

# Democracy Vs Dictatorship: The Crucial Role of Political Parties in Musharraf's Era (Pakistan)

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## Abstract

*During the era or administration of General Pervez Musharraf, political parties played various roles in Pakistan's democratic process from 1999 to 2008. It examines how these parties are suppressed, appropriated, and resilient in an authoritarian environment, revealing the complex interactions between the political parties and the military government. After the takeover of General Pervez Musharraf in 1999, democratic institutions were suspended, and political freedoms were significantly curtailed. Mainly, personalities associated with former civilian regimes were marginalized and subjected to restrictions. Under Musharraf's leadership, the Political Parties Order 2002 was enacted, severely limiting party activities. Despite these challenges, political parties remained a significant component of Pakistan's political environment. While some were coopted or formed connections with the military government, others were apprehended to fight and organize against the authoritarian dictatorship. General elections in 2002 were held in a confined space, which sparked allegations of rigging. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP), led by Benazir Bhutto, was notable among the opposition and was involved in overthrowing Musharraf's government. Opposition groups and civil society organizations persisted in their protests and demanded the restoration of civilian authority. This article will highlight political parties' resistance to authoritarianism and their critical role in Pakistan's final switch to civilian rule in 2008. It sheds insight into the complex interactions between political figures and the military dictatorship during a turbulent time in Pakistan's political history.*

**Keywords:** Coup, Authoritarianism, Democracy, Dictatorship, Civil Society.

## Introduction

Pakistan experienced a turbulent phase in its political history from 1999 to 2008 that was distinguished by a delicate balance between democracy and authoritarianism. General Pervez Musharraf, who came to power through a military coup in October 1999, presided over this revolutionary period. This introduction lays the groundwork for my investigation of political parties' crucial and nuanced role in negotiating the choppy waters between democracy and tyranny under Musharraf's tenure. The suspension of democratic institutions and the imposition of military authority brought about by General Musharraf's rise to power marked a shift from the democratic principles Pakistan had intermittently witnessed since its founding in 1947. Significant changes were made to the nation's political landscape during this time, which is frequently referred to as the "Musharraf era," as well as to how political parties operate and are viewed.

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This study focuses on the crucial function political parties played during this change. It aims to illuminate how these parties-maintained prominence in Pakistan's political system despite formidable obstacles and limitations. They demonstrate their tenacity, adaptability, and dedication to democratic values through their actions, strategies, and reactions in the face of an authoritarian state. To shed light on their long-lasting influence on Pakistan's political trajectory after this turbulent age. It explores the complex interactions that shaped Pakistan's political environment during General Pervez Musharraf's tumultuous leadership, which teetered precariously between democracy and dictatorship (Shehzad et al., 2013). The importance of political parties in this dynamic context is the main point of emphasis. Between 1999 and 2008, Pakistan saw a coup that saw it go from a precarious democracy to a military dictatorship under General Musharraf. Political parties encountered tremendous difficulties during this time (Talbat, 2002).

General Musharraf restricted political activity through the Political Parties Order of 2002, dismantled democratic institutions, and silenced critics. Political parties have become both agents of continuity and change in this precarious balance between democracy and authoritarianism. Some parties established alliances or were persuaded to accept Musharraf's leadership to work with the military regime. Others opposed dictatorship, with well-known people like Benazir Bhutto leading the way. Elections held during this time were tainted by claims of engineering and manipulation, casting doubt on their validity (Naden, 2011).

Nevertheless, political parties played a crucial role in Pakistan's political system by representing various interests and promoting democratic ideals. It highlights the political parties' adaptation and resiliency in managing Pakistan's political landscape throughout the Musharraf administration. It investigates their survival, mobilization, and resistance tactics, illuminating their crucial contribution to Pakistan's democratic development. The study also looks at how these years continued to influence Pakistan's political parties and democratic institutions after they had passed.

## Literature Review

The literature review for this study includes a variety of scholarly works, historical accounts, and analyses that offer insightful information about the function of political parties in Pakistan (1999–2008) under General Pervez Musharraf's rule. The theoretical foundation is established, and essential themes and disagreements are highlighted in this review. Political scientists and historians, including Ayesha Jalal and Hassan Abbas, have studied authoritarianism in Pakistan's past. These writings serve as a backdrop for comprehending the circumstances surrounding the rise of Musharraf's rule (Jalal, 1995). A thorough understanding of the development of political parties in Pakistan (Abbas, 2014), as well as their organizational structures, beliefs, and function in the democratic process (Rais, 2007), can be found in the research of academics like Rasul Bakhsh Rais and Philip Oldenburg (Oldenburg, 2010).

