

# POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF THE PML-N: ROLE IN OPPOSITION AND ALLIANCES DURING MUSHARRAF'S RULE

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## Abstract

*This article aims to analyse the PMLN, the context in which it originated, the role of its founder, Nawaz Sharif, and party's later expansion and progress. The focus is on the factors that contributed to split of party from PML, as well as the contribution made by the party and its leader in strengthening resistance against the Musharraf government from 1999 to 2008. Operating as the main opposition party to Musharraf's military-led administration, the PML-N role in maneuvering through a multifaceted environment of political suppression, changing alliances, and public dissatisfaction is analyzed. The analysis investigates how the party reacted strategic to Musharraf's autocratic policies? This research examines the issues by utilizing qualitative methodology through collection of data from secondary sources. The paper examines specific political events such as protests, election strategies, and agreements with other political organizations to demonstrate how the PML-N adjusted its approach to successfully challenge the Musharraf administration's tactics. Furthermore, the article examines the party's involvement in promoting democratic changes and its influence on the ultimate reinstatement of democratic procedures in Pakistan. Through an analysis of the PML-N's tactics and political maneuvers, the study offers valuable understanding of the wider dynamics of opposition politics and democratic advocacy during a crucial time in Pakistan's history.*

**Keywords:** PML-N, Alliance Politics, Democratic Advocacy, Opposition Politics, Pervez Musharraf

## INTRODUCTION

The PML-N is a centre-right, liberal conservative political party in Pakistan. It is presently the dominant political party in the National Assembly and ranks as the third-largest party in the Senate of Pakistan. The party was established in 1993 by a coalition of influential conservative politicians in the country following the dismemberment of the Islamic Democratic Alliance, led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

The party's core ideology is predominantly conservative, encompassing the endorsement of free markets, deregulation, reduced taxation, and private ownership (Haleem, 2013). While formerly aligned with social conservatism, the party's political ideology and platform have shifted towards a more liberal stance on social and cultural matters in recent years. Accompanying the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and PPP, it is among the three prominent political parties in the nation (Post, 2016).

One of the extant factions of the original Muslim League, the Pakistan Muslim League was established after the 1985 Elections by Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo, who consolidated the followers of President Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorship into a unified party. Following the death of President Zia in 1988, a significant bloc, led by Fida Mohammad Khan, separated from the Junejo-dominated Pakistan Muslim League and established a conservative coalition with many right-wing and Islamist political groups known as the Islamic Democratic Alliance. During 1990, the alliance established a government led by Nawaz Sharif. After the coalition disbanded in 1993, the party transformed into its present form and rebranded itself as the "Nawaz" faction of the Pakistan Muslim League, distinguishing itself from the "Junejo" side.



Following its establishment, the PML-N, in conjunction with the People's Party, exerted significant influence and control over the two-party political structure of Pakistan. Nevertheless, following the 1999 coup, the party was overshadowed by its own splinter group, the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid), which was supported by Musharraf, for around ten years. Following its election as the main opposition party in the 2008 general elections, PML-N recovered popularity. It regained control after the 2013 elections, when Sharif was triumphantly elected as the Prime Minister for an unparalleled third term. Nevertheless, the party encountered a significant blow consequent to the disqualification of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 2017.

The situation deteriorated after Sharif and his daughter Maryam received lengthy prison terms for corruption; nevertheless, their individual sentences were subsequently halted (Dawn, 2018). As of 2022, the party, led by Sharif's younger brother Shahbaz, is the dominant ruling party in Parliament, having lost both the Centre and the province government of its bastion Punjab to PTI in the 2018 elections.

#### **PMLN in General Elections 1988, 1990, 1993 and 1997**

The contemporary history of the party originated in the 1988 parliamentary elections, when the Pakistan Muslim League, under the leadership of former prime minister Mohammed Khan Junejo, divided into two factions: one led by Fida Mohammad Khan and Nawaz Sharif, who was the chief minister of Punjab Province at the time, and the other led by Junejo himself (who subsequently established the Pakistan Muslim League (F)).

The Pakistan Muslim League (N) was created in 1988 by Fida Mohammad Khan, an initial activist of the Pakistan Movement. Khan assumed the role of the party's founding president, while Nawaz Sharif became its first secretary-general thereafter. Although not the original Muslim League, the party is widely seen as its ongoing legal successor (Cookman, 2013). By the 1988 elections, the PML was a constituent of the eight-party Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA), which had united the right-wing conservative majority as a single entity to counter the left-wing factions, headed by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). In the 1988 general elections, the Pakistan Peoples Party emerged as the main political party, securing 94 out of the 237 seats in the state parliament. The IDA held 55 seats, but, a prominent figure, Nawaz Sharif, opted to nominate himself as the Chief Minister of Punjab Province. Following Benazir Bhutto's elevation to the position of Prime Minister of Pakistan, the Independent Defamation Advisory Council (IDA) selected Abdul Wali Khan as a moderate choice for the opposition leader in the state parliament. Under a span of 20 months, the government of the Pakistan Peoples Party was plagued by stories of poor governance and corruption. In 1990, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan accused the PPP government of corruption and failing to manage effectively, leading to the dismissal of both the National Assembly and the first Bhutto administration.

