

# Role Of Pakistan Peoples Party In Political Alliances Of Pakistan Against Military Regimes (1967-2008): An Assessment

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## Abstract

Democracy is incompatible with tyranny, martial law, and illegitimate government. An alliance for the restoration of democracy in the nation is ultimately formed as a result of the undemocratic condition. Since Pakistan has a multi-party system, political alliances have always been an important component of her political culture. In the course of its political history, it has seen military government four times. During military regimes, the majority of political parties formed political alliances in opposition to the military regimes. Pakistan Peoples Party, one of the oldest surviving parties itself is emerged on the political scene of Pakistan as a resistance of first martial law regime of Ayub Khan. PPP since its inception in 1967 remained an integral part of all opposition political alliances formed against military regimes in Pakistan. This brief article highlights the role of PPP in political alliances that emerged against military regimes. The article describes the unique struggle of PPP and its sacrifices for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan.

**Key Words:** Pakistan Peoples Party, Political Alliances, Military Regimes, Restoration of Democracy,

## Introduction

For many years, Pakistan endured military dictatorships. For instance, Pakistan experienced military coups beginning in 1958 and continuing until 1971. After that, Pakistan saw its second military regime from 1977 to 1988, followed by a third time from 1999 to 2008. As a result, Pakistan had protracted periods of military control; and the population felt a pressing need for a solid democratic system. General Ayub Khan and Z. A. Bhutto fell out in 1966 after they failed to bargain at the Tashkent Declaration. As

a result, Bhutto was dismissed from the government by Ayub Khan (Akhtar, 2017). Due to this occurrence, Z. A. Bhutto made the decision to create his own democratic party and became motivated to overthrow the military government. A political platform and organization were required to accomplish this. From Rasul Baksh Talpur's home, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Jalaluddin Akber Rahim announced the creation of a new political party on September 16, 1967. Jalaluddin Akber Rahim, a diplomat but a self-described Marxist, was pushing for the formation of a new political party. This declaration was

made against the backdrop of a quick tour of all the main Pakistani cities, which included consultations and conversations with left-wing activists. The need for a new left-wing party first surfaced throughout the tour (Gohar, 2015).

Under the shadow of Ayub Khan's unprecedentedly brutal regime, the PPP was founded and its founding convention was held. The gathering took place from November 30 to December 1 in Dr. Mubashir Hassan's suburban home. The meeting's organizers were Malik Aslam Hayat and the president of the Lahore High Court Bar. Lahore was picked due to its importance in politics and history. The Pakistan People's Party was established in this manner. It then developed into Pakistan's largest and most powerful political party, fighting in a particularly innovative way for democracy and the supremacy of the country's Constitution and Parliament (Akhtar, 2017). When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the party's founder, firmly refused to submit to a dictator, he was subjected to a bogus trial and killed for what even his harshest detractors referred to be "judicial murder." Begum Nusrat Bhutto experienced the trauma while leading the struggle after her husband was taken into custody. Benazir Bhutto, his daughter, struggled valiantly against General Zia-ul-Haq, the greatest military dictator in the nation, while also facing trial, incarceration, and exile (Ahmed, 2014). No party had given the kind of sacrifices the PPP workers had given in the General Zia-ul-Haq era. Benazir was finally assassinated while struggling against another military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf.

### **Defining Political Alliances and its Classification**

Political alliances are simply the joining of different political parties or organizations to advance shared objectives. In general, the form and intensity of alliances vary widely. Typically, the political climate of the society in which an

alliance is established determines the components that go into its establishment. Second, the number of parties has an impact on how alliances are formed. Because political alliances can take many different forms and because the political process is dynamic and always changing, it is impossible to categorize political alliances in a consistent and accurate manner. All of these factors make it challenging to categorize alliances because one is on shaky and shifting footing. The models of political alliances that are currently accessible can be loosely divided into the following categories.

