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Exploring the Challenges and Prospects of Women-related Legislations in Pakistan During Musharraf Government (1999-2008)

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Abstract

Pervez Musharraf's rule played a significant role in Pakistan's legislative history regarding the protection of women's rights. This era introduced several reforms for women's political participation in power corridors and made effective laws to protect women from any sort of violence and crime. Despite all his efforts, there were too many obstacles, including socio-cultural resistance, political opposition, and institutional weaknesses, that prevented these reforms from being implemented. This article explores the deep-rooted impacts of women-related legislation. We examine whether those reforms were cosmetic or brought concrete changes in society, and whether they contributed to women in the process of their socio-political awakening. It further evaluates the role of NGOs and their proliferation in the Musharraf era. NGOs played a very important role in putting pressure on the government to make laws for the protection of women against domestic abuse. Their surveys on women across different parts of the country are very helpful for understanding the impact of government policies on the ground.

Keywords: Musharraf Government, Women-related Legislations, Violence and Protection of Women, Extremism, Impacts, Challenges and Prospects.

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Introduction

The Musharraf regime (1999-2008) marked a significant period in Pakistan's legislative history, particularly regarding women's rights. Under General Pervez Musharraf, several women-related legislative measures were introduced to address gender inequality, safeguard women's rights, and foster their socio-economic empowerment. Notable initiatives included amendments to discriminatory laws such as the Hudood Ordinances and the enactment of the Protection of Women Act (2006). While these reforms were hailed as progressive, their implementation faced numerous challenges, including resistance from conservative factions, societal biases, and institutional limitations. This article explores the challenges encountered in formulating and enforcing these legislations and assesses their socio-political impacts on women's lives in Pakistan during the Musharraf era.

The era of Parvez Musharraf introduced various reforms through ordinances and legislation to improve women's social status. Almost the entire region of Pakistan has a patriarchal attitude. That is why the women's movement was restricted. The condition of education and the health of women were very vulnerable. Violence against women was reaching its peak. The fate of women hung in the balance. Thousands of women had been murdered in the name of honor killings. Musharraf had tried to take some good steps to eliminate these kinds of violations. The regime introduced the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2004³ to crush this insane behavior. The major barrier to women's progress was the controversial clauses of the Hudood Ordinance. Pervez Musharraf had tried his best to change the discriminatory clauses of the Hadood Ordinances. The image of Pakistan was very negative among international communities due to the vulnerable condition of women. That's why the Parliament of the Musharraf regime had passed the Women Protection Act in 2006.⁴ Through this, the discriminatory behavior of the legal system had been eliminated. He granted special relief to women in prison in various cases. Due to his regime's efforts, the socio-political status of women was uplifted, with a positive effect on common women. Women's participation in the economy has increased. She had a chance to earn income to cover daily living expenses. Awareness of the importance of female education has increased significantly. Hundreds of girls had enrolled in the educational institutions. Pervez Musharraf created a safe environment for girls in educational institutions. The acceptance of working women had increased during the Musharraf regime. Besides his effort, the fate of women had not changed in the country, especially in rural areas. The women of the remote region were still deprived of basic rights. There was no significant change in patriarchal mindset. The women of these areas had no awareness of the real spirit of these legislations. So, Musharraf's efforts could not bring a drastic change in society. Ironically, these reforms did not overcome the domestic violence in society. In contrast, legislative developments related to women offered a ray of hope to half the country's population. These reforms were the building blocks of women's empowerment in Pakistan. These reforms have proved that there is a long way ahead, but Pakistan is on the right track.

