

Contestation without Consolidation: Electoral Politics and Evolution of Party System in Pakistan (1977-1999)

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Abstract

This research paper analyzes the electoral politics and development of the party system in Pakistan from 1977 to 1999, a timeframe characterized by political instability, military interventions, and sporadic democratic transitions. The study commences with the military coup of 1977 led by General Zia-ul-Haq, examining the suppression, restructuring, and strategic adaptation of political parties to endure within an authoritarian context. The 1985 non-party elections and limits on political activity made it much harder for institutional parties to grow. However, they also set the stage for new political alliances and informal networks.

The analysis further examines the reestablishment of party-based politics following Zia's demise in 1988, emphasizing the development of a competitive multiparty system led by significant parties such as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (PML). From 1988 to 1999, there were weak democratic governments, a lot of firings, changing alliances, and a growing focus on individual political leaders. The study assesses how these dynamics obstructed the institutionalization of political parties and fostered political polarization.

The study also examines how constitutional provisions, civil-military relations, and electoral systems affect party competition and democratic practices. It contends that although the multiparty system officially grew during this period, it remained structurally fragile due to external interference and internal disunity.

The paper concludes that the evolution of Pakistan's party system from 1977 to 1999 exemplifies a complex interplay between authoritarian constraints and democratic aspirations, culminating in a hybrid political landscape that paved the way for subsequent political developments in the country.

Keywords: Political Party, Multiparty system, Pakistan, Evolution, military rule, Party Politics.

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Introduction: Pakistan has a multi-party democratic system that recognizes majority rule while safeguarding minority rights. Multiple political parties, each with distinct ideologies, participate in national politics, often forming coalition governments that enhance democratic policymaking. Such systems enable diverse communities to engage in political processes and are common in parliamentary frameworks (Bhutta, 2013).

Given the inherent diversity of societies, the multiparty system accommodates differing ideologies by ensuring representation and promoting inclusion. Pakistan, as a multi-ethnic and multicultural state, has adopted this system since its inception. Political parties play a central role in governance by integrating diverse perspectives into a structured political framework and providing opportunities for broad participation.

The multiparty system reflects democratic values by promoting political awareness, representation, and engagement across social groups. It fosters political maturity and national integration by encouraging participation from various segments of society. Major political parties in Pakistan include Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan People Party (PPP), Jammat-i-Islami (JI), Jamiat-i-Ulama-e-Islam (JUI), Jamiat-i-Ulama-e-Pakistan (JUP), Awami National Party (ANP), Muthida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Pakhtunkhawa Mili Awami Party (PMAP), Qaumi Wattan Party (QWP), and Baluchistan National Party (BNP), among others.

In Pakistan, the multiparty system remains a key mechanism for political and national integration by linking citizens with state institutions. Political parties facilitate representation and contribute to unity through ideological alignment, reinforcing democratic values (Zia-ur-Rehman & Taj, 2015). They also act as intermediaries between the state and citizens, supporting nation-building and integration (Peretomode, 1985).

Election of 1977 and Alliance of Political Parties: PPP, after completing its five years of democratic rule, arranged the new elections before the original schedule. PPP gave most of its party tickets to the feudal lords and influential persons. The election campaign started with the slogan of economic socialism.

Pakistan National Alliance in 1977: In the 1977 election, nine political parties made a grand alliance under the name of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), all the religious and National Awami Party were the major parties in this alliance. Abdul Wali Khan, NAP leader, was the leading figure. Six were the original parties of this PNA, which were National Democratic Party (NDP), Jamiat-i-Ulama-e-Islam, Jamiat-i-Ulama-e-Pakistan, Jammat-i-Islami, Muslim

League (Pirpagara group), Pakistan Democratic Party, and three other Parties which joined PNA were Tehrik-i-Isteklal by Asghar Khan, first founder of the Justice Party, Khaksar Tehreek by Ashraf Khan, and Sardar Qayyum Muslim Conference. In the election campaign, instead of giving their own agenda and manifesto, PNA focused and highlighted all the misdeeds of PPP, its disastrous economic policies, mismanagement of the economy, heavy expenditure of the administration, and distrust of the people. PNA exploited the anti-Bhutto sentiment in the 1977 election. The PNA declared the Quran as their manifesto by including a religious touch; they also gained a huge support of the people (Rehman, 2017).

