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## **AN ANALYSIS OF THE PAKISTAN GENERAL ELECTION 2013**

### **Abstract**

The general election that took place in Pakistan on 11 May 2013, drew a lot of attention from the international community. The caretaker government in Pakistan was successful in holding a free, fair and credible election for the first time in the history of the country, resulting in peaceful and legitimate transfer of power from a democratic regime to a similar one. Hence, the election has been lauded globally as for a country facing various problems at home and abroad. The newly elected government, however, will certainly face several issues at home and beyond. Pakistan, currently the fifth largest democracy of the world, continues to pay heavy prices since joining the US war on terror in Afghanistan. The government needs to deal effectively with the Taliban and other extremist groups; restoring damaged ties with the US remains a priority, of which Pakistan is a longstanding ally. Improving relations with India demands important concentration. In this election, political parties of Pakistan showed unity regarding national interest. The lawful handover of power may help Pakistan recover its political and economic instability. The new government's election manifesto contained many attractive pledges. Yet, how much they can live up to their words, is still to be witnessed in days ahead.

### **1. Introduction**

Pakistan held its general election on 11 May 2013. For a country going through various problems like severe political instability, extremism and violence in the name of faith, security dilemma regarding participation in the US-led war on terror and troubled relations with neighbours, this election can be termed as a commendable feat, as for the first time, governance was handed over in a peaceful and democratic manner by a democratic government that successfully completed its 5-year tenure. The election saw heavyweight candidates like Mian Nawaz Sharif (Pakistan Muslim League-N, and former Premier of Pakistan), Bilawal Zardari Bhutto (Son of former President Asif Ali Zardari, chairman of Pakistan People's Party), Imran Khan (former cricketer, now chief of Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf/PTI) and Parvez Musharraf (former Chief of Army staff and President; he was later declared disqualified for contesting in the election).<sup>1</sup> Contending parties had their respective manifestos. The election drew significant attention and raised speculations worldwide. At the end, Nawaz Sharif came out as victorious.

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<sup>1</sup> "Musharraf Declared Ineligible to Contest Election, for Life", *The Express Tribune*, 30 April 2013.

The results were welcome. Considering Pakistan's geopolitical location and important role in world politics, this election has significance at national, regional and global levels. Therefore, some questions are likely to arise: Why was Nawaz Sharif triumphant? How should he handle the economy and centre-provinces relationships when provinces other than the Punjab have governments from different parties? Can he deal effectively with the Taliban and other extremists? What will his attitudes be towards the country's military? What may Pakistan's relations be with its neighbours and foreign powers in particular with India, Afghanistan, China and the US respectively? What may the implications for Bangladesh be?

This paper tries to seek answers to these questions. It has six sections including introduction. The second section discusses the political and electoral systems in Pakistan in brief. The third describes the background of the recent election. The fourth illustrates the election, important candidates, their respective agenda and the ultimate results of the election; only three parties, their main candidates and agenda are briefly discussed. It also tries to explore the reasons behind Nawaz Sharif's success, the failure of the ruling PPP and good performance put up by the PTI. The fifth section talks about possible impacts of the election on national, regional and global levels including impacts on Bangladesh-pakistan relations. The sixth section ends the paper with some concluding remarks.

## **2. Political and Electoral Systems in Pakistan**

Pakistan, a federal democratic republic has a bicameral parliament divided into—the Senate (Upper House) and the National Assembly (Lower House). Like other democracies, Pakistan has the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. It also has provincial and local governments in its political system.

The Election Commission of Pakistan conducts elections in the country. The Electoral College elects the president of the country through presidential election. Under the present system of governance, the Premier is the head of government. Both the Premier and the president are elected for five years. The President can be reelected but cannot serve in that position for more than two successive tenures. Nevertheless, he can dissolve the National Assembly.<sup>2</sup> If he does that, a general election has to be held within two months.

## **3. Some Significant Events Prior to the Election 2013**

The general election of May 2013 was preceded by various events and issues; since the events of 9/11 took place, Pakistan's role and importance in conducting regional and bilateral relations underwent a massive shift. Relations suffered heavily

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<sup>2</sup> For details see Chapter 2, Clause 58 (Dissolution of National Assembly), The Constitution of Pakistan.

with Afghanistan, India and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), particularly the US. In many cases, there have been confrontations between security forces of Pakistan and those of these countries. Relations with the US worsened substantially over continuous US drone strikes despite Pakistan's strong protests, Pakistan's alleged support for militants, the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project etc. Several militant groups besides the Afghan Taliban, e.g., the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Haqqani Network, Punjabi Taliban etc have emerged and been actively operating against Pakistan, Afghanistan as well as Western presence in Afghanistan.