Political Arena: Challenges and Impacts

Under pressure from the international community and secular, left-wing elements in the country, Pervez Musharraf introduced many reforms through various ordinances and legislation, but traditionalists considered these reforms against the Islamic ethos and deemed them unsuitable in an Islamic country. Therefore, women remained the primary focus of fundamentalists who justified women's oppression in the name of Islam, and women paid a high price for their newfound

³ The Gazette of Pakistan, The Criminal Law Amendment, 2004,

⁴ The Gazette of Pakistan, Women Protection Act, 2006

freedoms and powers. Cultural taboos prevented women from participating in political activities. The political fate of women had not changed too much. The women, who were sitting in higher offices, including the cabinet and the National and Provincial Assemblies, faced tough times, criticism, and dismissal from their portfolios.⁵

In addition, Musharraf appointed certain liberal and conservative women to his cabinet, but they were never accepted by the various religious factions. Ms. Zubaida Jalal, from Baluchistan, the country's most traditional and underdeveloped province, was one of the prominent appointees. When she was appointed federal minister for education, she attempted to introduce modern curricula reforms into schools and madrasas (religious schools). Religious parties denounced her plans, saying that she was acting under pressure from the international community. Pressure from the religious forces led to her dismissal in 2007.⁶

Nilofar Bakhtiar, an outspoken liberal modern woman, served as federal minister for tourism in Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's cabinet before resigning in 2007 due to an unfortunate scandal. Bakhtiar worked hard to improve women's social status and was particularly concerned about issues such as health and education. In April 2007, she came under fire from religious groups in Islamabad, including the Mullahs of Lal Masjid (Red Mosque clerics). The clerics issued a fatwa (decree) against her, urging that she be fired from her government position after several newspapers published pictures of her hugging and kissing a male colleague in France after he had landed from a parachute jump. Several newspapers published her account of that particular event. The clerics accused her of committing an unlawful act and a major sin, but she responded that she was simply congratulating her colleague on their courage. The criticism was dismissed by Musharraf's government, but the woman's ministry was changed anyway to appease the clerics.⁷

Furthermore, Religious radicals also went so far as to attack female legislators. When some female politicians refused to embrace their ideology, they threatened female members of parliament physically. In 2007, extremists shot and killed Zill-e Huma, a Punjab provincial minister for social welfare. According to the murderer, he murdered the woman because she was not dressed properly (in a veil), and therefore had a negative effect on society. He pondered; he would continue his murderous spree against other female politicians if he were released. Musharraf's strong support for the US-led war on terrorism fueled extremism in Pakistan, and women were particularly vulnerable to it.⁸ Moreover, Musharraf's government introduced the "Women's Protection" bill in 2006. The bill permitted DNA testing and other scientific testing to be used in rape cases,⁹ which was not allowed under Zia's ordinance, which harmed women so much.¹⁰ The bill's passage caused uproar among hardline Islamist leaders and organizations. As expected, traditionalist and fundamentalist groups across Pakistan reacted angrily to legislation that benefited women, as they always do.¹¹

⁵ "Bill on Prevention of Violence Against Women," Daily Times, 8 September 2006

⁶ "We Won't Change School Curricula." Daily Times, 4 April

⁷ Sayed Irfan Raza, "Fatwa Against Nilofar Issued," Dawn, 9 April 2007, and "Embrace Costs Nilofar "Qazi Court" Decree, Daily Times, 9 April

⁸ "Zill-e-Huma murder case: Investigator's probing a 'serial killer's' links to extremist groups." See <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?>

⁹ "Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act." 2006,

¹⁰ R. Imran, "Legal Injustices: The Zina Hudood Ordinance of Pakistan and Its Implications for Women". *Journal of International Women's Studies*, (2005) 7 (2), 78-100.

¹¹ "Women in Pakistan" http://nazariapak.info/pak-women/women_in_pakistan.h

Social Aspects: Violence and Protection of Women

The Musharraf reforms and legislation related to women proved to be mere cosmetic changes in Pakistan's social structure. Domestic violence had remained the destiny of women, and it deteriorated the condition of society. General Musharraf did not take stern action on the issues of domestic violence and the protection of women. Therefore, there had been a rise in all types of violence against women, and middle-class women had no way to hide or escape from such crimes against them. Domestic violence and acid throwing were very common, but the criminal instigators who had varying degrees of political power or support very often went unpunished. Generally, they had been released soon after their arrests.¹²

