

THE WORKING OF THE CABINET SYSTEM IN PUNJAB UNDER SHAHBAZ SHARIF, 12008-2013, AN OVERVIEW

Introduction

Much has been written on the national history of Pakistan, but the regional history is overlooked and this paper attempts to explore the provincial history of the Punjab. This study deals with the formation and the working of the Cabinet System in the province of the Punjab under the chief minister ship of Mian Shahbaz Sharif in 2008-2012). On 8 June 2008, Shahbaz Sharif became Chief Minister of Punjab and remained in office till the new general elections in 2013. The history of the cabinet system during the period under study was divided into two phases. First period is a period of a coalition government when Shahbaz Sharif formed the government with the help of Pakistan people's Party at the Centre and also in the province, which remained in office from on 8 June 2008 to 25 February 2011. The second period he headed the single party cabinet on 25 February 2011 to 2013. The institution of the Cabinet plays very important role in parliamentary form of Government. During the period under study, it proved as instrumental in bringing remarkable reforms in the province, which enabled the Muslim League party to win an election not only in the province of the Punjab but also at the National level. The word good governance was used to describe the working of the province of the Punjab when the governments in other provinces failed to deliver as successfully as the government of the Punjab. The history of the formation and working of the institution of the Cabinet in the Punjab during 2008-2013 becomes an interesting case study. Therefore it is important to understand how the institution of the Cabinet worked and how and why it proved its worth in the province of the Punjab and what was the role of the Chief Minister in making it a cohesive body and what was its relationship with the provincial legislature, judiciary, executive and other important organs of the province and the state. Studies already have been made to analyze the institution of Cabinet in Pakistan but historians have not touched the regional history of the institution of the Cabinet and therefore this study will focus the regional history of Pakistan and thus fill the important gap in the historical literature of Pakistan.

The Cabinet is an important institution to run the country. So cabinet means an institution to explain a series of political practices, conventions and to resolve all controversial issues. Cabinet plays an important role in setting strategic guidelines for the government policies. In different countries, this institution works in different perspectives. In the British Parliamentary system it is the directing body for national policies. Here parliament plays vital role and the policies would be approved by the parliament. In America, a Presidential form of government is enforced, where cabinet secretaries are being selected by the president. Here cabinet works as to create electoral support, to make policies, to

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guide public and to manage programmes. Different kinds of institutions work in the country; here cabinet is very important institution to make decisions, settle matters, deliberate issues and to manage programmes for country safety and for public support. The purpose of this study is to put a light on the working of the cabinet in Pakistan, background of the cabinet system from 1947 to 1999, the real status of cabinet in different political regimes, weakness of this institution through military take over and authoritative natures of personalities influencing the institution of cabinet. The main focus of my study would be the cabinet of Shahbaz Sharif, how he took over charge after a long series of ups and downs and how cabinet worked under his chief ministership. He introduced reforms in different sectors in spite of worsening condition of security inside and outside the country.

Pakistan came into being through a democratic process and parliamentary form of government was introduced in the country. Followers could no longer sustain this set up successfully and few years after its establishment in October 1958, president dissolved Assembly. After this, prolonged military take over hit the norms of democracy time and again. A decade long Martial Law of General Ayub Khan severely declined the roots of democracy. Bhutto tried to reestablish the original status of cabinet by introducing parliamentary democracy and the 1973 constitution but the imposition of Martial Law in 1977 damaged the plan which was a severe hit to the decline of cabinet system in Pakistan. President Zia-ul-Haq dissolved the Assembly of Prime minister, Muhammad Khan Junejo in 1988 which was again severe blow to hit this democratic institution. Cabinet system in Pakistan was somehow better during 1988 to 1996 despite dissolution of the assembly in 1990, 1993 and in 1996.