The specifics of General Musharraf's leadership (Ahmed, 2007), including the circumstances of his ascent to power, the policies (Nawaz, 2010) he put in place, and the difficulties he encountered, are covered in books and articles by Ahmed Rashid, Shuja Nawaz, and others. Political party behavior studies (Sulehria, 2022), like those by Maria Raheem and Farooq Sulehria, examine how political parties in Pakistan have historically reacted to authoritarian regimes, highlighting accommodation, resistance, and co-optation techniques. Research on Pakistani elections and electoral politics, such as those of Markus Daechsel and Mariam Mufti, sheds light on how those elections were conducted during the Musharraf administration (Waseem et al., 2009) and the part that political parties played in those proceedings. Research on activism and civil society organizations, such as that by Ali Cheema and Adnan Naseem Ullah, looks at how civil society

actors often associated with political parties played a part in opposing authoritarianism (Cheema et al., 2006). David Ludden and Ather Zia's studies on how the media influenced political discourse during this period shed insight into how political parties used media and communication tactics to advance their goals (Ludden, 2011; Zia, 2014). Theoretical frameworks for comprehending transitions to and from authoritarianism (Huntington, 2012) are presented in works by Larry Diamond and Samuel P. Huntington, enabling an assessment of Pakistan's transition to civilian governance (Diamond, 2000). Some academic studies, such as those by Christophe Jaffrelot, analyze how the Musharraf era affected Pakistan's political parties and the course the political system took after that (Jaffrelot, 2016). This research paper aims to comprehensively analyze the complex interaction between political parties and authoritarian rule in Pakistan during this crucial period by combining insights from these various sources. This literature evaluation provides a greater understanding of the difficulties and opportunities political parties face in a transitioning democracy and serves as the study's analytical starting point.

## **Methodology**

This research paper aims to examine the critical Role of Political Parties in Musharraf's Era. The technique of this study is built on a methodical strategy for conducting excellent research. Enough data was found using secondary sources to complete this investigation. As a result, the author felt free to gather information from primary sources. This study's secondary materials included scholarly books, research journals, magazines, newspapers, online publications, and official reports.

## **History**

It explores the complex dynamics of Pakistan's political landscape from 1999 to 2008, General Pervez Musharraf's rule. The research's historical framework includes several significant occurrences and changes that influenced the environment in which political parties functioned throughout this turbulent time.

### **The 1999 Military Takeover**

The question of whether Pakistan can sustain democracy has come up again since General Musharraf's October 1999 military takeover. Even though the military kept the governments in the background, the death of General Zia-ul-Haq in 1988, as well as the subsequent elections-based governments, raised optimism that Pakistan had made some progress toward establishing a democratic state. This hope became a reality with the establishment of Nawaz Sharif's two-thirds majority government. However, the October 1999 military takeover exposed Pakistan's democratic experiment's weakness. Pakistan's deeply feudal structure and poor political institutions have prevented democracy from taking hold there. Even if the military government manages to restart the political process, it will take several decades for democracy to establish firm roots in Pakistan. The writing was on the wall for the army to see. It was impossible to get up of the authority and benefits that the military had been accustomed to since 1958.

After careful consideration, the army began arguing for its proactive role in national governance. The initial clue was revealed on October 5, 1998, at the Naval War College address by Jehangir Karamat, the army chief at the time. He argued the create of a National Security Council, wherein the military should play a significant function.

General Pervez Musharraf replaced him, and he paid the price by being fired. With this coup, Pakistan's democratic institutions were suspended, and a new era in the country's political history

began (Shah, 2004). In the years before the coup, Pakistan's political scene had been turbulent. Political unrest, accusations of corruption, and a conflict of interests between the military and civilian leadership afflicted the nation.

General Pervez Musharraf, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at the time, was at the epicenter of the coup (Kronstadt, 2005). He had mounted through the military ranks and was very worried about the country's situation under the civilian administration. The Prime Minister of Pakistan then was Nawaz Sharif, head of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). A scandal against Nawaz Sharif was allegations of extravagant spending of public money and corruption, which became the reason for his weak administration and the government's fall (Jalal, 2014). Many political crises sparked the coup of Musharraf. The most noteworthy of these was the confrontation with India over Kargil in 1999, which hurt Pakistan's relations with other countries as well and resulted in a significant number of casualties in war. Tensions between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and COAS General Musharraf grew due to how the Kargil battle was handled. When Sharif decided to jerk Pakistani troops out of Kargil without first consulting the top military leaders, the army responded stalwartly. On October 12, 1999, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif attempted to remove General Musharraf as COAS while abroad (Shah, 2014). The plot backfired when General Musharraf's plane was denied permission to land in Pakistan because the army refused to recognize the decision of Prime Minister Nawaz. In this case, the military decided to take over and control the situation. On the evening of October 12, 1999, General Musharraf organized a group of military officers to overthrow the civilian government (Hasanie, 2013).

