



Democracy and Political Parties: An analysis of Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan

Published online: 31-12-2021

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Abstract:

This paper is an attempt to understand and analyze the nature, origin and evolution of democracy and political parties in Pakistan. There is a multitude of political parties in Pakistan, claiming to be the torch bearer of democracy but in practice have no democracy within its folds. Jamaat-i-Islami is the only party in Pakistan which has tried to ensure democratization in its folds and ranks. The article is an attempt to ascertain the degree of internal democracy in the party. To achieve the desired objective, descriptive and analytical research approach is adopted. To collect relevant material, primary sources, like Jamaat-i-Islami's constitution and the writings of the founding father, Sayed Abu-al-Ala Maududi have been consulted. In secondary sources, books, research articles and news article and online materials are utilized to accomplish this research article. This research concludes that, though with a limited vote bank Jamaat-i-Islami is the only political party of Pakistan which fulfils the requirements of a modern democratic political party.

Keywords:

Democracy, Religion, Political parties, Jamaat-i-Islami, Politics, Government

Introduction:

The term Democracy is historically rooted in two Greek words “demos” and “kratos” means “the people” and “the rule” respectively, which means the rule of the public in general. But the term can also be taken as a political system, an ethical ideal or a social condition. A state, a government or a society, an institution, an idea or an ideal may be termed as democratic. However we are concerned here to use this term as a political system or an institution and as an ideal.

In democracy the masses in general influences and determine the course of actions in a society, system or organization. As a political system it represents the will of masses in general. According to M.Judd Hormons, “in democracy there must be a clear, direct and compelling relationship between public opinion and governmental actions” (Harmon, 2000, 19). Policy making and legislation must reflect the opinion and interests of the masses in general. David Robertson in Dictionary of politics writes that “democracy means that system in which Political power is ultimately in the hand of the whole adult population, and that no smaller group has the right to rule”(Dictionary of Politics, 1985, 80). The legislative and decision making processes are made responsive, if not to the entire, to the mature segment of the society, and the group or party in power cannot deny the popular aspiration while conducting the affairs of the state. “Democracy is the system which gives choice of election to the people. It ensures participation of the masses in their system. It is a frame of rule which serves the interests of the common public. Theoretically in democracy all the powers are vested with the people. People chose their representatives according to their own will by considering themselves as primary stake holders in the system. People go for their electoral agents by taking part into the elections. In one or other way democracy gives freedom to the masses. Democracy enables three types of freedom which are freedom of choice, freedom of selection and freedom of participation.(Raja, 2014, 25)” thus the system gives enough choice to common man to elect government of his choice.

Furthermore the system denounces the monopoly of few in the conduct of state affairs. It discourages

the privileged position of an individual, group or class to rule the majority. “The country don’t belongs to a special person, class or group rather it belongs to all its inhabitants, therefore, it should be governed, in accordance with, the will of all or at least with the majority’s will and principally they should have the right and practically they should have the opportunity to elect and alter their ruler with their own free will.”(Sayed, 1920, 174) If the political system is dominated by a handful elite or hereditary politicians and perpetuates its position by organizations with democratic façade with so-called democratic practices in the form of election cannot be termed as a democratic system.

The demand for a democratic governmental system was made during renaissance in Europe and evolved for centuries in Europe to be become a grown up system of the world. “Twenty-first century has witnessed the triumph of democracy as the universally accepted system of government. Between the second half of the century, newly independent states predominantly chose this system of governance leading to sudden rise in the number of democratic countries around the world.”(Ijaz, 2010, 68) Though the notion was not native to the countries however its success in the west charmed the populace of the newly independent nations to adopt it in their own.

Democracy in Pakistan

Pakistan emerged on the map of the world in the mid of twentieth century and “falls in the category of young democracies of the world.”(Ijaz, 2010, 68) Pakistan may be termed as a fruit of the introduction of the European rule of “majority is authority” to the subcontinent. Though the dream of an independent state for the Muslims of the subcontinent was realized through a democratic struggle and procedure however after independence “the involvement of the masses in the political process has always been negligible. Participation into the electoral process throughout the history has remained insignificant the embracement of democracy as the right mode of rule has never got public acceptance. Politicians have an image of corrupt and dishonest breed of leadership. Democratic values and norms have been undermined to the large extent. Democracy has been considered merely as the procedural system of conducting the ballots only” (Raja, 2014, 18).

