



## ELECTORAL MALPRACTICES IN PAKISTAN: FACTS AND EVENTS OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY

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### **Abstract**

*The electoral history of Pakistan is cherished with malpractices that resulted in political instability. From its very inception, Pakistan has continuously been struggling with democracy but failed to develop mechanisms and conditions for political development. The democratic process was derailed by different stakeholders including political and non-political forces. The country has experienced democratic and non-democratic governments which resulted in the authoritarian political system. An effort has been made to highlight the facts in those areas which resulted in malpractices and how had these been caused political instability in Pakistan. What and how various techniques, tools, and means had been employed by different elements have been analysed. This study focuses on the election process, electoral laws, political parties, politicians, the role of the establishment, media, and other stakeholders*

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*during elections which led to political instability. To evaluate the facts, an analytical approach has been adopted using secondary data referring to books, magazines, journals, and newspapers.*

**Key Words:** Elections, Malpractices, Democracy, Instability, Politics, Political Parties.

## **Introduction**

Genuinely contested elections provide a way forward to a peaceful transition of legitimate authority in matured democracies. Elections ensure an opportunity through which people express their will freely to fill various offices of political responsibilities. Politics means who gets what, why, and how? In a democratic setting, elections are the parameters of gaining the power to make public decisions. The essence of competitive elections is democratic dispensation leading to political development. Elections are the media of mass participation in the democratic process with free will, access to information, adult franchise, free campaign, and an independent body to conduct the election to make the electoral process fair and transparent. Elections show the attachment of masses to the political system and its institutions which lead to the proper functioning and political stability.

A transparent electoral process is possible only if it is characterized by certain internationally recognized standards like freedom of choice, expression, free campaign, and impartiality. Free and fair elections become the basis of selecting the highest slots of the state in which opposing political parties enjoy a level playing field in organizing their candidates and mobilizing all citizens to get majority votes. Elections would be free and fair if the votes posted must be counted accurately. (Kesselman et al., 2019) Governments formed in such an impartial manner are more stable and democratic. Government makes policy according to the well-defined procedure that provides transparency in decision making and maintaining a check on executives that is the essence of politically matured and stabled polity.

Contrary to the above, if elections are not conducted through a specified procedure to select the office bearers of state, it would give rise to electoral rigging where the will of the people is stolen through illegal means. Governments stemming through rigged elections would be unstable which pave the way to authoritarian rule. Here the political authorities are more autocratic involved in corruption, barring free media, intimidation, violence against the opponents, undermine opposition parties to ensure that the ruling party would be re-elected. Under authoritarian rule, competitive elections are



discouraged, lacking institutional procedure for the accountability of those misusing their authorities and citizens do not have equal rights and are governed by unjust rules.

From the very inception of human civilization, people learned and adopted mechanisms suited to the genesis of society to govern their affairs. Trends of the society changed with the industrial revolution and scholarly works paved the way to carve out a procedure called political system which later on reached maturity by the ideas of democracy. Democracy achieved its ideals through free, fair, and competitive elections. Western countries had all gone under this evolutionary process but developing nations of South America, Africa, and Asia lagged as they did not come up with standards of democracy and transparent elections. These states were governed by authoritarian rulers with hung parliaments emerged through rigged elections. Although electoral malpractices are common in all types of societies, however, these are more frequent in Quasi Democracies. (Khan, 2011)

The history of elections in Pakistan is interestingly cherished with electoral rigging causing political instability and failure of civilian set up. Pakistan, unfortunately, could not develop a political system of its own that could become the basis of legitimate governance to satisfy the demands of the masses and aggregate them into successful policy. She adopted the British legacy of a tribal and feudal bureaucratic model developed in the subcontinent for strengthening their rule. (Sayeed, 1966) Tribal- Feudal linkage was incorporated in a bureaucratic model ignoring the mass role in decision making and democratic dispensation through fair elections. Elite politics got rooted in the political system where rhetoric's of free will, equality of opportunity, free choice, free campaign, decentralization, transparent elections, democracy were propagated but actually, they were meant for elites to make their way to the corridors of powers at the cost of mass participation. Thus governments were made and broken through individual and specific group interests and intrigues rather than ballots held independently. This caused political instability and the failure of democracy in Pakistan.