He declared a state of emergency, elected himself as Pakistan's leader and suspended the Constitution of 1973. There were opposing responses to the coup in Pakistan by political parties, civil society, and lawyers. While some sections of society take it as a means of addressing political corruption and instability, others see it as a setback for democracy. The Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), a multiparty coalition of political and religious parties that includes Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Imran Khan's Movement for Justice, and the Mohajir Quami Movement of Karachi, was the most noteworthy. The GDA supported Pervez Musharraf's seven-point program on October 21 and applauded the overthrow of Nawaz Sharif's government. The GDA adopted this stance following its October 20 meeting in Lahore, presided over by seasoned politician Nawabzada Nasirullah Khan. The statement released by the GDA stated that "the Nawaz Sharif government had paralyzed every institution of the state through conspiracies" and expressed optimism that the incoming government would begin an accountability effort that would be "ruthless" to remove dishonest politicians.

While promising to restore democracy, General Musharraf said the civilian administration had led poorly. The political structure of Pakistan was significantly affected by the coup. The National Assembly and provincial assemblies were suspended, among other democratic institutions. General Musharraf's administration carried out numerous political and economic reforms, and Pakistan's foreign policy underwent significant adjustments. As opposition parties and civil society organizations agitated for returning to Pakistan's civilian rule, the coup also heralded a time of political polarization and instability (Kronstadt, 2005). Pakistan's political trajectory and future political environment were significantly impacted by the military coup that occurred there in 1999. It marked the beginning of General Musharraf's rule, which lasted until 2008 when Pakistan was again under civilian rule after a long struggle between political parties and civil society.

### **Putting Democracy on Hold**

It signaled Pakistan's suspension of democratic rule. The abrogation of the Pakistani Constitution was one of Musharraf's first moves. The Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO), which granted the military dictatorship-wide executive authority, was promulgated after the Constitution was suspended (Habib et al., 2012). During this time, he was also selected as President of Pakistan. General Musharraf's pledge to reinstate "real democracy" through local elections was a ploy to entrench his power further, much like Field Marshal Ayub Khan had done in 1962 by organizing elections for Basic Democracies. Musharraf has made a great effort to clarify that his plan to organize local body elections was a means of "devolving" power to the people. When he visited Thailand on April 3, 2000, as part of his five-nation tour of South East Asia to forge ties and attract foreign investment, he made repeated promises to hold general elections after first holding local elections in July 2001 in response to widespread criticism both domestically and internationally. While trying to fit his idea of democracy, General Musharraf has been engaging in unsuccessful political maneuvers.

The All-Party Conference (APC), which occurred in Lahore on August 6, 2000, proves this. Senior leaders from the PML-N, PPP, Awami National Party (ANP), Jamaat-I-Islami, and practically all other large or small parties from all the provinces attended the conference, which was chaired by veteran political leader Nawab Zada Nasrullah Khan to present a united front against the military rule. The APC called for ending local body elections and the decentralization process. It demanded replacing the current accountability system with a new one with a completely independent National Accountability Board (NAB). General Musharraf stood in stark contrast to all civilian and military governments, which had constantly choked news transmission by opening up the broadcasting sector. The media were genuinely grateful to the government for publicly recognizing their autonomy after fifty years of oppression. The media has frequently questioned the legitimacy of military regimes, which has led tyrants to target them most severely. The media has typically been the most vocal opponent of military coups. The civilian leaders in Pakistan, like Nawaz Sharif, who had no concerns about his legitimacy, did not treat the media any better. Musharraf, who went into office after such mistreatment, initially had a generally positive relationship with the media. This link was strengthened by the privatization of the electronic media, giving the General confidence in the press. Under General Musharraf, the Pakistani government desired favorable media coverage of the armed forces after the Kargil War. General Musharraf's cooperation with the most extensive media group in the country resulted in early backing for him. Even though PEMRA regulations expressly forbade cross-media ownership, many newspaper groups were permitted to launch their first private television channel in August 2002. During this coup, the military dictatorship severely restricted press freedom and managed the flow of information by imposing stringent censorship on the media (Talbat, 2002). Media houses and journalists experienced intimidation and harassment. Under military administration, political parties were subject to severe restrictions.

A further taste of protest against the military regime's anti-democratic actions was given when nearly all major political parties denounced a contentious change to the Political Parties Act 2002 (PPA) that the government had enacted on August 9, 2000. The legislation effectively eliminated Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif's chances of ever holding political power by prohibiting them from holding party positions. President Rafiq Tarar enacted the ordinance, enacting this modification at the military regime's request. Political parties were subject to some requirements and limitations under the Political Parties Order of 2002, including a prohibition on dual nationals and some political activists (Shahzad et al., 2013) Political figures from the opposition, notably

those from the Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), were either jailed, exiled, or put under house arrest. Their capacity to take part in political activity could have been improved. The London-based group of expatriate rebels is starting to join the chorus of leaders who are consolidating their protest movement against the military regime.

