

Question of Electoral Integrity in Pakistan: An Analysis of the Role of Political Parties

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Abstract: *This study critically examines the controversial role of political parties being part of the government and establishment and as opposition parties being the victim of government in safeguarding or threatening the electoral integrity in Pakistan. Pakistan had faced numerous challenges to democracy including constitutional drawbacks, constitutional breakdown, institutional weaknesses, corruption, electoral frauds leading to political instability. Introduction highlights the significance of electoral integrity in promoting public confidence in transparency during elections and strengthening democracy. This study investigates the various dynamics of politics in Pakistan and the role of political parties influencing electoral integrity and what policy measures can be taken to strengthen it? The study finds that political parties in Pakistan have the potential to safeguard electoral integrity but at times they became part of non-political forces for personal interests and ignored their role. Electoral rigging, role of state institutions, partisanship and internal structural problems of political parties undermined their functions. This is qualitative research based on primary and secondary data. Primary data covers official reports and documents of election commission of Pakistan, handouts and records related to electoral malpractices issued by government. Secondary data encompasses books, research articles of the experts' work on electoral integrity in developed and developing countries, reports of independent observer commissions, think tanks and reform organizations. This study is significant as it has the potential to make policy makers, intelligentsia, civil organizations and the public at large understand the underlying challenges to electoral integrity and initiate reforms for strengthening it. This will also contribute to broader discourse on democratization and political stability in Pakistan.*

Keywords: *Political parties, electoral integrity, political system, democracy, malpractices, political instability*

Introduction

Those who cast the votes decide nothing; those who count the votes decide everything observed by Joseph Stalin questioning the credibility of electoral processes in emerging democracies seems to be pivotal concern of the academicians, researchers, politicians, and policy makers alike in the contemporary representative polities. Recent incidents of electoral corruption in developing as well as developed democracies as highlighted by media and research exposed the challenges and threats to

electoral integrity minimizing public trust and legitimacy of the representative governance. Periodical elections have been conducted in the emerging democracies like Pakistan, but these were equally marred with irregularities, fraud, rigging, and vote manipulation threatening the concept of political development proposed by Samuel P. Huntington's democratic dispensation in the form of third wave of democratization and instead resulted in the burgeoning of authoritarian regimes.

Authoritative governments replaced the participative systems in these newly independent states and governed with autocratic norms. They followed the election process for legitimacy but what suited them to materialize their vested agendas. This caused threats to electoral integrity and democracy. Why did this happen is a vital question? What factors contributed to this state of electoral distrust and political decay and why and how different stakeholders benefited out of the political gambit? Indeed, this is not a single variable story encompassing the political situation. These include inter alia legislation, institutional involvement, lack of political conscience, interference of non-political actors and, the maneuverings of political parties during the election cycle right from the electoral legislation to the actual voting day and same political intrigues continued in Pakistan from the very inception of independence affecting electoral integrity (Kamran, 2008)

Electoral integrity is the fundamental pillar for strengthening democracy. It ensures that elections are held in a transparent manner with level playing field for all quarters. Democracy should be more than free and fair election, but it cannot be less (Pastor, 1998). History of election in Pakistan is not satisfactory in terms of international electoral standards which caused political instability and mass distrust. Political parties are the primary actors in the political arena of Pakistan to manipulate behavior of people and outcome of elections. They are not well organized, lacking roots in masses, personality dominated, without clear ideology and well-articulated manifesto always tried to capture power through hook or crooks. To achieve the stated aims of this study, a descriptive and qualitative research method is applied using primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of elections commission official reports, election observation mission documents including PILDAT, EUEOM, FAFEEN, party handouts, civil society organization, media reports and secondary sources consist of books, journal articles, publications of different agencies, magazines, newspapers' articles, and websites containing information during the electoral process in Pakistan.

