



## Politics of Alliance in Pakistan: A Case Study of MQM (1985-1999)

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to make a case study of alliance politics practised by MQM, a major political party in Sindh, which always remained in coalition to become a part of the government. The politics of alliance formation has remained a regular feature of politics in Pakistan since its inception. Several political alliances were formed in order to achieve the goals of power politics. MQM is a political party whose political influence is limited to the urban-based population influencing Urdu speaking mohajir community. From 1988 onwards, MQM formed alliances with different political parties; however, it could not become a national-level political party. It is a qualitative based study conducted to achieve research purposes. The findings suggest that MQM's alliance politics met failure due to multiple factors such as the party's alleged involvement in violence, practising the politics of ethnicity, and pursuing regional interests rather than national goals. Moreover, unrealistic demands from the partners, pursuance of personal agendas and dissent of the state to the party's activities. However, it left deep impressions on the national political landscape.

### Introduction

Political Alliances are a temporary blend of parties, groups or individuals that are formed to obtain certain objectives through joint action. Usually, pluralist democracies acknowledge the alliances and groups of the political parties. In the parliamentary form of government, small political parties have desires to share power, most of the time aligning with the major political parties. The alliance can be pre-election and post-election as well depending on the situation of the country. The culture of alliances and coalitions had a deep impact on the politics of Pakistan. The regional political parties have no capacity to attain the majority number of seats to form the governments so they join the major national political parties to attain their objectives and the same opposition makes alliances to give tough time to the governments. Several political Alliances opposed the military governments while several allied with

the military rulers. MQM had always remained unable to form the government on its own and remained a regional and ethnic political party, which included serving the interests of Urdu speakers. MQM remained the ally of almost every major political party that came into power from 1988 onward. However, the party failed to convert its regional character into a national character. Moreover, it is also a fact that coalition governments had always remained weak governments in Pakistan where every partner tried to enhance its interests instead of public service.

This study attempts to explore the history of alliances in the country since 1947 and specially MQM's alliances from 1985-1999. The major theme revolves around the politics of alliance in the country. Pakistan since the beginning witnessed coalition governments, especially after the death of Zia-ul-Haq regional and ethnic parties, lacking the character of nationwide support, always

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remaining dependent upon the major parties for political gains. Given the scenario of representatives of local communities, regional and ethnic parties acted as fascist regimes and posed serious threats to the security of the country. MQM, a representative of Urdu speakers entered into alliances but failed to address the core issues of the Mohajir community. After gaining power in 1988, the party turned into a conspired organization and security forces took action several times against them in urban Sindh.

### History of Alliances in Pakistan

Soon after independence, Muslim League became one of the major factors in alliance politics. Its political disconnection, opposition to holding elections in the country, delay in the constitution-making and consequent weak governments supported the politics of alliance to overcome the governance issues. Further, the politics of alliances

also got momentum as the democratic forces were pushed to the wall by the undemocratic forces from the beginning. The feelings of alienation between the two wings of the country were tried to overcome by forming alliances however failed.

The first electoral alliance came into being in Pakistan when the government announced the provincial elections in 1954 in East Pakistan. United Front was established to face Muslim League in the province. The United Front was the coalition of four parties namely, Awami Muslim League, Krishak Srimak Party, Ganatantri Dal and Nizam-e-Islam. The prominent leaders of this alliance were A.K. Fazlul Haq, Hussain Shaheed Suharwardy and Maulana Bhashani. The United Front succeeded in the elections and Muslim League faced a humiliating defeat by getting only 9 seats (Nair, 1990). The election results are as follows.

**Table 1.** Election Results of 1954 (Muslim Seats of Provincial Assembly of East Pakistan)

Parties	Seats in East Pakistan
Awami League	143
Krishak Srimak Party	48
Nazam-e- Islam Party	19
Ganatantri Dal	13
Muslim League	9
Khilafat-e- Robaani Party	1
Independents	4
Total	237