The leader of the MQM, Altaf Hussain, the convenor of the Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement, Ataullah Mengal, and Mehmood Khan Achakzai of the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party demanded that the army return to the barracks and turn over the country's governance to the duly elected representatives at a widely attended conference on September 1, 2000. Speaking on behalf of the smaller "ethno-linguistic nations," they asserted that the army's primary responsibility is to protect the nation's borders. Throughout Pakistan's 53-year existence, the military administered the nation directly for 26 of those years and indirectly for the other 26. The nation was divided under the military regime. They ended by stating: "It is, therefore, vital for the integrity, solidarity, and survival of the country that without further delay the army returns to the barracks and the governance of the country is handed over to the duly elected representatives." The new action by Pakistan's leading political parties, the PPP and the PML, to unite under the Alliance with the Restoration of Democracy, led by Nawab Zada Nasrullah Khan, has solidified this tendency. While Musharraf pledged a return to democracy, many people criticized the elections that were held during his leadership, including the 2002 general elections, for being rigged and manipulated to benefit the governing dictatorship.

The "local government system" used to conduct these elections included restrictions on the power of established political parties (Akhter, 2013). Despite the limitations, civil society organizations, attorneys, and activists were instrumental in putting Musharraf's government to task and pushing for the return of democracy. Notably, the Lawyers' Movement played a crucial role in getting the dictatorship to change. General Musharraf's hold on power did not start to wane until years of widespread protests, increasing pressure from political parties, civil society, and international actors, as well as the tragic killing of Benazir Bhutto in 2007. After democratic elections in 2008, Pakistan eventually returned to civilian control, ending Musharraf's authoritarian dictatorship and resuming democratic procedures.

### **General Musharraf's Ascension**

General Musharraf came to power as Pakistan's Chief Executive before becoming President. His administration implemented several policies and initiatives to reform Pakistan's political structure. The ascent of General Pervez Musharraf to prominence in Pakistan's political scene was a significant development in the late 1990s. Here is an overview of his rise to prominence. In Delhi, British India, General Pervez Musharraf was born on August 11, 1943 (Musharraf, 2006). His family relocated to Pakistan in the aftermath of the 1947 partition. He rose through the ranks of the Pakistani Army and enjoyed a successful military career. Musharraf received his commission and graduated from the Pakistan Military Academy in 1964. Later, he joined the esteemed Special Services Group (SSG). Musharraf had several important military roles before taking office, including director-general of military operations (DGMO) and commander of an artillery brigade. One of the pivotal moments in his career was his participation in the Kargil crisis in 1999 when Pakistani forces infiltrated Indian-administered Kashmir. Musharraf was the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) during this conflict. On October 12, 1999, General Musharraf orchestrated a military coup against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's democratically elected administration. One of several factors that led to this coup was disagreement between the military and civilian leadership over how to conduct the Kargil conflict. Following the coup, Musharraf declared an emergency,

suspended the constitution, and assumed power in Pakistan. He also served as President of Pakistan throughout his term.

Musharraf oversaw numerous policies and reforms in Pakistan, including measures to combat religious extremism, educational initiatives, and economic liberalization. He also allied with the United States after the 9/11 attacks, which resulted in Pakistan's involvement in the War on Terror and regional cooperation with the United States. Political problems, including allegations of human rights violations, media censorship, and the suppression of political opposition, marked Musharraf's government. His administration was scrutinized for limiting democratic liberties and rigging elections to maintain power (Ahmad, 2014). General Musharraf's administration has had a long-lasting impact on Pakistan's political climate; his nuanced legacy includes economic reforms and concerns about authoritarianism.

The military background of General Musharraf, his involvement in the Kargil battle, and his final overthrow of the government through a military coup all contributed to his rise to prominence in Pakistan. His administration, which lasted from 1999 to 2008, was characterized by political upheaval and economic reforms, finally leading to his removal from office and Pakistan's return to civilian governance.

### **The 2002 Political Parties Order**

During Pakistan's administration by General Pervez Musharraf, a key piece of legislation known as the Political Parties Order 2002 was introduced. The functioning and structure of political parties in the nation were significantly impacted by this directive, issued on June 15, 2002. It was ostensibly part of General Musharraf's larger strategy to alter Pakistan's political landscape during his administration. It sought to control and, in some instances, restrict the operations of political parties. The Political Parties Order of 2002 had some crucial measures that had a significant impact on the function and role of political parties in Pakistan, including:

One of the order's most prominent aspects was the limitation on dual nationals assuming leadership positions inside political parties. Numerous people thought this phrase singled out certain political personalities, mainly exiled ones. The edict prohibited political parties from federating or confederating with other parties without the government's prior approval. This limitation prevented alliances or coalitions from opposing the established order. The order gave the government authority to examine political parties' financial records. This clause was interpreted as an attempt to keep tabs on and possibly even regulate political parties' financial resources. The order's power to forbid political groups that were thought to be inciting violence or hatred based on religion, ethnicity, or sect was another contentious issue.