This paper starts with introduction is followed by theoretical framework combining the democratic theory, institutional role, laws, political parties, elitism, and political understanding of people is developed to seek the issue of electoral integrity in Pakistan. This study highlights the significance of fostering a culture of fair play, transparency, accountability, and inclusivity within the political parties during election for promoting democratic values and trust on the electoral processes in Pakistan. Study specifically explores the historical influence of political parties on electoral integrity in shaping public perception during elections. Lastly, analytical debate encompasses the overall political and electoral practices and intrigues done by political parties which affected electoral integrity in Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

"The system of political parties in Pakistan bears little resemblance to that of most other democratic countries. Politics has begun at the top... Politics is made up of large number of

leading persons who, with their political dependents, form loose agreements to achieve power and to maintain it (Callard K. , 1957)." Democracy expanded across the European continent after the Second World War where new independent states emerged in the world practiced with democratic norms, institutional build up with their own constitutional framework and political modernization. The democratic tide in the shape of third wave pressurized and inspired many of the Asian countries to adopt democratic values of a moderate system reflecting public voice and will but it appeared that many of the regimes did not fully appreciate the new settings and still have authoritarian and autocratic legacy (Huntington, 1991). The incompetency of the political and democratic leadership created a vacuum

for non-political agents capturing the political arena. In the states like Pakistan, hybrid regimes have been incorporated where democratic and liberal patterns operate in close nexus with the new patrimonial and authoritarian tendencies. Democratic values and institutions are undermined, civil liberties, judicial and media independence are ignored (Diamond, 2002). In such dispensations, free and fair elections became a rare opportunity for legitimate governance where election outcomes are manipulated threatening electoral integrity.

The theoretical framework encompasses the key concepts and theoretical perspectives to get an insight of the issue of electoral integrity and the role of political parties in preserving it in Pakistan or otherwise. The framework incorporates democratic theory as a foundational stone to assess the importance of electoral integrity within a democratic system. It explores the principles of free and fair elections, public participation, representation, free campaign within well-defined electoral laws and procedures that emphasizes how electoral integrity is essential for maintaining the legitimacy of democratic governance. Unfortunately, elections in Pakistan have marred with electoral malpractices by different stakeholders such as electoral management bodies, electoral laws, establishment, and political parties solely or being part of the other manipulators (Waseem, 2006).

Electoral integrity is the basic aspect of a democratic system, guaranteeing the conduct of elections in a fair, and transparent procedure without external influence. Free and fair participation enhances the mass trust in the political system, and they own the legitimate government. Political parties play a pivotal role in molding public perception, mobilizing voters, voter registration, canvassing with specific agenda to ensure that the electoral process is conducted in free and fair fashion. Election is a viable mechanism for consummating representative government represented by political parties as it facilitates leadership succession by formation of new government, promotes political accountability, citizen participation, and provides voice and power to the people (Agbaje & Adejumbi, 2006). This mass participation is necessary for decision making, boosting their trust in the electoral processes which in turn enhances electoral integrity.

Political parties in Pakistan revolve around personality cult in their structure rather ideological or policy perspective. Death of Jinnah and the Prime Minister Liaquat created leadership vacuum in party politics. They did pay attention to party organization and decisions in party and party politics at national level were all taken by the person at the helm of affairs instead of democratic consultation. Parties are dominated by families with oligarchic system such as PPP by landlord Bhutto family and the Muslim League by industrial Shareefs of Punjab, PTI by Imran. Same is the case with the other minor parties and parties with religious background; where personalities dominate through core committees or central executive committees' decisions (Khan A. A., 2018). Political parties in Pakistan lack the foundational basis in strict sense of the party definition and dynamics in conventional patterns rather they are political arrangements to win the election to serve their own interests instead of masses. Feudal background, military intervention and ban on political parties are the key factors minimizing the development of party politics in Pakistan and they always endeavored to manipulate elections through every legitimate or illegitimate mean (Ahmad, 2012).

Institutional Analysis examines the structures and processes that influence electoral integrity in Pakistan. It explores and analyses the functioning of political parties, electoral commissions, and the relationship between different institutions involved in the electoral process. This analysis highlights the formal and informal norms, procedures and practices that govern elections and how the behavior and actions of political parties significantly influence electoral integrity. In Pakistan, political parties play positive and negative role in the context of electoral integrity. In positive aspects, they play a significant role in mobilizing voters, nominating candidates, mass socializing, provide a sense of rights and responsibilities, canvassing, and developing infrastructure. They also monitor the election process particularly on election day activities and irregularities and report the same for official and public record (Dem, 2022).

