

Political Parties Politics in Pakistan: Paradigm Shift from Confrontation to Politics of Understanding

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Abstract

Pakistan has a multiparty system but politics of the country have been dominated by two main stream political parties (PPP & PML-N), since 1988. Although, these parties have a long history of confrontational politics, a shift in their politics took place during military government of General Musharraf. Then PML-N and PPP revisited their politics and settled a way forward, which was materialized in the form of signing of historical agreement called “Charter of Democracy”. This agreement is considered milestone for creating a stable democratic conditions in a continuous fragile democratic environment. The PPP and PML-N demonstrated politics of understanding which has been explicit during respective tenure of PPP government (2008-2013). Political parties with their changing course of politics expressed determination to strengthen the democracy in the country. This paper mainly addresses the two questions first; what were the factors that led to political parties towards politics of understanding? Secondly, how do these political parties demonstrated the politics of understanding? This study is qualitative research using descriptive approach. It concludes that the politics of confrontation ended with the realization of past sufferings and

changing political environment of 21st century. General Musharraf's targeting of the two main stream political parties, PPP and PML-N proved to be the motivational factor drove them towards political understanding. After 2008 elections, this consensus politics paved the way for a smooth functioning of democratic affairs and consensus building on important issues like Eighteenth amendment, and consensus on Seventh NFC award.

Key Words: Political parties, Charter of democracy, Politics of Confrontation and understanding, Consensus building

Introduction

There was a significant development to revive the democracy in the country, as two main stream political parties unanimously draw out their future plans and course of actions for politics, which were laid down in the form of "Charter of Democracy" (COD). This charter is named as the third most important achievement called Magna Carta of Pakistan after the Pakistan Resolution of 1940 and the Constitution of 1973, in which particularly two main stream political parties PML-N and PPP extended full cooperation and consensus towards each other. Political parties demonstrated the strong will to restore parliamentary democracy in the country, which was endorsed by some fifteen political parties in All Parties Conference (APC). 'Charter of Democracy' was a turning point, which ended the politics of confrontation and settled the contours of politics of understanding.¹

This politics of understanding resulted in Eighteenth amendment in 1973 constitution of Pakistan. This amendment was a significant move to restore the constitution in its parliamentary form as well as to address the demands of more provincial autonomy. It reflected political parties' commitment to the (COD) to strengthen parliamentary democracy, ensured provincial autonomy, independence of judiciary and Election Commission and strived for socio-economic development of the state. The consensus on the seventh award of National Finance Commission (NFC) could also be materialized due to consensus building of democratic forces. The award

incorporated the demands of provinces of Baluchistan, Sindh and KPK and multifactor formula was agreed based on population, poverty, underdevelopment, and inverse population density criteria.²

Theoretical Framework

There are different models which explain the politics of political parties in different eras. 'Catch all Model' was explained by Otto Kirchheimer. He was among the first to identify the downfall of the mass parties and the emergence of 'catch all parties'. He asserts that the end of ideology and decreasing loyalties compelled the parties to adopt 'Catch all' strategies. In which parties not just rely on particular set of class or clientele rather to enlarge their acceptability to maximum number of clienteles or classes.³

Another model called Consociational in this model Arend Lijphart broadly focused on democracies but his work also deals with party typologies and functioning of party systems. He believed in that 'segmental cleavages at the mass level can be minimized through elite cooperation. There are two dimension of party typology; structure of the society as homogeneous versus pluralist and the behavior of the elites as coalescent versus adversarial. The party elites act in a cooperative manner by following these four practices: grand coalition, segmental autonomy, proportionality and mutual veto. He views Consociational model as the key to understand party system for the reason that the cooperation of segmental elites is there, despite deepening cleavages.⁴

However, in this study, the "Rational Actor Model" given by Downs has been applied to understand the politics of understanding. According to Downs, political actors are also rational actors, they opt to act and react what they think is best to them. Politics of Understanding is an effort of creating harmony and smooth relationship among political actors. It may be in the form of formal or informal agreement, it may be for short or long time period, depending upon the commitment of the parties agreed to. Common grounds and agendas, interests or threats may unite the parties to demonstrate politics

of understanding while having agreement. As in case of Pakistan, 'Charter of Democracy' provided basis for the politics of understanding.

