

## **Jama'at-e-Islami Struggle for Democracy Promotion during Ayub's Dictatorship**

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### **Abstract**

*Democracy promotion consists of transition to democracy and consolidation of democracy. Transition is the process of preparing the ground for democracy during which the democratic system is not well established and consolidation is the stage when democracy becomes the only game in town for seeking and exercising political power. During Ayub rule, Jama'at played a vivid role in democracy promotion. Jama'at joined hands with other parties and adopted the role of hard-liner opposition to regime. Jama'at steadfastly faced the atrocities of the regime for democracy promotion. When the regime become feeble and started conceiving to the demands of opposition, Jama'at adopted the role of soft-liner opposition believing in negotiation rather than agitation. The regime accepted the demands of opposition and it seemed that democracy would be restored soon but the violent agitations of some parties deteriorated situations and caused the imposition of another martial law in the country.*

**Keywords:** *Jama'at, democracy promotion, transition, dictatorship, alliance politics, negotiation, violent agitations.*

### **Introduction**

Democracy promotion is the establishing and development of democracy. It consists of two phases, transition to democracy and then consolidation of democracy. Transition is the process of preparing ground for democracy during which democratic system is not well established and consolidation is the stage when democracy becomes the only way for seeking and exercising political power (Fobih, 2008). Political parties in the transitional phase mobilize citizens for transition and also provide leadership for confrontation and negotiation with dictatorship.

Jama'at had gained substantial fame due to its struggle for constitution-making and had immensely involved in the elections campaign aiming to gain power through winning the national elections scheduled for 1959. But the imposition of martial law shattered all hopes of Jama'at (Nasr, 1994). Jama'at rejected the imposition of martial law and contended that a person abrogated constitution and imposed martial law who had no role in its making and had no authority to abrogate it. Consequently, he had no authority to remain president and issue unconstitutional orders (Mawdudi, 1963). Jama'at declared imposition of martial law as a plot to thwart the elections and to preclude political parties from achieving political power through constitutional and democratic means. (Moten, 2003). Hence Jama'at launched a campaign for the restoration of democracy. Jama'at faced

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the atrocities of the regime but continued its struggle. Jama'at played a vivid role in the transitional process by rejecting dictatorship, uniting opposition and bringing the regime to the negotiating table.

*Rejecting the Dictatorial Regime*

Ayub Khan was against politicians and parliamentary democracy therefore he banned political parties to oust politicians from the political amphitheater. To give a democratic fascia to his regime, Ayub Khan introduced the system of Basic Democracies to run the local government and to form an electoral college for the presidential and assemblies' elections. The BD aimed to create and maintain small political groups that could be easily manipulated by the regime. The BD elections were held in such circumstances when there was no freedom of association and political activities.

Soon after elections the regime held a referendum and authorized Ayub Khan to frame the future constitution for the country (Hassan, 1986). The referendum was a one-horse race because there was no contestation which is an essential feature of a democratic referendum and elections, contestation provides the people alternative among the candidates and program, and enables them to use their power of authorization and accountability by electing or rejecting a candidate or program.

In May 1960 Jama'at rejected the political system of Ayub Khan and demanded the holding of free and fair elections. The regime could not bear the criticism of Jama'at; therefore, Mawdudi was summoned to appear before the authorities in Lahore where he was reprimanded for the disobedience of martial law (Nasr, 1994). But the chastisement could not deter Jama'at from its struggle against the BD and declared it as Basic Dictatorship which strengthened the dictatorship by the process of democracy (Hassan, 1986). To counter Jama'at's criticism, the ministry of information in its report to the cabinet labeled Jama'at seditious and recommended stern action against it (Moten, 2003). In 1961 Jama'at demanded free and fair elections; freedom of expression; supremacy of the people and handing over the responsibility of running of the state affairs to elected representatives for the protection of the country and promotion of democracy (Hassan, 1986).

