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**ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the Multi-party political system of Pakistan and its role and effects on the national integration in Pakistan. The researcher try to finds out the prospects and challenges of this political system in Pakistan. This study was carried out with the qualitative research methodology. First the background of the multiparty system of Pakistan was discussed and to find out the effects of this multiparty system on the national integration of Pakistan the primary data was collected through semi-structured interview from the political experts, scholars and political commentators through convenient sampling. Data was analyzed by the thematic analysis. During the analysis of data the researcher came across different positive and negative themes. But overall review which the researcher discovered from the analysis of the data was that multiparty system has a key role in the national integration of Pakistan, but the beneficial results are not seen in our society because there are many basic issues in our political system.

**Keywords:** Multiparty System, National Integration, Democracy, Pakistan, Diversity.

## **Introduction**

Multiparty system is a political system in which there are more than two political parties exist. Pakistan has this multiparty system since inception. Before going into detail of the multiparty system here political party is defined. Political party is an organized group of people who have the same political views and act like a political unit and try to control the government. According to Gettel a political party is a group of citizens more or less, organized who act like a political unit and by using their voting power aim to control the government and also want to carry out their policies (Awan, 2008).

In a democratic system final authority lies in hands of people, so political party is the basic avenue for the people to exercise their power and take part in the political system of the country (Ashiagbor & Benson, 2014). Benjamin Constant says that a political party is a group of such people having the same idea and professing the same idea among the people of the country (Howard, 1980). Leacock says that a political party is more or less organized group of people who always act in a united group as a single political body. According to Gilchstir political party always works as a single political entity and shares the same ideology and political views and tries to control the government of the country by increasing their vote bank through propagating its political ideology and manifesto. Epstien (1967) sees that the political party is a group of people for seeking votes under an organized form. Riggs says that a political party is the name of such organization, which presents candidates for the elected assembly in a country (p, 9). By Encyclopedia Encarta (2000) defines political party as an organization for the mobilization of the citizens for common interest and goals. Political parties play a very pivotal role in the national politics. They make political policies, agendas, selection of candidates for the party positions, and check the function of the ruling party. Other than these, political parties also provide a link to connect the citizens to the government.

These are the vehicles for the people by which citizens come together and take part in the general election campaign and win the public office as legislative body to put forward their interest, needs and present their aspiration for the society on the legislative forum. Democracy thrives and exists where the political parties play their critical role in the politics of the country (Dippell, 2000). Political parties provide the opportunity to the citizens to take part in the election of the country, learn about the political system and monitor the government actions and policies. These parties give them good chance to make the best choices among the different polices and leaders and can also influence the government in a meaningful way. By discussing definitions of the political parties Seymour Martin Lipset (2000) and many other say that

political parties are indispensable institutions in the modern democracy (Ahmad N. , 2004)(Kuo, 2008).

### **Constitutional and Legal status of Political Parties in Pakistan**

Article 17 of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 describes about the right of association and gathering of the people with some restrictions and limitations. Article 17 explains that every citizen has the right of making association and political party by not allowing to challenge the sovereignty of a country. Other than this article and many other constitutional amendments, executive orders, precedent fully explain this right of political association and impose certain limitations accordingly. First and fourth amendment, political parties act 1962, the Revival of Constitutional Order (RCO) 1985, Legal Framework Order (LFO) 2002, the Conduct of General Election Order (2002), the Qualification to hold Public Offices Orders (2002) and Political Parties Order (2002) explain the eligibility criteria of the person to make a political party and hold public office and impose all the restrictions which endanger the sovereignty and integration of Pakistan. The LFO 2002 bans and imposes restrictions on all those political parties which promote sectarianism, ethnicity and regionalism among the people. The Executive orders and many constitutional amendments give criteria for the qualification and disqualifications of the membership of the party and for candidate of the general election. It is mentioned that he/she must be good character, no criminal recode, honest and trustworthy, not involved in any activity that endanger the ideology and integrity of Pakistan, those who are not fulfilling the requirements will not be nominated for the election by ECP. Or those elected party members found guilty or not fulfilling the required criteria for the candidature as mentioned in the constitution will be terminated from his/her seat. The article 17 related to making party and membership is the most amended article of the constitution. So ECP has the right that all those parties or members of the party who do not fulfill the criteria should be terminated from their seats and such political parties should be banned (Ahmad N. , 2004).

