



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Democratic Political Development: A Case Study of Pakistan 2008-2013**

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Received:</b> September 12, 2019	Political development modernizes the country by improving institutional functions, national integrity, democratization and political participation. But, this concept could not be sustained in Pakistan due to the domineering behavior of the executive, poor performance of the parliament, lack of judicial independence and military coups. The period 2008-13 saw various events contradicted previous political upheavals. Conduct of continuous elections, the establishment of the coalition government, political cooperation between the opposition and the government on the issues of national importance, increased political participation, vibrant media, restoration of a democratic constitution and abundant law-making, judicial activism to restore constitutional independence of judiciary helped to develop a democratic political system of the country. These political events are explored in this paper which occurred for the first time in the political history of the country and caused political development. This research paper highlights the specific condition of political development in this era and identifies the issues which affect democratic development in the country. It also describes that either democratic political development in Pakistan during 2008-2013 was improved or not?
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**Introduction**

Dynamic character of the political institutions, stakeholders, judiciary, media and public participation are elaborated through the explanatory approach. The study is divided into four sections. The first section includes the government of Pakistan Peoples' Party Parliamentarian (PPPP) established the central

government in 2008. Specific political activities of this period reveal political development. The second section comprises two subsections. The first subsection deals with political activities that occurred during Zardari Regime. The next concerns the positive performance of different institutions which helped political development. The third section deals with the initial period of Nawaz Sharif who established his government after the Elections 2013. The fourth and the last section indicate many democratic political norms that could not be adopted and were indexed as demerits of the government.

The 'Political Development' has not any common definition and it is a controversial concept among political scholars (Smith, 2013, p. 50). Similarly, political participation and consumption/ production of goods have also been considered as a standard to evaluate political development (Schnaiberg, 1997). Eventually, democratic development was set as a reliable standard for this concern since the 1980s ( Carothers, 1993, p. 223). Civil or military dictators in third world countries have been interfering with political matters. So, Pakistan has no exception as being a member of this class (Shah, *The Army and Democracy*, 2014). Military dictators ruled over Pakistan for about 35 years out of 60 years till 2008. In turn, democratic political norms could not be promoted. Lower literacy rates and poor economic conditions hindered proper political participation. (Fair, 2005, pp. 101-132). So, democratic development in Pakistan is considered as the political development in this paper.

### **Initial Indicators of Democracy**

Taking off military uniform by Musharraf was an initiative towards a new democratic political era which pleased the people of the country who hardly like a continuation of any specific regime for a long time (Bhasin , 2007, p. 368). Even they had welcomed military coups which ended elected governments as governments of Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif etc. The end of Musharraf Regime was also welcomed due to two reasons. The first was popular opinion against military rule and the second was the end of the long political era. However, this juncture was also very important in the political and social history of Pakistan as it caused the initiation of the democratic political period once again.

The Elections 2008 had no serious allegation of rigging. So, the political parties were satisfied generally to the results contradicted to the previous routine of dissatisfaction ( Naqvi, 2010). The previous governments had been usually blamed for election rigging as the elections held in Ayub, Bhutto, Zia and Nawaz regimes. It was an important event of democratic development that the ruling

political party, Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PMLQ) lost the elections despite military support. It achieved only 54 seats in the National Assembly out of 272 ( Agency, 2010). It was also a bolster proof of fair elections that satisfied the people to a large extent. Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) participated in the election process in the name of Pakistan Peoples' Party Parliamentarian (PPPP) and became the largest party after winning 119 out of 342 seats in the National Assembly.

Opposition parties had participated in the elections through the promulgation of the National Reconciliation Order (NRO) released by President Musharraf, the constitutional head of the state. Though, this order is being criticized still by politicians and media houses even after a long time of its promulgation (Malik, 2008, p. 158). Yet, it helped to initiate a new political era that consolidated democratic norms. It was NRO by which the opposition could participate in the elections and defeated PML (Q), the ruling party. Contrary to that the smooth elections couldn't be conducted. PML (Q)'s defeat was a serious challenge for Musharraf regime. It reveals the defeat of dictatorship and the development of the democratic process in the country.

