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**THE POLITICS OF RELIGIO-POLITICAL PARTIES, MUTTAHIDA
MAJLES-E-AMAL:
(A STUDY OF 2002 GENERAL ELECTIONS)**

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Abstract

The political history of Pakistan revealed that despite of its active involvement in the political process, the religio-political parties always failed to gain success in the elections and achieve notable parliamentary representation. However, in October 2002 elections, for the first time, a sizeable part of the population voted for the religio-political parties under the banner of Muttahida Majles-e-Amal (MMA), a conglomeration of six religious parties. While using the anti-Americanism and Islamist card, the religious parties not only made inroad into the parliament but replaced the mainstream PPP and PML-N in certain regions of the country including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. This paper attempts to examine the causes that led to MMA's success in the 2002 general elections and to evaluate its implications on Pakistan political system.

Background

The religious parties have been counted in the list of those political forces that are involved in the decision making and actively engaged in the political process of Pakistan since independence (Bindra, 1990). Most of the religious parties of Pakistan originated in the pre-partition of India, in the early 20th century. The Majority of these religious parties strongly opposed the two-nation theory (Pakistan Movement). The Jamaat-i-Islami; the leading religious party of Pakistan under the leadership of Abu Ala Maududi opposed the creation of Muslim State. Abu Ala Maududi's opposition to the separate Muslim state was based on the notion that Muslim league is a Liberal moderate political party and it will harm its Islamic identity (Nasr, 2004).

After the creation of Pakistan these religious forces shifted their political agenda's pro- Pakistan and initiated struggle for converting Pakistan into an Islamic State for their own political expediency. The religious entities and the Shariah lobby in the Muslim League quickly called for an Islamic constitution, as they called themselves the Custodian of Islam. As a result, the Objectives Resolution was incorporated in the preamble of 1956 constitution on their demand (Malik, 2011). During the early years of Pakistan's independence, the religious parties including Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam(JUI), Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP), Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), Majles-e-Ahrrar and others under the banner of All Muslim Parties Action Council (AMPAC) launched an Anti-Ahmadya Movement, which demanded to declare the Ahmadi's and Qadianians as non-Muslims and to dismiss the Ahmadi Foreign Minister, Zafar Ullah Khan from his Ministry (Khan, 1999).

During Ayub's Military Rule (1958-69), the religious entities remained the part of anti-military movements. The leading religious parties JI and JUP were actively engaged in anti-Ayub movements. During the presidential election of 1965, the religious parties JUP and JI supported Miss Fatima Jinnah against General Ayoub Khan. In the 1970 elections, under the LFO of Yahya Khan, the three broad base religious parties, JUP, JUI, and JI fielded 299 candidates in East & West wings of Pakistan. In these 299 nominees of three religio-political parties, only eighteen were elected to the parliament (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2011).

The Islamist parties during the civilian government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977), perceived to Islamize the political system of Pakistan, for this notion the Islamist religious partners united under the banner of anti-PPP, Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) to oust the socialist Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from Government. The participant religious parties were demanding for the system of prophet (Nizam-i-Mustafa), in meanwhile the PPP swept the 1977 polls which were declared as rigged by the PNA, and thus they start countrywide agitations. In the legislative assembly of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the role of religious parties was very limited (Crisis Group Asia report, 2011). In 1977, with one master stroke General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88) changed the entire polity of country from a modern progressive state to a theoretic, Islamic state. The religious parties ganged up around General Zia ul Haq began to move to the Centre-stage of Pakistan politics and became as bastion of power of General Zia regime (The News, 2002). During the cold war politics, General Zia-ul-Haq regime in Pakistan played an important role in the growth of religious parties and several new religious parties and Jihadi organizations were formed. Until the soviet interventions in Afghanistan there were only thirty religious parties in Pakistan in which only a few, mainly the Deobandi's were politically active (Times, April 17, 2003). After the Death of General Zia ul Haq, Pakistan reverted into the democratic transition in which the religious parties participated in the electoral politics of 1988 and 1990 and were limited to a few seats under the banner of Isami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI). In the general elections of 1993, the

Pakistan Islamic Front grabbed only a few seats while the other religious parties were the allied of Pakistan People Party. Again, in the 1997 polls the religious parties did not perform well and were limited to a few seats. Thus, during these ten years the religious parties did not play any major role in Pakistani politics (The News, September 29, 2002).

