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IDENTIFYING THE BLIND SPOTS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING ACADEMIC DISCOURSE ON THE PAKISTAN LAWYERS' MOVEMENT

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**Rizwan Sarwar Sulehry, Derek Wallace. Identifying The Blind Spots: A Critical
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ABSTRACT

Discourse, including academic discourse, is rhetorical. Following this line of reasoning, we undertake a comparative, thematic discourse analysis of the existing body of political science research on the Lawyers' Movement of Pakistan using the insights provided by CDA. Through our analysis, we argue that not just social phenomena but also the academic discourses through which those social phenomena are communicated to the world of research should be put under the microscope as the latter can contribute to perpetuating political injustice by simply affirming the discourses of the prevailing political environment as opposed to unpacking, studying and critiquing them. The findings of this research have implications for the fields of communication, political science and discourse analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The Lawyers' Movement of Pakistan represents a watershed moment in Pakistan's political history. Triggered by the forced removal from office of the then Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, this movement was a truly national movement which mobilized people belonging to all walks of life, all socio-political persuasions and all economic strata. According to many (e.g., Ahmed & Stephan, 2010; Munir, 2009; Note, 2010; Shafqat, 2018), this movement led to the strengthening of the judiciary, affirmation of rule of law, removal of a military dictator (Gen. Musharraf) and, ultimately, restoration of an all-inclusive parliamentary democracy.

Importantly, this movement had open support from the news media of Pakistan. The latter were monolithic as far as the movement and the main actors associated with it were concerned. (See, for example, Note 2010, Ahmed & Stephan 2010).

The article begins with a brief introduction to the history of the Pakistan Lawyers' Movement. Following that, it summarizes the context and rationale for the study. It then provides an overview of the methodological approach followed by a brief introductory account of the existing political science scholarship on Lawyers' Movement. The next sections are devoted to identification of the main themes followed by analysis and discussion of the various researchers' discursive strategies focusing on the construction of those themes. Informed by the analysis, the article then identifies the blind spots within the existing scholarship and suggests directions for future research.

Context Of the Study

The Lawyers' Movement for restoration of CJP Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and the higher judiciary of Pakistan was a historic movement which radically changed/transformed the country's socio-political landscape. Likewise, the academic discourse on this movement can impact the readers' beliefs who in turn impact the world based on their resultantly altered or affirmed beliefs. It is therefore important to analyze the academic discourse on the Lawyers' Movement in order to not only facilitate self-awareness among researchers but also to improve academic inquiry.

A major lacuna in the existing academic discourse on the LM is the unproblematized ways in which this movement and the major players associated with it have been constructed and represented. We have observed that almost all the research endeavours have taken the same path leading, perhaps unconsciously, to affirmation of the political discourses which were dominant at the time of this movement. Resultantly, not much is known about some very important aspects of this politically consequential movement. Identifying those aspects is one of the aims of this research. Through that identification, we also aim to find an answer to "how scholars come to speak and write as they do, as well as how their styles influence the conduct and content of their research" (Nelson, 1998: pp. 7-8) using the existing body of research on the Lawyers' Movement of Pakistan as our object of study.

Why Investigate Academic Discourse?

As Devereux and Power (2019) point out, different scholars in the field of discourse analysis (e.g., Fairclough 1989, 1995; Dijk, 1988, 1998; Wodak, 1985, 2008) have worked extensively on the function of language as power. Following their examples, researchers with different disciplinary affiliations have conducted (and continue to do so) extensive studies on different issues and phenomena and produced their findings in the form of research articles. However, to-date scant, if any, attention has been paid to the discourse of those research studies which, itself a product of discourse.

Nelson (1998) argues that, “every field does its work through argument” which is aimed at persuading the reader. Put in one word, “every field is rhetorical” (ibid., p. 5). Rhetoric or persuasive argumentation is a very important part of academic discourse. The way a research study is argumentatively put out has implications because academic discourse is effectively an exercise in persuasion which can “alter the beliefs” (Nelson, 1998: p. 7). It is therefore important to analyze the academic discourse “to facilitate self-reflection” (ibid.: p. 6). It becomes more important when we note that “[c]hange in the world typically includes change in politics” which “mandates change in political inquiry” (Nelson, 1998: p. 10).

However, while research practices are being established towards analyzing policy documents as sites of political “war[s] of positions” (Marchart, 2018), (see, for example, Griggs and Howarth, 2002; Griggs and Howarth, 2013; Glynos et al., 2015; Remling; 2017; MacKillop, 2018), to the best of our knowledge, no effort has been made as yet to scrutinize the discourse of academic research in any discipline. The present article is going to be the first such effort. For the purpose of this research, we focus on the discourse of research within the field of political science using the existing scholarship on the Lawyers’ Movement of Pakistan as our object of analysis.

Why Investigate Political Science Discourse?

Nelson (1998) spells out four reasons for giving primacy to inquiry into the academic discourse in the field of political science. These are summarized below:

1. Rhetoric or persuasive argumentation began as political science. Thus, the connection between rhetoric and the discourse of political science is naturally an automatic choice.
2. Rhetoric of inquiry into the academic discourse views academic disciplines as political systems. Hence the issues and methods of political science prove crucial for rhetoric of inquiry into the discourse of political science.
3. Rhetoric comprehends not only what is communicated but the conditions, processes, effects, improvements, and comparative character of communication within the field of political science. Study of political science discourse is thus a study of the politics of political inquiry.
4. Political scientists are leaders in creating rhetoric of inquiry as a discernible focus of research. This situation reflects the special importance of politics for rhetoric, and thus of political science for the rhetoric of inquiry into the academic discourse of political science.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

We used the electronic database maintained by the library of Victoria University of Wellington¹ using the keywords “lawyers’ movement” and “Pakistan”. The

¹ This database, because of its integration with google, google scholar, ProQuest, JStor, Taylor & Francis, and other such mainstream repositories yields as exhaustive results as they could get. This ensures that no data item(s) has been left out of the purview of this study.

search yielded a dataset comprised of 252 full length research articles. Using hand coding technique, we skimmed through the data for relevance and focus. As a result, 10 comprehensive research articles were shortlisted for detailed analysis. The rest of the data, although it touched on the movement, was removed from consideration because of two reasons: one, it was not primarily focused on the Lawyers' Movement and, two, because of the focus elsewhere, their analysis was not aimed at examining and critiquing the Lawyers' Movement. Following this shortlisting, the dataset was further classified according to its disciplinary origins in order to facilitate a more systematic inquiry. This classification led to division of the dataset into three disciplinary subsets of political science, news media and law. For the purpose of this article, we retained the research on political science for further analysis. The next stage was data analysis for which we followed the main principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as spelled out by Wodak (2001, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2016). Wodak (2015) in her discourse-historical approach (DHA) suggests proceeding with two levels of analysis: the first level is thematic, i.e., identifying common themes and grouping them together. At the second level, data should be subjected to in-depth analysis of those themes identifying discursive strategies and argumentation schemes. Following these insights, the dataset was subjected to thematic analysis in order to identify the broad themes touched upon by the various researchers. Once again, each theme was hand-coded in order to facilitate distinction. The same technique was applied to classify the articles according to their overall stance on the Lawyers' Movement as a whole. After the thematic analysis and classification, data was analyzed discursively with the aim to identify the researchers' argumentation schemes or rhetoric vis-à-vis the identified themes. Respectively, the overall objective of this research was to identify common themes, analyze the researchers' discursive strategies focusing on the construction of those themes, highlight the blind spots lying therein, and suggest directions for future research.

Lawyers' Movement and The Political Science Discourse

Zaidi (2008), Munir (2009), Ahmed and Stephan (2010), Shafqat (2018) and Amin and Rehmat (2016) have covered the Lawyers' Movement (LM) from various perspectives (addressing, respectively, whether a civil society is emerging, the significance of the LM as a struggle for rule of law, organized mass non-cooperation and protests, civil society's role, and social movement theory). Ahmed and Stephen (2010) and Shafqat (2018) have argued that the salient role of civil society alongside lawyers was a major factor in success of the Lawyers' Movement which led to restoration of democracy. However, Zaidi (2008) has not only raised doubts on the LM as a movement for restoration of democracy but also problematized the existence of civil society by questioning whether a civil society in the classical sense of the term has really emerged in Pakistan².