1. Oppositional alliances;
2. Parliamentary Alliances, which include: a. Governmental Coalitions; b. Opposition Coalitions;
3. Electoral Alliances;

These categories can also be further broken down into short-term and long-term alliances (Hussain, 2008). The distinctive feature of alliances is that all three types occasionally function concurrently or may fit into more than one category. For instance, an electoral alliance could include every opposing group. The nature of alliances evolves over time in a variety of ways. Sometimes powerful alliances disintegrate and weak alliances get stronger (Rasool, 2017).

The political concerns and the general nature of national politics influence this. Democracy is opposed by dictatorship, martial law, unstable governments, and illegitimate governments. The avenues of communication are ineffective in this type of circumstance. The political system loses its ability to respond when the intuitional structures and processes are unable to reconcile competing demands and implement expected policies. Crisis is born as a result. The scenario finally results in the establishment of an alliance with the intention of combating the current system, which the majority of the populace does not perceive as legitimate. These alliances come

in a variety of forms, some of which are created to combat an undemocratic, unrepresentative government. Some alliances are formed for elections, while others are formed inside the legislature to form a cohesive group of lawmakers (Hussain, 2008). Occasionally, alliances are formed to address specific problems of critical national concern. Even the governing elites and the opposition make an alliance to form national government in situation of national emergency or any other grave crisis faced by the nation. All these alliances function on short term and long term basis as the case may be. Pakistan has seen a variety of alliances, including governmental, electoral, and oppositional alliances. Out of these the opposition alliances worked mainly during dictatorial regimes of the military adventuress (Rasool, 2017).

### **PPP Struggle against Military Dictatorship through Political Alliances**

Since Pakistan has a multi-party system, political alliances have always been an important component of her political culture. In the course of its political history, it has seen military government four times. In times of military rule, the PPP banded together to oppose them, forming political alliances, and fought for the restoration of democracy in the country. The PPP being a major and oldest party of the country remained an integral part of the all major political alliances i.e. electoral alliances, opposition alliances, parliamentary alliances (governmental coalitions, opposition coalitions). However the main theme of this article is political opposition alliances in which PPP played its significant role against military dictatorships for restoration of democracy. Therefore the following are the major political alliances; the PPP has a unique struggle for democracy.

### **PPP's Emergence as a Revolutionary Vehicle: Movement against Ayub Regime**

The emergence of PPP was by itself a political alliance with people against Ayub dictatorship. After India and Pakistan's war in 1965, Pakistan's ruling elite experienced a severe economic crisis. Ayub Khan's military government made an effort to place the financial burden of this crisis on the shoulders of the working class. It caused previously unheard-of contradictions in a society that on the surface appeared to be rather tranquil. Underneath, there was a volatile scenario boiling. It was bound to blow up (Raza, 1997). The PPP was founded as a result of the explosion of these social conflicts, which also gave it the ability to quickly fill the political void and grow into a major party. The year the PPP was founded was also the year when the working class rose up in revolt against General Ayub's military regime. The Railways workers, who successfully led a countrywide strike in January 1967 from Khyber Pass to Karachi in demand of an end to life's misery, poverty, and price hikes as well as, more crucially, better rights and facilities for workers across the country, were at the forefront of this uprising (Ahmed, 2014). This conclusively demonstrates the possibility of new leadership arising during a revolutionary uprising against the state. This new, militant labour leadership was to play a significant role in the PPP's success. This was the new political party's initial trade union support base. Although this strike was limited to the railways for the time being, it set the groundwork for the impending revolutionary movement. Under the shadow of Ayub Khan's unprecedented brutal regime, the PPP was founded and its founding convention was held. The government was so afraid that it forbade a political gathering from taking place on December 3, 1967, at the Mochi Gate in Lahore (Raza, 1997). In this situation, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto remarked, "Great movements often have low beginnings." Following the founding convention, there were many serious political problems and societal unrest. Ayub Khan's rule was being undermined on the one hand, and

conventional chaotic politics was vying for survival on the other. Different political alliances were emerged. The right and left wing parties came together to establish the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and Democratic Action Committee (DAC). PPP kept its distance from the DAC. The PPP faced restrictive state actions while growing significantly in popularity among the populace, as well as attacks from right-wing political groups and the elite (Ahmed, 2014).

This movement persisted for 138 days, from November 7, 1968, to March 25, 1968, showing remarkable bravery and tenacity. It was the longest movement in South Asian history. There was only one sign that read "Revolution, Revolution, Socialist Revolution" from Peshawar to Chittagong. By the end of 1968 and the start of 1969, the movement had taken on a truly revolutionary persona. General Ayub Khan made a conciliation speech on February 1st, 1969, to try and put an end to the movement, but much to his dismay, it just made things worse. He said that a round table conference of all the political parties would be held (Raza, 1997). Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, who accepted an invitation to the meeting, founded and served as the leader of a right-wing alliance known as the Democratic Action Committee (DAC). The PPP declined to go to the meeting. The PPP was plainly benefiting from the workers' overtly revolutionary sentiment, giving it its greatest strength. The leadership had no idea how well-liked the PPP was among the general public. All of Ayub Khan's efforts were ineffective. He was retreating. He said on February 21, 1969, that he would not run for president in 1970. This served as a preliminary sign of the movement's success (Ahmed, 2014). Finally, General Ayub announced his resignation on March 25, 1969.

### **Role in Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD): Resistance against Zia Regime**

Bhutto possessed a powerful and vivacious personality. Through his slogans and policies, he had ingrained a new Bhuttoist mindset in the minds of the middle and lower middle class. In all of Pakistan's provinces, the Pakistan People's Party had built up a strong support base, making it impossible to ignore them in the next elections. It was foreseeable that PPP would once again win a significant portion of the seats in the next elections, which Zia would oversee. The leaders of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) and Zia's military dictatorship saw Z.A. Bhutto as a serious danger. Zia was unwilling to give Bhutto complete control over the election because of this (Khuhro & Soomro, 2013). The military and PNA's shared aims were made possible by widespread terror. Zia sought to remove PPP off the electoral scene, while the PNA was concerned about its chances of winning. Major political parties made a major demand for free and fair elections after Z.A. Bhutto was removed from office. Zia often promised to hold free and fair elections but broke his word. The declaration of martial law caused a divide among the parties backing the military government. Only a small number of parties, including the Muslim League led by Pir Pagaro, supported the dictator, and the majority of political parties formed an alliance with the PPP under the MRD (Ahmad, 2015). The only vocal opposition group in Pakistan that constantly challenged Zia's policies was Pakistan People's Party. The PPP lost its most charismatic leader when Bhutto left the political scene. False lawsuits were filed against the party's leaders in an effort to further erode the support of the party. Party activists received harsh sentences from military courts. Without the assistance of the other political parties, PPP was unable to start a movement against the military rule. The Pakistan People's Party was given new life by the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, giving it an opportunity to successfully oppose the dictatorship. The PPP leadership also understood that they needed to put Bhutto's

execution in the past, act in accordance with the political logic and necessity of the circumstances, and reach out to former political rivals in order to engage in a coordinated effort against the military government (Khuhro & Soomro, 2013).

Nine political parties joined to form the MRD coalition. The Movement for the Restoration of Democracy under Zia included the majority of the political parties that had previously started a movement against Bhutto. Religious political parties like JUI, nationalist political parties like NAP, centrist political parties like Muslim League, and leftist political parties like Qumi Mahaz Azadi, Mazdour Kassan Party, and PPP. The alliance now included a wide variety of parties. To remove Zia from office was the main goal of all the parties. He was viewed as the chief foe of PPP (Mushtaq, 2015).

Mid-term elections were demanded by MRD in 1985, which was led by the Pakistan People's Party; however it fell short of its goals. MRD instigated protests against the Zia government in a number of Pakistani cities. Participants at the demonstration included students, physicians, actors, politicians, and lawyers. The middle and lower middle classes in Punjab demonstrated their support for the PPP and joined the demonstration from the MRD platform (Ahmad, 2015). After the coup, PPP employees fled Pakistan and resided in London. London had evolved into the hub of political activity. There were also Benazir Bhutto's brothers residing. After being exiled from Pakistan, she also made her home in London. She highlighted the mistreatment of political prisoners who were being held in jails and started an international campaign against Zia. The PPP employees started a journal called "Amal," in which they published stories about the inhumane treatment of inmates (Mushtaq, 2015).

On February 25 and February 27, respectively, elections were set for the national assembly and

provincial assemblies. No party was permitted to run in the elections, and none of the political parties were given any symbols. MRD abstained from voting because the elections were not party-based. Benazir Bhutto was eager to run in the elections, but she welcomed MRD's boycott and their decision to abstain as well (Rais, 1985). Candidates who opposed Zia earned the majority of the votes. Later, PPP expressed regret about its choice to boycott elections. Election boycotting was a mistake made by MRD that was later acknowledged by Benazir Bhutto. Muhammad Khan Junejo of the Muslim League was appointed Pakistan's prime minister following the 1985 elections, which also led to the end of the eight-year Zia Martial Law (Sekine, 1992). However, military rule does not stop with the lifting of martial law. After all, MRD and PPP applied pressure to the newly elected government to organize free and fair elections, which maintained the country's parliamentary system.

On April 10, 1986, Benazir Bhutto ended her self-imposed exile in London and travelled back to Pakistan. She was greeted cordially by a sizable throng, which exceeded her expectations. It was the biggest crowd Pakistan had ever seen (Richter, 1989). When the opposition PPP and MRD held a public rally on August 14, 1986, the administration was taken aback. As a result, the government launched a crackdown against the opposition, arresting hundreds of leaders, including Benazir Bhutto, which was seen as the darkest political development since the Zia regime (Van Hollen, 1987).

When BB attempted to deepen the roots of her struggle using the PPP platform, the differences between Gen Zia and PM Junejo came to light. Surprisingly, without anyone's permission, the then President Zia abolished the National and Provincial Assemblies on July 20. Despite being a constitutional move, few people believed it to be Gen Zia's uprising (Ahmad, 2015). Zia then announced a new date for the general elections,

which would take place on November 16, 1988. Even while it was an important breakthrough for politics, most people projected that these elections may be nonpartisan, which would severely harm political parties, particularly the PPP, and make it difficult for the general public to identify their real leaders.

The PPA of Zia was contested by Bhutto and in the Apex court, which restrained the PPP and other mainstream parties in the election that was later ruled to be invalid and null in 1988. Bhutto and MRD's confidence increased as a result of the Supreme Court's impressive decision, but it was unclear if Zia would permit party-based elections. MRD demonstrated its cohesion as well as the alliance's consistency and pragmatism. On July 12, 1988, Bhutto and MRD loudly denounced the Zia government for the first time in two years (Mahmood, 2017). On August 17, 1988, a jet disaster claimed the lives of President Zia ul Haq, senior Generals, and American officials. Ghulam Ishaq, president of the Senate, resolved to hold free and fair elections. After Zia's passing, political parties, including PPP launched their campaigns with a lot of fanfare. PPP's manifesto, which was not at all innovative and merely attempted to provide the most basic necessities, placed a strong emphasis on economic initiatives, previous reforms, education, and much more (Azeem, Hussain & Ahmad, 2018). As the smaller parties requested a large share above and above what they needed, there was a severe issue with seats being allocated among MRD. Finally, PPP decided to cut company with MRD and run alone in the elections.