Research is focused on finding reasons for political instability, particularly how have elections been exploited to get the required results to a favourite candidate at the cost of majority's will. These unfair contested elections created weak governments which met to premature dissolution causing political and democratic instability in Pakistan.

### **Electoral Malpractices**



Electoral malpractices can be defined in terms of undue and illegal interference to manipulate the electoral process to get the desired results of elections for favourite candidate.

Electoral frauds and techniques are used to steal the will of the masses and these frauds are numerous due to several political systems in practice across the world. There are various standards of transparent elections if ignored, electoral integrity could not be achieved. (Nipa) These international standards include free choice, free campaign, accountability, justice, competitiveness, level playing field and fair count make the elections transparent and bring political stability.

Myron Weiner is of the view that competitive elections, accepting the election results, and the location of supreme authority in the elected government responsible to electorates are the distinctive pillars of the electoral process. Unfortunately, such standards are absent in the political system of Pakistan which created political instability. The factors that contributed to electoral malpractices in Pakistan are manifold, ranged as intrigues of incumbent governments, administrative policies, electoral laws, non-party based elections, biased and sometimes controlled media, weak and corrupt election commission with irregularities in conducting electoral process, violence, tribal societal structure and multiple other social, economic, political, cultural, regional and religious factors combined led to electoral frauds which destabilized the political system.

### **History of Electoral Malpractices and Political Instability in Pakistan**

Electoral history is interesting in the sense that the political process faced both democratic and authoritarian phases alternatively. The nascent state established in 1947, encountered many socio-economic problems did not experience the exercise of general elections till 1970. (Khan, 2009) Constituent Assembly was formed entrusted with the task of governing day-to-day administration and provision of suggestions for the future constitution. Various conflicts halted the objective of nation-building and assembly delayed its allotted function due to the absence of mutual consensus between the East and West wings of Pakistan. The debate had started in the assembly over issues like representation, minority status, language, and the nature of the constitution. A compromise had been achieved but before the assembly could pass a constitution based on its second report, Governor-General struck it back and dissolved the parent body and he proclaimed to make a constitution through ordinances. (Chaudhary, 1959) On the verdict of the Supreme Court, Constituent Assembly managed to pass the first constitution of Pakistan in 1956. But vested interests of politicians at the cost of national ones, interference of civil-military bureaucracy, and many other factors culminated into the dissolution of government and abrogation of the constitution. Martial Law was

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imposed and the newly independent country could not develop the political system, created a vacuum for military involvement in politics ignoring the function of state security. All this created political instability and democracy failed at its pre-mature stage. The early history of Pakistan cherished with corrupt and fraudulent nature of politicians and other stakeholders caused political instability as there were nine governments made from 1947 to 1958 through intrigues of Governor-General with another influential group rather elections to represent the will of people ( Khan, 2011)

Parliamentary democracy practiced under the 1956 constitution, derailed by Ayub Khan when he introduced Basic Democracies in 1959. Under the BD system, people were disenfranchised from provincial and national politics and favoured the conservative elites. Ayub Khan manipulated the 1960 presidential election by exploiting this system and scored 96.5 % of votes polled by BD members.(Khan, 2011) During this period all political parties were banned. The government was ruled by proclamation of orders rather than by laws of the state resulting in the authoritarian regime. Similarly, the 1965 presidential elections were also rigged by the use of state machinery and purchasing BD members by Ayub Khan and got 49957 votes against Miss Fatima Jinnah's 28691 votes. (Aftab et al., 2020) This caused political unrest in the country and politicians started agitation and processions against Ayub. Authoritarian rule caused political instability and at last, he had to step down.