The most well-known case involved an acid attack on Fakhra Yunus, a young woman. Yunus, a former prostitute, was the wife of Bilal Khar, the foreign minister's cousin, a former provincial assembly representative, and the son of the Punjab's governor. He reportedly poured acid on his wife in 2000, mutilating her face and upper parts of the body.¹³ Bilal was arrested but soon released. Fakhra, who was 22 at the time of the attack, committed suicide by jumping from her sixth-floor apartment in Italy, where she was undergoing treatment, in March 2012. Fakhra was last seen crying in front of her face mirror, according to a neighbor.¹⁴

Fakhra's case became widely known when she attracted the attention of Pakistani writer and activist Tehmina Durrani, author of *My Feudal Lord*,¹⁵ a harsh indictment of women's treatment in Pakistan's feudal society. Durrani helped Fakhra Yunis move to Italy, where she received many plastic surgeries and intensive counseling. Durrani wrote the following on the Pakistani Site the News Daily after Yunis' suicide:

*At the young age of 22, an acid attack left her only marginally alive; her horrific mutilation disfigured her so completely that she was now confronted by open disgust and contempt from everyone who set eyes on her in Pakistan. She also became a liability to her own family, for whom she was once a source of income. I have met many acid victims. Never have I seen one as completely disfigured as Fakhra. She had not just become faceless; her body had melted to the bone. Despite her stark and hopeless condition, the government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was not in the least God-fearing. She was provided nothing... but disdain... and trashed.*¹⁶

Durrani quotes an Italian professor who counseled, "Fakhra as saying, I tried to mend her physical scars, but was unable to heal her soul."¹⁷

Moreover, a leading example of violence and rape is the case of Dr. Shazia, the wife of Khalid, a pipeline engineer. In March 2005, Dr. Shazia was a ranking employee of Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) and was a physician at the company's Sui hospital while living alone in accommodations provided by the Defense Services Group (DSG). She had accepted the job at the hospital with the express understanding that she would also be offered a job by PPL at the same location.

Sometime during the night of January 2, 2005, Dr. Shazia was sleeping alone in her apartment when she was suddenly awakened by someone pulling her hair. She was then partially strangled

¹² Awais Jafri, "Violence against Women: 2,713 cases reported in 2012 so far," The Express Tribune, 3 November 2012

¹³ "Acid-Throwing and State," The Express Tribune, 16 December

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Tehmina Durrani, William Hoffer and Marilyn Hoffer, *My Feudal Lord*, (London; Corgi, 1995)

¹⁶ "Domestic Violence to be Criminal Offense," The Nation, 12 February 2012.

¹⁷ Ibid.

by a cord, beaten, pistol-whipped, and then repeatedly raped by an unknown masked intruder. It was later alleged that her attacker was a military officer. She was seriously injured during the attack, but she was eventually able to free herself and seek medical help at her hospital. Dr. Shazia then informed the staff at the heavily guarded facility and asked them to contact her husband, who was working in Libya at the time.¹⁸

It is alleged that instead of trying to reach her husband and tend to her wounds, officials at the facility drugged her with sedatives to make her unconscious for three days to keep her quiet, and that she was then transferred to a psychiatric hospital in Karachi. Her husband, when notified of his wife's injuries, rushed back to be with her, and with his support, she officially reported the crime to the police. But rather than investigating the crime, police and government officials placed her under house arrest in Karachi, and she was not allowed any visitors or access to doctors, lawyers, or any officials of any kind. In addition, the crime scene was badly compromised, and any evidence, including clothes that she had worn at the time of the crime, was tampered with or destroyed and made to disappear. Dr. Shazia and her husband were told to keep quiet and not discuss the case with anyone. Her husband's grandfather told him to divorce her because her rape had placed a strain on the family honor, but when he refused, the grandfather tried, unsuccessfully, to gather a mob to kill her. There were further disturbances, and even President Musharraf became engaged in the fray, stating that the accused officer was, in his opinion, not guilty.¹⁹ Eventually, Dr. Shazia and her husband left Pakistan for England to ensure their safety. She has become both a symbol and a spokesperson for the difficult and often violent challenges that women face in Pakistan.²⁰