Musharraf's Pro-American Policies and the Emergence of Muttahida Majles-e-Amal (MMA)

During the Mid-1990s, the religious violence in Karachi and other parts of the country led to the arrest of many religious entities and ban on many religious schools. This led religious fanatics to put their differences aside and get united for the survival of their identity. As a result, a broad base alliance of all the major and minor religious groups was formed with the name of Milli Yakehti Council (MYC) (Memon, 1997). During this era the Taliban regime was enjoying the kingship protocol in the near bordering Afghanistan. The Afghan polity greatly affected the domestic politics of Pakistan and the Jihadi organization and religious groups supported the Taliban regime and waged loyalties in their favor. In meanwhile General Pervez Musharraf overthrew the elected government of Nawaz Sharif and seized the power on 12th October 1999. He was trying to accommodate the religious and Islamist forces to his fold but all the hell broke loose on September 11, 2001 when the terrorists attacked on world trade Centre. This event put Pakistan on the back foot and the United States of America directed Pakistan to change their policy with the provisions, to cut ties with Taliban regime in Afghanistan and stop the Jihadi militant groups mushroomed inside Pakistan (Hasan, October 16, 2002).

On October 7, 2001, the United States intervention in Afghanistan, indiscriminately killed thousands of innocent people in carpet bombing attacks. This brought Pakistan in the front-line state in the American scheme, as result the Musharraf government under the severe pressure from bush administration launched a crackdown against the radical religious parties and Jihadi groups which were involved in the promotion of terrorism. This phenomenon was not matched with the masses and promotes anti-Americanism amongst them (Hasan, 2002).

In the changed political culture, Musharraf promised with the people that the election would be held in October 2002 under the LFO, which enables the mullahs to contest the elections having the madrassah degrees equal to bachelor and master degrees. The religious parties, in order to boost their electoral performance in the October 2002 polls united under the name of Muttahida Majles-e-Amal (United Action Council).

Components Political Parties of Muttahida Majles-e-Amal (MMA)

The alliance of religious parties Muttahida Majles-e-Amal (United Action Council) was composed of six prominent Religio-Political Parties of the country. These political parties under the banner of MMA, aside their ideological differences and united for a common political agenda or interest. These parties include (i) Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan of Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F), (ii) Jama'at-i-Islami of Qazi Hussain Ahmad (JI), (iii) Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan of Shah Ahmad Noorani (JUP-N), (iv) Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Sami Ul Haq Group (JUI-S), (v) the Shia based Islami Tehrik-Pakistan (ITP) of Syed Sajid Naqvi, and (vi) Jamiat Ahle Hadith of Maulana Sajid Mir. Beside these six parties, MMA was supported by a number other small factions and Jihadi organizations (The Herald, November, 2002).

Muttahida Majles-e-Amal Manifesto for 2002 General Elections

The Alliance of religious forces MMA, included a detailed program in its manifesto for the 2002 elections, in which they promised for Roti (Bread), Kapra (Clothes) and Makan (Shelter). It also called for the health and educational facilities. The Alliance also promised in their manifesto for the elimination of feudal system from the country and the equal and cost-free distribution of the state land among the landless peasants of the country. The industrial labours will be given the shares in the factories; their salaries and wages will be increased. They will be allowed to form unions for the protection of their rights (Dawn, August 24, 2002).

They declared that Quran and Sunnah will be the supreme law of Pakistan and the future legislation will be drafted in accordance with the recommendations of Islamic Ideological Council. They also called for a federal parliamentary system in the country, MMA also called for Provincial autonomy in its manifesto with due shares in natural resources, it also called for the decentralization of power to the local representatives. Basic rights of every individual will be guaranteed, the elimination of corruption, oppression and violence will be ensured and all the unjust taxes will be withdrawn. The rights of women will be ensured in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah. The MMA also called for the rights of Minorities, and called for the protection of their lives, properties, worship places, and as a citizen equal treatment before law of the state (Noorani, 2002).