*M. Bhaskaran Nair, Politics in Bangladesh: A Study of Awami League, 1949-58*

Most alliances came into being for personal interests and this was exactly what happened in this alliance. A.K. Fazal ul Haq and Hussain Shaheed Suharwardy had ideological differences and these differences caused damage to United Front (Rizvi, 2009). Awami League took the majority number of seats in the provincial elections, however, Fazlul Haq's KSP decided to make an alliance with Muslim League in Dhaka and consequently Muslim League-United Front government was formed in East Pakistan. Fazlul Haq was appointed as governor while Abu Hussain Sarkar became the Chief Minister. However, the allied government failed to complete its tenure and Chief Minister was forced to leave office in August 1956. The

change in the provincial assembly affected the constituent assembly and the alliance of the Awami League and Republican Party led to the formation of the Suharwardy government in the centre. It was during this time when Maulana Bhashani developed differences with Suharwardy and decided to part his way from the PM. Bhashani formed a new political party "National Awami Party" and started campaigning on five-point agenda including the abolition of one unit scheme, joint electorates, neutral foreign policy, and regional autonomy (Smith, 2009). Furthermore, they stressed the fulfilment of 21 point manifesto which the United Front presented during the election. The tussle between the two parties

resulted in the overthrowing of the Attaur Rehman government in East Pakistan (Ziring, 2004). The continuous struggle between the governor-general and prime ministers further pushed Pakistan towards political instability. The analysis of the initial years of Pakistan clearly indicated that alliances played an important role in forming and removing the governments. Muslim League faced defeat by the political alliance of four parties and hence regional political parties gained importance on the national level.

Ayub Khan took over the government in 1958 and proceeded towards a presidential form of government by introducing a new constitution in 1962. Convention Muslim League came into existence with Ayub Khan as its president in December 1963 (Ziring, 1997). After strengthening his grip on the government Ayub Khan announced the presidential elections in the country in 1965. As the elections were announced by the Ayub Khan regime, opposition parties started their campaign. Khuwaja Nazimuddin, president of the Council Muslim League started visiting the country and discussed the situation with various opposition leaders and parties (Salim, 1993). The result of his discussions surfaced in the shape of a political alliance against the Ayub Khan regime known as “Combined Opposition Parties” (COP) in July 1964 in Dhakka. The COP included the Council Muslim League (CML), Awami League, NAP, Jamaat-i-Islami and Nizam-e-Islam Party (Sayyed, 1967).

Convention Muslim League nominated Ayub Khan while COP nominated Fatima Jinnah as their Presidential candidate. The election results shocked the whole nation as Miss Fatima Jinnah, the sister of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah lost the elections. A variety of factors was presented for the defeat of COP, i.e. the alliance was accused of disintegration of the country, a woman could not be the head of state and the COP was against the BD system and the alliance would scrape the system. The use of print and electronic media officially against the COP leadership played an important role, as the opposition parties had no alternative to counter the narrative of the government (Hamdani, 1978).

## **Bhutto Era**

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto came into power after the election 1970. His autocratic style of governance,

restricted media, dissolved the Baluchistan assembly, and military operations in Baluchistan, and compelled the opposition parties to protest. Bhutto having a popularity complex advised the President to dissolve the national and provincial assemblies for holding a fresh election in 1977. This resulted in an alliance of opposition parties against Bhutto and nine parties' alliance came into being in January 1977 namely Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) (Dawn, 1997). The PNA was composed of various left and right-wing parties that had totally opposite ideologies but united to confront the ruling PPP. Their election manifesto was a replica of PPP's manifesto-like social justice, equal distribution of wealth, end to all forms of exploitation etc. furthermore, the famous slogan of PPP "Roti Kapra or Makkan" was replaced with providing basic necessities of life to people (Ahmad, 2018). The PNA leadership was convinced that Bhutto was responsible for the disintegration of Pakistan and they announced the formation of a powerful commission soon after they come into power. They announced that culprits would be brought to the courts. The PNA criticized the constitutional amendments of the Bhutto regime especially, the curtailment of judicial powers and empowering executive and announced that after coming into power, the alliance would reverse these amendments (Chaudhary, 1977).

Elections were held in the country in March 1977 and the results were shocking, especially for the PNA. Out of the total of 200 national assembly seats, PPP managed to get 155 while PNA got only 36 seats. The results disappointed the alliance and they accused the PPP of massive rigging. Rafiq Ahmad Bajwa, the secretary general of the PNA forwarded three demands after the election in a press conference. Those demands were “resignation of the PM, replacement of Chief Election Commissioner and Fresh election under Judiciary and Army” (Rashid, 1980).

