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Dynamics of the Consociational Theory in the Political System of Pakistan: An Analysis of Pakistan Peoples' Party Third Regime (2008-2013)

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Article Information Received: December 09, 2022 Revised: January 01, 2023 Accepted: January 01, 2023 Available Online: July 15, 2023	Abstract <i>The paper is an attempt to investigate the nature and dynamics of consociational political strategies during the Pakistan Peoples' Party regime from 2008 to 2013. It is argued that the political and democratic system of Pakistan witnessed a drastic transformation in the behavior and preferences of political leadership in the post-CoD political environment. The paper puts into question the conventional wisdom, which denies the applicability of the consociational theory in Pakistan, and finds that during its five years tenure, the leadership of PPP successfully materialized different aspects of consensual democracy. It is founded that PPP implemented principles of a grand coalition, supremacy of parliament, segmental autonomy, and proportionality in services that are the core principles of the consociational theory. The regime also ensured constitutional supremacy of democratic institutions, such as the parliament and political parties which is one of the core objectives and nature of consociational theory.</i>
Keywords Democracy Political System Consociational Theory Dynamics Pakistan Peoples' Party	
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1. Introduction

The British government in India practiced a political system that was colonial in nature and authoritarian in manifestation. Powerful civil-military institutions dominated it with the intension to support state's intervention and to maintain its hegemony (Akhtar, 2018, p. 8). It revolved around the personality of an unelected official in the form of a Viceroy who bore no responsibility to the Indians. Standing upon the principles of vice-regalism and authoritarianism, the political system in vogue during the British rule over India lacked fundamental democratic principles (Qasim, 2013). With, so called independence, Pakistan inherited a political system of colonialism that had been under the dominant influence of non-elected civil and military institutions. These non-elected institutions continued maintaining their dominancy in the political system either through direct interference in the shape of imposing martial laws or through indirect interference in the shape of political engineering and government formation in Pakistan. The political history of Pakistan manifests that political elites not only failed in taking durable steps to counter interference of anti-democratic forces and institutions, but they also failed in building the principles of compromise, adjustment, and accommodation which are the core principles of the consociational theory of Arend Lijphart.

We argue that the above traditionally set patterns of military direct interference and derailment of democracy were broken in the post-Charter of Democracy era in Pakistan. In actuality, the political system of Pakistan witnessed a radical shift in behavior and preferences of democratically elected leadership after two major political parties of Pakistan i.e. Pakistan Peoples' Party and Pakistan Muslim League (N) signed the Charter of Democracy in London on May 15, 2006. The charter paved the way for the practical implementation of different consensual political strategies during the PPP regime from 2008-2013. Under CoD, PPP and PML (N) agreed upon burying their mutual differences. They also agreed to safeguard democracy from the interference of anti-democratic forces (Rabbani, 2011). To forward the cause of consensual political strategies, Nawaz Sharif openly declared that 'we would not be a part of any puppet show as we have buried the dirty politics forever' ("Nawaz refuses to play into the hands of puppeteers"). Political forces agreed upon making institutions like political parties, parliament, Elections Commission, and judiciary more supreme, independent and stronger. They agreed upon taking steps and developing consensus to make the military subordinate to civilian governments and to ensure principles of segmental autonomy for the successful functioning of democratic governance in Pakistan. The paper contends that following the spirit of consociation, adjustment, compromise, and bargaining, PPP remained successful in realizing principles of a grand coalition, segmental autonomy, and proportional representation of consociational theory.

2. Research Methodology

The present study has been conducted under the principles of foundational research with the purpose to increase the knowledge about the applicability of the consensual theory in the political system of Pakistan. Data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources have been collected from electronic interviews of the signatories of the Charter of Democracy, the original text of CoD, the original work of Arend Lijphart, parliamentary debates and the original text of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan. For secondary sources, books, journal articles and newspapers have been consulted. However, a major part of the data relies upon document analysis and literature review. The collected data was used after checking its internal and external validity. For the analysis of data the "Six Stages Thematic Analysis Method" of Braun and Clarke (2006) has been utilized.

