



Conceptualizing the Opposition and Response of Political Parties to Zia ul Haq Martial Law in Pakistan

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Abstract

In a democracy, the opposition plays a crucial role in maintaining accountability, checking the ruling influence, and avoiding misuse of that authority. The opposition during Zia ul Haq's imposition of martial law in Pakistan was characterized by tenacity,

mobilization, and a dedication to reinstating democratic rule. Diverse political parties, prominent leaders, and dedicated activists played a crucial role in confronting the authoritarian regime established by Zia after the military coup in 1977. This research explores the concept of opposition, its nature and its role in the democratic system particularly in Pakistan. While dealing with its role in the history of Pakistan, it analyses the pattern, style and character of the Opposition in Pakistan. Therefore, this paper attempts to investigate the response of the main political parties towards Zia's Martial Law in 1977 and particularly encapsulates the early response of the Opposition to the military regime.

Keywords: Zia ul Haq Martial Law, Opposition in Pakistan, Democratic Accountability, Political Parties' Response, Role of Opposition

Introduction

In a democratic system, the opposition plays a crucial role in maintaining accountability and avoiding the misuse of power by the governing party. The politics of any country cannot grow or get maturity without powerful opposition with constructive and purposeful criticism for the collective national welfare and effective decision making regarding the matter of national interests. Therefore, opposition is always critical on constitutional, national, political and foreign policy issues in any state. Having political parties that reflect different viewpoints, encourage discussion, and provide alternative policies makes for a more interesting political scene. For the democratic process it is necessary to have political parties because the political parties are the only source for conveying the voices of ordinary people to the assemblies. This creates the feeling of a political deadlock, which affects the people. There is no doubt that parties are an important part of the contemporary democratic system. The political parties of any country perform several functions necessary for the proper working of a democratic system. Political parties constitute the cornerstone of any democratic society. A political party is a small group of people with common interests, organization, undisputed leadership and membership. No democracy can flourish without political parties because Political parties can be seen as linked in their roles in the formation of a modern democratic state. As they provide the state leadership and assist the electorate in choosing representatives for public posts, political parties enable democracy to function. When

they are in power, political parties enact laws, and when they are in opposition, they critique the laws passed in order to ensure better laws.¹

Delving the Concept of Opposition

Opposition refers to groups of individuals, political parties, or parties that oppose the ruling party or incumbent regime.² The existence of organized opposition, including individuals, groups, press, and organized political parties, is crucial for the success of democracy. A good representative system requires a strong opposition, which should be a substitute for the government.³ Democracy liberates opposition as an anti-thesis, and opposition can be present in the electorate, legislature, and cabinet. Opposition is considered a 'safety valve' of the political system, providing a consistent body of alternative leadership.⁴ The crucial element in a parliamentary democracy is the presence of legal opposition which is not only tolerated but also allowed sometimes to select the subjects for debates which has an impact on the government decisions.⁵ In communist countries, the absence of opposition political parties does not necessarily mean absolute monopoly of one group. Pluralism pressures develop from non-party groups like the state apparatus, control commissions, and military leaders, as well as internal factions within the party with different personal loyalties. In communist countries, pluralistic pressures develop from non-party groups like the state apparatus, control commissions, and military leaders, as well as internal factions with different personal loyalties.⁶