The above-mentioned cases and the worst condition of women within the country show that there were no such effective steps taken by the government on the ground to control violence against women. The renowned Pakistan Women Lawyers Association (PAWLA) has conducted a lot of work to facilitate women against the basic violations of women's rights. The officials of the Organization said that they had received almost 1 new case every day during the Musharraf regime, regarding the violence against women.²¹ The majority of the victims came from poor family backgrounds. The main reason for the violence was the question of the credibility of their characters. After court judgments or issue settlements from arbitrary councils, the majority of the victims had returned to their homes, and a few weeks or months later, they had to face the violation again from their husbands or other male family members. The condition of the women was very pathetic and miserable, and there were no such efforts from the government to stop this kind of behavior.

A majority of the victims did not come to the courts to seek help because they were still unaware of their fundamental rights, given by the Constitution of Pakistan. According to the sources of the Pakistan Women Lawyers Association in 2004, 427 women came to their centers for legal help against domestic violence.²² The majority of the victims were beaten, mentally tortured, and harassed by their husbands through different tactics. The next year, 2005, was also a very pathetic year for women; 386 women filed their cases in the courts related to the violence against women

¹⁸ "Pakistani Women Turn to Once-taboo Divorce to Escape Abuse," Express Tribune, 9 January 2013.

¹⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/feb/21/pakistan.declanwalsh>

²⁰ Pakistani Women Turn to Once-taboo Divorce to Escape Abuse," Express Tribune, 9 January 2013.

²¹ Shahnaz Khan, *Zina, transnational feminism, and the moral regulation of Pakistani women*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011)

²² Ali, Asad, Mogren, and Krantz. "Intimate partner violence in urban Pakistan: prevalence, frequency, and risk factors." *International journal of women's health* 3 (2011): 105.

with the help of PAWLA. 137 out of 386 were physically tortured by the male members of their families. 79 victims had been beaten due to doubts of having illegitimate marital relations.²³ From 2006 to 2007, 336 cases were registered in the courts with the help of the Pakistan Women Lawyers Association. The cases and complaints filed by the PAWLA against women's rights violations were just like a drop of water in the sea; the truth is that thousands of the victims had not opened their mouths against the violations.

The Parliament's legislation for the protection of basic women's rights was not extended to the grass-root level of society. Only the privileged and the elite women were enjoying the fruits of this legislation. The women of the middle and poor classes were denied the enjoyment of their basic rights. Instead of ending the violations, like in the past, the cases and incidents against women were rapidly increasing, even in the last years of Musharraf's period. The atmosphere and attitude of a male-dominated society had become more vulnerable for women. From 2005 to 2007, there were 7,000 cases of rapes and murders of women reported from different parts of the country. The honor killings had increased alarmingly in the last two years of Pervez Musharraf's rule; 1019 women and girls had been killed in the name of so-called honor and Karo-Kari.²⁴ The uneducated and patriarchal society was not ready to accept the educated and independent women. A renowned Baloch Sardar and member of the Upper House of Pakistan, Israr Ullah Zehri, once said, "Don't call honor killings an insane and inhuman act; it belongs to our traditions."²⁵ He was saying these kinds of remarks while he was defending the honor killings of five innocent girls in Baluchistan. In this incident, 5 girls were burnt alive in an unknown remote village of Baluchistan. Israr Ullah Zehri's thinking and mindset reflect the attitude of rulers; ironically, he was a senator, a representative of the common man in the Parliament of Pakistan.²⁶

Outside of the parliament, the condition of women had not changed in the country. There were a lot of women's rights violations, rapes, gang rapes, acid throwing, burn cases, human trafficking, and Karo-Kari in the country.²⁷ It seems the legislation was intended only to please the international community and the left wing of the country. The condition of the common woman was still pathetic and vulnerable. The attitude and behavior of police and law enforcement agencies towards women were also very insane and inhuman. Many girls and women had been raped in police custody. During Musharraf's regime, the Sindh High Court ordered an investigation into a case in which two women were being raped in police custody. In 2002, Sindh Police broke into a house and arrested two women named Afroz and Husna for illegal detention. After that, the officials of the High Court had silently raided the police station and captured illegally detained Afroz and Husna with three children from police custody. The medical report revealed that the woman had been raped by someone in police detention.²⁸ This case was very alarming and intense. How could a common woman feel safe in society?