The political situation became complex after the elections because no party had secured the required majority to establish the government. The PPPP though was the majority party but it could not establish the government solely (Bradnock, 2015, p. 117). However, the political parties, deeply excited to initiate a new democratic political era after nine years of a dictatorship allied to defeat undemocratic forces. It proved helpful to defeat military supported PML (Q) and to abolish the military rule. Yousef Raza Gilani, the PPPP leader was elected the Prime Minister by securing 264 votes with compare to only 42 votes in favor of his rival Pervez Elahi supported by Musharraf. This election against the will of the dictatorship regime was a positive change (USA, 2008, p. 13). It was for the first time in the political history of the country that the opposition parties defeated the dictatorship regime and established a coalition government. It had also positive effects on the future politics of the country.

General Musharraf who had already taken off military uniform resigned from the office of the President ( Oldenburg, 2010).The Electoral College for the election of the head of the state, comprising of the National Assembly and the four Provincial Assemblies, elected Asif Ali Zardari as the President in 2008. It was the major change in the national political phenomenon. Musharraf's retirement and the election of Asif Ali Zardari were two important issues which strengthened democratic political development. These events ended the dictatorship regime on the one hand and caused the appointment of the civilian President on the other

hand. Zardari's appointment as the President astonished the analysts as he had suspicious political records based on corruption allegations. He had also been imprisoned for several years and was known as Mr. 10% due to receiving a commission in government contracts during his wife Benazir's Government (James, 2011, p. 103; Dawn, 2013). The opposition accepted him as the President intending to develop democracy and to escape dictatorship. It also promoted political tolerance, a political alliance against the dictatorship regime and procedure for appointment of the President in a democratic way.

### **Activated State and Non- State Actors**

The PPPP established a political alliance with other political parties to achieve a required majority for the establishment of the government as the Pakistani parliamentary system offers the majority party to establish the government, make laws and run the governmental institutions (Mahmood, 2001). The government depended on political coalition throughout the five years. However, different political parties joined this alliance on different occasions. It was for the first time in the political history of the country that about entire political parties performed as the government as well as opposition in central or some provincial government. It is rightly stated that the government always succeeded to achieve the political support of some party whenever it required. The political system well performed in this way which otherwise could hardly continue. Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), the largest opposition party supported the government during its initial period to strengthen democracy (Shah, 2014; Shah, 2016; Graf & Wurm, 2013). Different other major political parties as Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), Awami National Party (ANP), and Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PMLQ) also joined this coalition. It was the political insight of the government that it included almost all the entire major opposition parties into the government to run the system smoothly. It performed not only to establish and maintain the democratic government but also to continue parliamentary functions. Though these events were a revolt against the previous dictatorship regime yet also helped to promote democratic development.

Though functions of the parliament were not satisfactory in the initial period of this regime yet later its performance improved and it restored the original Constitution 1973, distorted by the previous dictatorship regimes of Zia and Musharraf, through amendments (Hasnat, 2011; Naqvi, 2010; Burki, 2011). The parliament made a record in law-making. The Prime Minister continuously joined sessions of the National Assembly as leader of the house which proved a positive impact on the democratic system of the country. It also granted extra

powers to the provinces which ultimately strengthened national integrity. So, the minorities were more satisfied than that of the previous dictatorship regime. The dissatisfaction of the people of Balochistan and turmoil in this province, majorly raised due to the murder of Nawab Bugti during Musharraf regime, began to decrease (Hasnat, 2011, p. 112). So, the overall position of its work remained better. It became possible with the help of political allies (Gul, 2012). The governing party could hardly make laws solely due to the absence of the required majority for this purpose. The aligned political parties supported the government to continue democracy and to avoid dictatorship. Though these parties had their interests also but the government couldn't ignore them as it could not perform without their political support.

