

Politics of Protest in Pakistan: An Analysis of Political Implications of Pakistan Tehreek E Insaaf's Dharna in Islamabad (2014)

Yaseen Ullah¹, Aamir Raza², Saba Gul³

ABSTRACT

Demonstrations, agitations, and protests are part of the democratic political process. Protests play a significant role in shaping the polity of a country, as they can challenge existing power structures and bring attention to social, political, and economic issues that may have been previously ignored or marginalized. Protest politics have played a crucial role in the history of Pakistan. These demonstrations were organized for a variety of causes; some were against civilian governments, others against martial laws, and yet others for the restoration of democracy and the judiciary. This present study discusses the recent protest and its political implications. The 126-day protest in Islamabad over the alleged rigging of the 2013 elections, led by Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) was popularly known as "Dharna." Most of the data is based on interviews with students, lawyers, and political activists in Nowshera, Peshawar, and Lahore, Pakistan. We argue that this Dharna has created awareness among the people, helped PTI win the elections of 2018, set a precedent for political as well as non-political forces to stage protests and put the government under pressure, encouraged the culture of civil disobedience, weakened the revived process of democracy, and reinforced the non-democratic forces in the country. For this reason, the prolonged dharna has far-reaching consequences for Pakistan's politics.

Keywords: Protest Politics, Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf, Dharna, Political Implications

INTRODUCTION

Demonstrations, agitations, and other forms of public protest are all essential components in a democracy system (Segalov, 2015). It has a profound impact on all facets of a nation's society, including economics, politics, and political systems. Protests are often regarded as indispensable to the continued existence of democracy and democratic values in a nation (Norman, 2017). Protests are used by people to advance and defend their

¹ Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar, **Corresponding Author's Email: ullahyaseenuop@gmail.com**

² Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar

³ Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan

constitutional, legal, and political rights (History, 2019). The political history of Pakistan is characterised by various periods of political instability and unrest triggered by military intervention and demonstrations (Lamba, 2014). Throughout the country's political history, both administrators of martial law and civilian governments have encountered protests and unrest (Rizvi, 1984).

In the latter half of the 1960s, a significant protest was held against the regime of military dictator Ayub Khan. This demonstration included members of many different groups, including students, politicians, laborers, and women (Reddebek, 2018). This demonstration immobilized the entire nation, forcing Ayub Khan to step down on March 25, 1969. The second important protest called for the overthrow of the Pakistan People Party's elected government, which was led by the party's founder, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), an alliance of nine political parties opposed to the PPP, founded it. PNA began this demonstration in 1977 to denounce election fraud (Dawn, 2014). The third demonstration, which got under way in July 1977, was intended to topple military dictator Zia-ul-Haq. Under the auspices of the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), a coalition of several political parties staged the demonstration (Zunes, n.d.).

A fourth significant demonstration against military dictator Pervez Musharraf was held. In 2007, he declared a state of emergency and ousted Chaudry Iftikhar, the Pakistani Chief Justice, from his position. To restore the judiciary, various political and civil rights organizations organized nationwide protests under the supervision of lawyers (Walsh, 2008). This protest was successful in its goal of restoring the judiciary in the country, and it also succeeded in removing the administrator of martial rule from his position (Government Issues Notifications for Restoration of Judges, 2009).

Imran Khan, leader of the PTI, is attributed with stimulating the latest wave of demonstrations in the nation (Tribune, 2018). Imran Khan initiated a march against the alleged rigging in the 2013 general elections (Malik, 2013). The Azadi March began at the PTI Chief's residence in Zaman Park, Lahore. Afterwards, The Azadi March demonstration proceeded in the direction of Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. The PTI protesters were calling for the following demands: The resignation of both Pakistan's Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of the province of Punjab; a review of how much money the government has spent over the past 14 months; to punish those who participated in election fraud in 2013; amendments to the voting system in preparation for the next round of elections; resolution of each and every assembly, as well as reelections; and prior to holding new elections, the establishment of a neutral interim government should be a priority. With the horrific Army Public School, Peshawar, tragedy, this 126-day Dharna came to a conclusion. (Zaman, 2014).