From 2002 to 2008, there were a large number of rape cases against girls and women. 1091 women were being gang-raped, and 3077 victims were raped by males. In these years, 1302 women had been burnt alive in the name of so-called honor and other factors. Forced prostitution is a very

²³ The Herald, July 2007, Karachi, pp.45-6

²⁴ Rashida Patel, *Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Pakistan*, (London; Oxford Press, 2010), 27

²⁵ Shahnaz Khan, *Zina, transnational feminism, and the moral regulation of Pakistani women*,

²⁶ Ibid, 29

²⁷ Rashida Patel, *Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Pakistan*, 31

²⁸ Corps Rapes "Women in Custody" Dawn 3, November 2006

insane crime against humanity, which is why many mafias were involved in human trafficking for prostitution. In Musharraf's Regime, 370 girls had been victims of this heinous crime.

One of the major and most fatal crimes against a woman is honor killing. The Pervez Musharraf government's major focus was on that issue. There was a lot of pressure on his government from the international community, the United Nations, and human rights organizations to end this fatal and insane custom in society. That's why he had made a lot of efforts to curb this custom from society through constitutional reforms. We can see his efforts on the floor of the Parliament and in the form of constitutional developments.²⁹ He did not give much attention to the implementation of this legislation in society. In his rule, from 2002 to 2008, approximately 4212 girls and women were murdered in the name of Karo-Kari and so-called honor. The protection of so-called honor in society posed a major threat to women's peaceful existence, but Pervez Musharraf was unable to eliminate it. Except for the above-mentioned details, many cases were never reported. Many times, the law enforcement agencies had refused to register the cases of honor killings and other violations of women's rights due to political and local pressures.³⁰ The country's and society's systems didn't truly empower women. The government's behavior in the country was not ideal; instead of passing laws like the Women Protection Act 2006.³¹ The state didn't take steps to implement it on the grassroots level. The condition of the country's rural and far-flung areas did not change. The fatal customs and traditions of villages and tribes remained unchanged because the government lacked the will to improve women's social status. We can say that the tenure of Pervez Musharraf was a symbol of the violation of women's basic fundamental rights. It was a reality that Pervez Musharraf had made great efforts to protect and empower women through constitutional reforms, but on the ground, the situation did not change.³²

The reforms were the first drop of rain, but not rain. The plight of women remained stagnant in society. The facts and figures vividly demonstrate the condition of women under the Musharraf regime.

Table A: *Cases of Violence against Women*

Women Abuse	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Grand Total
Gang Rape	140	219	226	247	259	1091
Rape	925	985	330	369	468	3077
Burn	240	280	310	180	192	1302
Hudood Cases	NC	NC	97	205	144	446
Human Trafficking	28	84	67	72	119	370
Karo Kari	803	930	870	817	792	4212
Grand Total	2136	2598	1900	1890	1974	10498

Source: *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Pakistan*

²⁹ Rashida Patel, *Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Pakistan*, 40-2

³⁰ Amnesty International. *Pakistan: Insufficient protection of women*. Karachi: Amnesty International, 2002.

³¹ Fatima Sadiqi and Moha Ennaji. "The feminization of public space: Women's activism, the family law, and social change in Morocco." *Journal of Middle East women's studies* 2, no. 2 (2006): 89

³² Ibid, 45

So, Table A shows that the women remained in grave danger and did not reap the benefits of Musharraf's legislation, introduced under mounting international pressure to legitimize his rule. Therefore, women's empowerment proved to be an illusion in his regime.

Economic Aspects

General Musharraf enhanced the status of women in society by granting them adequate rights in the social and economic spheres, as well as in politics. He initiated this process by giving them a 10% quota for government jobs.³³ Furthermore, the economic governance had come under the tutelage of a woman, who became the first woman governor of the State Bank of Pakistan. Further, two women also became Major Generals in the army, and for the first time in the history of Pakistan, two women judges were appointed in the Sindh High Court. In addition to granting rights in the industrial and business sector, Musharraf's government launched the first Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Pakistan.³⁴

Consequently, Pervez Musharraf's era of governance brought many changes to the laws and regulations governing women's rights and women's empowerment in the country. The effects and influence of those amendments and decisions could be seen through the available statistical evidence of Musharraf's regime.