The MMA also called for the economic reforms in the country under a sustained check & balance system and to ensure just distribution of money and wealth rather than in a few hands. They also called for interest free banking system in their manifesto. MMA also called for the promotion of industrial sector with the withdrawal of unjust taxes and the development of cottage industry. The alliance also called for a uniform education system in the country with the provision that the education up to middle class will be free, to improve the literacy rate. They also called for the health programmes with sustained health care units in the country, they also gave the provision of employment to the educated youngsters, and healthy recreational activities for them. Muttahida Majles-e-Amal also called for the supremacy of law and speedy justice without discrimination on the basis of race, color etc. They also ensured the freedom of media, strong defense and nuclear capability of the country. The Alliance also called for an independent sovereign policy with the provisions of Active support to the independent movement in Kashmir, Chechnya, Palestine and other Muslim countries (Dawn, August 24, 2002).

MMA Nominated Candidates for the NA/PA Seats

Muttahida Majles-e-Amal throughout the country nominated their candidates for the October 2002 elections, all these candidates contested the election with the election symbol "BOOK". The break-up of all the candidates from the four provinces and tribal areas for the national assembly were as; In the Punjab, MMA nominated 117 candidates for 148 National Assembly seats. Similarly, in Sindh for 61 national assembly seats, MMA nominated 45 candidates. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on all 35 constituencies MMA nominated their candidates. In Baluchistan, MMA nominated 14 candidates while 12 candidates were nominated for the tribal areas. The chief of JI contested the NA-5 and NA-34 constituencies while the head of JUI-F was allotted the NA-24 & NA-25 and Sajid Ali Naqvi NA-56 (Dawn, August 24, 2002).

For the provincial assemblies, MMA nominated their candidates with the given break-up, for 293 seats of Punjab assembly, MMA nominated 193 candidates, in Sindh 100 out of 103, in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa MMA nominated 90 out of 99, while in Baluchistan MMA nominated 40 candidates out of 51 provincial assembly seats. MMA also nominated candidates 45 out of 60 women seats throughout the four provinces. A written oath was also taken from the candidates to surrender in case of electoral adjustment with other parties (Dawn, 2002).

Constitution of Muttahida Majles-e-Amal (MMA)

Constitution is a written or non-written document through which an organization is smoothly governed. The alliance of religious parties Muttahida Majles-e-Amal devised a unanimous constitution for the smooth running of alliance and owed to keep united its component parties. Its constitution was comprised of one president, four vice presidents and one general secretary, this arrangement was designed with a view to accommodate all six parties. The president and General Secretary Post will be rotate each after six months amongst the member parties of the alliance (The News, October 20, 2002).

Elections 2002 Results

The 2002 general elections in Pakistan produced a very impressive result for the religious parties under the banner MMA, better than any of the previous elections that were held in Pakistan. In the national assembly election, the alliance of religious parties, MMA obtained 3.19 million of electoral votes (11 % of the total with 45 seats), in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muttahida Majles-e-Amal secured 82% of national assembly seats. In other parties, Pakistan People Party (PPP) scores 7.39 million of electoral votes (80 NA seats), the pro-government PML-Q gained 7.3 million votes (with 115 NA seats) while Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) obtained 3.32 million electoral votes. Thus, the religious parties joined forth position amongst the popular votes in the form of MMA and it was expected that MMA will form a coalition government with PML-Q at Centre, but MMA choose to set on the opposition benches with Maulana Fazlur Rehman as their opposition leader (Nasr, 2004).

In provincial assembly elections, Muttahida Majles-e-Amal showed more or less the same result as showed in the National Assembly, in KPK Muttahida Majles-e-Amal became the largest party with 51 seats out of 101 Provincial Assembly seats and formed its full-fledged government with Akram Durrani of JUI-F as Chief Minister. In Baluchistan in a tally of 51 seats, Muttahida Majles-e-Amal secured 14 seats and formed coalition government with Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam. In the populous province of Pakistan, Punjab the Alliance of religious parties failed to convince the voters with their manifesto and grabbed only eight seats out of 297 seats. In Sindh province MMA secured only eleven 11 seats out of 130. Thus, the result of elections showed one thing very common that in the Pakhtuns dominance provinces, the people voted overwhelmingly for the cause of Islamization, while rest of the country shied away and voted to their traditional guardians (Nasr, 2004).

