

MONITOR

Political Parties' Internal Democracy

May-June 2015



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This monitor is meant to identify key developments during the past two months on Internal Democracy of Political parties in Pakistan.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) – Puzzling Party Polls

The senior leadership of PTI had met on March 22, 2015 to discuss the election tribunal report of Justice (r) Wajihuddin Ahmed and accepted its recommendation to dissolve all elected bodies. However, at the same time, Chairman Imran Khan nominated most of the removed office bearers back to their former positions with slightly changed designations in some case stating that this decision was in line with the tribunal's recommendations till the next elections could take place.¹ He stated that the party could not function in vacuum at that time given the political situation of the country. These elected bodies and office-bearer were dissolved again in May 2015 and then a new administrative set-up was announced till the next intra-party elections could take place. The Central Secretariat of PTI issued a notification in which names of nominated 'party organisers' and their new designations were announced.² These did not really turn out to be the new faces. Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who was earlier Vice-Chairman PTI, was appointed National Organiser; Jahangir Tareen, who was earlier Secretary General PTI, was appointed Central Organiser, and Saifullah Niazi, who was earlier Additional Secretary General, was appointed Additional Central Organiser. The little change that did seem apparent was the earlier staff officer to the PTI Chairman Naemul Haq designated to become the Information Secretary, a position that was earlier held by Dr. Shireen Mazari, who was made Spokesperson for the Chairman and party's chief whip in the National Assembly. MNA Asad Umar was appointed head of media, marketing and policy. Chaudhry Sarwar was given the office of party organiser in Punjab where earlier the provincial president was Ejaz Chaudhry. Dr. Arif Alvi was made organiser for Sindh wherein Nadir Leghari was the elected Sindh president. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Yousaf Ayub was made organiser where before Asad Qaiser was elected provincial president but was later replaced by Mr. Azam Sawati by nomination and Humayun Jomezai for Balochistan where Qasim Khan Suri was elected provincial president.³



Imran Khan and Justice (r) Wajihuddin Ahmed

What appears is that only the nomenclature of top-tier leaders had changed but the roles and responsibilities remained in correspondence with the previous ones. What process was behind the whole decision along with selection of these names and why some people were retained while others were discarded gives a sense of arbitrariness.

If the idea was to just change the nomenclature of designations with the same people performing the same functions as before, what was really the objective behind the formation of the tribunal and what was achieved in the process?

Keeping in view that the nominated party organisers' new duties were not outlined clearly, a lot of confusion was reported, especially between the roles of central organiser and national organiser. This led to the restoration of Jahangir Tareen's earlier powers as the Secretary General PTI by the chairman Imran Khan only two weeks after the dissolution of the party's elected structure.⁴ He now exercises all the functions and responsibilities of his old office as these are described in the party's constitution. Six days later, the election tribunal came back to life and announced expulsion of Jahangir Tareen and Nadir Khan Leghari, cancellation of basic membership of Pervaiz Khattak and Aleem Khan and issuing of show-cause notices to Arif Alvi, Saifullah Niazi and Qasim Suri.⁵

1. Press Release after discussion on PTI Election Tribunal Report, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Official Website, March 22, 2015, as accessed on July 9, 2015 at <http://www.insaf.pk/news/national-news/item/1789464-press-release-after-discussion-on-pti-election-tribunal-report-and-pti-pmln-agreement-on-the-formation-of-the-judicial-commission>
2. Chairman PTI notification dated May 27th, 2015, PTI Official Website, as accessed on July 8, 2015 at <http://www.insaf.pk/news/national-news/item/1790242-chairman-pti-notification-dated-27th-may2015>
3. Imran Khan announces interim PTI organizational set up, Geo TV, May 23, 2015, as accessed on July 9, 2015 at <http://www.geo.tv/article-185746-Imran-Khan-announces-interim-PTI-organisational-set-up>
4. PTI's Jahangir Tareen gets his old job back, Dawn, June 10, 2015, as accessed on July 8, 2015 at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1187290/ptis-jahangir-tareen-gets-his-old-job-back>
5. PTI tribunal punishes party stalwart, Dawn, June 16, 2015, as accessed on July 8, 2015 at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1188490/pti-tribunal-punishes-party-stalwarts>

Media reports say that Tareen, Leghari and Khattak had been reportedly found guilty by the tribunal of 'manipulating the intra-party elections' and interfering in the tribunal's proceedings. In response, Imran Khan and other party leaders said that the tribunal had been dissolved soon after its verdict and the order to suspend any party member carried no legal standing.⁶ Hence, no suspensions took place and orders of the tribunal were simply ignored. Why the Chairman has taken no action on this matter where the tribunal has openly objected to the membership of some party members is not clear and a clearer picture would have been possible if the functions of the tribunal were made official and public.

