

# PAKISTAN JOURNAL OF HISTORY & CULTURE

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## ***The Role of Political Parties in the 2002 National Elections of Pakistan***

**Altaf Ullah\***

Major decisions of the government in democratic countries, rest directly or indirectly on the freely given consent of a majority of the adult elected representatives of the citizens. The formal process of selecting a person for public office or accepting or rejecting a political proposal, by voting is called election. An election is one of the means by which a society may arrange itself to take the decisions of their national interest. It is a process for choosing offices or making binding decisions concerning policy by the vote of those formally qualified to participate. Indeed it is a formal procedure by which public offices are filled.

Elections and political parties have a direct relationship with each other. Election is the mechanism through which modern states create amongst its citizens a sense of involvement and participation in public affairs. Citizens derive a sense of satisfaction from participating in the selection of their governmental leaders, and the selection of leaders through proper election procedures gives to the government a base of support, a sense of legitimacy among the masses. It is through popular elections that authority of a government is clothed with legitimacy and peaceful transfer of authority to elected representatives is ensured.

When the election programmes were announced by the government both small and big parties applied for the eighth national parliamentary elections. The major parties contesting the elections included Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz Group), Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam Group) and the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), an alliance of six religious political

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parties. Other known parties contesting at the national level included the six-party National Alliance led by former caretaker Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf of Imran Khan and Pakistan Awami Tehrik of Tahir-ul-Qadri. Many others regional and nationalist parties with strongholds in their respected regions and provinces including the Muttahida Qaumi Movement in Sindh, Awami National Party in NWFP, Jamhuri Watan Party, factions of Baluchistan National Movement and Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party in Baluchistan took their active part in the 2002 national elections.

Prior to each national election, every political party while taking part in the elections propagates its future programme and policy. One of the most attracting features of the electoral politics is the publication and propagation of the party manifesto through which a political party convinces the electorate as to why it should be voted.

The purpose of the research paper in hand is to highlight the role of political parties which took part in the 2002 national elections. The paper focuses on the election campaign and political manifestos through which they tried to convince the electorate in their favour. The electoral strategies of different political parties, their seat adjustment and political alliances among them are the key questions to be critically evaluated.

The historical background of Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam) is peculiar in nature. The PML (like minded) which basically came into being as a consequence of a personality clash between Nawaz Sharif and Mian Azhar rather than an ideological conflict, was ultimately renamed as PML-Q in 2001. Apart from the personality clash, the politics of caste or *baradaris* also played a pivotal role in generating contempt for Nawaz Sharif. When Mian Azhar, an Arain by caste, nominated his brother-in-law, Mian Nasir Jabran for Lahore's lord mayor in the 1998 local bodies elections, the Sharif Brothers disliked it and favoured the Kashmiri Khwaja Hasan, who got victory in that contest. In the like manner the Chaudhry Brothers from Gujrat turned their eyes towards PML (like minded) when Mian Shahbaz Sharif became the Chief Minister of the Punjab and totally ignored Chaudhry Pervez Elahi. In the meanwhile, Ejazul Haq, son of former military ruler, too joined them and rejected the offer of Nawaz Sharif for ministership in his cabinet. The lust to accumulate absolute power by Sharif also worked as a cohesive force in bringing together dissidents. However, when Nawaz Sharif was deposed, the PML (like-minded) was formed with Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Mian Azhar, Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri, Sikandar Hayat Malhi, Ghulam Sarwar Cheema and Abdul Sattar Lalika as its leaders. With the passage of time, several Nawaz loyalists such as

Chaudhry Akhtar Rasool, Mian Munir and Tariq Aziz also joined the like-minded group. Though this like minded faction of Muslim League was renamed as PML-Q prior to the 2002 national elections yet it had no grass roots in the general masses. The PML-Q mostly depended on the incumbent establishment's support in order to stay in the electoral race of 2002 with great hope of success.<sup>1</sup>

The PML-Q propagated its manifesto to improve the performance of the government. It declared that the role of the Parliament should be made more effective by adopting immediate measures as it has lost its previous prestige and status. The PML-Q promised to introduce political, economic, judicial educational, and health reforms in the country in order to change the fortune of common man of the society.

The PML-Q's manifesto declared that the appropriate legislation should be introduced for funding of political parties. It should be ensured that the election expenses allowed were adhered to through appropriate monitoring mechanism established to keep expenditures within limits. Those exceeding the prescribed limits should be dealt with appropriately. An ethics committee should be established for both the houses that should monitor the conduct of respective members. Rules of business should be amended so that no expenditure was made without prior approval of the National Assembly. Elected members should be subject to conflict of interest legislation on business activities or in cases where any interest pertaining to a member was involved. All expenditure of state for frivolous purpose should be curtailed or done away with. Voting rights for Pakistani citizens residing in foreign countries should be extended.<sup>2</sup>

It was also described that young and educated persons should be encouraged to take part in political activities. Assets of elected representatives should be disclosed as a public record. Limits should be prescribed on the number of ministers and advisors that could be appointed in the federal and provincial governments. Through the National Finance Award, more funds should be given from the federation to the provinces and from the provinces to the local institutions. Voting age should be maintained at 18 years. Women should be encouraged to take part in all walks of life. They should have greater representation in the superior judiciary and the Armed Forces in addition to the Parliament/Assemblies. The process of accountability in all public

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1 *The Herald*, October 2002, p.31.

2 Syed Karim Haider, comp. *Pakistan's General Elections 2002* (Lahore: Pakistan Study Centre University of the Punjab, Quaid-i-Azam Campus. 2004), p.36.

service should be institutionalized particularly for the elected representatives. Role of opposition in the Parliament and outside should have full institutional protection as is the case in all parliamentary systems of government.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding security and justice the PML-Q's manifesto declared that rule of law should be upheld at all levels throughout the countries. The state functionaries should protect the weak against the powerful. Police reforms should be carried out to make police service as an oppressive body. Judicial procedures should be modernized, simplified wherever possible to reduce delay. The prison service should be made effective, efficient and responsive. Conditions in jails should be improved through an effective inspectorate system. Rehabilitation of prisoners should be facilitated by training them in industrial work such as textiles, engineering, woodwork, pottery and horticulture, during their term of sentence.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding Education the manifesto stated that education should become the top priority of the government, which should aim to raise the education standards to the levels that compare favourably with countries of middle level income. New measures should be introduced to rationalize class sizes, raise standards in schools and upgrade local (district and tehsil) education authorities, enhance status and quality of teaching profession, review curriculum by updating textbooks, setting up student support programmes especially for girls in the rural areas.<sup>5</sup> Besides these programmes the PML-Q's manifesto mentioned its policy regarding citizen's rights, good governance, strengthening of state institutions, devolution, austerity, agriculture and rural development, trade and industry, health, housing, transport, environment, unemployment, labour reforms, women's employment programmes, minorities, package for the disabled, national security and foreign policy.