This political dharna had numerous political consequences. Additionally, it has political, social, and economic effects. This Dharna significantly increased Pakistan's economic losses. Due to the dharna, the Chinese President's already scheduled visit was canceled, causing Pakistan great shame. The PTI leader's urging that his supporters

contribute money through hundi rather than through authorized channels was another step Pakistan's economy was taking in the wrong direction. Due to the Dharna held by the PTI in Islamabad, the IMF delegation also decided to cancel its visit to Pakistan (Javed & Mamoon, 2017). Moreover, the Dharna caused disruptions in the regular life of the individuals. This action worked against the progress of democracy. Dharna protesters violated citizens' right to free movement by closing highways during the demonstration (Rehman, 2016).

In this context, it is also pertinent to note that the protestors from PTI attacked the government-owned television and damaged some of the equipment. Moreover, dharna activists surrounded the parliament building and the Red zone. Moreover, it is also asserted that the standstill in the country was caused by the stubborn behavior of the chairman of the PTI and his strident demands. The commentators believed that a military involvement in the country was possible under these circumstances. The democratization process, according to some observers, was hampered as a result (Kronstadt & Kumar, 2014).

Within this backdrop, the research study delves deeper into the political repercussions of the PTI sit-in in Islamabad. This is significant, keeping in view the media reports on this dharna and their obsession mostly with economic dimension of this dharna. Moreover, popular perception of the political implications of this dharna needs to be demonstrated empirically. This article, thus attempts to answer the question what are the political impacts of PTI dharna for Pakistan? Below, we discuss the methodology utilized for this study. After that, there will be a quick discussion on the PTI's electoral politics. Following that section is a comprehensive analysis of the political repercussions of this dharna, which is mostly rooted in the data gathered from the participants. A succinct conclusion is provided at the end of the article.

Collection of Data

The primary data used in this study was gathered using qualitative methods. Interviews with lawyers, students, and political activists were undertaken. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions. Moreover, a random and purposeful sampling technique was utilized while contacting and selecting participants for interviews. Interviews with members of the legal profession are quite rare compared to those with college and university students. The interviews have been conducted in 2015 for an undergraduate research and later in May-June 2019 for a graduate research.

In this regard, the total number of participants is 60. Twenty interviews were conducted for the undergraduate research of which 15 were male and 5 females. These were mostly students at MA and Ph.D. level from the social sciences division including some from student political organizations. The interviews that were conducted for graduate research comprised 40 participants from Peshawar, Nowshera, and Lahore. These were students, political activists, and lawyers, and they included 10 female participants and 30 male participants. Pseudonyms have been given to the participants in place of their real names in order to hide and conceal any personally identifiable information about them. In

the same vein, the specific location has been altered as well in order to conceal the identification of the interviewees.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Both the writing and the analysis are descriptive in style, with most of the themes deriving from the participants during the fieldwork. In this way, the style of the writing is thematic. The majority of the university's undergraduates came from political science courses. The interviews were split between online mediums like email and Skype and in-person meetings.

PTI: An Introduction and Electoral History

Imran Khan, a former Pakistani cricketer, established the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in 1996 (Rao, 2018). Initially, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf was founded as a socio-political movement known as Movement of Justice (Siddique, 2018). Its slogan is "justice, humanity, and self-esteem (Mehdi, 2012) & (Mufti, 2016). Its goals include setting up an Islamic and democratic system, promoting tolerance, protecting human rights, starting social welfare programs in the country, giving everyone the same education, reducing government at the local level, reviving the economy, giving young people a place to grow, improving health and infrastructure, and getting rid of the corruption that has been a problem for so long (Michaelsen, 2012) & (Shaikh & Bughio, 2012) and to end the manipulation of the country's underprivileged by its supposedly unscrupulous politicians, bureaucrats both in military and civil and feudalism (Sheikh, 2018). Hence, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf is, without a doubt, well-known among the country's younger generation (Naqvi, 2018).