Exploring the Role of Opposition in Democracy

The role of opposition in a democratic state is highly valuable and important. The opposition serves as an alternative government, providing alternative policies and constructive criticism to the ruling party⁷. Its main function is to hold the government accountable and ensure the success of democracy. In a parliamentary form of government, the opposition has an official status in the legislature and participates in the law-making process alongside the ruling party. In case of a failure of the ruling party, the opposition may be approached to form a new cabinet. The opposition also presents its own policy programs to the electorate, acting as an important mechanism for political education.⁸ The concept of a legitimate and organized opposition, along with the recognition of criticizing and ousting the ruling party through elections, is a recent phenomenon that developed mostly in the western world. The United Kingdom was the first country to have a constitutional and legal opposition, known as "His/Her Majesty's Opposition" since 1826.⁹ The success of the British opposition is widely acclaimed and seen as a great contribution to parliamentary democracy and the art of governance.¹⁰ For the effective opposition, it must operate positively and remain loyal to the system and comply with the rules of political action and criticism must be carried out for the sake of construction not for destruction. It should not impede the activities of the government and should restrict differences to specific actions rather than engaging in overt political activity or conspiracies against the ruling party. Overall, the opposition plays a crucial role in a democratic political system, providing an alternative government,

holding the ruling party accountable, and educating the masses about political issues. Its presence and involvement in state affairs are essential for the success of democracy.

Analyzing the Pattern of Opposition in Pakistan

Opposition in states varies based on factors like constitution structure, party system, socio-economic gap, and electoral system. Parliamentary opposition plays a more concrete role than presidential opposition, with a shadow cabinet formed and certain privileges for opposition leaders. In parliamentary systems, opposition has a formal status, with no official opposition and a special rank in the governmental system. Immediately after independence, the Muslim League dominated in politics, with a few other parties having little influence. The system evolved into a multi-party system, with opposition having different strengths, statuses, and positions. In a two-party system, opposition appears as an alternative to government, while in multi-party systems, there is no viable opposition parties and coalition governments become more common due to electoral weakness. In a two-party system, extremist parties are not allowed, unlike in multi-party systems. In a parliamentary system, opposition can challenge the party in power, either against a single minister or the entire ministry. If the no-confidence motion is accepted, the government faces the risk of quitting office. The vote of no-confidence or threats to use it by the opposition is an effective mechanism to maintain governmental responsibility.

The role of opposition in the legislature is rather formal through different legislature techniques; opposition tries its best to make the government behave with befitting manners. The prime function to criticize the party in offices, scrutinize governmental activities and to offer itself as an alternative government is performed not only inside the legislature assembly but also outside the legislature.¹¹ Opposition parties, in order to extend their bases of support against the government, aggregate the interests, demands and claims which have been articulated by the interest groups and such aggregation is accompanied by means of preparing or formulating general policies in which interests are accommodated and combined.¹² One very important role of the opposition in democratic politics has been to create public opinion in favor of its alternative policies or programmes. Opposition also exploits every opportunity of pinpointing the failures of the government to keep election pledges and public commitments. The citizens become aware of political issues and are enlightened on the game of politics by means of the activities of organized opposition parties and deviously the educative value of opposition can hardly be overemphasized. Opposition parties use a variety of techniques and tactics to try to change government policies and put pressure on the governing party to give into public demands. Most common tactics include using political platform, press and media, organizing processions, demonstrations, public rallies and political movements, calling strikes, protesting through blockade, and in extreme cases, adopting the strategy of total non-cooperation with the government.¹³

However, the tactics of organizing agitation politics and using students as feat soldiers by the opposition is a phenomenon more common in less developed polities.

Moreover, opposition has the most significant role to play on the eve of popular elections. By formulating well prepared election manifesto, opposition makes strong campaign for it and tries to attract the electorate and mobilize the voters to vote for its candidates opposition also does its best to attract the uncommitted voters who could be convinced by propaganda, programmers and personality of the contesting candidates since this type of voter often becomes instrumental in determining the victory, opposition employs all efforts to capture the minds and win over the floating voters . It is pertinent to mention here that in democratic system, in order to keep the government within the bounds of constitutional limitations, strong and responsible opposition is greatly required both within and outside the legislature. As such ruling party becomes responsive to public grievances, respectful to the views expressed by the opposition members, and democratic in its attitudes and actions. It is worth to be mentioned here that the above role of opposition is more a characteristic feature peculiar to develop democratic politics. On the other hand, in many under developed societies which adopted democratic set up in the past independence period, both the party in power and the opposition are bound inefficacious in performing their proper functions.