The legal and regulatory framework in the shape of constitution and electoral laws envisages the framework for the formation and operation of political parties in Pakistan. These laws regulate the registration of parties, party structures, functions, limits, their internal governance, and participation in elections. Interaction of political parties with other institutions such as Election Commission of Pakistan, military, bureaucracy, media and other civil society organization that influences the role of parties directly or indirectly shaping democracy with different dimensions. At present, Election Commission's website shows about 167 registered political parties in Pakistan (Election Commission of Pakistan, 2024). These parties are mostly ethno-centric, regional, linguistic, or religious based lacking the element of federation which hinder the majority will to prevail during elections.

The internal governance of the political parties in Pakistan also significantly influences the electoral integrity in Pakistan, mostly parties are personality centric or some monastic families. Its whole gambit of electoral process and activities are shaped by party leadership ignoring the ground realities or party priorities. Party leadership of the leading political parties comes through direct nomination; hence portfolios are distributed the same way ignoring the gross root members. These parties are non-democratic, authoritative in nature forbid the internal democratic procedures in recruiting various offices. Personality cult dominates the democratic party elections. This authoritative structure is a big hurdle in the way of free and fair elections. These parties used numerous techniques to manipulate the free election like using finance as bribery, gifts, or developmental works to influence the voters. They intimidate voters and voting staff through violence, irregularities in ballots, snatching ballot boxes. All these actions of the political parties influence the electoral process, hence creating challenges for free elections which threatens electoral integrity (Shaukat Ullah, Mahmood, & Khan, 2020).

Political parties have had a close nexus with the establishment from the very inception of independence. Weak and unorganized hierarchical structure of the political parties without manifestoes and ideologies provided space for military establishment to capture the corridor of power and prolong their influence on the state affairs through legal and extra-legal framework. This time and again interference by the military junta has resulted into institutional imbalance and instability in the country and people lost trust in political parties (Taj & Ur Rehman, 2019). The military, in close relation with the bureaucracy, either exploited the existing parties through concocted institutional laws or created king parties to manipulate the politics and elections. Ayub misused power through Muslim League Functional, Zia exploited the political scenario via Muslim League Janajo and Musharraf created Muslim League (Q) to materialize his nefarious political agenda. These generals had manipulated the elections and formed the so-called democratic government to run the affair according to their own desires. This military ties with the parties weakened the political foundation of the state and lost the trust of masses in political process which influenced the electoral integrity.

There is need for a comprehensive approach that considers the role of multiple factors. Analyzing these dynamics can contribute to incorporating effective policy measures to strengthen electoral integrity and ensure the proper functioning of democratic processes. Political parties being the agent of mass mobilization can generate such debates for inculcating public trust and alternative reforms for boosting credibility of elections and strengthening electoral integrity.

Historical Role of Political Parties in Electoral Process

Electoral history of Pakistan has been remained turbulent since its inception. It oscillated between democratically elected governments and military intervention, controversy among the provinces and constructed standoff with India hindered it to gain real stability. The chattered history is marred with the imposition of state of emergency, political violence, assassination, making and unmaking of political parties through political intrigues by the establishment and imposition of Martial regimes resulted into political decay. These upheavals at the early stage deprived the country of practicing general election since 1970 and government were formed representing the bureaucratic mindset rather than masses and

political parties. These parties are the tools of authoritative personalities aimed to gain personal interests. Lack of constitution based on public demands and frequent elections till 1970, reflects the political immaturity of the politicians and political parties prioritizing personal interests at the cost of national demands (Cohen, 2004).

Muslim League winning the 1945-46 elections proved its claim to be the sole representative of the Indian Muslims came up to the position to negotiate the constitutional arrangement with Congress and then got independent state for them. In the proceeding years, Muslim League couldn't hold its own popularity among the masses and due to its elitist approach was badly defeated in the 1954 provincial election in East Pakistan against the United Front. It showed the ideological difference between the East Pakistan where United Front succeeded 223 out of 309 seats by allying with Shramic Krishak Samajbadi Dal (Workers Party) and pro American Republican Party in West Pakistan ousting the mother Party Pakistan Muslim League. These elections triggered the demand of provincial autonomy, and confidence to Bangali sentiments in politics (Christophe, 2004).