The PTI candidates participated in the elections held in 1997, however they were unsuccessful (Mehdi, 2013). Its leader became well-known among the public, particularly among the youth, as a result of his ideological views against: dictatorship, corruption, and US drone strikes in the 2002 elections, when he was elected to the National Assembly from the constituency of NA-95 in the district of Mianwali. All politicians seemed to him to be crooked, inept, and lacking in the nation's essential values and he was strongly opposed to the situation of the country's politics. He also condemned the military dictatorship of General Pervez Musharraf. When Benazir Bhutto of the Pakistan People's Party and Nawaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) returned to Pakistan in 2007, the head of the PTI, along with other political groupings, spoke out against Musharraf (Ahmed, 2007).

Imran Khan boycotted the 2008 general elections since they were held during President Musharraf's tenure as an ex-martial law administrator. Hence, his declaration of a boycott of the 2008 general elections made him somewhat famous in the country. Similarly, he indicated plans to boycott all future elections until Supreme Court judges that were dismissed and imprisoned by Pervez Musharraf are reinstated. He also stated that the polls were manipulated and the interim government was prejudiced.

On May 11, 2013, general elections were conducted, resulting in a turnout that surpassed all previous records in Pakistan (Jan, 2013) in which the PML-N was able to clinch a majority with 199 out of 342 members in the National Assembly. However, Nawaz Sharif was elected to the position of Prime Minister of Pakistan for the third time. (Craig, 2013). According to the results of the elections held in 2013, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf emerged as the third biggest political party in the nation, with the PPP taking the position of being the country's second largest political party (Golovnina, 2014). The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) won 7.5 million votes and only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) did the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) win a majority, and it established a coalition government with other parties, notably Jamaat-e-Islami (Khan, 2013).

In view of all this, Imran Khan and his party, the PTI, alleged that the general elections in 2013 were rigged. At first, he ordered that an inquiry be conducted into four different constituencies. PTI was compelled to organise rallies across the province of Punjab since the government of PML (N), which was in power at the time, was insistent about conducting an investigation into the matter regarding the allegations raised by the PTI (Javed & Mamoon, 2017). Shortly after, the PTI put out a call for a Long March against election manipulation. The following year, it initiated an Azadi March and a sit-in Dharna in the D-Chowk of the capital city of Islamabad to demonstrate its disapproval of the situation (Rumi, 2014).

The Azadi March began in earnest from the residence of the PTI Leader at Zaman Park, which is located in Lahore. Afterwards, the Azadi March rally made its way to the country's capital, Islamabad. Furthermore, Pervaiz Khattak, the then-chief minister of KP, traveled to Islamabad with supporters from Peshawar to join the Azadi March. Imran Khan's rally proceeded through many districts of Lahore, including Faisal Chowk, Mall Road, and Data Darbar, among others. Riots broke out on the route to Islamabad between protestors and PML-N workers. The Dharna, which was held in Islamabad's D Chowk, lasted 126 days.

Nevertheless, the leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) declared that his protests would persist till his demands were fulfilled. The 126-day Dharna came to an end on December 16, 2014, when 150 innocent people, including 132 kids, (Alvi, 2015), were killed by terrorists of the Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the Army Public School, Peshawar (Hashim, 2018).

This protest is very similar to others that have taken place in Pakistan in the past, but it is also distinctive in a number of respects, most notably due to the fact that it has been going on for a very long time and has garnered a huge proportion of coverage in the media. In addition to this, as a consequence of this, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has been given an edge in the general elections of 2018 (Shah & Sareen, 2018). In addition, the PTI was successful in forming governments in the provinces of KP and Punjab, and Baluchistan. The protest has multiple impacts on the politics, culture, and economy of Pakistan. Below, in the next section, we elaborate on the multiple political implications of this protest.

Political Impacts of PTI Dharna

The PTI protest/Dharna has significant ramifications for Pakistan's political situation, a nation that has seen political and constitutional unrest since its establishment in 1947. The historical context of this protest is also important because, for the first time in Pakistan's history, a civilian government elected by the people handed over power to another civilian government after serving a 5-year term without the interference of a military dictator or an ex-Martial Administrator in 2013. The next parts discuss the ramifications of this dharna for Pakistani politics, with participants arguing that some of these consequences are unfavorable and others are favorable.