Election's Result and Reaction of the Political Parties: Elections were held on 7th March 1977, but the result was unpredictable for all political parties in Pakistan. In the election result, PPP got 155 seats out of 200 total seats, and PNA just secured 36 seats from all over Pakistan. From Punjab's provincial assembly, PNA just got 8 seats out of 116, and in Lahore and Rawalpindi did not secure their seats. PNA did not accept and boycotted this result because PNA was defeated in the election by using all means of rigging. So, they started protesting against Bhutto all over the country. The situation got worse, and the police were helpless. The Army arrested many leaders of opposition parties, imposed curfew and Section 144 in all major cities by taking control, but the situation was out of control. Then Bhutto was forced to impose military rule on 7th July 1977. Martial law was imposed in the country, and Zia ul Haq became the CMLA, and Pakistan again went into the hands of a long military rule (Mazari, 1999) (Burki, 1988).

The Military Coup of General Zia-ul-Haq 1977-1988: On 7th July 1977, the Chief of Army Staff General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq imposed martial law in the country due to the unrest in the political situation between the PPP and the opposition parties after the election of 1977. The military named this coup a fair play, which meant the military intervened to hold free and fair elections and would transfer the power to the civilian government within ninety days. As General Zia took control, he dissolved the national and provincial assemblies, suspended the constitution, imprisoned Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, other PPP leaders, and PNA activists. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was kept on trial for 2 years by the Supreme Court on charges of murder in a murder case of his political opponent, and then was hanged in 1979. Zia made his cabinet consist of military men. Zia's agenda, as he planned, was the accountability of the previous government, the Islamic system in the country, and transparent elections. He promised a fair election, he did not ban political parties, but then he postponed the elections, stating that accountability of state machinery is more important than elections. In this accountability, he took into custody many prominent leaders of political parties and many PPP leaders; Zia ul Haq also kept Bhutto's wife

and daughter on trial and placed them under house arrest. He also banned the press by shutting down several newspapers and also imprisoned more than 200 journalists (Niazi, Usman, & Niaz, 2008).

Rise of Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD): The Movement for the Restoration of Democracy was basically an alliance of twelve political parties to oppose and end this military rule in the country. PPP was the leading party, and Benazir Bhutto was the leading director of this alliance, which was formed in February 1981. MRD was the result of the negotiation between PPP and PNA political leaders, and its objectives were the restoration of democracy and the gain of civilian control of the state. PPP, Pakistan Muslim League (Khawaja Khairuddin group), Awami National Party, Pakistan Democratic Party, Tehreek-i-Isteklal, Awami Tehreek, Jamiat-i-Ulama-e-Islam, Mazdoor Kisan Party, and Communist Party of Pakistan were part of this alliance. This was a nonviolent movement, but the military regime crushed it with an iron hand, and in the first week of this movement, nearly 2000 people were arrested, 189 killed, and 126 injured. This movement worked till the end of the military regime. MRD pressured Zia to hold the national election in the country, which he scheduled in 1985, although that was non-party based. After Zia's death, this movement ended on 24 August 1988. Zia became the president of the country for five years by conducting a national referendum, which was strongly opposed by PPP and MRD (Mazari, 1999) (Awan, 2016).

National Election of 1985 and Restrictions of Political Parties: Under his unique style of referendum, Zia became the president of Pakistan for another 5 years, and the general elections of the country were held in Nov 1985, but further restrictions were imposed on political activities, and political parties were banned due to the strong role of MRD and PPP. This was also a non-party-based election; PPP and MRD totally boycotted this election. Just the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM) and the Muslim League (Junejo group) took part in this election candidacy. Muhammad Khan Junejo, leader of the ML Junejo group, was selected as Prime Minister by Zia ul Haq. Political Parties were also revived and restored their political rights of free political activities, but soon after the clashes with PM Muhammad Khan Junejo, Zia dissolved all national and provincial assemblies under his dictatorial power in 1988, and he scheduled fresh elections in November 1988. But on 17th August 1988, a mysterious plane crashed near Bahawalpur in Punjab, and Zia ul Haq was killed with the US ambassador and many other officers (Rai & Malick, 1989).