Ayub Khan constituted a Constitutional Commission for constitution-making and probing the causes of democracy failure. The Commission issued a questionnaire to extract public opinion but the regime-imposed curbs on press for the purpose to prevent people and political parties from forming a collective opinion (Tufail, 1963). Jama'at reacted to the questionnaire and favored a parliamentary

democracy, direct elections and asserted that democracy had not been failed in the country but it had never been allowed to function freely. Jama'at published its reply to the questionnaire for attracting public support. The regime deemed it a breach of martial law and summoned Mawdudi. He argued that the Commission had published its questionnaire; therefore, Jama'at used its right of expression to tell the people how it replied to the questionnaire. Jama'at contended that if the regime considered it violation of martial law than it could take action against Jama'at but Jama'at would defend its position in the court. The Commission in its report recommended presidential system, bicameral legislature, direct election and the office of vice president (Hassan, 1986).

Ayub Khan rejected most of the recommendations because they were against his plan. The 1962 Constitution was a one-man show and a blow to party politics because it concentrated powers in the hands of president; he was the head of state and also government and also had the general and special legislative powers (Muhammad, 1995).

In August 1962, *Majlis Shura* of Jama'at in a resolution declared the constitution undemocratic and demanded the restoration of direct elections, fundamental rights, and provincial autonomy. (Afzal, 2000). Jama'at declared the political system and constitution as a dictatorship in the form of democracy and contended that the constitution-making was the right of the people neither of a person nor a group (Bahadur, 1978). To counter the barrage of criticism, Ayub offered Mawdudi the post of vice-chancellor of the Bahawalpur Islamic University and also advised to abandon politics and consecrate himself to religious works but Jama'at rejected both the offer and advice (Nasr, 1994).

The incessant opposition of Jama'at compelled the regime to withdraw martial law and restore party politics. After the restoration of the party politics, within 24 hours Jama'at started its activities throughout the country and launched a regular campaign for the restoration of democracy (Hasan, 1986).

Unity among political parties during transitional period is imperative, therefore Jama'at in October started negotiation with opposition leader H.S Suharwardy aiming to form a united front against the regime (Joshi, 2003). Thus, opposition including Jama'at formed United Democratic Front for the democratization of the system (Afzal, 2000).

In September 1963 opposing the proponents of dictatorship, Mawdudi declared that Jama'at would not favor even an angel as a candidate of Conventional Muslim League, the party of the regime, in

elections. The regime reacted to the radical opposition of Jama'at and warned Mawdudi to retract his words but he refused by saying that the government could take whatever action it deemed fit (Hasan, 1986).

### *Regime 's Reaction*

Jama'at steadfastly suffered atrocities of the regime for democracy promotion. In October 1963 Jama'at decided to hold all Pakistan Conference but the regime first delayed the permission and then granted a narrow place for holding the conference. The District Magistrate didn't allow the use of loudspeakers in the conference and when Jama'at went to the court against the order of Magistrate, the regime hurriedly banned the use of loudspeakers by imposing the Loud Speaker Ordinance of 1963. Jama'at criticized the despotic behavior of the regime and contended that the regime talked loud of democracy from the housetop but asphyxiated democracy by suppressing the voice of opposition (Hasan, 1986).

When the session began on October 25, 1963, a band of hired hooligans disturbed the meeting and killed a worker of Jama'at. In the conference, Jama'at announced the continuance of struggle for democracy promotion and described the hooligans as agents of provocateurs (Bahadur, 1978).

The regime was not contented with these actions therefore in January 1964 it callously reacted and declared Jama'at an illegitimate organization under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 (Hasan, 1986). Unluckily on the same day, Jama'at was holding a meeting of *Majlis-e-Amala*, hence including Amir and general secretary, many leaders of Jama'at were arrested (Bahadur, 1978). Jama'at went to the court against the regime and the apex court declared the ban illegitimate and released leadership of Jama'at (Afzal, 2000).

### *Alliance Politics for Democracy Promotion*

Combined confrontation and negotiation theorists consider united action of opposition against the dictatorship both in the form of confrontation and negotiation with regime sine qua non for the transitional process. (Fobih, 2008). When the regime decided to go for elections, Jama'at allied with opposition against the regime by forming Combined Opposition Parties. There was no resemblance in the ideologies and political programs of opposition parties except the common desire to defeat Ayub Khan in presidential election and reinstate democracy. The COP nominated Miss Fatimah Jinnah as presidential candidate against Ayub Khan.

Supporting the candidature of Miss Jinnah *Majlis-e-Shura* passed a resolution that “in the present unusual situation the candidature of a woman for the head of state was not against the Shari’ah (Ahmad, 1991). Jama’at enthusiastically participated in the election campaign by criticizing the despotic actions of the regime such as abrogation of the constitution, imposition of martial law, the system of Basic Democracies, undemocratic nature of the 1962 constitution, curbs on fundamental rights, press and judiciary (Hasan, 1986).