This was a clear indication that provinces were the main arenas of political activity threatening the central authority and political development at national level. Political parties shifted their alliances in making and unmaking of governments. Election outcome affected the alliance within the United Front. Defeat of the Muslim League started a new debate of reconstituting the Constituent Assembly leading to political instability (Callard K. B., 1957)

Political parties were not well organized and integrated, which paved the way for military and bureaucratic interference weakening the political structure of the newly independent state. Governments were weak and within a period of nine years, eight Prime Ministers stepped into parliament and stepped out of the next door. Politicians and political parties became flunkies in civil military bureaucratic web. The net result was apparent in the regional, factional and group politics sabotaging the political culture and threatening the political integrity at very early stage (Rizvi, 2001).

Provincial elections were held in the 1950s. Political parties were involved in rigging and frauds such as using of government machinery, unequal access to resources, absence of level playing field, intimidating the rival parties, restricting the other parties for free campaign and gerrymandering by ruling party raised question about the credibility of elections. The United Front won 223 out of 237 seats in 1954 election in East Pakistan was not allowed to contest election in 1958, and many other politicians were declared disloyal and barred from politics under the cruel clutches of Public and Representative Office Disqualification Act. Party shift, factions, electoral rigging and weak institutional structure of political parties caused political instability and led to imposition of Martial Law in 1958 (Khan H., Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan, 2009).

Ayub Khan ruled Pakistan from 1958 to 1969 a period known as dictatorial Martial Law regime. He banned Political parties and other political activities. Political parties were victimized under Elective Bodies Disqualification Order EBDO and disallowed them from contesting election. Instead of going for general elections, he introduced Basic Democracies, a system of indirect elections at local level shunning mainstream politics so that parties may not become challenge for him at national politics. Ayub was supported by king Party i, e Convention Muslim League particularly during legislation and 1965 presidential elections. Combined Opposition parties could not win against the powerful dictator with government resources at hand and other political maneuverings. Politicians were arrested and sentenced but political parties like Awami League, National Awami Party, Jamat-I- Islami and PPP and their leadership all bore the hardships and were successful in ousting Ayub during mass protest in 1969 (Ghaur, 1993).

General election 1970 proved a divisive factor due the confrontational approach of mainstream political parties such as Awami League and PPP. Awami league was in a dominant position in East Pakistan and did not allow other parties to run campaign freely. Pakistan People's Party enjoying strong position in

West Pakistan didn't bother to nominate her candidates in East Pakistan. There were some incidents of pre-poll and election day rigging were recorded but overall, the election remained peaceful and transparent. Election Result were in favour of Awami League in Eastern Wing with 167 seats while PPP in Western side securing 81 seats. The mutual confrontation not only led to political instability but caused to the separation of East Pakistan becoming Bangladesh (Jalal, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*, 2014).

Political parties of West Pakistan learned a bit from the devastating consequences of the 1970 election and successfully framed a constitution based on all parties' consent. This mutual understanding was short lived as the 1977 election proved fatal to destabilize the political situation leading to Martial Law imposed by General Zia ul Haq. Bhutto was confident of his success, so he announced an early election. Nine opposition parties made an alliance namely Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) but could avail only 35 seats against PPP winning 155 seats. PNA accused PPP of rigging the election and refused to accept the election results. Opposition alliance launched a countrywide protest and anti-Bhutto movement started which deteriorated the circumstance to the extent of irreversible and this gave an opportunity to military to interfere in the politics revising the 1958 situation (Walport, 1993).

General Zia banned political activities, rallies and meetings of political parties, arrested the leadership of different parties. Bhutto was arrested in a fake case and sentenced to death. He ordered to seal the offices of parties, censored media to restrict the coverage of opposition parties particularly PPP. Zia issued political party order in 1981 imposing strict regulation on the activities of opposition parties, all parties were required to register themselves with the government and act under the provision of constitution, ban on receiving foreign funds and obtaining NOCs before rallies, processions and meetings. Zia formed Muslim League Junejo by handpicked politicians for political maneuvering during 1985 elections. The martial law regime damaged the electoral integrity by supporting Junejo at the expense of other parties, particularly the People's Party. Political parties were not free to perform political activities under Zia government (Khan H. , *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan*, 2016).