#### **Structure of Multiparty System in Pakistan**

Multi-party political system in Pakistan is such political setup in which more than two political parties take part in the general election of the state and take active participation in all political activities of the country. In such political system, many political parties represent the different ideologies and different groups participate in the national politics and achieve the state powers for implementing their own manifesto (Ahmad & Afridi, 2014). In Pakistan there are nearly one hundred small and large political parties registered in the Election Commission of Pakistan. These large and small parties take part in the national and provincial election and often made coalition government. Historically studying the background of the political system

of Pakistan it is stated that after the independence somehow uni-party political system existed which meant that one major and active political party was present in Pakistan. But very soon the weak position and discouraging role of the politicians of the country belonging to this one party, clashes and divergence of the interest led to the formation of many factions and other political parties. Pakistan also experienced somehow Bi-party system during the 1990s till 1999 and then a very long period of military dictatorship of Musharraf military rule again in 2008 many political parties appeared in the general election of the country. So till today Pakistan having this multiparty political system in which a number of political parties working in the politics of the country (Mufti, Shafqat, & Siddiqui, 2020).

### **Effects of the Multiparty System on the National Integration in Pakistan**

The effect or role of multiparty on national integration of Pakistan is the main research hypothesis and research question which the researcher is trying to answer from the available literature. By studying the available data on the hypothesis the researcher found two main and broad categories of the opinion of the experts;

- Positive Views
- Negative Views

#### **Positive Views**

Positive views of the scholars argue that multiparty political system has a very positive effects and key role in the national integration of the country. They highlight all the functions and significance of the political parties in political system. It gives equal chance to all the citizens of the state to participate in the country politics, aggregation of common masses, providing them a common platform, making them aware about their political, civil rights and public policies. Political parties integrate all the common minded people on the same ideology and on the same platform regardless of their cultural, ethnic, social and religious differences. Therefore, they support their view and say that political parties integrate and can integrate the society if party leadership are honest, patriot and follow the exact ideology and manifesto and prefer the common interest and general will (Khan L. A., 2013).

#### **Negative Views**

Besides, positive and supportive arguments, another group of scholars who strongly oppose the aforementioned opinions of the different scholars and argue that multiparty system has no strong role in the integration of society. They are of the view that multiparty system pushing more toward the fragmentation and diversity. They further support their arguments and say that each and every group has a slight difference based on social, ethnic, cultural,

religion linguistic which prevent them from national integration (Manyak & Katono, 2011). This group of scholars argue about the culture of coalition government which is commonly followed in the multiparty setup, they say that this coalition government is not actually good for the integration of a nation because in this coalition government, many political parties jointly formed government and run the state machinery which is basically work for the preservation of their own personal and political interests and ignore the national interests and issues. They always seek the interests of their community and group and pave the way for the sentiment of provincialism and regionalism among the nation (MacDonald, Listhaug, & Rabinowitz, 1991) (Malachova, 2012).

### **Primary Data of the Research**

For drawing a valid conclusion and accurate result of the hypothesis, the researcher has not relied only on the secondary data but also has gone through the primary data. For primary data collection, tool of semi-structure interview has been adopted and sampling technique has been followed in this research study. The researcher has made three main categories of the interviewees; one Political Experts or Academia second is political scholars and the Third is political commentators, political commentators are those people who have no academic political knowledge, but they keep themselves aware of the country political situation.

### **Participants**

All the interviewees from the three groups are selected on basis of convenience sampling. The researcher conducted all interviews on the basis of the prior permission of interviewees, time schedule and their willingness for the interview was made sure. Some interviews were arranged physically and some telephonic those who were not physically accessible. All the questions for interviews were properly had in written form and had been shared with the all the interviewees of the first two categories. Prior to the start of the interview the researcher discussed the topic and themes of the research and orally explained. All the difficult terminology and operational definitions and technical concepts were explained for the first two categories. All the interviews are conducted in the native language and all the political terminologies are explained in a very simple words for the category III participants. And it was ensured to all the interviewees that the specific and required data will be used just for the academic purposes. The collected data will not be shared with any other institutions, and the identity of all the interviewees will be kept secret in the whole study. All the interviewees gave different opinions. Some gave supportive argument some negatives argument about the role of this system in national integration of Pakistan. Possible recommendation for the betterment of the system was also asked and answered by all the interviewees.

**Analysis of the Data**

The researcher conducted total twenty-five interviews for primary data. All the different participants had their own views about the hypothesis. The thematic analysis was applied for analyzing the collected data. By processing the data, applying the thematic analysis and after the codifications, different themes were generated from the collected data.

**Multi-party System Strengthen the National Integration in Pakistan**

Positives themes are all those opinions and ideas which support the assumptions and had logics and arguments about the positive and constructive role of multiparty system in national integration of Pakistan.

- **Provide Wide Choices to Diverse Groups**

This was the first and very widely supportive theme which the researcher discovered from the data. They had the rationale, that multiparty has a key role in the integration of a diverse society, because it gives equal chance to all the diverse and small communities of the society to come forward and take active part in the politics and policy-making of the state. Pakistan being a very diverse, and multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and politically diverse society, so multiparty party system is a suitable for Pakistan. All the scholars, political experts pointed out integrating of the society in Pakistan is possible whenever the system will be adopted with all their ground principles and pre-requisites in its actual meaning.

- **Mechanism for the Unity in Diversity**

Multiparty system is always opted and adopted for the integration and unification of society. Political scientists describe it a system of unity in diversity which means integration of the whole society in diversity. As intimated by many scholars and academia that multiparty system is the best ever mechanism for the integration in a diverse society like Pakistan. A diverse state or nation can be integrated by this multiparty system very effectively. Political parties are the backbone and main players of this political system which not only keep running this political system but also integrate the people and served their general will.

- **Balance a Socio-Cultural and Political Diverse Society**

Pakistan has diverse political culture, multiparty system balance its divers society. Many political experts pointed out in the interview that multiparty system has a very significant role in the balancing and bringing equality in such a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-social state.

- **Multiparty System is the True Spirit of Democracy**

Multiparty system is commonly called the true spirit of democracy. Multiparty system ensures all the political rights to every citizen. It does not confine these political rights to a specific political entity or elite class, but every citizen has the right to make its own political party and political association. However in multiparty system not only the elite class but common citizens too have their political parties with their own agenda and manifesto.

- **Representation of all the Political Groups**

Multiparty system not only ensures the political rights of all the common citizens but also gives representation to all the political groups. Political scholars identified that diverse nature of the society with its own political ideology and political interests represent their respective groups. In this multiparty system every group has the equal chance to win the majority support and make the central and provincial government and then implement their specified manifesto and ideology. Such free and equal chance is not available in a Bi-party political system.

- **Role of Political Leadership**

Role of Political leaders and political elites can also be a source of integration in a diverse society like Pakistan. All the political experts raised this theme that particularly in multiparty party system when there is a number of political parties exist then political leadership can play a very determining role in the integration of society. In Pakistan due to immature political culture people believe in cult politics. The role of charismatic and active leader is the main factor of becoming a mainstream and popular party and a source of unification.

- **Family Legacy**

Family legacy and role of family politics has also been considered as one of the main factor for the national integration in the political system as described by a political expert of my interviewee that if new faces appeared in a particular political party the conservative political supporters and many political workers quit that party and join another party or most of the time made their own bloc in this political party. Thus, the absence of family legacy may also sometime damage and threatens the political and national integration. Family politics is strengthen and if patriotic leaders appear in the politics from that particular family then it may strengthen the national integration. This theme has both positive and negative aspects it may sometimes strengthen and sometime weaken the national integration of Pakistan.

- **Coalition Government**

Coalition government is one of the salient characteristic of multiparty system having positive and negative effect on the national integration of Pakistan. Many political experts



highlighted its considerable role in the national integration of Pakistan. They picked up the point that Pakistan being a diverse society may be integrated at national level by the integration of these political institutions. When different political parties come to the parliament and make a coalition government which is based on the consensus and then these parties join hands, follow the policy of give and take and compromises for the maintenance of their government and powers. It prevents the parliament from political deadlock. Therefore, the coalition in diversity is the beauty of democracy in which many major groups get their issues addressed simultaneously.

- **Political Alliances**

Majority Political scholars, experts and other interviewees have favored and attributed this multiparty system for its feature of political alliances of the different groups in different political crisis. These political alliances have remained a strong force during military dictatorship in Pakistan. These political alliances have always played a strong and effective role in the national integration. It always remained guardian of political and civil interest. And often made for solution of political unrest. Therefore, political alliances exert good and positive impact on national integration.

- **Political Training and Development of Political Culture**

According to the scholars and academicians are of the view that multiparty system has a very crucial role in the political training of the people and development of the political culture of the country. It takes part in political activities, political training of citizens by developing peculiar political culture. It provides political awareness for developing specific political culture.

- **Multi-party system Prevent Autocracy in the Politics**

Many scholars opined that multiparty system prevents autocratic rule by coalition. Political alliance oust single party rule and provides an opportunity of participation to majority in the process of political activities. Political alliance oust single party rule and provides an opportunity of participation of majority in the process of political activities.

- **Transparency and Check and Balance**

Majority of the respondents are opined that multiparty system represent major segments of society and works as vigilant agent of the political process. It keeps check on the performance of the treasury bench and balancing the power structure of state institutions. It keeps checking on the performance of each other outside the legislature and makes

transparency and accountability easier which leads to cohesion in the process of national integration.

- **Mobilization of all the Communities and Political Ideologies**

Many political scholars have the perspective that multiparty system not only give the opportunity of mobilization to all the communities and political groups, but also they can gain the support and loyalties of the people with the common mindset and then this mobilization of the political groups with having common mindset lead to developed political culture. A number of political group in multiparty system struggle for the mobilizing of all the citizens and give them political understanding. The involvement of the different groups in the politics and political activities of the state develop a mature and better political culture. And then ultimately such developed and mature political culture integrates the nation very smoothly.

Multi-party System Weaken the National Integration in Pakistan

**Negative Themes:** By negative themes we mean, all those justifications which go against the role of multiparty system in national integration.

- **Leading toward the Political Deadlock**

Many political scholars and experts raised this point that multiparty system may integrate and may also divide the nation if not fully followed all the requirements or the actual implementation of the system is not made certain. They highlighted that due to the presence of many political parties people always confuse in using their right of vote and political support of the party and government by alliance leads to political instability and lack of consensus on many core issues which often endanger or manipulate national interest and political stability.

- **Fragmenting of the Society and Factionalism**

Some scholars and experts of the field are of the view that multiparty system works in the process of national integration only if pursued with proper setup. The experiment in Pakistan is somehow disappointing and just the imitation of imitation. In Pakistan, it has not borne the fruits as it ought to be rather it has caused fragmentation and cleavages with great.

- **Ethnic and Regional Politics**

A group of experienced expert of political science is of the view that multiparty system is promoting politics of regionalism and ethnicity and ultimately endangering the integrity of Pakistan. Albeit of its characteristics to provide a road map for national integration, the negative consequences have polarized the society at large. Some interviewees were of the view that the aim of national integration has not been achieved yet by multiparty system in Pakistan.