If there was a political party or grouping in the 2002 elections which had a strong ideological base and a clear campaign slogan that was the alliance of six prominent Islamic groups, the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA).<sup>6</sup> This alliance of six religio-political parties sidelined their religio-sectarian differences at least temporarily to work together for

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3 *Ibid.*, p.37.

4 *Ibid.*, pp.37-38.

5 *Ibid.*, p.43.

6 *The Herald*, October 2002, p.32.

pursuing a shared political agenda.<sup>7</sup> Those included the Jami'at Ulama-e-Islam of Fazl-ur-Rehman (JUI-F), the Jami'at Ulema-e-Islam headed by Samiul Haq (JUI-S), the Jami'at Ulema-e-Pakistan led by the late Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani (JUP-N), the Jama'at-e-Islami (JI) headed by Qazi Husain Ahmad, the Jami'at Ahl-e-Hadis (JAH) headed by Sajid Mir and a *Shia* minority Party, Islami Tehreek Pakistan (ITP), led by Sajid Naqvi.<sup>8</sup> Apart from this a number of tiny religious groups and *jihadi* organizations also worked under the auspices of MMA.

To mobilize the masses in favour of a particular group or party, the election campaign play a pivotal role. The six religio-political parties of MMA burnt the hatred because before entering into the alliance the clerics were rivals to each other but later on, they united for common cause in the name of Islam and started against the United States in the whole process and still saying against them.<sup>9</sup> While the groups may differ acutely on the interpretation of Islamic teachings and some of them may even have fuelled sectarian violence in the past, they saw in the 2002 elections the opportunity to win in the name of Islam. The alliance's campaign was quite clear: "to take away power from the pro-American and secular forces and establish a true Islamic system in the country".<sup>10</sup> The alliance presents itself as the only alternative against the so-called corrupt political parties and pro-Western rulers such as President Musharraf. Its leaders believe the prevalent environment in the regional constituencies provides them with the best opportunity to attract a far greater number of votes than in the past, particularly in areas such as the NWFP or the Pashtun belt of Baluchistan, where pro-Taliban sentiment runs high. To ensure the success of their candidates at the polls, component parties of the alliance, particularly JI have also struck separate deals at local levels with parties such as the PML-N. The alliance was the first to launch its election campaign and in some of the recent speeches, its leaders have warned the people that unless votes are given to the "forces of Islam", the coming days can be disastrous for the country.<sup>11</sup> The MMA promised to the voters to evict US forces from the region and also wanted to introduce the Islamic system in the areas

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7 *The Nation*, 3 October 2002.

8 *Dawn*, 8 October 2002.

9 Nadim Haider Bangash, "Talibanization of the NWFP: A Case Study of Success of the MMA in the 2002 Elections", M.Phil Thesis (Islamabad: National Instituted of Pakistan Studies, 2005), p.81.

10 *The Herald*, October, 2002, p.32.

11 *Ibid.*

where it forms a government. They also warned the western media during the campaign that they should stop defaming Islam and negative propaganda against the Muslims. During the election campaign, MMA also insisted that the Americans should stop interfering in the internal affairs of Muslim countries and openly expressed sympathy for the former Taliban rulers of Afghanistan who were defeated and ousted by US-led forces. Some parties in MMA had close relations with the Taliban and provided religious and military training to its leaders and workers who were allegedly involved in sectarian violence in Pakistan.<sup>12</sup>

Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Group was one of the most potent political forces in the country. Like other factions of Pakistan Muslim League, the it also claimed to be the true political inheritors of the idea of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and All-India Muslim League. PML-N was born when President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed the government of Nawaz Sharif in April 1992 and rapidly earned the reputation of being the only party other than the PPP with the credentials to form a government independent of support from smaller groups. The faction grew from strength to strength until it was sent packing by the military establishment in October 1999. The rise and fall of PML-N was a direct outcome of its relationship with the military establishment. While a pro-establishment stand allowed it to develop into a full-fledge party, its direct confrontation with the establishment ended in its removal from power.

The extra-ordinary performance put up by the PML (N) candidates in the two of four elections since the restoration of democracy in 1988 and the surprising anti-establishment stance of Nawaz following his removal from power in 1993 and latter in 1999 are significant factors that differentiate the Nawaz League from the other Muslim Leagues. The two-third majority enjoyed by the PML-N following the 1997 elections allowed Nawaz to head the most powerful government the country had seen since 1970.<sup>13</sup>

The wings of the PML-N has been clipped considerably since the 1999 military takeover. Apart from a handful of loyalists, only those politicians who had no other option are still with the PML-N. With the Sharief family exiled and ejected from electoral politics, it was widely

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12 Bangash, "Talibanization of the NWFP", p.82.

13 *The Herald*, October 2002, p.30.



believed that the performance of the PML-N would not be different from other smaller factions of the PML.<sup>14</sup>

The PML-N propagated its political manifesto and future programme through political processions, meetings, print and electronic media. Its manifesto renewed its commitment to work for self reliance, merit and economic revival of the country.<sup>15</sup> The PML-N offered restrictions on ordinance making and strengthening committee system within the parliament. It promised to limit the number of ministers and advisors. Regarding the election matters the PML-N's programme was to limit the election expenditure and extending the voting rights to Pakistani citizens residing in abroad. On accountability it referred to the accountability bureau and also made it clear that any member convicted of financial wrong doing would be disqualified for at least seven years. To discourage the VIP culture, its programme was to abolish the facility of duty free cars and foreign medical treatment facilities.<sup>16</sup> Besides it, the PML-N comprehensively declared its agenda about social security, justice and citizen rights.