The intra-party polls are now decided to take place after the local government election for Islamabad and the exact polling date would be reportedly announced after Eid.⁷ Imran Khan, in his official notification of May 24, 2015, also announced that the interim office-bearers would not be eligible to participate in the next polls.⁸ If all office-bearers stand disqualified for the next polls, will it not wipe out the top leaders of the party who have been actively involved with PTI for the past few years? PTI did make it public that party offices shall be bifurcated from the political ones and party tickets in elections will not be given to those members who would be holding party offices – a new policy devised in light of the lessons learnt from the previous intra-party elections.⁹

PTI was rated as one of the most democratic parties based on its internal democracy assessment by PILDAT in December 2014. One major reason for this assessment was the competitive elections organised by the party. Now that the elected office bearers have been replaced with nominated office bearers who serve to the pleasure of the Chairman, the intra-party democracy of PTI has suffered a major setback. PTI's intra-party election was supposed to serve as a model for other political parties but the crisis faced due to the intra-party election in PTI will not only continue to haunt PTI, it may serve as a deterrence for other parties intra-party election plans.

PTI Election Tribunal

PTI ntraparty polls took place in March 2013 and after a series of allegations from party members, an election tribunal was formed headed by Justice Wajihuddin in December 2013. Justice Wajihuddin announced his verdict in October 2014 and directed the dissolution of all elected bodies, reduced the term of 4 years to 2 years and holding of new party elections before March 18, 2015. On April 24, 2015, Imran Khan dissolved the election tribunal with Justice Wajihuddin repeatedly arguing against the dissolution and continuing to convene meetings of the tribunal.¹⁰ Except for a Party Election Commission and its functions, PTI's constitution does not state anything about the formation of a tribunal. As the terms of reference of the tribunal along with its report have not been made public, it remains a cause of concern for the democratic structure of the party and a conclusive stance cannot be taken on the matter. However, it is indeed noteworthy that despite the open flouting between the Chairman Imran and tribunal head, Justice (r) Wajihuddin remains a member of the party and the party leadership is tolerating the tussle.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) – Emergence of a new faction and CEC meeting resolution

To quote, in order to 'save the legacy of PPP founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and its former chairperson Benazir Bhutto', Pakistan Peoples Party Workers (PPP-W), was formally launched on May 8, 2015 by Safdar Abbasi, former Senator and central leader of the PPP, and his wife Naheed Khan, ex-political secretary of Benazir Bhutto.¹¹ According to media reports, PPP-W has been formed as a result of an alleged downfall of PPP and specifically for its failure in the general elections 2013. Safdar Abbasi, who is the President of PPP-W, has stated that this new party will comprise all those leaders who were side-lined after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in 2007.

Generally, in democratic societies, faction formation within a party based on ideological differences allows information sharing and intra-party dialogue and increases the capacity of a party to meet its objectives. However, in this particular case of PPP-W, the differences are not ideology-based but personality-based and the new party is seemingly formed to hold the current leadership of PPP responsible for the party's dilapidating state of affairs.

In other news, PPP Senator Abdul Latif Ansari paved the way for the PPP's Vice President Sherry Rehman by resigning from his seat in the Senate. He was elected from Sindh in March 2015. Sherry Rehman returned unopposed as Senator from Sindh on June 9, 2015.¹² Senator Farhatullah Babar, Spokesperson PPP, is reported to have said that Senator Abdul Latif Ansari had resigned for the purpose of inducting Sherry Rehman who could not participate in the Senate elections of March 2015 as she had quit her office as Ambassador in the US on May 15, 2013 and hence, had to wait out a period of 2 years to run for an elected office. However, Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari seems to have compensated the former Senator Ansari by appointing him a member of the PPP's CEC on the same day Sherry Rehman got elected.¹³

PPP CEC Meeting



PPP top-tier leaders at the party's CEC Meeting on June 17, 2015 in Islamabad

A key meeting of the Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Central Executive Committee (CEC) took place on June 17, 2015 in Islamabad presided by

6. PTI tribunal suspends basic membership of senior leaders, The Express Tribune, June 16, 2015, as access on July 8, 2015 at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/904315/internal-rift-pti-tribunal-suspends-basic-membership-of-senior-leaders/>
7. PTI announces fresh intra-party polls after local body elections, The News Tribe, June 21, 2015, as accessed on July 9, 2015 at <http://www.thenewstribes.com/2015/06/21/pti-announces-fresh-intra-party-polls-after-local-body-elections/>
8. Chairman PTI Imran Khan's press conference, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, May 24, 2015, as accessed on July 16, 2015 <http://www.insaf.pk/news/national-news/item/1790199-chairman-pti-imran-khans-press-conference>
9. PTI's move to ensure 'fair' intra-party polls, Dawn, June 24, 2015, as accessed on July 8, 2015 at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1190100>
10. Chairman PTI Imran Khan writes letter to Justice (r) Wajihuddin, April 30, 2015, as accessed on July 9, 2015 at
11. Estranged PPP leaders form new party, Dawn, May 9, 2015, as accessed on July 9, 2015 at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1180862>
12. Sherry elected Senator unopposed, Dawn, June 9, 2015, as accessed on July 9, 2015 at
13. Former senator Abdul Latif Ansari appointed member CEC PPP, PPP Media Cell, June 9, 2015, as accessed on July 9, 2015 at <https://mediacellppp.wordpress.com/2015/06/02/former-senator-abdul-latif-ansari-appointed-member-cec-ppp/>

Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari. As is apparent from the picture of the event, Secretary General Latif Khosa PPP and Secretary General Raja Pervaiz Ashraf PPP-P are seen along with Vice President Sherry Rehman, Information Secretary Qamar Zaman Kaira and Senior Vice Chairman Yousaf Raza Gilani. Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari, daughter of co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari and slain leader Benazir Bhutto, is also seen sitting next to her father.¹⁴ It is not clear whether she is now a member of the CEC or had attended on special invitation. Total membership of CEC is 55 and it is not known how many members attended the meeting.