Muslim League and its Factions: Muslim League was divided into three main factions: the Muslim League (Qayyum group), the Council Muslim League, and the Convention Muslim League.

- **Muslim League (Qayyum):** In the 1977 election, this was not part of the PNA and got one seat out of 32. In the 1977 election, all such small parties were ignored because the main political parties were PPP and PNA, so this Qayyum group, after its leader's death, became part of the Muslim League Fida Group in the 1988 election (Afzal, Imran, & Ahmad, 2020).
- **Muslim League (Pirpagara group) and Origin of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz):** In Zia's Martial Muslim League, Pirpagara group also demanded civilian rule and restoration of democracy, but did not join the MRD regularly. In 1985 non-party-based elections, Muhammad Khan Junejo was selected as the Prime Minister of the country, so this Junejo group of ML was actually the outcome of the ML Pirpagara group. In Junejo's premiership, parliament was divided between two groups: one was an independent group (Independent candidates), and the other was the government group that was the Junejo group. This Junejo group reframed itself as a national party in the name of Pakistan Muslim League. This Muslim League (Junejo group) remained in the government till 1988 and strengthened itself by the restoration of basic rights, freed the press, disbanded all the political activities and political parties, and restored the democratic spirit in the country, so this Pakistan Muslim League got the popular support (Rafique, 1997).

Other than the PML Junejo group, ML (Fida group) was another faction which consisted of four Chief Ministers of the provinces. Nawaz Sharif, Chief Minister of the Punjab, was the general secretary of this Fida group. After a very hard struggle, the leaders of these two factions were united in Oct 1988 in the Pakistan Muslim League. By the unification of these two factions, this party emerged as a strong nationwide political party. Later in 1988, the Pakistan Muslim League contested the election with the PPP and became an opposition party (Sagar, 2017).

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and its Factions: When Zia-ul-Haq took control of the country, he banned all the political activities of the parties, and the PPP was the main target of Zia. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was imprisoned and hanged after 2 years trial, and nearly 3000 of political persons were imprisoned. Benazir Bhutto, the leader of PPP, condemned the constitutional amendments and the referendum in the state organized by Zia-ul-Haq, and totally boycotted the 1985 general election (Javed, 2017).

- **National People Party and Progressive People Party:** Likewise Muslim League party PPP also had two main factions, one was Progressive People Party under the leadership of Maulana Kausar and other was National People Party (NPP) under the leadership of Mustafa Jatoi, who was the prominent member of PPP but due to some personal and political clashes with the party leadership he formed his own party and played an opposition role against PPP in 1988. This

was a national political party due to its leaders because Mustafa Jatoi was a nationally recognized political person, NPP was a popular party and was present in all provinces of the country, but it was not politically organized so it remained a weak party after 1988 (Mehmood S. , 1988).

Jamaat-i-Islami: Although Jamaat-i- Islami was the front party of PNA against PPP, after Zia's martial law and negotiation with the Military regime, it joined the civilian cabinet with the military rule, and supported the Islamization policies of Zia-ul-Haq. Although this party was not part of MRD, its leaders with a progressive mindset always criticized the military dictatorship and always demanded the restoration of democracy and national elections.

Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM): This was basically the representative of the Muhajir Urdu-speaking community of Karachi. It was formed in 1984 by Altaf Hussain and Azeem Muhammad Tariq. It was a supporting party of Sindh's Muhajir population. Although this Muhajir movement had been started in 1978 by Altaf Hussain in the form of a student federation, whose name was All Pakistan Muhajir Student Federation (APMSF). This party has always had a large support from Karachi since the 1988 election. In 1998, this party changed its original name, which was Muhajir Qaumi Movement, to the Mutahida Qaumi Movement (Rafique, 1997).

Awami National Party (ANP): The original name of this party was National Awami Party, which they reshaped in 1977 in the name of National Democratic Party with other small parties, but this party split over again on the question of joining MRD against Zia's rule. In 1986 Abdual Wali Khan again launch this party with name of Awami National Party (Mehmood S. , 1988).

Trend of Bi-Party System in Pakistan from 1988-1999: After Zia's death, the chairman of senate Ghulam Ishaq Khan was next to become the interim President of the country, because the national and provincial assemblies had already been dissolved by Zia-ul-Haq. After a very long military dictatorship, Pakistan entered into the phase of a bi-party system for nearly a decade. The two major parties emerged through the political evolutionary process because of the long military rule and restrictions on the political activities of the parties experienced by all the political actors of the state, so small political parties and factions joined hands with the large ones, PPP and PML. But this Bi-Party system was again crushed by another military coup in 1999 by Musharraf (Ziring, 1980).

Election of 1988 and Rule of Pakistan Peoples Party: After the nine-year-long military rule and brutal suppression of political parties, the Supreme Court announced party-based elections in November 1988. There were two main political players in this election, PPP under Benazir Bhutto, and Islami Jamhuri Ittehad, an alliance of nine political parties under the leadership of

Nawaz Sharif, who contested this election, but despite the grand alliance of IJI, PPP won the majority of seats and remained in power till 1990 (Abbas, 2005).

PPP's Role in the Election of 1988 and Electoral Politics: PPP reorganized itself under Benazir Bhutto and started a political campaign separate from MRD in 1988. After the hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and political victimization by Zia, the PPP had gained the sympathy of the people and emerged as the largest political party in the 1988 election, securing 94 seats out of 207. Although it was not an absolute majority so PPP made a coalition government with the help of the MQM in the center. PPP swept the election in the Sindh provincial assembly by winning 67 seats out of 100 and got an absolute majority there. In the other three provinces, PPP could not get the majority. After making a central coalition government in December 1988, Benazir Bhutto became the first female Prime Minister in all Islamic countries in the world. But unfortunately, this civilian government faced an imminent dismissal by the president using his discretionary power under the 8th amendment in the Constitution, which was done by Zia to extend his power. After the twenty months of PPP rule, it was dismissed by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on the charge of corruption, inefficiency, nepotism, favoritism, and her nationalized policies, but the differences with the army actually filled the remaining gap, and Benazir Bhutto was ousted from her office in August 1990 (Afzal, Imran, & Ahmad, 2020).

Islami Jamhuri Itihad in the Election of 1988: IJI was an alliance of nine political parties, in which the Pakistan Muslim League, which later became PML (Nawaz group), National People Party, a faction of PPP made by Mustafa Jatoi in 1986, and some other religious political parties such as Jamaat-i- Islami, Jamiat-i-Ulama-e-Islam (Darkhawasty group), Markazi jamiat-i-Ahle Hadees (Lakhavi group), Jamiat-ul-Mashaikh (Sahibzada Fazle Haq group), Hizbe Jiahd of Agha Murtaza and Fakhr Imam Zad group formed this IJI to oppose the socialist agenda of PPP and contested a joint election in 1988. NPP and PML were the leading parties of this alliance. This alliance was actually a counter-movement of the PPP. It got 56 seats out of 207 and got second position. Other than this, IJI also took the majority of seats in Punjab and secured eight seats in NWFP. IJI's provincial government in Punjab under Nawaz Sharif gave a tough time and criticized the PPP for its unfair, biased, and corrupt performance. During the PPP 2 years rule, clashes between the center and provincial government, military, and the role of fundamentalist political parties cleared the field for PML-N, the successor of IJI in the next election. When the PPP government was dismissed by the President, and in the next election, PML-N emerged as the majority party of the country (Afzal, Imran, & Ahmad, 2020). Other than these two main political players, some small political parties also participated in the election but could not get public attention. Although MQM contested the election separately

and got some representation in the National Assembly and Provincial assembly of Sindh, it became the coalition partner with the PPP in the center.

Elections of 1990 and the Rule of PML-N: After the dismissal of the PPP government by the president, new democratic elections were announced for the national and provincial assemblies, which were scheduled on October 24th, 1990. In this election, the PPP allied with three parties in the name of Pakistan Democratic Alliance (PDA) and Nawaz Sharif under the IJI, participated in the elections and got an absolute majority in the NA. Although this government was formed with the president's and the army's support but did not complete its political tenure and was terminated by the president again after two years of rule (Jalal, 2014).