The emergence of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians was not a new phenomenon but it was basically the Political Parties Act of 2002 which forced the party to effect a change of quad in order to stay in the electoral race. As a consequence of the same order, benazir Bhutto decided to form PPP-P with her second in command Makhdom Amin Fahim as its head while still not relinquish the post of chairperson of the party.

The PPP-P announced its political manifesto for the October 2002 national elections with a pledge to strive for an egalitarian Pakistan. The PPP-P reaffirmed its faith that people were the political sovereigns and the party would continue to struggle for their economic, political and social rights. The PPP-P vowed to eradicate poverty by increasing the social sector budget and the annual development programme. It pledged to promote religious tolerance in the country. In the education sector, the PPP-P manifesto declared that it would provide free text books to the government primary schools. The manifesto also took up rule of law as an issue as a major factor of most of the political and economic ills.<sup>17</sup>

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14 *Ibid.*

15 *The News*, 22 September, 2002.

16 *The Nation*, 20 September, 2002.

17 *Dawn*, 1 October, 2002.

The leaders and workers of the PPP-P geared up efforts for public mobilization campaign on the eve of the 2002 elections with the support of Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD). The PPP-P leaders visited different constituencies and held meetings with party workers to formulate a strategy to strengthen party position in each district during the October polls.

The PPP-P decided to continue with its old slogan i.e., “*roti, kapra aur makan*”, and vowed to reverse all the amendment made by the military government after coming into power. It assured a strong defence system to safeguard country’s territorial integrity and national independence. The party opposed extravagance through non-audited accounts and re-appropriation of budget. It favoured that a parliamentary committee would be established to inspect the defence accounts, which would also be submitted to defence committee of the cabinet.<sup>18</sup> This would end corruption in defence deals. The manifesto assured that full autonomy would be given to provinces by abolishing the concurrent list to fulfil constitutional guarantees. It pledged that special courts would be abolished while family courts would be established. The number of courts and judges would be increased to ensure that cases were to be dealt with expeditiously. The PPP-P pledged to appoint more women and minority judges into judiciary to strengthen weaker section of the society.<sup>19</sup>

The PPP-P vowed to introduce a system of purchases on the basis of pay “As You Earn” (credit purchases) in government corporations and other salaried institutions. A credit bank would be established the purpose of which would be payment of small and medium loans to encourage purchase of television, furniture, cars, houses etc., and daily life necessities on instalments by young and middle class age purchases. The party also supported an independent and impartial anti-corruption office to investigate every citizen of Pakistan irrespective of the office that he or she might hold.<sup>20</sup>

Although the Frontier’s prominent politician, Mr. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao had some serious differences with PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto yet he managed to stick to the party till the 1997 elections. But Aftab Ahmad Khan broke away soon after the polls, blaming Ms. Bhutto for the party’s disastrous outing in the 1997

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18 *The Nation*, 1 October, 2002.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

elections. The 2002 elections proved as Sherpao's first election as the head of his own party.<sup>21</sup>

The PPP (Sherpao) launched its election campaign with great enthusiasm. The leader of the party, Sherpao declared that his party would eradicate poverty, injustice, unemployment and price-hike from the country. It would strengthen the local body system and work for tax-free society. The party would take every step with the consent of the people.<sup>22</sup> The party pledged to work for the establishment of true egalitarian society to promote democratic culture and bring about economic revolution in the lives of the downtrodden people.

Aftab Sherpao was essentially aiming for a major role in the NWFP rather than the centre in order to get more support from the Pakhtun belt of the province. His own campaign was focused on his own district, i.e., Charsadda, where he was in alliance with PML-Q and MMA.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was founded by the former cricketer, Imran Khan, on 25 April 1996 in Lahore announcing that he had entered into politics to mobilize the people to extricate Pakistan from its present state of despair and to set it on the path of unity, solidarity, social justice and prosperity. The party's declared aims and objectives were to establish a modern Islamic state, developing and reconstructing religious thoughts, as envisioned by poet-philosopher Allama Iqbal and synthesizing the eternal principles and values of Islam with the imperatives of contemporary economic and social life.<sup>23</sup>

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was termed as the third force in the 1997 general elections but it was unable to win even a single seat in any of the national or provincial constituencies across the country. During the 1997 elections campaign, the PTI's emphasis was on corruption. For the 2002 elections the issue of corruption and hanging the corrupt still found priority in the election slogans.

The PTI's manifesto contained many elaborate programmes including debt retirement, agricultural development, water resource management, education and women development plans etc.<sup>24</sup> The PTI had also made extensive proposals regarding labour welfare, the issue of

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21 *The Herald*, October, 2002, p.36.

22 *The News*, 23 August, 2002.

23 Rafaqat Ali, "Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf" in A.B.S. Jafri, ed., *The Political Parties of Pakistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 2002), p.115.

24 Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) "Who Voted for Whom: Findings from an Exit Poll Survey" (Lahore: 2002).

accountability and for the independence of the state controlled media. The PTI criticized the role of military and clarified that the military's role should be to defend borders and assist civil administration in times of need.<sup>25</sup> Indeed the PTI had come out with a most balanced manifesto addressing a bulk of issues of the current election campaign.<sup>26</sup>

Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari, former President of Pakistan, laid down the foundation of the Millat Party on 14 August 1998. It took part for the first time in the 2002 elections. For this election, the Millat Party formed the National Alliance (NA) with six other political parties. The National Alliance had further entered into an electoral adjustment with the PML-Q and dubbed this arrangement the Grand National Alliance. The National Alliance had filed candidates from the Millat Party's stronghold of D.G. Khan and seemed poised to clinch a few seats from other areas as well. The former PPP minister Pervez Saleh was a candidate of the Millat Party from NA-126 against the PPP's Fakhr Zaman.<sup>27</sup>

The guiding principles of Millat Party expressed the basic philosophy and ideology of the party. To sum it up, the Millat Party was committed to revive the spirit of the original vision for Pakistan. At the same time, it was committed to introduce a progressive direction for dynamic future.<sup>28</sup> Although the party knew that the Musharraf government had focused on some of the very areas which had earlier been prioritized in the party's founding manifesto, the party nevertheless believed and asserted that there remained vast scope for improvement in the present government's policies. It would like to see perceptible acceleration of reforms to the existing systems. It pleaded for what it described as innovative new approaches to the problems that beset the country.