Under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, the PML-N, which was once a constituent of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IDA), actively took part in the general elections of 1990. The IDA engaged in competition with the leftist coalition, referred to as the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA), which had housed the Pakistan People's Party and the Tel. Following the elections, IDA emerged victorious, and Nawaz Sharif assumed the position of Prime Minister. The independent and democratic administration (IDA) provided the conservative factions led by Sharif with an opportunity to establish a national government, marking the first instance in the history of Pakistan. The assumption of office by Sharif also signified a transformation in the political culture of Pakistan, namely a transfer of power from the traditional feudal nobility to the expanding group of contemporary and moderate entrepreneurs.

In a groundbreaking move, Sharif initiated privatisation and economic liberalisation policy initiatives, and his economic team successfully executed some of the significant economic liberalisation and privatisation policies that previous administrations had just discussed (Samad, 2013). The election results also indicated that the MQM, conservatives, emerged as the third largest party with 15 seats. Sharif, for the first time in the nation's history, permitted monetary transactions involving foreign currency to be conducted through private money changers. Although his achievements received international recognition, the PPP strongly criticised his policies. Benazir



Bhutto exerted immense pressure on President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who terminated the administration of the Independent Democratic Alliance (IDA) on 18 April 1993.

The PML-N lodged an appeal with the Supreme Court, which subsequently reinstated Sharif's administration on 26 May. The nation's armed services and military leadership endeavoured to engage in negotiations with Sharif in order to secure his resignation. This ultimately resulted in the resignation of Nawaz Sharif, and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan was likewise ousted from his position (Samad, Governance, Economic Policy and Reform in Pakistan, 1993).

In the 1993 legislative elections, the PML-N achieved nation-wide recognition and secured 73 seats in the state parliament. The political party affirmed its position as the opposition to the Pakistan People's Party. The PML-N accused Benazir Bhutto of engaging in corruption, causing stagnation, and in jeopardising national security. Furthermore, the PPP was adversely affected by internal divisions, one of which was spearheaded by Murtaza Bhutto. The contentious killing of Murtaza Bhutto by the Sindh Police and the subsequent pressure on MQM exacerbated the already fragile position of Benazir Bhutto.

Benazir Bhutto's departure came as a shock to both the PML-N and Sharif himself. One paradoxical element of this termination was that it was instigated by the former President Farooq Leghari, a reliable subordinate of Benazir, who appointed her to the president as a precautionary measure for the PPP's administration following the resignation of Ghulam Ishaq Khan. Under the campaign, Nawaz Sharif traversed the whole expanse of Pakistan. Furthermore, he initiated a train procession from Lahore to Peshawar as a strategic move to remove Benazir from power. Throughout this period, the party maintained strong connections and exerted significant influence on the appointments and military plans of the Pakistan Armed Forces, making it one of the most closely aligned with the civil bureaucracy and it.

The Pakistan Muslim League (N) achieved its greatest and most substantial success in the 1997 legislative elections, which took place on 3 February 1997 (Dawn, In pictures: The rise and fall of Nawaz Sharif, 2018). It achieved a two-thirds majority in the Pakistan Parliament, making it the sole political party to have obtained such a majority since the nation attained independence in 1947. Amidst this period, the PML-N emerged as the dominant conservative party, securing 137 seats out of a total of 207, which accounts for around 66.2% (ECP). In 1997, the party achieved victory with a decisive mandate, with minimal opposition. Following Nawaz Sharif's successful vote of confidence on 18 February 1997, the Pakistan Muslim League took over the government of Pakistan (Dawn, In pictures: The rise and fall of Nawaz Sharif, 2018). In spite of the PML-N's control of the state parliament, Nawaz Sharif granted Benazir Bhutto the role of Leader of the Opposition. In an effort to consolidate its authority and enhance its position, the PML-N government enacted the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of Pakistan.

In 1998, the PML-N assumed control over the law and order situation and successfully achieved economic recovery. To establish the country as a parliamentary democracy, several constitutional modifications were enacted. In May 1998, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's PML-N government, in reaction to Indian nuclear tests, decreed the conduction of six nuclear tests. The tests gained immense popularity and elevated PML-N's image and reputation to an unprecedented level domestically. Nevertheless, in 1998, the PML-N administration essentially terminated the employment of General Jehangir Karamat (see to Dismissal of General Jehangir Karamat), resulting in unfavourable public opinion but creating the impression of civilian authority over the military. Such power politics and the frequent removals of military commanders deteriorated the party's relationship with the Pakistan Armed Forces, leading to a slow decline in its public ratings (Dawn, In pictures: The rise and fall of Nawaz Sharif, 2018).