PNA decided to boycott the provincial assemblies' elections and started protests and agitation across the country. PNA was dominated by religious parties, so the movement transformed into “Tehreek-e-Nizam-e-Mustafa”. The protests and agitations in the country created the worst law and order situation so Bhutto imposed martial law in a few cities. Bhutto invited the opposition for dialogue so PNA presented demands to Bhutto.

The demands included "lifting of Martial law, dissolution of assemblies, powerful election commission, the appointment of a new governor and the resignation of Bhutto" ([Ahmad, 1988](#)). Bhutto agreed to the first three demands and promised to think about the last two demands. The negotiations were in progress when differences emerged between the PNA parties. Consequently, PNA refused to approve the agreement, which the negotiation team signed ([Ahmad, 1988](#)). Deteriorated law and order situation compelled the Army to intervene and Zia-ul-Haq imposed Martial Law in the country in 1977.

### **General Zia and Movement for Restoration of Democracy**

Zia-ul-Haq suspended the constitution, declared an emergency and banned the political parties and media. Initially, PNA welcomed Zia but later most of the parties of PNA turned against Zia from a combined platform of the "Movement for Restoration of Democracy" (MRD). MRD was an alliance of nine political parties and the major parties were JUI, NAP, Qaumi Mahaz Azadi (QMA), Mazdoor Kissan Party (MKP) and PPP. MRD was also composed of parties having quite opposite ideologies but the objective was the same—to get rid of military government. Zia promised to hold elections within 90 days that never materialized and hence MRD started their movement in the country with PPP in the driving seat ([Khan, 2008](#)). The military regime tried to suppress the movement with harsh steps like registering cases against political leaders with severe punishments ([Burki, 2009](#)).

To get approval from the masses for his government's legitimacy and support for his Islamic program the government announced holding a referendum in the country. MRD movement enjoyed massive support of masses and by taking it mistakenly boycotted the referendum of 1984 ([Burki, 2009](#)). In spite of MRD's boycott public participated massively in the referendum. However, under the pressure of MRD, the government announced non-party-based elections in 1985. MRD once again committed a mistake by boycotting the elections while PML and MQM contested the elections. The alliance created history by organizing a massive movement against a military ruler however internal differences,

mistakes and finally the death of Zia resulted in the ending of MRD (Abbas, 1988).

### **Uprising of MQM**

The death of Zia-ul-Haq led the country towards the resumption of the democratic process once again. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the then Chairman of the Senate became the president of Pakistan and announced party based election in November 1988. MQM, a newly emerged political party, showed remarkable progress and became the third largest party by winning 13 seats after PPP and IJI who secured 92 and 55 seats respectively. The MQM challenged the existing status quo set up by religious and nationalist groups. JI and JUP claimed to be the sole representatives of Urdu speakers but the emergence of MQM shut the ways of JI and JUP. Analyzing the popularity of MQM on the basis of seats in the National and Provincial Assembly it got great importance during that years. The comparison of 13 seats with 92 seats of PPP seemed to be unjust; however, the elimination of other representatives of Urdu speakers increased its importance.

The non-Mohajir ethnicities formed an alliance under the term "Ittehad" having some sort of resemblance with MQM. The most important alliance was Pushtoon-Punjabi Ittehad (PPI) which claimed to be a representative of two million non-Mohajirs residing in urban Sindh. The establishment of PPI compelled other small ethnicities as well to jump into the ring by forming their ethnic alliances as well. For instance, Balochis remained staunch supporters of PPP in Karachi however, the formation of PPI, inspired them and they formed the "Baloch Ittehad" for the protection of their political, social and economic rights in urban Sindh ([Baluch, 1989](#)). Dr Maqsood Tariq Arain, a councillor in the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation came forward by establishing the "Sindhi Punjabi Ittehad". MQM did not inspire ethnicities in Sindh only rather in other parts of the country the ethnicities started uniting themselves to gain the same sort of success. The Siraiki Qaumi Mahaz (Siraiki National Movement) was one such example that demanded a separate province for their community ([Ziring, 1997](#)).