History of Pakistan is not lucky to see the institution of cabinet illuminated with democratic command, continuous series of setting strategic guidelines for government policies and to set a series of political practices and conventions. So once again in October 1999 military coup weakened the democratic process in Pakistan. So this study will also put a light on the civilian takeover of Nawaz Sharif in 1997 and post 1997 period after 1999 military coup. Shahbaz Sharif the Chief Minister of Pakistan took part in February 2008 elections. Shahbaz Sharif after 1999 military coup was banned to take part in political activities but struggle and effort helped him to put steps in politics once again after he with his brother Nawaz Sharif was sent to Saudi Arabia. Shahbaz Sharif the son of Mian Muhammad Sharif became the Chief Minister of Punjab who is considered a strict and commanding administrator.

Though he made deal to remain in exile for ten years but how he came back to Pakistan and even became the Chief Minister of Punjab. We will also deal his one man show of a hero. During 2008 elections PML-N got victory with 59.2% share in votes. In Punjab, they got 2/3 majority so chief ministership of Punjab was kept to them. Institution of cabinet did not enjoy its democratic right during chief ministership of Shahbaz Sharif. It is said that cabinet presented one man show with just chief minister all in all and Punjab Assembly presented one man show with RanaSanaullah. Shahbaz, s personalized and whimsical political arrangements alienated many of his friends. He depended mostly on small group of close associates from Punjab and especially from Lahore. So many even trusted

allies shifted their politics from Lahore to Islamabad and it put disproportionate clout in domestic political condition we will also see how he most of the time ignored cabinet members.

Shahbaz Sharif came back to Pakistan after High Court decision that he is free to return to Pakistan. So on 11 May 2004, he attempted to come back to Pakistan but his plane was returned after some hours. He was deported to Saudi Arabia once again. Then during the month of August in 2007 Supreme Court announced its verdict in which decision came out that he can return to Pakistan. But election commission did not allow them to participate in 2008 elections and even both brothers did not file petition against this. Party contested elections and they were declared victorious in 2008 elections at Punjab.

Dost Muhammad Khosa was made as interim Chief Minister of Punjab till Shahbaz Sharif wins in by elections. Though cabinet was established with the help of coalition partner PPP but more than 12 ministries were to him. This study will also deal with detail the role of the cabinet of Shahbaz Sharif from February 2008 to December 2012 in which many ups and downs came in Punjab politics. Under Shahbaz Sharif we will see how many cabinet meetings were held. Dost Muhammad Khosa held 2 cabinet meetings. The number of total ministers during his chief ministership was 15 and it was a coalition cabinet.

Second part of the cabinet was comprised from June 2008 to February 2009, it was also coalition cabinet, 16 cabinet meetings were held and there were 15 ministers under him. Governor Rule was imposed on 25 February 2009 and this Governor Rule was lifted on March 30, 2009. 3rd cabinet of Shahbaz Sharif started from April 2009 to March 2012, when coalition partner (PPP) separated from coalition and since this date Muslim League was single party in Punjab. Though this was a civilian government but it can be said that Role of Shahbaz Sharif as the head of cabinet was from military dictator to civilian dictatorship. On the collapse of coalition cabinet under Shahbaz Sharif ministers were Haji Muhammad Ishaq, Mrs. Neelam Jabbar Chaudhry, Mr. Tanveer Ashraf Khan Sohna, Haji Ehsanuddin Qureshi, Malik Nadeem Kamran, Mr. Ahmed Ali Aulakh, Malik Muhammad Iqbal Channar, Mr. Kamran Michael, Rana Sanaullah Khan, Mian Muftaba Shuja-ur-Rehman, Mr. Tanveer-ul-Islam, Mr. Farooq Yousaf Ghurki. After the collapse of coalition in 2011, there were just seven ministers of PML-N in Punjab Cabinet under the Chief Ministership of Shahbaz Sharif. More than 12 ministries were to Shahbaz Sharif himself.

The Working of the cabinet is much important to deal as a proportional time of cabinet was spent in receiving reports, making decision, legislating bills and deliberating issues. Cabinet also helps in resolving controversial issues it is the sensitive body which depends mostly upon particular individuals, personalities and also with its good relations with different institutions. Side by side public opinion is given special consideration. Through this study we will see how cabinet of Shahbaz Sharif dealt with the opinion of cabinet members and with public opinion.

There were about 40 departments under the cabinet of Shahbaz Sharif from 2008-2013. