

POLITICAL PARTIES: A FACTOR OF STABILITY IN PAKISTAN 1999-2008

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the Pakistan's political stability in the context of the role of the political parties from 1999 to 2008. It also highlights that the culture of political parties went through a profound change during the Musharraf era in the result of the reforms introduced by the military regime. The questions how the political parties strengthened themselves in response to and due to the challenges posed by the army rule and how parties performed for the development of the stability in the country have been dealt. The role of ruling parties – Pakistan Muslim League (PML(Q)), Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) – as well as the opposition parties – Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League (PML(N)), and Mutahida Majlis-i-Aml (MMA)'s religious parties – as the safeguard to the instability has been defined through a qualitative research. It was assessed that the political parties matured themselves and did not sacrifice the stability of the country for their political gains.

Keywords: Stability, party politics, influence, challenges, response

INTRODUCTION

In 12th October 1999 Musharraf took over the government and arrested Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. At that time Military officials from Musharraf's Joint Staff Headquarters met with regional corps commanders three times in September in anticipation of a possible coup. (*New Straits Times*, 1999) General Musharraf went to Sri Lanka to take part in 50th Army anniversary celebration of Sri Lanka. When he was returning from an official visit to Colombo his flight was rejected to land to Karachi International Airport and the order were given by Prime Minister of Pakistan. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif replaced Pervez Musharraf by Khwaja Ziauddin. At that time the military rejected the prime minister order and arrested him and placed Sharif under house arrest. The military failed the plan when soldiers take over the Air Port control in Karachi. Musharraf addressed the nation with a recorded message on 13th October. (Musharraf, 2006 p 40-60)

On October 13, Musharraf met with President Rafiq Tarar to predetermine on legitimizing the coup. Musharraf announced state of emergency and suspended the constitution and put on the power as Chief Executive of Pakistan on 15 October. He also quickly rid of the political enemies of the government particularly Ziauddin and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. In 17th October, he established a seven member military civilian council to run the government. On 21st October he also appointed three retired military officers and a judge as provincial administrators. Very soon he gained powers of Chief Executive but he did not obtained the Prime Minister office. After the personal request of Saudi Arabia Sharif's were exiled to Saudi Arabia during their house arrest. (BBC, 2007), (*The Guardian*, 2000) It was the time of political instability in the country when General Musharraf took over the country and the elected government dissolved. It was wrong way to take over the government and the political process of the country could not run due to this process of the Musharraf regime.

THE DANGER TO STABILITY FROM SEPTEMBER 11 AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Pakistan's political atmosphere and condition changed dramatically with the events of September 11 in the USA. It was quickly determined that the attacks on the United States had been staged by the Muslim militant organization Al-Qaeda, which was operating out of Afghanistan near the Pakistani border with the support of the Taliban regime. Pakistan had diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and Musharraf hesitated to put pressure on the Taliban to arrest Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. However, when Al-Qaeda and the Taliban became judged a single entity; the United States demanded Pakistani assistance as it was prepared to move militarily against both organizations. Musharraf chose to side with the United Nation coalition against the Taliban. (Ahmed, 2011)

Islamist conservatives of Pakistan were against of the General Musharraf decision of supporting the United States of America. Thousands of pro-Taliban Pakistani volunteers crossed the border to help the fight against the U.S. troops and their coalition allies when those forces invaded and occupied Afghanistan in the fall of 2001. In the period following the September 11 attacks and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the population of Islamist militants boomed in the FATA, as Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters found refuge over the border in Pakistan. Many more Muslim recruits flocked to the FATA from abroad, eager to join the conflict. (Ali, 2003)

Musharraf was pressurized by Washington to take aggressive action against these Islamist operatives in the tribal areas and the Pakistani military launched a major campaign to combat militants, particularly in mountainous Waziristan. However, the tribal Pashtun region historically had been off-limits to the central government and Pakistan's military action not only challenged Pashtun tribal autonomy there but it also affected members of the Pashtun community not involved with the militants. When government forces were met with stiff resistance, the soldiers often paramilitary and recruited from similar tribal orders were refused to fight or fought with little enthusiasm. Musharraf dismissed a number of army officers deemed sympathetic to the Taliban and numerous foreign jihadists were arrested by Pakistani authorities and turned over to coalition officials but the United States continued to accuse Islamabad of not doing enough to contain the terrorist threat.

This situation was a very hard test for the Pakistani government and political system as well as the state. This would have been dangerous for the stability of the country if the political parties especially the religious parties would side the militants and resultantly left the way of cooperation with the government. Not to mention of the factors which forced the parties to cooperate the government, no political including the religious parties as well came into direct and violent conflict with the government on the issue. The parties criticized Pakistani involvement in the war on terrorism but did not totally oppose the government and did not leave the government all alone in the state of war. That stance of PPP and even PML (N) was not in full opposition of the government and the same case was with the religious parties of MMA.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK ORDER AND POLITICAL PARTIES

In April 2002 General Musharraf made his position as the head of state, held and won a referendum granting him as president an additional five years. The referendum also the constitution of 1973 restore into previous condition providing 29 amendments in a document called the Legal Framework Order (LFO). The LFO based on many reforms about the government and the political parties. But here I discuss only those reforms which were for the

political parties. General elections in October were held under the limitations imposed by the LFO. Among those the attention was also fixed on the role of political parties. The Constitutional amendments which the Musharraf introduced obligated that all political parties.

Promote Internal Discipline and Accountability

Musharraf introduced the internal discipline and accountability in the political parties so that the members of the political parties attend all the general meetings of the party and parties establish discipline committees and held elections to choose the heads of these committees in district and provincial levels. Political parties give opportunities to their workers so that they can raise their ranks and give promotions in these committees. (LFO, 2002)

Promote Internal Democracy

LFO 2002 advised the political parties to promote democracy in the parties. For this purpose parties had to hold regular elections for all the leadership posts in all district, provincial and national levels. So that all parties must be based on democracy and this could also stop the promotion of hereditary politics. It was a good step of Musharraf government to develop the democracy in the political parties. (LFO, 2002)

Broaden Participation in the Decision-Making Process

All the political parties were directed to adopt such pattern that all members could participate in all the matters. It was also restricted that monthly meetings should be held at local levels. Local units should send their reports to district offices and the provincial offices should get the reports from the districts offices. Political parties must provide all necessary facilities including research staff to the committees so that the party policies could be made easily and all members must participate in decision making process.

Political parties were required to establish central and provincial funds for the low-income workers so that these party workers could also participate in the election process. Political parties were asked to initiate necessary training programs before achieving full membership and devote special attention to the workers. Political parties were desired to increase representation of women in provincial and central level in all executive committees and decision making bodies. It was also required that the political parties must enhance organizational capacity in headquarters by hiring professional staff on merit basis and instituting necessary management structures and practices. (LFO, 2002)

In rejection to the administrator measure for the betterment of the parties, The Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), uniting the PML (N) and the PPP rejected the LFO and also opposed (MMA) newly founded alliance comprising the religious parties. Thus while some parties were opposing the government, others were supporting it though seeming opposition. The MMA was indirectly helping in stabilizing the system that had been reformed with the help of LFO.

In LFO politicians who were involved in corruption, misconduct and evading repayment of government loans and were disqualified which could not participate in elections. The Amendment 17 established the National Security Council (NSC) and gave the executive seat to General Pervez Musharraf, therefore, the powers of Prime Minister and Parliament went to President. In 2003, to pass the amendment in the parliament a council was set up to check the values which were necessary. PML (N) and PPP-P rejected all proposals but Islamist parties of the MMA served as supporting parties of the regime. In fact, MMA was the second largest group of the parliament and it supported the government policies. Only exception in the

MMA was Jamat Islami which was the part of this coalition but did not support the policies of the regime. It means that all political parties of MMA except Jama'at worked for the stability of the regime.

The 17th Amendment which was ratified by Parliament on December 29, 2003 was a great milestone that produced the stability in the system. This Amendment on the one hand supported the steps of the Musharraf regime and on the other hand increased the stability in the system. The Amendment was passed after an agreement between the Musharraf regime and the MMA was reached. Thus the LFO was passed in the parliament and came into law on January 1 and allowing for the General's transition for COAS to President. LFO set up system of government that was going to be established in the future. The provisions of the LFO were accepted by the religious parties as well as ruling PML (Q) after Musharraf's agreement over his resignation as chief executive and contesting election as civilian president. The MMA, support the LFO and approved the Amendment by two-thirds majority. ARD boycotted this and organized rallies against the LFO in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. ARD was against MMA for the support of LFO and asked MMA as Musharraf party like PML-Q. But this time MMA stabilized the political system by supporting the LFO. If MMA could not support the LFO, the country once again could be destabilized in political affairs or the military regime might continue.

Major reason for which MMA supported the LFO was the agreement which was made between the leaders of two parties of the alliance, the Jamat-e-Islami's leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed and the JUI (F)'s leader Fazlur Rahman. In fact, the ARD and other political parties of the parliament felt that the MMA came close towards the Musharraf and became the Governments party like PML-Q, although MMA could not support thr government in Lal Masjid Operation and Hasba Bill. Later on, MMA proved that it was not a regime supporting party and opposed the government in different matters. (Admin, 2003)

Over LFO and over the agreement on uniform issue there were differences between two major parties – PPP-P and PML (N) – and MMA but on the imposition of LFO all of the parties followed it that meant the approval of the parties to LFO. All parties contested elections under LFO. Thus the stability in the country was not endangered by the attitude of the political parties. Altogether disagreement of the parties with the LFO might create situation that could lead towards chaos and agreement could lead towards development of stability. The parties chose the latter way on the cost of sitting in opposition.

After the deal on LFO Musharraf went back on his agreement with the MMA. Notwithstanding the religious parties were furiated they did not leave the system outrightly. They did not resign from their government in KPK. They continued to remain the part of the parliament. These were the options which could push the system towards instability. The avoidance from this course indirectly strengthened the political system of the country and stability prevailed.

The political parties, during the Musharraf regime had to reform also due to the external pressure mainly from the governmental decisions and policies. It became an objective need of the parties to reform themselves due the objective changes in the constitutional role of the political parties.

CONDITIONS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES DURING MUSHARRAF REGIME

Three new developments regarding political parties took place after the Musharraf takeover. First was the formation of a new political party named Pakistan Muslim League (Q), Second was the formation of an alliance of the religious parties named MMM and third was the

formation of the alliance of the parties Alliance for Restoration of the Democracy (ARD) which shared their opposition to the military rule and desired to replace it with the democratic one. Third was the formation of MMA. The PML (Q) was not an autochthonous party in its own right. It was not formed with new leaders or members. On the other hand it was formed through collection of the members of PML (N) and those minor groups which did not have a place in the political system. (*Dawn*, 2004)

FORMATION OF PML (Q)

Ch. Shujaat Hussain launched the PML (Q) in 2002 focusing onto General Musharraf military regime. Shujaat Hussain was the party's president, while party began the same pattern of PML (N)'s. President Pervez Musharraf got full advantage that granted opportunities to the party and gave full support of the government to diminish the public support of Mian Nawaz Sharif in the country. Tariq Aziz, the national security adviser had played an important role who gave the idea in advance of the general elections 2002 of converting the PML(N)'s into PML(Q), the Q stands for "Quaid-e-Azam". (Irfan Bukhari, 2011).

So In May 2004, To form a united Pakistan Muslim League (PML) various PML factions and other political parties merged with the PML(Q), only leaving out the Nawaz Sharif led faction of PML. They included the former President Farooq Leghari's Millat Party, Mr Jahan Zaib Awan, National People's Party, Manzoor Wattoo's PML (Jinnah) Hamid Nasir Chattha's PML (Junejo), Arbab Ghulam Rahim's Sindh Democratic Alliance, Pir Pagara's PML (Functional), and Ijaz-ul-Haq's PML (Zia).

The leaders of PML (Q) belonged to PML(N) before the creation of PML(Q) such as Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain, Chaudhary Pervaiz Elahi and Humayun Akhtar Khan, son of the late General Akhtar Abdur Rahman, who was close to Zia and Ijaz ul Haq, son of the late General Zia ul Haq. In fact, 75 % of its elected members were former "big men" of the Zia ul Haq regime and Nawaz Sharif Government. To establish the PML (Q) many members of PML(N) broke away in 2001 under NAB'S pressure. They were important supporters of General Pervez Musharraf and consider Musharraf their mentor. Although, Pervez Musharraf was not the part of the party but they support him as a party leader. Although Musharraf as a President of Pakistan could not participate in politics. (*Dawn*, 2003)

General Pervaiz Musharraf coined this faction of PML together before the elections of 2002, when the PML (N) was under clouds. Mian Nawaz Sharif was facing trial under terrorist act. Therefore the political members who were rivals of Nawaz within PML (N) and those who were scared of persecution by military government parted their ways from the PML (N). When Musharraf in 2000-01 called for restoration of the PML (Q) as a king's party they joined it attending the call of time. In 2004 when General Musharraf signaled the change of Prime Minister Mir Zafer-ullah Khan Jamalli's Government, further five factions of the PML merged in the PML (Q) under the leadership of Chaudhry Shujat Hussain. (*New York times*, 1999)

Throughout the period of Musharraf, the PML (Q) remained an important political party in the parliament with its presence in all the provincial assemblies and it only lost its political standards after it lost the elections in 2008. (*The Tribune*, 2004) The PML (Q) supported the Musharraf regime in every way. This support of the party to regime in turn proved a support for the stability in the country. The party helped in consolidating the system and avoiding the chaos. The elements of the party, though not democratically ideal, played the role of ruling party in a very well manner. This gave the regime a form of democratic government within as

well as out of the country. The image of the government as a democratic one was established and Pakistan and the party helped in establishing the stability of the country.

The ARD took the opposing stance of the government. It, however, could not cross the limits and instability did not occur in the country due to the actions of the ARD. The ARD could choose the line of action of demonstrations and total refusal of the political system. In that case Musharraf regime would find no other option but to increase the pressure. All this could lead to instability. But ARD, despite being in opposition, did not adopt the course of complete refusal and the system was allowed to function as it was working. The struggle within system and avoidance from complete denial of the regime remained the policy of the ARD that did not endanger the stability.

GENERAL ELECTION 2002 AND POLITICAL PARTIES

General elections were held on 10th October 2002 and National Assembly of Pakistan and the provincial assemblies were elected. Around 70 parties participated in the general elections 2002; only six parties managed significant popular support for the prime minister candidacy. With the conclusion of these general elections, Pakistan came back to democracy and the two-party system was developing gradually into multi-party system. More than 70 parties, contested the election, the major parties were the Pakistan Muslim League (N), Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), Pakistan Muslim League (Q) also called the "King's Party" for its unconditional support to the Musharraf regime, and the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), the alliance of six religious parties named Jamiat Ulema Islam (F), Jamat-e-Islami, Tehrik-e-Jafaria Pakistan, Jamiat Ulema Pakistan, Jamiat Ahle Hadith. (South Asia: BBC, 2004)

In general elections 2002 there were 357 constituencies for the National Assembly and 728 constituencies for Provincial Assemblies. There are 60 seats are reserved for women in the National Assembly and 128 in the provincial assemblies. In addition, 10 seats are reserved for non-Muslims in the National Assembly and 23 in the provincial assemblies. In April 2002, Pervez Musharraf's extended his term as president through a referendum for five years. General elections were held for the national and provincial assemblies in 2002 and for the Senate in 2003. But international and domestic observers had criticized these elections.