## **MQM-PPP Alliance: Benazir First Government (1988-1990)**

The first MQM alliance was with PPP in the National as well as Sindh Provincial Assembly after the election of 1988. Both parties signed an accord that was declared the 'Charter of Peace, Love and Rights'. Both parties were of the opinion that the accord was a step to unite the urban and rural Sindh and decrease their political differences ([Weekly, 1988](#)). The making alliance in the province showed the political pragmatism of Benazir Bhutto as PPP was in majority. The accord was also very ambitious due to diverging opinions on national issues and especially on repatriation of Bengalis was the major point in the accord that was not possible to accept by the government ([Masood, 2014](#)). Furthermore, voices within PPP were raised against this Accord especially the Makhdoods of Halas, who severely criticized it. MQM, on the other hand, knew that it would not be possible for the PPP to fulfil their demands but they entered into an alliance with the government for their own political interests. The party was newly established and its impressive performance in the election ensured the leadership of MQM that it was a good time to do something for Mohajirs.

The marriage of inconvenience soon witnessed ups and downs when violence erupted in Karachi in April 1989. The killing of Urdu speakers and the resultant response in the shape of killing local Sindhis aggravated the law and order situation in Karachi. The MQM-PPP alliance began to dismantle as a result of violence. Three MQM ministers resigned in protest from the provincial government. The situation was alarming in Karachi but PPP did not take it seriously and Benazir declared it a mini insurgency. Declaring violence as the continuation of the dictator's legacy showed the seriousness of her government to tackle the issue ([Masood, 2014](#)). Altaf Hussain, the leader of MQM during his visit to Hyderabad city was detained at the airport, which created a wave of anger among his followers. The MQM leadership declared the act as an act of humiliation and things started moving in the opposite direction from there onwards. The final blow to the alliance came when PPP decided to establish Federal Placement Bureau for inducting their workers into bureaucracy without appearing in the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC). The move was

considered by the MQM as a step to create an imbalance in the bureaucracy and hence a threat to their interests. The IJI-MQM contacts started developing since then and both the parties signed a new Accord secretly. Although MQM joined the IJI camp they argued that leaving the alliance would not mean terminating the accord. These steps and the following wave of violence and terror in the city compelled Altaf Hussain to appeal to the President of Pakistan to intervene ([Masood, 2014](#)). The move to pressurize the government, however, left a big question mark on the future of the MQM-PPP alliance.

The starting of dialogues for a new alliance between MQM and IJI gave confidence to IJI in the centre and they filed a no-confidence motion in the National Assembly. In a press conference with Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Altaf Hussain formally declared the termination of the alliance with the PPP government and disclosed the signing of a new accord with IJI. The no-confidence motion failed by 12 votes only which caused great damage to the democratic process ([Sayyed, 1992](#)). Benazir Bhutto tried her best to save the MQM-PPP alliance however, the MQM focused only on the regional agenda. The "regional-national outlook" tussle resulted in the breakup of the alliance very early. IJI having the support of the establishment engineered the move and played a significant role by starting negotiations for future alliances even then when the MQM-PPP alliance was fully intact. The break of the MQM-PPP alliance resulted in the joining of MQM in protests against the PPP government. MQM showed its power by organizing a rally at the Quaid-e-Azam's Mausoleum and it was one of the largest rallies in the political history of Pakistan. The rally was followed by a wave of violence and terrorism, which resulted in the killing of hundreds of innocent people. The wave of violence was so intense that President Ghulam Ishaq Khan intervened and called Aitizaz Ihsan, the then interior minister to explain the situation (Dawn, 1990).

Coupled with extreme political instability, the economic chaos due to disturbance in Karachi which was the economic hub of the country put further pressure on the Benazir government. The violence and terrorism in Karachi compelled the central government for serious efforts. The PPP government replaced Qaim Ali Shah, Chief

Minister of Sindh with Aftab Shaban Mirani but that did not work as the situation was out of control. Even the law enforcement agencies of Sindh were not under the control of PPP and they opened fire during a search operation resulting in the killing of nearly 40 people in Hyderabad. Having all these difficulties and IJI's connection with the military establishment and Ghulam Ishaq Khan's approval finally led to the ending of the PPP government in 1990 ([Masood, 2014](#)). The first episode of the Alliance history of MQM revealed the pattern of the party that it persuaded for political gains.