Under General Musharraf's leadership, the Political Parties Order of 2002 had many significant effects on Pakistan's political landscape: it placed stringent limitations on the activities and operation of political parties, restricting their capacity to operate freely and form alliances. The order was criticized for being used to repress opposition movements, notably those that opposed the Musharraf government. It took much work for exiled or constrained political figures to organize an opposition movement. The decree appeared to weaken the values of political plurality and freedom of association, both essential components of a robust democratic system, which raised questions about the health of Pakistan's democracy. Numerous political parties in Pakistan showed resiliency despite these limitations by adjusting to the new legislative framework, organizing their supporters, and promoting democratic standards and ideals.

### **Controlled Elections**

Despite the authoritarian troposphere, general elections were held under Musharraf's rule in 2002. Concerns about the legitimacy of these elections were raised since these elections were criticized for being rigged to favor particular political factions. Pakistan's elections during Pervez Musharraf's rule, particularly the general election of 2002, drew heavy criticism for being rigged and manipulated in the government's favor. The following are important details demonstrating the manipulated nature of these elections: The political parties allied with the Musharraf dictatorship were strongly favored during the 2002 general elections (Khan, 2011). The government accused election meddling by opposition parties to influence results favoring pro-Musharraf parties. In Pakistan, the Musharraf administration implemented a new local government system before the 2002 elections.

This system reduced the importance of conventional political parties by giving local governments much power. It was viewed as a move to weaken the influence of significant political parties. Many prominent political personalities, like Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, were either exiled or preoccupied with legal matters during this period. It successfully discouraged significant opponents from vying for office and participating in the election. According to opposition parties and civil society organizations, the voter rolls were manipulated, and there may have been mistakes and anomalies that tipped the results in favor of candidates who backed the regime (Khan, 2011). Politicians from the opposition have allegedly intimidated and harassed activists and candidates. The media was tightly controlled by the dictatorship, which had an impact on how much and how prominently the opposition was covered. The electoral process has come under fire for lacking independence and transparency.

Since it was believed that the Election Commission was under the government's sway, the election's impartiality was questioned. These elections were won by a coalition of pro-Musharraf parties, who then held control of the federal and provincial governments. Because of this, Musharraf could hold onto his position as President and exercise complete control (Kronstadt, 2005). The 2002 elections were rigged, which raised questions about Pakistan's democracy. It was perceived as a defeat for the values of political pluralism, free and fair elections, and the equal playing field necessary for a robust democratic process. It is crucial to remember that the rigged elections held under Musharraf's rule caused controversy and exacerbated Pakistan's political polarization. Political parties and civil society organizations persisted in promoting democratic ideals despite obstacles and limitations, and they were vital in exerting pressure on the regime to return Pakistan to civilian control in 2008.

### **Function of Opposition Parties**

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP), led by Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and other opposition parties played a crucial role in opposing the military regime and arguing for a return to civilian rule throughout the Musharraf era. During Pakistan's Musharraf administration, which lasted from 1999 to 2008, opposition parties were a crucial and frequently tricky element of the political system. Pakistan's politics at this time was greatly influenced by their deeds, plans, and tenacity. The following are significant facets of the opposition parties' function under Musharraf:

General Musharraf's military authority was fiercely opposed by opposition parties, especially the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) under Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) under Nawaz Sharif (Khan et al, 2021). They attempted to reinstate civilian authority because they saw it as a usurpation of democratic values. Many opposition figures, including



Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, went into self-imposed exile or were put under house arrest. They could not mobilize their supporters or participate in political actions as an upshot. Opposition parties have repeatedly pushed Pakistan to regain its democracy and rule of law (Khan, 2011). They emphasized the deterioration of democratic standards under Musharraf's rule through international forums and the media. Political parties organized nationwide demonstrations and rallies using their party members to launch anti-Musharraf campaigns. A full-fledged political crisis would have been the ideal means for political parties to force General Pervez Musharraf into talks or bargaining in the framework of the judicial crisis. The Pakistan People's Party and the PML-N were identified as pro- and anti-Musharraf parties, respectively, but anti-democratic forces erased this distinction between the two major political parties. When Benazir Bhutto and PML-N delegate Ishaq Dar began talks on broad intraparty consulting for restoring Pakistan's democratic customs, PPP and PML-N became closer in 2002. The political parties decided to work together to overthrow the dictatorship and do away with it permanently.

They promised to replace the military government with an elected parliament. To fortify the negotiation process and meet with Nawaz Sharif, Benazir Bhutto traveled to Jeddah in 2005. The leaders of both parties came to a consensus on plans to guarantee sound government and uphold the true spirit of democracy. With the backing of other political parties and civil society, the PPP and PML-N came to an understanding. In 2005, the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD), a coalition of fifteen political parties, was established due to discussions and democratic forces approaching together.