Anthony Downs, lead the way to innovative study of the parties within the milieu of democracy. He formulated a model how a democratic government makes decisions, in which party politics is at central place. He believes that the political parties and voters strive for certain specified goals and more importantly they rationally act to achieve them. 'Parties formulate politics in order to win elections rather than win elections in order to formulate polices.'⁵ Downs Model is well suited to illustrate the political rationality from a perspective of economics, likewise 'parties in democratic politics are analogous to entrepreneurs in a profit-seeking economy.' The analogue depicts that parties are always concerned to maximize their profit in term of maximum votes and other political gains which are rationalized in the best interest of the party or democracy. Model presented by Downs, stands on the hypothesis that every government is concerned to maximize its political support. In this regard elections hold central position to this theory of democracy. Without elections there is no way to formulate government in democratic societies, and existence of political parties' is inevitable as important players in democratic setup.

Downs's model also put emphases on diverse types of two-party competition. It attempts to coalesce formal objective of parties in regard to devising and holding on policies when in office, and the informal arrangement that dealing with the private motives of the members beholding politics. The party in government tries to manipulate policies and actions which are necessary to maximize its gains i.e. votes without abusing constitutional rules.⁶ While the one sitting in opposition criticize sometimes with concern and sometimes reacted negatively.

Politics of Confrontation from 1947 to Gen Musharraf

Muslim League struggled for an independent state of Pakistan under the charismatic leadership of M. Ali Jinnah and finally

succeeded on 14th August 1947. Gradually, its decline started after creation of Pakistan due to its failure to transform itself from a movement to a political party. At first stage it was a pressure group till 1940, a nationalist movement till 1947 and finally a political party in the period of (1947- 1958).⁷ Early death of Jinnah and assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan, the first prime minister of Pakistan created a vacuum of genuine leadership. It indulged in power politics for narrow political interests. The power tussles between Governor General and Prime Minister further added to political instability in Pakistan. Governor General Ghulam Muhammad had exercised his discretionary powers and dissolved first constitutional assembly in 1951.

The Muslim League which remained in power at central and provincial level was rejected by the masses in provincial election of East Pakistan held in 1954. That was the reason it chose to postpone general elections leading to government change through palace intrigues in the years to come, later leading to derailing of parliamentary democracy and imposition of martial law in 1958.

Incompetent politicians, and political parties' lack of commitment in strengthening the democracy not only undermined the trust of the masses but it also provided the reasoning to non-democratic forces to intervene in politics and ultimately run the state. From 1958 to 1971 Pakistan remained under the rule of military dictatorship.⁸

Four factors shaped the course of early political process: the failure of Muslim League to maintain its position as a strong party, second the withholding of highly centralized system of government (the supremacy of executive branch), thirdly the elite politics and fourth was the supremacy of military.⁹

The second parliamentary phase of Pakistani politics started with the restoration of democracy in 1971. In this period opposition played relatively efficient role in the parliamentary proceedings, while Government remained intolerant and authoritarian in dealing with opposition. Many journalists,

student activists and labour leaders were arrested and pro-opposition media groups were also banned.¹⁰

This brief interlude of democracy ended when in 1977, Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, the Army Chief, imposed Martial Law on the account of political confrontation and allegations of rigging in elections of 1977 by Z. A. Bhutto, the elected Prime Minister at that time. As Gen, Zia, conducted party-less elections in 1985 and restored democracy but when the government of his handicapped Prime Minister, Muhammad Khan Junejo started asserting civilian supremacy to come out of identity crisis, it was facing under a military chief in a uniform. Gen. Zia dissolved the government and National Assembly. The instrument of dismissal was 58 (2B) the notorious clause of the Eighth amendment to the constitution of 1973.¹¹ This Amendment was instituted by General Zia in 1985 before lifting martial law.¹² That clause continued to haunt the political process throughout 1990s and caused ouster of four politically elected governments one after another, without completing their terms.

Third phase of democracy in Pakistan started after the end of Zia era. Democracy was restored and informal bi-party system emerged in Pakistan. However this period witnessed acute victimization and confrontational politics led by two major parties PML (N) and PPP, during their respective tenure. Four governments were precipitately dismissed between 1988 and 1999. In this period elections were held in 1988 and Benazir Bhutto formed her government which was prematurely dissolved in 1990, by the Ghulam Ishaq Khan, then President of Pakistan. This exercise was repeated when in 1993, government of Nawaz Shif was dismissed by the same president. Next president elect, Sardar Farooq Ahmed Laghari, followed the lines of his predecessor and dismissed the elected governments of Benazir Bhutto in 1996. Although, the democracy was functioning in the country but no government was able to complete its five year term, giving the military valid justification for imposing martial law again. Gen. Musharraf derailed the fragile democratic process by imposing military rule on 12 October, 1999. He suspended the constitution and

appointed himself as the “Chief Executive”, and ordered that President must follow his instructions.¹³

It has been usual trend in Pakistan during all these three phases that political parties/alliances upholding government denied legitimate space to opposition parties.¹⁴ Opposition parties had faced unfair treatment by the incumbent governments, like ban on their political activities and victimization, dismissal of opposition controlled provincial governments. However, at certain occasions, establishment provided energy to opposition by putting pressures on government.¹⁵ In such circumstances legislative role of opposition remained highly ineffective. Opposition preferred to suppress government by focusing on scandals instead of emphasizing on substantial issues.

Military Regime of GEN. Musharraf

The 4th military regime established by General Musharraf, who dissolved the elected government of Nawaz Sharif and appointed himself the “Chief Executive”, on 12 October, 1999, and ordered that President must follow his instructions. A state of emergency was declared on October 15. Another measure to secure his actions was the implementation of “Provisional constitutional Order” (PCO), under this order courts lost their powers to issue any order against him. He expressed that economic revival, national integration and good governance would have top priority in his goals.

Although, there was international pressure on Musharraf by the Western allies, especially the US regarding restoration of democracy, but like Gen. Zia, Gen. Musharraf also avoided proclaiming any announcement regarding this. However, to satisfy the international community he managed local elections in 2001, and tried to justify his decision by saying that democracy will start at local level, and from there gradually it would move to higher levels at provincial and federal through elections in due course. It was claimed that local bodies’ elections would empower the people at grass-root level. Basically, it was gimmick to prolong his rule adopted on the pattern of General Ayub’s introduction of ‘Basic Democracies’.¹⁶

There were three new developments in respect of political parties during Musharraf era: the formation of PML (Q) as a king party; the arrangement of an alliance of the religious parties known as MMA; and third the alliance of the parties known as Alliance for Restoration of the Democracy (ARD), which shared their struggle for restoration of democracy and expressed unity against army rule. General Musharraf while complied with the advice of Supreme Court regarding elections, which were held on 10th October 2002, in which about 70 parties participated, but no political party could achieve simple majority required to form a government.¹⁷ The PML-Q with military's support got 77 seats out of 342 in the national assembly and with the reserved seats for woman and non-Muslims and its victory in by elections rose to 122 seats. The PPP-Parliamentarian secured 62, and surprisingly MMA got 45, the PML-N had only 15 seats in the national assembly. The voter turn-out in this election for national assembly remained 41.8 percent. Gen. Musharraf extended his full support to PML-Q regarding formation of coalition government. Zafarullah Khan Jamali was elected Prime minister, on the nomination of Gen. Musharraf.¹⁸

Character of Democracy

The realization that the military regime was taking advantage of the politics of confrontation, played by both mainstream political parties, led to rapprochement towards each other. Ultimately the 'Charter of Democracy' was signed between the two major parties of that time (PML-N and PPP) on May 15, 2006 in London. Being the main stream political parties they expressed the great concern and deliberation on the political crisis in Pakistan, the factors which put the country on the brink of disaster include; the threats to the country's survival, particularly military's dominating position and subordination of all state institutions, undermining the civilian or parliamentary supremacy, disdaining of the Constitution, rising poverty, unemployment and socio-economic inequality, disregarding rule of law and the hardships faced by masses due to military dictatorship. However, the most significant aspect of the charter was "We will respect the electoral mandate of representative governments," that accepts the due role of the opposition and

declares neither shall undermine each other through extra-constitutional ways. This agreement further pledged “We shall not join a military regime or any military-sponsored government.” No party shall solicit the support of the military to come into power or to dislodge a democratic government.¹⁹ Political leadership expressed the strong concern that the military rule and the nation cannot co-exist, as the former adversely affected the economy and the democratic institutions. It further marginalized the integrity and defence of the country. The victimization of political leaders and workers in the name of accountability and their media trails were perceived as dictators’ strategy of ‘divide and rule’ as to prolong their rule.²⁰ Political leadership expressed their unity against non-democratic forces and decided that by the peoples’ support military dictators’ ambitions to rule the country shall be discouraged.

Charter of Democracy (COD) is viewed as the third most important achievement as the Magna Carta of Pakistan after the Pakistan Resolution of 1940 and the Constitution of 1973 in which political forces extended their full cooperation and consensus in the statecraft. Political parties demonstrated the strong will to restore parliamentary democracy in the country, which was endorsed by some fifteen political parties in All Parties Conference (APC). The landmark achievement of (COD) was comprised of four major components such as, Code of conduct, necessary constitutional alteration, management of the civil-military relations and arrangement of the free and fair elections. It was the commitment of particularly two main stream parties to articulate imperatives of transition from military-led controlled democracy to actual democracy and governance based on democratic norms. CoD was the rationalization of political wisdom and historical evolution of political parties and democratic process. Perhaps, it was not easy process to develop political understanding between two arch rivals and break down of the contour of traditional politics. CoD is a milestone document if it continues to be implemented in its letter and spirit.²¹

Transition of Power: From Military to Civilian Government

Third democratic transition went through visible socio-political changes in the history of Pakistan which were different from previous transitions of 1971-77 and 1988-99. The third phase of democratic revival is the part of evolutionary process of socio-political changes in the country. In this respect, the struggle of political parties and movement for the restoration of judiciary played a pivotal role by challenging the powerful dictator, otherwise un-democratic nightmare would have prolonged. Other paramount changes in the form of a vibrant media and political parties renewed commitment to democracy also contributed to successful democratic transition.²² The transformation studies describes that the growth of democratization happens in succeeding phases and that process starts with a crisis in the established regime that challenges the erosion of its legitimacy and power.²³

Gen. Musharraf's 'confrontation with judiciary gradually eroded his status as a strong military dictator. Gen. Musharraf observed the foreseeable situation that Chief Justice on legal grounds would not provide him any relaxation for re-election as President. To continue his grip on the matters, he was not reluctant to avoid the extreme and unconstitutional steps. Keeping in view the above scenario, Gen. Musharraf suspended the CJ Iftikhar on March 9, 2007.²⁴

To his astonishment the Lawyers community organized a movement named 'Adliya Bachao Tehreek' (Save the Judiciary Movement) to ensure the independence of Judiciary as a reaction to CJ's dismissal. However, the Lawyers movement accomplished its desired goal of reinstatement of CJ on July 20, 2007. But the real fruit was still away as after a few months Gen. Musharraf suspended the constitution and imposed emergency on November 3, 2007. Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) was enacted to decide the affairs according to his will instead of facing judicial oversights. Lawyers were again at forefront to protest against the dictator's act of emergency as well as suspension of the constitution. Most of the senior judges reacted and bluntly refused to accept the

unconstitutional state of emergency and PCO. Aggressive measures were taken against Judges and Lawyers, followed by crackdown, arrests and detention. Due to immense pressure of Lawyers' movement and as well as international pressure Musharraf quit his position as the Army Chief, on November 28, 2007 and lifted emergency on December 15, 2007.²⁵ However, still he was a part of the political system as a civilian President.

In fact the achievements of civil society regarding restoration of judiciary, 'Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy' (ARD) and 'Charter of Democracy' were significant developments which strengthened the democratic forces and adversely effected Gen. Musharraf's military regime. The ARD purpose was to achieve for the revival of civilian rule, as the alliance agreed to frame "effective political strategy for the restoration of real democracy and the supremacy of parliamentary institutions." Although the alliance was first organized effort to restore democracy, but it remained ineffective until the leadership of PML-N and PPP reached to a critical turning point and signed 'Charter of Democracy'.²⁶ However later on, irrespective of joint "pro-democracy" agreement of Charter of Democracy, Benazir Bhutto signed National Reconciliation Order (NRO) with Musharraf.²⁷

Power-Sharing of Parties and Dualistic politics

The, elections were Pakistan held in Pakistan on February 18, 2008. Election results were disappointing for pro-Musharraf PML-Q at central and provincial levels. Similarly religious parties also experienced massive downfall compared to their position in 2002 elections. The two main stream parties and adversaries PPP and PML-N secured maximum number of seats. PPP was at first in terms of its seats in the National assembly. It secured 121 out of 342 seats, with 30.6 percent of all votes. PML-N stood second and secured 91 seats in the national assembly, with 19.6 percent of votes, PML-N also won simple majority in the Punjab Assembly (the largest province). PML-Q got only 54 seats, although fewer seats than PML-N but percentage of votes was higher as received 23 percent of total votes.²⁸

In the post-election scenario, the two main stream political parties' initiative to form a coalition government was a historical development towards political understanding instead of following the traditional pattern of confrontational politics and antagonistic environment. The unity between the two arch rivals in the parliament raised the optimism for a progressive political environment and political stability.²⁹

In the nineteenth century, British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli explained that "Coalitions, though successful but their triumph has been brief." The two coalition partner the PPP and PML (N) were not only ideologically different from each other but also had a strong history of political rivalries. It was realized that cooperation between the PPP and PML (N) would contribute to smooth democratic process.³⁰ However the level of cooperation remained fluctuating based on interests of these political parties.

Dualistic politics yield positive results due to important feature of collaboration. Dualistic politics happens when a leading party is playing the role of opposition and as governing party simultaneously, and vice versa. As PPP established its government at center and was leading opposition party in the Punjab. The PML (N) formed its government in the province of Punjab and opposition party at center. The PML-N criticized the governance of PPP at national level whereas the PPP criticized PML-N politics in the Punjab.³¹ Dualistic politics is considered to be different from conventional politics as the later remained mostly concerned to find out flaws in the government and may be involved in irresponsible or unnecessary criticism. However, dualistic politics restricts the opportunity of wider criticism because it is hard to target itself as a governing party is subject to criticism. Anyways if stakeholders act in a responsible manner then dualistic politics can contribute to the stability of the system.

In Pakistan conventional politics damaged the system and paved way to military coups, as party in opposition with no stakes in any government central or provincial preferred the replacement of government by hook and crook. However, after

2008 elections the two parties PPP and PML-N had collaborative stakes to preserve democracy and avoid conventional politics. So dualistic politics is valuable to protect the system against unnecessary conspiracies and destabilize government by unlawful means. It provides the systemic defense to respect the each other mandate and not to let down the systemic particularly against non-democratic forces.

There are more chances that leading political parties may engage themselves in collaborative politics. Collaborative democracy becomes more viable when there is a multiparty coalition government at federal and provincial levels. However, for effective collaborative democracy there must be a vigorous but pragmatic opposition. Parties should avoid undermining each other's government while part of government or opposition. Dualistic politics strengthens the democracy by engaging in collaborative environment while defusing the conspiracies, unlawful collusions, and military interventions.³²

Consensus in Legislation: Eighteenth Amendment

The eighteenth amendment in the 1973 constitution was significant achievement which reversed the seventeenth amendment (enacted during General Musharraf era) and ensured original parliamentary nature of the constitution. It was the reflection of the political parties' commitment to the Charter of Democracy to strengthen parliamentary democracy, make sure provincial autonomy, independence of judiciary and Election Commission and to strife for socio-economic development of the state.

In the eighteenth amendment the real position of Prime Minister (as executive chief) was restored in respect of appointment of heads of the armed forces and members of judiciary, and President role was largely fixed as ceremonial as head of state. It also delegated considerable powers to provincial assemblies and abolished the two-term limit for the office of Prime Minister, in this way Nawaz Sharif benefited from that change and enjoyed third-term as Prime Minister.³³

The Eighteenth amendment abolished article 58 (2) (b), (President's power or prerogative to dissolve the parliament),

which was initially enacted by General Zia, was restored by General Musharraf after his military coup from the constitution. Judicial Commission and a Parliamentary Committee shall have the responsibility to appoint the judges of Supreme Court and High courts, which was previously exercised by President in consultation with Chief Justice. The province of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) was also renamed as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, a long awaited demand.