Digging the Role of Opposition during Martial Law Regimes

Although the existence of opposition political parties is recognized officially the government is intolerant of opposition and often adopts various repressive measures to suppress them. The opposition in a similar manner, resorts to extra-constitutional methods against the government and in many instances, its objective is to unseat the party in power through political agitations and revolutionary activities. In the post liberation period countries badly need consensus on state fundamentals and concerted efforts to formulate and implement national economic planning and select priorities.¹⁴ Whereas the common phenomenon is that, such attempts are greatly lacking in these countries as both the government and the opposition has conflicting views on fundamental issues. Both sides often violate their constitutional role and fail to remain sincere to democratic norms and practices. Thus, they invite instability, political chaos, confusion, crises and extreme situation which resulted the Military intervention in politics. In Pakistan, the military has been involved in politics for a considerable amount of time, as is the case with many other third-world countries. The military has interfered explicitly and promulgated martial rule across the nation four times uptill now i.e., in October 1958, March 1969, July 1977, and October 1999. The military has used this option so regularly that it is now almost a standard component of Pakistan's democratic process.

The military's increased entrenchment in non-traditional fields can be attributed to a number of factors, including Pakistan's post-independence struggles in establishing a

new government, dealing with the horrors of communal riots, an ill-defined border, tense relations with India, the conflict in Kashmir, and the early years of maintaining law and order. To prevent total breakdown the central government depended upon the military the weak social base and disarray of political leadership and political parties and the lack of organized political support resulted in the weakening of the political institution political parties tended to function in social vacuum and were not seriously engaged in specific issue of social and economic politics. On flipside of the coin, the military was disciplined, cohesive and perhaps the most organized institution in Pakistan. Following the Anti-Ahmadi riots in Punjab in 1953, the army had its first opportunity to fully oversee civil government. Their involvement in non-military sectors provided them with the expertise to address civilian issues and exposed the ineptitude of the civilian administration in resolving these issues. Over time, reliance on the military grew.¹⁵ The military's intermittent but ongoing involvement in civilian matters has rendered it a significant determinant in Pakistan's decision-making process.

During 1947-58, the political leadership neither intervened nor tried to assert itself in the internal administration of the military. The politicians were so busy in solving their own problems that they hardly had the time to tighten their grip over the military. Although, the Muslim League was credited with establishing Pakistan but it failed to transform itself into a political party with a grass-roots organization.¹⁶ The majority of its leaders were primarily concerned with attaining political positions rather than fulfilling their duty to the country. Thus, these factors facilitated the first military coup in Pakistan in 1958. General Ayub Khan assumed the dual role of both the president and the Chief Martial Law administrator. During this period, the military authorities encountered no resistance in strengthening their position. However, over time, particularly after the Tashkent declaration in 1966, opposition parties grew increasingly hostile in their criticisms of the government. This led to the formation of an opposition movement called the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), which initiated agitation against the government.

Ayub Khan was successfully removed from government by the opposing political leaders, but they were unable to choose a successor. The result was the imposition of martial law for the second time in a decade and General Yahya Khan assumed the powers on March 25, 1969, without facing any opposition. His era was the most turbulent period in the history of Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's assumption of the presidency and Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) position in Pakistan on December 20, 1971, replacing General Yahya Khan, was a direct result of the country's loss of East Pakistan and its defeat in the war against India. Bhutto entered the president at a period of severe crises in the history of Pakistan. He proceeded with martial law, which is often referred to as civilian martial law that was imposed on April 21, 1972, in conjunction with the implementation of an interim constitution. Put otherwise, the period covered by martial rule was from March 25, 1969, to April 21, 1972.¹⁷ On

August 14, 1973, Bhutto assumed the position of Prime Minister after the 1973 Constitution's introduction of the parliamentary system.