A religious scholar, Dr. Allama Tahirul Qadri laid down the foundation of Pakistan Awami Tehreek on 25 May 1989.<sup>29</sup> After a gap of almost twelve years his party decided to take part in the 2002 national elections. This time the party had fielded candidates from 125 national

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25 *The Nation*, 7 October, 2002.

26 PILDAT, "Who Voted for Whom: Findings from an Exit Poll Survey".

27 *The Herald*, October 2002, p.35.

28 Zafar Abbas, "Millat Party" in A.B.S. Jafri, ed., *The Political Parties of Pakistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 2002), p.52.

29 Shamim-ur-Rehman, "Pakistan Awami Tehreek", in A.B.S. Jafri, ed., *The Political Parties of Pakistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 2002), p.85.

and 226 provincial assembly constituencies. Allama Qadri contested the elections for the National Assembly from Lahore, Jhang and Gujjar Khan. The contest in Jhang was of particular interest to many as Allama Qadri had been working in the constituency for several months prior to the elections to ensure his success against Maulana Azam Tariq, the Chief of defunct *Sipah-e-Sahaba* Pakistan. Allam Qadri was depending heavily on anti-SSP sentiment for his success in the city. Allama Qadri had also made several political moves to gain the support of the minorities. He had joined the Christian in their prayers on a number of occasions and had even formed an alliance with the minorities on the basis of a promise to secure them equal rights, provided the PAT sweeps the elections.

The Pakistan Awami Tehreek pledged to eradicate VIP culture from the society and bring an end to the centuries old exploitative feudal and capitalist system.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement was founded by Altaf Hussain on 18 March 1984 in Karachi.<sup>30</sup> Unlike other political parties which set up a student wing to muster the support of the youth, the MQM was born of a student body, the All Pakistan Mohajir Students Organization. According to the MQM leadership, the body was set up while the leader themselves were students at the Karachi university. For the 2002 national elections, the MQM was back in the field in full force.<sup>31</sup>

The MQM is relatively better organized political party. It has maintained a network which ensures continuity of contact between the leadership and the workers. The party leader, Altaf Hussain often addresses workers and supporters via telephone from London on important occasions. The MQM has been vocal in opposing the construction of Kalabagh Dam and seems to intone with the perception in Sindh that this province is being denied its due share of the waters of the Indus river system. It has identified itself with the Sindhi nationalists in their protest over the sacking of people from government jobs, increase in rates of transport, electricity gas, water and other public facilities.

The MQM boycotted the 2001 municipal elections but participated in the 2002 national elections. The party supported General Musharraf's U-turn on Afghan policy after 9/11.

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30 Rehman, "Muttahida Qaumi Movement", in A.B.S. Jafri, ed., *The Political Parties of Pakistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 2002), p.59.

31 *The Herald*, October, 2002, p.33.

The manifesto of MQM declared that social justice at any cost should be guaranteed, rule of law should be the cry of the day, provincial autonomy in the real sense should be ensured and minorities' rights should be safeguarded. It also pledged for the social, economic and political uplift of the state.

The Sindh Democratic Alliance was formed in September 2001 by former Bureaucrat Imtiaz Sheikh. It contested the 2002 national elections as a part of the National Alliance (NA) with a common election symbol, the tractor.<sup>32</sup> The driving force behind the National Alliance was the Sindh Democratic Alliances a coalition of politicians who either traditionally opposed the PPP or were drop out from the PPP. The party leader Imtiaz Sheikh who resigned from the post of secretary of health in October 2000, was appointed secretary to the Chief Minister, Jam Sadiq Ali in 1990 but soon acquired notoriety for his shenanigans. His party as generally believed, was fully capable of producing favourable results in Sindh, traditionally a PPP stronghold. The SDA has been able to attract many politically influential families, which were then part of the alliance. These included the Arbabs of Tharparker, the Shirazis of Thatta, Mumtaz Bhutto of Larkana etc. Many political observers believed that in the absence of Benazir Bhutto, the SDA was potentially a political force that might form a government in Sindh with the MQM as its major partner.<sup>33</sup>

From the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement of pre-partition India to the Awami National Party of today, the Pakhtun Nationalists of Frontier Province have played an important role in the politics of Pakistan. The Awami National Party is mostly famous among the Pakhtuns of Pakistan in North West Frontier Province, Balochistan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Western Punjab and Northern Areas. The party's current President is Asfandyar Wali Khan.<sup>34</sup>

The claims that, as enshrined in its manifesto, it has been struggling since its formation for a prosperous, peaceful and free society. The party struggle is aimed at achieving;

- a. Democratic order;
- b. Protection of the rights and identities of all nationalities living within the country;
- c. The protection and advancement of their languages and culture;

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32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Ibid.*

- d. Emancipation of supremacy;
- e. Social justice and;
- f. Rejection of and abstention from all forms of sectarianism.<sup>35</sup>

The Awami National Party contested the 2002 national elections with propagating its policy and future programme in a positive manner. During the election campaign, the party pledged that Pakistan would be transformed into a free, developed, prosperous and democratic federal state. Its federating units would be free to solve their regional matters. Only foreign affairs, currency, communication and defence would be vested with the federal government, if came into power.<sup>36</sup>

Jamhoori Watan Party was founded by Nawab Akbar Bugti in August 1990. In the same year when it contested the elections, it emerged as one of the strongest political force in the province of Baluchistan. It got twelve provincial seats and two National Assembly seats but remained in opposition.

The JWP wants maximum provincial autonomy within the confines of the federation. The party, however, revolves around the charismatic personality of Nawab Bugti and most of its central leaders are either Bugti's personal friends or admirers. In spite of its secular and progressive approach to sink roots in the provincial vote bank Nawab Bugti, who hails from Dera Bugti, the centre of Pakistan's natural gas fields, has also failed to strike camaraderie with successive federal governments because of his outspoken nationalistic favour. Bugti has been advocating complete provincial autonomy in financial and taxation matters. He annoyed Islamabad when he demanded the institution of royalty on natural gas and the payment of all royalty arrears to Baluchistan. The party contested the October 2002 general elections but Bugti himself did not take part as a candidate.<sup>37</sup>

The Baluchistan National Movement was launched by the cadres of the Baloch Student Organization in 1988 to fill the political vacuum left by the 1970s banning of the National Awami Party (NAP). Dr. Abdul Hayee, Sardar Akhtar Mengal, Dr. Abdul Malik Dr. Yaseen and Manzoor Gichki were amongst its founding members. The BNM's policy revolved around complete provincial autonomy and the restructuring of

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35 Mohammad Riaz, "Awami National Party" in A.B.S. Jafri, ed., *The Political Parties of Pakistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 2002), p.10.