It is suggested that the dharna has had a negative impact on the role of state institutions, particularly the military, in politics. In addition, dharna had a negative impact on Pakistan's democracy and constitutionalism. Pakistan's culture of civil disobedience is also cultivated further, which has a detrimental effect. It also had a bad effect on Pakistan's foreign relations and international standing. On the other hand, it had a beneficial effect on the relationship between lawmakers and politicians, who united against the PTI's approach. In addition, the dharna raised the political consciousness of the masses and increased women's political participation. In addition, the country gained optimism for free and fair elections. We will now discuss these effects.

Impacts on State institutions

In this section, we argue that because the military's leadership was unwilling to speak openly about the PTI Dharna, it raised questions about its alleged involvement in the protest in the eyes of Pakistan's citizens, notably political parties, the media, and civil society. According to some commentators, the nation's three successful military interventions happened as a result of such types of political unrest. There were rumors that if the unrest persisted, the military might step in. One worry was that "the military would try to resolve the problem initially. Its first option would not be to impose direct rule, but they may do so by installing a different civilian government with military backing in its stead (Craig & Hussain, 2014). In addition, the fact that the military was involved in resolving political conflicts within the nation degraded its reputation during these protests. However, many people in Pakistan had the impression that it was a covert military takeover because of its participation (Malik, 2014). A participant in this context stated that

“The political authority was weakened by the Army Chief of Staff's meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. It upset the country's power dynamics between the military and civilian leadership. As a result, according to Senator Raza Rabbani, the real power has moved from Islamabad to GHQ, Rawalpindi. The non-democratic forces' primary benefit from the dharna was that it helped them indirectly advance their goals.”(Safia Rehman, personal communication, 2015) & (Wakeel, personal communication, November 5, 2019).

Notwithstanding the prevalence of this notion among the general public, legislators, and members of civil society, the government and military have tried to clarify their positions. The government debunked claims that the military supported protests in the country by declaring that the military had no role in the PTI's Dharna. Clearly, this institution promoted democratic process. Similarly, the military advised the government and protesters to refrain from violence and address their dilemma through diplomacy (Dharna Deadlock: Government PTI Negotiators Begin Talks to End Crisis, 2014). In addition, army officials stressed that in such a perilous circumstance, all segments of society must be tolerant and prudent and must settle the problem in the national interest. Notwithstanding the worst confrontations between the police and protesters in the country's capital, where a number of people were killed and injured, including police officers, the institution of the Army attempted to remain impartial (BBC News, 2014).

The demonstration rendered the state's operations in the capital city completely ineffective and deflected the focus of the government away from the most pressing issues facing the nation, namely the engagement of the military in the tribal territories. It also messed up the work of parliament and foreign affairs (Rehman, 2015). Similarly, civil-military tensions were impacted, or, to put it another way, the tensions were sharpened (Rehman, 2015). In reality, the demonstrators who were engaged in an uprising against the government were actively working toward the goal of undermining the authority of the state organs and the nation's overall national sovereignty. Dharna weakened democratic institutions like Parliament, which was strengthened after long endeavor.

Additionally, the position of non-democratic forces became strengthened due to the PTI Dharna. Other major protests in the history of the country were staged mostly for restoration of a democratic system against military dictators, except the one against Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, nonetheless; the PTI demonstration was directed against a democratically elected government. Moreover, the 2013 elections were not held under the supervision of PML (N) and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, yet he was blamed for them. Such moves pushed the balance towards non-democratic forces (Wakeel, personal communication, November 5, 2019).

The dharna practically hindered the smooth functioning of state institutions like the judiciary and parliament, which are vital for state functioning, in Islamabad. A participant, Subhan, aptly remarked that “the capital of the country was blocked, and there were barriers that halted the proper functioning of state institutions, namely, the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Parliament, etc.” (Subhan, personal communication, June 16, 2019). Similarly, the protestors even attacked the state institutions and led to destruction of state property while encouraging civil disobedience against the government and state apparatus. To some, including, Sakib, a research participant, this was for the creation of a situation of disorder and anarchy and to weaken democracy and state institutions. His remarks were,

“Demonstrators from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) marched towards the nation's capital and urged the populace to engage in civil disobedience.

The steps taken to depose the elected government before the end of her term, the destruction of state property and the property of the poor masses, and the refusal to comply with orders from state institutions led to anarchy in the country. It has not only sparked the system of deposing the elected government, which has severely harmed our democracy, but the state has also experienced the implications of economic loss, i.e. a fall in foreign investors. Furthermore, protestors took the law into their own hands, resulting in skirmishes between agitators and state security that were illegal and unconstitutional (Sakib, personal communication, November 6, 2019)".

Also, as a result of these sit-ins, national institutions were undermined, the nation's sovereignty was challenged, an atmosphere was created in which people suspected a coup d'etat, and international relationships with other nations were disrupted. In the words of a participant, Muhammad Hamid,

"Participants of the PTI Dharna violated democratic values, created an opportunity for a military takeover, violated the law and order of the state, misappropriated the concept of freedom for personal gain, and spread violence in Islamabad, which affected the internal and external environment and weakened national organizations"(Zubair, personal communication, 2015) & (Hamid, personal communication, August 6, 2019).

In addition, the PTI protest made the institution of the military questionable in Pakistan, since it was suspected that the military encouraged the Dharna in order to undermine democracy in the country. Many claimed that the Sit-ins served the military's goals. A participant, Idris Khan, states, "The military's interests were met." Several argued that because the military was unhappy with the PML (N) administration's policies, it supported the protesters or considered itself the least supportive of the civilian government. A common conspiracy theory was that Nawaz Sharif's government intended to reduce the military's role in foreign affairs and build better relations with neighboring nations, particularly India and Afghanistan. Among many participants, Syed Muzakir Shah, said:

“Dharna of the PTI has undermined and cornered the democratic forces in the country. After the Musharraf rule, this was the second democratic administration that handed over the democratic system to a democratically elected government. Pakistan Muslim league Nawaz's foreign policy was influenced by the military establishment, and he desired amicable relations with the neighbors.”(Shah, Personal, 2019).

Impressions on Democracy and constitution

The protest/dharna has major and far-reaching effects on Pakistan's democratic system. The majority of research participants and even some state

legislators viewed these effects as bad. Farhat Ullah Babar, a senior politician and senator who previously served as the press secretary for former President Asif Ali Zardari, asserted that both Sharif's regime and Imran Khan pose a "serious threat to democracy." Farhat Ullah Babar added that the government should have initiated a real engagement with Imran Khan much earlier. Currently, the dire political situation is shifting the power balance from Islamabad to Rawalpindi (Craig & Hussain, 2014).

In this context, democracy and constitution were correlated as well. A participant, Ibrar, elaborated on that,

“According to the Constitution of Pakistan, the Prime Minister can be removed from office through a vote of no confidence in the National Assembly, which is the elected representative body of the people. This process is a constitutional and democratic method for addressing political problems in the country. However, it is also the right of the citizens to hold peaceful protests to express their grievances and demands. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party organized a sit-in protest or dharna in 2014. While the method of the protest may be debatable, because his demand regarding resignation was unconstitutional.”(Ali, personal communication, 2015) & (Ibrar, personal communication, June 20, 2019).

Imran Khan, on the other hand, criticized the alleged monarchical nature of the then current government and pledged that his march will open the way for a genuine democratic process in the country (Report, 2015). In addition, government official Chaudry Nisar stressed that opposition is fundamental to democracy. To adopt a might-makes-right mentality, however, would be improper and hazardous. Such an approach could not succeed in today's society. What is sown today will be harvested tomorrow. If you rise to power in the future, the opposition will certainly organize a civil disobedience movement against you (Iqbal, 2014). Moreover, it set a wrong precedent, and now every party would gather masses and pressurize elected government (Yousafzai, personal communication, 2015) and (Nawaz, personal communication, October 5, 2019). The demonstrators breached the law; even they may violate the Pakistani constitution. The dharna created a bad precedent by mobilizing the masses and serving their objectives (Dharna Deadlock: Government, PTI Negotiators Begin Talks to End Crisis, 2014). The removal of the democratically elected administration of the nation was opposed by both experts and politicians on the grounds that it would establish a horrible precedent and that would hurl an existing democratic process into disarray (Khan, 2014).