- **Concept of Political Elitism**

Political elitism has gone deep rooted in our political culture and has subdued the political parties at all. The political parties are entirely dependent of such elites, its decisions, policies and strategies. They have overlapped the chance to give an opportunity to participate in political process of the country and have dominated the whole political setup. Some elite families have overshadowed and monopolized the politics. Therefore, the eradication of the culture of elitism in Pakistan is the need of the time. The dynastic role of such elites in political parties has flooded the process of integration with fragmentation.

- **Pressure of Non-State Actors and Other Institutions**

Many other scholars are of the view that lack of discipline and weakness in the core objectives of the political parties have provided chance of leading to other anti-state actor and foreign actors to exert pressure on the unauthorized role and efficacy of political parties for their own interest. They often manipulate the state interest and do not play the role of integrating the nation.

- **Dictatorial role of the Political Parties its Leaders**

The political parties in Pakistan are not democratic and therefore, have not been effective in bringing the national integration. It lacks proper organization, representation, division of power which is preventing them aloof from obtaining the aim of integrating the nation. The internal issues and instabilities of political parties have not left the multiparty system to work properly and bear the purpose of integrating the nation. It lacks proper organization, representation, division of power which is preventing them aloof from obtaining the aim of integrating the nation.

- **Ineffective Role of the Political Parties in the Development of Political Culture**

Most of the respondent of my interview were quite agree on this point that the political parties in Pakistan have failed to educate the people in creating political awareness. Educating the people and political awareness enable them to work with coordination for the promotion of a developed political culture which penetrate the guts of national integration without coercion and pressure.

- **Lacking of the Prerequisites of Political System**

All the respondents were of the view that the political system in Pakistan is lacking of all pre-requisites. The political system applied here is the legacy of British rule which is entirely unfit here. It can be achieved only if all the conditions and requirements of a matured political system is acquired. Thus, political awareness, balanced socio-economic system, organized and

democratic political parties, patriotic and visionary leadership, independence of judiciary, free press and media, check and balance and strong institutions are the basic characteristics without which, any expected result in favor of national integration is not possible.

- **Gap Between theory and Practice**

All the experts and scholars were of view that albeit of all policy guidelines for political system in Pakistan, it lacks practicality and endurance because there is gap between theory and practice since the inception of Pakistan. Therefore, narrowing down the gap between theory and practice is the main requirement for the smooth integration of Pakistan.

- **Lack of accountability**

The unchecked nature of multiparty political system in Pakistan has turned the entire political system self-centered and unprofessional. Log rolling has become the part of the daily business. It has made the political parties authoritative and has thus nearly affected all the state institutions. Political parties and even the politicians are deemed as power seeker. One of the respondents was of the view that unless and until we do not contract the dictatorial role of political parties and political elites, we cannot achieve maturity in our political behavior and thus stability and national integration.

### **Conclusion**

In this study the researcher focused the multiparty political system of Pakistan and its role and effects on the national integration of Pakistan. To see the linkage and effects of this multiparty on national integration the political system of Pakistan was studied by going through the available literature on the political history of Pakistan. The main debate in this study was to find out the connection of the two variables multiparty and national integration. The main question was how this multiparty system affects national integration in Pakistan? National integration is an imperative for the stability and development of a nation. To find out the actual issue and effects of the multiparty system on national integration besides with secondary and available data, the researcher went through the primary data which was collected by the applying convenience sampling through semi-structured interviews. The researcher collected data from these groups and then refined the data by applying the thematic analysis and discovered different themes and aspects from the collected data.