36 *The Frontier Post*, 2 October, 2002.

37 *The Herald*, October, 2002, p.37.

provinces on the basis of their respective cultures, languages and sub-nationalistics living within their specific boundaries.<sup>38</sup>

Prior to the election 1988, the BNM forged an alliance with Nawab Akbar Bugti to form the Balochistan National Alliance (BNA). The alliance secured 11 seats in the provincial Assembly, formed a coalition government with the JUI-F and embarked upon a collision course with the centre, then controlled by the PPP. However, the BNM could match its past performance for a number of reasons. First, though the middle class BNM leaders had a clean reputation while in power, the image of the government was marred by some independently elected members who became coalition partners of the BNA. Personality clashes also damaged the alliance. Sardar Akhtar Mengal and other BNA leaders from Central Baluchistan parted ways with the BNM after the 1990 elections and formed their own group under the same name. Presently the influence of the BNM stand confined to Makran coastal belt, which happens to be the only Baloch region free from the shackles of the Sardari system. Though it took part in the 2002 elections yet could not win even a single seat in the national elections.

The Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party was founded in 1988 as the successor of Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Ittehad. Mehmood Khan Achakzai is the head of the party. Like National Awami Party, the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party underwent a complex metamorphosis. The party was founded on the ashes of NAP (Samad). In 1972, Samad Khan, known as Khan Shaheed, parted ways with the then NAP and formed his own group. Latter he supported Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's arrangement in Baluchistan. After Samad Khan's death in a bomb explosion, the party nominated his son, Mehmood Khan Achakzai as the new party chief. Latter on, they formed the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Ittehad and joined the Movement for Restoration of Democracy in 1980s. Mehmood Khan had to go into hiding when his party workers clashed with the police during an MRD rally in Quetta. He resurfaced in 1989, during the first tenure of Benazir Bhutto. The Benazir's government withdrew all cases against him. He won his ancestral seat in the election of 1990.

The Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party participated in the 2002 national elections with its planned programme and manifesto. The party believed in the restructuring of the federal units of Pakistan on cultural and linguistic lines. It has been demanding a new province for the Pakhuns in the north of Baluchistan. It also opposed to the domination of

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38 *Ibid.*



the Punjabi bureaucracy in the three smaller provinces. The party always ideologically opposed to the theocracy in all its forms.<sup>39</sup>

### **Elections Campaign and Strategies of Political Parties in the 2002 National Elections**

When the elections were announced to be conducted in October, 2002 different political parties including traditional rival PPP and PML(N) were talking of seat adjustment to boost their chances of win at the polls. For sometime, they mulled over seat adjustments under the overarching umbrella of Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD). There were elements in both the parties who favoured seat adjustments for fighting battle for restoration of democracy. By agreeing on seat adjustments these parties might win a few more assembly seats at some places in the country but this sort of political patch-work between them would for sure damage their standing with the common man and raise a baffling question mark as to what separate the two parties except their names and person occupying the top slots.<sup>40</sup> Not long ago both PML-N and PPP-P reached a crucial phase of setting up a two party system. Power seesawed between them and they appeared poised to herald a stable parliamentary form of government in the country anchored in two party system. However, this scenario proved short-lived.

The electoral seat adjustment between mainstream political parties PML-N, PPP-P and even by PML-Q and MMA was fraught with dangers to the party based parliamentary system in the country. This in fact, amounted depriving the voters of their choice and reducing the elections to a party-less fray.<sup>41</sup> Instead of staying their course and making efforts to claw back their lost ground these parties appeared launching them into search for easy shortcuts to electoral gains obviously at the expense of their principles and manifestos. Even adjustment at one seat would leave little justification to feign their separate existence at the national level.

The election campaign was full of high-sounding promises, ideological rhetoric and negative campaigning. The 2002 election, on the whole demonstrated a gross lack of capacity of the political parties to launch any national level electoral campaign. The election campaign was however, mostly dominated by local issues. The opposition demonstrated its distrust in the whole process of election campaign and considered the

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39 *The News*, 3 October, 2002.

40 <http://www.nation.com.pk/daily/081002/editor.2htm>.

41 *Ibid.*

election as a move to erect a civilian façade in the name of a return to democracy. The two mainstream political parties came under intense pressure to save their cadres from disarray. Their campaign was mostly submitted under their day to day responses to various administrative and political initiatives of an expressly partisan regime, which was playing for high stakes in the elections. The government forced both the parties to effect a change of guard to stay in the race. The PPP leadership had to change hands, at least on paper, by creating PPP-P with Amin Fahim as its chairman while the PML-N elected Mr. Shahbaz Sharif as its new leader. Both the parties had to carry out their election campaign in the absence of their most valuable assets in the form of their leaders. The constitutional amendments, legal injunctions and administrative measures were the issues that dominated their campaign.<sup>42</sup>

The return of PML-N and PPP leaders remained among the important election campaign issues for the leaders and worker of both the parties. As expected, the party cadres rallied the voters in the name of the two popular leaders, and thus elevated them to icons of unblemished democracy. The possible return of the two leaders before the election was announced from time to time in order to keep the morale of the party workers and the voting public high. The filing of nomination papers on behalf of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharief was seen as an indication of their speculated return. It was aimed at impressing on the potential voters that the two leaders wanted to return to the country to serve the general masses, and it was the army that kept them out.<sup>43</sup> When the election Commission rejected the nomination papers of Benazir Bhutto for all the three seats she sought to contest, Nawaz Sharief also withdrew his candidature to express solidarity with Benazir Bhutto.

The government openly supported the Grand National Alliance and went beyond even legal and structural injections that had favoured the political fortune of the alliance. As the official backing increasingly involved alleged pressure tactics against the opposition parties, the latter found a ready excuse for playing the victim. The campaign which was already devoid of any serious policy debate plunged into a never ending series of accusations about official manoeuvres to influence the outcome of the election. The opposition parties generally lacked any convincing campaign strategy that could mobilize the masses. They found it convenient to try to elicit public support by incessantly playing on the

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42 Mohammad Waseem, *Democratization in Pakistan: A Study of the 2002 Elections* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.121-22.