Ayub Khan provoked the religious sentiments of people against the candidature of Miss Jinnah hence many *ulema* issued a fatwa that “to assign the office of Head of State to a woman is *Haram*.” Pro-regime *ulema* also appealed to Basic Democrats to vote Ayub Khan (Moten, 2003). Jama’at declared domineering dictatorship as a greater sin than making a female head of state and accused the pro-regime *ulema* of being *Ulema-e-Su*, who always toed the line of dishonesty and despotism. The regime decided to engineer a split in Jama’at on the candidature of women for the office of head of state and instigated Kawthar Niazi, a renowned member of Shura. Niazi resigned from Jama’at arguing that Jama’at’s decision of supporting Miss Jinnah could be only for political and democratic reasons (Bahadur, 1978).

Jama’at supposed that the real issue was how to get rid of dictatorship not that a woman could not head a state. Hence Jama’at regarded the candidature of woman as a lesser evil than dictatorship and considered that if Jama’at didn’t support Miss Jinnah it would mean that Jama’at supported the greater evil (Hasan, 1986). Niazi’s attack on Jama’at could not deter Jama’at from opposing dictatorship, therefore to counter conspiracy of the regime Mawdudi denounced dictatorship and demanded democracy by arguing that for the establishment of the Islamic system a democratic system was essential (Nasr, 1994).

The regime alleged COP had no program and a group of discredited politicians who had been tried and they had murdered democracy, therefore COP government would be unstable while the regime had introduced a new system of Basic Democracies understandable by the people. Jama’at shielded the cause of COP with persuasive arguments that COP had a comprehensive program; the dictatorial rule had been tried for last six years and its failure was greater than that of politicians; if politicians had murdered democracy than the dictatorship had gone a step advance and dragged the cadaver of democracy from the grave; stability brought through dictatorship

was no stability and the people had understood well the new system as monarchy (Hasan, 1986).

Jama'at was sure about the victory of Miss Jinnah but partiality of governmental machinery and the system of indirect election ensured the victory of Ayub (Zaheer, 1994). The defeat in election divided COP, the pro-boycott group contended that the regime rigged the presidential election and would also rig the assemblies' elections while the pro-participation group argued that assemblies would provide the vital opportunity for the restoration of democracy. Jama'at supported the pro-boycott group and later on dissociated itself from the alliance. The view of the pro-boycott group proved prophetic and COP couldn't win considerable seats in the National Assembly elections (Afzal, 2000).

Jama'at struggled for the existence of a constitutional mechanism of regular, free and fair direct elections for the purpose to refrain an adventurer from capturing power. Mawdudi regretted that the majority opposed the regime but due to indirect elections the ruling party could maneuver to hold power in its hands. In June 1966 demonstrations erupted against the regime in East Pakistan. Jama'at opposed the suppression of protests. Jama'at considered the feeling of exclusion among the people under the 1962 constitution as the main cause of grievances and demanded the introduction of direct elections and supremacy of the parliament for the elimination of a sense of exclusion among the people. In 1967 Jama'at declared the deprivation of people from fundamental rights and freedom of expression by the regime as the worst calamity which could fall on a nation (Hasan, 1986).

As unity among political parties is essential for democracy promotion hence in February 1967 Mawdudi again gave a call for the united front of opposition parties. Finally, five parties including Jama'at formed Pakistan Democratic Movement, an alliance of regional, Islamic and secular parties which core purpose was to oust dictatorship and restore democracy (Bahadur, 1978).

Using the platform of PDM Jama'at endeavored for the restoration and promotion of democracy. Jama'at contended that the core aim of PDM was to reinstate democracy and make citizens the real repository of power. In March 1968 Jama'at highlighted the ills of Ayub regime and demanded the withdrawal of the 1962 constitution and the restoration of 1956 which had been framed by the people representatives (Hasan, 1986). PDM faced the opposition of regime and also of some opposition parties; National Awami Party and Awami League alleged that PDM had ignored popular demands and Six Points of AL (Afzal, 2000).