Notwithstanding its substantial public mandate, significant disputes arose within the party. At last, the 1999 coup d'état brought an end to the PML-N's government. 94 Significantly, in 1999, the party had a notable division, which had a further impact on Nawaz Sharif's prosecution in the military court. No large-scale demonstrations were organised by the party; its officials refrained from speaking out and maintained their endorsement of the military intervention against Nawaz Sharif. In 2001, the party experienced additional fragmentation due to factionalism. The Pakistan Muslim



League, previously known as the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) (or PML-Q), was established by dissenters and subsequently aligned with the administration of former president Pervez Musharraf. The Muslim League (Nawaz) officially changed its name to PML-N, more commonly referred to as PML(N), in 2001 (Economist, 2008).

#### **PML-N Strived for Restoration of Democracy in Musharraf's Regime**

Pervez Musharraf assumed administrative control through a military coup when the army leadership declined to acknowledge the decision made by the democratically elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (PMLN) to remove the former Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and appoint General Ziauddin Butt as a new COAS on October 12, 1999. The decision of the prime minister was a result of the disagreements that arose between him and the COAS during the Kargil war, which General Musharraf allegedly initiated without the authorisation or awareness of Sharif (Dugger, 1999). In a televised address to the country, Musharraf declared the decision to remove the civilian administration, which includes the prime minister, his cabinet, provincial chief ministers, and governors.

The Constitution and the National Assembly of Pakistan were suspended by Musharraf on October 14, thereby establishing a state of emergency within the nation. Nevertheless, it was declared that President Rafiq Tarar would retain his position. Musharraf declared himself as the Chief Executive of the nation, therefore assuming the authority of the prime minister. Additionally, he issued a Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) which prohibited all courts and tribunals from issuing any "judgement, writ, order" or similar measures against any action carried out by "the chief executive or any authority designated" by him, including the declaration of emergency.

Nevertheless, the military government explicitly stated that the basic rights that do not conflict with "the declaration of emergency" will continue to be valid. The administration also guaranteed Justice Said-uz-zaman Siddiqui, the former Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), that it would not impede the autonomy of the judiciary, which may continue to operate in accordance with the constitution (Naazer, 2018).

President Musharraf failed to fulfil the majority, if not all, of his commitments, especially those pertaining to the tenure of President Tarar, autonomy of the judiciary, and implementation of basic human rights, including civil and political rights, within the nation. Specifically, he compelled the judges of the higher courts to take an oath under the Public Contracts Ordinance (PCO) and dismissed those who declined to do so or were denied the opportunity to take the oath due to government disapproval or fear. In addition, Musharraf unlawfully removed President Tarar from his position and thereafter elevated himself to the presidency. Therefore, the Musharraf government eroded the autonomy of the court, making it subordinate to the executive, particularly military leadership, reduced political freedoms and limited media freedom.

Throughout the military regime of Pervez Musharraf, the general human rights situation in the country remained grim. Notwithstanding the apparent shift to civilian control (and reinstatement of democracy) after the general elections conducted in October 2002, no substantial change occurred.

#### **Role of PMLN General Elections 2002**

Following the Kargil War with India, the PML-N administration experienced dissatisfaction among its members. In 1999, a clandestine faction within the party formed a coalition with all the opposition parties to pursue a single objective: to ousting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from power. Thus, a military coup d'état ensued. The coup was deemed legitimate by the Supreme Court, which granted General Pervez Musharraf a three-year term to conduct general elections. Following the removal of Sharif's administration, the party underwent a division into multiple factions, resulting in a reduction in its membership as a significant number of its members choose to join the splinter political grouping. A significant number of its most prominent members, sponsors, and funders defected to the new group affiliated with Pervez Musharraf. This faction resurfaced as the Pakistan Muslim League (Q), and officially incorporated as a political party with the Election Commission. Following Sharif's removal from the party's presidency, Dr. Kalsoum Nawaz, who was married to Sharif, assumed the role. Following the exile of Nawaz Sharif to Saudi Arabia, the party's president was transferred to Javed Hashmi, prompting the party to reaffirm its identity in the next general



elections. They conducted extensive nationwide campaigns and participated in the 2002 state parliament general elections. The election results declared the triumph of the Pakistan Muslim League (Q) and the liberals, MQM, as these parties maintained their majority in the state assembly and decisively defeated the PML-N (Economist, 2008).

In the 2002 Pakistani general election, the PML-N had a subpar performance, securing a mere 9.4% of the popular vote and obtaining seats for a mere 14 out of 272 elected members. This was the most severe loss the party has suffered since its establishment in 1988 (Economist, 2008). Following his contentious comments about the nation's military, Hashmi was ousted from the party's president. Shahbaz Sharif was elected as the new president of the party in an indirect party election, and the executive leadership of the party relocated to London, England. In 2006, the party entered into a collaborative declaration with its competitor, Pakistan People's Party, to delineate and advance a novel democratic philosophy in the nation. Termed the Charter of Democracy, this paper was affixed by Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto in London, when they declared their dissent against Musharraf and Shaukat Aziz (News, 2006). In the 2008 general election, the party secured electoral support in metropolitan areas and had significant influence over the temporary parliament of Punjab Province. Their electoral victory in the state parliament amounted to 91 seats, placing them second only to the Pakistan People's Party, which obtained 121 seats. Subsequently, the parties reached a consensus to establish a coalition administration. The PML-N initiated the process of impeaching President Pervez Musharraf, effectively removing him from his position as president and thereafter banishing him to the United States in 2008 (Dawn, 2006). Nevertheless, Nawaz Sharif promptly declared his endorsement and guidance of the Lawyers' Movement aimed at reinstating the esteemed Iftikhar Chaudhry, who had been suspended in 2008. A branch of the PML-N was created in Kashmir Province in 2011 with the purpose of participating in the general elections of Kashmir.

#### **Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD)**

The Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD) was established on December 3, 2000 in Islamabad as a direct response to the military dictatorship led by Musharraf and to advocate for the cessation of military governance (Dawn, 2006). Nusrullah Khan was appointed as its president. The objectives of the initiative were to promptly reinstate democracy and constitution, conduct free and fair elections, and achieve maximum regional autonomy. The 18 salient party components were PPP, PML(N) ANP, JWP, PKMAP, PTI, and MQM. These parties were unsuccessful in exerting influence in the 2002 election. Nawaz Sharif was compelled to commit exile to Saudi Arabia, a decision that was strongly condemned by ARD. It ranks as the second biggest opposition alliance in Pakistan, following the six-party alliance known as MMA.

As per a newswire, the ARD is intrinsically cumbersome, as it forms alliances of parties that lack compatibility and share only their antagonism to General Musharraf (Economist, 2004). Certain reports suggest that the ARD consists of 15 political parties, including the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz faction (PML-N). Contrarily, several sources have said that the ARD consists of total of 18 political parties (Dawn, 2020). The Bureau Chief of an independent newspaper, based in Peshawar, informed the Research Directorate that of the PML-N and the PPP-P, the Pakistan Democratic Party led by Nawabzada Mansoor Ali Khan and the Pakistan Muslim League (Qayoom group) are also significant constituents of the ARD.

Prior to 2003, press reports documented the inclusion of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), the ANP, (Times, 2002) and the Pakistan Democratic Front within the ARD (Hindu, 2000). The remaining parties were said to consist of "distinct ethnic and nationalist factions as well as minor religious groups that have a track record of significant political and ideological disparities". The article published on 7 December 2000 stated that the Jamhoori Watan Party, based in Balochistan, was anticipated to become a member of the Alliance. However, the Research Directorate was unable to locate any information regarding the actual membership of this party in the ARD among the sources checked. Reports indicate that the ANP, the MQM, and the Labour Party, Pakistan (LPP) withdrew from the Alliance in 2001 (Tribune, 2002). The Research Directorate was unable to locate any further or up-to-date information regarding the specific member parties of the ARD among the





sources it consulted. During November 2003, the ARD occupied 78 seats in the 342-seat National Assembly, with 18 of those seats being controlled by the PML-N (News G. , 2003).

Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, who concurrently held the position of leader of the Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP), was the inaugural leader of the ARD. After the death of Khan in September 2003, a new presidency role was created to promote equilibrium between the two main factions of the coalition, the PPP-P and the PML-N. On 8 October 2003, Javed Hashmi, the interim leader of the PML-N, was duly chosen as the president of the ARD. Simultaneously, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, representing the PPP-P, was elected as the chairman of the ARD. According to reports, Fahim assumed the position of chairman of the ARD in March 2005, although Hashmi remained the head of the ARD in January 2005 (Dawn, 2003).

As to the Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), the trial infringes against global norms regarding the proper procedural safeguards and equitable legal proceedings. Hashmi was denied the due time and opportunity to establish his innocence. The trial processes were carried out clandestinely at the Adiyala Jail. Attendance of his family members or reporters was prohibited. The ACHR outlined the incidents up to Hashmi's arrest and conviction as follows:

Having strongly opposed the Legal Frame Work Order on 21 August 2001 and the 17th Constitutional Amendment Bill, Hashmi became a source of contention for General Parvez Musharraf. Under Mr. Hashmi's leadership, the ARD was impeding its progress, depriving President Musharraf of the National Assembly's approval of his decrees and powers. Following the incarceration of Hashmi, the government enacted the 17th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 with a two-thirds majority on 29 December 2003, therefore reinstating article 58(2)(b) of the Constitution. Effectively, this clause grants President Musharraf the authority to dismiss a prime minister and disband the National Assembly, to request a vote of confidence from parliament and the four province assemblies to legitimise dictatorship, and to retain his position as army leader for an additional year.

Published articles in October 2003 and February 2005 indicated that Iqbal Zafar Jhagra served as the secretary-general of the ARD (Dawn, 2005). Tehmina Daultana was identified as the vice-president and candidate for the deputy opposition leader position of the ARD in October 2003. Syed Zafar Ali Shah was identified as the information secretary of the ARD. Further up-to-date information regarding the identities of prominent members of the ARD could not be located within the sources checked by the Research Directorate. Although the PML-N and the PPP-P are the primary political parties in the ARD, Freedom House contends that Musharraf effectively rendered Nawaz Sharif, the leader of PML-N, ineffective via a combination of legal convictions and forced exile. Nevertheless, as stated by the ACHR, the ARD has emerged as the most outspoken detractor of the military governance, both within and beyond the National Assembly.

The book "Political Parties of the World 2005" asserts that Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, the inaugural leader of the ARD, effectively reconciled the intense competition between the PPP-P and the PML-N. Additionally, he successfully secured the limited cooperation of the MMA. In October 2003, PPP-P leaders expressed their dissatisfaction with the appointment of Hashmi as president of the ARD. This was because the PML-N had a smaller number of members in the national assembly compared to the PPP-P. Additionally, the PPP-P leaders protested that out of the six key positions within the ARD, five were being occupied by the PML-N (Dawn, 2004). By August 2004, Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the PPP-P, and Sharif Nawaz, the leader of the PML-N, together with the ARD and the MMA, nominated Hashmi as a joint opposition candidate. In February 2005, Bhutto and Nawaz convened in Jeddah to formulate a three-point accord aimed at advancing democracy in Pakistan. This framework was to be jointly pursued by the PML-N and the PPP-P (Dawn, 2005).

Further details regarding the current state of the PML-N could not be located within the sources checked by the Research Directorate. The present Response was developed following a thorough investigation of publicly accessible information provided to the Research Directorate within specified time limitations. Please note that this Response is not, and does not claim to be, definitive on the validity of any specific application for refugee status.



### **Charter of Democracy**

A thirty-six point 'Charter of Democracy' was signed by Mian Nawaz Sharif and Benazir on 14 May 2006. The key aspects of CoD included constitutional revisions, a code of conduct, transparent and equitable elections, and harmonious civil-military ties. The paper was comprehensive, addressing all significant factors that had been impeding the progress of democracy in Pakistan. On July 2, 2006, the CoD document was signed by several constituent parties of the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), including Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP), Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP), Jamiat Ahle Hadith (JAH), and Pakistan Christian Party (Aziz, 2009). Following the signing of the document, all major political parties achieved consensus in order to enhance the democratic system in Pakistan.

Under this charter PPP and PML-N agreed to revoke the 17<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment by restoring parliamentary system. All parties have agreed to conduct elections for local bodies through provincial election commissions. They reiterated their commitment to grant constitutional safeguards to Local bodies, therefore ensuring their autonomy, responsibility, and accountability to the provincial legislatures.

The code of conduct stipulated that both parties agreed to eliminate the National Security Council (NSC) and create the Defence Cabinet Committee (DCC) under the leadership of the Prime Minister. An agreement was reached to remove the prohibition on the Prime Minister serving a third term. A second commitment was made to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) with the purpose of addressing and offering assistance to those who have been subjected to political victimisation. Furthermore, they intended to assess the functioning of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). Both parties reached a consensus to designate leaders of the opposition in the state legislatures as Chairmen of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in their respective Assemblies. They also resolved to negotiate amicable ties with the bordering nations, resolve the Kashmir issue through United Nations (UN) Resolutions, and implement steps to efficiently manage nuclear arsenals. Their aspiration was that effective governance will enhance the quality of life for the ordinary citizen. Both major political parties have pledged their commitment to not endorse any totalitarian actions in the country and to refrain from involvement in any potential plot against democracy. The military and judicial authorities would display their assets and have the same level of accountability to the public as the lawmakers. The National Democratic Commission (NDC) will be established to foster and advance democratic principles in Pakistan.

Within the momentous agreement, both sides aimed to establish an independent and impartial election commission by seeking input from the house and opposition leaders. The deal was designed to ensure equitable opportunities for all political parties in the elections, free all political detainees, and abolish the prerequisite of graduation for election participation. The parties equally agreed that the elections for local bodies would occur within a three-month timeframe following the general elections. They insisted on the resignation of election commission members and the establishment of a new governing body of impartial administrators to supervise the local bodies and general elections. Furthermore, two factions have demanded the establishment of an unbiased interim government to carry out elections that are free, fair, and transparent.

### **CoD and Party Politics in Pakistan**

Following the approval of the CoD, all political parties in Pakistan began working towards the shared objective of reinstating parliamentary democracy in the country. They were united in their opposition to the government of Pervez Musharraf. The opposition parties chose to submit a no-confidence motion against Shaukat Aziz, the former Prime Minister, alleging poor governance, corruption, and a law and order situation. However, they were unsuccessful in achieving their ultimate goal (Dawn, 2006). The ARD, representing the united opposition, organised large public gatherings where all political leaders expressed their determination to remove Musharraf from power. The CoD has provided a platform for all opposition against the dictator.

### **The 2007 All Parties Conference**

Nevertheless, the atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration was strained among the members of the CoD as a result of the rumours surrounding the purported agreement between the PPP and



President Musharraf. Amin Fahim and Nawaz Sharif convened a meeting in London to assess the pressing political circumstances. This PPP leader assured its ally to not entering into any deal with the President (Times D. , 2006).

#### **All Parties Democratic Movement**

The importance of the CoD diminished with the speculation of a potential agreement between Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto. Under the altered political landscape, a total of thirty-eight leaders from various opposition groups participated in the meeting held on August 23, 2007, which was organised by Nawaz Sharif. Through a collective declaration, all the political factions made a solemn commitment to nullify the presidential elections.

