Relationship between Political Parties and Non-Political Powers: 
An Analysis with Reference to Pakistan

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Abstract
This paper presents a thorough review of connections between political and non-political elements in Pakistani political framework. It suggests that although political parties have been working in political system of Pakistan accordingly, but non-political elements are looking dominant apart from exceptional cases. Individual and group interests outweigh power needed in its organization. In the case of multi-party system, the interests of the major groups are considered as major determinants of political parties, alongside the interests of these groups. Army, bureaucracy, ulema and biradaries (clans) are main non-political powers which are deep rooted in political parties. Analytical and comparative approach is adopted in this paper. Another object of this paper is to analyse the power of major biradaries, bureaucracy and ulma in politics for the reason that it takes one beyond the traditional range of political theory and practice in its past and present forms.

Key Words: Biradari, Ulemas, Madrassahs, Shrines, Pakistan

I. Introduction
Political system of Pakistan is a developing system facing numerous setbacks which influence its competency. An extensive study is the need of the time with an outcome based approach. This discourse is an attempt to point out the causes of ineffectiveness of political system of Pakistan which has deep roots in our political culture. The interests of the dominant groups are measured as chief determinants of political parties, in conjunction with the interests of the army, bureaucracy, ulema and biradaries. Army, bureaucracy, ulema and biradaries (clans) are main non-political powers which have deep influence on the working of the political parties while placing themselves within the political parties. Political parties are playing pivotal role in the current democratic and totalitarian systems. How non-political elements influence our political parties and leadership and why are we unable to get rid of non-political powers from developing system of the Pakistani state and society? This study will highlight a relationship between political and non-political powers which will be helpful to indicate the vital political problems of the country.

In democratic systems, political parties produce political elites and carry on campaign to win elections whereas in dictatorial systems single party systems are adopted to fill the gap of political leadership and to legitimise the authority. The political parties help to articulate opinion and aggregate public interests. It is hardly a century since parties, in the true sense of the word, came into existence. There have been trends of opinion, popular clubs, philosophical societies, and parliamentary groups, but no real parties. In 1950 parties started functioning in most civilized nations, and in others there is
an attempt to imitate them (Duverge, 1987: p. 23). Party system has same objectives in its origin but it varies from system to system in practice. Political scientists opine that political parties are essential for democracy. It is very important to analyse party system according to its real nature to get scientific results. Indian scholar Johari remarks “A scientific study of party politics with special emphases on the role of factions and groups operating within political parties so as to have a thoroughly imperial study of the subject” (Johari, 2001: p. 297). Political parties have been defined in different sub-texts by many scholars. Schotten defines a political party as, “Any group of individuals who agree on some or all aspects of public policy and organize to place their members in control of the national government” (Magstadt and Schotten, 1993: p.583). As far as the biradari is concerned, the biradari is derived from Persian word “biradar” means brother. Biradari(literally ‘brotherhood’), is commonly argued as a ‘primordial’ group identities such as family, kinship and caste, or membership in a village faction, play more important role in determining voting behaviour in the sub-continent, than individual political preferences (Wilder, 1999: p.177). Ulemas and Pirs are members of Islamic clergy who take control and management of the mosques, shrines (the tomb of a saint or other revered figure) and other religious properties.

II. Historical Prospect

From the very inception of Pakistan, a dominant political party system has been observed at intra state level. The Muslim League was the dominant party in the early years of independence while several small parties existed in the legislature and the outside (Mehmood, 2004: p.117). Earlier, Unionist party was more popular than Muslim League in Punjab, and the reason was that major biradaries (Jatts, Rajputs and Arains) of Punjab were supporting Unionists. In the elections of 1937, Unionist party neither ran an election campaign, nor arranged meetings like Muslim League and Congress; but even then they succeeded with a great mandate in Punjab because major biradaries of Lyall Pur, Lahore and Gujranwala were supporting Unionists. Talbot (1999: 125) ascribes this success that Unionist party used to penetrate in biradries and gained success easily. Chaudary opines the same that Unionist party attained its success by entangling the rural Muslim in biradri’s gain” (Chaudhary, 1991, p.127). Muslim league also gained success in 1946 elections with the support of biradaries in Punjab (Talbot, 1980: p.87). Role of Army in Pakistani politics started in 1950s. Bureaucracy involved soon after independence whereas biradari politics is an inherited gift of pre-partition period.