Death of Zia was the beginning of civilian rule, but establishment didn't allow free politics as it had influenced the electoral process by nefarious techniques to manipulate the election results. During the 1990s either PML(N) or PPP had remained favorite of the establishment at one point or became the victim of politicization under accountability yardstick. Political parties acted as directed by the establishment for their short-term interest to reach the power corridors. Islami jamoori Ithad (IJI) was funded by ISI during the 1990 election to oust the PPP in the election race. Similarly, article 58 (2b) was a powerful tool in the hand of president to dissolve the democratic governments. Hence president sent back four governments home and dissolved the elected assemblies. Frequent elections were held. Political parties were involved in electoral rigging by using different techniques which questioned the electoral integrity. They could not exploit the duration of civil rule of 1990s, and we saw political instability (Dulat, Durrani, & Sinah, 2018)

Although during the 1990s, major political parties did demand electoral reforms like independent and neutral election commission for the conduct of free elections, the credibility of election commission remained questionable. It couldn't stop the irregularities of the electoral process inter alia voter registration, voter verification, vote count, gerrymandering, stuffing and snatching of vote boxes. Muslim League was labelled as king's party supported by establishment while PPP as the leftist and disloyal to the state. PPP and PML(N) both served the country from 1988 to 1999 alternatively and tried to bring reform to the political system, but main policy decisions were taken by the establishment. Accountability laws and procedures were set but they were meant for political victimization of the opposition parties (Khan I. H., 2011)

Musharraf derailed the political process on 12th Oct, 1999 creped on after Zia's death. He dissolved the

assemblies, held in abeyance the 1973 constitution and run the state through ordinances. PML(N) leadership was arrested and detained. Nawaz Shareef along with his family was ousted to Saudi Arabi through a deal. Benazir, leader of the PPP was forced into self-exile. He issued the political parties act 2002 which restricted the activities of political parties. Country was completely under Martial Law rule though it was not declared apparently (THE POLITICAL PARTIES RULES, 2002, 2002).

Musharraf introduced the Legal Framework Order to govern state affairs which was later made part of the constitution through 17th amendment. Political system was turned into quasi presidential reversing the 13th amendment which limited the powers of president. Local bodies elections were held in 2000 which were nonparty based. Similarly, the 2002 general elections were rigged to keep the mainstream leadership out of politics. Many parties were not allowed to run campaigns freely. Violence and intimidation barred the politicians from performing political activities freely. Many members of the PPP including Benazir Bhutto and that of the ANP including Balour family were killed during this period and were not allowed for free campaign. King's party (PMLQ) was a party which supported Musharraf in 2002 stood the largest seat winning with 77 seats, PPPP got 63 and PML (N) only could secure 14 seats, but PMLQ couldn't perform well in 2008 election. PPP leadership claimed that it would work with President Musharraf if he guaranteed for free election and PML(N) demanded for his resignation. Religious parties were given freedom. They made an alliance in the 2002 election under Muttahidda Majlis-e- Amal (MMA) and were successful in making government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Khan 2016).

Election 2008 was the beginning of civilian governance after at the end of Musharraf 10 long year of dictatorial rule. King's party couldn't perform well in the 2008 election with 41 seats. PPPP was the leading party with 98 followed by PML(N) with 71 seats. Both PPPP and PML(N) agreed for making mutual government along with ANP and JUI (F) for national interests, but this alliance was short lived as PML(N) withdrew blaming PPPP for unwilling to materialize the promises. This coalition government intended to submit an impeachment motion against Musharraf on charges of corruption and violating the constitution who resigned on 18th August 2008 (IPU PARLINE database: PAKISTAN (National Assembly) ELECTIONS IN 2008., 2010).

PPPP successfully completed 5 years, but PM Gillan was ousted by court in a court of contempt case. It was the great achievement of PPPP to adopt the 18th amendment which transferred powers from president to parliament and promoted provincial autonomy. Political parties couldn't strengthen themselves and time and again their elected governments and PMs were sent home. Nawaz Shareef was ousted in 2017 and same happened to PM Imran Khan in 2022 through a vote of no confidence.

Analysis and Conclusion

Political parties have been crucial for bringing democracies and its development. They played an important role in shaping the super structure of modern society in terms of legislation, policy making and providing alternative choices to masses for selecting their own governments. They act as a linkage between people and the government representing the values and demands of the constituents and providing policies to materialize them. They also contest and organize elections, run campaigns and educate the masses by creating political awareness. They are the platform for political participation to ensure representation of diverse values and voices. In mature democracies, parties not only elect official but also hold them accountable for their measures and actions by enhancing transparency and good governance (Dalton, FarrelL, & McAllister, 2011)

Political parties influence the legislative agenda through policies and lobbying. They debate on policy agenda, compromise for broader representation keeping in mind the party ideologies and priorities. In this way they integrate the different groups and ethos of the society (Koger & Lebo, 2017).