The article by Munir (2009) discusses the Lawyers' Movement from the perspective of struggle for rule of law waged by the lawyers of Pakistan.

² Zaidi's article had been written when the Lawyers' Movement was still on. It was the time when a democratically elected government was in office.

Acknowledging the opportunity this movement presented 'for meaningful political reform in Pakistan', the article asserts that the "lawyers' movement became the principal conduit for democratic change in the political arena" (p. 41). Amin and Rehmat (2016) focus on framing (and how it led to creation of a 'collective identity'), symbols and slogans, and the "[r]esource [m]obilizing [s]tructure" (p. 47), i.e., how the organizers went about mobilizing resources for their cause from the potential constituents, which in this case included: lawyers' organizations, the politics of collective identity, civil society and student's associations, political parties and the electronic media. They argue that the LM had arisen out of a purely legal-constitutional issue which turned into a social movement.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Following Wodak's (2015) approach, we began by conducting thematic analysis of the data. The analysis yielded the following major themes which had been touched upon by the political science researchers.

1. CJP Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry
2. The two main political parties – the Pakistan Peoples' Party and Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)
3. The two presidents - General Pervez Musharraf and Asif Ali Zardari
4. The National Reconciliation Ordinance
5. Civil society and the news media.

In the next step of research, we conducted a comparative analysis of the discourse of each research article with the aim to identify the argumentation strategies used by the various researchers vis-à-vis each theme. We had an important observation during the thematic analysis: all the entities other than Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry have been argued about/evaluated based on their practices in relation to the former. These findings are discussed in the following section.

CJP Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry

The findings lay out that different scholars have used different argumentation strategies to discursively construct Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. What is common to all the studies is the almost unqualified positive evaluation accorded to Chaudhry, devoid of any history and context. The triumph of rule of law and Pakistan's return to parliamentary democracy is accredited to Chaudhry's conduct and functioning. For example, Ahmed and Stephan (2010) have painted Iftikhar Chaudhry as a hero (see for example p. 493) calling him, without providing any context regarding his professional trajectory,

"a unifying symbol of defiance against injustice" (p. 493).

At another place, he has been hailed as

"independent-minded" and one who took a "principled stand" (p. 494).

He is further eulogized as

"An advocate of ordinary Pakistanis" (Ahmed and Stephan, 2010: p. 493).

The underlying argument here is that the former CJP Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry was a judge with firm resolution and will, someone who refused to bow to the forces of injustice because he had high principles. In addition, because of his conduct and exercise of judicial power independently, without any fear of the unjust and the powerful (i.e., the government headed by President General Pervez Musharraf), he gripped the people and hence was able to unite them.

Similarly, Shafqat (2018) has positive description for the judiciary (read Supreme Court led by Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry) when she says “the judiciary launched a challenge to the Musharraf regime in 2007” (p. 894).

The implicature here is that it was a brave judiciary which, acting ab initio in a selfless, apolitical manner with the aim to uphold the constitution and the rule of law, proactively and consciously took on (“launched a challenge”) the military-led government of General Pervez Musharraf. Continuing in the same vein, Munir (2009) touts Chaudhry as a champion of constitution and rule of law who

“Underwent a fundamental metamorphosis [after becoming CJP in 2005]” (p. 39).

In such an argument approving of CJP Chaudhry’s transformation, Munir fails to provide any knowledge of the timing and manner of this transformation as well as of the potential factors which may have come into play around that transformation. In doing so, he also overlooks important facts when he contrastively compares Chief Justice Chaudhry with a former Chief Justice Munir. The latter’s conduct is lamented by ordinary Pakistanis for bowing down to a military dictator’s whims. Munir, while joining the practice, fails to mention that what was true of CJP Munir is true of CJP Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry as well who not only took oath to serve under Musharraf’s military rule but also put his signatures on all the judicial verdicts validating Musharraf’s extra-constitutional steps.

