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**Rebuilding Democracy: An In-Depth Analysis of Pakistan's Political Transformation (2008-2015)**

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**Abstract**

This study delves into the political evolution of Pakistan between 2008 and 2015, focusing on the intricate process of rebuilding democracy after years of military rule and political instability. During this period, Pakistan witnessed significant shifts in governance, with the peaceful transition of power between civilian administrations, the strengthening of democratic institutions, and a series of reforms aimed at improving political accountability. By examining key political events, such as the 2008 and 2013 general elections, the restoration of the judiciary, and the role of civil society movements, this analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Pakistan's democratic system. Ultimately, it offers insights into the complex dynamics that influenced Pakistan's political landscape during this transformative decade, highlighting both successes and ongoing struggles in the quest for a stable and functioning democracy. The research adopts a qualitative research design, focusing on political analysis and historical interpretation of key events. It will incorporate both descriptive and analytical approaches to understand the political changes that occurred during the 2008-2015 period.

**Keywords.** Democracy, Constitutional amendments. Transition, Election, Coalition

**Introduction.**

The process of democratic consolidation in Pakistan between 2008 and 2015 was a complex and challenging journey, marked by various internal and external hurdles. These challenges, including constitutional and political issues, economic struggles, terrorism, strained civil-military relations, judicial and executive divergence, security concerns, and the disruptive nature of "dharna" politics, created significant obstacles to the development of a stable and thriving democratic system. However, despite these difficulties, the political parties in power demonstrated a commitment to democratic behaviour that ultimately facilitated a reconciliation policy and contributed to the strengthening of the country's democratic institutions. The period of 2008 to 2013 saw the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leading the 13<sup>th</sup> National Assembly with a sense of confidence, despite the daunting challenges. During this period, Pakistan faced a struggling economy, widespread financial corruption, issues of law and order, and an overburdened justice system. Nonetheless, the PPP government successfully completed its full five-year term on March 16, 2013—marking a historical achievement as it was the first time in Pakistan's history that one elected government peacefully handed over power to another elected

government through a democratic process. This successful transition from one democratic government to another, alongside constitutional amendments, greater provincial autonomy, increased women's representation, and a general non-interference by the military in political affairs, were pivotal indicators of democratic consolidation during the PPP era. The continuity of civilian rule during this time helped further cement the foundations of democratic institutions in Pakistan, despite the challenges. According to Khan (2016), these developments were key achievements for democratic consolidation. In the 2013 general elections, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N) emerged as the dominant party in the National Assembly. Nawaz Sharif assumed office as the Prime Minister with a clear focus on reviving the country's economy, which had suffered greatly under previous administrations. Throughout the five years of the PML-N government (2013-2018), there was a strong emphasis on economic recovery and the completion of delayed infrastructure and energy projects, which were essential to address the country's mounting economic and developmental challenges. However, the PML-N government also faced significant criticism for slow progress on human development indicators, persistent fiscal deficits, and the growing external debt burden. Furthermore, there were concerns about a lack of transparency in financial matters, particularly regarding Nawaz Sharif's involvement in the Panama Papers scandal. This controversy led to his eventual removal from office by the Supreme Court in 2017. The case and its aftermath highlighted deep-rooted issues of corruption, governance, and transparency, which undermined the trust of the public and the political system in general. The following questions will be addressed in this study.

### **Research Questions**

1. How did the 2008 general elections in Pakistan contribute to the consolidation of democratic governance, and what were the key challenges faced during this transition?
2. What role did political parties, particularly the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), play in strengthening or undermining democratic institutions in Pakistan between 2008 and 2015?
3. To what extent did the military's involvement in civilian governance and the balance of power between the civilian government and the military impact Pakistan's democratic revival during the 2008-2015 period?

### **Research Methodology**

The research adopts a qualitative research design, focusing on political analysis and historical interpretation of key events. It incorporates both descriptive and analytical approaches to understand the political changes that occurred during the 2008-2015 period. To address the research questions, the study employs the data collection methods focusing on Secondary Sources. This methodology includes analysis of speeches party manifestos, parliamentary debates, and official documents from the PPP and PML-N that reflect the political strategies during this period. It also includes Review newspapers, and other media coverage from 2008 to 2015 to assess the public discourse and portrayal of democratic developments. This study also utilized academic books, journal articles, reports and research papers that focus on Pakistan's political history, democratization, and the civilian-military relationship during this time.