Table -B

Years	Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (national estimate)	School enrollment, primary, female (% gross)
2001	16.24447394	60.20979
2002	16.20000076	60.99193
2003	17	65.50591
2004	18	70.11277
2005	19.46383402	76.26907
2006	21	74.75929
2007	21.29999924	82.59632
2008	21.79999924	84.03872

Source: World Bank, 2009, <https://www.worldbank.org>.

Table B shows data on the female population (as a percentage of the total population), the female labor force participation rate, and the percentage of female school enrollment in the country. The data shows the noteworthy improvement in female labor force participation and female school enrolment from 2001 to 2008. Such statistics demonstrate the success of policy decisions taken during Musharraf's regime to empower women in Pakistan. A significantly increased female school enrolment rate shows that almost 84% of the female population was enrolled in schools, indicating the availability and easy access to education for females in the country. Almost 22% of

³³ Suwaibah Qadri, Sidrah Gilani, and Paras Khurram. "An Analysis of Women Empowerment in Pakistan with Reference to Musharraf's Regime." *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies* 17, no. 1 (2018): 299-316.

³⁴ Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*, (London; Free Press, 2006), 316

female labor force participation was clear evidence of the increasing empowerment of women in the country and showed how the policies regarding women's emancipation during Musharraf's regime had played an influential role in the increased share of women in the country's growth and development.³⁵

Table-C

Years	2000	2005
Employment in Agriculture, female (%)	72.90000153	67.30000305
Employment in Industry, female (%)	9	15
Employment in Services, female (%)	18.10000038	17.60000038

Source: World Bank 2006, <https://www.worldbank.org>.

Moreover, as with the increasing wave of women's empowerment in the country since Musharraf's era of governance, a huge improvement in many social and economic indicators (related to women) can be analyzed through the statistics. The female employment-to-population ratio had increased impressively from only 7% in 2000 to almost 15% in 2005. The same effects can be seen in Table B by analyzing the percentage of female employment in three main sectors of the economy, i.e., agriculture, industry, and services.³⁶

Women in Extremism Hit Areas: NWFP and Tribal Areas

General Musharraf introduced an unprecedented level of legislation for the empowerment of women, but these reforms did not alter the fate of women living in the NWFP and Tribal areas. These reforms did not break the cultural shackles of these extremist-hit areas. The socio-political status of women was very low.³⁷ They were living in a very pathetic and vulnerable environment, dominated by a traditional patriarchal attitude. Due to the activities of different terrorist organizations and militant groups, no authentic sources or information are available to highlight the crimes against the fundamental rights of women. Further, due to the terrain and the uncertain security situation, it was difficult for government institutions and various NGOs to conduct research on these issues. The majority of the criminals in cases related to women remained unpunished due to a lack of government writ in the Tribal Areas and different parts of KPK.³⁸ The cases of honor crimes, religious extremism, and sexual harassment were at their peak. Common women in KPK and Fata were not in a position to go to the police station for legal help. That's why thousands of cases were neither reported on the media nor registered in any police station. The situation of federally administered Tribal Areas was very vulnerable.³⁹ Musharraf's regime was unable to take any step against the culprits. The patriarchal customs and traditions of Pashtun

³⁵ Suwaibah Qadri,,Sidrah Gilani, and Paras Khurram. "An Analysis of Women Empowerment in Pakistan with Reference to Musharraf's Regime."

³⁶ A. R. Chaudhary, Chani, M. I., & Pervaiz, Z. (2012). An Analysis of Different Approaches to Women Empowerment: A Case Study of Pakistan2. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 16 (7), 971-980.

³⁷ Moonis Ahmar, "9/11 and the Changing Paradigm of Conflict Resolution." *IPRI Journal* 111 (2003): 4.

