



Brief Political History of Pakistan



By:
Nasrullah Barech



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Introduction:

Pakistan is facing the dilemma of political instability. During the 65 years of history, our country has seen various political experiments and spent first eight years without constitution. First constitutional assemblies was dissolved by the few vested interest people and reconstitute the second constitutional assembly who suggested the parliamentary system for the country, but did not hold any election and first martial law was imposed in 1958, by the then chief of Army staff Gen. Ayub khan. The military General told the nation that they are sole authority in deciding the future of the nation and spent 11 years experimenting different systems, introduced Basic Democracy System and declaring the BD members as electoral college for the election of president and national and provincial legislative bodies, introduced new constitution and rejected parliamentary system by arguing that it does not suits the country, therefore the presidential system is more appropriate for the country and he is the president. Later on violated his own constitution and imposed another martial law. Another general conducted general elections in the country on the basis of one person one vote and did not accept the result of his own elections, which led the country towards dismemberment and Bengal emerged as an independent state with the name of Bengla Desh.

Country got another constitution of 1973, but after four years another martial law was imposed by another military general and hanged the prime minister, experimented different systems including Islamization, non party elections, dismissing his own created elected government as well as local government system etc and ruled for 11 years. After Zia Martial law four civilian governments were dismissed until the next martial law under General Musharaf in 1999, he again experimented different systems like Devolution of Power, NRO, declaring Emergency etc. This small booklet is compiled for the political education of political and civil society activists. Who wish to see the stable, transparent and accountable democratic government in the country and constitutional supremacy where the people of country, exercise their rights through their representatives in different tier of government, establish the good governance in the country.

Nasrullah

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Early Period 1947 to 1958

Pakistan was granted independence under clause 8 of the Indian Independence Act, 1947. India at that time was being ruled under the Government of India Act, 1935. Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah took over as first Governor general of Pakistan. The Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was constituted to write Pakistan's constitution, and serve as its first parliament. It first convened on 11th August 1947, before the end of British rule, on August 15, 1947. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was elected the first President of Assembly until his death on 11th September 1948. Initially, the number of members of constituent assembly was 69 later on ten more members were included and total members reached to 79 in which 44 members were from eastern Bengal, 22 from Punjab, 5 from Sind 3 from NWFP and 1 members each were from Baluchistan, states of Baluchistan, Bahwalpur, Khairpur and tribal areas of NWFP. Unfortunately, first constitutional assembly failed to produce a constitution for Pakistan due to death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Later on, in 1959 Mr. Liaqat Ali Khan the first prime minister of Pakistan was assassinated, in Rawalpindi in a public meeting. After the Liaqat Ali Khan Khawja Nizamudding became the prime minister and tried to frame an constitution for the country but Governor General Ghulam Muhammad terminated him from prime minister ship and appointed Mr. Muhammad Ali Bogra as prime minister who was the ambassador of Pakistan in United States of America and presented a constitutional formula for country's constitution on October 17, 1953 and was expecting to announce constitution for the country on December 25, 1954, but Governor General Mr. Ghulam Muhammad dissolved first constitutional assembly on October 24, 1954.

The major reasons for not framing the constitution were the fundamental disagreement over two major questions i-e the role of Islam in the newly born state and the relations between provincial and the central government. Constitutional Assembly was reconstituted on May 28, 1955 lasting until March 23, 1956 when the new constitution came into place and Pakistan became a Republic.

The Government could not hold election under the new constitution. The cabinets were dissolved one after another. Mr. Muhammad Ali the Prime Minister resigned on 8th September, 1956. Mr. H.S. Suharwardy

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General Muhammad Ayub Khan 1958 to 1969

On 27th October Muhammad Ayub Khan sent three Generals, General Azam Khan, General K. M. Sheikh and General Burki asking the President to resign. So, the President Iskandar Mirza was removed and Muhammad Ayub Khan, the Martial Law Administrator took the control of the country, as the President of Pakistan on 27th October, 1958. After declaring Martial Law, Muhammad Ayub Khan met Moulvi Tamizuddin Khan and Mr. Nur-ul-Amin of the East Pakistan. Moulvi Tamizuddin Khan disfavored Presidential form of Government. Nur-ul-Amin kept silent.

Ayub Khan introduced a new political system, in 1959 as "Basic Democracy" and declared 80000 basic democrats as electoral college for National, Provincial Assemblies and president of Pakistan who elected Ayub Khan as president of Pakistan on February 17, 1960.