### **Role in Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD): Struggle against Musharraf Regime**

Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan founded the Grand Democratic Alliance in September 1999 in Lahore following extensive collaboration with a number of political parties hostile to the Nawaz

regime (1997-99). The alliance was established with the dual goals of saving Pakistan's Federation and toppling the increasingly autocratic Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. This demonstrates to the patron of political alliances created in Pakistan that opposition to a certain regime or individual usually results in an alignment of political parties, but they only concur on the need to overthrow that regime or individual. Rarely do broad political objectives result in sustained political cooperation. GDA was no different. The supremacy of the law, the realization of human rights, and press freedom were its core objectives, but like all other opposition alliances, it also included additional points in their agenda, such neutral permanent accountability, the restoration of democracy, and the economy (Hussain, 2008). Despite having 19 political parties, only three of them were represented in parliament. However, the PPP held more sway within its fold due to its leadership role. When General Musharraf imposed martial law on the nation on October 12, 1999, it led to the overthrow of GDA's adversary Nawaz Sharif from office. But this happiness was coupled by a great deal of concern on the part of the politicians who saw the army playing a new role in politics (Rasool, 2017).

Once more, the military entered openly into the corridor of power by attacking the democratic system and the constitution. Politicians now had to contend with a more powerful foe than Nawaz, which called for greater political unanimity in the nation. On November 26, 2000, the alliance made the decision to work with the PML (N) due to the shifting political landscape. The alliance argued that collective efforts from all political factions are necessary to fight for the restoration of democracy (Hussain, 2008). Thus, the alliance that was established to depose Nawaz Sharif has now allied with PML (N), though not without losing some of its original constituents. As a result of the PML (N)'s admission, eight parties

left the coalition. This dealt GDA a fatal blow, and a few days later, it was properly buried. However, a new coalition of political parties was born as a result of this burial. On December 3, 2000, in Islamabad, the majority of the GDA's component parties reorganized to establish a new alliance called the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy with the addition of the PML (N) (Associated Press, 2000, December 04). As its leader, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan was selected. The PML (N) and the PPP put their past animosity and hatred behind them and joined the ARD. Thus, the ARD united the two primary rivals on a single stage. Its goals were to immediately hold free, fair, and impartial elections; to peacefully and persistently mobilize the populace for the immediate restoration of democracy and the Constitution; to provide the maximum amount of provincial autonomy; and to establish a commission to investigate historical wrongdoings. Among its 18 constituent parties, PPP, PML (N), MQM, ANP, PML, and JAH are prominent ones. In actuality, ARD offered a multi-textured awning under which several parties from all political spheres were represented. Despite the regime's removal of the two top PPP and PML (N) politicians from office, the alliance persisted. By detaining its political staff, the authorities severely repressed the ARD and prevented a gathering that was set to take place in Karachi on May 1 (Naazar, Mahmood, & Ashfaq, 2017). The Musharraf administration detained hundreds of ARD leaders and activists while abusing police power to prevent ARD from staging processions, rallies, and demonstrations.

President Rafiq Tarar was compelled to step down, and President Pervez Musharraf took over. He then declared a presidential referendum that was held on April 30, 2002, to further legitimize his action (Indurthy, 2004). Political parties were allowed the chance to run, although there were tight limitations. As a result, PPP abstained from voting in the referendum on ARD's behalf.

Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, the chairman of ARD, claimed that the referendum had breached the Constitution and that peaceful public rallies against President Musharraf's referendum campaign would be held. The referendum is actually condemned by human rights organizations and religious groups. However, the police quickly attacked the ARD leaders at a protest against the referendum on April 21. The ARD requested that exiled PPP leader BB return home in order to bolster the president's anti-referendum effort (Talbot, 2009). However, Pervez Musharraf made it clear that he would not permit Benazir Bhutto to return. Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif's return to Pakistan, the restoration of democracy, and the army's return to its barracks are all demands that ARD has steadfastly maintained. Due to the component parties' involvement in the political system the military ruler had established, it was unable to really confront the Musharraf regime. Both the general elections in 2002 and the elections for local bodies saw participation from nearly all of ARD's constituent parties (Rasool, 2017).