One may characterize Pakistan's Bhutto period as a brief period of civilian administration. The transition to civilian government in Pakistan indeed marked a significant shift in the country's governance and power dynamics, introducing several new political entities and factions into the realm of decision-making. But internally, Bhutto faced the problem of increased political mobilization coupled with low demand satisfaction which led to mass demonstration and deterioration in law and order. When Bhutto announced the elections in 1977 the entire opposition was putting out angry threats that it would boycott the elections. The emergence of a nine-party united opposition, called the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), the political crisis was reviewed by the top commanders and Bhutto was communicated their concern about the deteriorating political situation. They advised him to work out a political settlement at the earliest. This signal which gave a clear indication of the military commanders, changing perspective on the political situation did not have any meaningful impact on the government policy towards the PNA agitation as well as on the course of political negotiations.¹⁸

Encapsulating the Response of the Political Parties towards Zia Regime

The failure of political leaders and also the political parties of Pakistan to end the constitutional deadlock once again gave an opportunity to the Army to usurp political power. Political parties play a crucial role in the democratic process and without political factions, democracies cannot successfully function. Nevertheless, the sheer existence of political parties does not guarantee the efficient operation of a democratic system. The nature and direction of the political system are greatly influenced by the caliber of political leadership and the efficiency with which political parties carry out their mandates.¹⁹ Political and economic management, as well as governance, may suffer if political parties don't follow democratic and constitutional standards and participate in interest-based elections and governance within a democratic framework. In Pakistan, the majority of political parties suffer from weak organizational structures, making them vulnerable to internal disagreements and conflicts. These parties are heavily influenced by their leaders, who rely on a small group of loyal followers to run the parties in a personalized manner. Additionally, these political parties have faced challenges due to the intermittent interruption of the democratic process through the imposition of martial laws. During such times, political parties are either prohibited from functioning or face severe restrictions on their activities.²⁰

The third martial rule regime had a significant impact on both the democratic system and the political parties. The July 1977 coup was equally calm, much as the coups in 1958 and 1969. General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, the head of the army, assumed the position of Chief Martial rule Administrator (CMLA) after declaring martial rule

nationwide. The 1973 Constitution was not abolished, but rather temporarily halted. The Federal and Provincial Cabinets, as well as the National and Provincial Assemblies, were disbanded. The Prime Minister's Cabinet members and prominent opposition leaders were apprehended. General Zia-ul-Haq portrayed himself as an unwilling leader. He said that the military intervened in the political arena when it became evident to them that the politicians were unable of resolving the political problem on July 5th, he stated.

It is evident to you today that when the political leader has failed to navigate the nation out of a crisis, it is an unforgivable transgression for the military forces to remain passive observers. I want to emphasize that I have not expressed any political aspirations, and the military does not want to separate itself from its role as soldiers. My primary objective is to arrange elections that are both impartial and unrestricted, scheduled to take place in October of this year 1979.The user's text is straightforward and precise..... I provide the salesperson with a guarantee that I would strictly adhere to this timetable "Martial law orders and regulations are issued and they would not be subject to legal challenge."²¹

Zia promised that "political parties will be given all the facilities to shout their heads off" and "we will only impose minor restrictions, like a possible ban on processions" it would be a "clean" campaign with the armed forces present only to ensure "impartiality".²² All the political parties had different attitude about the marital law regime. Some parties joined the Martial Law government. Others deemed it more expedient not to do so in order to retain some kind of public legitimacy. Muslim league (Pagara Group) Jamaat-i-Islami and PDP were prominent among the former, while the latter included JUP, NDP, and Tehrik.