Independent judiciary is essential to maintain the rule of law and political development (Tremblay, 1997, pp. 137-148). But Montesquieu's concept of separation of powers could not be promulgated contradicted its popularity in the US. The judiciary was always interfered with by the executive of the country contradicted the spirit of the Constitution 1973 (Neudorf, 2017). On November 3, 2007 emergency was imposed by General Musharraf as head of the state (Streib, 2008). But it proved as the pole star in favor of the movement for judicial independence. The lawyer associations launched the movement for restoration of the judges and its restoration empowered the rule of law (Kennedy, 2012). The restoration of the sacked Judges enhanced its independence and it began to perform more independently (Neudorf, 2017; Jalalzai, 2012; Brass, 2010). Many judicial verdicts proved very effective to decrease the dictatorial behavior of various state institutions as bureaucracy and military.

The judiciary attempted to maintain the rule of law which had been ignored since the establishment of the country by the elite class and pressure groups. Many bureaucrats faced judicial verdicts that contradicted their interests (Bashir & Crews; Devji, 2012, p. 153). They were trialed and punished through procedural law. On the other side, the judiciary restored many dismissed officers due to negating illegal orders of the government. Yousef Raza Gilani, the then Prime Minister, was disqualified by the apex judiciary due to contempt of court and he deprived his office of the back dates (Perumal, 2013). It reveals the independent status of the judiciary and an indicator of separation of powers. The judiciary also protected national assets by maintaining checks and balances against the denationalization process for the public institutions. In this concern, many retired and in-service bureaucrats were called in questions. For instance, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested Tauqeer Sadiq, the former chairman of a national institution along with other high profile officers against allegations of

illegal sale and purchase of medicines (Correspondent, 2016). The apex judiciary took many suo motu actions concerning national issues and fundamental rights (Neudorf, 2017). It forced the empowered institutions and elites to surrender in front of rule of law and maintained its writ as it is empowered to take action against violation of human rights (The Constitution, 1973). So, judicial activism brought about a great change in the political, economic and social concerns and it was appreciated by the civil society as it occurred for the first time in the political history of the country.

The role of private electronic media is also important to establish public opinion during this era. Previously, the people were informed by only two institutions, radio and television managed by the government (Hashmi, 2015). Press rules were also not so smooth and the newspapers were often threatened and restricted. In 2002, electronic media began to expand and many new media houses were established (PEMRA, 2002). It opened a new way of criticism which caused the establishment of healthy public opinion and political participation was improved (Britain & Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2011). The politicians, ministers, opposition leaders, technocrats, analysts and social workers were invited to explore different issues of national importance. So, during the study era media became more independent and it attempted to form public opinion and the people realized that the king is not himself law but the law is king (Jethro, 2005, p. 436). The media was established and functionalized on such a large scale for the first time so it could not play a proper role. However, it severely criticized government performance, policies and, institutional functions.

Contradicted to the previous routine, the opposition played a changing role and cooperated with the government to maintain and develop a democratic political system. The political history of the country shows that the powerful governments of empowered rulers as General Ayub, Z.A. Bhutto, and General Musharraf faced powerful opposition. The politics of riots, violence, and long march had also been a tradition. But 2008-2013 saw the constructive role of opposition. The major opposition party PMLN performed a cooperative opposition during this era (Shah, 2014). Even it participated in the government as a coalition partner for a long time in the name of strengthening the democratic system. The major opposition was so deeply joined with the government that it was named as 'B' team of government by the parties which wished to abolish this coalition and to start political riots as usual. They also invited the military to dismiss it by the declaration of a state of emergency or military coup. So, the major opposition performed a positive role to improve political development and the parliament completed five years of legal term successfully by two Prime Ministers (Grand,

2014). Completion of the constitutional term and the improved role of the opposition reveal a major change in the political system of Pakistan for the first time.

Bureaucratic political interference had been a deep-rooted tradition in Pakistan since British rule in India (Bano, 2012, pp. 42-65). It was challenged for the first time in this period. The Military performed as a professional institution contrary to the previous practice. The changing political and social phenomenon encouraged people to participate in political activities. The people started to consider their proper political role and realized their political importance to transform the political system and political participation was exhilarated.

### **Towards a Neo-Transformation**

The certain indicators during Musharraf Regime (1999-2008) reveal the initiation of political development. For instance the establishment of private electronic media, stable condition of the economy, the extended graph of goods consumption, and political participation in the last year (Musharraf, 2008). But it cannot be considered as political development as it did for specific intention under the military influence. However, the real flow of political development initiated at the end of Musharraf regime and with the initiation of the PPPP democratic government in 2008 (Mahmood, 2001).