Corruption scams against president Zardari and Premier Yousuf Raza Gillani continued to mar Pakistani politics. President Zardari has several allegations of corruption on himself; he is often called "Mr. ten per cent".<sup>3</sup> In July 2012, the Supreme Court of Pakistan set a deadline for approaching Switzerland to reopen investigations into his corruption cases. He strongly supported the US in the current war in Afghanistan despite opposition from the general people. As for Premier Gillani, the Memogate scandal (May 2011) was a considerable shock to his premiership. The PPP's relations became strained with the military considering Memogate aside from constant militant attacks, occasional clashes with Afghan forces on Pak-Afghan borders, US aerial attacks and the party's failure in successfully dealing with these. In 2012, a disqualification petition was filed against Gillani on default of bank loan.<sup>4</sup> He was charged with contempt of court; in June 2012, he was finally disqualified and ousted with the court declaring all orders issued by him as null and void that would take effect from 26 April 2012.<sup>5</sup>

Centre-provinces relations also experienced problems under the PPP administration. The party, with the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, devolved seven ministries (Food and Agriculture, Environment, Health, Minorities Affairs, Labour and Manpower, Sports, Women Development) and 131 out of 178 departments of these ministries were put under various divisions and ministries of the central government. However, it showed that the devolution initiative did not meet the demands of the provincial governments. The provincial governments of Sindh and the Punjab were dissatisfied as provinces got authority over only 47 departments.<sup>6</sup> The PPP was not successful in reviving the economy also. The country's troubled role in the war on terror and widespread militancy may be cited as two important causes. According to a Pakistani newspaper, the PPP decayed the balance between public and private sectors by creating significant numbers of employment in the earlier by unfair means, eroding its profitability.<sup>7</sup> Yet, no effective reform was carried out.

<sup>3</sup>"Mr Nice Guy and Mr Ten Per cent", *The Economist*, 5 May 2012.

<sup>4</sup>"LHC Seeks Assistance from DAG in Case against Gilani, Family", *The Express Tribune*, 28 March 2012.

<sup>5</sup>"EC Issues Gilani Disqualification Notice", *The News International*, 20 June 2012.

<sup>6</sup>Irfan Bukhari, "Centre-Provinces Row Likely to Worsen after Devolution", *Pakistan Today*, 1 July 2011.

<sup>7</sup>Khalid Anwar, "Stagflation: A Bane for Progress?", *Pakistan Today*, 30 August 2012.

Sufi scholar and politician Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri’s long march in January 2013 though called for democratic, revolutionary reforms in Pakistan, his dual nationality (Pakistani and Canadian) was eventually questioned. The rally also received mixed responses.

After Gillani’s departure, former minister for water and power in his government, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf became Premier and served from 22 June 2012—25 March 2013. Despite many plausible initiatives, his name was included in an arrest warrant directed against 33 people said to be involved in corruption in the Ministry for Water and Power.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. The Caretaker Government, the Election and the Manifestos of Three Contending Parties

A caretaker government rules a country for the time between the regular departure and the assumption of power by a new government through election. Premier Raja Ashraf in a letter to then opposition leader of the Parliament Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan (currently Minister of the Interior) calling for submitting the names of people of their choice as Prime Minister of the caretaker government. The PML-N, PTI, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam–Fazl (JUI-F) all proposed the name of former Justice Nasir Alam Zahid for that post. The PPP named former Justice Mir Hazar Khan Khoso and former governor of Pakistan’s central bank Dr. Ishrat Ahmed. The PML-N also named politician Rasool Bux Paliejo besides Justice Nasir Alam<sup>9</sup> while the JUI-F did former Justice Shakirullah Jan as well. But later, both the government and opposition parties could not agree on that issue; as a result, a parliamentary body consisting of members from both sides was assigned to complete that task. At the end, former Justice Mir Hazar Khan Khoso became the Premier of the caretaker government as appointed by the Election Commission and assumed office on 24 March 2013.

The total number of voters was 8,61,94,802; Punjab had the highest number of voters (4,92,59,334) while the Islamabad Capital Territory had the lowest (6,25,964).<sup>10</sup> Heavyweight candidates were placed as said earlier. The election pledges of the main three parties are briefly described below:

Party	Leader	Main Candidate	Slogan
PPP	Asif Ali Zardari, Bilawal Bhutto	Bilawal Bhutto	Towards a progressive, just and prosperous Pakistan
PML-N	Nawaz Sharif	Nawaz Sharif	Our goal, self-respecting, prosperous, sovereign Pakistan
PTI	Imran Khan	Imran Khan	Justice, humanity and self esteem

<sup>8</sup> C.M.As. No. 3685 & 3686 of 2012 in H.R.C. 7734 of 2009, Supreme Court of Pakistan, available at <http://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/.../C.M.A.No.3685of2012-dt-17-1-2013.pdf>, accessed on 20 June 2013.