The generals of Pakistan army are also disapproving of political parties similar to general Washington of US in the early period of America. The Role of army in Pakistan is more political than professional. Justice (R) M. Shaq Usmani writes about the role of army in Pakistan that “The army’s, rather armed forces’ role is already defined in Article 245 of the Constitution and relates to the defense of Pakistan’s borders and aid to civil power, when called upon by a civilian government” (Usmani, 2002). In Pakistan, dictators banned political parties or excluded them from the electoral process, during the periods of its dictatorship. Entry of the army, headed by Ayub Khan, opened a new chapter in the history of Pakistan. Earlier, Ayub Khan had refused to gain control of the country as once offered by Governor General Ghulam Muhammed when he was serving as Defense Minister in the ‘cabinet of talents’ headed by Muhammed Ali Bogra in 1954 (Anwar, 2002: p.144). Ayub Khan tried to throw the politicians and ulema out of the political arena to enforce his policies (Mehmood, 2004: pp.121-142). He promulgated the Elective Bodies (Disqualification) Order (EBDO) during March and August 1959
respectively and all prominent political leaders with a few exceptions were thrown out of the political arena in this regard.

The power base of the ulema is in the religious institutions, mosques, madrassahs (The schools for Islamic education) and shrines and as such they are in a better position to protest against the political establishment and want good relations with political parties. During Martial Law amendments were made in the Political Parties Act of 1962. These amendments affected all political parties. Ayub Khan not only allowed them to come back but agreed to be the head of one (Con. ML) of them. Ayub Khan assumed the presidency of Convention Muslim League from 1963 to 1970. Convention Muslim League was actually his handmaiden and revolved around his personality and policies. Shah opines on the role of Ulema in Presidential elections:

“A faction of the ulema and pirs supported Ayub Khan and held Miss Fatimah Jinnah’s candidature in contravention of the injunction of the Shariah. The Pir of Dewal Sharif claimed that “God has communicated to him His displeasure with the Combined Opposition Party”. Some traditionalist ulema like Abdul Hamid Badayuni not only issued fatwas in favour of Ayub and against the COP, but also criticized Maududi for opposition to the creation of Pakistan” (Shah, 1996: p.70)

Zulifikar Ali Bhutto founded the Pakistan People’s Party in November 1967 in Lahore. The anti-Ayub movement of 1968-1969, for the restoration of democracy, turned into an expression demanding economic and political change. The election campaign of Z.A. Bhutto targeting the feudalism and bureaucracy for keeping the country impoverished, this fired-up youth generated a massive movement in which caste system and religious sectarianism were both crushed. Earlier a Fatwa of 113 ulema appeared in the press on 26 February 1970 which was initiated by the Deobandi Ulema with the support of Barelvi, Ahl-i-Hadis and Shia Ulema but it could not prevent the attractiveness of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and his movement. Syed M.H. Shah discourses the situation in these words:

“The Fatwa declared socialism as the greatest of all dangers to the security and well-being of Pakistan and called upon all Muslims to rise against this “accursed” ideology. The ulema declared that individuals and groups who preached socialism were rebels against God and His book, and that it would be gravely sinful for any Muslim to aid, or vote for them. In fact they claimed that “Islamic Socialisms” was a distorted exploitation and abuse of Islam by shrewd and power-hungry politician who was a non-practicing Muslim and who had never cared to study Islam carefully. More important was the fact that there exited no unity among religious or Islam pasand Parties” (Shah: p-101.)