General Yahya Khan then army chief imposed martial law and abrogated the constitution. He promised to deliver power to the elected government but later on played delaying tactics by introducing Legal Framework Order. First general elections were held in Pakistan in 1970 under military rule. These elections were fair and transparent but their results proved fatal to the integrity of the nation. None of the parties got majority at the national level rather there was provincial majority i.e Awami League secured all seats in the East wing while in the West Pakistan PPP had won in Punjab and Sindh but lost in Balochistan and NWFP (KPK). This caused polarization among the two major parties on the question of making government. For this purpose session of the parliament could not be convened due to divergent interests and standpoints of Yahya, Mujeeb, and Bhutto which led to a political crisis in the country. (Norman, 1975) Mujeeb was hardened to move away from six points while Bhutto wanted to be Deputy Prime Minister and sharing of power which the Awami League refused. Awami League was the winner of majority seats and had constitutional right to make government and when it thought that west wing becoming hurdle in this process, launched Civil Disobedience Movement which later on turned into a war of separation. Unfortunately, the 1970 elections resulted in the breakdown of East Pakistan rather than democratization and political stability.



The military had the responsibility to transfer power to civilians but failed and on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 1970 East Wing became Bangladesh and Yahya was forced to quit by his fellow generals and Bhutto became the Civil Martial Law Administrator. (Yousaf, 1998) Thus West Pakistan was divided into four provinces and PPP being in majority made government. The country was run without any constitution and all parties were called in to give proposals to frame the future constitution which was completed in 1973.

Shreds of evidence show that the 1977 elections were rigged. Bhutto preferred authoritarian rule and as such various features of the military regime were retained. After completing his term as prime minister he announced for elections to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March 1977 for national and provincial assemblies respectively. These elections were systematically rigged. Bhutto dismissed governments in Balochistan and KPK. Governor rule was imposed and a PPP government was established there. (Rose, 1997) Pre-poll rigging was planned under the Larkana plan in which a special election cell under federal ministry was set up with the help of district administration to manipulate the forthcoming elections. Nine parties united together and formed Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) Against PPP. Reports supported that government machinery, intelligence agencies, prime minister's secretariat, and information ministry all were busy in rigging to divert the election results. (Amin, 1977)

Due to malpractices 25 candidates of PPP for National Assembly and 69 for Provincial Assemblies were declared winners unopposed. Even Jan Muhammad Abbasi the rival candidate against Bhutto at Larkana was arrested before he could submit his nomination papers and Bhutto won unopposed.

The election result astonished everyone as PPP achieved an overwhelming majority securing 155 seats i.e. 58 % of votes polled. PNA started the countrywide protest and boycotted the provincial elections to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> March. PNA's council demanded the boycott of provincial assemblies' elections and the resignation of PNA's elected ministers' fresh elections for National Assembly, resignation of Bhutto and removal of chief election commissioner, etc., Government launched a crackdown on opposition and imposed martial law in certain districts (Rizvi, 1986)

To control the situation government took strict action arresting leaders of the opposition jailing them and hundreds of others people were arrested and killed. The political situation worsened. Army chief General Zia got the opportunity to snatch power from the elected government on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1977 and imposed martial law. (khan, 2009) The nascent tree of democracy began to grow after the partition of East Pakistan, once again crumbled down by mighty boots and led to political instability. Although Zia promised to

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hold elections in 90 days but later on refused in the name of accountability and said that he will hold power and remain president as Allah wills. (Waseem, 1987) Bhutto was arrested on charges of murder of Nawab Muhammad Ahmad Khan Kasuri and later on put to gallows. Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) was launched against the dictatorial rule but the Zia administration crushed it. To legalize himself he held a referendum in which he claimed 97.7 % of 60 % votes polled while the opposition said that less than 5% votes were cast and the referendum was rigged and fraud. (ref no 75) Thus Zia became president for the next five years.