Likewise, Amin and Rehmat (2016) have discursively constructed Chaudhry as a selfless man of law who had

“Started hearing the cases in order to probe the maltreatment of power or misuse of authority including large-scale investigations in politically controversial cases” (pp. 41-42).

Once again, it is noticeable that Chaudhry is being represented as someone who was concerned about ‘misuse of authority’ on the part of the government and hence ‘started hearing the cases’. The use of the word ‘probe’ suggests that the CJP was directly looking into ‘large-scale investigations’ with the aim to prevent corruption, as well as abuse of power on the part of the government. Overall, through their argumentation strategies, the researchers have represented Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, the CJP, as a selfless man who had nothing but the people’s good at his heart. Not confining their arguments to such representation, they go on to argumentatively portray Chaudhry as a principled

judge who was particular about exercising his independence in dispensation of justice for the good of the people.

The Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)

PPP – the political party, and the major partner in the coalition government We noted that the PPP has been evaluated more or less negatively throughout the political science academics' discourse. For example, to describe and discuss the PPP-led coalition government, Ahmed and Stephan (2010) say that

“Clashes between the two main coalition partners quickly emerged over the issue of reinstating the deposed judges and over whether or not to impeach Musharraf” (p. 499).

The argument here suggests that the PPP and the PML-N got into political conflict only because of the issue of restoration of the deposed judges, as well as over Musharraf's impeachment. Close reading of this argument, the way it has been constructed, suggests that the coalition government in which these two political parties were coalition partners was functioning smoothly otherwise which is a problematic presupposition. Further on, the PPP-led government's attempt to enforce law has been constructed as

“The government's ban on public gatherings of more than four people” (p. 501).

Here, the researchers fail to mention that this was in line with a written law, 'Section 144' (see Amin and Rehmat, 2016) present in the Constitution of Pakistan which states no gatherings of more than four people. Almost all the governments which came before and after that led by the PPP's Asif Ali Zardari have used this section for 'controlling law and order'. The government only applies this law (rightly or wrongly depending on which side and ideology one supports). Thus, to make it appear as if this was something undemocratic done especially by a particular government could be viewed as discursively manipulative and affirmative of the then prevalent prejudices.

For her part, Shafqat (2018) too has equated PPP the party with the PPP-led government. In contrast, all the researchers have either completely omitted the PML-N from discussion or argued for it as a party which was occupying high grounds politically, socially and legally/constitutionally. In doing so, they have overlooked important details pertaining to the party's political rhetoric thereby also leaving unaddressed the potential reasons behind those details. For example, political science researcher Munir (2009), in describing how the PML-N drew immense political capital out of the PPP's failure to stand by its campaign promise of restoration of judges, has failed to mention the fact that the PML-N got actively behind the lawyers only after its provincial government in the province of Punjab had been dismissed in February 2009 (see Note, 2010).

The Two Presidents - General Pervez Musharraf And Asif Ali Zardari

General Pervez Musharraf

The discourses of political science researchers vary on Musharraf's exit from the offices of the Chief of the Army Staff and President of Pakistan. While not many researchers have shed light on Musharraf's retirement as Chief of the Army Staff and resignation from the office of the President of Pakistan, some of them seem to suggest that both flew either directly from or as a consequence of the LM. For example, Ahmed and Stephan (2010) have described Musharraf's retirement as Army Chief as flowing from his deal, the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), with PPP leader Benazir Bhutto. Likewise, they have described Musharraf's resignation from the presidency owing to the PPP-led government's decision to impeach him (p. 500).

Shafqat (2018), on the other hand, alludes to Musharraf's resignation thus:

"The main political parties continued to press for Musharraf's resignation, and in August 2008, he did so" (p. 897).

The argument here is that Musharraf resigned from his post as President of Pakistan owing to the pressure exerted on him by the main political parties (i.e., the PPP and the PML-N) to resign. By impicature, Shafqat (2018) has argued that the main political parties' political rhetoric and power was so overwhelming that it made it impossible for Musharraf to remain in office. This is clearly devoid of any mention of the instrument of impeachment³ (the very real threat of which, according to some researchers, actually forced Musharraf to step down from the Presidency).

Asif Ali Zardari

Another interesting finding of this research is the universally negative nature of the discourse on Asif Ali Zardari, the PPP co-chairperson and (the then) President of Pakistan albeit in varying degrees of intensity. For example, Shafqat (2018) says that

"Zardari dismissed the elected government in Punjab using his powers as president" (p. 897).

In describing President Zardari's action thus, she omits mention of the fact that Zardari's action flew from a Supreme Court judgment disqualifying both the Sharif brothers from holding public office. By failing to mention this very important fact, Shafqat's (2018) argument makes it look like it was purely a negative move by President Zardari motivated only by his position as a powerful political opponent of the Sharif brothers rather than as a democratically elected

³ Impeachment is a constitutional mechanism applied through the parliament for removing the president from office in the event of any allegations against him/her, or for any other reason based on which the parliament comes to the conclusion that the president should not continue in the office.

President who was performing his functions according to the dictates of the constitution of Pakistan.

For their part, Ahmed and Stephan (2010), perhaps inadvertently, keep negativizing Zardari by mixing and sequencing facts of the Musharraf era with facts of the Zardari era, making the latter responsible for many of the actions which had been taken by Musharraf. For example, while alluding to Musharraf era media blackouts, Ahmed and Stephan (2010) sequence it with the Zardari government's brief blocking of GEO TV in March 2009. Zardari's act is termed a "blackout" (p. 505) and made out to be somehow equal to Musharraf's. In addition, Ahmed and Stephan attribute Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar's appointment as CJP to Zardari (p. 501). This is factually incorrect. Justice Dogar had been appointed by General Musharraf as CJP after the proclamation of emergency in November 2007 (DAWN, 2009). Premising their arguments on such attributions and selective omissions, the researchers have argued as though Zardari was a villain in the broader scheme of democracy and rule of law.

The National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO)

The NRO is a political instrument which had been negotiated between the then President of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf and the then PPP Chairperson Benazir Bhutto prior to the latter's return to Pakistan in 2007. It set out the series of measures which would be taken by the General-President to ensure Pakistan's transition to an all-inclusive representative democracy. It also bound the President to lift all the cases instituted against everyone including politicians during the years 1988-1999. Equally importantly, it set a timeframe for General Musharraf to retire from his post of Chief of the Army Staff and remain in office only as a civilian president. In return, the PPP allegedly promised to help him get elected for another term in the Presidency (2007-2012).

The most important finding of this review is the almost complete absence of reference to the NRO as an instrument which may have not only forced Musharraf to retire from the post of Chief of Army Staff but also reopened the political space for a genuinely representative form of government post-February 2008. Only Ahmed and Stephan (2010) have dealt with this important document, negotiations on which had been going on in the background (between the then PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto and President General Pervez Musharraf) as the LM was gaining momentum. They have acknowledged the NRO as the instrument which brought about Musharraf's retirement from the post of Chief of Army Staff and reopened the space for an all-inclusive political activity.

Other researchers, if they have touched upon the NRO anywhere, have argued negatively about it, insinuating that it was a bad deal sealed with the interests of only two parties, i.e., President General Pervez Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto (the then chairperson of the PPP) at the cost of transparency and fair play. Such consistently negativizing discourse comes at the cost of the fact that neither did the NRO bring any job security to Musharraf nor did it bring legal relief only to Benazir Bhutto and her spouse Asif Ali Zardari. In fact, a whole list of non-

associated people got to benefit from it in varying proportions, including the Sharif brothers.

The Pakistani Civil Society and The News Media

Barring Zaidi (2008), the political science discourse is evenly divided on the contribution and/or significance of civil society to the success of Lawyers' Movement. For example, Munir (2009) thinks that LM was a movement led and dominated by lawyers while other civil society actors were participants. On the other hand, Shafqat (2018) and Ahmed and Stephan (2010) have given primacy to the role of different segments of civil society in the Lawyers' Movement arguing that it was a vibrant civil society in Pakistan which made the LM successful. Amin and Rehmat (2016) have argued that it was a lawyers'-led and dominated movement with significant participation from the civil society. Interestingly, Zaidi (2008) has problematized the civil society by asking whether there is a civil society in Pakistan in the classic sense of the term. However, the discourse is uniform across the board on the openly pro-LM role of news media.