Zulifqar Ali Bhutto exercised power as the Chief Martial Law Administrator (1971), President (1972) and Prime Minister (1973 to 1977). His government was dislodged by an army takeover led by Gen. Zia-ul-Haq in 1977. Bhutto was arrested on the charge of murder of a political opponent. He was tried in a regular court of law, which convicted him and awarded death sentence, which was carried out on 4 April 1979. The military government built a lot of pressure on the Bhutto ladies. Therefore, both Nusrat and Benazir, left the country and did not return till 10 April 1986. Bhutto’s exit
from power, the PML (Pagaro Group) co-operated with the martial law regime. (Mehmood, 2004: p.126)

Zia-ul-Haq barred political parties from participating in the 1985 elections. Earlier he established a supporter group in shape of district chairmen in local bodies. General Zia’s most durable political legacies, and perhaps the one that has been the most harmful to the political parties, was the ‘localization of politics’. This shifted political attention away from national politics. Local identities and local issues became the substance of Punjab politics. Family, faction and biradari ties increasingly determined political loyalties, and political power was determined by the amount of patronage at one’s disposal. Zia’s strategy of diverting political energy from national to local issues had the intended effect. (Wild, 1999: p.131) Mr Junejo, Zia’s nominee as Prime Minister, discovered that the National Assembly could not function effectively in the absence of parties. The Muslim League was then revived both within and outside the legislature and so was other parties. Junejo co-opted the PML (Pagaro) as the official party. President Zia dismissed the Junejo government in 1988, and replaced with the Zia loyalists and it was once again PML with new name (Fida Group) (Mehmood, 2004: p.126). The conflict between President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was resolved through the intervention of the Chief of Army Staff General Abdul Waheed Kakarr, on the basis of an agreement by which both the president and the Prime Minister resigned (Mehmood, 2004: p.395). General Pervez Musharraf dismissed Nawaz Sharif’s government in 1999. Political parties were barred, once again in Pervaiz Musharaf’s era from the local elections held in 2001 but they were active in the elected councils, even if informally. Political parties took part in this contest by different names; Jamat Islami (ihlsaab group), PMLN (Quaid-e-Azam group), PML (istehkam-e-Pakistan group), Pakistan Awami Tehreek( Awam group), Tehreek-Insaf(Insaf group), Millat party(Sher Dad group) and more than 80 % local candidates male or female belonged directly to the political parties and their identity on local basis was related to their political party. This is why the government, could not get success in keeping the political factors away from the local bodies. (Abid, 2005: p.56).

III. Analysis of Contemporary Political Parties

The General Elections 2002 held on party basis but two leaders of major political parties; Mian Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan People Party were not allowed to take part in this contest. As it has been highlighted about this contest that if sectarianism and ethnocentric politics are a legacy of Gen. Zia, the era of Gen Musharraf will be remembered for elections without contest. (DAWN, 2-08- 2005) The presence of non-political party elements hamper the fabrics of the political values and practices, which do not allow the pedestals of democracy to prevail in Pakistani society.

Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam) has been supported by President General Pervez Musharraf since 2002, was defeated in 2008 General Elections. The only cause of defeat was the leadership of Pervez Musharraf (a non-political power). Likewise, the recent scenario of the restoration of Chief Justice and the execution of governor rule in the Punjab province provided a lee way for common platform to the politicians and lawyers to initiate a campaign of long march. The long march demonstrated the sway of non political elements in the shaping of decision making by the Zardari regime. The politicization of the non political actors merged with the political motives of the political
actors. Pakistan Muslim League supported by Ayub, Zia and Musharraf demonstrate the relations between non-political powers and Pakistan Muslim League. As far as the Pakistan People’s Party is concerned, Jamaat opines about its relations with non-political powers in these words “PPP leadership had indirect alliance with the military regimes of Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan. Gen. Zia-ul-Haq was brought up by them, but he chose his own path, hence the confrontation, yet there were some direct and many indirect linkages throughout this period. After Zia in 1988 it was Gen. Aslam Beg, the Chief of the Army Staff, and the Chief of the Military Intelligence Gen. Asad Durrani, who played an important role in bringing her to power. Benazir was paid back by publicly offering tribute to the army’s role in the so-called restoration of democracy. Even Tamgha-e-Jamhooriyat was given to the army. In 1992-93, there was a clear collusion with General Asif Nawaz (www.jamaat.org). Currently PPP is a ruling party along with a coalition. Pakistan Muslim League (N) is sitting on opposition benches in centre whereas the coalition government with PPP in Punjab is running with some reservations by both parties.

