

ABSTRACT

Political Change is the structural or behavioral transformation either from authoritarian to democratic regime or otherwise. However, transformation from authoritarian to democratic rule is considered as a positive development, and the other as a political decay. Positive structural and behavioral transformation is considered the prime cause of political development.

In Pakistan on 12 October 1999 Gen Pervez Musharraf, the then COAS of Pakistan, toppled the Nawaz Sharif regime in a bloodless military coup after a hopeless survival of his own life. All the political activities in the country once seemed to be stopped. No prominent reactions from the political parties, media, and civil society were seen throughout the country. The masses in Pakistan were totally indifferent from the ongoing political crisis and upheaval. Perhaps the process of political development had been put into reverse gear. People had linked their hopes for better future with the current military regime. Most of the leaders of the main political parties changed their loyalties and established another political party named Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) under the presidency of Mian Azhar. The party supported all military actions. Any constructive political activity in the country was totally stopped.

Hence there was no political development right after the Gen Musharraf's coup. But after the general elections of 2002 and presidential referendum, the political parties, media and civil society started to raise their heads against the policies of the authoritarian regime. They staged protests, organized rallies and demonstration, and observed hunger strikes against these policies. The political activity gradually started to appear in the country. People realized the importance of political participation. By the middle of 2006 the political parties in opposition had realized that they could not win against military dictatorship unless they were united. Charter of democracy was the manifestation of the same realization.

Throughout the military regime of Musharraf, most democratic values were allegedly set aside. People were denied basic democratic rights. In the first quarter of 2007 the movement of civil society and the support of media in highlighting the national issues had triggered the process of political change towards constructive ends. As President Musharraf continued to clamp down on political and media freedoms, a potentially vital election of 2008 became a power struggle between military, Islamic and secular interests than the movement for a large population to exercise its rights to influence the country's social policies. But at the end, free, fair and to some extent transparent elections, the removal of Chief Justice in March 2007 and then his restoration and the imposition of the emergency in November 2007, and the curbs on media's freedom geared the process of political development after a long spell of civil-cum-military dictatorship. The extent of political change throughout the military regime was nominal. Although their role was not much praiseworthy throughout the Musharraf regime, as a whole all the three domestic, non-governmental agents of political change (Political Parties, Media, Civil Society) have contributed to the momentum of political development in Pakistan. In fact there had been a development in the attitude and behavior of the agents of political change.