#### **National Reconciliation Ordinance**

The convergence of the two formidable opponents, the PML (N) and PPP, was very unexpected for the President. The situation caused significant concern for the President, who attempted to intercede by engaging the leadership of the PPP. Representatives from several agencies convened meetings with PPP leadership in Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and Dubai. On July 27, 2007, bilateral discussions took place between former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Musharraf (News T. , 2007). The President agreed to nearly all the requests presented by Benazir, leading to the final signing of the agreement. The presidential decree, enacted on October 5, 2007, nullified all legal proceedings against politicians and bureaucrats that were initiated between January 1, 1986, and October 12, 1999. Subsequently, Benazir Bhutto made the decision to endorse General Musharraf's re-election as the Head of the State, albeit without an official uniform. Through this approach, Musharraf effectively managed to foster division among the opposition by presenting a favourable agreement to the PPP. Consequently, the agreement led to a tumultuous state in the political landscape of the nation. Benazir Bhutto purportedly asserted that she entered into a *détente* with Musharraf for the reinstatement of democratic governance. Nevertheless, the decree faced opposition from several political parties and many sectors of civil society. According to the 2007 ruling of the Supreme Court, it was determined that the administration neglected to propose the ordinance to the Parliament. The ordinance ceased to be effective on November 29, 2009. The full bench of the Supreme Court declared NRO null and unconstitutional on December 16, 2009, yet it undermined the core of the Constitution and changed the political climate of the country.

#### **Return from Exile**

One consequence of the Musharraf-Benazir Bhutto deal was the formation of a division among opposition groups. However, it also facilitated the repatriation of expatriate leaders from other political parties. The leadership of the PPP entered into an agreement, while their counterpart from the PML (N) chose to approach the Appellate Court in order to seek official authorisation to return to their homeland. Subsequently, Nawaz Sharif determined the specific date of his return on consultation with the leaders and workers of the APDM party. Upon Nawaz Sharif's return, the APDM leaders intended to extend a cordial reception and oppose any potential deportation process (Jang, 2007). The arrival of Nawaz Sharif in Islamabad on September 10, 2007 resulted in the detention of several workers. He was repatriated to Jeddah. In response to the coercive expulsion, the APDM organised a Black Day that garnered global recognition. Upon her return to Pakistan on October 18, 2007, Benazir Bhutto facilitated the subsequent return of Nawaz Sharif and his family on November 25, 2007.

#### **Judicial Crisis**

After the Steel Mills case reached its conclusion in 2006, Musharraf voiced his discontent with the Chief Justice of Pakistan and formally asked for his resignation on March 9, 2007. Still, he refused. Consequently, Iftikhar Chaudhry was placed on suspension and the matter was then sent to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC). On July 20, 2007, the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) restored the Chief Justice of Pakistan (Kazimi, 2009). President Musharraf proclaimed a state of emergency in the country on November 3, 2007, and subsequently suspended sixty judges of the Superior Judiciary, including the Chief Justice of Pakistan .





All political parties strongly condemned the move and objected to the decision. The media, general public, and civil society of Pakistan strongly objected to the emergency directive. Specifically, PML (N) and PPP expressed strong resistance to the directive. Their stance was expressly against the implementation of a state of emergency in the nation and the organisation of general elections under the leadership of Pervez Musharraf. The removal of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry provided a fertile ground for all political factions in Pakistan to rally their party followers. On the agenda of the Council of Defence were the appointment of judges and the development of an independent judiciary. Therefore, Musharraf was obliged to end the state of emergency on December 15, 2007.

#### **The 2007 Presidential Elections**

During the course of their CoD, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto made a commitment to remove Musharraf from the president. Subsequently, their perspectives shifted and PPP became willing to acknowledge Musharraf as President, therefore lending credibility and backing to Musharraf's constitutional elections. On September 29, 2007, the APDM declared its intention to temporarily withdraw from the National and Provincial Assemblies in order to organise protest rallies and commemorate Black Day on September 30, 2007. One hundred and sixty-four members of APDM resigned from their respective Assemblies on October 2, 2007. In order to manage the current political crisis, the President issued the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) on October 5, 2007, to officially incorporate the PPP. The PML (Q) party submitted a resolution of no confidence against the Chief Minister of KPK, Akram Khan Durrani, of the JUI (F). Following the implementation of the National Representation Order (NRO), the APDM announced a comprehensive movement across the entire country to protest against the presidential elections on October 6, 2007. Failure of the opposition parties to choose a cohesive candidate for the elections led to Musharraf's victory over Amin Fahim and Justice (R) Wajeeh ud Din Ahmad. Participation of the legal community and PPP in the elections enhanced the legitimacy of the electoral procedure.

#### **Efforts to impeach Pervez Musharraf**

The impeachment of Pervez Musharraf was an August 2008 endeavour by opposition groups including the Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N), PPP, ANP, Ulema-e-Islam, and Jamiat to compel the removal of Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf from official power. Musharraf tendered his resignation on August 18.