*Politics of Negotiation*

In January 1969 PDM was replaced by a new and strong alliance of eight parties including Jama'at, the Democratic Action Committee (Bhuiyan, 1982). Like the earlier alliances, the core objective of DAC was to dethrone dictatorship and restore democracy. The unity among opposition terrified Ayub Khan hence in February 1969 he invited the opposition to end the crisis. The DAC demanded the withdrawal of emergency and the release of all political prisoners as a condition for the commencement of negotiation (Hasan, 1986). As an indication of goodwill, the regime withdrew section 144, curbs on press, emergency, released all political prisoners under Defense of Pakistan Rules and ended the Agartala Conspiracy case. These developments paved the way for the negotiation process. Parties of DAC agreed on two points, federal parliamentary system and direct elections based on the adult franchise as demand for negotiation with Ayub Khan at Round Table Conference. (Afzal, 2000).

In March 1969 at RTC Jama'at rejected presidential system and contended that under it all powers had been concentrated in President's hands who had to belong to one unit of the country which violated the principle of parity while in parliamentary system parliament was supreme in which all units had representation. Jama'at contended that the country belonged to the people therefore there should be direct elections and declared indirect elections against the basic concept of democracy. The regime accepted the two agreed demands of DAC and suggested that the unresolved issues would be decided by the directly elected assembly (Hasan, 1986).

The regime agreed to amend the constitution and to incorporate these points into the constitution but AL dissociated itself from DAC by rejecting the two agreed demands (Bhuiyan, 1982). Thus, three important political parties rejected the process of negotiations at a critical juncture when the victory was at doorsill. Jama'at considered that after holding of elections and restoration of democracy the remnants of dictatorship would be thrown out. But meanwhile, some parties started violent agitations against the regime which worsened the situation. Jama'at favored the peaceful transformation of power therefore on March 14, 1969, condemned the violent agitations. Mawdudi argued that Ayub Khan had conceived to the demands of opposition but some misguided elements preached the cult of violence and considered that the regime had been conceiving because of their violent agitations. Jama'at contended that the violent agitations had impeded the process of democracy promotion because democracy didn't stand for violence (Hasan, 1986).

The violent agitations made it impossible for the National Assembly to meet and amend the constitution for the incorporation of the agreed demands. Therefore, the president on March 25, 1969, handed over power to General Yahya Khan. (Afzal, 2000). The imposition of martial was a blow to Jama'at because it had struggled for the reinstatement of democracy. Therefore, condemning the violent agitations Mawdudi said that when the victory was at doorsill some political leaders snatched the prize from the nation (Hasan, 1986).

### *Conclusion*

Jama'at regarded the political system of Ayub as a one-man show and a blow to democracy because it concentrated all the effective levers of power in Presidents' hands. Hence Jama'at adopted the role of hard-liner opposition and waged a war against dictatorship and for reinstatement of democracy. Jama'at struggled for the restoration of free, fair and direct elections; fundamental rights and freedoms because their restoration was sine qua non for reinstatement and promotion of democracy. Jama'at faced the atrocities of the regime but stuck to its guns for the promotion of democracy. The incessant opposition of Jama'at compelled the regime to withdraw martial law and restore party politics. With the restoration of party politics, Jama'at launched a regular campaign against the regime. Jama'at sought the support of secular, regional and ethnic parties and formed alliances such as United Democratic Front, COP, PDM, and DAC for the restoration of democracy. Jama'at not only steadfastly supported the program of these alliances but also strongly opposed the proponents of the regime and declared dictatorship as a greater sin and calamity.

The hard-liner role of Jama'at united opposition and made the regime feeble. When dictatorship conceives to the demands of opposition than the way of negotiation is beneficial than agitation. Therefore, when the regime started conceiving to the demands of opposition, Jama'at adopted the role of soft-liner opposition believing in negotiation rather than agitations for the restoration of democracy and peaceful transformation of power. The negotiating politics of Jama'at played an important role in paving the way for the restoration of democracy because the regime conceived to the demands of the opposition. When the victory was in sight some political parties rejected the process of negotiations and adopted the way of violent agitations which caused the imposition of martial. The imposition of martial was a blow to Jama'at because it had borne the atrocities of the regime for democracy promotion. Therefore, Jama'at declared that the



violent agitations hampered the way of democracy promotion and caused the imposition of another martial law.

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