43 *Ibid.*, p.122.

theme of the king's party. The MMA, PPP, PTI, PML-N and several regional and ethnic parties remained preoccupied with the alleged interference of the regime in the election activity on the side of PML-Q, NA and the Sindh Democratic Alliance (SDA).<sup>44</sup>

The opposition parties criticized the constitutional amendments of the military regime while the pro-government parties of the GNA remained silent on that issue. The PML-N completely rejected the constitutional amendments. It vowed to bring the proposed constitutional amendments before parliament after the elections in order to ensure the latter's sovereign status. It also pledged to revoke the LFO immediately after coming into power. The PPP-P criticized the National Security Council (NSC) and questioned the authority of President Musharraf to meddle with the supreme law of the country. The PPP-P termed the new package of the constitutional amendments a threat to the federation and a political game to perpetuate the military rule in the country. The MMA was capable of challenging to bring some troubles to the government. As opposed to representational parties including PPP-P and PML-N, the MMA was an alliance of mobilizational parties. In contrast of local interests and reformist agenda of the mainstream parties, the religious parties displayed a commitment and approach to politics aimed at system change and to implement *sharia* in the country. It ruled out any compromise on its demand for the restoration of the 1973 constitution, its parliamentary and federal nature, as well as the sovereignty of democratic institutions. The Alliance of MMA also expressed its reservation about the devolution plan. It claimed that the local governments were incompatible with the provincial government.

The election strategy of Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD) was not so obvious. It was not clear whether its member parties would launch any joint efforts. So far they appear to be poles apart-politically speaking. The MMA had decided to use a single platform for election yet their train-march remind one more of an agitation than an election campaign. The political parties had a very little control over their candidates. "Enemy of my enemy is my friend" was the main consideration. It was generally observed that PPP candidates getting support from PML-Q and vice versa. The PML-N provincial and central leaders curse their like-minded brethren day in and day out.<sup>45</sup>

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44 *Ibid.*, pp.125-26.

45 *IPRI Fact File, Elections in Pakistan 2002*, Serial No.35 (Islamabad: Islamabad Research Institute, n.d), p.4.

The PML-Q had emerged as the most sought after political party. Yet its candidates were fighting it hard to sell the party name to their people. The people back in their constituencies had not yet reconciled to emerging realities. The PML-Q had been advised by their workers to avoid using the party tag and to seek votes on personal level. The election campaign so far was more dominated by non-issues or parties competing with individual influences. The candidates had no time to make lengthy speeches underlining the contribution of their party and its manifesto. The candidates appeared more interested in settling with his opponents on personal level and in view of the requirements of the constituency.<sup>46</sup>

In the October 2002 National Elections, there were no solid grounds of differences and political divisions among different political parties. There were no concept of leftist and rightist and no chances of division between pro-government and anti-government parties but that had been settled. Both had agreed on the policy of 'live and let others live'. The MMA had guaranteed the government that it would make government-friendly statements and in return the government would create no obstacles in their way. The PML-Q had already earned the status of king's party.<sup>47</sup> But the situation was compounded by the disqualification of Ms Benazir Bhutto and Sharief family scions. This had riddled and confused the active workers of the two parties which way to go. They were also confused over reports of seat adjustment between the two rival parties. At one place the candidates of PPP and PML-N were opponents while at the other constituency, they were in unison to oppose the PML-Q or the other parties. The simmering discontentment among the party loyalist of Ms. Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharief over this expediency of politics disregarding principles has rendered the party cadres rudderless. The political parties owed their existence more to the personality cult than any political thought or commitment to any specific cause congruent to people's aspirations.<sup>48</sup>

The PPP-P and PML-N of course enjoyed the support of a big majority of the people before the finalisation of candidate's lists by the Election Commission. The seat adjustment reports had deprived these parties of the strength and vigour which was the driving force behind party politics. The workers were baffled to find no moral force to go his

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46 *The Nation*, 10 September, 2002.

47 *IPRI Fact File*, pp.6-7.

48 *Dawn*, 20 September 2002.

party line or continue to oppose the traditional opponents.<sup>49</sup> The political rhetoric emanating from lesser parties was similarly more visionary than realistic. Their muddled election talk was not much different from the mainstream parties. The PTI, for instance, appealed to the masses to consider the unblemished past of its leadership. In various public addresses, the party leader Imran Khan emphasized the need to strengthen government institution in general and his commitment to a strong judiciary in particular. The party promised education for all and pledged to institute a uniform education policy across the country. On the other hand, various ethno-nationalist parties demanded provincial autonomy as the way out of the myriad problems facing their respective communities, following a half century old tradition of identity politics. For example the campaign of Awami National Party (ANP) was dominated by a consistent demand for the rights of the NWFP. It not only raised questions such as the payment of royalty owed by WAPDA to that province, but also upheld the rejection of the NFC award for its allegedly inequitable nature along with its opposition to the Kalabagh Dam project.<sup>50</sup>

The leader of the MQM, Altaf Hussain with his new vigour and approach championed the cause of the people of Sindh. He indicated the feudal class for the failure of democracy and the socio-economic backwardness of the country. While espousing Sindhi nationalism, he upheld the rights of Sindhi people, and even threatened to invoke the UN Charter if his demand was not met. He further demanded a six year tax holiday for new industries in Sindh and the removal of disparity in electricity charges between Sindh and Punjab.<sup>51</sup>

Like late 1970, when majority of the religio-political parties formed an alliance against the Bhutto's government on a one-point agenda to eject him from corridors of power, this time also after a lapse of some 26 years, the religio-political parties formed a union, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal. Some other electoral alliances, like National Alliance, headed by Farooq Leghari and included Sind Democratic Party (SDF) and other parties and GNA, an alliance of National Assembly and PML-Q were also in the field.<sup>52</sup> Two new political groupings fought the 2002 elections. The first was the GNA which brought together the so-called king's party of the PML-Q and the National Alliance of pro-government

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49 *The News*, 22 September, 2002.