Key outcomes of this meeting were that the Gilgit Balitistan party was dissolved and it was decided to hold fresh elections. Similarly, the party's organisation in Balochistan was also proposed to be re-organised. However, it was not mentioned whether representatives from the two federating units was present in the meeting. How the two chapters will be reorganised and when elections of new office bearers would take place did not come to light. Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar and Farhatullah Babar are also reported to have attended this meeting.¹⁵ The CEC also endorsed Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari's speech of June 16, 2015. Chaudhry Mukhtar is reported to have said in the media, "We have assured party Co-chairman to stand his ground if he wants to put up a fight and he would find the rest of the party by his side."

After Asif Ali Zardari's strong statements criticising the Pakistan military on June 16, 2015, Sherry Rehman and Qamar Zaman Kaira, organised a press briefing in which they went to great lengths to defend the co-chairman's speech and tried to make it clear to the public that it should not be interpreted as an anti-military stance. Despite the fact that Asif Ali Zardari's statements were not statesman-like at all, the party's CEC endorsed it without delay. Democracy within the party would have been shown had the CEC questioned the severe statement of the co-chairman and made an effort to provide an alternative instead of readily agreeing and trying to give explanations to the public. However, according to media reports, on June 18, 2015, Yousaf Raza Gillani and Raja Pervez Ashraf voluntarily resigned from their senior positions in the party, Gilani as Senior Vice-chairman and Ashraf as Secretary General.¹⁶

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) – Dissolution of Sindh district bodies

As a result of growing factionalism in the party, PML-N's Sindh president, Muhammad Ismail Rahu announced the dissolution of all district bodies and announced new names just four days later. PILDAT spoke with the party's secretary general in Sindh, Senator Syed Nihal Hashmi, who said that the new names were all elected office-bearers whose elections were carried out by a constitutionally set up Electoral College of the



Muhammad Ismail Rahu, PML-N Sindh President

party. No such news of the party election appeared in the media or on the party website. An official notification was reportedly released from Islamabad office but is not available on the official website of PML-N. Even though the secretary general of the Sindh chapter does say that elections were held, it raises questions about them as they were held rather confidentially and in such a short period of time (Four days between the resignation of old office holders and the election of the new ones).

National Party (NP) – Countrywide party conventions



Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch, Chief Minister Balochistan, addressing National Party (NP) Convention in Lahore on June 7, 2015

National Party (NP) has been holding its conventions and conducting intra-party elections countrywide in the past two months. The first convention took place for its Islamabad chapter on May 24, 2015 and the second took place for Balochistan in Quetta from May 29 – 30, 2015. For Punjab, the convention was held on June 7, 2015 in Lahore and the Sindh convention took place on June 14, 2015 in Karachi. Respective councillors and members of all three provinces have been reported to attend these conventions along with the top leadership of the party. Provincial level office-bearers and organizational bodies of the party were elected through a system of secret balloting. The convention for KPK is planned to take place after Eid 2015. It is noteworthy that NP, originating from Balochistan – a province that has a small population, is making a serious effort to organise itself at national level by holding elections and conventions in each province and slowly growing to become a national level party. In the past, we do not see many examples of regional parties successfully transforming into national level parties but it is heartening to see that NP is attracting people from all provinces of Pakistan.

14. PPP Central Executive Committee Resolution, Media Cell PPP, June 17, 2015, as accessed on July 10, 2015 at <https://mediacellppp.wordpress.com/2015/06/17/ppp-central-executive-committee-resolution/>

15. #westandwithzardari #zardarifordemocracy: PPP CEC puts its weight behind Asif Zardari, Pakistan Peoples Party Punjab Official Website, June 17, 2015, as accessed on July 10, 2015 at <https://ppppunjab.wordpress.com/2015/06/18/westandwithzardari-zardarifordemocracy-ppp-cec-puts-its-weight-behind-asif-zardari/>

16. Two ex-Prime Ministers resign from PPP positions, Geo TV, June 18, 2015, as accessed on July 16, 2015 at <http://www.geo.tv/article-188390-Two-ex-prime-ministers-resign-from-PPP-positions->

17. PML-N braving silent rebellion in Sindh and Karachi leaderships, The News, May 27, 2015, as accessed on July 16, 2015 at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-4-320383-PML-N-braving-silent-rebellion-in-Sindh-and-Karachi-leaderships>