### **Literature Review**

Aqil Shah (2014), in his seminal work *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan*, provides a comprehensive examination of the historical dynamics between the military and civilian authorities in Pakistan. Shah traces this relationship back to 1947, emphasizing that democratic transitions in Pakistan have been rare. He notes that the first peaceful transfer of power occurred in 2013, which could mark a significant step toward consolidating democracy, despite on-going challenges. Shah suggests that democracy in Pakistan could strengthen if elected governments deliver on public expectations, address critical national issues, and respect

constitutional norms, thereby securing democratic legitimacy. In his research article *Constraining Consolidation: Military Politics and Democracy in Pakistan (2007-2013)*, Shah further acknowledges that military dominance is not the sole obstacle to democracy. Instead, he identifies a complex interplay of political, economic, and security challenges that hinder democratic consolidation. This perspective aligns with Larry Diamond's *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, which stresses that a state's democratic consolidation requires strong political institutions, effective governance, power devolution, a dynamic civil society, and sound economic performance. Huma Baqai, in her paper *Pakistan in Transition: Towards a Substantive Democracy*, discusses the fragility of Pakistan's democracy over the past five years. She argues that while democracy has been formally established, its functioning remains tenuous due to persistent challenges, both historical and contemporary. The interplay of these issues makes the debate around democracy in Pakistan increasingly complex and fraught with difficulties. Niaz (2009), in *The Culture of Power and Governance in Pakistan*, attributes the military's frequent intervention in politics to the ineffectiveness of civilian politicians. He contends that the country's political instability and economic fragility, especially during times of fiscal distress, have paved the way for military takeovers. Additionally, the military's involvement in disaster management has given it a platform to cement its political influence, making it a recurring force in governance. The PILDAT report (2014) acknowledges the gradual steps Pakistan took toward consolidating democracy between 2008 and 2014. This period saw the first peaceful transition of power between civilian governments, a significant milestone in Pakistan's democratic evolution. International observers regarded the elections during this time as credible, marking an important achievement in Pakistan's political history. Dr. Sohail Mahmood (2009), in *Good Governance Reform Agenda in Pakistan*, explores the persistent governance issues that have plagued Pakistan, including corruption, poor planning, and bureaucratic inefficiency. His analysis highlights the dangers of centralization, which exacerbates corruption and public dissatisfaction. Oldenburg (2010), in *India, Pakistan, and Democracy: Solving the Puzzle of Divergent Paths*, compares the democratic trajectories of India and Pakistan. He argues that India's democracy has proven more resilient, while Pakistan's political system remains mired in a power struggle between elected representatives, the military, bureaucracy, and other influential sectors. Oldenburg suggests that this constant tug-of-war has often led to military interventions. S. Akbar Zaidi, in his book *Military, Civil Society, and Democratization in Pakistan*, delves into the era of Pervez Musharraf and the historical development of the ruling system in Pakistan. Zaidi identifies the concepts of acceptance, accommodation, and reconciliation as central to the process of democratization in Pakistan. He also emphasizes the role of political parties, which, despite being ostensibly aligned with democratic principles, have often acquiesced to military authority. This body of literature provides a nuanced understanding of Pakistan's political landscape, characterized by recurring military interventions, fragile democratic structures, and the challenges of governance. While some scholars offer hope for democratic consolidation, they acknowledge the persistent influence of the military, which remains a powerful force in the nation's political arena. After analysis of literature review the major steps for rebuilding of democracy are discussed below in Pakistan during the civilian regime between 2008 and 2015.

### **1: Political Compromise for Coalition Government**

After the 2008 elections, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) emerged as the major political force in the country, but it was not able to form a central government on its own due to the lack of a mandatory majority. As a result, forming a coalition government became necessary to ensure democratic consolidation and to combat the lingering influence of authoritarianism. The PPP understood that without the support of other political forces, it would be difficult to govern effectively, especially considering the severe challenges facing the country. These included the deteriorating law and order situation in key regions like Karachi and Balochistan, as well as a

struggling economy at the national level. In light of these issues, the political leadership realized that unity and consensus were crucial for the survival and stability of democracy in Pakistan. They recognized that political disagreements at this stage could derail their efforts to address the pressing challenges facing the country (Akhtar, 2017, p. 90). Despite historical rivalries and political differences, the PPP, led by Asif Ali Zardari, and the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N) came together to form a political alliance. This momentous decision was formalized in what became known as the Murree Declaration, signed at Bhurban, Murree. Zardari's emergence as a powerful political figure, buoyed by his party's majority in the parliament, provided the political leverage necessary for this coalition. Under the auspices of this alliance, Yousaf Raza Gilani was appointed Prime Minister, securing 264 votes in the National Assembly. Zardari succeeded in forming a coalition government with a diverse array of parties, including the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), Awami National Party (ANP), PML-N, and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)—a remarkable achievement given the historical hostility between these groups during the 1990s (Satar, 2008, p. 23). This political conciliation also resulted in the inclusion of 11 members from different provinces—Punjab, NWFP, Sindh, and Balochistan—into the cabinet after mutual consultations with PML-N. One of the most significant milestones of the coalition government was the push for the resignation of President Pervez Musharraf. The PPP-led government threatened impeachment, which ultimately led to Musharraf's departure. Zardari was elected as the new President on August 26, 2008, with the support of coalition partners such as JUI, ANP, MQM, and the PPP itself. In addition, the coalition's inclusivity allowed the opposition to play an active role in executive matters, with the majority party in the central government demonstrating a willingness to cooperate with political rivals. The opposition was not only accepted as an important part of the decision-making process but also fully supported the central government in the interest of maintaining political stability (Hasanie, 2013, p. 44). The Sharif brothers, leaders of the PML-N, had been disqualified from participating in future elections by the Supreme Court during the tenure of Chief Justice Abdul Hamid Dogar. However, despite this tense political situation, Zardari refrained from taking punitive actions against the Sharifs, recognizing the importance of avoiding further political instability and military intervention. This decision was emblematic of the political maturity shown by the PPP leadership in prioritizing the long-term goal of democratic consolidation over short-term partisan gains (The Herald, 2012). The political compromise and coalition-building efforts between the PPP and PML-N were crucial for the consolidation of democracy in Pakistan during this period. The establishment of a coalition government not only ensured that power was shared across different political factions but also helped neutralize the possibility of military interference. The cooperative approach of the political parties, despite their historical rivalry, contributed to a relatively stable democratic environment during the early years after Musharraf's resignation. Thus, the period from 2008 to 2009 can be seen as a pivotal moment in Pakistan's journey toward democratic consolidation. The successful formation of a coalition government, the prioritization of national unity over partisan interests, and the avoidance of confrontations with political opponents marked a positive trajectory for Pakistan's democracy. Ultimately, the political cooperation between the PPP and PML-N during this time played a major role in strengthening democratic institutions and laying the groundwork for a more stable democratic future.

## **2: Constitutional Amendments: A Landmark Achievement**

Despite challenges during the PPP-led government (2008-2013), including poor governance and disruptions by the judiciary and military, significant progress was made in restoring constitutionalism and advancing parliamentary democracy. In 2008, President Asif Ali Zardari emphasized constitutional reforms. In 2009, a parliamentary motion led to the creation of a 26-member committee, chaired by Mian Raza Rabbani, to propose constitutional changes. After nine months, the Eighteenth Amendment draft was signed by all political parties in 2010 and passed overwhelmingly in both the National Assembly and Senate, with President Zardari