Factors Behind MMA'S Surprise Victory

The political culture of Pakistan has always been polarized between the civilian rulers and the military dictators. At different times, it favoured one or the other. Pakistan's political history demonstrates that its major portion is governed by the nonpolitical institutions rather than the political in the shape of long spells of military regime. On October 12, 1999 the civilian Government of Nawaz Sharif was ousted by the military General, General Pervez Musharraf. The 12th October military coup was the fourth military coup in Pakistan and it is after more than

one decade (1988-1999) that Military institution find opportunity for another coups d'état, and as a result General Pervez Musharraf became the Chief Executive of Pakistan (The News, October 13, 1999). General Pervez Musharraf after assuming the power consolidated his position through referendum, barred the leadership of mainstream political parties and brought certain controversial amendments in the constitution (The News, November 13, 2000).

The tragic incident of 9/11 and the subsequent intervention of United States of America in Afghanistan under the name of pursuance of Al-Qaida's leaders Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar abruptly changed the culture of global politics in general and that of Pakistan in particular. The political history of Pakistan demonstrates onething that its political climate always leads to the success of one political party and the failure of another political party, thus at that time of 2002 polls, the fortune favoured the cobble of religious parties as they very cleverly used the card of anti-Americanism and anti-government during their election campaign and as a result the alliance of religious parties staged in opposition in the National Assembly and installed its government in two provinces i.e. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. It was a new thing in Pakistan political history that the multifaceted religious parties of the country, who formed a rare electoral alliance under the name of MMA to contest the October 2002 polls and for the first time have won remarkable seats in the national assembly and became the third largest party in the national assembly after the pro-government PML (Q) and PPP (The Economist, November 9, 2002).

The electoral trajectory of Pakistan revealed that for the first time the religious parties won such number of seats in the national assembly and it was more interesting that for the second time the one-party government was installed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was back in 1946 that the pro-congress Khudai Khedmatgar of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan swept the elections and formed its ministry under Dr. Khan Sahib (the elder brother of Bacha Khan). Throughout the political history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, ethnicity, Afghan cause and Pakhtun nationalism remained the dominant factors in its politics and this card was very successfully used by the pro-congress party of Bacha Khan (Badshah Khan) but it is also a fact that the Pakhtuns are very staunch religious and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan himself was a very devoted religious person (Educated at Deoband) (Shah, 1999).

Thus, after the fall of Taliban and the US led intervention in Afghanistan greatly affected the political culture of Pakistan and during the 2002 general elections it benefited the alliance of religious parties. The factors which contributed to the MMA victory and the failure of other parties are summarized as under.

Unification of the Religious Parties

The unification of religious parties on a common and shared platform of MMA was the most reliable factor behind the overwhelming victory of United Action Council. All the religio-political parties in the united action council set aside their ideological differences and joined hands for a joint struggle (The News, October 18, 2002). According to the Naib Ameer of Jama'at-e-Islami, the only and the foremost important factor behind the landslide victory of Mutahida Majles-e-Amal in the October, 2002 polls was the unity amongst the religious parties. He argued that the religious parties never united with such spirit and when united under the banner of MMA got success (Saleemi, 2002). A long history of electoral failure of the religious parties gave birth to a pure alliance of Religio-political parties MMA, in past the religious

political parties contested the polls either with independent status or enter with some political alliance which never benefited the religious parties and thus the religious parties were limited only to a few seats. Before the MMA, the religious parties, Jama'at-i- Islami, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam and Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan were the (PNA), a pre-electoral alliance formed for 1977 election(The News, September 29, 2002).

The Role of Madrassah's

Madrassah's have also provided great electoral support for MMA success during the October 2002 polls. The presence of Madaris in the region play handy ballot game for religious parties (Malik,2011). According to the chief of Jamaat-i-Islami Qazi Hussain Ahmad, the Madaris played a vital role in the success of MMA in the 2002 general elections. He also argued that where there were the strong Madrassah's institutions, the alliance showed very good result, such as in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. The Madrassah's not only provide the street power but also cadre for electoral rallies during the election campaign and provide a great support in their electoral victory (Mutahir, 2002).