The eighteenth constitutional amendment was a serious endeavor to create a balanced federal structure with enough provincial autonomy. Significant changes were implemented to ensure devolution of power to the provinces. The Long-standing concurrent legislative list was also abolished, and provinces were granted more autonomy by providing legitimate constitutional rights regarding governance, legislative powers, production of electricity, and management and utilization of their natural resources. However, the provinces are still unable to take on the full responsibilities transferred to them according to the eighteenth amendment. Further, mechanism of bodies like the Council on Common Interests and the National Security Council, coordinating bodies among provinces and the center in sharing governance is still largely inactive. The 18th constitutional amendment was an attempt to craft a balanced federal structure in Pakistan, and gave more institutional power to the provinces.³⁴

Previously, according to article 46 Prime Minister was bound to inform President regarding all decisions taken in the cabinet meeting, and President had the power either to consider the decision or send back for reconsideration. Yet according to new amendment President did not have the power of reconsideration. According to Article 48 President was empowered to hold referendum on national issues of high importance. However, according to new amendment, the Prime Minister with consultation of joint session of parliament will hold referendum.

Amendment regarding the formation of Caretaker government elaborates that appointment of personals for caretaker

government must follow the criteria of fair, neutral and impartial. Constitutional amendment is to set out the jurisdiction of the caretaker government. Along with other responsibilities an important function of government is to facilitate the citizens to take part in elections. In respect of political rights of the citizens, the International Convention for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) explains, “Political clout of any government is depending upon the rights of every citizen to take part in state affairs including the right to be elected or to vote etc”³⁵.

Through the eighteenth amendment, Article 25A dealing with Right to education was placed into the constitution, as the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen in such manner as may be determined by law.” According to the Eighteenth amendment regulating of health department at provincial level is a problematic task in the absence of overseeing authority. The provinces yet don’t have the capacity to handle this critical area of social wellbeing and service to people.³⁶

A well known lawyer and former Minister Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. S. M. Zafar who was a member of the constitutional committee which framed the 18th Amendment to the 1973 Constitution, expressed his view during conference arranged by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) that granting more fundamental rights was above any criticism. Those rights include free and compulsory education by the state for children from age 5 to 16 years, right to information and right of fair trial for each citizen granted through amendment. It was good progress. “Today, the Election Commission by virtue of the 18th constitutional Amendment is a powerful organization. It is one of the most important institutions of our country to ensure holding of free and fair elections. Now all members of the Election Commission including the Chief Election Commissioner are independent, their tenure is fixed, their salaries are ensured, their removal is not possible except through judicial misconduct and that also by the Judicial Supreme Council. Nothing more could be given as protection to the election

commission. If they do not perform their duties now without any fear it will not only be neglect, it will be criminal neglect” Concluding his remarks, in the conference arranged by IPRI titled “Eighteenth Amendment Revisited” Senator Zafar criticized the decision to abolish the concurrent list and suggested that subjects of national curriculum and higher education, standard of drugs, environment, and population must be kept with the federation. He pleaded for a new amendment to return these subjects to the centre.³⁷

National Finance Commission: Consensus Building

National Finance Commission (NFC) is placed in the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 for the distribution of revenues between the federation and provinces. Taxes collection from provinces is pooled and redistributed according to designed formula of NFC Award. Since the execution of 1973 constitution, there has been three consensus based NFC awards came into effect in 1974, 1991 and in 1997. However, the NFC awards in 1979, 1984 and in 2000 remained unimplemented due to non-consensus of stake holders over the proposed formula.