PTI Dharna weakened the country's democratic powers. After the Musharraf dictatorship, this was the second democratic government, and for the first time in the country's history, it was successfully transferred to the other Democratic Party after a five-year term. Pakistan Muslim league Nawaz's foreign policy was influenced by the military establishment, and he desired amicable relations with the neighbors. In addition, it fostered a climate of mistrust, misinformation, and harsh, undemocratic language inside the

democratic process and democratic politics. It resulted in the transfer of the administrative machinery of the country to incompetent, ineffective, and politically immature politicians, paving the path for the military establishment to indirectly govern the country (Shah, 2019).

In addition, the sit-in was responsible for the country's political unrest, the cancellation of trade deals, and a deterioration in the progress made toward the restoration of democracy. Participant Abdullah Khan said:

“It exacerbated political division, strengthened apolitical forces, stoked the idea of street and agitation politics for realizing one's dreams, increased political and economic uncertainty, exposed political ineptitude across Pakistan's political spectrum, and created political instability. The capital was held hostage for more than four months as a result (Shah, personal communication, 2015) & (Abdullah, personal communication, May 27, 2019)”.

Along with this, another negative impact of the dharna was that it fostered a culture of civil disobedience in Pakistan.

Fostering the culture of civil disobedience

The promotion of a culture of civil disobedience was another "bad" effect of the dharna. The PTI leader urged his supporters to disobey Pakistani civil authority both inside and outside the nation. They locked up the capital through their followers (“The Wrong March,” 2014). On the other hand, it was claimed by the Interior Minister of the government of Nawaz Sharif that the PTI chairman's incitement of disobedience of civil authorities is not only against the government, but is also against the country. He emphasized that even one step toward civil disobedience had the potential to bring the state to its knees. Imran Khan suggested to his party's overseas supporters that they send their money to Pakistan not through the conventional banking system but rather through the use of the Hundi. It was urged to the people that they should avoid paying the taxes. It was an attempt to make the country's economy more unstable (Raza, 2014).

In addition, the culture of dharnas in the nation was elevated as a direct result of this particular dharna and now everyone would get together in large numbers and hold a sit-in in protest against the government. Respondent Muhammad Hubab said: “From then on, a small group of people would gather and hold a dharna to demand their own personal interests; this can be interpreted as narrow-mindedness or selfishness, and it may not be regarded as a legitimate form of political expression. Moreover, such protests can be disruptive and potentially harmful to the broader community, as they may create tension and conflict, and divert resources and attention away from more pressing issues. Thus, it is a bad precedent”. (Hubab, 2019).”

As a result, only a small number of people are able to conduct a dharna and exert pressure on the government, which is a worrying sign for the future of politics in the nation.

Along with this, the protest impacted the international image and foreign relations of Pakistan.

Repercussions for Pakistan's foreign affairs

The protesters were responsible for a significant setback to the nation's diplomatic efforts. Because of this, the number of arriving and outgoing visits of delegations and heads of state have been postponed and canceled for an undetermined amount of time as a result. It put obstacles in the path of several heads of state's visits, especially China. These sit-ins distracted attention away from Pakistan, which was bad for the country's economy (Rehman, 2015). It is true that the cancellation of Chinese visits to Pakistan and the rapid setting of a Chinese President's visit to India after the Dharna protests severely affected Pakistan's standing in the international community. China is a key economic and strategic partner for Pakistan, and any negative impact on that relationship can have significant consequences for the country's economic and political stability.