The Basic Democracies set up five tiers of institutions. The lowest but most important tier was composed of union councils, one each for groups of villages having an approximate total population of 10,000. Each union council comprised ten directly elected members and five appointed members, all called Basic Democrats. The next tier consisted of the tehsil (subdistrict) councils, which performed coordination functions. Above them, the district (zilla) councils, chaired by the deputy commissioners, were composed of nominated official and nonofficial members, including the chairmen of union councils. The district councils were assigned both compulsory and optional functions pertaining to education. In 1960 the elected members of the union councils voted to confirm Ayub Khan's presidency, and under the 1962 constitution they formed an electoral college to elect the president, the National Assembly, and the provincial assemblies.

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For the justification of his illegal government he announced reforms agenda that includes Land reforms, Public offices disqualification ordinance, Elective bodies disqualification ordinance, economic and social reforms etc

Ayub Khan's power declined. Subsequent political and economic grievances inspired agitation movements that compelled his resignation in March 1969. He handed over responsibility for governing to the commander in chief of the army, General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan, who became President and Chief Martial Law Administrator.

Separation of East Pakistan as Bangladesh.

General Yahya Khan conducted General elections in December 1970. The Awami League, which advocated autonomy for the more populous East Pakistan, swept the East Pakistan seats to gain a majority in Pakistan as a whole. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), founded and led by Ayub Khan's former Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, won a majority of the seats in West Pakistan, but the country was completely split with neither major party having any support in the other area. Negotiations to form a coalition government broke down. On March 26, 1971, following a bloody crackdown by the Pakistan Army, Bengali nationalists declared an independent People's Republic of Bangladesh. As fighting grew between the army and the Bengalis, an estimated 10 million Bengalis sought refuge in India. On April 17, 1971, Bengali nationalists formed a provisional government in an area bordering India, and in November 1971, India sent its military into East Pakistan to intervene on the side of the Bangladeshis. On December 16, Pakistani forces surrendered in Dhaka, and East Pakistan became the new nation of Bangladesh. Yahya Khan then resigned the presidency and handed over leadership of the western part of Pakistan to Bhutto, who became President and the first civilian Chief Martial Law Administrator.

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Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto 1970 -77

Bhutto moved decisively to restore national confidence and pursued an active foreign policy, taking a leading role in Islamic and Third World forums. Although Pakistan did not formally join the Non-Aligned Movement until 1979, the position of the Bhutto government coincided largely with that of the non-aligned nations. Domestically, Bhutto pursued a populist agenda and nationalized major industries and the banking system. In 1973, he promulgated a new Constitution accepted by most political elements and relinquished the presidency to become prime minister. Although Bhutto continued his populist and socialist rhetoric, he increasingly relied on Pakistan's urban industrialists and rural landlords. Over time the economy stagnated, largely as a result of the dislocation and uncertainty produced by Bhutto's frequently changing economic policies. When Bhutto proclaimed his own victory in the March 1977 national elections, the opposition Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) denounced the results as fraudulent and demanded new elections. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto held talks with the PNA and Islamist leaders. An agreement was eventually reached in June 1977 and Bhutto was to sign it on July 5. However, in spite the enthusiasm of the negotiating team other PNA leaders had reservations about the agreement. Bhutto resisted and later arrested the PNA leadership.

General Zia ul-Haq (1977-1988)

With the increasing anti-government unrest, the army grew restive. On July 5, 1977, the military removed Bhutto from power and arrested him, declared martial law, and suspended portions of the 1973 Constitution. Chief of Army Staff Gen. Muhammad Zia ul-Haq became Chief Martial Law Administrator and promised to hold new elections within 3 months.

Zia released Bhutto and asserted that he could contest new elections scheduled for October 1977. After it became clear that Bhutto's popularity had survived his government, Zia then postponed the elections and began criminal investigations of the senior PPP leadership. Subsequently, Bhutto was convicted and sentenced to

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death for an alleged conspiracy to murder a political opponent. Despite international appeals on his behalf, Bhutto was hanged on April 6, 1979.

Zia assumed the presidency and called for elections in November. However, fearful of a PPP victory, Zia banned political activity in October 1979, and postponed national elections. He also passed into law the Hudood Ordinance, which implemented harsh Quranic punishments for violations of Shari'a (Islamic law).

In 1980, most center and left parties, led by the PPP, formed the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). The MRD demanded Zia's resignation, an end to martial law, new elections, and restoration of the Constitution, as it existed before Zia's takeover. In early December 1984, President Zia proclaimed a national referendum for December 19 on his "Islamization" program. After non-party based polls were held for the National and Provincial Assemblies in 1985, President Zia appointed Muhammad Khan Junejo as the Prime Minister. He implicitly linked approval of "Islamization" with a mandate for his continued presidency. Zia's opponents, led by the MRD, boycotted the elections. When the government claimed a 63% turnout, with more than 90% approving the referendum, many observers questioned the figures.