50 Waseem, *Democratization in Pakistan*, p.130.

51 *Ibid.*, pp.130-31.

52 Haider, *Pakistan's General Election 2002*, p.iii.

parties headed by the Millat Party of Leghari. The PML-Q was the driving force of GNA. Its president was former Punjab Governor Mian Mohammad Azhar, while its powerful Punjab leader was Pervez Elahi, one of the political family of the Chaudhry of Gujrat. The second new grouping was the MMA headed by Maulana Shah Ahgmad Noorani; bridged both the Sunni-Shia sectarian divide as well as the doctrinal Islamist, traditionalist one represented respectively by the Jama'at-i-Islami and the Jami'at-i-Ulema-i-Islam. The driving force was provided by Jama'at-i-Islami. The serious ideological differences were prepared over by a common anti-American stance. The MMA decried the presence of US bases in Pakistan for the war on terrorism. It also condemned the bombing of innocent Pushtuns in Afghanistan during the conflict with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The ambiguous stance of the traditional nationalist parties in Baluchistan and the North West Frontier (NWFP) on these matters enabled the MMA to bite deep into the support of the Awami National Party.<sup>53</sup>

The pre-poll environment was relatively dull for various reasons, one initially being that no one really believed that the elections would be held. But just a couple of days before the closure, campaigning did pick up, most probably because money was spent with great husbandry by politicians who had been kept away from the levers of power for three years. But if enthusiasm for the elections was low, one could assume that the turn out on election day would be on the lower side too.

In the 2002 elections more than 70 political parties participated. Street slogans have always been the hallmark of Pakistan's electioneering process. In this election some of the interesting slogans which caught the imagination of public at large were:

The PML-N's popular slogan was, "*Hathon main hath do, Sher ka sath do*", (join hands together, side with the lion). The PPP-P chalked out its slogan, "*Teer badlay ga taqdeer, Chhai gi Benazir*", (arrow will change the fortunes and Benazir will return). The PML-Q popular electoral slogan was "*Aa gai cycle, Chha Gai cycle*", (cycle will come, cycle will dominate). The MMA also propagated its slogan, "*Kitab lay gee hisab, kitab karay ge ehtesab*", (book will take account and conduct accountability).<sup>54</sup>

These were the slogans raised by different political parties. But what was perhaps more interesting about the sloganeering was that in October

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53 Asian Survey, Vol. XLII, No.1, January-February, 2003, p.204.

54 Haider, *Pakistan's General Election 2002*, p.iv.

2002 election, the voters themselves used the method to focus attention onto their issues. They made their demands very plain; “*Roti do vote lo*” (Vote in exchange of bread) was slogan heard in nearly all slum areas that constituted thousands of voters. A few popular slogans, in the province were, “*pani do vote lo*”, (Water for vote), “*Dispensary do vote lo*”, (dispensary for vote).<sup>55</sup>

The current election scenario demonstrated a three way fight between pro-government groupings such as the PML-Q and other components of the Grand National Alliance, anti-government parties like the PPP-P and PML-N and the Muttahid Majlis-e-Amal. Although there were other significant players such as the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) which had returned to electoral politics with a bang, as well as the Awami National Party (ANP) and small Baloch nationalists groups. But the overall results were obviously going to be determined by the performance of the three major groupings. The MMA had an obvious campaign agenda and described the elections as an ideological position between the forces of Islam and those who support pro-West or secular ideas. Despite their poor showing in past elections, the religious parties believed that they could translate anti-American sentiment into votes. Throughout the election campaign, prominent MMA leaders like Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani and Maulana Samiul Haq had relegated domestic, social and economic issues to the sideline, choosing instead to highlight their anti-American platform. In a way it was their best, if not last chance to make an impact on the Pakistani electorate. Some key MMA leaders privately admit, however that they were eyeing no more than 10 to 15 National Assembly seats. This would nonetheless represent a significant improvement on the past performance of religious parties.<sup>56</sup>

Among the regional group in the field, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement was likely to emerge as the single largest party in the Sind Assembly. The MQM was also expected to win a large number of National Assembly seats from urban Sindh and could play a leading role in the case of a huge parliament, which was to be the most likely outcome. All the major political parties were talking big, at least in public, sounding assured of victory. However, no party seemed capable of securing a clear majority. But the shifting of loyalties and forced seat adjustments witnessed in the run-up to October 10 might just had given the PML-Q an obvious edge over the competition, particularly in the Punjab. This might be simply the military regime’s task of cobbling

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55 *Ibid.*

56 *The Herald*, October, 2002, pp.20-21.

together a compliant government as smaller groups in the four provinces would immediately fall in line to create a majority. The real battle was expected to start once parliament was installed and the formation of a coalition was linked to the selection of the new prime minister.<sup>57</sup>

The general assessment about the election has been that it would produce a hung parliament. No one party would be able to show a majority in the lower house of the parliament. That was because the two main parties had been decapitated by General Musharraf through the ouster of Ms Benazir and Nawaz Sharief, and one of them the PML, had been split down the middle. While the PPP vote bank was considered to be intact despite the Millat Party and Sherpao splinters, the PML-N was expected to face tough competition from some of its former bigwigs in the PML-Q. One opinion was that, the elections this year were no longer polarized according to parties but according to personalities, and since the big vote-getters were in the PML-Q, it was the PML-Q which would have the highest number of seats. That would suit General Pervez Musharraf down to the ground. The party would be malleable and would not protest too much if he chosen his favourite as the next prime minister.<sup>58</sup>

### **Analysis of the 2002 National Elections Results**

Elections in the developing countries like Pakistan inevitably elicit comments about their extent of fairness and impartiality. In the West and other advanced countries, however, the leaders whether belonging to the government or opposition, quietly bow before the people's verdict without attempting to find fault with the process through which it has been obtained. In fact public opinion is so highly regarded that the thought of tampering with the well-stream lined process never enters the minds of those responsible for its execution. On the other hand, in developing societies there is a general tendency for the losing side to cry foul.

The basic characteristic that distinguished these polls from the last four elections were peculiar. First in term of over all context, the October 2002 elections were held under a military regime, as in 1985, with the difference that political parties participated in these election, learning a lesson from the bycott disaster of MRD days. The political parties decided to take part in the polls despite certain restrictions. The second most important fact, which distinguished these elections, was that the

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57 *Ibid.*, p.21.