signing it into law on April 19, 2010 (Burki, 2015). The Eighteenth Amendment marked a significant shift in Pakistan's political history, as it increased provincial autonomy and redefined the balance of power between the federal government and the provinces. One of the most notable features of this amendment was the reduction of presidential powers, transferring significant authority to the Prime Minister. The amendment made the presidency a largely ceremonial role and removed restrictions on the Prime Minister and Chief Minister serving a third term. It also introduced a new Article 19A, which granted citizens the right to information on matters of public importance. Additionally, the amendment made education mandatory for children aged 5 to 16, establishing it as the responsibility of the state. The Eighteenth Amendment played a pivotal role in stabilizing democracy in Pakistan. It rationalized the electoral process, reformed the caretaker system, and introduced a new Article 175(A) that revamped the process for appointing judges to the judiciary. However, this amendment faced challenges in the courts, leading to a revision of the judicial appointment process. In response to the Supreme Court's concerns, the Nineteenth Amendment was introduced. On December 22, 2010, the National Assembly passed the Nineteenth Amendment, which was signed by President Zardari on January 1, 2011. This amendment increased the number of judges on the Judicial Commission from two to four and addressed conflicts between the judiciary and the parliament. It also clarified the procedures for judicial appointments, ensuring greater balance between the executive and the judiciary. The Nineteenth Amendment further replaced the term "High Court" with "Islamabad High Court" and granted the parliamentary committee the authority to reject judicial nominations with solid reasons. The Twentieth Amendment, passed on February 28, 2012, further strengthened Pakistan's democratic framework. This amendment focused on enhancing the autonomy and independence of the Election Commission of Pakistan, which was seen as vital for ensuring free and fair elections. The amendment aimed to reduce the possibility of electoral rigging and to ensure that elections were conducted transparently. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani hailed the Twentieth Amendment as a critical step toward strengthening democratic norms in Pakistan (The Nation, 2012). By reinforcing the independence of the Election Commission, the amendment contributed to the integrity of the electoral process and helped build public confidence in the fairness of future elections. The Twenty-First Amendment, passed on January 6, 2015, responded to the tragic Army Public School attack in Peshawar in December 2014. This amendment authorized the establishment of military courts for the speedy trial of terrorists. The decision was made to address the increasing threat of terrorism in the country and to expedite the legal process for convicted militants. President Mamnoon Hussain signed the amendment into law on January 7, 2015. Throughout the PPP-led government, from 2008 to 2013, significant strides were made toward the consolidation of democracy in Pakistan through constitutional reforms. The Eighteenth, Nineteenth, Twentieth, and Twenty-First Amendments collectively marked a period of substantial transformation, from restoring parliamentary democracy and increasing provincial autonomy to ensuring the independence of the judiciary and Election Commission. These reforms played a crucial role in stabilizing Pakistan's democracy, improving governance, and empowering citizens. Though the path to fully consolidated democracy remains a work in progress, the constitutional changes made between 2008 and 2015 have laid a solid foundation for future political development in the country.

### **3: Democratic Transition.**

The cooperation between the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Parliament played a crucial role in stabilizing the initial stage of Pakistan's democratic transition. Despite challenges in governance, the PPP made significant strides toward restoring democracy in the country (Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, April 2013). Siddique Farooq, the PML-N spokesperson, expressed that both parties operated under the principle that "the worst democracy was better than the best dictatorship" (Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, April 2013), highlighting the importance of upholding democratic

processes despite setbacks. Although the PPP government faced criticism for ineffective governance and incomplete reforms, it did take steps to strengthen democracy.

### **3.1 Electoral Reforms and the 2013 Elections**

The Eighteenth Amendment (2010) and the Twentieth Amendment (2012) introduced significant reforms, particularly in electoral laws. The Eighteenth Amendment sought to ensure greater transparency in the election process, even though the Election Commission remained dysfunctional and external forces, including terrorism and judicial interference, posed challenges. Despite these obstacles, the 2013 elections marked a pivotal moment in Pakistan's political history as the first-ever peaceful transition from one elected government to another. The PPP government completed its five-year term on March 16, 2013, and the subsequent 2013 elections were conducted under the new electoral reforms, with an independent judiciary overseeing the process. Despite allegations of rigging and dissatisfaction from the Pakistan People's Party, particularly due to their defeat, the elections were largely seen as free and fair, with no interference from the government. The peaceful transfer of power to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was an important step in solidifying democratic norms, although no political party secured a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly.

### **3.2 Coalition Politics and Power Transition**

The PML-N emerged as the majority party in the 2013 elections, but no party could claim an outright victory, which led to the formation of a coalition government at both the federal and provincial levels. The inclusion of smaller parties in the coalition process, such as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which formed a government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in coalition with the National Party Pakistan (NPP), and the Baluchistan government, which was formed in coalition with PTI, reflected a new dynamic in Pakistan's political landscape (Samad, 2015, p. 120). Though small parties could have potentially disrupted the process by creating political alliances, they chose to accept the democratic mandate, marking a positive shift in the country's political culture. This peaceful transfer of power to the newly elected government and the appointment of Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister represented a significant moment in Pakistan's democratic development (Hayes, 2014). During the five-year tenure of Nawaz Sharif's government, Pakistan witnessed a mature political environment, where political parties demonstrated greater cooperation, the military maintained professionalism, and the judiciary remained independent. This period marked the consolidation of democratic practices, as institutions began to function more effectively, and the political transition from one government to another was completed without major disruption.