In addition, the rapid scheduling of the Chinese President's visit to India after the Dharna protests may have been seen by some as a sign of disapproval or lack of confidence in Pakistan's political leadership. This could further undermine Pakistan's reputation and influence in the region and beyond. Both of these events took place simultaneously. During Dharna's tenure, there was no forward movement in the country's development. That was made worse by the fact that the Chinese president's visit was delayed. The Dharna not only resulted in the postponement of the visit of the President of China but also resulted in the postponement of the visits of the Heads of State of Maldives and Sri Lanka. Because to the ongoing Dharna in Pakistan's capital city, the visit of a delegation from the International Monetary Fund had to be canceled as well. In addition, the dharna was responsible for the cancellation of deals that international financial institutions were ready to sign for a significant amount with the government of Pakistan but were prevented from doing so because of the protest (Rana, 2014).

Similarly, a negative reputation was earned for the nation as a result of the political climate that prevailed throughout the Dharna period. At the period of the Dharna in Pakistan, people from many various walks of life within the foreign world voiced their dissatisfaction of the situation.. Critics said that this dharna was an illegitimate political ploy that was used to overthrow the democratically elected government of Pakistan. The US ambassador to Pakistan had both official and unofficial discussions with the heads of political parties and religious organizations in Pakistan. These meetings took place with both parties and groupings. Concern was expressed by the ambassador on the deterioration of law and order across the nation (Malik, 2014).

In addition, the United States Department of State has issued a statement claiming that it is against the constitution to call for Nawaz Sharif's resignation and insisted that his administration must complete its term of office, which is for five years. He assured yet, the government of the United States of America will not back any action that violates the Constitution in this nation. Imran Khan gave a response to the statement made by the State

Department of the United States and said that it was an indication of the United States meddling in the internal affairs of Pakistan. He argued that the United States should retract her remark (Today, 2014).

The British representative advocated for the continuation of democracy in Pakistan and stated that the then current political disorder must be resolved through democratic process. This was mentioned while the representative stressed the importance of democracy. Concern was shared by the European Union over the precarious situation that had developed during the Dharna protests. The European Union expressed its extreme concern about the unstable situation and stated that it was following the developments in Pakistan with utmost attention. It was urged that the impasse should be overcome through constitutional and amicable dialogue. In addition, it is imperative that all political parties take responsibility and refrain from engaging in violent behavior. Sadly, the country has not yet taken advantage of the opportunities. In this context, the non-serious attitude of political groups in Pakistan towards the current situation could indeed lead to the deprivation of GSP status and the loss of its major accomplishment (Malik, 2014). In addition to this, Indeed, the Dharna demonstration in Pakistan tarnished the country's reputation abroad (Ahmad, 2014). A participant, Faisal, said:

“The attack on Parliament and PTV during the Dharna protest in Pakistan did create a negative image of the country in the international community. Any kind of violent protest or attack on government institutions can be seen as a threat to the stability and security of a country, and can have serious consequences for its international standing. In this sense, the Dharna protest may be remembered with a bad name in history, as it created a perception of instability and insecurity that could have long-term implications for the country.”(Faisal, personal communication, May 10, 2019).

Thus, the protest had multiple negative impacts on the political landscape of Pakistan. However, the protest also had other impacts, seen as positive. Below is an elaboration of some of these.

Unity of parliamentarians and politicians

In addition to the affects that the participants viewed as having a negative impact, there were a few other impacts and aspects that the participants viewed as a favorable influence. One of these is the harmony that exists between members of parliament and various political parties. All of the legislative parties came together and offered their support in order to combat the alleged non-democratic activities of the PTI, which aimed to topple the democratically elected government (Dominguez, 2014). Khurshid Shah, the leader of PPP and a member of the opposition in the NA, unequivocally asserted that PPP will work to uphold democratic order in Pakistan. It would be strictly forbidden for anyone to overthrow the democratically elected government. According to him, the PPP would not support suspending the mandate that has been provided to the then current government

(The News, 2014). Likewise, the head of Pukhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), Mahmood Khan Achakzai, claimed that the protests and PTI are supported by 'hidden hands' which aim to achieve their vested interests by derailing democracy in Pakistan. He insisted that in order to preserve democracy, Nawaz Sharif should convene a conference amongst the leaders of the various political parties, including the PTI chairman.