After becoming president, Zia conducted non-party-based elections to exclude PPP from the electoral process. MRD boycotted the elections. All parties were banned and politicians were arrested and put in jail. No campaign and party manifesto were allowed. (Bhardwaj, 1999) A new political setup was initiated by the military regime. Muhammad Khan Junejo was made prime minister and gave him the task to create a new party from within the legislature known as Pakistan Muslim League (J). These elections had no credibility in the absence of political parties and these elections led to the creation of hung and rubber-stamp parliament and a strong presidency. The government was unstable and president Zia employed article 58 (2b) and dismissed government and assemblies before the expiry of term in 1988 on the charges of bad governance and negligence to Islamization process in the country.

Elections held in 1988 were engineered by ISI as they made Islamic Democratic Alliance oppose PPP. ISI head, General (retired) Asad Durani had been entrusted with the task of distribution of money to politicians by then army chief General Aslam Beg to weaken the position of PPP. (Gillani, 2013) Despite all these maneuverings PPP won majority seats at the center but she was not allowed to become prime minister unless she accepted the demands of the military establishment viz, president Ghulam Ishaq Khan would continue as president and head of the cabinet's defense committee, no changes in the constitution and validation of actions taken by the military. (Lodhi, 1988) Thus Benazir made government in the presence of strong opposition. Ghulam Ishaq Khan following the footsteps of his predecessor Zia dismissed the government in 1990.

A caretaker government was set up under the leadership of Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi as the prime minister who was also the leader of the opposition during the Benazir government. 1990 elections were contested between two competitive alliances namely Islamic Democratic Alliance and Pakistan Democrat Alliance led by PPP. Again military establishment and presidency went against PPP and rigged elections. Appointing the opposition leader as caretaker prime minister the elections' results were a foregone

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conclusion. The troika of power consisted of the president army chief and prime minister, all hands together in a joint venture to defeat Benazir. She was accused of charges of being a stooge of India, America, and the Zionist lobby, and many other extreme allegations were charged against her. On polling day many irregularities and intrigues made by the establishment turned the result in favor of the Islamic Democratic Alliance and Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif became prime minister for the first time.

The government made by Nawaz Sharif was fragile due to the interference of the president in the choice of ministries and administration of Sindh. Similarly, the army chief got annoyed with Nawaz for sending an army to Saudi Arabia which was also disliked by the masses and IJI. Differences further widened between government and president when it tried to punch at his powers. Under such a situation Benazir supported Ishaq Khan and promised to re-elect him president if he sent Nawaz home. ( Nasir, 1992) Thus president again used his authoritarian power and created political instability by dissolving assemblies.

First time in the electoral history of Pakistan, elections were conducted by civilians set up in 1993 and fair as none of the political parties complained of malpractices. However, during the campaign parties maligned each other to get the support of voters. Election results were disappointing as none of the parties could secure a clear majority. So a hung parliament was constituted by the coalition of PPP with PML (J) ( Khan, 2011)

Presidential power 58(2b) provided an instrument of exploitation and threat for the parliamentary system particularly in case of the absence of a dominant majority in the house. President Farooq Laghari was used the same against Benazir by dismissing the government on account of corruption and failure in deliverance. Once again country met the same fate with political instability and lacking any representative government.

### **Political Instability Continued From 1988 Onward and 4 General Elections were Held till 1997**

The political immaturity of the politicians and intrigues of civil-military bureaucracy had deteriorated the democratic process in Pakistan. These non-political institutions became more influential resembling the 1950s political history of the state. The premature dissolution of the Benazir government gave way to conduct fresh elections in 1997. Like the previous elections in Pakistan, these elections too were marred with rigging. This time deal was done between the president and Mian Nawaz Sharif. President Laghari agreed to change the accountability law to save PML leaders on the

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conditions that Sharif would increase his power as president. (Gillani, 2008) Thus all guns were set against PPP and many leaders were barred from taking part in elections. Similarly, many irregularities committed on the day of elections had deprived many voters to cast votes. As per expectations, Mian Nawaz Sharif got the absolute majority. However, this absolute majority was not the outcome of any big fraud except presidential help.

