

The Role of Western Powers in Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) Palestinian-Israeli Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) between Israel and Palestine always remains one of the most vital strategic significance and complex dilemmas facing by international community. For more than the past sixty years, Israeli-Palestinian or Arab conflict has been giving rise to regional instability and wars. The enduring confrontation has resulted in at least five major wars and a number of minor controversies and the source of two major Palestinian intifadas (uprisings). Many concrete international and regional attempts have been made to achieve a ceasefire and eventual negotiations on a more permanent peace. However, despite the international involvements, the deadlock in peace process is still there, due to frequent clashes between two nations. The main purpose of this theoretical research paper is to provide historical political background of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to identify the main obstacles which hinder the smooth functioning of MEPP. On the basis of reviewed literature, the paper is divided in three sections; first part focusing on the brief but comprehensive back ground of the research problem, the second part deals with role of western powers in the MEPP, while a summary of findings for the process of peace would be discusses in the last section of the study.

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East region occupies a significant geopolitical strategic position, located in South-Western Asia and North-Eastern Africa. The region is the meeting point of three continents. It is a tri-junction of Asia, Africa and Europe. It is an international cross road. Naval and air ways from the east to the west pass through this area. The Suez Canal connects the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. It is the shortest air route from Europe to Asia. In the twentieth century, this region gained significance due to the discovery of its vast oil reserves. Presently, it contains the single biggest reserve of oil and gas. The Middle East is the lifeline of Europe and other industrialized region. This region supplies 60-70 percent of Europe's needs, 66 percent of Japan's and about 25-30 percent of the United States. During the Cold War, the both super powers- the US and the former Soviet Union who produced sufficient quantities of oil- were interested in the control of the oil resources of this region to maintain their supremacy as well as preserve their own limited and exhaustible resources for the future. So oil is the backbone of the industrialized western economies, and the wielding of influence and involvement in the Middle East has been of paramount importance for the former and current imperial and super powers, including France, Britain, USA and the former Soviet Union¹.

The Middle East is also the birth place of three Abrahamic religions; Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Important religious centers like Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and the Wailing-Wall are situated in this region. Islam is the

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currency stores have been increased. However, the dollar depreciation didn't have any positive impact on the common man as the prices of everyday items of use have not been reduced³⁸.

However, according to April 2014 Gallup Annual Pulse Report, which was released after eleven months of May 2013 General Elections, the performance of PML-N Government outshone against the preceding achievements of the government of PPP. According to the survey conducted, a high number of people had been more satisfied with the policies and performance of the PML-N government as compared to the preceding government³⁹.

In terms of net rating of performance which was set for political leaders, the report revealed that Mian Nawaz Sharif of the PML-N was on the top of the list. His popularity rate was 18 percent. On the contrary, the popularity rate of Asif Ali Zardari was -28 percent. After assuming power, the PML-N government controlled inflation by 20 percent, curbed corruption by 36 percent and terrorism by 31 percent. At the time of the PPP rule, the survey revealed that only 27 percent of people considered PPP government unfavorable and 71 percent gave it a negative rating⁴⁰.

From the above, we can see that before the present day regime, although the Nawaz government made a considerable number of contributions during its tenure, the PPP government's contributions were still greater in certain sectors. However, Nawaz government's contributions towards economic reforms and industrialization were greater as compared to the PPP government's contributions.

CONCLUSION

The Pakistan Peoples Party holds the honour of being the first party which has served as the elected party in Pakistan for 16 years altogether. The first tenure started in 1971 and last till 1977; then the party assumed office in 1988 and served till 1990, after which, the party came to power in 1993 to 1996 and finally served the country from 2008 to 2013.

All in all, it can be said that the PPP is one of the biggest political party in Pakistan which has, despite deficiencies and setbacks, fought for the restoration of democracy for so many years and thus, it has played a very significant role in the political setup of Pakistan. Had the party not been there to struggle for democracy, Pakistan would have suffered more at the hands of dictators. The party has always strived for democracy and vows to continue its struggle towards democratic goals for years to come.

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military governments had played from time to time. Hence, this turned out to be successful for the Nawaz Government too.