## **4: Dimension of Legislations**

The legislative activity in Pakistan's National Assembly saw significant growth after 2008. During the 13<sup>th</sup> National Assembly under the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) regime, 116 government bills and 18 private members' bills were presented, of which 9 were successfully enacted into law (FAFEN, 2013). Similarly, the 14<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, under the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), passed 205 bills, including 182 government bills and 23 private members' bills, of which 157 were transformed into law. This achievement in the 14<sup>th</sup> National Assembly is the second-highest number of laws passed in Pakistan's parliamentary history, after the 1970 elections. Therefore, it can be argued that the period from 2008 to 2015 witnessed considerable legislative activity, contributing to the overall democratic consolidation in the country.

### **4.1 Resolutions and Legislative Activity**

The 13<sup>th</sup> National Assembly moved 243 resolutions, out of which 85 were adopted (FAFEN, 2013). During the 14<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, 464 resolutions were tabled, of which 209 were adopted (FAFEN, 2018). This shows that the 14<sup>th</sup> National Assembly was even more active in adopting resolutions compared to the previous term, reflecting increased parliamentary

engagement. The resolutions from 2008 to 2015 primarily focused on issues related to democracy, foreign affairs, religion, terrorism, land reforms, missing persons, and the welfare of children, women, and the poor, as well as concerns such as price control and unemployment. During the PPP's tenure, the National Assembly passed a resolution on January 16, 2012, reaffirming the importance of upholding democracy and the fundamental constitutional principles. Another notable resolution in May 2012 expressed confidence in the leadership of Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani during his contempt of court proceedings before the Supreme Court. The assembly also passed a significant resolution condemning the murder of Benazir Bhutto. The 14<sup>th</sup> National Assembly continued to focus on key issues like education, health, the energy crisis, terrorism, economic policies, and political reforms. A notable resolution came after the tragic terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar on December 16, 2014, where the Assembly expressed deep sorrow and condemnation. Additionally, between 2008 and 2015, the Senate also passed several resolutions aimed at ensuring democratic rule in Pakistan. These legislative actions reflect the Assembly's active role in promoting democratic norms despite governance challenges.

#### **4.2 Role of Parliament in Democratic Development**

Despite the governance challenges faced by the PPP government (2008-2013) and the PML-N government (2013-2018), both governments moved forward with significant legislative actions, and many of these were successfully adopted. The active movement of resolutions in the National Assembly indicated progress toward democratic consolidation. Importantly, the National Assembly became more transparent during this period, with information about legislative proceedings, business, and members' questions to ministers being made publicly available through the Assembly's website. In contrast to the era of Pervez Musharraf, when only 51 bills were passed in Parliament, the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> National Assemblies passed a total of 134 bills, including 18 private member bills. The Acid Crime Prevention Bill and Acid Control Bill, both passed unanimously in 2011, were particularly significant as they were introduced by female politicians, underscoring the growing role of women in the legislative process. One of the most vital legislative achievements during this period was the Eighteenth Amendment, which marked a significant milestone in democratic consolidation. This amendment not only restored parliamentary democracy by undoing the constitutional changes made by Pervez Musharraf that had shifted the country toward a presidential system, but also curtailed the executive powers of the president. Furthermore, the Eighteenth Amendment introduced key reforms to the process of appointing members of the superior judiciary and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), making these appointments more transparent and subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

#### **4.3 Standing Committees and Parliamentary Functionality**

In addition to passing laws, the 14<sup>th</sup> National Assembly also made strides in improving parliamentary processes. On August 21, 2013, it established 34 standing committees tasked with addressing public concerns related to their respective ministries and forwarding recommendations for action. This was a positive step toward improving parliamentary oversight and making the Assembly more functional and accountable.