Now the question rises what caused the failure of the Sharif government to have such an absolute numerical strength? Many possibilities were likely as the Prime minister had made the president a titular head and appointed junior judges to the high court against the choice of Chief Justice. What was extreme was the judicial coup by his workers on Supreme Court while hearing court of contempt case against the prime minister. (Khan, 2009)

Similarly, Nawaz Sharif failed to maintain national cohesion and preferred Punjab at the cost of other provinces. He even did not walk forward with his allies in NWFP (KPK) and Sindh. In Punjab, instead of providing chief minister post to Ch, Parvez Elahi, he preferred Shahbaz Sharif his brother. What did it present was a dynasty ruling the state. All this saga was going against the government and the prime minister being confident of his strength in the assembly did not notice a wave of hostility getting roots against him. In this superiority complex, he even challenged powerful elite group the military by sacking army Chief General Karamat and brought General Musharraf superseding two senior generals.

Meanwhile, the prime minister and army chief had grown differences over the Kargil incident. Nawaz made a plan to oust Musharraf but this time, the game went against him and Musharraf dissolved the assemblies by a military coup and arrested him. Later on, he was sent to Saudi Arabia through an agreement. (Ziring, 2004) Nawaz Sharif has a majority tried to maintain civilian supremacy over other institutions including the army but he did all this in haste. Democracy had just started growing though tumbling at a short interval, Nawaz had to wait and make cooperate with other political parties especially with his governing allies. He had to pay for his bold actions against the military and the country once again derailed democratization and military-ruled the country for almost a decade.

Musharraf grabbed power from Nawaz Sharif through a military coup on 12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1999. The democratic process was stalemated and political instability was created to strengthen the military rule. Constitution was held in abeyance and Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) was issued which could not be challenged in any court. Chief

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Justice and other judges of the high court were removed. (Aftab et al., 2021). Justice Irshad Hassan Khan was appointed new Chief Justice under PCO. Musharraf cleverly weakened the judiciary to make it subordinate to an executive as he had assumed the office of Chief Executive. Judiciary validated all the actions taken by Musharraf including the 12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1999 coup under the shadow of law of necessity. Military in Pakistan had always got validation of its political coups through the judiciary and then through intrigues with politicians had prolonged its rule although it every time claimed and justified its interference on the pretext of correcting system and protecting national integrity.

Like his, predecessor Musharraf introduced and implemented local government elections to decentralize power. But he used local body members in the later elections, especially in the referendum. Musharraf conducted a referendum on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2002 (Abbas, 2002) Musharraf put a strange question in a referendum to elect himself president against the spirit of the 1973 constitution. The question was if you (masses) for the survival of local government system, the establishment of democracy, continuity of reforms, end of sectarianism and extremism and to fulfill the vision of Quaid e Azam want to elect him president for next five year? (Khan, 2011) In this referendum, people visited in low spirit and strength in which nazims were involved in malpractices and Musharraf boasted that more than 97 % of people voted for him. ( Khan, 2009) Musharraf assumed the office of president for the next five years along with the office of army chief.

Musharraf had all means and power to mold the system according to his will ignoring constitutional values and bars. Before conducting elections to the provincial and national assemblies, he brought LFO (Legal Framework Order) (Bakhtiar, 2002 ) LFO restored the presidential power to dismiss the sitting prime minister at his will as he sent home Mir Zaffarullah Jamali. King party namely Pakistan Muslim League (Q) was created under the leadership of Chaudhary of Gujrat consisting of politicians mostly descendants from PML (N). Election rules were so designed to bar those candidates who might create hurdles for Musharraf like a ban on the third term to become prime minister was meant to hold back Nawaz Sharif and Benazir to become premier. The condition of a Bachelor's degree not only had barred seasoned politicians but it had deprived almost 96% of the population to contest elections. (Khan, 2011) This was unconstitutional and against the democratic norms. Besides this, Musharraf used every means including government machinery, administration, Nazim, and money to manipulate the elections. Elections were held on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct 2002 in which King Party got majority as expected securing seventy-six seats, PPP got sixty-two, MMA fifty-one and PML (N) just



fourteen. (Khan, 2011) All the parties blamed that elections were rigged heavily. European Union Observer Mission declared that elections were no free and fair.