Political parties had increased in numbers but declined in political power, particularly in relation to the military government. Many political parties had splintered into factions, due to electoral support and became the coalitions that often also dissolved into factions. PML (N) and PPP had splintered into many parties and the MQM had lost substantial legitimacy as a result of involvement in violence.

In general elections 2002, 73 political parties participated in the National Assembly elections, but the registered members of a political party were only 3 percent. After the elections 2002, Pakistan Muslim League (Q) made a coalition government in provincial assemblies in Punjab and Sindh and the National Assembly. PML (Q) was closely political party of the government of General Pervez Musharraf. Many parties had no constitutions, membership lists and documentation of funding sources. Furthermore, the electoral support was rarely nationwide and mostly drawn from particular religious, ethnic, or regional bases. Many parties had separate wings for youth and women.

Lack of clear majority of anyone political party showed that people did not trust any of these parties. Therefore all of the parties enjoyed less support. The clear will of people, which is indeed the expression of their choices, establishes a stable political system that is strongly

supported by the common masses. The lack of the support of the will of people, therefore, lessened the capacities of the political parties for stabilization of the political system.

The results of general elections were issued after inexplicable delay and no party had got majority in the new National Assembly but also was surprising that unexpectedly large number of seats won by the Islamic parties. The religious alliance of political parties known as Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) secured 51 seats in the National Assembly elections while PML (Q) won 76 seats and PPP won 62 seats. 121 seats in the National Assembly were the three major anti-Government parties PPP-P, MMA and the PML (N). The Islamic parties were won majority in the National Assembly and got a strong position which previously had not. MMA got a clear-cut majority in NWFP and Baluchistan provinces where it easily formed a government on its own. In Punjab and Sind provinces no party had got the majority and coalition governments were formed. In general elections there was a low turnout of 20 to 25 percent as compared to 35.42 percent in 1997 general elections. Many political parties accepted the elections as free, fair and transparent but some political parties alleged that the elections were engineered and government gave a favor of some parties. (*Dawn*, 2004)

Despite the reservations on the results of elections as well as the defeat in the elections, the opposition parties – PPP, PML-N, and religious parties – as well as the ruling parties – PML (Q), MQM etc. did not choose to leave the system. This again provided the legitimacy to the regime which in fact increases the stability. Thus the actions of the parties became the supportive for the stability of the country.

HUNG PARLIAMENT AND POLITICAL PARTIES' ROLE

While the actions of the political parties bent toward stability, the situation and the conditions of the parties produced instability. In general elections 2002, no party could get simple majority in the parliament. So Pakistan faced menace of a hung parliament. Mir Zaffarullah Khan Jamali, the candidate of PML(Q) as the Prime Minister of Pakistan set up a coalition government with the help of MQM, some independent candidates and 10 members of the who defected from the party to form their own Forward Block. Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) was a coalition of religious parties consisting of the Jamiat Islami, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan, Tehrik-e-Jafaria Pakistan, Jamiat Ahle Hadith and a few other smaller groups. (*The Tribune*, 2008)

The opposition PPP polled next highest, but it was MMA that made the most notable showing marking the first time a Pakistani religious organization had gained a significant voice in parliament. The MMA was vehemently opposed to Musharraf's policy of confronting Islamist groups and after gaining a dominant political role in the North-West Frontier Province, the MMA openly questioned the army's actions in Waziristan. Even then the MMA's blanket support towards the system continued.

Instability knocked at the doors of Pakistan from 2002 to 2004. Musharraf's government had been combating religious extremism at home, banning some of the more militant groups that had long been active in Pakistan and rounding up hundreds of religious activists. Low-level fighting and skirmishing took place along the line of control there until late November 2003, when, unexpectedly, the Pakistani government declared a unilateral cease-fire and sought negotiations with New Delhi. The following month, two attempts were made on the president's life. Acts of political and religious violence continued to escalate, particularly those between Sunni and Shia factions. In all of this circumstance the ratification of the most provisions of LFO as the 17th Amendment in the Constitution gave a breathing relief to the instable conditions of the government. The 17th amendment confirmed Musharraf's power to

dismiss a prime minister, appoint chiefs of the armed forces and provincial governors and dissolve the National Assembly. (Bakhtiar, 2004)

Now the system became stable. In January 2004 Musharraf sought and received an unprecedented vote of confidence from a parliamentary electoral college. In August Shaukat Aziz became the Prime Minister of Pakistan who was a former banker and minister of finance. Musharraf, however, clearly hold the reins of power and despite repeated promises to return the country to full civilian authority.