The Lacunas in The Political Science Discourse

The findings of our investigation into the discourse of political science research indicate that there is a fair number of areas which have either not been dealt with or treated without any consideration for their detailed contexts of occurrence. In line with one of the aims of this article, after highlighting some of those areas, we suggest direction for future research addressing each one of them.

First, in view of the fact that CJP Chaudhry, after his retirement, had formed his own political party, future research may be directed towards investigation into whether Chaudhry's actions as Chief Justice of Pakistan were indicative of any potential political ambitions. A possible starting point for such an analysis could be to investigate whether there was a potential resource mobilization pattern (gaining support of news media and the wider public, working to have pro-Chaudhry bar associations elected) in Chaudhry's conduct and performance post-2005 as argued by Ghias (2010).

As reported in our analysis, the political science discourse on 'the government' is problematic in at least two ways. One, this discourse has constructed 'the government' as though it was a single-party government run by the PPP, without any serious attempt anywhere to describe its composition. Two, the democratically elected coalition government led by the PPP has been discursively bracketed with the quasi-democratic previous government which was headed by President General Pervez Musharraf. The combination of these two constructions has been followed by censoring of the PPP and its functioning in the face of the LM. Future research, in addition to taking care of this serious academic lapse, could explore as to what were the social and political circumstances which informed the elected government's functioning and decisions by contextualizing it within the broader political landscape of Pakistan

during those times. It could be worth investigating this question in order to academically (dis)qualify the existing political science discourse on the PPP.

Based on our findings on the PML-N which indicate a positive discursive construction, future research into the PML-N's politics could be initiated with this question; whether the timing of its decision to join the second long march testified to its commitment to the cause of a genuinely independent judiciary (coming as it did only after the removal of its government in the province of Punjab). Researchers could also investigate if there was a, potentially, unsaid, unwritten but understood alliance between the PML-N leadership and the Chaudhry Supreme Court. It becomes a very significant question not only in view of the law researcher Ghias's (2010) assertion that '[t]he Court allowed Sharif to return in order to.....entrench the judicial support structures in the event of [PPP leader Benazir] Bhutto's return [to Pakistan as a result of the National Reconciliation Ordinance⁴]' (p. 1015) but also in view of the fact that Kalhan (2013) has detailed how the long adjudicated upon and time-barred⁵ convictions against the Sharif brothers were unprecedentedly overturned by Chaudhry after his second and final reinstatement while at the same time his court made very difficult the functioning of the sitting coalition government led by the PPP, especially turning the heat on the PPP leadership.

Given that Musharraf, like any other dictator, had used politics to retain his post of the Chief of Army Staff, as well as assume the office of the President of Pakistan (as also was the case when politics was employed to force his exit from both the offices), future studies in political science could investigate the political maneuvering surrounding his exit from these two offices. Specifically, researchers could look into the wider political context of the time in terms of how and due to which factors it started tilting in the opposition's favor, and which factors played a role in forcing Musharraf to go. As a possible direction, it could be studied from the Social Movement Theory perspective of political science whether a resource mobilization structure may have been created (or an existing resource mobilization structure put to their use) by the different anti-Musharraf players such as Benazir Bhutto and Chief Justice Chaudhry.

Given such importance of the NRO, future research investigate the politics in, of and around the NRO. As a preliminary direction, researchers could study the NRO in terms of the role of civil society actor(s) in helping bring it into being (how did they achieve it, which social factors, directly or indirectly, helped them in reaching this deal?), its value for the political re-opening of Pakistani society, and restoration of democracy. Alternatively, they could investigate whether NRO was a product of socially opportunistic approach of a particular civil society actor (a political party's leadership) aimed solely at gaining personal legal/political benefit (lifting of cases and getting back into power).

⁴ See section vi for details

⁵ Each court verdict can be challenged/appealed against within a certain period of time. Once that time period lapses, the verdict assumes permanence and can never be challenged afterwards. This phenomenon of a court case becoming immune to challenge is referred to as 'time-barred'.