<sup>9</sup> “Justice (r) Mir Hazar Khan Khoso Named Interim PM of Pakistan”, *The Express Tribune*, 24 March 2013.

<sup>10</sup> “Final Electoral Rolls Voter Stats”, available at <http://www.ecp.gov.pk/>, accessed on 21 June 2013.

There were some similarities among the manifestos of the main three political parties. All of them, for example, talked about ensuring growth, restoring the economy, promote social advancement and meeting basic needs of people, initiate effective reforms in the administration and thus enhance democracy, improve bilateral relations at regional and international levels etc. Two things were visibly common which all parties focused on: mitigating the electricity crisis and ensuring national security. The PML-N, though took and still maintains strong stance against US drone strikes, did not explicitly mention it in their manifesto whereas the PPP did. The PTI's manifesto focused largely on reforms; regarding national security, they clearly said about resorting to diplomatic measures to deal with such issues and if necessary, military ones as well.

In Spite of many uncertainties and risks, the total turnout of voters in the election was about 55 per cent (nationally) which means out of 8,61,94,802 registered voters, about 4,74,07,141 people did cast vote. The Federal Capital Territory had the highest turnout (62 per cent) followed by Punjab (60 per cent) while the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) had the lowest (36 per cent).<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, former Premier Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) emerged triumphant. The PPP held the second position followed by the PTI of Imran Khan. The following table reveals the results in a nutshell:

Party	Leader	Number of seats won	Votes received	Percentage
PML-N	Nawaz Sharif	166	1,48,74, 104	31.37
PPP	Ameen Faheem (senior vice-chairman)	40	69,11,218	14.57
PTI	Imran Khan	35	76,79,954	16.19

Source: Turnout Comparison of Election Results 2008 & 2013 (National Assembly)

#### 4.1 *Notable Factors behind Sharif's Victory*

Several factors secured Nawaz Sharif's victory. Sharif has been an outspoken critic of US drone strikes and continuously demanded to end those permanently. He signaled about improving relations with India.<sup>12</sup> His manifesto pledged about engaging "Special efforts to resolve the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, in accordance with the provisions of the relevant UN resolutions and the 1999 Lahore Accord and in consonance with the aspirations of the people of the territory for their inherent right of self-determination."<sup>13</sup> His promises regarding the restoration of Pakistan's economy, dealing with the constant energy crisis, administrative, health and education reforms, and plans to hold talks with the Pakistani Taliban earned him people's trust. His election

<sup>11</sup> "Turnout Comparison of Election Results 2008 & 2013 (National Assembly)", available at [http://ecp.gov.pk/Misc/GE-2013-Graphs/02\\_na\\_turnout\\_comparison.png](http://ecp.gov.pk/Misc/GE-2013-Graphs/02_na_turnout_comparison.png), accessed on 21 June 2013.

<sup>12</sup> "Nawaz Sharif Calls for Warmer Ties with India", *The Express Tribune*, 8 May 2013.

<sup>13</sup> "PMLN Manifesto English & Urdu—PMLN Official", available at <http://www.pmln.org/pmln-manifesto-englishurdu/>, accessed on 21 June 2013.

campaign was also innovative. According to an Indian analyst, the PML-N received more votes in rural areas than urban ones, mainly in southern Punjab; Pakistani rural people tended to vote for candidates they knew quite well. The PML-N went deeper into the countryside for campaigning. They emphasised more on local problems than national ones. They were also able to receive Christian votes from Punjab, as after the Badami Bagh fire incident in Lahore, Nawaz Sharif assisted them considerably.<sup>14</sup> During his campaign, his manifesto also reminded people of his contribution in transforming Pakistan into a nuclear power.

#### **4.2 Factors behind PPP's Defeat**

The PPP, on the other hand, could not maintain good relations with the military during its tenure and instead antagonised them through flawed policies. The killing of bin Laden inside Pakistani territory by US forces, deaths of Pakistani soldiers from US attacks (by breaching Pakistani airspace), attacks by Afghan and Pakistani Taliban on civilians and military alike, mounting death tolls from US drone strikes also contributed to this complexity; the economy was going down too. In terms of election strategy, the PPP relied somewhat on the elite sections of the Pakistani society. The PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto was alleged to have some rift with his father, i.e. president Zardari<sup>15</sup> and eventually did not contend for Premiership. He decided not to lead party campaigns on security grounds; some days before the election, he left Pakistan and his party said that he would not return until the end of the election.<sup>16</sup> Zardari's popularity was already low due to various allegations. In addition, he did little to probe into the assassination of his wife, the former Premier Benazir Bhutto. All these might have given the PML-N some extra advantages in their campaigns.

#### **4.3 Good Performance by the PTI**

The PTI, a new party founded by former cricket star Imran Khan, showed some remarkable achievements in this election. They secured the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province and formed government there. Their amount and percentage of votes were higher than those of the PPP. Imran Khan has been a charismatic personality both in sports and politics. After the name of his late mother, he has established a hospital where cancer patients are treated free of cost which gave Imran and his party a big boost. PTI's manifesto also reflected some popular demands that may have contributed to its success in this election.

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<sup>14</sup> Portia B. Conrad, "Pakistan Election 2013: The Roar of PML-N and Nawaz Sharif", Pakistan—Articles, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), *Issue Brief No. 3954*, 29 May 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Imtiaz Ahmed, "Bilawal Leaves Pakistan after Tiff with Dad", *The Hindustan Times*, 26 March 2013.

<sup>16</sup> "Bilawal Bhutto Leaves Pakistan, not to Return before May 11 Election: Report", *The Indian Express*, 4 May 2013.

## 5. Possible Impacts of the General Election 2013

Pakistan remains an important country in both regional and international politics; therefore, the election is likely to have significant impacts on both levels. Still, impacts at national/local level are important as well.

### 5.1 National Level

Premier Nawaz Sharif has tended to focus on domestic issues first. One of his pledges was to assure uninterrupted supply of electricity;<sup>17</sup> his election manifesto addressed and proposed several measures to deal with it. In many areas of Pakistan, power failure is common for about 12-20 hours a day. But President Zardari, Premier Nawaz Sharif, Army Chief General Ashfaq Kayani, ISI headquarters, residences of judges do not face it.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, the Sharif government has confronted the judiciary; prior to the official approval of the budget, raising taxes on petroleum products created dispute between the two sides.<sup>19</sup> The electricity issue, if not addressed and alleviated properly, may create difficulty for Sharif despite the massive victory.

In his native Punjab, Sharif has formed provincial government. But in Sindh, and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the PPP and the PTI formed provincial governments respectively. In Balochistan, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch (National Party-Pakistan) remains the Chief Minister. As a senator, he added major demands into the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution, for ensuring greater autonomy for Balochistan. In KPK, the Chief Minister Pervez Khattak is from the PTI but the Governor Shaukatullah Khan is from the PPP. Khattak talked about avoiding any confrontation with the federal government.<sup>20</sup> However, there was no such assurance from the governor. The Governor of Sindh, Ishrat-ul-Ibad Khan is from the MQM while Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah is from PPP again. The MQM has alleged terrorist links.<sup>21</sup> Premier Sharif has to pay special attention to the relations of the central government with provincial governments. A vital issue is how will be the relations of his government with the Pakistan military; traditionally, PML-N has maintained good relations with the military<sup>22</sup> though Sharif opposes their participation or intervention into politics. On PML-N's relations with the military, some issues should be mentioned here: the dismissal of General Jahangir Karamat by Premier Sharif in 1998 for violating the orders on making public statements remains a

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<sup>17</sup> Declan Walsh and Salman Masood, "Pakistan Faces Struggle to Keep Its Lights On", *The New York Times*, 27 May 2013.

<sup>18</sup> "No Load Shedding for President, PM, Judges and Generals", *Dawn*, 10 June 2013.

<sup>19</sup> "No Rift Likely between PML-N Government, Judiciary: Experts", *Business Recorder*, 23 June 2013.

<sup>20</sup> "Will Avoid Policy of Confrontation with Federal Govt.: Khattak", *The News International*, 20 May 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Khalid Hasan, "Canadian Federal Court Upholds MQM's 'Terrorist Character'", *Daily Times*, 17 September 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2011, p. 244.

controversial decision to date. He also said that he had no information about the Kargil war and this was initiated by General Musharraf himself instead.<sup>23</sup> Sharif's government was in turn deposed by the military in 1999 and General Musharraf (as president) tried him on military tribunals on various charges.<sup>24</sup>

Premier Sharif as for austerity measures, proposed to reduce the staff of the Prime Minister's Office about 30 per cent and cancelled the beautification project of the road that runs towards the Premier's residence.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, his government declared to raise defence budget by 10 per cent.<sup>26</sup> Amid the continuing economic downturn and energy crisis, this rise in defence spending may put the country into further chaos.