The declaration of a state of emergency by President and former Chief of the Army Staff Pervez Musharraf on November 3, 2007, resulted in the indefinite postponement of the National Assembly elections of Pakistan, which were originally planned to occur on January 8, 2008. The emergency announcement also included information regarding the removal of Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, who was widely believed to have been fired due to a forecast that the Supreme Court was on the verge of nullifying Musharraf's reelection as President of Pakistan in October. By virtue of this conduct, coupled with a widespread pro-democracy movement taking place in Pakistan at that period, Musharraf's popularity plummeted dramatically. Subsequent to the killing of Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistani Election Commission declared that the election would take place on February 18. The PPP and the PML-N, two ideologically opposed parties to Musharraf and his Pakistan Muslim League (Q) party, were victorious in the elections.

On August 7, 2008, the Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League (N) collectively resolved to request Musharraf to obtain a Vote of Confidence from the National and Provisional Assemblies or resign, so initiating the process of impeachment. Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif declared their intention to jointly petition Musharraf for his resignation, and if he declined, they would initiate the process of impeachment through official parliamentary procedures. Nevertheless, Musharraf firmly declared, "I shall overcome anyone who attempt to defy me." Should they exercise their authority to remove me, I possess the autonomy to protect my own interests. Upon receiving the news, Musharraf postponed his departure for the Beijing Olympics by one day. Subsequently, it was revealed that Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani would be taking over as his presence at the opening functions.



In order to initiate the impeachment procedures, the government convened the National Assembly for a session on August 11. Captain Wasif Syed, the spokesperson for the Pakistan People's Party, verified the announcement by stating, "A consensus has been reached that he must depart at this moment, and all the parties have reached a shared agreement on this matter." To file an impeachment against Musharraf, the ruling coalition would have needed a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, and their ability to secure the necessary number of votes was uncertain. Although Musharraf has the opportunity to combat his impeachment by dissolving parliament, he would probably require the backing of Pakistan's army to be effective and this action could provoke a backlash.

Zardari specified on television that the impeachment would be conducted in accordance with section 47 of the Pakistani Constitution. Although the procedure for impeachment is outlined, the reasons for impeachment were not specified. The 2007 impeachment proceedings, which resulted in the implementation of emergency rule, were grounded on the regulations that forbid the President of Pakistan from occupying a "profit-oriented position" inside the Pakistan Government structures.

### **Parliamentary Election 2008**

Following their return to Pakistan, the PML-N participated in the 2008 general election, requesting the reinstatement of the judges who were dismissed under the emergency rule implemented by President Pervez Musharraf, as well as the ousting of Musharraf from his position as President. Upon the killing of Benazir Bhutto, Sharif declared that the PML-N would abstain from participating in the elections. However, after some time and discussions with the co-chairman of the PPP, Asif Ali Zardari, Nawaz decided to participate in the elections and started organising rallies in the Punjab regions. On 18 February 2008, following the conclusion of the elections and the subsequent announcement of the results, the PML-N secured 68 seats in the National Assembly, placing them only behind the PPP. An announcement was made regarding the initiation of negotiations for the establishment of a coalition with the PPP, aiming to secure half of the seats in the 342 seat Parliament. During a news conference on 19 February, Nawaz publicly demanded the resignation of President Pervez Musharraf. An agreement was reached between Nawaz and Zardari to establish a coalition. Nawaz subsequently declared that he and his party granted the PPP the authority to select the next Prime Minister.

On May 13, 2008, the PML-N ministers tendered their resignation from the cabinet as a result of a dispute concerning the restoration of the justices. According to Nawaz, the PML-N would provide support to the government without involved itself in its affairs. Zardari, in an effort to maintain the alliance, instructed Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani to decline the offered resignations.

According to the official records, the PML-N and the PPP secured three and two by-election seats in the national parliament on 27 June 2008. The elections for the sixth seat in Lahore were delayed because of Nawaz Sharif's contested eligibility. A court declared him ineligible because of a previous conviction, on the day of a government appeal in the Supreme Court scheduled to hear the issue on 30 June, therefore delaying the voting in the constituency. Additionally, the two parties secured victory in 19 out of the 23 provincial assembly seats that were decided by by-elections. The results of the 18 February general election determined that Benazir Bhutto's PPP secured 123 seats in the 342-seat National Assembly, Sharif's party secured 91 seats, and Pervez Musharraf's party secured 54 seats, placing them in third and third, respectively. In the province assembly elections, Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) secured eight seats, while the PPP secured seven seats. On August 25, 2008, Nawaz Sharif declared that Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui would officially become the nominee of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) to succeed Pervez Musharraf as the President of Pakistan.

### **Resignation**

While delivering a speech to defend his record, Musharraf declared his intention to step down on August 18, 2008. His request for protection from prosecution in the August 18 negotiations, which were unsuccessful due to legal technicalities, was contingent upon his resignation prior to the impeachment procedures. During her appearance on "Fox News Sunday," Condoleezza Rice stated



that Musharraf would not be being granted sanctuary in the United States. That is a matter that is not yet under consideration. Musharraf declared his intention to reside in Pakistan, specifically in a self-constructed residence located in a prestigious area of Islamabad, in close proximity to a golf club.