The procedure for the establishment of the caretaker government has revealed by the Constitution 1973. But, no elected government completed its five years constitutional term because they were dismissed before completion of this period. The first Legislative Assembly was dismissed in 1955 (Binder, 1963). The governments of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Muhammad Khan Jonejo were affected by this arbitrary routine also. Similarly, Benazir Government was dismissed in 1990 and 1996 and Nawaz Sharif Government was also dismissed two times in 1993 and 1999 (Waseem, 2012). All it did unexpectedly in the history of the country. But, the parliament elected in 2008 completed its term till 2013 and the provisional government was established to perform routine matters (Grand, 2014). It was for the first time that the opposition was granted the right to consult for the establishment of the caretaker government. The Parliamentary Committee included the government and the opposition members, and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) played a great role for this purpose. Completion of constitutional term of five years for the first time of an elected parliament and the establishment of a caretaker government with the consultation of the opposition transparently and peacefully was an important change for political development

(IBP, Inc, 2012). This procedure abolished arbitrary practice for dismissal of the government.

The Elections 2013 was criticized by the politicians due to rigging allegations but PPPP, the then ruling party was seriously affected and it lost the election (Ullah, 2013). The defeat of the party was expected as the pre-election surveys had forecasted and PML (N) became the major party by winning 166 seats of the National Assembly out of 272. This number was increased to 189 with the inclusion of special seats (Bradnock, 2015; NA, 2017). The election results were not in favor of the ruling party as it could not maintain its number in the parliament. It reveals that the elections were not interfered with by the government and they were free, fair and transparent.

Transfer of powers after the Elections 2013 was a serious challenge because no party had secured a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly. PML (N) was the majority party by winning 189 seats out of 342. PPPP, PTI, MQM, JUI (F), PML (F), and JI were other major parties respectively (NA, 2017). The major parties in the Provincial Assemblies were PML (N) in Punjab, PPPP in Sind, PTI in Khaibar Pakhtoon Khawa (KPK), and National Party (Pakistan) in Baluchistan. The entire winning parties participated in the coalition governments in the provinces and the center. It was a good sign for political development and helped to establish stable governments. PTI established the government in KPK in coalition with National Party Pakistan (NPP) and turn NPP to establish the Baluchistan Government in coalition with PTI (Idrees, 2016, p. 270; Samad, 2015). It was expected that the small parties might disturb the major parties by establishing a political alliance against them. But they set a good trend in the national politics and negated to ignore their mandate.

Powers were transferred properly and peacefully to newly elected representatives and Nawaz Sharif became the Prime Minister (Hayes, 2014). In the beginning, no party objected to the election results. Whereas, the losing parties used to protest and hardly accepted the results in history. For instance, the losing parties protested against election results conducted during General Ayub, Zia and Bhutto regimes. It was based on protest against unsatisfactory election results that Bengal, the largest province of the country was parted from the country (Zaheer, 1997). However, some parties as PTI and PPP had reservations against election results but they also favored the government to strengthen the democratic system. Later, PTI launched an effective movement against the election results but it failed as the bench of the Supreme Court headed by the Chief Justice released verdict against it.

## **Conclusion**

These facts reveal that transfer of powers was assured peaceful and various positive democratic norms were adopted during this era. Due to the continuation of the mentioned norms of democratic development, Pakistan became an important democratic country as it is going to become the fifth major country in the world. Similarly, the opposition parties had been continuously forecasting for the dissolution of the parliament but they could not succeed. So, continuous failure of forecasts strengthened the political system. Conclusively, the above mentioned steps for democratic development proved the initiative to the positive change. The effects of this change were also felt during the following five years Nawaz regime in which judiciary had become independent, the political parties expressed mature behavior, the role of the military was professional and the Prime Minister faced trial under Panama leaks along with many others. Although, in the election of 2013, the opposition was unsatisfied with the results and alleged pre-poll rigging and engineered results in favor of PML (N). But it also favored the sustainability of the democratic system.

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