### **MQM-IJI Alliance**

The continuous agitation by IJI and MQM coupled with the charges of bad governance, nepotism and corruption led to the dismissal of Benazir's government in 1990. The new elections were held in the country and IJI came into power. After the election MQM-IJI alliance came into existence for which the PPP leadership predicted that the Sindh-based MQM could not afford to remain at war with the majority party in the province—PPP. Contrary to this, MQM always remained in search of an opportunity to maximize its powers and that was exactly what they found in the shape of IJI in the centre ([Ziring, Pakistan in 1989: The Politics of Stalemate, 1990](#)). MQM-IJI alliance reached the conclusion to sign an accord on a similar pattern, which the MQM signed with PPP and most of the points matched with the previous agreement. The new MQM-IJI agreement focused on better civic facilities for Karachi, revision of the quota system and a new census ([Abbas Z., 1989](#)).

Nonetheless, the MQM-IJI alliance did not succeed to end the difficulties of Urdu speakers in Sindh especially. Instead of resolving the issues of Mohajirs, a new wave of hatred emerged in Sindh cleavages between the two major ethnicities were further widened. Sindhi Nationalists and workers of PPP considered the act of MQM as a betrayal of the local people and the provincial autonomy. Moreover, it was argued that MQM was a power-greedy party that could not survive without the power and for this; they can go to any extreme—sacrifice the interests of the province. It was against this backdrop that the PPP decided not to align itself with MQM in the future. Contrary to this MQM presented itself as a party representative of Urdu speakers only and as the kingmaker. They

accused the PPP leadership of being Sindhi Nationalists having concerns only for the rural areas of the province. It was their policy of ignoring the interest of urban Sindh that compelled the MQM to move towards IJI. MQM rejected the allegations of opportunism and asserted that they would go to any extreme for the right of Urdu speakers.

The MQM-IJI alliance was met with its fate of failure because like the previous agreement the IJI was unable to fulfil the demands of MQM. Furthermore, the alignment of MQM with violence and terrorism never came to an end that led not only to the creation of rifts between two allies but at the same time gave way to the internal differences of the party. The internal rifts in the party were mainly because of the power struggle between the high officials. The party was also interested in its base in other parts of the country and thoughts were there to change the name of the party but the decision was not implemented until 1997 ([Mehdi, 1991](#)). The differences among the party leadership resulted in the sacking of the party.

It was a well-thought alliance where both the parties had the backing of the military establishment but the plan did not work well because of the MQM's militant policies and outlook. The party remained indulged in violence and militancy and the major ally had no other option but to start an operation against them. The MQM's attack on the security forces compelled the central government to launch a military operation against them especially when Major Kaleem was abducted in Karachi. The army finally in June 1992 launched an operation against the militants in Karachi ([Amir, 1992](#)). To counter the popularity of MQM, the establishment supported the sacked members Afaq Ahmad, Amir Khan, and Babar who were in the USA and just came to Pakistan. They formed their own fraction of MQM (H).

Although, MQM had its own military win and had a history and experience of militancy, however, they could not resist the power of the state. It was for this reason that MQM failed to retaliate and preferred to go underground. The offices of the MQM were captured by MQM (H). Altaf Hussain who sensed the situation quite early managed to leave the country on medical grounds and from London, he requested the US embassy to

accommodate the party's workers by giving them asylum which the embassy rejected ([Amir, MQM: A Fight to the Finish, 1992](#)). Altaf Hussain alleged the central government targeted the Urdu speakers while the federal government maintained their position by replying that the operation was against the militants and not against any party or ethnic group.

In spite of the state's policies against them, the alliance was technically intact. Despite being an ally of Nawaz Sharif, the party received heavy suffering in terms of the loss of its workers and offices. MQM had no other option except to resign from the provincial assembly of Sindh and finally 23 members resigned including the Speaker of the assembly. The resignations left the provincial assembly to be hanged with a thin thread of losing the government in Sindh ([Khan R. A., 1993](#)). The resignations were a severe blow to the Nawaz government however the real test was the tussle between Nawaz Sharif and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan. The immediate reason that became the bone of contentions between the two powerful personalities of the state was the disagreement over the appointment of the Chief of Army Staff ([Amin, 1994](#)). The president dissolved the assemblies and the decision was challenged in the Supreme Court. The restoration from Supreme Court did not resolve the issue and finally, the army chief's intervention resolved the issue when both Nawaz Sharif and Ghulam Ishaq Khan resigned from their posts in July 1993.