³⁸ John Horgan, *The psychology of terrorism*, (London:Routledge, 2004)

³⁹ Maliha Gull Tarar, Sarah Safdar, and Syeda Mahnaz Hassan. "Violence against Women in Pakistan: Prevalence, Legislation, Interventions & Realities." *Pakistan Journal of Criminology* 9, no. 3 (2017): 66.

culture were very harsh towards women. The reforms introduced by President Pervez Musharraf through various ordinances and legislation were not effectively implemented nationwide, especially in KPK and the Tribal Areas.

The cases of violence against women have increased in great numbers.⁴⁰ There were too many cases of domestic violence, honor killings, sexual abuse, and harassment in the workplace. The statistical data of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan for the year 2008 shows that the policies of Pervez Musharraf did not work on the grounds. The very insane act of honor killings was at its peak. Many innocent girls had been slaughtered in the name of so-called honor in KPK and Fata. In 2008, 172 girls and women were killed by their spouses, brothers, and other close male relatives. Around 108 females were physically tortured on the basis of extramarital relations and illegal affairs with strangers.⁴¹ Only a doubt and single talk of outsider about the character of victim was enough to murder her for the sake of to protect the so-called dignity of the family.

Despite honor killings, there were too many other crimes against women that had increased alarmingly in Pashtun society. In 2008, 51 girls had been raped in different parts of KPK and Fata. Due to poverty and limited financial resources, many women are engaged in various jobs and domestic work to meet basic needs. Instead of encouraging women in the workplace, the atmosphere and attitudes of the people were not conducive to female workers. They were facing many problems and difficulties at work. The male supervisors and owners of the offices harassed female staff for their unethical desires.⁴² In 2008, the police reported 52 cases of sexual harassment from different female workers. The above-mentioned cases were reported in the police and many other human rights forums; unfortunately, due to the rigid and complex Pashtun culture, thousands of cases against basic fundamental rights of women could not be reported in public. The women of KPK and the Tribal Areas were not allowed to go out of their homes. The women of the Tribal Areas and KPK are just considering serving their children and husbands.⁴³ On 7 September 2007, two girls named Meena and Maliki were kidnapped from Banu, a renowned city of the NWFP. After two days of their abduction, their dead bodies were found in the surroundings of the city with a note that both of the women were involved in an extramarital relationship with someone. So that's why it was their duty to purify our culture from these bad evils. This kind of attitude was prevalent in society, and the government was unable to enforce laws protecting women in the region.⁴⁴ Another insane tradition of the region was the selling and purchasing of girls in the name of marriage. Many mafias are involved in that insane tradition; in many cases, these girls had been used for prostitution in various parts of the country. In 2007, the Swat police had raided a brothel located somewhere in Swat Valley, where they found a girl of 13 years old and seven other women from the brothel. After the investigation, they revealed that the girl was sold to the owner of a brothel for 40,000 rupees. These types of cases show that the status of women was vulnerable, and the government failed to protect women from the culprits. So, Musharraf's reforms remained vague regarding the social uplift of women in the NWFP and the Tribal areas.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban revival: violence and extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier*, (London: Yale University Press, 2014)

⁴¹ Mariz Tadros, "Violence and Discrimination against Women of Religious Minority Backgrounds in Pakistan." (2020).

⁴² Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban revival: violence and extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier*

⁴³ Nitya Ramakrishnan, *in custody: Law, impunity and prisoner abuse in South Asia*. SAGE Publications India, 2013.

⁴⁴ Investigators piece together portrait of Pakistani woman in shooting massacre, CNBC, 5 December, 2015

⁴⁵ Anthony DeStefano, *the war on human trafficking: US policy assessed*. Rutgers University Press, 2007.