He announced at the end of the year that the country was too brittle for him to comply with his own deadlines. On the other hand Pervez Musharraf was against the MMA, who accused and stopped him of seeking to secularize Pakistan. The country was going to sectarian violence, suicide bombing at mosques and different public places. Including these conditions suffered an earthquake in Kashmir in October 2005 that killed the thousands of people and left many homeless. (Admin, 2003)

In the wake of political stability the sectarian and terrorist violence was a matter of concern to the stability. The economy of the country needed law and order to flourish; This was out of control as well as out of the domain of the political parties in Pakistan. In the developed political systems the political parties help government in tackling such issues but due to various constraints the parties in Pakistan were unable to provide any support to the government especially on issues of sectarianism and terrorism.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND JAMALI'S RESIGNATION: AN INSTABLE POINT

Mir Zaffarullah Jamali very surprisingly declared his resignation on television On 26 June 2004. There was much news about Jamali and President Musharraf on executing the government policies. A media report said that Jamali was failed to fulfill the entire desire of President Musharraf to satisfy the oppositions as they were unhappy with him, opposition performance and his failure to endorse his policies strongly, although, President did not asked Jamali to resign. (*Pakistan Tribune*, 2004)

Initially, the allied parties were shocked to hear the news of Jamali's resignation and they named his resignation as forced and humiliation for democracy, while others stated that it was not good for the future. After the surprise announcement, Jamali nominated his party's President Shujaat Hussain as interim prime minister. After some weeks of the resignation, it was clearly opened that the resignation came as a result of adverse relations with Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. (*Economic Times*, 2012)

Musharraf accepted the resignation of Jamali. Shujaat Hussain nominated Finance minister Shaukat Aziz as Prime minister who had been working as finance minister in 1999. Musharraf regarded Shoukat Aziz as his right hand and best choice for the office of Prime Minister. With Shaukat Aziz appointed as Prime minister, General pervez Musharraf transferred all executive powers to Aziz. Shaukat Aziz approved many projects that did not require permission of President Musharraf. (*Business Standard News*, 2004) The episode of Jamali's resignation was a shocking upheaval to the regime. The change of the premier could again lead towards instability or complete destruction in the lines of the government if there was not the support of the ruling parties with the President. The parties in the government, however, not only cooperated with the President but also supported his wishes. His close friend who was not a seasoned political worker in contrast to a well reputed Jamali was able to win the support of political parties and thus a change of government took place within the Assembly.

TREND OF COALITIONS AND INSTABILITY

The trend of political parties during 2001 to 2008 was to form coalitions amongst themselves. PML (Q) and MMA formed the coalition government in the Centre while in opposition the coalition of ARD was made. This trend of coalition became the reason of instable conditions. Coalition set up is considered temporary arrangement in political scenario everywhere in the world. Since the coalition is based on interests of various groups when they are not served it is broken and leads to more instable conditions within the political system where the coalitions are formed. (*Daily Times*, 2004)

With the exile of Nawaz and his family and emergence of new PML (Q) pushed the PML (N) into periphery of politics following the elections of 2002 under military dictator General Musharraf as the President of Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif, the head of PML (N) was allowed to come back in Pakistan in 2007. The PML (N) and PPP signed a Charter of Democracy to launch a joint struggle against military dictator. In future, Charter of Democracy keeps the temperature low on both sides against each other. On 1st January 2004 President Pervez Musharraf got a vote of confidence in the Electoral College of Pakistan, consisting of National Assembly, Senate and the four provincial assemblies. Musharraf secured 658 votes out of 1170 votes; as a result of getting the vote of confidence his term was extended to 2007.