Aftab Khan Sherpao of Qaumi Watan Party was another senior politician who defended the government by stating that the demands of PTI were unconstitutional. The Jammāt-I-Islmāi group also urged the PTI leader to settle the country's then ongoing political unrest. Nawaz Sharif thanked Altaf Hussain, the leader of the MQM, for his contribution to the continuance of democracy and thanked Ishrat ul-Ibad Khan, the governor of Sindh, for his support of democratic government (Dharna Deadlock: Government, PTI Negotiators Begin Talks to End Crisis, 2014). Moreover, Mian Iftikhar Hussain of Awami National Party said that dharna might disrupt the democratic system and that Imran Khan would be answerable for it. According to Fazlur Rehman (the leader of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam F), all political parties are standing together to defend the parliament and the constitution (Javed & Mamoon, 2017).

Similarly, due to the political crisis that Dharna sparked, leaders and lawmakers in the nation found common ground and worked together to ensure the political process would continue. Thus, the members of parliament voted to adopt the resolution imploring the Prime Minister to stay in his post rather than quit (Khan, 2014). Political parties were united and asserted the role of peaceful protest and civic engagement is in a healthy democracy. In a democratic society, people have the right to express their opinions and to participate in the political process through peaceful protest and other forms of civic engagement. However, protests must be conducted in a peaceful and lawful manner that does not disrupt the functioning of the government or undermine the stability of the political system (Correspondent, 2014). Thus, were united unprecedented way to protect the parliament and constitution (Report, 2015) & (Dominguez, 2014). The protest also increased political awareness and political activities among the masses, especially women.

Political Consciousness and Women's Engagement

Dharna brought about significant improvements through enhancing women's political engagement and educating the public about political issues. Women made history by turning out in large numbers to join the PTI protest. It also sparked fierce resistance in Pakistan and awoke the state's citizens to fight for their own rights. As a result, people voiced their worries over corruption, labor rights, the opulent lifestyles of government officials, the high cost of resources, etc. in the country (Nawaz, personal communication, October 5, 2019).

Similarly, people became vigilant and asked for change due to the dharna. Mohammad Ramzan, a participant, remarked: "The demonstration rekindled anti-corruption agitation among the populace" (Khan, 2019). In the same way, people will raise their voices against injustices wherever they occur with them. Erum Shah stated that people

become aware of injustices and corruption and, therefore; they are more likely to speak out against it (Shah, 2019).

The demonstration inspired individuals to become more active in the fight against corruption. Said Muhammad Ramzan, a participant:, “Due to this protest, more and more people are speaking out against corruption. First time people come together to raise their voice against corruption, it sends a strong message to those in power that they cannot continue to act with impunity. (Ramzan, personal communication, December 5, 2019)”. Alike, it criticized the dynastic politics in Pakistan. Suleman Malhi said: “Dharna criticized dynastic or family based politics, and people are now aware of this issue (Malhi, personal communication, June 21, 2019)”.

CONCLUSION

Set in a context that protests are integral to any democratic setup and have implications for society and politics of a country, this article elaborates on the protest of PTI, popularly called Dharna, held in Islamabad in 2014. The political ramifications of the PTI dharna were the primary subject of discussion. On the other hand, we went into detail on some earlier protests in Pakistan in the beginning part. After that introductory paragraph, we provided a quick summary of PTI and Imran Khan's electoral politics. We contended that the PTI demonstration had far-reaching implications and repercussions on Pakistan's political system. Some of these are termed as positive while others as negative by the research participants of this study. We contend that negative impacts included: the repercussions for State institutions, Impressions on Democracy and constitution, fostering the culture of civil disobedience, Repercussions for Pakistan's foreign affairs. Likewise, some of the positive impacts of this protest, we argue, that led to temporary unity of parliamentarians and politicians for the sake of civilian supremacy and the inculcation of political awareness among the masses especially women in the country.

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