Role of PDA/PPP in the election of 1990: In the 1990 elections, except Jamiat-i-Ulama-e-Islam (F) and Jamiat-i-Ulama-e-Pakistan(N), all the religious political parties were part of these two main alliances. Benazir Bhutto made a political alliance with three parties, i.e., Tehreek-i-Istiklal by Asghar Khan, the Muslim League (Qasim group), and the Shia party Tehreek-i-Nifaz-e-Jaferia in the name of Pakistan Democratic Alliance. Despite the alliance of PDA, PPP could not get the majority of seats in the election. There was a total of 29 small and large political parties that participated in the elections, but the real contestants were IJI and PDA because this was the era of the bi-party system. Like the previous election, again MQM contested separately and gained 15 seats in the NA, but in this election, MQM had changed its name to Haq Parast Party (Farooq, 2014).

Role of Islami Jamhoori Itehad (IJI) in the 1990 Election: The IJI got 105 seats, and PDA secured 44 seats. PDA rejected the election's result. Though IJI managed to make alliances in the central and provincial governments, with the ANP and MQM in all the provinces (Afzal, Imran, & Ahmad, 2020). By gaining the majority vote in the national assembly of IJI on November 1st, 1990, Nawaz Sharif, a leading member of IJI, became the PM of Pakistan. After becoming the PM, he focused on his agenda, worked for denationalization, economics policies, unemployment, and agriculture. But the clashes with MQM erupted soon in 1992, and started an ideological war; the situation turned worse in Karachi. Other than this, grudges started with the President when the PM intended to amend the constitution and cut off the discretionary power of the President. Gulam Ishaq Khan used his dictatorial power and dismissed Nawaz Sharif and his government on the charge of corruption and mismanagement on April 18th 1993. PM appealed in the Supreme Court against the president's exceeding power, from here the power struggle started between Ghulam Ishaq Khan and PM Nawaz Sharif, the army again intervened and took the resignations of both authorities and announced fresh elections again on October 6th, 1993 (Afzal, Imran, & Ahmad, 2020).

PPP Second Term 1993-1996: After the resignation of Nawaz Sharif and Ghulam Ishaq Khan, new elections were called on 6th October 1993 under the caretaker government. In this election, PML-N emerged as a strong conservative political party under the leadership of Nawaz from IJI. PML-N and PPP presented their ideologies and policies' preferences, but their policies were not very different, and this was the contest of personalities. In the election result, PPP got 86 seats, and PML-N secured 73. PPP made the central government, with the alliance of PML-J, formerly part of PML and IJI. PML-N also gave a very tough time to PPP. It was the start of confrontational politics. The President again dissolved the government in November 1996, on the charge of corruption, ethnic and sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shi'a, which had led to the internal conflict in the country (Sagar, 2017).

Election of 1993 and Role of PPP and PML-N in the Politics of Pakistan: The elections were scheduled again in October 1993. PPP started its campaign and highlighted its socialist agenda, which showed the support of agriculture, partnership of government with businessmen and women's political rights. As a result, PPP remained the largest party and got 86 seats out of 217 in the NA. PPP made a central government with the alliance of PML-J, formerly part of PML and IJI, JUI(F), and some independent candidates, and became the PM for the second term. PPP also made provincial governments in Sindh and Punjab. Farooq Lagharai, PPP's own party member, became the new president of the civilian government. PPP experienced a weak and unstable rule. Laghari dismissed PPP's second term in November 1996, and an interim government was established (Ahmad N. , 2004).

Politics of PML-N in 1993's Election: PML-N reemerged as a party from the IJI after its dissolution in 1993. PML was the leading party in IJI, but after IJI's dissolution, PML took a solo flight in the election of 1993 under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif with the new name PML-N. It secured 72 seats in NA, got second position, and had a majority in Punjab's PA. On October 19th 1993, Nawaz Sharif became the opposition leader in the center and in Punjab and Sindh as well. PML-N formed provincials' government in the NWFP and Baluchistan with the help of ANP and other small regional parties.

PML-J also got 6 seats in the NA and was the coalition partner of PPP in the center and in Punjab. PML-J was the main faction of PML, which separated in 1993 after the death of Muhammad Khan Junejo from PML-N. All PML factions had a single political party in 1988 and 1990 and remained united under the alliance of IJI till 1993.