Unfortunately, the political parties did not show maturity and were divided among themselves. One group supported the Martial law and welcomed Zia-ul-Haq and joined his provisional government. Other group chiefly PPP which was a ruling party, along with few other parties opposed it. Here is a brief role of the political parties to the early years of Zia's martial. Political groups like Jamaat-i-Islami supported Zia while others opposed the martial rule administration. Following the implementation of martial rule, the Jamaat provided assistance to President Zia's military government and his initiatives for the promotion of Islam. It became a member of the cabinet in 1978. Despite the Jamat's resignation from the cabinet alongside other parties of the PNA in 1979, it continued to retain a strong and intimate connection with the military administration.²³

Nevertheless, certain prominent figures within the organization, such as professor Abdul Ghafoor Ahmad, raised doubts about the Jamaat's connections with General Zia and openly voiced their criticism of the military government. The subsequent phase of collaboration between the right-wing and the military solidified the shared ideology between the military and the Jamaat-i-Islami. He became estranged from the Jamaat mainstream due to its alignment with the MRD opposition front.²⁴ Although the Jamaat and the reigning Generals had different agendas, they saw that a cooperative

alliance would be mutually beneficial. The Jamaat-i-Islami gained advantages by being able to participate in political activities with less attention and also by expanding its influence inside the bureaucracy. The Jamaat also collaborated with the military to undermine the endeavours of other political factions to initiate a political protest against the military regime.²⁵

The Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP) was established in 1948 by the Ulema belonging to the Bareilvi sect, with Maulana Abdul Hamid Badauni serving as its president. It desired an Islamic regime for Pakistan. While JUP had a presence in all four provinces, its primary areas of political influence were limited to Punjab and urban Sindh.²⁶ In the 1977 elections, it allied with the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), a coalition established in opposition to Bhutto's administration. Upon the PNA's inclusion in Zia's government in 1978, the JUP disassociated itself from the coalition. Subsequently, it endeavoured to advocate for the repeal of martial rule and the restoration of democratic governance according to the 1973 Constitution. However, it refrained from aligning itself with the MRD, a coalition formed with same goals.²⁷ On other hand during the Pakistan movement, due to widespread discontent with the pro-Congress stance of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind, the pro-Muslim League made the decision to establish the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) in order to advocate for the creation of Pakistan. The JUI served as a constituent party of the PNA during the 1977 elections. The leader, Mufti Mahmud, had a significant impact on the PNA's protest against Bhutto's administration. Under martial rule, the party experienced a split into two factions: JUI (F) under the leadership of Maulana Fazlur Rehman and JUI (S) under the leadership of Maulana Samiul Haq.²⁸ The former was in opposition to Zia and typically aligned themselves with the PPP, while the latter aligned themselves with the military dictatorship. The JUI (F) was affiliated with the PPP in the MRD. In the beginning, some political parties were joined the martial law government but later these parties left the government and demanded withdrawal of martial law, like TI, PDP.

Moreover, the Tehrik-i-Istaqlal newly founded party played its role during the military regime and this party was founded by Air Martial (Rtd.) Muhammad Asghar Khan in 1966 in opposition to Ayub Khan's government. The party has performed poorly in the polls. During both the 1970 and 1977 elections, it was considered a peripheral political organization. Asghar Khan played a crucial part in the Pakistan National Alliance's efforts to oppose the PPP. After the imposition of martial law, Tehrik-i-Istaqlal refused to join it and withdrew from the PNA.²⁹ Tehrik had conducted elections of its office-holders regularly, even though Asghar Khan had been able to influence the outcome in one way or the other. In actual strength, it claims to be the second largest party in the country, although this was contested by other political parties. The Tehrik regained its place in the Opposition when President Zia failed to fulfil his commitment to conduct elections in November 1979. The demands included the immediate repeal of martial rule, the holding of new nationwide elections, and the reinstatement of the 1973

Constitution. The Tehrik aligned itself with the MRD and actively engaged in its endeavours, despite Asghar being subjected to a prolonged house arrest. The Tehrik would like to inherit the leftist and centrist support of the PPP but the party lacks a charismatic leader such as the PPP.³⁰ The smaller parties of Pakistan like PDP, NDP, PML and PNP also had a different response towards martial law regime. These single-leader parties are integrated factional groupings.

Another party named The Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP) was formed in June 1969 by the amalgamation of four political parties: the Nizam-i-Islam Party, the Awami League (Nawabzada Nasrullah Group), the National Democratic Front (NDF), and the Justice Party. The PDP got out to a strong start, but problems quickly emerged when several of the original leaders split. From 1971 until 1977, the PDP, led by Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, actively participated in the opposition ranks. Following General Zia-ul-Haq's implementation of martial rule, the PDP aligned with the government and obtained seats in the federal cabinet. Later, the PDP left the government and distanced itself from the martial law authorities. Then, the PDP joined the anti-Zia political alliance, called the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy and Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan was arrested while participating in the MRD agitation against the military government.³¹

National Democrat Party, after the banning of the ANP in 1975, some of its activists organized a new party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), with Sardar Sherbaz Khan Mazari, a former member of the National Assembly, as its leader. The NDP served as a new forum for the NAP workers who immediately joined it.³² The NDP was a component party of the Pakistan National Alliance. But when the PNA joined Zia's cabinet in 1978, the NDP dissociated itself from the PNA. Its leadership felt that any co-operation with the military government would undermine its credentials as a democratic party. It came out openly against the military government of Zia-ul-Haq and demanded restoration of 1973 constitution and holding general elections. It stood for fundamental rights of the people, freedom of the press and non-alignment in external affairs. The NDP joined the Opposition alliance MRD in 1981.

Pakistan Muslim League (Khairuddin group) led nominally by Khawaja Khairuddin, who was prominent in Calcutta and Dacca Muslim League politics before and after partition. PML was the patchwork of a break-away faction of Pagara Muslim League. Such factional groupings have never been able to play a significant role in Pakistan politics, especially in terms of electoral activities. The party was more closely identified with the original Muslim League than its counterpart. In 1982, the party became a major supporter of MRD.³³ Mazdoor Kisan Party, MKP came into being in 1968 as an offshoot of the peasant committees of the National Awami Party. Afzal Bangash built upon his base in NWFP by forming alliances with other leftist groups in Punjab and

Karachi. The MKP was active in the 1981 formation of the MRD and prominent in the MRD's 1983 civil disobedience campaign against martial law.³⁴

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was also against the martial law regime. The PPP was founded by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Lahore in November 1967. The PPP is a left-of-the-centre party with a socialistic socio-economic programme and greater emphasis on participatory governance. Initially, despite Bhutto's charismatic personality, it could not attract membership of high caliber and good repute but its young devoted workers opened offices and introduced its programme in cities and towns all over the country. All are agreed that it is the largest single party in the country. The PPP built popular support in a short period and outstripped the older political parties it drew strength basically from laborers, workers, students, peasants and the urban poor. The PPP supervised the drafting of the 1973 constitution, which implemented the parliamentary form of governance, leading to Bhutto assuming the position of Prime Minister in 1974. The PPP government's notable accomplishments include instilling trust in the country after Pakistan's breakup in 1971, establishing a democratic constitution, and empowering the average man with a feeling of electoral participation. Over time, the party was infiltrated by the conventional leadership comprised of feudal landowners, which compromised its revolutionary image. Consequently, the party experienced significant internal discord as several groups engaged in a battle against one another. Violence was used by opposing groups in several regions, resulting in detrimental effects on the party's organization and effectiveness.³⁵ The PPP purported to be a democratic party, however it never conducted elections for its several levels of hierarchy. Bhutto himself had absolute authority, having the right to appoint and remove office-bearers as he pleased. Consequently, the party was unable to operate effectively or progress in a democratic manner. The party officials faced allegations of corruption. But Bhutto did not lose faith in the party's potential.