58 See, Gallup Pre-poll Survey Report published in *The News*, 22 September, 2002.



leadership of two mainstream parties, the PML-N and the PPP, who had dominated the electoral scene in the last four elections, were excluded from electoral contest. More than a hundred leading politicians, former ministers and ex-MPs were out of the electoral race either for being non-graduate or for some other reasons. The heavy weights hit by the new election laws included also Benazir and Nawaz Sharif. The condition that twice elected Prime Ministers or Chief Ministers would not be elected for the third time, virtually eliminated the chances of these two former prime ministers to assume the office for the third time. They were also disqualified to contest the polls. Many other leading politicians stood disqualified for not have university degrees to contest the elections. Akbar Bugti, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, his son Murtaza, Gohar Ayub Khan, Yousaf Raza Gilani, Abdus Sattar Laleka were amongst them.<sup>59</sup> However, the Government of Pakistan invited various national and international observer groups to monitor the General Elections held on 10 October, 2002.

During these elections, the interest of international community was more visible as appears from the fact that the Commonwealth Secretariat and the European Union Electoral Observer Missions (EU-EOM) had sent missions well before the general elections, which were held in October 2002. The Government always welcomed the International Community to observe the general elections. The Election Commission, however, remained completely impartial and non-partisan in inviting the observer. It had arranged briefing sessions in the Commission Secretariat as well as in the offices of provincial Election Commissioners for International Observers. Entry passes were issued to them for visiting the polling stations of their choice. They were also given necessary briefing material relating to the general elections.

It was generally felt by independent observers that the military government of General Pervez Musharraf created troubles in the way of the leaders of mainstream parties i.e., Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto in order to keep them away from the electorate and by bringing about large scale defection particularly from the PML-N. All this created electoral space for the MMA. It was in this context that the traditional political leadership considered the latter to be the establishment's product, created for the specific function of acting as a counterweight to the PPP, PML-N, ANP and MQM. However, the scale of MMA's success surprised both its supporters and opponents.<sup>60</sup>

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59 *Ibid.*

60 Waseem, *Democratization in Pakistan*, p.156.

In the 2002 national elections a total of seventy three political parties participated, out of which only seventeen could manage a place on the score sheet while the rest of the parties played their role only to the extent of participation. Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-i-Azam has emerged as the single largest party with 77 seats. However, it received fewer votes as compared to Pakistan People Party Parliamentarians, which won only 62 seats. The PML-Q received 7.33 million votes or 24.8 percent of the votes polled whereas the PPP-P had 7.39 million votes or 25.01 percent of the total votes polled. The situation of the six religio-political parties, the MMA surprised many observers by winning 52 seats, including seven independents from the tribal areas who were elected with MMA's backing. But it seemed that MMA's victory was mainly in the areas where relatively fewer votes were polled, as it received just over 3.29 million votes, and its overall percentage comes to 11.10 percent of the total. In comparison, the PML-N won mere 14 seats. However, its candidates polled a total of 3.32 million votes or 11.23 percent, slightly higher than that of the MMA.<sup>61</sup> The pro-government party PML-Q got more seats as compared to others including PPP and PML-N. The new entry of Islamist coalition emerged the third largest group on the national level.

These elections were unique in many ways. It was marked by controversy and intrigues, the emergence of a new class of politicians, the absence of ideology, the return of the religious minorities to the political mainstream and a significantly great number of women candidates. Although the mainstream politicians were barred from the contest yet the fact remained that no political party of any repute boycotted these elections. This high level of participation had lent at least a semblance of credibility to these elections.<sup>62</sup>

On provincial level the electoral situation was quite predictable. The Punjab sided with the military establishment, mainly due to the Chaudhry of Gujrat. The PML-Q emerged as the largest party by winning 68 seats out of 148 National Assembly seats whereas the PPP-P managed to win 35 National Assembly seats from the Punjab province. The next in cadre was PML-N which won 14 seats from the whole province. Although the PPP-P and PML-N could not manage to get majority National Assembly seats yet the PPP-P got votes even more than the votes won by the PML-Q. While in Sindh, though, the situation proved to be uglier than any other province. With the military

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61 *The Nation*, 19 October 2002.

62 *The Herald*, October, 2002, p.18.

establishment desperately seeking to dent the PPP's hold on this key southern province, its lackeys in the National Alliance and the various factions of the PML left few stones unturned to keep the party in check. But the PPP hit back with as much force and at the end of the day, led the seats tally with 27 out of the 61 national assembly seats from this province. The MQM while losing some key constituencies in its urban strongholds, was still able to notch up a tally of 13. What was surprising, though, was the ability of smaller entities such as the PML-F and the NA to win some seats to help them become players in the post-poll power struggle.

The PPP-P emerged as the largest party in Sind by winning 27 out of 61 national assembly seats whereas MQM managed to win 13 seats. MMA got six national assembly seats, National Alliance and PML-Q five seats each, PML-F three seats, and one each by Muhajir Qaumi Movement and an independent candidate.

In the October 2002 national elections, the new entry of the Islamists coalition, the MMA, emerged the third largest group on the national level and it captured strong position and maximum seats in the Pakhtun-majority areas of NWFP. The success of MMA in this province was a big upset to the nationalist groups particularly to Awami National Party because it was the first time when they faced defeat by the hands of Mullahs. The ANP suffered the heaviest defeat of its history. It failed to win even a single national assembly seat from this province. Its policy of seat adjustments with the PPP-P was unpopular with the workers of both parties. So the MMA defeated the rest of the political parties in the NWFP and secured twenty nine national assembly seats out of thirty five seats whereas PML-Q got four and PPP-Sherpao won two seats.

During these elections, the MMA, PML-Q, JWP, BNP and PMAP were expected to be the main contesters while dealing with the national assembly elections from Balochistan. In the Pakhtun belt, the PMAP was contesting against the JUI-F, which was equally popular on both sides of the ethnic divide. The PML-Q popularly known as the "King's Party", appeared to be in a strong position since most of Balochistan's traditional political families were contesting from its platform. However, the constituency wise result showed that MMA while contesting on national assembly seats from Balochistan got victory on six seats, PML-Q two seats and one each by NA, BNP, JWP, PML-N, PMAP and an independent candidate.