According to a survey published in Daily newspaper, the News on 20 October 2002, there are six thousand Madaris in Pakistan, out of which 2333 Madaris belongs to Deobandi School of thought, 1625 Madaris associated with Baralvi Sect, 224 Madaris belongs to the Ahle-Hadees and 124 belongs to the Shia sect. Moreover, 815 madaris are affiliated with the Deobandi fiction of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), fifty-eight madaris belong to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-S), 120 madaris affiliated with Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) 67 affiliated with the Sipha-e-Sahaba Pakistan, 119 belong to Tehrik-e-Jafaria and 2969 miscellaneous (The News, October 20, 2002). Thus, during the 2002 polls the religious parties were well backed by these Madaris and which acknowledged it a well-disciplined and highly organized political force in Pakistan. After the 9/11 tragic incident, Musharraf due to the increasing pressure from Bush administration launched a crackdown against the religious Madaris and Jihadi organization in Pakistan with the view that these religious institutions are providing a nursery and breeding ground for the Islamist militants. This gives a boosting effect to the religious fanaticism and further reunited the religious parties. It also gave a negative impact and as a result the hatred was boosted against the United States of America and Musharraf, thus the crackdown on the Jihadi organizations and religious Madaris further boosted the activities of religious including the Madrassah's institutions (Mohammadzai, 2002).

The Pro-Taliban and Anti-Government Policy of MMA

According to the Naib Amir of Jama'at-i-Islami, Chaudhri Aslam Saleemi, the pro-Afghan and the pro-Taliban policy and the anti-government policy of the religious parties in the 2002 general election was one of the catalyst factors behind its success. During the election campaign the religious parties in their rallies and gatherings openly criticized Musharraf's policy; support to US led war against terrorism, in which the military government in Pakistan provided Airbases to the US-led Alliances in which a large number of innocent people across the border were killed. This phenomenon developed hatredness among the masses against the Musharraf regime and the people of Pakistan, particularly that of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan bordering Afghanistan, voted overwhelmingly for MMA (Saleemi, 2002).

The political elites believe that Musharraf's policies were responsible for the success of MMA during the 2002 general elections. Musharraf regime created a political vacuum which was very

wisely filled by the religious stakeholders of Mutahida Majles-e-Aamal. Leadership of religious parties opposed the policies of military government towards Afghanistan while the other mainstream parties did not address these issues (Ijaz, 2002).

Absence of the Leaders of Mainstream Parties (PPP and PML-N)

After assuming the power, General Pervez Musharraf introduced certain measures to curtail the influence of mainstream parties as they were considered a threat to their regime and to advantage his King party in the October 2002 polls. The leadership of two major and dominant parties, Benazir Bhutto of PPP and Nawaz Sharif of PML-N were barred from the country's politics and their parties were broken into different factions by the military government (Nasr, 2004). Moreover, the military government under the name of improving the quality of parliamentary representation, revised the qualification and eligibility for contesting the 2002 general elections; It provided that a person having Bachelor degree or Madrassah certificate equal to B.A can contest the forthcoming October 2002 polls. This condition eliminates and ousted many veteran politicians of mainstream parties from politics and covertly benefited the electoral alliance of religious parties (MMA) (The Herald, November 2002).

Ethnic (Pakhtun) Factor

The ethnic (Pakhtun) factor was also far more important and has been dominant rather than the religious element for the Mutahida Majles-e-Amal victory in the 2002 general elections. The Pakhtun factor was of two folded; first, all the leaders of religious parties in Mutahida Majles-e-Amal except of Shah Ahmad Noorani of JUP-N, belongs to the Pakhtun belt either Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or Baluchistan. The political elites are of the view that this factor cannot be ignored while searching the causes of its success in 2002 polls (Nasr, 2004).

Second, the alliance of religious parties in Pakistan used the Pakhtun card very handsomely during their election campaign. The religious stallholders associated with politics assure the masses of Pakistan in general and that of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan in particular, that the ongoing war against terrorism in Afghanistan is a crusade against the Muslims and Pakhtuns. Furthermore, the destruction caused by the war against terrorism in the neighbor country created an impression that it is actually the Pakhtun-Specific war across the border (Dawn, October 4, 2002). The Alliance of religious parties, who had close ties with the Jihadi organizations operated in Afghanistan organized massive rallies and demonstrations opposing US strikes against Pakhtuns by US led alliance. It served as fuel to the fire against the anti-government and anti-war sentiments in Pakistan, especially in the Pakhtun dominant regions. Thus, the Pakhtuns considered MMA as the champions of their rights and the guardian of afghans (Pakhtun) cause. As a result, on polling day they overwhelmingly used their votes in favor of MMA (Qazi, 2002).