Ms. Benazir Bhutto Civilian Governments 1988-1990

On August 17, 1988, a plane carrying President Zia, American Ambassador Arnold Raphel, U.S. Brig. General Herbert Wassom, and 28 Pakistani military officers crashed on a return flight from a military equipment trial near Bahawalpur, killing all on board. In accordance with the Constitution, Chairman of the Senate Ghulam Ishaq Khan became Acting President and announced that elections scheduled for November 1988 would take place. Elections were held on a party basis. On one side was an eight-party alliance and on the other, the PPP. The PPP won 94 seats out of 207 and the Islamic Democratic Alliance (IJI) won 54. Muhammad Khan Junejo lost his home constituency. The

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president was bound to invite the PPP to form the government. However, Khan delayed doing so for 2 weeks in order to give the IJI time to muster the support of other groups. Ultimately, the president asked PPP Co-chairperson Benazir Bhutto to form a government.

The PPP, under Benazir Bhutto's leadership, succeeded in forming a coalition government with several smaller parties, including the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

Differing interpretations of constitutional authority, debates over the powers of the central government relative to those of the provinces, and the antagonistic relationship between the Bhutto administration and opposition governments in Punjab and Balochistan seriously impeded social and economic reform programs. Ethnic conflict, primarily in Sindh province, exacerbated these problems. A fragmentation in the governing coalition and the military's reluctance to support an apparently ineffectual and corrupt government were accompanied by a significant deterioration in law and order.

In August 1990, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, citing his powers under the eighth amendment to the Constitution, dismissed the Bhutto government and dissolved the national and provincial assemblies and announced new election in the country.

New elections was conducted in October 1990, IJI won the election of national and provincial parliaments and enjoyed the support of the military and of President Khan. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, as leader of the PML, the most prominent party in the IJI, was elected prime minister by the National Assembly.

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Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif 1990 -1993

Sharif emerged as the most secure and powerful Pakistani prime minister since the mid-1970s. Under his rule, the IJI achieved several important political victories. Sharif's economic reform program of privatization, deregulation, and encouragement of private sector economic growth greatly improved Pakistan's economic performance and business climate. The passage into law in May 1991 of a Shari'a bill, providing for widespread Islamization, legitimized the IJI government among much of Pakistani society.

However, Nawaz Sharif was not able to reconcile the different objectives of IJI's constituent parties. The largest religious party, Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), abandoned the alliance because of its antagonism to what it regarded as PML hegemony. The government was weakened further by the military's suppression of the MQM, which had entered into coalition with the IJI to contain PPP influence, and allegations of corruption directed at Nawaz Sharif. In April 1993, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, citing "maladministration, corruption, and nepotism" and espousal of political violence, dismissed the Sharif government. The following month, however, the Pakistan Supreme Court reinstated the National Assembly and the Nawaz Sharif government. Continued tensions between Sharif and Ghulam Ishaq Khan resulted in governmental gridlock and the Chief of Army Staff brokered an arrangement under which both the President and the Prime Minister resigned their offices in July 1993.

An interim government, headed by Moeen Qureshi took office with a mandate to hold national and provincial assembly elections in October. Despite its brief term, the Qureshi government adopted political, economic, and social reforms that generated considerable domestic support and foreign admiration.

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Ms. Benazir Bhutto 2nd term 1993- 1996

In the October 1993 elections, the PPP won a plurality of seats in the National Assembly, and Benazir Bhutto was asked to form a government. However, because it did not acquire a majority in the National Assembly, the PPP's control of the government depended upon the continued support of numerous independent parties, particularly the PML/J (Pakistan Muslim League-Junejo). The unfavorable circumstances surrounding PPP rule--the imperative of preserving a coalition government, the formidable opposition of Nawaz Sharif's PML/N (Pakistani Muslim League-Nawaz) movement, and the insecure provincial administrations--presented significant difficulties for the government of Prime Minister Bhutto. Despite these conditions, the election of Prime Minister Bhutto's close associate, Farooq Leghari, as President in November 1993 gave her a stronger power base.

In November 1996, President Leghari dismissed the Bhutto government, charging it with corruption, mismanagement of the economy, and implication in extrajudicial killings in Karachi. and announced new election for national and provincial assemblies.

Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif 2nd term 1997 to 1999

Elections were conducted in February 1997, resulted in an overwhelming victory for the PML/N, and President Leghari called upon Nawaz Sharif to form a government. In March 1997, with the unanimous support of the National Assembly, Sharif amended the Constitution, stripping the President of the power to dismiss the government and making his power to appoint military service chiefs and provincial governors contingent on the "advice" of the Prime Minister. Another amendment prohibited elected members from "floor crossing" or voting against party positions. The Sharif government also engaged in a protracted dispute with the judiciary, culminating in the storming of the Supreme Court by ruling party loyalists and the engineered dismissal of the Chief Justice and the resignation of President Leghari in December 1997.

