It adopted the equilibrium policy of appeasement. It ensured that Pakistan would be a democratic state where minority rights would be safeguarded and simultaneously all Muslims would lead a life according to the Islamic scriptures. Islam was elevated to state religion. Ulema were employed as advisors to the legislators. The function of the Council of Islamic ideology was consequently strengthened. Religious ideology acted as a crutch for political leaders. Thus, from the very inception, ground was prepared for theocracy

⁴¹ Banerjee, Arun Kumar. (2014). Pakistan in ferment-I, *The Statesman*, Kolkata, September 28, p.6.

and not democracy.⁴² Maududi and others demanded “that the sovereignty in Pakistan belongs to God Almighty alone and that the government of Pakistan shall administer the country as His agent”.⁴³ The elementary signature of the political parties in Pakistan portrays non-defiance, submissive acceptance of Islam in both societal and political level. For example, Md. Iqbal’s vision has influenced Imran Khan in his contemplation on an ‘Islamic State’. There is no doubt that *shura* (internal consultation), justice, strictures against imposing faith, *ijma* (consensus) and *ijtihad* (independent interpretive judgment) and assertions of equality are concepts that makes Islam democratic. The main current of Islamism views democracy as being close to Islam, while the Jehadi approach rejects democracy on the grounds that it derives its authority from the people instead of *Allah*.

Pakistan has become a breeding ground of both generals on the one hand and militancy and religious extremism on the other. No doubt, balancing the role of religion and politics is a tedious affair for the rulers. An inch of imbalance will both covertly and overtly change the orientation of the polity. The pernicious usage of religion as an instrument of coercion, power and political mobilization and its consequent desacralisation adversely affects the polity in ways that go far beyond the immediacy of electoral politics. It not only undermines and distorts the democratic processes and unleashes physical and emotional violence at all levels but also kills the soul of a culture. While religion as faith as well as an instrument of persuasion has historically played a humanizing role, religion as ideology and an instrument of coercion has only resulted in structures of violence, hidden and manifest.⁴⁴ Suicide bombings at check posts, offices, markets, mosques are claiming hundreds of Pakistani lives. Benazir lost her life to militancy. The killings of 163 innocent lives at Peshawar on 16th December 2014 are all consequences of uncontrolled mobilization of religious sentiments for immediate gains.

In order to maintain democracy, the first thing that should be to religiously followed is the constitutional methods. Bloody violence, loss of lives, threatening and subjugation can never bring peace, stability and tranquility. A system of governance founded on fear and apparition

⁴² Bennett., op. cit., pp. 28-29.

⁴³ Roy, Subroto. (2006). ‘Understanding Pakistan - II’, *The Statesman*, Kolkata.

⁴⁴ Madampat, Shajahan. (2012). Islamism And Democracy, *Frontline*, 29 (6), April 6, pp. 43-44.

will always be fragile and unstable. Pakistan's *awam* has shown that bullet can be confronted with ballot. The 2013 national election was more significant in the sense that voters came out to vote facing the phantom of terrorist attacks by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It is through the pillars of democracy, popular representation, strong and prudent political parties that Pakistan will be able to attain stability and maturity. And it is through the medium of political parties that the Pakistani *awam* can bring changes in their political system and a revolution in their social-cultural-economic proceedings which will in course of time enhance the polity's morale and psychological disposition.

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