Political and Economic Crisis

The political and economic frustration of the masses served as a triumph card for Mutahida Majles-e-Amal in 2002 elections. Since 1980s to 2000s, the Pakistan masses tasted a number of alternate governments one after other. The people became fed up with the traditional dynastic politics of PPP and PML-N and they wanted a change in the political and administrative spheres. In the economic aspect, under the feudal lords since last few decades there has been very little economic development took place. Pakistan is an agriculture country and there is no

development introduced in this sector. Since the decline in industrial, education, health and social sectors created frustration and unrest amongst the masses and this frustration was reflected in the electioneering of MMA (Qazi, 2002).

Religio-Autonomism and the Election Symbol as “BOOK”

Mutahida Majles-e-Amal during its election campaign assured the people that “our destination is not to reach the government; our destination is to implement the Islamic laws and Shariah in the country”. Thus, among the MMA most prominent actions, the enforcing of Islamic laws and system of prophet (Nizam-i- Mustafa) in the country, provided a broad base electoral support for them and specially the Pakhtuns have had by birth both the qualities of religious and ethnicity that’s why in Pakhtuns dominant regions (KPK and Baluchistan), people warmly welcomed the Shariat lobby of religious parties in 2002 general elections (Malik, 2011).

During the October 2002 polls, Mutahida Majles-e-Amal was allocated the symbol of book. During their election campaign, in the Conferences and Friday sermons, the leadership of MMA told the people that it is mandatory upon them to cast their votes in favor of Book. They told the people that this is not an ordinary book, it is the Holy Quran and the election they called that it is the Battle between Islam and Kufr, therefore those who casted their votes against MMA will go against Islam. On polling Day, the masses particularly the Pakhtuns who had firm affinity with religion (Islam) came out from their homes and cast their votes in favor of book (The News, October 1, 2002).

The 9/11 Incident and Anti-Americanism

On 11th September 2001, the terrorists entered into the heart of United State of America and destroyed the world trade Centre. This incident abruptly changed the global politics and once again the international politics was shifted to South Asia (Afghanistan), as on October 07 2001, the United State of America launched war against terrorism in Afghanistan. Pakistan became the frontline state in the US war against terrorism (Hasan, 2002). The military government of General Pervez Musharraf strongly supported the US policies and became a US ally in War against Terrorism. This further ignited the anti-Americanism feelings in the masses, particularly in the provinces contiguous to Afghanistan (Malik, 2011). The religious parties in Pakistan which always opposed the US policies towards the Muslims and possess great sympathies for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The anti-Muslim policies of USA were did not accepted by the hardline Islamic Parties, thus further backlash the anti-Americanism sentiments. This development enhanced the vote bank of religious parties and as a result they gain a countrywide fame in the polls especially in the two afghan bordering provinces (Ijaz, 2002). The unprecedented success of MMA also proved the July 2002 statement of Congressman, Gary Ackerman wrong, in which he stated that “The Islamist Parties have never done well in the elections in Pakistan” (Dawn, October 26, 2002).

Government and Politics of MMA; An Analysis

The success of Mutahida Majles-e-Amal in 2002 elections demonstrated that since the inception of Pakistan, Islam is highly instrumental in the political milieu and it has been used as a tool of safeguard by the rulers to legitimize and prolong their regimes. The state guardians and the political elites used religion as a tool in their internal and external affairs and they very easily accomplish their personal interests and political objectives with the use of religious card

(Mashriq, September 17, 2007). As the religion is very dearer to the people of Pakistan, thus since the independence of Pakistan religion is used as the most reliable force in the politics of the country and after the 1970s, religious and Islamist forces achieved vital success by using the religion and Islamist card in politics as it defined a frame work of their interests in domestic and international politics (Nasr, 2004).

During the military regime Zia, the Islamist factor was very highly instrumental in the political process, once again the military ruler, Musharraf was associated with fundamentalist Islamist forces. His regime was largely responsible for the emergence of religious forces in the October 2002 General elections, in the shape of Mutahida Majles-e-Amal. However, its electoral success also suggested that MMA would be an alternative to the main stream political parties which shattered the feudal class and encourage the middle class, because majority of their members of Provincial and National assembly were belong to the middle class and they were easily accessible to masses. The MMA government gave promotion to Mosque and Hujra, and they used these religious and social institutions, as the political institutions for the conflict resolutions and crisis. The protocol and the VIP culture were vanished by the MMA while austerity and simplicity in life style was given by the alliance, which add a far-reaching effect on the democratic culture of Pakistan (Shah, 2008).