Opponents staged protests, marches, and rallies to mobilize public opinion against the military regime. Although the government frequently used force against these protests and made arrests, they provided a forum for dissent. Concerning their participation in the elections held under the Musharraf dictatorship, opposition groups had difficult decisions to make. Due to perceived unfairness, some people elected to abstain from voting, while others decided to participate despite having doubts about the electoral process. By contesting Musharraf's conduct in court and calling for accountability and transparency in government, opposition parties sought to hold the government to account. Sometimes, electoral pacts or alliances were formed by opposition parties to strengthen their base of support and take on the dictatorship as a whole. One such coalition created to oppose Musharraf was the All-Parties Democratic Movement (APDM).

Some opposition groups, including the PPP and PML-N, were a part of the political scene after the 2002 general elections because they were given seats in the national and provincial parliament (Khan et al., 2021). Due to their presence, they could participate in parliamentary politics while still adhering to their oppositional agenda. To gain support for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan, opposition leaders communicated with the foreign community. They emphasized the significance of civilian government and the requirement for free and fair elections. The eventual switch to civilian governance in Pakistan in 2008 was made possible by the tenacity and tenacity of opposition parties, as well as persistent popular pressure. Benazir Bhutto's leadership of the PPP was essential in this change (Khan, 2011). The importance of political pluralism and the ongoing fight for democratic ideals, even in the face of authoritarianism, is shown by the involvement of opposition parties during the Musharraf era. Their efforts, together with those of lawyers and civil society groups, were crucial in putting Pakistan back under civilian control when military rule ended.

### **Civil Society and Protests**

The opposition to Musharraf's government was led mainly by civil society organizations, activists, and lawyers. Pressure on the dictatorship was partly increased due to the Lawyers' Movement and other demonstrations. Civil society in Pakistan was crucial in expressing dissent, promoting democratic ideals, and opposing authoritarian government during the General Pervez Musharraf regime. The following are significant facets of civil society's involvement and protests under the Musharraf administration, like the lawyers' movement. The Lawyers' Movement was one of the most significant civil society movements under Musharraf. Lawyers, legal professionals, and law students organized protests and marches to call for Musharraf's dismissal of the judiciary during the emergency in 2007 to be overturned. Journalists and members of civil society defended press freedom. Media organizations and journalists in Pakistan protested against government meddling after facing limitations and censorship (Khan, 2011).

Human rights groups in Pakistan, such as the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), were outspoken in identifying and reporting violations of human rights throughout Musharraf's administration. They spoke up for the rights of individuals and groups who were marginalized. Activists for women's rights continued to promote gender parity and women's empowerment. To address concerns like honor killings, domestic abuse, and discriminatory laws, they organized protests and campaigns. During this period, Students and youth activists contributed to the opposition to the dictatorship. Colleges and universities were focal points for political activism and demonstrations as students called for restoring democracy and the rule of law. To protest against Musharraf's administration, political parties, civil society organizations, and even public organized marches and rallies (Ahmed et al., 2022). Government repression and participant arrests were frequent occurrences at these events. To bring attention to Pakistan's political crisis, civil society organizations and activists interacted with the foreign community (Khan, 2011). For the restoration of democracy and human rights in Pakistan, they enlisted the aid of foreign countries and international organizations. The lawyers and judges' movement, which worked to restore Musharraf's ousted judiciary, had the active support of civil society organizations. Widespread attention was drawn to demonstrations and sit-ins outside the Supreme Court building in Islamabad.

Pressure was applied to Musharraf's government through civil society's combined efforts, including demonstrations, petitions, and public awareness campaigns. This pressure ultimately resulted in the switch to civilian government in 2008 (Khan, 2011). The political environment in Pakistan has been permanently altered by the civil society's activism and tenacity under the Musharraf administration. Notably, the Lawyers' Movement is frequently highlighted as a case study of how effective civil society mobilization can result in a significant political shift. During the Musharraf administration, civil society's participation in opposing authoritarianism, promoting democracy, and defending human rights served as an example of the relevance of civic engagement in preserving democratic principles and keeping those in authority accountable. The return of Pakistan to civilian government and the establishment of democratic institutions were greatly aided by these rallies and protests.

### **Heading Back to Civilian Rule**

In 2008, the change came after Benazir Bhutto's murder, which resulted in the PPP winning the ensuing general elections of 2008 and forming a coalition government (Ahmed et al., 2022). During General Pervez Musharraf's leadership in Pakistan, returning to civilian authority was intricate and varied, and it took several years to complete. Musharraf's military reign, which had started with a

coups in 1999, ended with the return to civilian authority in 2008. A provisional election schedule, which included parliamentary elections, was announced by General Musharraf in 2007. This proclamation was made in response to mounting pressure from political parties and civil society groups demanding a restoration of civilian governance. Former Pakistani leader Benazir Bhutto made her way home from a self-imposed exile in October 2007 (Khan et al., 2021). Her reappearance and readiness to work out a power-sharing deal with Musharraf gave the political scene a fresh perspective. Her homecoming, however, was overshadowed by a failed assassination attempt in December 2007, which tragically resulted in her passing (Khan, 2011).