Another area where the PML-N government worked was in the area of crime and terrorism and the illegal trade of arms in the country. In 1991, the PML-N government passed the Twelfth Amendment in the Constitution which enhanced the jurisdictional authority of Speedy Trial Courts to dispense summary justice. The PML-N government also introduced a number of significant industries in sectors like electricity generation, shipping, airlines; highway construction and telecommunications were opened up to the private sector unlike the nationalization policy of the previous regime of PPP³⁴. When the Nawaz government stressed upon privatization and liberalization of the economy, there was considerable criticism from certain elements who tried to derail the economic reforms introduced by the new government and brought up conspiracy theories. Nonetheless, the government worked on its set goals. The government also extensively worked towards infrastructure development as against the previous regime and to this end, a US\$1 billion superhighway (Motorway) project under the National Highway Authority was started. Under this regime, the Ghazi Brotha and Gawadar mini port projects were also initiated and the government also worked towards its foreign policy. In April 1993, the PML-N government was dismissed by the president³⁵.

The PML-N government again came to power in 1997 in a sweeping victory. Once again, the government introduced a landmark to the Constitution of Pakistan by repealing the Eighth Amendment which was considered a controversial one. Under this amendment, the president could dismiss the Prime Minister and dissolve the assembly. PML-N also added the anti-defection Fourteenth Amendment Bill. The government's most important contribution was to derive Pakistan towards economic progress despite US sanctions on Pakistan through the Pressler Amendment. Another credit that goes to the PML-N Government which PPP could not do was to strengthen Pakistan's atomic power as the government carried out at Chagai (Balochistan) three nuclear tests on May 28, 1998, in response to the Indian detonation of its five nuclear devices³⁶. This is something for which the government of PML-N must be given some credit to.

Assuming power in 2013 by winning 186 seats in the National Assembly, the PML-N formed its government in Pakistan after the PPP government smoothly passed on the baton after completing a historical five years in office. In 2014, the government of PML-N has faced vehement opposition from the Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan AwamiTehrik (PAT) which alleged the PML-N government to have rigged the elections of 2013. According to people, ever since the government assumed power, no changes have been found to occur in terms of poverty alleviation, price hike, unemployment, electricity load shedding, and terrorism³⁷. However, under the present PML-N government, there has been a considerable decrease in the value of dollar and foreign

Besides, the PPP government introduced the Aghaz-e-Huqooq-e-Balochistan policy for the people of Balochistan who had been neglected by previous regimes²⁷. There were many more achievements that the PPP government had during its tenure, however, the biggest achievement was the successful completion of its office.

COMPARISON WITH PML-N

Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) has been the major political party since the inception of Pakistan in 1947. Apart from the PPP, PML-N has been the only party which has consistently struggled for democracy in Pakistan. It is the only party after PPP which has contributed to the democratic setup of Pakistan²⁸. Like PPP, the party struggled for democracy in the face of military dictatorship. The first time PML-N took office was in 1990, making a coalition with IslamiJamhooriIttehad (IJ). Before coming to power in 1988, when PPP emerged as the single largest party in Pakistan and formed the government, the PML-N of Mian Nawaz Sharif emerged as the second largest party. The emergence of PML-N with strong vote bank strengthened the democratic setup of Pakistan as there was a power shift from feudal aristocracy to that of modern entrepreneurs. Like PPP, his government also made significant contributions to the political setup of Pakistan. The PML-N assumed power four times i.e. in 1990, in 1993, in 1997 and in 2013. During all its tenures, PML-N's achievements can be compared with that of the PPP's²⁹.

After assuming office in 1990, the Nawaz Sharif government announced a comprehensive national reconstruction plan for the country and promised to ensure smooth implementation of the plan³⁰. His government also worked towards making Pakistan a self-reliant country, work towards denationalization and deregulation, introduce taxation reform, introduce reforms related to foreign exchange and payment, introduce reforms related to administration and law and work towards increasing exports and agricultural productivity³¹.