### **MQM and Politics of Alliance: Benazir and Nawaz Sharif Second Tenures (1993-1999).**

The political instability of the toppling of government prematurely led to the holding of elections in 1993, the third general elections in five years. PPP was the leading party with 86 seats in the centre while PMLN was the runner-up by taking 72 seats. PPP formed a coalition government in the centre with other small parties like PMLJ ([Amin, 1994](#)). MQM boycotted the election for the National Assembly as a protest against the policy of oppression against them by thinking that low turnout would compel the state institutions to rethink their policy of operation.

However the turnout on the polling day was much higher than the expectations of the MQM and hence they decided to contest the elections of

provincial assemblies ([Amin, 1994](#)). The results of the provincial assembly were shocking to the state institutions who thought the party would hardly get any seats. MQM performed well and proved that their vote bank remained intact in spite of the policy of oppression against the Urdu speakers. The policy of shifting alliances by the MQM and their lust for power, neglecting the interests of the Province, their hatred for the local Sindhis and their involvement in militant activities restrained PPP from forming an alliance this time in the province. The so-called only representatives of the Urdu speakers failed to bring any positive change for their supporters in urban areas but rather added further to their miseries. Military operation once again resumed against the militants and this time led by interior minister Nasreerullah Babar. Babar's aggressive approach settled the issue temporarily however in the long run the violence and militancy in the city never ended.

The operation was ruthless as only in 1995 about 2095 people were killed. Out of these 243 were members of MQM and 180 belonged to MQM(H). In response to this attacks happened on the security forces as well and nearly 223 personnel were killed. It was a huge number in terms of killings in an operation by the government ([Bakhtiar, 1996](#)). The death toll reached touched new heights when we analyze the data for the last four years from 1992-1996. It was estimated that nearly 5000 people lost their lives in Karachi only ([Abbas A, 1996](#)).

The new phenomenon emerged in the shape of extrajudicial killings which Pakistani society had never been familiar with before. Fake police encounters took the lives of nearly 200 people in 1996 ([Abbas M, 1996](#)). Moreover, the state failed to produce any enquiry about these extra-judicial killings during the Benazir government.

MQM's stronghold was Karachi, the economic hub of the country and the party remained successful so far in paralyzing the city by calling strikes, agitation, burning of properties, vehicles and banks etc. shutting down the city for one day would mean the loss of billions. MQM did it quite often and caused great damage to the country's economy. In July 1995 only, the party called for 19 strikes and the city almost remained closed for a month ([Bakhtiar, 1996](#)). The results for the economy of the country were quite horrendous. Karachi Chamber of Commerce

stated that a day strike would cause a loss of \$1.3 billion to the economy and in 1995; the city business was closed for 34 days (Ahmer, 1996).

Naseerullah Babar, a Pushtun and a retired general dealt with the security situation with an iron hand. It was argued that only Babar was capable of handling the MQM otherwise all the governments previous or following failed to counter the violence and militancy of the MQM. The security issues, deteriorated law and order situation in the country and allegations of corruption once again on the PPP government led to the dissolving of the assemblies and this time by a President who was a member of the party—Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari.

The pattern of political instability continued in the country as the political parties who are considered the basic unit of any democratic system failed to perform maturely. Keeping national interests ahead and putting personal interests behind would mean putting the country on the path of prosperity and political stability. What happened in Pakistan in the 1990s was the opposite where political parties tried to maximize their personal gains and had no care for the national interests of the country. The immaturity of the politicians led to the fourth general elections in the country in just nine years.

In February 1997 elections PMLN emerged victorious while PPP faced a crushing defeat with only 18 seats in the parliament (Syed, 1998). The turnout was quite low, however, PMLN for the first time succeeded to reach the parliament with a two-thirds majority. MQM's strength also reduced to 13 seats from 15 in 1990's election. Although, MQM remained the ally of both the major parties and had harsh memories for addressing the problems of the Urdu speakers there was only one way—power. PMLN also launched operations against the MQM during their first tenure, however, in spite of all those bitter memories, MQM decided to form the alliance with PMLN once again. The alliance with MQM was the compulsion for the PMLN as Nawaz Sharif was unable to form government in Sindh without the support of MQM. On the other hand, MQM fed up with continuous policies of operation now wanted to do something for their supporters. MQM's major demand from the federal government was to pay compensation to the families whose family members were killed

extrajudicially. Initially, the Nawaz government was reluctant to release the funds but finally, the funds were released for the affected families. The government released Rs 100 million in two instalments (Rizvi, *Pakistan in 1998: The Polity Under Pressure*, 1999).

