

## **The Policies of Musharraf Regime in Pakistan: An Analysis**

By

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### **Abstract:**

*The important theme of Musharraf government was to improve governance system in Pakistan. To achieve the objectives, the military regime introduced series of policies and structural administrative reforms throughout the country to replace the “sham” democracy of the past with a real and genuine democratic set-up. Musharraf began his rule by projecting himself as yet another well intentioned soldier forced by circumstances to take over the country. A few years into his rule, Musharraf declared Pakistan is not ready for democracy adding that he would not relinquish power as long as his retaining it was “in the national interest. This paper is an attempt to provide an analysis of policies of military regime in Pakistan during the Musharraf era. It has also examined the implications on Pakistani politics and the role of military in politics.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Regime, Policies, Musharraf, Etc.

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**Introduction:**

General Pervez Musharraf became Chief of Army in October 1998 by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Things did not get well with the Army Chief as Sharif tried to replace Musharraf with Lieutenant General Khawaja Ziauddin Butt on October 12, 1999. The army high ups did not like the change of command and the new appointment by Sharif was resisted with the imposition of martial law. Commenting on Nawaz Sharif's meddling in the Pakistan military affairs, a former law minister opined that Sharif "had the habit of shooting himself in the foot. This time he shot himself in the mouth." (Pirzada, Newslite). General Musharraf proclaimed himself "Chief Executive" and halted the constitution of the land and did not impose martial law, although his word was considered a law of the country (Abbas, 2005). The Chief Executive did not promise of holding general elections in three months, thereby, indicating, that regime planned to stay longer (Baxter, 2004).

The legitimization of the coup led General Musharraf to announce a so-called seven-point reform agenda to resolve country's institutional problems, and bring the country to a prosperous path. The so-called reform plane included "rebuilding national confidence and morale; strengthening the federation while removing inter-provincial disharmony; reviving and restoring investor confidence; ensuring law and order and dispensing speedy justice; reconstructing and depoliticizing state institutions; ensuring swift across-the-board accountability; and devolving power to the grass roots level." (The News, 1999). Thus, Pervez Musharraf's seven-point agenda was a camouflage for his power ambitions to impose military rule in the country.

**The Local Self Government System, 2001:**

The military regime established a 'National Reconstruction Bureau' (NRB) in November 1999, declared devolution of power a key priority of the government (ICG, 2008). The establishment of the NRB by the Musharraf government would be remembered self-serving decisions. One of such

decisions was establishment of a local administration system, which chief executive always exhorted, was his most solid achievement. The Bureau brought a comprehensive local government blueprint that Musharraf revealed in 2000. He maintained decentralization was “the beginning of a constructive, democratic, dynamic revolution whose sole objective was to place in [the] hands of the people the power to shape their own destiny....an unprecedented transfer of power will take place from the elites to the vast majority (Associate Press of Pakistan, 2000).” In “devolving powers”, Musharraf regime replicated policies of former military rulers to avoid common goals for representative rule.

Consequently, a “three –tier local government” scheme in district level of country was put in place on August 14, 2001 as a first initiative towards a democracy. Under the plan, local governing system was designed at “three levels: district, tehsil, and union”, each headed by its respective Nazim and Naib Nazim (Mehmood, Salient Governance). The former apex administrative divisions were abolished. On the promise of involving the people in the civic development, “grassroots organizations like village councils and citizen community boards” were envisaged in the system (Baxter, 2004, p.145).

Despite its loud claims on the decentralization of power to grassroots level, NRB’s scheme took the districts out of the provincial domain and placed them under the center’s supervision (Baxter, 2004). The military regime of General Pervez Musharraf assigned greater priority to introducing designated institutions at the local than at national and provincial levels. This strategy enabled the military government to create an impression of democratic system at lowest level without compromising its firm control at central or provincial levels. The system of local government was projected to build democratic structure in Pakistan and bring real representatives of the people. It was also described as a catalyst for carrying the dividends of socio-economic development to grass roots level; it would serve the people at their doorsteps. Another attribute was the subordination of the bureaucracy to public representatives at council level to break the status-quo (Rizvi, 2005).

Despite the whole-hearted support of the Musharraf government and availability of funds, the local government system faced problems after the formation of assemblies. They competed for power, influence, and state funds for development work. It seemed that system of local government had been planned without considering the question of relationship with the provincial governments and parliamentarians at all levels. Alternatively, the planners of the local government system were pursuing an unrealistic goal of making the local government a preserve of the central government, while keeping provincial governments and assemblies separated from it. A system of direct devolution of power from federal government to local government is unrealistic in a federal system and negates the importance of provinces in Pakistan's politics and administration. The local government system faced three major types of problems after the establishment of elected assemblies and governments in the provinces such as the Domain Issue, Development Funds and Intra-Local Government Issues (Rizvi, 2005).