Maulana Abul A’la Maududi founded Jamaat-i-slami in 1941; the Jamaat-i-slami is the well-organized party in Pakistan. In January 1964, the Ayub Khan government banned the Jamaat-i-slami. The Supreme Court removed the ban in September 1964. After the imposition of Martial Law in July 1977, the Jamaat-i-Islami extended support to President Zia’s military regime (Mehmood, 2004: p.155). In Pakistan the political parties led by the ulema gave religious manifestos whereas the approaches of other political parties are secular. (Shah, 1996: p.92). In the elections of 2002 the Jamaat was a part of MMA and enjoying power in NWFP. Recently Jamaat is a part of All Parties Democratic Movement an opposition group who boycotted the General Elections 2008.

Bureaucracy has been interfering in politics since independence. Roskin observes bureaucracy in broad sense that no country has devised a way to keep its bureaucracy under control. Bureaucrats think that they alone can save their country and that elected politicians are a necessary evil that come and go and are not to be taken seriously. (Roskin, 1998: p.139). Pakistan is in hands of top bureaucracy sans elected representatives. Some bureaucrats, therefore, got into political posts in Pakistan and this practice continued for a long while. Some notable bureaucrats turned politicians include Ghulam Muhammed, Ch.Muhammad Ali, Iskandar Mirza, Aziz Ahmed, Alltaf Gohar, Rao Abdur Rashid, Agha Shahi, Gulam Ishaq Khan, A G N Qazi, Roedad Khan, Sartaj Aziz, Mehboob-ul-Haq. Pakistan’s politicized bureaucracy has lost its old respect and confidence in the masses. In reality the state bureaucracy, which is meant to serve the interest of the people, serves the kingmakers. Therefore, the multilateral and bilateral initiatives do not manage to create major benefits for the people. The civil society hangs in the middle, disconnected both from the system that serves the kingmakers and the public. Thus, there is very little that reaches the people (Siddiqa, 28-11-2008).

In rural areas the problems are easier. Here the party notables are likely to be landed aristocrats who can recruit some of their own tenants and persons from their extended families (“biradaries”) and caste groups to help with their election campaigns. But they may still have to hire persons on a temporary basis, to do certain election-related chores and pay them, for the most part, out of their own funds. They are not likely to get a whole lot of assistance from their party organization. The candidate’s dependence on workers and the party is much greater in the cities where relationships, and even
knowledge of one another, tend to be impersonal. Furthermore, the worker’s attachment is probably focused on the party more than it may be on a particular politician in his own area. (DAWN, 10-02-2002) Mehmood opines on the leadership gap: “The lack of leadership which, in turn, resulted in the lack of well-organized and disciplined parties, and the general lack of integrity among the politicians, were chiefly responsible for the debacle of democracy” (Mehmood, 2004: p.54).

The issue of biradari-based politics and use of its outfit for political purposes is a game started by political parties. In Punjab local biradaries as a pressure group have their influence on political parties. In early years of Pakistan, some leading families (landlords) occupied the Muslim League (founder political party of Pakistan) and they became the permanent leaders of that party after independence.

The political parties seem to be divided into local groups and biradaries instead of ideology. Biradaries join the political parties by dint of mutual clashes instead of ideologies. Political parties give tickets to major biradaries. Major biradaries in Punjab are Jatts, Rajputs, Araiens, Gujjars, Sayads and Balochs. Heads of district government in Punjab are from major biradaries. In northern Punjab, Rajput biradari looks dominant. Jatts are leading in central Punjab and also sharing in southern Punjab. Arains are sharing in central Punjab while Balochs are dominating in southern Punjab. The leadership of political parties becomes weak in the distribution of tickets because of weak leadership and they give importance to the opinion of the local biradaries. In this way the local biradari is in the position of interrupting in distribution of tickets and the tickets are given to their favourite candidates. Wilder writes that “A good deal of biradari, “ticket balancing” is done between the candidates for a National Assembly seat and several the provincial assembly constituencies within each (Wilder: p.183). Saboohi (1990) concluded in her research discourse, “The Elections 85, 88, 90, the Study of District Faisalabad”, that the political parties kept in view the power of the biradari of the candidate in spite of loyalty with party (Saboohi, 1990).