Once again, General Musharraf suspended the constitution, imposed a state of emergency, and removed the judiciary, including the Chief Justice of Pakistan, on November 3, 2007. This action sparked a crackdown on civil society and political opposition and received intense international and local criticism. A key force in fighting the emergency and promoting the restoration of the judiciary and the rule of law was the Lawyers' Movement, which included lawyers, civil society activists, and the media. Across the nation, large-scale demonstrations, marches, and sit-ins were planned. Negotiations between political groups, notably the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led by Nawaz Sharif, took place amidst the political unrest (Khan et al., 2021). The All-Parties Democratic Movement (APDM), which campaigned for the restoration of the judiciary and an end to military rule, was created due to these negotiations.

General Musharraf announced his resignation as Chief of Army Staff in late 2007 in response to massive protests and international pressure. He then called for presidential elections in September 2007, which he won. However, opposition participation in the presidential election was relatively low. In February 2008, the National Assembly and provincial assemblies underwent general elections. These elections were a significant turning point because the PPP won with a resounding win and became the dominant force in the National Assembly. Following the elections, the PPP and other opposition parties formed a coalition government at the federal and provincial levels. The PPP's Yousaf Raza Gillani was appointed Prime Minister of Pakistan (Khan et al., 2021). As a result of rising opposition and parliamentary impeachment procedures, General Musharraf tendered his resignation as President of Pakistan in August 2008.

His rule came to an official end at this point. With the resignation of General Musharraf, Pakistan was fully transferred to civilian control. The democratic institutions were fully restored when Asif Ali Zardari, Benazir Bhutto's widower, took office as the President of Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2022). Pakistan's return to civilian rule in 2008 marked a substantial change in the nation's political climate. The end of military control and the transition back to democratic administration resulted from years of political activism, demonstrations, negotiations, and democratic processes. Musharraf era affected Pakistan's political parties and democratic institutions in the years that followed 2008 and later political developments in the country. Political parties in Pakistan managed to get through this challenging time in the country's political history, from their initial repression and co-optation to their resiliency and contributions to the eventual restoration of civilian rule (Khan, 2011). Historical context is essential for examining the intricate interactions between political parties and authoritarian governments throughout this period.

## Findings

Does Pakistan still have a place for democracy? This subject was brought up again on October 12, 1999, when General Musharraf took over Pakistan in a military coup. Through their protracted and turbulent military dictatorships, Field Marshal Ayub Khan, as well as General Yahya Khan, then

General Zia-ul-Haq, had convinced the world that Pakistan was unfit for democracy. To demonstrate to the world that he is serious about bringing democracy back anytime soon, General Pervez Musharraf has been making every effort. However, he has yet to appear particularly convincing on this front.

In contrast to General Zia-ul-Haq, who, upon seizing power in 1977, had declared that elections would be held within ninety days, Pervez Musharraf made no such commitment on October 12, 1999. When Musharraf met with a fact-finding delegation of visiting Commonwealth foreign ministers on October 29, he informed them that he could not guarantee the return of democracy to the nation. After the meeting, he told reporters, "I have set myself certain objectives, and I am targeting those objectives."

It even blocked the intended reversal of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments, which Nawaz Sharif had approved. Instead, it urged the rapid reinstatement of political activity and rejected any modifications to the constitution. Political parties played a crucial role in navigating Pakistan's complex political environment, which alternated between features of democracy and dictatorship throughout the General Pervez Musharraf administration. The Musharraf dictatorship used a variety of strategies, such as censorship, arrests, and intimidation, to stifle political dissent. The parties' ability to mobilize and interact with their constituents needed to be improved by these restrictions. Political parties had to carefully balance their adherence to democratic ideals with their willingness to cooperate with the military dictatorship occasionally. They were able to endure thanks to this subtle strategy, which finally helped civilian rule to be restored. Despite the difficulties, political parties emerged from this period with a strengthened dedication to democratic values. They played a crucial role in Pakistan's democratic process, pushing for political change and better governance.

In short, political parties played a complicated interaction between resiliency, internal strife, alliances, and their final contribution to restoring civilian authority during Musharraf's leadership. The difficulties Pakistan's democracy faces were made clear to them by their experiences during this time, highlighting the need for ongoing efforts to enhance democratic institutions and standards in the nation.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

General Pervez Musharraf's rule in Pakistan was turbulent in its political history, fluctuating between dictatorship and democratic features. Political parties were significant in determining how Pakistan's politics and government would develop during this time. In conclusion, several crucial issues above underlined the function of political parties under Musharraf. The Political Parties Order of 2002, which was put into effect under Musharraf's leadership, significantly influenced Pakistan's political scene. In addition to regulating and controlling political parties, it also spurred discussions on the proper proportion of democracy and authoritarianism, the function of political parties in a representative democracy, and the tenacity of Pakistan's political actors in the face of repressive measures.