#### **Legal Framework Order (LFO):**

The Supreme Court of the land validated military coup in the *Zafar Ali Shah* case, and allowing president to make constitutional amendments only "if the Constitution fails to provide a solution for attainment of his declared objectives." (Baxter, 2004) The act of Apex Court was not only incomprehensible but also immense clarification of constitution. The decision was defined that "no amendment shall be made in the salient features of the Constitution, that is, independence of judiciary, federalism, parliamentary form of government blended with Islamic provision." Musharraf at first intended to change the complete character of the Constitution but later ended up with the supplement of his "commandments" into it (*Dawn*, 2002).

On August 21, 2002, Musharraf made fundamental changes in the Constitution. He made the controversial LFO, the part of constitution with major features of presidential type of government. The new amendment permitted fully a person holding the exalted office without being answerable to the people of the country. In reality, the LFO changed the status of the

1973 Constitution from parliamentary to presidential type government. (Baxter, 2004).

These variations in constitution did not solve the old problems of the country, yet they reflected the so-called policy of change and real democracy of the military rule. The military ethos necessitates a hierarchical command and emphasizes centralization. Viewed from such a perspective, “the military rulers, despite their commitment to democracy, could not overcome their psychological makeup that called for establishing a focal point of authority at the top, and prefer control to participation and sharing of power (Rizvi, 2005, *Dawn*, 2002).” The LFO inserted, at the will of the COAS president, in the Constitution without sanction from the Parliament, reflected the same ethos. By amending 29 articles, the LFO was widely believed to have distorted the shape of the Constitution. According to ARD president late Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, “the constitution will be neither presidential nor parliamentary nor federal. Not presidential because there will be no checks on the president’s authority, not parliamentary because the parliament will not be independent; and not federal because the president will dictate terms to the provinces”. (ICG, 2008)

### **General Elections, 2002:**

The regime imposed a two term ban for the prime ministers and chief ministers, was perceived a “mollified, ill conceived, and against all norms of democracy” (Editorial, the Nation). The introduction of such a law also reflected the mind-set of the rulers’ elite, whose real intent was focused on the short-term personal interest of excluding the two politicians from the political arena, and seemed to the self-serving device. The very induction of Irshad Hassan as the Chief Election Commissioner and his subsequent conduct in holding the president’s referendum and general elections was often portrayed as partial and controversial by the media and political parties alike (The News, 2002).

The military regime cherished the desire that the new and unfolding political setup should consist of and be controlled by legislators favoring

Musharraf and his reforms agenda. This carted his coterie around to ensure the success of regime -backed candidates-PML (Q). That event dashed even the weakest chances of the cleaning up of Pakistan from corruption and the degraded politicians. For the sake of enlisting support of corrupt politicians in the PML (Q) the much-trumpeted rules of accountability were not affected change in letter and spirit against the corrupt and the country faced the predicament of a shady deal culture. Consequently, the flawed electoral process stacked against the democratic norms.

The military regime, despite claims of the Chief Election Commission (CEC) to the contrary, continued the postings and transfers of key civil officers for facilitating its strategy of poll rigging. The mighty civil and military bureaucracy continued to pursue winnable candidates aggressively to convince them to change party loyalties (Dawn, October 5, 2002). The governors, the inspector's general of police, and other senior bureaucrats restored to their frenzied behind-the-scenes politicking for manipulating the ballot on October 10, 2002, for the electoral triumph of the king's party. The final results of October elections, in most constituencies, did not tally with the results collected by the polling agents of candidates, and such results included results of ghost polling stations, as well. The shadows of night witnessed changing of results, whereby winners were declared losers, and the CEC rejecting demands of recounting the ballots.

The verdict in the October 2002 elections did not result in the emergence of any party bagging the majority votes in the National Assembly. On October 9, 2002, the chief executive had amended the LFO, providing for independent "candidates to join any political party within three days after the official publication" of their names by the Election Commission. The move had its background in the manipulative election process, itself (Hassan, Dawn October 3, 2002; Razaqat Ali, Dawn October 30, 2002).

**National Accountability Bureau Ordinance, 1999:**

The regime implemented NAB Ordinance in 1999 to continue accountability of the politicians in the country. The law provided that the NAB would resolve the corruption cases and within the purview of the NAB law the cases would be nonbailable. The Ordinance also prescribed punishments that included imprisonment, fines, and disqualification from holding public offices and seeking loans from government-sponsored financial institutions. Interestingly, 'serving armed forces personnel were excluded from application of the NAB Ordinance'. The military-enacted law allowed the NAB officials to detain the accused up to ninety days.

The NAB started hunting for politicians who opposed Musharraf policies. The bureau only did not investigate the leadership of pro-military government party, the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i- Azam). On the other hand, many politicians faced NAB cases yet secretly struck political settlements with military regime. Numerous cases were delayed against politicians who promised to support the regime made mockery of the NAB law. Thus, the NAB's bogus claims of neutrality and openness were undermined by its biased treatment to many politicians.