These results brought a hung parliament with no party scoring clear majority seats. The coalition government was formed by PML (Q) and MQM under the premiership of Jamali from the smaller province so that he could not have the confidence of majority members at his backing which were the intentions of the powerful presidency. Jamali did not take any stand against the dictatorial actions of the president and willfully acted as directed. Boss and servant relations existed between them. Elections resulted in political instability. Politicians were restricted to personal interests.

No government business could take place as ministers refused to take oath under PCO. There was even no opposition leader for one year in the parliament when Maulana Fazal ur Rehman was declared opposition leader after making deal with Musharraf on the seventeenth amendment. (Khan, 2009 491) Musharraf promised to skip the office of the chief of army staff but later on refused on the pretext of its necessity for political stability and fighting extremism in the country declaring uniform as his skin which could not be removed. Musharraf availed what he wished and politicians bowed silently. Democracy was just labeled but failed.

Under the authoritarian rule of Musharraf democratic norms and constitutional rules were put aside and the political system was hijacked. Musharraf continued his hold on all institutions. This time he entangled with the judiciary. Musharraf called chief justice CH, Iftikhar, and forced him to resign but he refused. Musharraf put him under house arrest. (Khan, 2011) Musharraf thought that judges would not resist him especially those who took oath under PCO. Judiciary turned against him. Public and politicians stood with the chief justice and Musharraf had to yield.

Musharraf put pressure on the judiciary to make changes in the law for his re-election and did so violating all constitutional restraints and making National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) with Benazir reliving cases of corruption against members of PPP. (Amin, 2007) In retaliation, PPP supported Musharraf's presidential election for the second term. There were constitutional bars on Musharraf's re-election and Musharraf crossed them by imposing an emergency on Nov 3, 2007, and issued a PCO to stop the judiciary which was dealing with his case. Musharraf deposed sixty judges including chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhary which was resulted in another judicial cum political turmoil in the country and a tug of war started between executive and judiciary along with political parties and masses.



Before the 2008 general elections, electoral laws were tempered to prevent most of the politicians to contest elections. These include the appointment of the election commissioner and four other members by the president, rejections of nomination papers of some seasoned politicians at the behest of Musharraf, late registration of nomination of candidates, and wrong registration of voters, bachelor degree as a minimum qualification for a candidate. (Nasr, 1992) Musharraf's government had exploited the procedural rules and kept many politicians aloof from politics and changed election results in its favor. Besides these tactics, the Government had taken certain steps including the formation of the caretaker government and its role in elections, the role of nazims, administrative staff, intelligence agencies to intimidate, and harassment of opposition to mold the election results.

Along with the political instability, the security situation in the state and violence had barred political parties to campaign freely. PPP and ANP became the target of terrorist attacks. Benazir Bhutto escaping on her arrival at Karachi in Oct 2007 was killed at Liaquat Bagh Rawalpindi on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2007. This gave a big setback to PPP's campaign. ( Ref 83 iffat page 138) Besides all the maneuverings of the establishment, King Party could not win elections scoring just 42 seats. PPP was at the top winning 88 seats followed by PML (N) with 67 seats at the national level. (Ref Election commission of Pakistan) Now the question which matters was that why did PML (Q) not exceed in elections albeit it had the support of the establishment. Many options might be the answer but apparently, the major cause was its association with Musharraf and military rule. People had lost faith in the military and its supported allies as they had failed to deliver on all fronts. Musharraf's cooperation with Americans in the war on terrorism, cases of missing persons, handing over Pakistanis to Americans, violence, and extremism in the state, and more importantly, PPP and PML (N) in playing field were more popular and organized than PML (Q) resulted in its low score in 2008 elections.