Political parties played a significant role in Pakistan's political scene even after martial law was imposed and democratic institutions were suspended. Opposition organizations fought tenaciously to restore democracy and the rule of law despite severe restrictions and official control. Political parties went through internal turmoil at this time. These disputes regularly made it difficult for them to oppose Musharraf's administration as a united front. Internal and power conflicts made it difficult for parties to challenge the military-backed rule. Political organizations formed alliances and partnerships to strengthen their position against Musharraf. The formation of coalitions like

the All-Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) and the Charter of Democracy (CoD) demonstrated how keen the parties were to cooperate to achieve a common objective.

To suppress opposition groups, the Musharraf administration used a variety of tactics, including censorship, arrests, and intimidation. As a result of these actions, political parties could not gather support and participate in democratic activities. Pakistan's political parties still felt the consequences of working with Musharraf's administration. It helped people realize how important it is to uphold the law, support democratic institutions, and ensure that civilians take precedence over soldiers. The Musharraf era exposed the flaws and limitations of Pakistan's democratic system. To prevent future military coups, it highlighted the need for more robust democratic principles, institutions, and procedures. Political parties played an important but complex role throughout General Musharraf's leadership, oscillating between dissent against the dictatorship and internal conflict. Their perseverance and commitment to democratic principles ultimately assisted Pakistan in returning to civilian rule, demonstrating the ubiquitous significance of political parties in upholding and fostering democracy in the country. During the period, they also brought to light Pakistan's democratic system's persistent problems and weaknesses, which call for continued attention and reform initiatives to guarantee the country's future stability and democracy.

Democracy, a political structure that permits the people's continuous and complete participation, has not yet established itself in Pakistan. Egalitarian economic and social structures, a growing middle class, and a modernizing entrepreneurial elite are the cornerstones of democracy. It also requires the rule of law and an independent judiciary. Pakistan's social and economic systems and the country's culture are still firmly rooted in feudalism. Because of the absence or inadequacies in the ingredients that support democracy, what are considered democratically elected administrations in practice tend to behave in wholly non-democratic ways, making it possible for the military to overthrow them on several occasions. Even while it would not be accurate to state that democracy possesses no place in Pakistan, it would take many decades for democracy to establish enduring roots there. Thus, there remains doubt regarding Pakistan's democratic future.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions on the significant function of political parties under General Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan, several suggestions can be made to deepen democracy and enhance the political environment in the nation:

**Strengthening Intra-Party Democracy:** Political parties should concentrate on internal reforms to reduce factionalism and power battles. Parties can become more cohesive and effective if democratic and open leadership selection procedures are used.

**Building Stronger Alliances:** Parties should keep working together through coalitions and alliances, particularly during political unrest. By forming these partnerships, they can raise their profile and present a more united front in opposition to authoritarian threats. **Enhancing Civic Education:** To provide individuals with a better grasp of democratic principles, the role of political parties, and the need to actively participate in politics and promote civic education and political awareness.

- **Maintaining Accountability:** Political parties should improve accountability and openness in their internal decision-making, money management, and candidate selection processes. It might help the general population feel confident.
- **Electoral Process Reform:** Encourage electoral reforms to guarantee fair and transparent elections. It includes stopping gerrymandering, unlawful influence, and election manipulation.

- **Strengthening Civil Society:** Encourage civil society organizations to monitor political party actions to ensure they adhere to democratic ideals. The promotion of transparency and accountability can be aided by civil society.
- **Securing Media Independence and Freedom of Expression:** Ensure freedom of expression and media independence. A free press is necessary to hold political parties and the government accountable.
- **Fostering Diversity:** Encourage political parties to implement inclusive policies that reflect the diversity of Pakistan's people, including gender, ethnicity, and religious origins, to promote inclusivity. It can foster national solidarity and help heal divisions.
- **Constitutional Reforms:** Advocate for constitutional changes that would improve the division of authority between the military and civilian authorities. For a democracy to remain viable, citizen supremacy must be guaranteed.
- **Promoting Dialogue:** To address problems and forge consensus on democratic governance and national stability, encourage honest and productive dialogue between political parties, the military, and civil society.
- **International Engagement:** Participate in international organizations and diplomatic initiatives to strengthen Pakistan's democratic institutions. Adherence to democratic standards can be encouraged by international pressure and collaboration.
- **Long-Term Commitments:** Recognize the commitment over the long term required to consolidate democracy. Even in difficulties, political parties, civil society, and citizens should uphold democratic values.

By putting these suggestions into practice, Pakistan may seek to build a more robust and more durable democratic system, lowering the danger of authoritarian interference in the future and ensuring that political parties continue to play a constructive and valuable role in determining the nation's political future.

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