By the different groups of interviewees the researcher came through a number of themes. According to the collected data from the interviews all the respondents have the opinion that multiparty system has and can play a key role in the national integration, but in the case of Pakistan since 76 years political history we got very low output and not better result

from this strategy of national integration. They also exposed a number of hurdles in the way of this political process. They added that this system is a mechanism for national integration, spirit of true democracy and many positives aspects which may help in the national integration. Political alliances, coalition government, representation of all the communities of the state, more check and balance, surmounting role of shadow cabinet, prevention of the autocracy of a single party, were the main positives aspects of this multiparty system which truly help in the national integration of Pakistan.

Besides these positives and supportive points the interviewees also mentioned the negative aspects of this system in the national integration of Pakistan. They elaborated the negative effects and causes of those negative results from this system. According to many scholars and commentators that in multiparty system there is always a likelihood of instability and sometime political deadlock which paralyzes the whole political system and prevents the political development and national integration. Many other problems in the system such as absences of the basic ground principles, lack of check and balance, ethnic and regional politics, ineffective role of political parties, problem in the structure and organization of the political parties, centralization of the political authority in the political parties, influences and interference of other state institutions in the political institutions and dictatorial role of these political institutions are discovered by the many respondents.

### **Recommendations**

The research experts not only commented on the positive and negative role of multiparty system in national integration of Pakistan but they all also suggested some recommendations for the better result of national integration in Pakistan.

#### **1. Reforms in the Ground Principles of Political Parties:**

- This is one of the basic and important suggestion by all the interviewees that there should be some basic and ground principles which will be strictly abided by all the political parties covering all aspects i.e. making a new party, selection of its members, worker, related to their internal structure and activities of the all the political parties.

#### **2. Check and Balance:**

- This was also a common suggestion that the system of check and balance and accountability should be made strong and functional and no one should be exempted from it. The authority and leading institutions for check and balance and accountability should be made strong, free and fair.

**3. Develop Political Culture and Political Awareness:**

- Developed and matured political culture of a country contributes a lot to the success of a political system. Political culture is the political understanding of people about their state political system, its role and functions but after the 76 years of independence, Pakistan is still in search of the techniques for the development of its political culture.

**4. Limit the Influential Role of the Political institutions:**

- Political interference has plagued our political culture. If the unnecessary interference of political parties in performance of state institutions removed it will exert professional coherence in the state development and will ultimately lead to state prosperity.

**5. Proportional Representation;**

- Proportional representation is also one of the suitable options for the integration in multiparty political system. In this proportional representation Pakistan can achieve the required result and can ensure equality in its diverse society.

**6. Strong Political Institutions;**

- Political institutions should be made strong and independent. In Pakistan political and other state's institution are very easily influenced and to some extent not independent and free in their decision-making, all the state institutions should be made strong and independent.

**7. Curtail the monopoly of political parties**

- Dynastic nature of Pakistani political system may weaken the political culture. It prevents other people of the state in the politics of the country, which is a main cause of weak political system. This dynastic politics should be reformed with new patriotic and charismatic leaders.

**8. Decentralization of the Political Authority in our Political System;**

- Political power and political parties should be decentralized and political authority should not be given in single hand, because absolute power corrupt absolutely. So decentralization and devolution of political power can improved and give positive result.

**9. Role of Media;**

- Media has a constructive role in the development of a political system. Media can play very effective and crucial role in building political culture of Pakistan. Media can give political education, awareness and political knowhow about all

the policies and political development of the country. Media has a key role in the awareness of the people and development of political culture in Pakistan.

#### **10. State Accommodative Role;**

- Accommodative role of state in the development of political system is very essential. The state's role is one of the main factors which may develop the role of political parties in terms of national integration and national stability.

These were some recommendations based on the consensual opinions and suggestion from all the interviewees. Other than these described suggestion some other recommendations which the researcher discovered are the political awareness of people, check and balance, economic development, socio-economic balance, reforms in the political parties, system of fewer or bi-party system and focus on the literacy rate, reforms in the government educational institutions and syllabus were also the main suggestions. By ensuring these reforms we can achieve national integration in Pakistan.

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