INSTABILITY DUE TO LAL MASJID AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Lal Masjid was a religious school for women and the Jamia Hafsa Madrassa, which was attached to the mosque. Another madrassa where male students got education was also attached to the mosque which was only a few minutes' drive. Many prominent politicians, presidents, prime ministers and army chiefs often visited the mosque. (*BBC News*, 2007)

The mosque administration started attack on local businesses like massage parlors and video shops in April 2007. The mosque administration announced that these businesses were against Islam. These attacks on these local businesses were often executed by the mosque's female students. In July 2007, Government authorities made a decision to stop the violence by the female students of the madrassa and sent officers to arrest those students who were involve in these matters. This development could not gain results and the mosque's students refused to surrender and keep firing and shelling on the police. So many police men were killed at that operation. (*BBC News*, 2007)

3rd July 2007, The Lal Masjid students stole the radio sets and weapons from the rangers. After it the army located the mosque and gave a dead line to the students to surrender. But the administration and students could not accept the government's demands. So the army took over the operation against the Lal Masjid administration. This issue created a major political instability in the country. All political parties except ruling parties were against this operation, but government denied the pressure of the political parties and the people of Pakistan. The ruling party tried to dissolve the issue through negotiations but at last failed due to the stiff attitude of presidency as well as the administrators of the mosque.

INSURGENCY IN BALOCHISTAN AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Akbar Bughti was supportive to Nawaz Sharif and against Musharraf regime. Military was also against the Bughti, although Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz forcefully denied that there was no military action against Akbar Bughti. Shaukat Aziz as Prime minister never gave any information about military action in Balochistan. But Shaukat Aziz appeared 25-26th August midnight on television and stated that Bughti was killed when a shell exploded in his cave.

NAWAZ AND BB'S RETURN, INSTABILITY AND POLITICAL PARTIES

In September 2007, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan and was immediately arrested. He was sent back to Saudi Arabia. On 8th September 2007, Muqrin bin Abdul Aziz (Saudi intelligence chief) and Saad Hariri (Lebanese politician) arrived separately in Islamabad. They gave a message from Saudi King Abdullah after a meeting with Nawaz Sharif in London. After meeting, Musharraf discussed for two-and-a-half hours of Nawaz Sharif's possible return. At that time there was a political instability occurred in the country. PML (N) organized rallies throughout the country. As chief executive, Musharraf had total power to himself. He could not allow the PML to organize these rallies which were against him. Although, the general condition of the country was poor. Musharraf claimed that Pakistan was at a upper level and Sharif's supporters planned to split and weaken the country and armed forces. (Walker, 2007)

Deputy Information Minister Tariq Azim said on 14th September 2007 that Benazir Bhutto would not be deported, but must face corruption suits against her. He clarified that Nawaz Sharif's and Benazir Bhutto had right to return to Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan on 18th October after eight years exile. On 17th September 2007, Bhutto accused Musharraf's allies that they were the responsible of political instability in the country. (CNN News, 2007) Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto who had also been living in exile decided to return to Pakistan and each began campaigning for the upcoming general elections. The Parliamentary elections were scheduled for early January 2008, so both leaders started their campaign. (The Sunday Times, 2007)

CONCLUSION

In the start of Musharraf regime Pakistan had to face a situation which in every way could be called the instability. In that situation the political parties of Pakistan especially the former ruling party PML(N) and former major opposition party PPP had to face the challenges of survival. The parties not only survived but also contributed in the political activity during Musharraf period. Moreover all political parties passed through internal reforms due to the rules and regulations introduced by Musharraf regime. These reforms left positive effect on the parties. They all, the ruling as well as the opposition parties, contributed for the development of political system. There were very few occasions when the actions of the political parties caused the instability. Otherwise on almost all occasions of the dangers of instability the political parties came to the assistance of the regime for the stability of Pakistan.

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