Following are taxes which fall in the pool: Income taxes, General sales tax, Wealth taxes, Capital gains taxes and Custom duties. All the taxes were collected as the major source of revenue for the government and then the redistribution of this revenue was always a debatable issue.³⁸

Previously the formula of distribution was largely based on population while other factors carried secondary position. The previous awards lacked consensus on the following three grounds: fixing population as a main source of dividing resources, secondly, controlling of revenue generation by federal government, and thirdly federal government receiving of main share. Provinces received 80 percent share in the awards of 1974, 1979 and in 1990 but different situation emerged in 1996 in Malik Meraaj’s care taker government which decided award in 1996 and fixed a highly increased share to the federal government of 62.5 percent and provinces gained only 37.5 percent.³⁹

In the 7th NFC award, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa desire multiple criteria, whereas, Punjab emphasized to keep on talking population as a sole criteria. Sindh demands considerable share for revenue (sale tax, services collection) to be weighted more. Punjab and Sindh receive most tax. The Port of Karachi provides the largest custom duties. KPK emphasizes on poverty, while Baluchistan stresses the inverse population density in the financial resources distribution. The 7th NFC award incorporated the demands of Baluchistan, Sindh and KPK.

Considering a multifactor formula for distribution of resources based on population, poverty, underdevelopment, and inverse population density criteria was a significant development. Federation agreed to sacrifice 10 per cent of its share in favor of provinces. Federal government issued Rs 225 billion more to provinces during 2010-11.⁴⁰

The commission concluded the distribution of 7th NFC award in December 2009. Prime Minister and chief ministers of four provinces signed the award at Gwadar and finally the finance minister Shaukat Treen announced on December 11, 2009.

According to new award provincial share was increased from 47.5 percent to 56 percent for the year 2010-11. The federal government also made a decision to reduce tax collection charges from 5 percent to 1 percent. The sales tax on services is the subject to be dealt in provincial list and respective provinces are to be responsible for collection.

Federal government with the consensus of provinces framed a multiple formula for the distribution of resources. The multiple criteria include; population 82 percent, poverty and backwardness 10.3 percent, revenue collection/generation 5 percent and inverse population density comprising urban and rural development 2.7 percent.⁴¹

The 7th NFC Award the provincial share from the divisible pool is as follows; Punjab 51.74 percent, Sindh 24.55 percent Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 14.62 percent and Baluchistan 9.09

percent. Political leaders President Asif Ali Zardari, Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani and politicians from the other political parties and finance and political analysts appreciated the consensus of political leaders in the form of successful 7th Award, and viewed it a remarkable achievement after 19 years of controversial.⁴² The consensus building on the NFC award enhanced the trust building among the political actors and was an indicator of fostering national unity. The new NFC Award settled the glorious precedent of sacrifices and adjustment by big and small provinces.⁴³

Regarding the vertical part of the NFC formula, there are views that the federation has reduced its share too much. Some have even argued that the current fiscal deficit issues that the federation faces has a lot to do with this vertical arrangement in the NFC. Since the federation keeps too little, while its expenditure needs and commitments are large, it has to run a deficit. If the basis for the NFC could be redone, the deficit issue might be easier to address.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Basically, Charter of Democracy (COD) laid down the foundation of politics of understanding. The document settled comprehensive roadmap to move forward on democratic track. If on the one side, victimization of two main stream parties PML-N and PPP by military dictator General Musharraf led them to strife for their political survival and establish unified moves to resist the unfavorable circumstances. On the other side, Country's changing socio-political environment oppressed the parties to experience political compromise and demonstrate politics of understanding. Thus political actors rationalized their political strategies according to changing political circumstances and challenges as Antony Down described that political actors are rational actors, they always opt what is best to their interests. Parties' commitment to move forward by creating a conducive environment and adopting democratic code of conduct was a necessary step to restore the trust of the masses.

Politics of understanding contributed to significant developments in democratic process; as completion of five years term of democratic government in a sensitive political environment, and smooth transfer of power to next government, which in past had been a dream. It was utmost necessary requirement to strengthen the democratic process in fragile political circumstances. It was also necessary to prove the capacity of political parties to run the political business and revive the trust of the masses and establish the image of the Pakistan as a democratic state. Consensus building on important issues particularly in legislative process strengthens the democratic process as well as trust on each other. In this respect 18th amendment in the constitution is considered as a landmark which empowered the provinces through devolution of various ministries. It enhanced the trust of the provinces regarding their long-standing demands of provincial autonomy. Similarly, NFC award is a big achievement through consensus on agreed formula of distribution of pool of financial resources among provinces. Whatever has been achieved is not enough but it may be considered as prerequisite requirement to streamline the democratic process after the third democratic transition.

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