He was sure that it could win the next elections. In March 1977, the PPP won an overwhelming majority of seats in the National Assembly amid widespread charges of election rigging, bribery and violence. The nine-party opposition, the Pakistan National Alliance, refused to cooperate with the PPP and the country experienced four months of violent political turmoil.³⁶ The turning point came when Pakistan Army Chief General Zia-ul-Haq overthrew the PPP government and imposed martial rule across the nation. Bhutto was then taken into custody on suspicion of killing a political rival. After a trial in a conventional court, he was found guilty and given the capital penalty, which was executed on April 4th, 1979. After the death of Bhutto, the PPP was led by his wife Nusrat Bhutto, and daughter Benazir Bhutto. They challenged the martial law government and expressed their determination to take revenge. PPP has never been well organized and what little organization there has been shattered by the Zia regime. Although different instances of defection from the party, it still remained a political

force with its support-base intact.³⁷ Some of the leaders who left the party in eighties included Mumtaz Bhutto, Hafeez Pirzada and Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi.

The 1978-79 campaign to save Bhutto failed miserably despite his massive popularity. Realizing their failure to mobilize the general public, the PPP high command agreed to forge a broad alliance with an earlier adversary, the PNA in 1981 and gave birth to the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), demanding the holding of elections and restoration of representative government.³⁸ The PPP was played its role in the country's politics from the platform of the MRD. However, its efforts were adversely affected by the hijacking of a PIA aircraft by the activists of an underground terrorist organization, Al-Zulfikar, led by two sons of Bhutto. This group was also occupied in a number of other terrorist activities, including killing of some pro-Zia political leaders. Though the PPP tried to distance itself from the activities of this group but as Bhutto's sons were running it, the PPP's reputation was badly affected; it also lost some political support. The MRD's agitation against the military regime gained momentum in August 1983 but it did not succeed in dislodging the government. This failure created a difficult situation for the PPP; there was a sense of demoralization in the party. Some of the allied parties were also critical of the behaviour of the PPP leadership. The military government was also putting a lot of pressure on the Bhutto ladies.³⁹ Therefore, both Nusrat and Benazir left the country and did not return till April 10, 1986.

When Benazir Bhutto returned from her London exile, she carried a legend of defiance and of personal suffering, as she made a triumphant entry into Lahore, where she received a tumultuous welcome by more than half a million people. Soon after, the PPP started an agitation to press the demand for mid-term elections, but the movement crackles out. This failure proved a turning point in its history; thereafter, the party gave up the politics of violence and adopted a long-term strategy for electoral politics.⁴⁰ Following the removal of Prime Minister Junejo in May 1988 and the death of President Zia in an aviation accident in August 1988, the PPP made arrangements to take part in the upcoming general elections. During the 1988 elections, the PPP stuck to its platform of ending poverty, ending slums, combating illiteracy, defending democratic procedures, and giving financial compensation to its workers who had suffered during the Zia administration.⁴¹ The PPP attained the status of being the biggest party in the National Assembly after the party-based general election that took place on November 16, 1988. Benazir Bhutto was sworn in as the Prime Minister.

Conclusion

The opposition plays a crucial role in a democratic state, acting as an alternative government, providing policies and constructive criticism, holding the government accountable, and participating in the law-making process. Pakistan has faced martial laws since its inception, affecting federal and democratic norms. The Martial Law of Zia ul Haq, introduced due to a lack of institutional development, had adverse effects on the

political system. The regime relied on coercion, conservative elites, religio-political organizations, and foreign friends to legitimize itself. President General Zia-ul-Haq used the 'Islamic political system' to maintain hegemony, but it also fostered caste, sectarianism, color and creed systems, dispersing national thinking and leadership. After Martial law in 1978, political parties joined General Zia-ul-Haq's cabinet, which lasted until Bhutto's execution in 1979. This corporation helped the military deal with political dissidents and civilianized military rule. However, it couldn't produce a trusted leadership and ultimately transferred power. The military sought to eliminate the dissident left's support base. Not all parties, including Tehrik-i-Istaqlal, the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Pakistan (JUP), and the National Democratic Party (NDP), were enthusiastic about a vigorous corporation with the military regime.

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