On September 27, 2003, its founder president Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan passed away. A highly esteemed politician named Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan was the driving force behind the ARD's initiatives. He left the alliance without a qualified leader after passing away. A new presidency was created after Khan's passing in order to "balance the two key components of the alliance," the PPP (P) and the PML (N). The two major political parties in the ARD were the PML (N) and PPP (P), but Musharraf was able to neutralize Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto through a mix of exile and court convictions. However, both inside and outside of the National Assembly, the ARD had emerged as the most vocal opponent of the military regime (Indurthy, 2004).

In 2003, Makhdoom Amin Fahim of the PPP (P) was chosen as the ARD's chairman, while Javed

Hashmi, acting leader of PML (N) was chosen as its president (Waseem, 2003). On December 26, 2003, the government introduced the 17th constitutional amendment in the national assembly. Aitazaz Ahsan, the leader of the PPP, rejected the modification and raised the complaint that LFO was deemed unlawful because it was completely at odds with ARD viewpoints (Talbot, 2009). In the name of accountability, the government frequently employed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), which was established under the National Accountability Ordinance (1999), to persecute political opponents. The top leaders of the ARD, PML (N), and PPP who refused to switch allegiances were jailed on corruption-related charges. PPP leaders who remained devoted to the party, such as Yousaf Raza Gilani and Jehangir Badar, were jailed on corruption-related charges. Targeting exclusively those leaders who belonged to the PPP and PML (N) and defied the dictator's whims and demands, the NAB operated as a "National Arm-twisting Bureau" (Naazar, Mahmood, & Ashfaq, 2017).

Both political party leaders had been the subject of corruption investigations and allegations, but these claims remained unfounded and were widely believed to be made for political reasons. On March 24, 2008, Makhdoom Amin Fahim resigned as chairman of ARD, and Rao Javed Ali Khan took over in an interim capacity. The ARD was later dismantled, because it was never able to rally the populace against the Pervez Musharraf government. Later, the 2008 Pakistani general election saw independent campaigns from both of the country's major parties, PML (N) and PPP (Rasool, 2017).

## Conclusion

Political alliances were the only viable option left to the political parties under the Martial Law regulations. Because of this, the majority of these opposition alliances were vital in exerting

pressure on authoritarian and dictatorial administrations to speed up the nation's democratization process. In the same spectrum the emergence of PPP in 1967 was the reaction against the dictatorial regime of Ayub Khan, although PPP was not the part of that time opposition alliance DAC but made an alliance with Pakistani people. And the electoral victory of PPP ended the Yahya regime. Political parties and the PPP in particular, had a difficult time during Zia's third martial law government because its members were imprisoned and subjected to torture. The PPP joined hand with its former adversaries to form the Movement for Restoration of Democracy as a result of the events. In the beginning, the movement served as a unified voice for the restoration of democracy and the overthrow of the Zia military regime. The Zia regime's decision to hold non-party elections in 1985 was somewhat influenced by this movement's success. The fourth military regime of Pervez Musharraf also suppressed the political activities particularly victimized the main parties PPP and PML (N). The political circumstances led to the unification of these arch rival parties into political alliance, ARD against Musharraf regime. The PPP played pivotal role in ARD and its leader remained on high position in it. However, it was later disbanded due to its ineffectiveness against Musharraf regime. The PPP maintained its strong support for the restoration of democracy throughout the alliances. However, the PPP leadership repeatedly switched sides, betraying the confidence of the public, and failed to bring about any positive change in Pakistani politics. The democratic aspirations of today's politicians will determine the course of democracy in the future. Nobody will be able to try to impose a dictatorship in Pakistan if they remain together.

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