President Musharraf tendered his resignation during a televised address at 1 p.m. in order to prevent impeachment. Upon careful examination of the circumstances and seeking guidance from legal counsel and political supporters, I have made the decision to tender my resignation. The responsibility for my future is entrusted to others. I am not against any accusation in the impeachment. No accusation can be substantiated against me as I have never engaged in any actions for my own benefit; rather, my purpose was solely to benefit Pakistan. Through divine favour, Pakistan has emerged as a significant nation on the global map. Irrespective of my outcome in the impeachment, the nation will indeed suffer. Their lack of awareness of their potential success against me will result in irreversible harm to the nation. I hereby submit my resignation to the speaker of the National Assembly today. During an impassioned one-hour address, Musharraf elevated his tightly closed fists to the level of his chest and declared, "Long live Pakistan!" According to Nasir Ali Khan, a prominent figure in the Pakistan Muslim League-N, Musharraf would remain in Pakistan, as he had before demanded. The Constitution stipulated that a new president must be selected within a period of 30 days. The resignation granted the coalition administration, which had been in power for 4 months, the authority to select a new president through a vote conducted by the Parliament and region assemblies. Newsweek publications located in the United States stated that the president would be granted exile in Saudi Arabia, where he is expected to stay for the following three months. An anonymous Western official was quoted by The British Daily Telegraph as suggesting that Musharraf may choose to establish his residence in London following a journey to Mecca.

#### **Presidential election and Musharraf's Exile**

Pakistan's Election Commission on August 22 declared that Presidential elections were to be place on September 6, and the candidacy papers may be filed from August 26. President Asif Ali Zardari was elected by the 2 chambers of parliament and the 4 provincial assemblies on September 9. President Pervez Musharraf went into exile on 23 August, 2008. His arrival in London occurred on August 24, 2008. Regarding the resignation, Gonzalo Gallegos, the spokesperson for the United States Department of State, restated that the internal politics of Pakistan are a matter for the Pakistani people to determine. He further expressed the anticipation that any decision taken will adhere to the principles of the rule of law and the Pakistani constitution.

#### **Conclusion**

The participation of the PML-N in the restoration of democracy during the Musharraf government (1999-2008) was distinguished by substantial hurdles and efforts to defend democratic principles in the face of military authority. After the military coup in 1999, Pervez Musharraf gained control and deposed the democratically elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The PML-N, led by Nawaz Sharif, emerged as a prominent opposition party against the military rule.

The PML-N, together with other opposition parties, created the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD) in 2000 to confront the military government and demand the restoration of democratic institutions and the constitution. The ARD tried to bring together numerous parties to unify against the military government and promote for democratic governance. Despite suffering obstacles and persecution, the PML-N remained committed to its role in fighting military authority and working for democratic principles.

During the 2002 general elections, the PML-N performed poorly, but it continued its efforts to improve democracy by participating in the political process. It signed the Charter of Democracy (CoD) with the PPP in 2006, which provided a detailed strategy to restore democratic institutions, secure free and fair elections, and develop civil- military relations. The CoD functioned as a unified forum for numerous opposition parties to work together for the restoration of democracy.



The PML-N's engagement in the All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) and its resistance against the military regime's actions, including as the expulsion of Iftikhar Chaudhry, demonstrated the party's desire to safeguard democratic values and uphold the independence of the judiciary.

However, the CoD's significance was later challenged by the reported arrangement between the PPP and President Musharraf, which produced tensions within the opposition. Despite these hurdles, the PML-N continued to strive for democratic principles and the rule of law.

The period of 2007 and 2008 in Pakistan's political history witnessed significant upheavals and adjustments in power relations. The presidential elections of 2007 were distinguished by opposition parties' attempts to undermine President Pervez Musharraf's power, with promises of expelling him from office. However, as the electoral process progressed, attitudes shifted, and the PPP's choice to accept Musharraf as president offered a degree of validity and support to the elections.

The enactment of the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) added complexity to the political environment by seeking to integrate the PMLN and preserve the integrity of the Electoral College for the presidential election. Notwithstanding the nationwide protests of the APDM, the opposition parties were unable to establish a cohesive stance with a unified candidate, resulting in Musharraf's triumph in the presidential elections.

The impeachment petitions against Musharraf in August 2008 were indicative of the increasing resistance against his leadership. In conjunction with Musharraf's diminishing popularity and the consequences of Benazir Bhutto's assassination, the pro-democracy movement played a role in the demand for his ousting. Confronted with the possibility of being impeached and intense pressure from opposition parties, Musharraf finally stepped down from his position, therefore allowing a new president to be selected through the parliamentary procedure.

Despite initial boycott threats, the PML-N actively participated in the 2008 parliamentary elections and emerged as a major presence with 68 seats in the National Assembly. With the objective of guiding the political trajectory of the country, a coalition government was established between the PPP and the PML-N. Nevertheless, conflicts emerged, resulting in the resignation of PML-N ministers and additional levels of intricacy in the administration.

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