The NAB institution was to investigate the corrupt people of the country but sadly there was a questionable record of malpractices to its record. By judging its performance, many opine that "instead of impartially investigating cases of corruption in order to facilitate the return of social and psychological equilibrium to society, and allowing the country to leave behind the sour memoirs of a murky past and move ahead, NAB's actions have often been accused of being against the business and investment interests of the country" (The News, September 20, 2002)

**Change in Madrassah Policy:**

The system of madrassas for spreading religious education is a historical inheritance and had performed well. However, its continuous pursuits of a puritanical world and abject refusal to learn modern knowledge outclassed

it. The Afghan crisis transformed these madrassas into breeding nurseries for holy warriors. Mindless meddling in the Afghan affairs, on behest of the intelligence organizations, encouraged religious students to flex their muscles in pursuit of the objectives of those who had reared them in military training. In the opinion of an analyst:

The unrestricted and unchecked growth of [madrassas] had led to increased rivalry, tension and even bloody clashes among various sects. These clashes had created serious problems of law and order and threatened to social harmony and national unity. Second, some of these [madrassas] were imparting military training to their students, who were later found involved in sectarian violence and terrorist activities. The religious parties running these [madrassas] were following their own agenda on foreign policy; thus challenging the writ of the state (Qadwani, 2002).

The government issued the Madrassah Ordinance 2002 to remove the anomalies in the Pakistan's religious educational system on June 19, 2002. The Ordinance provided for the incorporation of Islamic education with general education in madrassas. Under the ordinance, all the madrassas must be registered at the provincial or federal level to be eligible to receive financial assistance, from the government. Madrassas refusing to register were banned. The religious schools maintained accounts and submitted annual reports to their respective madrassas boards (Baxter, 2004). To bring madrassas education in line with Pakistan's mainstream educational system, the religious schools course in modern disciplines such as Science, Mathematics, English, and Urdu are compulsory and were incorporated into the teaching curricula. This Ordinance was not promulgated in letter and spirit due to the support of religious parties for the LFO and resultantly Musharraf placed madrassa reforms on backburner (ICG, 2007).

The Madrassah policy was a fraud and was used for political purposes as no such policy was implemented and numerous seminaries are still unregistered. The policy makers did not make any efforts for a comprehensive national syllabus for all. The rules for funding to the religious organizations is remained a distant dream till today. The government took



two-way policy, at one point it struggled mainstreaming education and on the other hand it assured that there will be non-interferences policy towards seminaries (ICG, 2007). The military did not want the implementation for reasons better known to the generals. Musharraf was completely following his predecessors in co-operating with the Mullah for stability of his government and sidelining the secular political forces. There was no policy in fighting the extremist forces, but the regime continued its hunting and putting behind bars the popular political leadership of the country. The only cosmetic arrests and measures were taken against religious extremists to ease the international pressure and showed the western leadership that military government is doing its utmost in combating terrorism.

### **Imposition of Emergency:**

The presidential term of Musharraf was ending, and the Supreme Court was required to hear its legality of Musharraf's next presidential election. Dismissing Musharraf regime's pressure for resignation, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry refused to toe the regimes line. Musharraf did not find any way other than imposing of emergency on November 2007 and suspended the constitution and promulgated Provisional Constitution Order (PCO). The judiciary was restructured and about 50 judges were disposed along with fundamental rights. The lawyers, journalist and civil society members were arrested. (ICG, 2008).

The military ruler claimed that it was necessary to impose emergency to remove hidden obstacle to the popular rule of the people and fight against the religious extremism. Thus, the country faced a second time martial law rule for all practical purposes in November 2007. This all was done just to prevent any adverse or unfavorable verdict from the Apex court. From nineteen judges of the higher court just 5 took oath under the PCO and remaining were dismissed including Justice Chaudhry and were kept under house arrest. Consequently, the government hurriedly started appointing loyal judges for the Supreme Court and High Courts (ICG, 2008).

**Conclusion:**

It is concluded that the policies of modernization and corruption free Pakistan were only meant to prolong the military rule in Pakistan. Musharraf claimed to bring true democracy in the country but in reality, he pushed Pakistan backwards with these policies and projects. Under the martial law regime, the military focused on its expansionist policies and extended its power and influence in the state institutions at the cost of democracy. Musharraf placed the military personnel into positions of authority within the political, economic and social fabric of Pakistan.

The regime created a so-called NAB but surprisingly the bureau did not have power and mandate to spread its influence on military. The NAB was fully used by the General for his political ends. The massive development funds were used to gain the support of political and religious leadership to keep a strict hold on political government. In this way, the military gradually extended tentacles to keep her control over political affairs of the state.

Enlightened moderation and Madrassah policies were introduced to make the country vibrant, and modern democratic Islamic polity. In reality, Musharraf brought these policies to legitimize its rule and banned religious groups who were waging a freedom struggle in Kashmir, thereby damaged the Kashmir cause. He could not maintain a balance between our national interests and our international role in war on terror.

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