The new President elected by Parliament, Mr. Rafiq Tarar, was a close

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associate of the Prime Minister. A one-sided, anti-corruption campaign was used to target opposition politicians and critics of the regime. Similarly, the government moved to restrict press criticism and ordered the arrest and beating of prominent journalists. As domestic criticism of Sharif's administration intensified, Sharif attempted to replace Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf on October 12, 1999, with a family loyalist, Director General service Intelligence Directorate, Lt. Gen. Ziauddin. Although General Musharraf was out of the country at the time and on the way back to the country, his plan was not allowed to land at Karachi airport, the army moved quickly to depose Nawaz Sharif Government and Genrel Musharaf landed at Karachi airport and imposed martial law in the country. Nawaz Sharif was sent to jail and later on along with family sent to Saudi Arbia under an agreement for ten years.

General Pervez Musharraf: 1999 to 2008

Following the October 12, 1999 nonviolent coup and subsequent ouster of the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the military-led government stated its intention to restructure the political and electoral systems. On October 14, 1999, General Pervez Musharraf declared a state of emergency and issued the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO), which suspended the federal and provincial Parliaments, held the Constitution was temporary suspended, and designated Musharraf as Chief Executive. Musharraf appointed an eight-member National Security Council to function as Pakistan's supreme governing body, with mixed military/civilian appointees; a civilian Cabinet; and a National Reconstruction Bureau to formulate structural reforms. On May 12, 2000, Pakistan's Supreme Court unanimously validated the October 1999 coup and granted Musharraf executive and legislative authority for 3 additional years. On June 20, 2001, Musharraf named himself as president and was sworn in.

On the recommendation of National reconstruction bureau new local government system was introduced on the name of devolution of

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power to gross rout level, through Local government ordinance 2001, representation were given to women, labor peasant and religious minority in local government institutions, the colonial administrative structure were changed the positions of commissioner, deputy commissioner, assistant commissioners were abolished and powers were given to the elected representatives, provincial departments were devolved to district level

In a referendum held on April 30, 2002, Musharraf's presidency was extended by 5 more years. The handover from military to civilian rule came with parliamentary elections in November 2002, and the appointment of a civilian prime minister, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali. Having previously promised to give up his army post and become a civilian president, General Musharraf announced in late 2004 that he would retain his military role. In August 2004, Shaukat Aziz was sworn in as prime minister, having won a parliamentary vote of confidence, 191 of 342 votes, in which the opposition abstained. During the election 2002 all the religious parties of Pakistan formed an alliance called MMA and contested election on the platform of MMA, the alliance became the second largest parliamentary force formed provincial government in NWFP and also partner in Balochistan Government, MMA supported the 17th constitutional amendment of General Musharaf, Military Governmet all steps got constitutional cover under the 17th amendment.

On October 6, 2007, Musharraf was elected president for a 5-year term. On November 4 he declared a state of emergency, suspending the country's Constitution and firing the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. In November 2007, Musharraf also relinquished his army post. Mrs. Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in Rawalpini when she coming back from a election public meeting, election was postponed for few months and Asif Ali Zardari became the co-chairman of Pakistan People's Party.

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PPP Government 2008

General elections were held in February 2008. Pakistan people's Party under the leadership of Asif Ali Zardari became the largest parliamentary party in centre and formed a coalition Government with JUI, MQM and other small groups. The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz group became the second largest party in Parliament and joined the government with PPPP but after few months went in Opposition and formed Government in Punjab Province.

The elections brought to power former opposition parties, led by the PPP, in a coalition government; Yousuf Raza Gilani was elected prime minister and head of government on March 24, 2008. Musharraf resigned as president on August 18, 2008, as the Parliament prepared for impeachment proceedings. Of the 13 Supreme Court justices whom Musharraf dismissed in November 2007, by the end of 2008, the new government reinstated five under a fresh oath of office. Three other judges either retired or resigned and five remained off the bench. The newly elected government also removed media restrictions adopted during the 2007 state of emergency and lifted curbs on unions imposed during Musharraf's tenure. General Musharaf resigned from the presidency and Mr. Asif Ali Zardari elected as president of the country on September 6, 2008.

The PPP-led coalition government moved forward on long-awaited constitutional reforms. In particular, on April 19, 2010, Zardari signed into law the 18th Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution. The amendment realigns executive powers by restoring the prime minister as the premier civilian official and returning the presidency to its original, more ceremonial role as head of state, which largely eliminates constitutional changes made by former President Musharraf to strengthen the presidency. The reform package also abolishes the two-term limit on prime ministers; restricts the president's power over judicial appointments; and reorganizes center-province relations, empowering provincial assemblies to elect their own chief ministers. The amendment also renamed the North-West Frontier Province to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, The concurrent list was abolished from the constitution and the subjects were devolved to the provinces.

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