A coalition government was made after long deliberation between PPP and PML (N) in the light of the Charter of Democracy. But this joint venture remained short term as PPP did not cooperate with its partner on the issue of restoration of judges removed by Musharraf.

Parliament formed as a result of elections, was hung one resembling its predecessor during Musharraf. Although powers of parliament were reinstated through the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment still it was Zardari being party head and later on president of Pakistan enjoyed the real authority. All the party matters and important policies including security situation, armed operation, foreign policy matters, constitutional and judicial issues were

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centered in Zardari and PM had to obey orders like Jamali during the Musharraf regime. Gillani could not complete his term as he was sentenced to 30 seconds in April 2012 in a court of contempt case by Supreme Court which caused his premature removal.

REF ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Prime\\_Ministers\\_of\\_Pakistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Prime_Ministers_of_Pakistan))

Raja Pervez Ashraf was elected as new prime minister till the end of the term in 2013. Election 2013 was also blamed as rigged on by opposition parties generally and PTI particularly. Various pre-poll rigging allegations were laid down like procedure adopted for the appointment of Chief Election Commission against the constitution, delimitation of constituencies particularly in Karachi, code of conduct for political parties and politicians, women were barred from participating in election especially in Shangla district of KPK, Ref PILDAT Final Report on Election 2013 12 June 2013 retrieved from [www.pildat.org](http://www.pildat.org). Resulted in electoral malpractices. PTI demanded the inquiry of four constituencies in Punjab which the (PMLN) government refused. This made the stance of the government dubious and PTI started to protest and rally. PTI staged a sit-in at Islamabad for three months what is called Dharna politics. This movement of PTI had not only created political instability but also economic loss of a great magnitude. The government completed its term but Nawaz Sharif could not complete five years as he was convicted in Panama Leaks.

## **Conclusion**

Elections are the key to democratization and political development. Through elections will of the people results in the legitimate government. They represent the commitment and determination of both voters and contestants. They are the channels of peaceful transition of political power from one government to another. Free and fair elections need a competitive environment, free campaign, well-defined rules and procedures to conduct that process, acceptance of results, and formation of legitimate government. Unfortunately, the electoral process and formation of government in Pakistan has always been exploited through malpractices which resulted in political instability since its inception.

The Nation-building process was derailed by self-interested politicians and political parties. They could not develop any sustainable political system for political maturity. Political elites were the main stakeholders of power junctures. They did not take interest in creating a viable means of fulfilling the political offices instead their main concern was to capture the authority by hooks or crooks. This maneuvering in politics caused political instability and Pakistan could not practice general elections till 1970.



Thus no government could claim the national will behind it. Political instability reached to climax and the eastern wing of the state seceded in 1971.

Later electoral history was also not satisfactory. The electoral process was started after making the 1973 constitution but it was derailed through martial law. Had this process remained continued, political parties might get maturity, and government might come and go through free and fair ballots, Pakistan would have political stability.

Electoral malpractices have negatively affected body politics in Pakistan. Legitimacy crisis engulfed the will of the masses. Political institutions became weak and unstable to perform their allotted responsibilities. Political parties gave priority to self-interests ignoring the national cause and objectives. None of the parties could claim the symbol of the federation which resulted in the dominance of regional and provincial politics. Another aspect of electoral politics was the emergence and influence of non-political institutions in political affairs which led to political instability. Pakistan has become a crisis state with structural and functional flaws that succumbed to organize her political system. To come out of this menace she needs legitimate authority which can only be materialized through free and transparent elections contested by national political parties with complete freedom of campaign, independent election commission, and well-defined rules and procedures.



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