Though the tools and mechanism adopted for the formation of government in the country has a label of democracy but its spirit is feudal and all the time favored, hereditary politicians to come to power.

Pakistan has so far remained unable to evolve a durable mechanism for free and fair electoral setup. This resulted in a fragile democratic setup in the country. Poorly executed electoral processes created a vacuum for the manipulative actors to capture the power, thus making the democratization only procedural not substantive one. "There exists a paradox of the rhetoric of democracy and the deliverance in the country. The superficial definitions of the democracy overrule the real purpose of democracy that is meant for the welfare of the masses."(Raja, 2014, 37-38) The demagogues talk about it, only to perpetuate the status quo in their favor. The ruling elite have nothing to do with the democratization of the flesh and blood of the institutions, organizations and political parties, which are the breeding nurseries for democratization of a state.

Political Parties in Pakistan

Political parties are the first and foremost prerequisite of a democratic system. "A political party is more or less an organized group of citizens of a country who act together as a political unit. They share or profess to share the same opinion on questions of public importance and exercise their voting power towards a common end which normally is to obtain control of the government."(Ahmed, 1995, 135) These are the vehicles with the help of which the entire body of a democratic setup is loaded. "Political parties are integral to democratic process. No democracies can function effectively without political parties. However the mere presence of political parties does not ensure smooth functioning of democracy. The quality of political leadership and how the political parties discharge their task go a long way to shape the nature and direction of the political system. Unless the political parties engage in interest articulation and aggregation, electoral exercise and governance within a democratic framework, and respect the democratic and constitutional norms, these may inversely affect governance and political management."(Safdar, 2000, 117) Therefore, if political parties have only democratic façade and lack the actual norms and values will add nothing to

the betterment and welfare of masses in general and will serve only the interests of few in the power to perpetuate their rule.

Muslim league, the founding party of the country, in the early years of independence dominated the political scene, while several small parties existed in legislature and outside. Subsequently, it gradually changed in to a multi-party system with the attendant problems of this system. Most of these parties having weak organizational structure often fall victim to internal dissension and conflicts. Invariably, there is a strange imprint of the leadership on these parties who run these with the help of a small group of loyalists, often in a personalized manner.

Political parties are the first schools of democracy. But in Pakistan most of political parties have a democratic façade but lacks the spirit. There is hereditary leadership and works under personal dictatorship. Political parties lack will define and tightly constructed constitution and procedure for recruitment and expulsion of the member therefore, their leader can take action against any member of the party who disagrees or oppose them in the party decisions. While in democratic political parties if there is any disagreement or ambiguity regarding party matters, is brought in shura or executive committee for decision making.

For decades the political scene of Pakistan has been dominated by the hereditary leadership. In Pakistan People's Party, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, was succeeded by his daughter Benazir Bhutto, after her she was replaced by his husband Asif Ali Zardari and now he says that "he is giving his power and authority to his son Bilawal Bhutto Zardar" (92 News, 9 December, 2017, Editorial) after the disqualification of Mian Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharief became active to become the president but the disqualified PM brought amendment in the constitution and consequently captured the presidential chair. Following this trend, he will be replaced by any of his family member.(92 News, 9 December, 2017, Editorial) Mulana Mufti Mahmood was replaced by his son Mulana Fazal-ur-Rehman as the president of JUI and in ANP Abdul Wali Khan was replaced by Asfadyar Wali Khan. The parties which talk about the democratization of the state and society have no internal democracy in their folds. Jamaat-i-Islami has set the tradition of

democratic change of leadership through election. Jamaat-i-Islami has been benefited from the experiences of five leader i.e. Sayyed Abu-ul-Ala Maududi, Mian Muhammad Tufail, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, Munawar Hassan and the current amir senator Siraj ul Haq since its inception.

The tradition of periodic and transparent elections in political parties is not established as yet in Pakistan. Intra-party elections are a legal requirement, as provided in the Political Parties Order, 2002. (Zafarullah, 2002, 5) There is no internal democracy or accountability in most of the political parties of Pakistan (Daily Mashriq Peshawar, November, 21, 2017). In a democratic political party a suggestion is issued for discussion, which goes step by step to the grass root membership, and consequently their suggestions are forwarded to the upper leadership. In such a manner political party with its constitution and political view point, contributes to the politics of a country. The task will be performed more reasonably if the political parties of a system have a proper democratic structure and mechanism.

“Jamaat-i-Islami is a political party, which conducts regular intra party election” (Daily Mashriq Peshawar, November, 21, 2017) and have a democratic mechanism of decision making and in the appointment of its office bearers. It has a well-constructed and systematically articulated constitution, which defines the powers and function from central to local bodies and individuals. Furthermore it’s not a rigid and static document rather yielding to the social change and is amended according to the need of time.

Jamaat-I-Islami as a Democratic Political Party in Pakistan

Jamaat-i-Islami was founded by the well-known thinker and writer, Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi. One foreign student of Islam had, therefore characterized the Jamaat as one of the most significant developments in contemporary Islam and one of the most significant forces in contemporary Pakistan.(Smith, 1957, 233) It is not a major party regarding the electoral success, but it is essentially an important party. This party is not political in the sense, as the meaning is taken of the ordinary democratic parties. It is an ideological party. Jamaat-i-Islami has a specific ideology. A heartily attachment to its ideology and determination and

endure to spend one’s life for it, is the first condition of or relation with it.

By prevailing standards, Jamaat is the most disciplined and internally most democratic party of Pakistan, founded in 1941 in Pathankot, at a convention of supporters of Maududi, who chaired the session, and its declared purpose, adopted by consciences’, in brief, as later enshrined in its constitution in 1957, was to work for the establishment of Islamic way of life through constitutional and democratic means. Initially it was not an electoral party, in that contesting election was not part of its purpose, but this was changed in 1957. (Niazi, 2002, 24)

Jamaat-i-Islami’s claim to be the country’s most internally democratic political party, is an arguably effective selling point to new and potential recruits. (Crisis Group Interviews, February-April, 2011) It has a detailed constitution of 101 pages, divided into eleven chapters. It’s a comprehensive document containing details about the power and functions of the offices and bodies of the party. It has so far remained evolutionary in matter of democratizing its ranks and offices within the folds of Islam in the contemporary paradigm.

Organization of the party

All democratic parties make rules and regulations for the smooth functioning of its affairs and make the organization strong and effective and bring coherence and unanimity in the folds of the party. It fixes the power and functions, rights and duties, and responsibilities of all the office bearers and members. “In Pakistan, submission to the party rules and regulations remain personal and individual matter of a member or official of a party, and are generally not implemented to avoid differences and tension in the ranks of party, (Gillani, 2011, 368-369) which puts a question mark on the democratic credence of a party and makes it puppet in the hands of few influential people for the attainment of their personal benefits and interests. According to Irshad Ahmad Arif “they come together for their mutual interests not ideals and objectives” (Arif, 30 December, 2017, 92 News Islamabad), therefore have a shallow vision, democratic façade, minimal responsibility and less care for public welfare. On the other hand, “Jamaat has associated, its organization, with religious spirit. The observance of the party constitution, which intricately specify

the rules and regulations for the members, is considered as a religious duty, consequently bringing more coherence and adhesiveness to its structure” (Gillani, 2011, 369) and makes the party conspicuous among the multitude of political parties in the political system of Pakistan.

Its national, provincial and district officials are elected by its rukuns or permanent members including the *amir*, who presides over central advisory council (the Majlis-e-Shura). There are two kinds of membership, *mutafiq* member and *rukun*. *Mutafiq* is the person who has an inclination towards the ideology or agrees with the policy of Jamaat but have no strict alliance with the discipline of the party while *rukun* is registered, responsible and is more organized and ranked member of the party.

General Assembly

It’s a gathering of the members of the party which have the authority to decide an issue or give credence to a policy under consideration. “In all the matters final authority rests with the general assembly of Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan” (Dastoor-e-Jamaat-i-Islami, 2014, 25). It’s a general forum of the members of the party where decisions are taken on the basis of majority of the present members. “The central council (*markazi-shoora*) or the *ameer* of Jamaat can summon the meeting of general assembly whenever needed by jamaat and if, in two or more provinces, five or more council of the organizational constituencies pass resolution, then the meeting of the general assembly must be summoned in a reasonable time”(Dastoor-e-Jamaat-i-Islami, 2014, 25). All the policies and strategies are presented before the assembly for discussion and debate for the purpose to be endorsed by the popular opinion of the general members and are adopted after approval by majority votes.

Ameer of the Party

With the inception of the party discussion for the appointment of the head or *ameer* of the party started. “There came three kinds of suggestion, first group was of the view that at the movement, a temporary *Ameer* should be appointed to run the affairs of the party and the procedure for the appointment of a permanent *Ameer* will be set later, on the expansion of the party membership. Second group suggested a group of individuals for the administration and guidance of the party members.

The third opinion was for a permanent *Ameer* to make party effective and more organized because loose organization well adversely affects its objectives”. (Gillani, 2011, 166-167) Therefore *Muwlana Sayed Abu-ul-Ala Maudoodi* was elected its *Ameer*. Due to his extraordinary personality he remained a life time head of the party. The constitution of Jamaat adopted a democratic method for the election of *Ameer* and left the way open to all to remain life time *Ameer* if they have credence, ability and trust of the members, can be elected time and again.

The constitution of Jamaat provides for direct method of election of the *Ameer* by members. It says that “The appointment of *Ameer* will be through direct election and absolute majority will be decisive. He will be elected for five years. At the end of the term of his office he may be elected time and again if the members wells so (Dastoor-e-Jamaat-i-Islami, 2014, 25)”, therefore, since the death of the founder, the party has so far headed by different personalities according to the spirit of the constitution of the party.

It further stipulates that the *Ameer* “should be neither aspirant for, nor desirous of, the office of the *Ameer*” (Dastoor-e-Jamaat-i-Islami, 2014, 22). This condition added to the dignity and grandeur of the office and made the elected *Ameer* more undisputed and symbolic in the party hierarchy. “In other democratic parties, president of party observe number of limitations because the head is not expected to have just behavior with all the members, especially those who use their vote against the existing president, in the presidential election, after his success, there remains an apprehension to be organizationally targeted”(Gillani, 2011, 169). Describing the nature and method for the election of the *Ameer*, the founder of the party put forward the example of four poised caliphs and writes that “In the beginning, in the Islamic state, the rule was that, no one, for getting the office of caliphate. one should not stand by himself or think of or make efforts to come in to power but he who, to whom the people think suitable for leading the Ummah, should be given the office after mutual consultation”(Maudoudi, 2008, 157-158) which means that the *Ameer* will be a honest(*Sadiq*) and truthful(*Ameen*) person.

Central Council or Majlis-i-Shura

Mutual consultation and consensus is the spirit of democracy. “The affairs of Muslims are carried through mutual consultation”. (Al-Quran, 38) Any organization, process or idea, lacking this basic trait will be undemocratic and cannot be termed as popular. “Jamaat-i-Islami is a constitutional and consultative organization. Consultation is the basic matters of its decisions and program. The very first constitution of Jamaat was approved by its formative assembly or Shura. It was decided in its embryonic stage that consultation will be the spirit of the party”. (Sayyed, 2011, 260-261) It is compulsory for the members of the party to seek the opinion of other party member in organizational or policy matters.

Ameer of Jamaat has a council of member to assist him in the affairs of the party. The council is generally known as Majlis-i-Shura or Central Council. It is a consultative body, “the number of the elected members of Shura is fifty. It is directly elected through direct votes of the member of Jamaat”. (Dastori-Jamaat-i-Islami, 2014, 29) This was decided in the initial stages that mutual consultation is the spirit of the organization and must not be ignored at any cast. If a person is assigned an organizational responsibility he has to make consultation and seek the opinion of his party fellows on the matters and issues in hands, therefore it may be concluded that the very ideology is based principles of democracy.

Conclusion

Pakistan was liberated with a democratic struggle therefore democracy became its ultimate political system. As political parties are the undeniable prerequisite of democracy, therefore with independence political parties mushroomed on the political scene of Pakistan, having varying Ideological orientations. Though political parties have been remained numerous within the system since its inception but these may better be termed as mechanisms for the perpetuation of dominance of the privileged groups to exploit and dominate the down trodden poor majority. They have nothing to do with the empowering of the masses to have a say and share in the affairs of the state. These parties are engineered by landlords or industrialist or ethnic monopolist to protect their vested interests. Among these Jamaat-i-Islami is the only political party which, since its inception, has concentrated its

energies on its internal democratic nourishment rather trapping mob of masses on hollow slogans of democracy. It is passing through a process of planting the very spirit of democracy to the grass root level. Its ordinary member’s opinion is valued in the affairs and policy of the party. It has developed a fair democratic procedure for the election of its Ameer and has sound mechanism of consultation from top to bottom in the party hierarchy. It has evolved itself as a living political organism in a developing country like Pakistan. That’s why; PILDAT report of 2015, Jamaat-i-Islami was ranked the most democratic party of Pakistan.

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