From this angle, researchers could start by looking into Pakistan's social, political, legal and constitutional context at that time as well as whether the Pakistani civil society actor(s), at that point in time, had the power to force a military dictator out of office using any other means. The researchers could then also investigate whether the NRO opened up the legal and political space for one political party or all. It could be academically worthwhile to know if there are any overlapping findings between the researchers studying the NRO from opposite sides of the spectrum.

Finally, researchers of political science could conduct research on the significance of the NRO, and its effects on Pakistan's political landscape, as well as its role in the revival of all-inclusive political process in Pakistan, or whether it had any role at all in re-opening the space for transition back towards a democratic political system in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

According to Ellen K. Coughlin, "elements of rhetoric...are so thoroughly ingrained in scholarly research as to affect every step of the enterprise – how sources are used, how data are interpreted, how findings are communicated" (quoted in Nelson, 1998: p. 12). The present research provides an evidence of this. Our analysis suggests that the existing political science discourse on the Lawyers' Movement is largely reflective of the dominant political discourses which prevailed in the period 2007-2009. The findings of our investigation indicate that while there is universal consensus on the role of the legal community during the movement, the academic discourse seems to have largely ended up affirming the general perceptions about the other main players involved as well, as opposed to problematizing them. As an example, the very findings that while the PPP and its co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari are villainized, there is clearly a pro-Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry tilt and a lenience towards the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) point to this discursively affirmative nature of the academic inquiry into the Lawyers' Movement.

Another evidence of such affirmative academic discourse of the field of political science is the findings pertaining to the argumentation strategies employed to describe 'the government'. For the period starting post-February 2008, wherever there is a mention of the government, it is given to mean only the PPP's government (as if it was a single party government run by the PPP) completely omitting the fact that it was a PPP-led coalition government in which the PML-N was a partner, the second largest partner. Accompanying that omission is academic censure of the PPP both as a party and as a ruling party, and its co-chairperson. The argumentative construction relevant to that leaves little doubt that there is no serious effort to distinguish between the quasi-democratic government headed by General Pervez Musharraf and the democratically elected government headed by the PPP post February 2008 general elections.

Additional evidence of the rhetorically political nature of the political science discourse on the Lawyers' Movement of Pakistan could be found in the fact that more or less the same treatment (as has been accorded to General Pervez Musharraf's quasi-democratic government) is reserved by the researchers for

the democratically elected coalition government in which the PPP was the major partner. Such bracketed discursive constructions are undergirded by either (perhaps inadvertent) omissions or over reliance on sources which could be prejudiced. An example of the latter could be Ahmed and Stephan's (2010) discourse which while laying out some important details un/under-addressed by other researchers, relies too much on newspaper opinion pieces and reports as its sources in order to justify its arguments. One such source was the New York Times' article "Can Pakistan be governed?" authored by Traub (Traub, 2009).

Finally, the academic affirmation of the dominant political discourses of 2007-09 continues as regards the NRO as well. Thus, where it has found mention in the political science discourse (barring Ahmed and Stephan), it has been constructed in such a way as to generate an impression that, a) it was an inherently bad political deal sealed with nothing but the interests of two individuals (Musharraf and Bhutto) aforethought and, b) Zardari et al were resisting the restoration of judges because they feared that, if restored, the latter will strike down the NRO and bring Zardari back into the dock.

In summary, our research demonstrates that the existing discourse of political science research on the Lawyers' Movement of Pakistan, while broadly touching on the identified and analyzed themes, rhetorically affirms the generally prevalent discourses of those times. These findings provide some evidence of Nelson's assertion that every field is rhetorical, including the field of academic research. They also lend credence to our argument that while academic discourse is aimed at investigating social phenomena in as much unbiased a way as possible because it has the power to unpack social complexities by systematically articulating those phenomena, it can also contribute to affirmation of the prevailing discursive environment and thereby "perpetuate injustices by choosing specific representations of events, identities and subject positions" (Phelan, 2014 quoted in Maydell et al., 2021, p. 14).

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