After establishing government in two provinces and setting on the opposition benches in the national assembly, MMA declared that they have no Taliban like agenda, which was later on made apparent by their policies and approach. As the MMA government followed the traditional democratic approach towards the political matters and its policies did not matched with Taliban government, such as their education policies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the women participation in education and the women representation in politics, their participations in government jobs, in sports tourism and other departments (Shah, 2008).

As an alliance, the main problem that was faced by MMA was its internal differences. Soon, their ideological and theological differences amongst the constituent parties were emerged. Its constituent parties belong to different sects such as Sunni, Shia, Deobandi, Ahle Hadith and Baralvi. Their ideological and doctrinal differences did not allow them to devise on coherent and uniform scheme to interpret the word Islam and Islamic system. Beside these contradictions in ideas, they have also personal and political clashes within the alliance, which further made infective the alliance and no one was agreeing to accept each other. The smaller partners were persistently ignored by the bigger ones and time to time they give threats that they will part their ways and will say goodbye if they were not treated equally, as a result Maulana Sami ul Haq (JUI-S) parted his ways from alliance in December 2005 (Shah, 2008).

Beside these internal ups and downs, the role of Muttahida Majles-e-Amal in the Centre was not more than the friendly oppositions and the political analyst called them as the B-team of military-cum President General Pervez Musharraf, and it was true because MMA supported General Pervez Musharraf in every trouble situation throughout his regime. MMA compromised its stature when it strokes a deal with Military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf on Legal Framework Order (LFO), which helped Musharraf in the approval of 17th amendment which brought several changes dealt with the office of president and empowered Musharraf to remain the president of Pakistan in Uniform. This deal also benefited the alliance to complete its governments in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which was not possible if they confronted with Musharraf (Mashriq, 2007).

When APDM was formed in July 2007 with sole purpose to resist General Pervez Musharraf in the presidential election of October 2007, MMA was its partner and it kept away PPP to join this alliance, which paved way for PPP to deal with Musharraf (Dawn, July 09, 2007). In September 2007, when All Parties Democratic Alliance (APDM) decided that they will resist Musharraf from presidential election on 6th October, at any cost even they will be resigned from their seats. When the APDM meeting was called on 29 September, the Head of MMA, Maulana Fazlur Rehman left to Saudi Arabia for Umra, which articulated his intentions to weakened the strategy of the alliance. In the same way when the APDM decided that the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will dissolve the assembly before the presidential election to resist Musharraf, once again one of MMA's component party put forward the no-confidence vote against CM in order to facilitate Musharraf presidential election and as a result Musharraf was elected for the second time as president of Pakistan for five years. Thus, throughout the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf, MMA served the function of merely a Mullah-Military Alliance. These developments created vehement rifts in the MMA and eventually led to the detachment of Jama'at-i-Islami just before the February 2008 elections (Mashriq, October 08, 2007). As the Chief of Jama'at-i-Islami, Qazi Hussain Ahmad said "Mutahida Majles-e-Amal ceased to be an Electoral Alliance but an ideological coalition" (The News, December 13, 2007).

Conclusion

The election-oriented MMA, a cobble of six religious parties, introducing themselves as "soldiers of Islam and protectors of democracy" came into existence in 2002 just before the elections. The unification of religio-political parties in the prevailing political atmosphere with its pro-Taliban anti-Americanism and anti-government stance enables the MMA parties to form its government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan while adjusted itself in the oppositions at the Centre. During its government, the main problem faced by MMA was their ideological and theological differences, which did not allow them to devise a coherent and uniform scheme, to interpret the word Islam and Islamic system. After setting in the lucrative and fascinating offices, the religious leaders did not express any disagreement to the military dictator and even benefited the military ruler at the cost of all the civilized and democratic values. Moreover, MMA compromised its stature when it strokes a deal with the Military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf on Legal Framework Order (LFO), which helped Musharraf in the 17th amendment and brought several changes dealt with the office of president and empowered Musharraf to remain the president of Pakistan in Uniform.

In July 2007, General Pervez Musharraf, with the help of MMA and some other politicians strengthened his regime so much that he announced presidential election with the purpose to re-elect himself for the next five years as a president of Pakistan which became the core reason of MMA's dismemberment just before the 2008 elections.

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