### **5: Struggle against Dictatorship**

The Eighteenth Amendment, passed by the 13<sup>th</sup> National Assembly of Pakistan, was a landmark development in the country's democratic consolidation. It reinstated the 1973 Constitution, effectively reversing many of the constitutional changes made during military rule. Most notably, it removed any reference to military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq, who had ruled Pakistan through authoritarian means, from the constitution. The amendment also declared the military takeover of General Pervez Musharraf on October 12, 1999, to be illegal, thereby marking a decisive rejection of military interventions in politics. The Chief Executive Orders of 2002, Legal Framework Order (LFO) 2002, and the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment introduced

during Musharraf's regime were all abolished, rendering them unconstitutional. These actions marked a significant step towards restoring democratic governance and ensuring that military regimes would no longer have a place in Pakistan's political system (World Times, 2010). A key aspect of the Eighteenth Amendment was the revision of Article 6 of the constitution, which deals with high treason. The Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Reforms strengthened this article to explicitly declare that any act to abrogate or suspend the constitution would be considered high treason and could not be justified by any court. This revision closed the door to future military coups and ensured that any person found guilty of violating the constitution would be held accountable under the law (Dawn, 2019). The amendment, therefore, created a legal framework that would prevent any future military dictator from suspending the constitution, which had been the case in 1977 and 1999, when military rulers suspended the constitution and legitimized their actions with the help of a compliant judiciary. This change to Article 6 of the constitution was critical for the long-term stability of Pakistan's democracy. It represented a clear commitment to upholding constitutional governance and preventing the return of military rule. In December 2019, after a six-year trial, Pervez Musharraf, the former Chief of Army Staff and President of Pakistan, was convicted of high treason under the amended Article 6 of the constitution. This conviction reinforced the principle that no individual, regardless of their status, is above the constitution (Dawn, 2019). The Eighteenth Amendment and the revision of Article 6 were crucial for the achievement of democratic consolidation in Pakistan. These reforms contributed significantly to strengthening Pakistan's democratic institutions and protecting them from authoritarian influences in the future.

### **6: Non-Intervention Policy of the Military**

Another critical factor in the achievement of democratic consolidation in Pakistan was the neutral role of the military, which ultimately supported the democratic process and allowed for political stability. The military's policy of non-intervention encouraged Asif Ali Zardari to contest the 2008 presidential elections. His ability to forge alliances and adopt a policy of reconciliation with political opponents was a strategic move to bolster civilian power against potential military interference. The military, under the leadership of General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, consciously decided to remain neutral in the political process, allowing civilian governance to play its legitimate role. This decision was part of the military's effort to improve its image by refraining from meddling in political affairs and enabling the democratic process to unfold without obstruction (Pakistan Army Green Book, 2008). General Kayani's stance of supporting democracy was evident when he helped mediate the reinstatement of judges, which had been a long-standing issue between the civilian government and the judiciary. Although it was the first instance of military involvement in political matters during this period, Kayani's role was largely seen as a constructive intervention that helped de-escalate tensions and avoid a potential crisis. This intervention was a demonstration of the military's commitment to maintaining stability while respecting democratic norms. However, not all aspects of Zardari's governance were in line with the military's interests. For instance, the Kerry-Lugar Bill, which sought to redefine U.S.-Pakistan relations and curtail the military's influence, was met with scepticism by the army. The military also had reservations about Zardari's foreign policy stance, particularly towards India, which was perceived as unacceptable to the armed forces. Despite these disagreements, the military refrained from directly interfering in the civilian government, maintaining a hands-off approach even as the Zardari government faced criticism for mismanagement and corruption. Though many opportunities arose for the military to assert its control, it continued to support the civilian government, thus preserving the fragile political order. This period of military non-intervention marked a significant shift in Pakistan's political history, while the military had historically been quick to intervene during political crises, it recognized that collaboration between the civilian government and military was essential for the functioning of state institutions, addressing security concerns, and ensuring stability and