In addition, Musharraf also focused on the political empowerment of women in Pakistan. For this purpose, he gave a special quota to women in the Parliament of Pakistan. However, common women in the region were not allowed to participate in elections due to the concept of the so-called dignity of the four walls of the house. In the 2008 elections, women were not even allowed to vote in various parts of the NWFP and the Tribal Areas. Thousands of women were prevented from voting. There were too many reasons behind this attitude, like family pressure, old cultural traditions, and threats of militant attacks. On the day of the election, the militants attacked a female polling station in Peshawar. They planted a bomb in a motorcycle. After the huge blast, at least one child and 11 females were seriously injured.⁴⁶ These kinds of attacks were also threatening women and their families, which is why the female turnout was very low in the NWFP and Fata. In many parts of the region, the secret deals were also signed to prevent women from participating in the election process. A secret deal was signed in Lower Dir, a famous area of the NWFP, among various political and religious parties. They had decided not to allow their women to vote. The rigid, traditional behavior of these elements had prevented women from participating in the election. Due to various limitations on female voters, at 478 polling stations, they were unable to cast a single vote.⁴⁷ Pervez Musharraf's political reforms could not alter the traditional fate of tribal and NWFP women. Only the women of the elite class were enjoying the fruits of political reforms, while common women were not even allowed to cast their vote on Election Day.

Despite social and political exploitation, the educational atmosphere of the region was not suitable for girls due to some serious security threats from Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Its leadership thought that the modern and westernized curriculum of education was a great threat to their culture and Islamic values. So, they did not allow women and girls to go to educational institutions. They had targeted hundreds of schools and destroyed a number of girls' schools in the region. They waged a war against female education in the Tribal Areas and the NWFP. They frequently targeted female schools and colleges.⁴⁸ In 2008 and 2009, almost 1200 female students and 800 teachers were killed in the fatal attacks of terrorist organizations.⁴⁹ That's why girls couldn't attend educational institutions. Almost every girl's school had been destroyed by the Taliban in Swat, Malakand, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. In Fata, 141 girls' schools were destroyed by the Taliban to demolish the educational setup of female education. Only in the Swat Valley, 120 female educational institutions were demolished, and 93 were partially damaged by the terrorists, and the rest of the NWFP had witnessed the destruction of 121 girls' schools and colleges in different parts of the region.⁵⁰ The local and ignorant inhabitants of the region were exploited by the Taliban to stop their daughters from attending schools and other institutions of government and NGO's. They manipulated them by various molded interpretations of Islamic beliefs. Henceforth, Musharraf's reforms became an elusive dream for the people of the NWFP and the Tribal areas.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ian Douglas Wilson, "Southeast Asian Studies: Contents_Vol4-3."

⁴⁷ Hilary Synnott, *Transforming Pakistan: Ways out of instability*. Vol. 406., (London: Routledge, 2009)

⁴⁸ Asma Shabab, *Marketing the beard: The use of propaganda in the attempt to Talibanize Pakistan*. University of Southern California, 2012.

⁴⁹ Farida Shaheed, and Gender Equality. "Gender, religion and the quest for justice in Pakistan." *Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung* (2009).

⁵⁰ Brendan O'Malley, *Education under attack-2010*. Unesco, 2010.

⁵¹ Farida Shaheed, and Gender Equality. "Gender, religion and the quest for justice in Pakistan." *Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung* (2009).

Conclusion

To sum up, General Musharraf undoubtedly took various initiatives to empower women in Pakistan, but he could not implement his plan in the true letter and spirit. There were many obstacles that blocked the path to reforms. Likewise, Musharraf did not pay special attention to education that could bring a drastic change in society. On the other hand, his policies were short-lived and served only to legitimize his rule. As a result of Pervez Musharraf's reforms, the economic and educational conditions of women improved in areas outside the NWFP and Fata. Many women had been involved in different affairs of the state, no doubt, with less power and influence. The number of women in the National and Provincial Assemblies had increased. Despite the political uplift of women, social behavior had not changed. There was too much violence against women, which still exists in society. The major challenge of the regime was to address the problems of FATA and NWFP. The reforms of the regime could not alter the lives of women in the Tribal Areas and NWFP. Despite all criticism, Musharraf's regime proved to be a turning point in the contest of women's empowerment in the country. It is further argued that a comprehensive understanding of the mindset and cultural taboos is required to fully assess the true impacts of legislation related to women.

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