National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and Jamaat-i-Islami from the platform of Pakistan Islamic Front and JUI (F), with their own agenda, also participated in elections, but in these

elections, the religious parties had a poor performance. MQM boycotted this election, although its members contested the election as independent candidates from Sindh (Abbas, 2005).

Second Term of PML-N as Ruling Party 1997-1999: PPP could not complete its second term as well and dissolved after its three-year rule by the President. New elections were again conducted under the caretaker government on February 3rd 1997. PML-N got the majority votes in the election, and Nawaz Sharif took oath as PM for his second term on February 17th 1997. PML-N clashes with other small political parties didn't allow them to rule peacefully, especially conflicts with MQM and the issue of sectarianism, creating disturbance in Sindh. PM's discriminatory and slow performance increased deprivation among the people, and above all, conflicts with the military leaders and the dismissal of the army generals proved to have very dire consequences. PM was kicked out of the parliament and imposed another martial Law by General Pervaiz Musharraf on October 13th, 1999 (Ahmed & Afridi, 2014).

Electoral Politics of PML-N and PPP in the 1997 Elections: Elections were held according to the schedule on February 3rd, 1997. Once again, PPP and PML-N contested the elections this was the turn of Nawaz Sharif. PML-N party got 137 seats out of 217 an absolute majority was achieved by PML-N for the first time in the history of Pakistan. This was a landslide victory for PML-N. It also got 211 seats in the Punjab provincial assembly out of 248 total seats. Nawaz Sharif took control of Sindh by allying with MQM, because MQM had always been popular in Sindh. PML-N also controlled in Punjab, NWFP, and Baluchistan. Overall, PML-N had a very strong position in the elections of 1997.

PPP got 18 seats in the NA and 36 seats out of 109 in Sindh's PA. PPP did not play well due to its poor performance in the previous round. Benazir Bhutto alleged that this election was marred by irregularities and rigging.

Other than these two players, small parties were also present in the election. MQM under Altaf Hussain got 12 seats and made a coalition with PML-N in Sindh, ANP was strong in NWFP, and in Baluchistan, the Baluchistan National Party (BNP) under the leadership of Akhtar Mengal secured 3 seats in the NA (Mazari, 1999).

However, this was a decade of weak and unstable civil rule, but political parties were struggling to play their role in the electoral politics of the state. But unfortunately, this journey of civil rule was again interrupted and disturbed by the military leaders, who took control of the state. Although this decade of civilian rule was not given a stable position, due to its frequent dissolution, military involvement, and some internal and external factors, the system was shaky and unstable. In 1999, PML-N tussles with the military paved the way for a military takeover. On October 12th 1999, Musharraf addressed the national television, stating the PM Nawaz

Sharif was ousted due to the instability and deteriorating condition of the state. Musharraf declared an emergency in the country, and he became the Chief Executive. The assemblies were dissolved, and the constitution was suspended. The Doctrine of Necessity was issued for the legitimacy of his coup by the Supreme Court. Musharraf strengthened his position by conducting a nationwide referendum on 30th April 2002, in which he got 98% vote and became the president of Pakistan for another five years till 2007. Through PML-Q, Musharraf controlled the whole government (Ahmed & Afridi, 2014).

Conclusion: The development of political parties and the multi-party system in Pakistan from 1977 to 1999 reflects an uneven trajectory of democratic evolution shaped by internal dynamics and external pressures. While political parties have remained central to the political system, military interventions, weak democratic traditions, and fragile institutions have constrained their growth. The era of General Zia-ul-Haq particularly weakened party structures and left lasting impacts on political culture.

With the restoration of democracy in 1988, major parties such as the Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League (N) re-emerged, though their competition remained personality-driven rather than institution-based. The post-2008 phase marked continuity in civilian rule and greater political pluralism, while the emergence of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf enhanced electoral competition and voter engagement.

Despite these developments, the multi-party system remains only partially consolidated. Challenges such as dynastic leadership, weak intra-party democracy, limited ideological clarity, and the influence of non-elected institutions continue to hinder democratic deepening.

In conclusion, while Pakistan has made progress toward a multi-party democracy, its sustainability depends on strengthening institutions, promoting intra-party democracy, ensuring electoral transparency, and maintaining civilian supremacy for long-term stability and inclusiveness.

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