The PML-N government also started an economic strategy that worked towards industrialization and to extensively promote the private sector. As against the policies of the PPP, the PML-N government worked towards rapid industrialization because the government saw it as the only means to create more jobs for the masses³².

Moreover, the PML-N focused on the implementation of Islamic legislations against the secular agenda of the PPP. This was particularly in terms of creating sharia courts and transforming the educational system of Pakistan on the basis of Islamic teaching. Moreover, the government imposed controls on the print and electronic media designed to ensure Islamic moral value and worked towards the establishment of Islamic banking through 'total abolition of interest'³³. These measures were wholeheartedly welcomed by the masses as religion has always been a very effective trump card that both the civilian and

- The PPP government also introduced Anti-Narcotics policy under which major drug barons were banished. Moreover, capital punishment and property confiscation introduced in the law to punish drug pushers.

2008 to 2013:

After the ousting of the Nawaz Sharif government in 1999 by the military under General Pervez Musharraf, a long period of one-man rule was yet again imposed in Pakistan. In the backdrop of political crisis, the PPP had to undergo yet another big tragedy for the sake of democracy in Pakistan²⁵. On 27 December 2007, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated. After the tragic incident, the PPP clean swept the 2008 parliamentary elections and gained a momentum of 121 general seats from all provinces. This time around, the responsibility to lead party fell on the shoulders of husband of Benazir Bhutto, and Mr. Asif Ali Zardari became the co-chairperson of PPP. The move was not appreciated by many. However, he formed a coalition government with the PML-N. The title of the coalition agreement was PPP-PML summit declaration. Under this agreement, all the judges who were deposed during the emergency imposed by General Pervez Musharraf in 2007 were reinstated. The PPP successfully completed its five-year tenure and peacefully passed the baton to PML-N in the General Elections of 2013. This was, yet another, significant achievement of the PPP as it emerged as a successful democratic force in the overall tumultuous political history of Pakistan. However, one setback was that the PPP violated the treaty later on, and as a result, the PML-N withdrew its coalition from the government. During the presidential elections of 2008, the PPP appointed Asif Zardari, who became the President of Pakistan by securing 481 out of 700 votes. In the April of 2010, President Zardari voluntarily surrendered his president powers and handed the charge over to the then PM, Yousuf Raza Gillani of the PPP under the 18th Amendment of the Constitution. In 2012, Raja Pervez Ashraf was elected as the new Prime Minister of Pakistan through PPP's nomination²⁶.

Under this tenure, the PPP once again made considerable achievements. For instance, the National Command Authority Ordinance was amended in order to implement the Charter of Democracy (CoD). Other key achievements of the government included the appointment of the first ever female Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Hina Rabbani Khar. The PPP also introduced the reconciliatory and consultative form of governments in Pakistan under which all the elected representatives are invited on board to take major decisions. The government also launched the famous Benazir Income Support Program, worth Rs70 billion, to help needy people earn a living. Moreover, the government introduced the Benazir Employees Stock Option Scheme which was successfully implemented in about 80 organizations owned by the state. More achievements including the Benazir Green Tractors Scheme for small farmers, Utility Store subsidy, increase in the minimum wages, and trade union revival through IRA 2009, among others. The PPP government also introduced many policies in different field, including power, petroleum, education, natural resources, and textiles, etc.

1996, the party's own elected president, Farooq Leghari dismissed the PPP government. Some of the policies that the third PPP regime introduced are as follows²⁴:

1993-96:

- In the development sector, the third regime of PPP constructed some 21,000 primary schools; the government provided electricity to some 18,000 villages across Pakistan and some 700,000 new telephone connections were allotted. The government also built an Airport at Gwadar as well as Sehwan Sharif, and in order to provide clean drinking water to the residents of Mehran –a coastal region – Akra Dam was constructed. The government also started work on the port of Ketti Bandar.
- In terms of Pakistan's foreign policy, the PPP government adopted a unanimous resolution to resolve the issue of Kashmir at the OIC Summit at Casablanca, as per UN resolutions. The government also adopted the Brown Amendment under which military equipment and hardware stuck up in the US due to Pressler Law were partially released.
- In the defence sector, the PPP bought Agosta submarines for the Pakistan Navy and also bought tanks for the Army.
- In the energy sector, the government vowed to bring an end to electricity load shedding by involving the private sector in the generation of power through a uniform policy. Under the government, HUBCO power plant was completed as the first private-sector power plant in Pakistan.
- In terms of communication, the government made considerable achievements as well. For instance, optic fiber was laid alongside river Indus' right bank. Moreover, satellite dish, FM radio, digital paper and cellular-phone technology were promoted.
- The PPP also extensively worked towards the eradication of polio from Pakistan by introducing a countrywide Polio Vaccination Programme. During PPP's three-year regime, almost cent percent children under five years of age were vaccinated against Polio.
- Under PPP's regime, electoral reforms bill was adopted in the northern areas for the first time and people in those areas were given right to vote. Thus, the party upheld its democratic principles.
- PPP government established Women Police Stations and appointed women judges in the superior judiciary.
- Complete Press Freedom was ensured and sixth Wage Board award for print journalists was announced by the government.
- In the financial sector, cabinet members were forbidden to take loans from Pakistani banks for the first time in history. The PPP government also gave complete autonomy to the State Bank of Pakistan and a one billion dollar debt retired under the regime for the first time. The Tax revenue was raised from 7.2 per cent to 14. 1 per cent as of 1995-96 and economic growth was raised to 5.2 % in 1995- 96.

The government also established a Women Bank and thousands of females were given the opportunity to set up their own businesses.

- The PPP government worked for the enhancement of power and water sector of the country and towards this end, the government achieved the goal of supplying electricity to some four thousand villages in Pakistan, thus, setting up a record. The government also encouraged the private sector to invest in the electricity generation industry. Moreover, it was during PPP's second regime that the Ghazi Brotha and Neelam Jhelum projects, which were to produce 1 thousand Mega Watts of power, were started. Finally, in order to overcome energy crisis in the country, the PPP government signed an agreement with China to establish a 300-Mega Watt nuclear Power Plant in Pakistan.
- In the defence sector, the PPP government also made considerable progress. For instance, the government ordered to hand over two Frigates to the Pakistan Navy and production of indigenous aircraft was also started in Pakistan. Moreover, some sixty F-16 planes were acquired by the Pakistan Air Force and new, high-tech radar systems were installed.
- The PPP regime worked towards the freedom of expression and freedom of press. After facing a very tough time under military rule where the press was not allowed to speak against the military regime and freedom of expression was curbed, the democratic government introduced laws to lift censorship imposed on media. Under the military rule, many outspoken journalists were terminated from their jobs. After the restoration of democracy and working in accordance with democratic principles, all such journalists were reinstated. Moreover, earlier, journalists were required to obtain a no objection certificate (NoC) from the government if they were to travel abroad. However, PPP abolished this rule after assuming office.
- In terms of religious services, the PPP introduced a new *Hajj* Policy and increased the number of pilgrims who could perform *Hajj*.

Apart from the above mentioned services that the PPP regime rendered during its second tenure, there were other miscellaneous services that the government performed. For instance, under PPP's second regime, Pakistan joined the Common Wealth again. In terms of foreign relations, Pakistan's relations with India, which remained hostile in the past, were normalized and an agreement was signed between the two countries regarding no attack on nuclear installations. The government also extended the Karachi Steel Mills after getting a \$ 1 billion loan approved from Russian, amidst many other services²³.

Following the elections of 1993, the PPP returned to power by plurality. However, this time, some internal factions had developed within the party. There were three factions within the party, the Bhuttoists, the Parliamentarians, and the Sherpaoists. The most influential of them was the Bhuttoists faction. An internal rift was created within the party when Benazir's policies were being criticized by her brother, Murtaza Bhutto. After the mysterious death of Murtaza Bhutto in

1988-1990:

Benazir Bhutto introduced some important Land Reforms during her tenure. These included the following²²:

- The government distributed 35000 acres of land among peasants who did not own any lands. Under the new policy, 12.5 acres of land was allocated to each farmer. This enraged landlords and they filed a petition in the Supreme Court against the reforms due to which the newly introduced reforms were stopped for a temporary period of time.
- Under Zia's ruthless regime, more than 500 political workers had to bear severe economic crisis. After the restoration of democracy, these political workers were allotted small residential plots on official rates.
- The government also took measures to provide housing facilities to homeless people in all big cities. Under this policy, the government announced to build some 2000 small houses. In Karachi, the economic hub of Pakistan where people from all corners of the country come for employment, the government of PPP built one thousand homes for homeless people at a very nominal price (Rs.30, 000) which was to be paid over easy instalments.
- The PPP government also introduced some labour reforms. Under these reforms, trade union activities, which were banned by the military setup, were revived. Moreover, some 40,000 sacked workers, earlier working in the industrial sector, were reinstated. The government also increased labour wages and labourers were also given a share in the income of their organizations. Furthermore, the government decided to build labour colonies in each industrial city and pension rights were also introduced for labourers after their retirement.
- In the area of health, the government of PPP decided to introduce government dispensaries in every Union Council. Moreover, the government also abolished admission and bed fee in hospitals which Zia-ul-Haq had introduced under his regime.
- In the educational sector, the PPP government increased the education budget for the first time in Pakistan's history. The budget was increased both in 1989-90's and then again in 1990-91's budget. Additionally, in order to improve the standard of education in Pakistan, some 50,000 teachers were employed by the government and education up to the 8th standard was made compulsory.
- The government also worked significantly towards improving the youth policy. To this end, the government of PPP lifted the ban on the formation of student unions. A ministry of youth affairs was established to look after the problems of youth in Pakistan. This was the first time it happened in Pakistan. Besides, some 80,000 literacy centres were established throughout the country.
- In terms of Women Affairs, the government of PPP established A Ministry of Women Affairs for the very first time in the political history of Pakistan.

May a public holiday. These were some of the significant developmental works that the PPP government performed during its first time in office¹⁸.

1977 was the last year of PPP in the parliament as on July 4, 1977, the Pakistani military once again launched a coup and overthrew the democratic setup. An operation codenamed Fair Play was executed by the then Chief of Army Staff, General Zia-ul-Haq along with the support of Chairman Joint chiefs, Admiral Muhammad Sharif. In a coup d'état, Z A Bhutto's regime was toppled, the assemblies were dissolved, the Constitution of Pakistan was suspended and a Martial Law was imposed once again, thus derailed democracy in the country. As a result, a modern, yet strict form of conservatism was introduced by Gen. Zia, which promoted religious and nationalistic programs in the country. In 1979, following a controversial death sentence given to Z. A. Bhutto, his daughter Benazir Bhutto was elected as the chairperson of the People's Party in 1982. Afterwards, a campaign to restore democracy in Pakistan was initiated by the PPP, which is known as one of the greatest non-violent democratic movements in history against the ruthless one-man rule imposed by Gen. Zia-ul-Haq¹⁹.

The party fought for democracy in the country for twelve long years, facing various hurdles from the unpopular military regime. After constantly striving for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan, the PPP once again came to power by winning the 1988 parliamentary elections and Benazir Bhutto, aged 35 at that time, became the youngest Prime Minister of Pakistan²⁰.

This was yet another major contribution from PPP to the political setup of Pakistan as for the very first time, a female was chosen as the Head of the State of an Islamic country. Like her father, Benazir Bhutto also turned out to be a charismatic leader. During Benazir Bhutto's tenure of two years, she introduced a number of significant policies, including, human rights, particularly women's and children's rights, protection of the weak from the strong, focusing on women, children and minorities, she worked on female literacy and encouraged non-governmental organizations to promote and work for women's and child rights. Her government also significantly worked towards the improvement of education. However, there were some problem areas in her government too; therefore, in 1990 the government of PPP was dismissed by the then President of the State, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, under the 8th Amendment due to economic downturn and issues regarding nationalization and national security. When re-elections took place, the PPP for the first time in its political history boycotted the elections and served as the leading opposition party. Listed below are some of the significant achievements of the PPP government during the tenure of Benazir²¹.