3. Nature of Consociational Theory

The consociational theory seeks to ensure democratic stability by restoring the relationship of accommodation, respect, and compromise among political elites. Arend Lijphart has also termed it 'negotiation democracy' due to the nature of negotiation among the ruling elites. In his early works, Lijphart presented four basic characteristics of the consociational theory that are a formation of a grand coalition government, ensuring autonomy of various social segments, proportionality in public sector employment, and minority veto (Lijphart, 1977). However, in his later works, Lijphart has further limited consociational theory to two fundamental characteristics, which are 'grand coalition government' and 'segmental autonomy' (Wolf, 2010, p. 5). Implementation of these features can ensure the dignity of democratic institutions and can result in solutions to various segmental issues, which ultimately lead to flourishing democracy in a country (Williams, nd, p. 2). It has been researched and found that the nature of negotiations in the parliament among the political elites has always had positive and gentler impacts on different state institutions and their performance.

4. Dynamics of Consociational Theory during PPP Regime 2008-2013

Politics of hate and contention followed by political forces during the 1990s taught bitter lessons to political forces, particularly to PPP and PML (N). As the political forces did not adhere to the principles of consociation, the political arena remained dominated by frequent military interference. Resultantly, not only was democracy derailed, but even democratic institutions like parliament and political parties remained weak and in factions. Therefore, to strengthen the federation of Pakistan and to ensure the smooth functioning of democratic governments, PPP believed in the policy of reconciliation, adjustment, and accommodation among the political forces, which are, in fact, the core principles of the consociational theory of Arend Lijphart (Naeem, 2012).

4.1 Power sharing in the broad coalition

The formation of a grand coalition government is one of the core principles of Consociational theory. Contrary to the principles of exclusion and competition, consociational theory believes in inclusion, accommodation, consensus, and power sharing among political elites. Therefore, it stresses maximizing the size of ruling elites and, for that purpose favours the formation of a broad or grand coalition government (Lijphart, 1977, p. 32). PPP followed the same principles after the 2008 general elections. After securing a majority of seats in the 2008 general elections, Asif Ali Zardari visited the leadership of major political parties like PML (N) and MQM and favoured forming a grand coalition government with major stakeholders. After winning the majority of seats, Pakistan Peoples' Party did not prefer to make a minority cabinet, rather it opted for making a grand coalition government and for that purpose, formed a government with PML (N), MMA (JUI-F), ANP, and MQM which indicates PPP policy and its tilt towards politics of consensus. Before the formation of the government, Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari met in Islamabad and held a press conference. In this conference, Zardari said, "I requested Nawaz Sharif to form a coalition government with PPP for the broader benefits of Pakistan and national politics. Our purpose behind negotiation is to have a government with a broader consensus" (Mukhtar, 2008).

4.2 Supremacy of parliament

In Consociational theory, parliament remains supreme and vibrant. There is an environment of trust, bargaining, and compromise among the political elites. This culture of consensus among elected elites in the parliament results in gentler and kinder policy outcomes (Lijphart, p. 2). After forming a coalition government, PPP soon focused on strengthening the institution of parliament under the despotic shadow of the 17th Amendment. Under Article 58 (2) (b), the president had the power to dissolve elected institutions, i.e. the parliament. This was contrary to the spirit of parliamentary democracy. In a parliamentary system, the power of dissolution of the National Assembly rests with elected representatives and is exercised by the Prime Minister (Adeney, 2012). Looking at the necessity of repealing the 17th Amendment and restoring parliamentary supremacy, the government formed a Parliamentary Committee for Constitutional Reforms (PCCR). In the committee, the government gave representation to leaders belonging to all political parties in the parliament (Rizwan et.al, 2014). According to Katharine Adeney (Adeney, 2012), a political expert, members from different political parties worked the sense of not to return to 1990s politics of confrontation. On April 8, 2010, PPP passed the 18th Amendment, which contributed to the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Pakistan. To many academicians, “the 18th Amendment became possible because of the consensus among the elected representatives in the parliament. It proved to be a considerable development toward restoring the principles of a true federation in a country with a long history of political polarization and confrontation (Shah, September, 2012). According to Muhammad Zubair, former Governor of Sind and member of PML (N), “during the PPP regime from 2008 to 2013, we did follow principles of friendly opposition. As an opposition political party, PML (N) criticized various policies of PPP, but we set the principle and decided that we should not compromise on parliamentary supremacy and its dignity. Resultantly, parliament remained one of the most viable institutions where political elites remained engaged in positive debate from 2008 to 2013(Umar, 2021).

4.3 Segmental autonomy

Segmental autonomy is another one of the core principles of the consociational theory of Arend Lijphart (Lijphart, 2002). Although, to Lijphart, segmental autonomy is the group autonomy in the cultural sector, this feature of consociational theory has been widely studied and empirically tested by different subsequent researchers. A vast body of literature and experts on consociationalism agree that inherently segmental autonomy refers to sub-national autonomy, group autonomy, sub-state autonomy, or regional autonomy (Brailey, 2020). Following a similar proposition, scholars like Stefan Wolff and Katharine Adeney argue that the realization of principles of federalism further strengthens the application of consociational political strategies (Adeney, 2006, p. 6).