Sharif has been quite vocal on trying former president General Musharraf. In June 2013, he said that Musharraf must be tried for his betrayal<sup>27</sup> who is already facing severe charges like his alleged involvement in the killing of former Premier Benazir Bhutto and Baloch leader Akbar Khan Bugti, serious abuse of power etc. Moreover, he overtook power in 1999 through a coup, deposing the then Nawaz Sharif government. But trying Musharraf may not be easy and has possibilities for generating bigger problems, for example, enraging the military. Furthermore, Musharraf himself has some serious dangers to counter. Prior to his return to Pakistan from Dubai in March 2013, the TTP issued a warning to murder him after his return.<sup>28</sup> In April, he admitted of signing a secret deal with the US allowing it to conduct drone strikes on Pakistan,<sup>29</sup> the first ever confession by any top Pakistani leader. Such a deal is contradictory to Pakistan's official position regarding these strikes. Musharraf's own acknowledgment, the Sharif government's prosecutions against him, and the Taliban threat may really complicate overall situations for the country.

## 5.2 Regional Level

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have witnessed regular fluctuations since the 9/11 and the resultant Afghan War. Previous administrations of Pakistan were not on good terms with the Karzai government of Afghanistan; how relations will be in the Nawaz Sharif era, is not clear yet. PML-N's victory worried Afghanistan as Sharif showed willingness for holding talks with the TTP; then, what about other Muslim armed groups and most importantly the Afghan Taliban (recognised by the Sharif government in 1997)? The Durand Line is still a controversial issue between these two countries. Nonetheless, Pakistan in June 2013 increased the tenure of Afghan refugees to stay in Pakistan.<sup>30</sup> The

<sup>23</sup> "Sharif Admits He 'let down' Vajpayee on Kargil Conflict", *The Hindu*, 10 September 2007.

<sup>24</sup> "A Farical Trial" *Frontline*, Vol. 17, Issue 10, May 13-26, 2000.

<sup>25</sup> "Nawaz Sharif Issues Order to Reduce PMO Staff by 30 Per cent", *The Times of India*, 11 June 2013.

<sup>26</sup> "Pakistan Raises Annual Defence Budget by 10%", *Gulf Times*, 12 June 2013.

<sup>27</sup> "Pakistan PM Backs Treason Charges against Former President Musharraf", *Reuters*, 24 June 2013, available at <http://www.reuters.com/.../us-pakistan-treason-idUSBRE95N0ET2013>, accessed on 26 June 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Rob Crilly, "Pakistan Taliban Vows to Send Pervez Musharraf 'to Hell'", *The Daily Telegraph*, 23 March 2013.

<sup>29</sup> "Drone Attacks: Ex-president Admits Secret Deal with US", *The Express Tribune*, 13 April 2013.

<sup>30</sup> "Afghan Refugees Allowed to Stay in Pakistan", *Dawn*, 20 June 2013.



PML-N is thought to have good relations with the Hizb-e-Islami (Gulbuddin)<sup>31</sup> which is mediating between the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban. In that case, Sharif will also have influence in these talks. But despite his willingness, the TTP does not seem to be interested in talks; in June 2013, they killed 9 mountaineers terming it as a revenge for US drone strikes.<sup>32</sup> The Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network continue to fight the NATO. It is not sure whether these radical groups will soften their stance on the new government of Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan-Afghan relations can face further challenges.

Pakistan-India relations are expected to improve, at least from the initial reactions of India, and Sharif's motivation to that end. In his birthplace in India, people celebrated his success.<sup>33</sup> His victory may pave the way for developing relations. At present, Pakistan-India trade relations are quite good; in 2012-13, Indian exports to Pakistan rose about 15 per cent while Pakistan's exports to India rose by 30 per cent.<sup>34</sup> But Indo-Pak relations are often volatile and there are other stakes involved; e.g. The Kashmir issue is still unresolved. Border skirmishes continue to kill soldiers of both countries. India's continuous allegation of Pakistan harbouring terrorist and insurgent groups has been another thorny matter between these two neighbours. Previous governments of Pakistan have not been successful in dealing with this; both countries are now vying to secure their own influence in Afghanistan in which India seems to be a bit ahead, evident from its opening of medical and education centres in Kabul,<sup>35</sup> providing training to Afghan military officials since 2011 under an agreement. In May 2013, Afghan president Hamid Karzai visited India and requested military equipment.<sup>36</sup> Pakistan may not view these lightly and relations with both Afghanistan and India become more strained besides existing disputes. About the potential Indo-Afghan arms deal, Pakistan suggested Afghanistan to think about regional realities.<sup>37</sup> Thus, there remain both hope and uncertainty in bilateral relations among these three nations.

### 5.3 Global Level

The US President Barack Obama greeted Nawaz Sharif on his win; he said the US would work closely with the Sharif government and strive to make Pakistan stable and secure.<sup>38</sup> There were thoughts in the US to expand military relations with Pakistan.<sup>39</sup> But Sharif strongly opposes US drone strikes. During his campaigns, he

<sup>31</sup> Dawood Azami, "Afghans are Wary of Nawaz—but Should They be?", *BBC News*, 18 May 2013, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-22551129>, accessed on 19 June 2013.

<sup>32</sup> "Militants Kill 9 Foreign Mountaineers", *The Nation*, 24 June 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Yudhvir Rana, "Amritsar Village Celebrates Nawaz Sharif's Victory", *The Times of India*, 12 May 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Shruti Srivastava, "India-Pak Trade at Its Peak, Exports See a 15% Jump", *The Indian Express*, 15 April 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Jyoti Thottam, "Afghanistan: India's Uncertain Road", *Time Magazine*, 11 April 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Ross Colvin, "Afghanistan's Karzai Gives India Military Equipment 'Wish List'", *Reuters*, 22 May 2013, available at <http://www.reuters.com/.../us-india-afghanistan-idUSBRE94L0DQ20130522>, accessed on 23 June 2013.

<sup>37</sup> "Kabul Urged to Consider Regional Implications of Arms Deal", *Dawn*, 25 May 2013.

<sup>38</sup> "Obama Greet Sharif", *The Hindu*, 15 May 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Carey L. Biron, "U.S. Relationship with Pakistani Military Must Broaden", *Inter Press Service*, 14 May 2013, available at <http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/.../u-s-relationship-with-pakistani-military-must-b-...>, accessed on 22 June 2013.

said about reviewing Pakistan's role in the US war on terror<sup>40</sup> and did propose talks with the TTP. If he does these, Pakistan-US rifts may widen further. Although having rifts with Pakistan for various reasons and conversely developing closer relations with India, the US will not prefer losing a vital ally like Pakistan due to its own interests, for example, Pakistan's geostrategic location and nuclear capabilities, the war on terror, the Iranian nuclear issue and Pakistan's good relations with other Muslim nations etc.

Pakistan-China relations are going to be closer. In late May 2013, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited Pakistan; during this visit, Premier Sharif requested Chinese assistance for meeting Pakistan's energy needs.<sup>41</sup> Premier Li pledged for extending all kinds of cooperation to Pakistan including energy needs. In total, 11 agreements were signed.<sup>42</sup> Premier Li spoke at the Pakistani Senate, met president Zardari, chiefs of Pakistan Army and Navy respectively. The strategically vital Gwadar port in Balochistan has been built with Chinese assistance and operated by the China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC). China is now also assisting Pakistan in other infrastructural development projects. The Karakorum Highway, and the Karakorum Railway (proposed, and includes the Gwadar port) will link Xinjiang in China with Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan. The Railway link, if built, will enhance Pakistan's connectivity and trade with Central Asian nations and make China a privileged partner.

Saudi Arabia also hailed Sharif's victory, who is known to be close to the Saudi royal family. The country said about providing US\$ 15 billion to Pakistan as a bailout package in the energy sector.<sup>43</sup> But here is a problem; Pakistan has good relations with both Iran and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan is going for building a pipeline for importing gas from Iran; as a close ally of the US in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia will not be pleased by this move of Pakistan. The killing of Osama bin Laden, a Saudi citizen and leader of the al-Qaeda, remains a disturbing issue for Pakistan. But what stance Saudi Arabia may adopt on Pakistan's alleged connections with militant groups, e.g., the Afghan Taliban, is not clear although it was one of the three countries besides Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates to have recognised them.

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<sup>40</sup> "Nawaz Sharif Says Pakistan Should Reconsider Support for U.S. War on Terror", *Reuters*, 5 May 2013, available at <http://in.reuters.com/.../pakistan-election-nawaz-sharif-idINDEE94403F20130...> accessed on 22 June 2013.

<sup>41</sup> "Nawaz Seeks Li's Help to Resolve Energy Crisis", *Dawn*, 24 May 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Sumera Khan, "Enter The Dragon: China Offers Help to End Pakistan's Energy Woes", *The Express Tribune*, 23 May 2013.

<sup>43</sup> Khaleeq Kiani, "\$ 15 Billion Saudi Bailout Likely", *Dawn*, 23 May 2013.

#### 5.4 *Impacts on Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations*

The triumph of Nawaz Sharif also has some implications for Bangladesh. The new government in Pakistan has shown interest in dialogues with regional countries. Bangladesh may pursue the newly elected Pakistani government for taking back the "Stranded Pakistanis" in Bangladesh, an issue still unsettled. The government stated several measures in its election manifesto for promoting trade. Bangladesh and Pakistan have relatively small bilateral trade; for example, in 2010-11, Bangladesh imported products from Pakistan worth US\$ 908 million and exported merely US\$ 75 million.<sup>44</sup> However, Pakistan may be a good market for Bangladeshi readymade garments. In major cities like Karachi, Bangladeshi garments have gained popularity.<sup>45</sup> As members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), both countries need to work closely to promote bilateral trade. One notable initiative from Bangladesh concerning this was the decision to issue multiple visas to Pakistani businessmen for evaluating business opportunities in Bangladesh especially in textile and energy sectors.<sup>46</sup> In 2012, Pakistan proposed Bangladesh to reduce the existing trade gap; Pakistani representatives opined that their country could be a potential market for Bangladeshi ceramic and medicine industries.<sup>47</sup> Bangladesh must pursue the Sharif government in this respect to expand its market in Pakistan aside from exporting garments there. Regarding the government's pledges for greater regional cooperation and engagement, there remains substantial scope for extending cooperation between the two nations through civil societies. For instance, The University of Dhaka has memoranda of understanding with several Pakistani universities, namely the University of Peshawar, Islamia University of Bahawalpur, University of the Punjab, University of Sindh etc.<sup>48</sup> Such collaborative measures can be increased. BRAC, a Bangladeshi NGO has started operating in Pakistan since 2007 and now works there in six districts. Pakistani NGOs may also come and operate in Bangladesh, for example, for resolving the issue of the Stranded Pakistanis here.<sup>49</sup>

#### 6. **Concluding Remarks**

Pakistan's recent election has been called as a victory of democracy.<sup>50</sup> But the new government will face many challenges; e.g. Sharif pledged to deal with the recurring energy crisis while many members in his cabinet itself are big defaulters of electricity bills in Pakistan.<sup>51</sup> The economy has been facing problems for long.

<sup>44</sup> "Pakistan, Bangladesh Need to Finalise FTA: FBR", *Business Recorder*, 7 September 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Abrar Hamza, "Bangladeshi Readymade Garments Penetrating Local Markets", *Daily Times*, 6 January 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Farhan Zaheer, "Dhaka Offers Pakistani Businessmen Multiple Visas", *The Express Tribune*, 28 September 2010.

<sup>47</sup> "Pakistan Proposes Steps to Reduce Trade Gaps with Bangladesh", *The Nation*, 25 June 2012.

<sup>48</sup> "Welcome to Research at the University of Dhaka", available at [http://www.du.ac.bd/research3/research\\_collaboration.php](http://www.du.ac.bd/research3/research_collaboration.php), accessed on 21 June 2013.

<sup>49</sup> "41 Years of Independence and Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations", CNN iReport, *CNN*, 12 April 2013, available at <http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOCS-955269>, accessed on 21 June 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Schezee Zaidi, "Election 2013 a Victory for Democracy: Observers", *The News International*, 15 May 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Declan Walsh and Salman Masood, *op. cit.*

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts that in 2012-13, Pakistan's economy will grow by just 3.5 per cent.<sup>52</sup> The Asian Development Bank (ADB) said that about US\$ 500 million going out of Pakistan every month; this will negatively impact the country's loan payback abilities.<sup>53</sup> Yet, being an industrialist himself, it is expected that Premier Sharif will pay more attention to the economic problems of his country. He may try to involve the rich and influential in his reform programmes. But simultaneously, their enthusiasm and sincerity should be kept vigorous for contributing to the wellbeing of the nation.

For a democratic system to function well, strong and effective civil-military relations are essential. The possible trial of former president Musharraf and Sharif's opposition of armed forces' role in politics may become causes of concern. Nawaz Sharif is a pragmatic politician and not likely to antagonise the military. His government has to live up to its promises, as popular support may wane for a democratic government with poor performance. That may again put Pakistan into turmoil as seen in its history where military has ruled the nation for over half the period to date since its independence in 1947.