The party partly succeeded to address the grievances of those whose family members were killed during the previous government. Nonetheless, the party wanted to devise a strategy for its decreasing popularity among the masses as the party lost three seats in the general elections which belonged to them from the beginning. The step they took was the renaming of the party and transformation from Ethnic identity to national identity in July 1997. Word “Mohajir” was replaced with “Mutahidda” thereby broadening its appeal from representing only Mohajir interests to championing those of the oppressed classes in general, rejecting the ethnic and linguistic identity, which had hitherto been central to it.

## Conclusion

Pakistan enjoyed the parliamentary form of government with a short interval of presidential form of government during the Ayub Khan Regime. For the most part of its history, the governments that came into power were coalition governments. The multi-party system is usually considered a weak system where every coalition partner tried to receive more benefits from its major partner. The journey of electoral politics of MQM started in 1987 with local bodies however that soon translated into general elections in 1988. Since then the party remained in alliances with various major political parties like PPP and PMLN. Like international politics, local politics in Pakistan always followed the pattern of realism which means the focus was on "is" rather than "should be". Political parties are supposed to be the advocates of democratic values and morality and supporters of human rights. However, the dictates of "interest-driven politics" led the MQM to align itself with the military regimes as well.

Use of pressure, blackmailing, violence, agitation, conspiracies and backing of the military establishment were the main ingredients of MQM's policy of alliance during this period. The party from day one signed an impractical accord with PPP having in mind to pressurize the central



government for political gains in urban Sindh. Although the betterment of Urdu speakers was the main agenda the practical political realities divert the attention of MQM towards power politics and they hardly did anything for the Urdu speakers in Sindh. The party remained involved to maximize its strength by negotiating secret alliance with IJI, which could be termed as unethical on the grounds that being a partner of one party how can one negotiate with the opposition parties.

The analysis of these two governments revealed that alliances were made only for personal interests in Pakistan and hence played an important role in increasing the political instability in the country. The country came back to the democratic path after eleven years and the immature response of the political parties revealed their weaknesses in terms of organizational structures, policy preferences, and personal interests rather than national interests. It took just four years to dismantle the two democratic governments and resultantly neither regional political parties like MQM nor national political parties like IJI and PPP benefited. The political activists, civil society and political leadership that struggled for bringing back democracy in the country were frustrated over the performance of these parties. The frustration of the masses put a big question mark on the performance of political parties that were supposed to be responsible for taking the country out of these crises. However, the pattern remained the same in the following years and violence and militancy continued to haunt the MQM's politics in the coming years.

The analysis of MQM during 1988-1999 revealed that it was the party itself that reduced its popularity in the latest elections. Party's involvement in violent and militant activities, its emphasis on the ethnic outlook, focus only on regional issues rather than national issues and continuous military operations against them were the factors that pushed the party to this position. Furthermore, a new challenge emerged in the mid-

1990s when Islamic extremism was on the rise. The freedom struggle in Kashmir and the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan attracted many young people to the country for a more goal-oriented target—Jihad. As MQM relied heavily on the youth, therefore their divergence from ethnicity to Jihad was a great blow to the party's popularity. The emergence of new radical groups challenged civil society, political parties, journalists, academics and human rights activists alike. The new radical Islamic groups were quite contrary to the previous Islamic parties that believed in moderate political agendas. Although these groups failed to challenge the superiority of MQM in Karachi electorally however they managed to create rifts among the vote bank of the party.

MQM was not part of the alliance this time and hence received heavy losses in terms of casualties and operations. MQM continued to play a negative role by harming the country's economy. Their alleged involvement in the terrorist activities and attacks on the security forces compel the central government of PPP who had a bitter experience of alliance with them to launch strict operations.

The MQM alliance politics never succeeded since 1988 for a number of reasons. First, the unrealistic demands of MQM and consequent failure of their major partners to fulfil those demands resulted in the ending of alliances prematurely. It happened frequently during the democratic regimes, especially from 1988-1999. Second, the MQM used authority and power to convert the organization into a mafia whose sole aim was to terrorize the city. Instead of achieving the goals through democratic means, the party focused on violent means and hence faced the music in the shape of military operations. Finally, the community that voted for MQM for nearly three are still at the receiving end. The MQM remained in power quite often but failed to deliver and urban Sindh had no other option except to look for alternatives.

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