Considering this nature of segmental autonomy, we have co-related segmental autonomy with the case of provincial autonomy and decentralization in Pakistan during the PPP regime. The case of provincial autonomy had been one of the major sources of contention between central and provincial governments in Pakistan. PPP government addressed this issue for the first time and solved it through the 18th Amendment in the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan. According to the essence of federalism, the amendment increased the powers and resources of provincial governments (Shah, 2012). Before this amendment and apart from having command over Central Legislative List, the central government was exercising a monopoly over Concurrent List in case of controversy with provincial governments. Under the 18th Amendment, the government abolished Concurrent List and took practical steps toward the devolution of seventeen ministries to provinces (Anjum, 2021). The government confirmed that the

process of devolution had been focused on devolving all subjects to provinces except five subjects, i.e. finance, defence, foreign affairs, communications and revenue (Khan, Implementing 18th amendment: Cabinet approves devolution of 7 more ministries, 2011). Responding to concerns regarding the lack of human and financial capital of provinces to cope with decentralization in the form of devolution, Senator Raza Rabbani, leader of the Constitution Reform Committee, said that 'provincial autonomy ensured under the 18th Constitutional Amendment should not be taken up as an ideal situation. No doubt, it is a just step taken towards provincial autonomy in Pakistan, but provinces would face difficulties in the early phase of implementation. We however recommend that issues related to devolution need to be taken up and resolved on the forum of the Council of Common Interest (Khan, Implementing 18th amendment: Cabinet approves devolution of 7 more ministries, 2011). Considering the heterogeneous structure of Pakistani society, we argue that PPP took a required decision in the form of decentralization towards the right direction. A major part of current literature has extensively documented the philosophy behind decentralization of powers. It has been testified that decentralization of powers is necessary for heterogonous societies like Pakistan (Doorenspleet & Pellikaan, 2013).

4.4 Proportionality

Proportionality is another principle of consociational theory of Arend Lijphart required for establishment and preservation of consociational democracy (Lijphart, 1996). By proportionality, apart from voting system, Lijphart also means that all social segments must be proportionally represented in public sector employment as the under-representation of certain groups in state institutions may create problems in smooth functioning of democracy (Lijphart, 1977). So far as the case of Pakistan is concerned, the under-representation of certain groups, particularly of Baluchistan, in civil and military institutions has generated ethnic tension many times. According to Katharine Adeney, for the first time, the PPP government practically addressed the issue of under-representation in key state institutions (Adeney, 2012). Moving towards guaranteeing proportional representation, the PPP government reviewed Article 27, making it obligatory for parliament to determine and address the under-representation of any social segment (Constitution of Pakistan 1973, Article 27). Practically, to address the issue of under-representation of Baluchistan, the government introduced Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Baluchistan Package. According to many analysts, the package was a political, administrative and economic initiative taken by Pakistan Peoples' Party government which was focused on ameliorating under-represented segments in Pakistan. It was predominantly focused on making Baluchistan an equal partner in the federation of Pakistan (Moin, 2009). Under the package and in the initial stage, four thousand people from Baluchistan were inducted into the military as soldiers. Military officers openly came in support of Baluchistan. They confirmed that 10,000 soldiers having domicile in Baluchistan should be inducted into the army to meet the criteria of 'share in the military per population' (Malik, 2010).

In order to make the people of Baluchistan economically equal, the government gave special attention to uplifting the people of the province through education. Having this purpose in mind, the 'Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Baluchistan Project', a special scholarship package for youth and students of Baluchistan, was initiated through the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. Under the project, hundreds of students from Baluchistan obtained overseas and local scholarships for higher education (HEC, 2019). This policy of inclusiveness and proportionality in state services by PPP invited appreciation of different Baluch nationalist leaders like Hasil Bizenjo (Zia, 2011).

4.5 Safeguarding provincial economic resources

Under 7th National Finance Commission (NFC) in December 2009, government took steps towards an increasing share of provinces in available resources. The share of provinces from divisible pool increased from 45 percent to 57.5 percent (Ahmad & Mustafa, 2007). Before 18th Amendment, central government of Pakistan exercised control over mineral resources and land of provinces. PPP government revised this mechanism under Article 161 which maintains that a province where a well-head of oil and natural gas is located shall exercise right over its usage and economic gains (Constitution of Pakistan 1973, Article 161 (2)).