economic progress. The military understood that the efficiency of the state could only be ensured if both civilian and military leadership worked together, particularly in the face of Pakistan's mounting security challenges. The military-civilian relationship during this period was notably marked by cautious diplomacy. Despite internal political conflicts, particularly between the two leading political parties, the army refrained from disrupting the democratic system. This was in stark contrast to previous instances when the military had seized opportunities to intervene. One important reason for this restraint was the growing power and influence of civil society and the legal community, especially after the lawyers' movement against General Pervez Musharraf's authoritarianism. Any attempt by the military to intervene during this period would have provoked widespread public opposition, further destabilizing the political environment. On September 12, 2008, General Kayani made a public statement reaffirming the military's support for the democratic government. He emphasized that the military would safeguard all key elements of national power, including the country's territorial integrity, under civilian leadership. This statement was a clear signal of the military's commitment to the democratic process and its intent to cooperate with the government, particularly in areas of national security and economic stability. In line with this commitment, the army refrained from pursuing some of its planned infrastructure projects, such as the construction of a new General Headquarters (GHQ) in Islamabad, citing the country's fragile economic conditions (The Express Tribune, 2009). In conclusion, the military's decision to remain neutral and support civilian governance, even in times of political upheaval, was a key factor in democratic consolidation in Pakistan between 2008 and 2015. While the military continued to hold significant power, its cooperation with civilian governments and its refraining from direct interference helped foster an environment in which democracy could take root.

## **7: Provincial Autonomy**

Provincial Autonomy has been a longstanding demand of political parties in Pakistan, and its realization was a significant achievement under the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment. This amendment, passed by the 13<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, addressed the long-awaited issue of provincial autonomy and initiated a shift towards genuine federalism in the country. One of the most important provisions of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment was the exclusion of the concurrent list from the Constitution. This led to the devolution of 40 of the 47 subjects previously under federal control, transferring them to the provinces. More than 20 ministries were devolved to the provinces, marking a historical moment for the true establishment of federalism in Pakistan. For the first time in the country's political history, federalism was realized in its genuine form, giving provinces greater authority and autonomy. To ensure provincial autonomy, several constitutional clauses were amended, including Articles 70, 143, 142, 144, 157, 149, 160, 161, 172, 167, 232, and 234. These amendments granted provinces significant powers over matters such as natural gas, the National Finance Commission award (Shah, 2012). The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment represented a collective achievement by political parties that not only addressed the issue of provincial autonomy but also reinforced the practice of federalism in Pakistan. Historically, the relationship between federal and provincial governments had been marked by tension over resource distribution, authority, and revenue-sharing. The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment sought to resolve these issues by re-organizing the Council of Common Interests. The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment also addressed the grievances of marginalized groups, including the minority communities. It provided for the creation of four additional seats in the Senate for minorities, with one seat allocated to each province (Cookman, 2010). Furthermore, the National Economic Council (NEC) was reformed, and its role was expanded to include reviewing the country's economic condition and advising both federal and provincial governments on future economic planning (PIPS, 2015). Upon assuming power in 2008, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), under Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, focused on improving relations between the federal government and the provinces. In his first address to the Parliament of Pakistan on March 29, 2008, Gilani

promised to address the grievances of Balochistan. This led to the creation of a committee tasked with making recommendations to resolve longstanding issues. The committee, after considerable deliberation, presented the 30-point Aghaaz-i-Haqooq-i-Baluchistan package, which was introduced in Parliament on November 24, 2009. This package was crucial in addressing the demands of the people of Balochistan for constitutional modifications and greater provincial sovereignty. The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment played a pivotal role in granting autonomy to Balochistan, particularly by doubling the province's share in the NFC award. The amendment also led to the release of many prisoners and the adoption of the Balochistan Local Government Ordinance on May 10, 2010 (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2012). Furthermore, the NFC award was restructured, with the new formula shifting away from the old population-based criteria. The new award took into account factors like poverty, revenue collection, and population density (Ishfaq Khan, 2009). This change resulted in a redistribution of financial resources, with the share of Balochistan receiving a significant boost, and the federal government's share being reduced from 45% to 42%. Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) also made sacrifices in their share for the sake of Balochistan. The 7th NFC Award marked significant cooperation between federal and provincial governments, with provinces sacrificing shares for Balochistan. The PPP government also introduced reforms in Gilgit-Baltistan, forming a committee under Qamar Zaman Qaira. The Federal Cabinet approved the Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order 2009, leading to legislative and judicial reforms, including the appointment of a Governor and creation of a 33-member legislative assembly. A significant part of the 18th Amendment was the decentralization of authority, particularly with the abolition of the concurrent list. By amending Article 203(d), the amendment removed the concurrent list and replaced it with the Federal Legislative List, transferring the majority of the subjects under the concurrent list to the provinces. Eighteen ministries were decentralized, giving provincial governments more control over public services and local government institutions. However, criminal law and rules of evidence remained under the jurisdiction of the Parliament and provincial assemblies. In 2012, debates surrounding the creation of new provinces gained momentum, particularly in Punjab and KPK, where demands for the creation of Seraiki and Hazara provinces were raised. On January 3, 2012, the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) submitted a constitutional amendment bill to the National Assembly to create new provinces. In response, the PPP government established a commission in August 2012 to explore the creation of new provinces. While this proposal faced resistance from political parties like PML-N, the National Assembly passed a resolution on May 3, 2012, in favor of creating a Janoobi Punjab province.