Deep mistrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan is hampering the peace process in Afghanistan. In May 2013, the Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister said his country would conduct peace process without Pakistani assistance<sup>54</sup> while Pakistan termed Afghan president Karzai as the main obstacle to peace.<sup>55</sup> Afghanistan is now broadening relations with India whereas relations with Pakistan are not showing positive signs. Premier Sharif said about holding talks with the TTP and assisting the Afghan peace process, but nothing about the Afghan Taliban or other extremists, e.g., Haqqani Network, al-Qaeda, Laskar-e-Taiba etc. Most of these extremists (including the Taliban) totally reject democracy; being democracies, Afghanistan and Pakistan both remain in risk from them. Numerous initiatives by Pakistani authorities to control/eliminate these groups have bore little fruit. If Premier Sharif can deal with them effectively, that will be a vital attainment for his government.

Although apparently it seems that Indo-Pak relations will improve, there is no guarantee since old rivalries may erupt anytime. The Sharif government recognised the Afghan Taliban in 1997 and in 1999, transformed Pakistan into a nuclear power through test-explosion of nuclear bombs. And during his rule, the Kargil War took place. In early 2013, the TTP threatened to spread their activities in Kashmir.<sup>56</sup> In the election manifesto, Sharif talked about resolving the Kashmir dispute through dialogue keeping in mind the expectations of people in that region, but will his plans be acceptable to India? That is not certain. Their persistent enmity has failed the SAARC to a large extent. Therefore, both Pakistan and India must be amply careful in conducting their mutual relations.

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<sup>52</sup> "IMF warns of deteriorating Pakistan economy", *The Express Tribune*, 5 October 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Sarah Algethami, "Pakistan Seeks to Cut Budget Gap", *Gulf News*, 25 June 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Tahir Khan, "Afghanistan's U-turn May Derail Elusive Peace Process", *The Express Tribune*, 30 March 2013.

<sup>55</sup> "Pakistan Sees Afghanistan's Karzai as Obstacle to Peace with Taliban", *Dawn*, 25 March 2013.

<sup>56</sup> "Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan Pledges to Fight in Kashmir, Implement Sharia in India", *The Indian Express*, 8 January 2013.

Pakistan-China relations are assuming healthier forms; when India expressed its own concerns over Chinese involvement in Gwadar port,<sup>57</sup> Pakistan dismissed those.<sup>58</sup> China, aside from assisting Pakistan in aforementioned development projects, has also offered a US\$ 500 million loan for the proposed Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline<sup>59</sup> although there was US threat of economic sanctions on Pakistan.<sup>60</sup> The US's growing relations with India, uneasy relations with Pakistan, standoff with Iran, competition with China on one hand, and China's growing global influence, good relations with both Iran and Pakistan on the other, will have broader ramifications for regional and global affairs.

Pakistan-US relations are expected to improve in the Sharif era. Yet, Premier Sharif is taking quite strong stands, e.g., firmly opposing drone strikes. Recently, he summoned the US ambassador in Pakistan regarding one of such strikes.<sup>61</sup> Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan said, a meeting had become urgent comprising of all political parties, intelligence services and the Pakistan military. Besides the common people, all political parties should also form strong resistance against such strikes in the tribal areas.<sup>62</sup> The US continues to defend the strikes.<sup>63</sup> Continuation of strikes will definitely exacerbate Pakistan-US relations. In addition, after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan will face more pressures as militant groups in both Afghanistan and Pakistan will have relatively more liberty and ease. Premier Sharif has to be properly thoughtful of that.

Though the election saw Nawaz Sharif achieving a resounding victory, coming to power is not all. Because, after gaining the state power, ruling authorities have to perform the tasks they promised. There are numerous stakes, issues, parties involved and it is not possible for a government to implement each of its pledges, nor please everyone. The Sharif government had good track records in its past tenures; in the present changed global scenarios, it has many important duties ahead, regarding Pakistan's domestic and foreign policies both. The PML-N's election manifesto contained many promises for the interests of the country. How far this new government will be able to materialise those, remains to be seen. If they fail in that, the victory will be useless.

<sup>57</sup> "India 'concerned' over China Running Gwadar Port", *The Express Tribune*, 6 February 2013.

<sup>58</sup> Shafqat Ali, "China Gets Gwadar Port", *The Deccan Chronicle*, 19 February 2013.

<sup>59</sup> Zafar Bhutto, "Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline: In Snub to US, China Offers \$500m Loan", *The Express Tribune*, 13 March 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Imtiaz Hussain, "US Warns Pakistan of Sanctions over Iran Gas Pipeline Deal", *The News International*, 29 January 2013.

<sup>61</sup> "Pakistan Summons US Ambassador to Protest against Latest Drone Killings", *The Guardian*, 8 June 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Azam Khan, "Back in Action: Imran Wants Drone Issue Taken up at UN", *The Express Tribune*, 20 June 2013.

<sup>63</sup> "John Kerry Defends US Drone Strikes", *The Express Tribune*, 1 June 2013.