The government put in concerted efforts and revised the resource distribution formula between central and provincial governments. Since the implementation of the 1973 Constitution, the ratio of the population has been deciding criteria for resource distribution which, in principle, benefited Punjab due to its larger population ratio (Jalal, 1999). Instead of the population as a criterion for resource distribution, KP and Baluchistan had always demanded backwardness. At the same time, Sind stood for 'contribution of a province to national revenue' as standards for resource distribution. In past, not only NFC resist such types of demands by provincial governments, but in fact, the population as a standard for resource distribution had always been a source of dissension between the central and provincial governments in Pakistan (Ahmad E. , 2010). PPP brought changes in conventional methods and devised a new formula based on multiple factors. According to the revised formula, it was decided that 82 percent of resources should be allocated based on population, 10.3 percent based on backwardness, 5 percent based on revenue generation, and 2.7 percent based on inverse population density (Zahid, 2018).

4.6 Institutional reforms

Arend Lijphart argues that in consociational democratic setup, political elites who represent grand coalition government make legislation in such a way that has positive impacts on institutions of the state. He argues that steps are taken to make institutions inclusive and responsive to the demands of different social segments (Lijphart, 2012, pp. 274-96) Similarly, the government of PPP has taken different constitutional steps toward making various institutions responsive to the demands of social segments. In this regard and having the intention of resolving disputes between central and provincial governments, PPP amended Article 153 of 1973 Constitution of Pakistan under which the Council of Common Interests (CCI) was made more inclusive and powerful (Constitution of Pakistan, Article 153). Headed by Prime Minister as Chairman, representation was given to provincial governments in form of giving membership to provincial Chief Ministers. Moreover, the council was given the task resolving disputes between central and provincial governments. It was provided that the Council shall submit an annual report to parliament and be answerable to parliament in exercising its powers and functions (Ahmad Z. M., 2013).

The political and judicial history of Pakistan is full of examples where the appointment of judges to superior courts can be seen as a source of conflict either between executive and judiciary or between the prime minister and president. PPP government resolved this conflict under the 19th Constitutional Amendment. While introducing changes in Article (175 A) of the 1973 Constitution, the procedure of appointment of judges to the superior judiciary was framed by Parliamentary

Committee for Constitutional Reforms (PCCR) (Khan, Appointment of judges: 19th Amendment clears NA, 2010) Apart from creating Judicial Commission under 18th Amendment, a Parliamentary Committee of eight members having equal strength from government and opposition and both houses of parliament was constituted. To make an appointment of judges less controversial and to ensure supremacy of parliament, it was provided that the judicial commission shall forward a nomination to Parliamentary Committee to get approval. The committee has been given the power to approve or reject the nomination of the Judicial Commission. However, in case of rejection, the Committee has to provide solid reason for rejection (Saroop, 2014). Thus, according to many experts, by involving the judiciary and Parliamentary Committee in appointing judges to the superior judiciary, the PPP government reformed the traditional method of appointing judges, which lacked impartiality due to the dominant role of the judiciary and president. More importantly, involving parliament in the process of appointment of judges strengthened the base of parliamentary supremacy (Saroop, 2014).

5. Conclusion

The political system of Pakistan has a long history of hate and confrontation. Political parties of Pakistan failed to practice principles of consociation like accommodation, trust, and adjustment. This practice had always left negative effects on flourishing democracy and the working of democratic institutions like parliament and political parties. The practice has been proved precarious for building a working relationships between central and provincial governments. However, the signing of CoD changed the political landscape of Pakistan for the first time. In a post-CoD era and particularly during PPP regime from 2008 to 2013, the political leadership of Pakistan demonstrated a certain level of maturity. Their agreement of working according to the spirit of consociation ensured the supremacy and dignity of different democratic institutions.

Political leadership during PPP regime also worked under the spirit of accommodation, adjustment, and compromise, which paved the way for the implementation of various features of the consociational theory. Supremacy of parliament, provincial autonomy, and revising the formula of resource distribution between central and provincial governments ensured the parliamentary system in Pakistan in the true sense of the word. These strategies helped in resolving long-standing confrontations between the centre and provinces. Nevertheless, the above achievements on the front of consociational politics in the post-CoD era need to be considered while looking at the nature of the Pakistani state, which has a challenging relationship with democracy. Consociational strategies followed by the PPP regime are worth considering as these strategies are supposed to set the nature and direction of democracy, democratic institutions, and the interference of non-elected institutions in politics in the future.

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