Political parties maintain electoral integrity which is significant in establishing transparent and legitimate government and stability of political system. They ensure electoral integrity by strictly

adhering to electoral laws, procedures regarding party organization, registration, nominating candidates, financing, campaign, and overall electoral process. For example, in Canada, Political Financing Act requires political parties to ensure their financial liabilities in terms of contribution and expenditures which strengthen the electoral transparency and fairness (Norris, Electoral Integrity and Political Legitimacy: From Democratic Institutions to Democratic Values, 2014). They often monitor and report the election regularities and frauds for maintaining electoral integrity. In USA, Republican party reported to Supreme court for election anomalies in 2020 and in Pakistan PTI approached to Supreme court for recounting in four constituencies. Similarly in Kenya during 2017 general election, opposition party challenged the electoral irregularities, and Supreme court annulled the presidential election.

In developing countries like Pakistan are not matured enough to contribute to political process as expected by masses. The role of political parties is imperative, yet it is not to the level of appreciation. Political parties did not organize themselves after independence to perform the allotted role of making legislation and policy for public good. The post-independence period was a tumultuous cherished with frequent making and unmaking of the government leading to political instability. Representative institutions including political parties became weak and came to power through the crutch of state institutions. These institutions became strong enough to manipulate the political and constitutional development process started after independence.

Military and bureaucracy were the practical and real masters of the nascent state. Through political intrigues, they made different parties and broke the parent parties like Muslim League and used those faction for their political interests at the cost of national interests. Role of Ghulam Muhammad and Skinder Mirza in the early stage of the political process in manipulating the political parties and favoring them cannot be ignored. Military rulers like Ayub Khan made king party i, e Functional Muslim League, Zia created Muslim League Junejo, Musharraf introduced PML(Q) and they fully exploited these weak parties for strengthening their rule and dictatorship.

From the very early stage, Pakistan had a turbulent experience with democracy as political parties were not given free space to flourish and perform in elections. Unfortunately, till 1970, Pakistan couldn't hold general election which created a huge gulf between political activities and parties. Four military coups had been faced by Pakistan during which political parties were banned and politician were arrested, detained and became prey of severe political victimization. Military had dismissed the elected governments and were also involved in soft coup activities like supporting the new candidates and parties raising them as archrival to mainstream political parties particularly which had fallen out of favorite (ladla) circle (Mufti, 2020).

Political parties couldn't play a significant role for establishing the civilian dominance, but they had always been remained challenge to military rule despite the arbitrary measures taken against them. Combined Opposition Parties supported Miss Fatima against Ayub Khan during the 1965 presidential election. It criticized the indirect election through Basic Democracies and launched countrywide protest which later contributed to the fall of Ayub's dictatorial rule in 1969. Political parties made an alliance (PNA) during the 1977 election against Bhutto and started a movement for re-election which ultimately led to his decline. PPP protested the 1990 election where the establishment heavily funded IJI and stole the election results. PPP demanded accountability of the fraud and petition reached to Supreme Court in the shape of Asghar Khan (DAWN, 2012). Political parties criticized the result of 2002 and 2008 elections where Musharraf government supported PML (Q) (Pakistan's 2002 Elections: The Enduring Legacy of Military Rule, 2002) Pakistan Tehreek-e- Insaf launched Azadi March against 2013 election against the victory of PML (N). Similarly, the 2018 election was rigged by favouring PTI (Hashim, 2018). Again in 2024 election, malpractices were claimed by different political parties especially PTI alleged that PML (N) was supported by establishment.

In nutshell it can be argued that political parties came to power either through the support of

establishment or became the victim of accountability through PRODA, EBDO or NAB. They were mostly interested in reaching the power corridor through every means and opportunity offered by the establishment or created themselves. Political parties must learn the lesson of the past mistakes and rely on themselves. They must become the symbol of federation and initiate such programs and manifesto which should attract masses. In this way they would be able to come to power through ballot and government would be legitimate. Electoral integrity can only be established when parties work freely, campaign independently and state institutions refrain from political interference.

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