### **8: Arbitrary role of Army in 2014 Dharna**

The military appeared as an intermediary between the government and the demonstrators particularly during 2008-2015. In a joint meeting, Imran Khan during PTI Dharna 2014 made remarks regarding the army's role in mediating between the government and the two political parties. On August 28th, 2014, General Raheel Sharif, the Chief of Army Staff, assured Imran Khan that the military would conduct a transparent investigation into allegations of electoral interference. Furthermore, General Sharif expressed in a Corps Commanders meeting that, while the army fully supports democracy, it had concerns about the ongoing political issues. The military, however, did not agree with the use of force and reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding the country's security. The army positioned itself as a mediator between the government and the protestors. Observers have suggested that the military played a role in supporting the protests led by Imran Khan and Tahir-ul-Qadri. According to Information Minister Parvez Rasheed, Imran Khan met with former ISI chief General Shuja Pasha before launching the Azadi March. Both Imran Khan and Qadri maintained regular communication with the Army Chief, stating that the government had appointed General Raheel Sharif to act as a mediator to resolve the ongoing conflict. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) firmly supported the democratic government and sent a strong message to the anti-democratic factions

during a joint session of Parliament. However, the Prime Minister's reputation was tarnished when he invited Army Chief Raheel Sharif to mediate the crisis. By doing so, Nawaz Sharif effectively allowed the military to intervene in political matters, despite having the full support of Parliament. The protests of 2014 had a significant negative impact on the democratization process. PPP Senator Farhat Ullah Babar argued that both Nawaz Sharif's government and Imran Khan were responsible for creating a major challenge to Pakistan's democratic system. Ex-ISI chief Ahmad Shuja Pasha also advised the PTI leadership on the political protest. Additionally, a Corps Commanders meeting was held on August 31, 2014, under the leadership of General Raheel Sharif. Five out of the eleven participants in this meeting supported the idea of removing Nawaz Sharif's government, but the Army Chief was not in favor of military intervention (Jaffrelot, 2014). In a speech during the Dharna, Imran Khan claimed that the "third empire" (the establishment) had guaranteed victory. It's unclear what might have happened without the Army Public School tragedy. The military sought a more covert control over Pakistan's foreign and security policies, like the Bangladesh Model of 2007, where a short-term government led by an ex-judge was backed by the military (Kronstadt, 2014; Sethi, 2020). This model was considered in 2014 to replace Nawaz Sharif's government with Imran Khan's but blocked by Sharif. The establishment seemed to support PTI's sit-in to weaken Sharif's government and undermine civilian rule, which would have been impossible without their backing (Ullah, 2014). During the 2014 dharna, many believed military intervention might occur due to Nawaz Sharif's government's failure to address the grievances of PTI. All efforts by the civilian government to manage the protest had proven unsuccessful. However, the army chief refrained from taking any direct military action against the civilian government. The military's policy of non-interference during this period was seen as a positive step toward consolidating Nawaz Sharif's civilian rule. Completing his government's five-year tenure was viewed as a sign of democratic stability in the country.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Pakistan's political transformation between 2008 and 2015 represents a significant period of rebuilding and reshaping the nation's democracy. Despite facing challenges such as political instability, corruption, and security concerns, the country made notable strides toward strengthening democratic institutions. The transition from military-led to civilian rule, coupled with the resilience of political parties and the increased role of civil society, reflected a growing commitment to democratic governance. The politics of reconciliation, constitutional amendments, provincial autonomy, and arbitrary role of the army demonstrated clear steps towards re-emergence of democratic culture. Although the road to democracy remains fraught with obstacles, the developments during this period laid the foundation for further democratic evolution. Ultimately, Pakistan's political landscape during these years highlights the complexities of consolidating democracy in a developing nation, while also underscoring the importance of continuous efforts towards transparency, accountability, and civic engagement in shaping a more democratic future.

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