Local groups became active and participated as a representative of political parties but through dominating bradaries. One of the reasons behind this is the presence of dominant biradaries which dilute the hostility between the political parties. These biradaries are more active and effective than the political parties (Ahmed, 2004: p.156.). The candidates take the help of biradari, likewise, their role is very important in making it stronger. No candidate can win without the help of major biradari in the villages of landowners. Biradari faithfulness fixes the political behaviour of voters than the political connection in rural area.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The military-bureaucratic elites manipulated politics and often destabilized the elected governments. In the context of political government, a lot depends on the relationship among different players with the establishment and the military. The longevity of a political rule depends on the individual ruler’s relationship with the establishment and his own behaviour. An unwise politician engages in massive loot and plunders without considering the high political cost of his behaviour. Thus, the government is gone even before it can stabilise. (Siddiqa, 21-11-2008) AyubKhan, Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharaf supported Muslim League in different names and interrupted political party system’s flow. Ghulam Ishaq Khan a former bureaucrat
dismissed Nawaz Sharif’s government and maintained the traditions of dissolving the assemblies before the completion of their period. It will happen first time in the political history of Pakistan that the current assemblies (2002-2007) are going to complete their tenure of five years and General Pervez Musharraf resigned due to the pressure of PPP and PMLN coalition. As far as the biradari is concerned there is no doubt in its role to strengthen political parties. Some clans are as important as political leadership for political parties. For example, Bhuttos, Pagharas, Lagharis, Mangales, Khans and Sherpas are essential for some parties. As far as the numerical strength of any political party or local pressure groups is concerned the local “Dharras” (Dharras are groups of it or opposite biradari or clan, which established in villages to maintain their political importance and social status and have no political fidelity but clan/biradari loyalty.) are non-political elements, which play vital role in the success of any political party in elections. Biradari seems to be stronger than political fidelity. These non-political elements are required for the victory of a candidate and political party. So, political parties have close relationship with biradaries. Biradaries determines voting behaviour in the rural areas of Pakistan, especially in Punjab. Some personalities have been playing pivotal role in political parties, for instance Quaid-e-Azam Muhammed Ali Jinnah, Z.A. Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif.

The tendency of voters is limited to non-political powers (2008 Elections). Political scientists believe that Political parties and pressure groups are necessary for democracy. In Pakistan, pressure groups as non-political powers in shape of military, bureaucracy, ulemas and biradaries/clans are interrupting political process and political party system. Biradaries are playing role of local political groups and providing contesting atmosphere, which is necessary for democracy. Non-political powers are filling the leadership gap because of the weakness of the ideological connections of the political parties but on provisional base. Non-political powers use this trend in their favor to prolong their era of authority and this trend became a challenge to genuine democracy. The strong and national level political parties are expected to wipe out or determine the role of non-political powers in their respected fields. The better level of political socialization and political awareness will develop the elements, which are essential for indisputable political party system. The role of non-political powers in business of political parties is a negative trend, which is dangerous for the federation and national unity. Due to this tendency Pakistani nation is known as non-political nation at international level and attitude of democratic nations towards Pakistan is not idyllic but apathetic. Relationships among the world’s governments are closely connected with culture and domestic politics (Goldstein, 2004: p.3). This unresponsive relationship between political parties and non-political powers is also influencing our international relations. These circumstances will remain in present condition as long as political parties are surrounded by non-political powers. History is witness to the fact that confrontation between political forces has benefited undemocratic and non-political forces. Hence in the present scenario political parties should devise a strategy for reconciliation. They should avoid a situation which may benefit this undemocratic and non-political forces (DAWN, 03-02-2009). In fact non-political forces which have violated the constitution to achieve their interests are responsible for the constitutional, social, political and governance crises in Pakistan.

While recommending the constructive responsibility of the political parties in the Pakistan state, the transparent and accountable elections must be a practiced. There is an
urgent need to refurbish the democratic norms of political parties. The unnecessary influence of the bureaucratic and military culture as an element of non-political party system needs to be firngelized. Moreover, exclusion of ulema’s and *biradaries* will eventually paves the way for the very fabric of the values of political parties in the improvement of the political system in Pakistan.

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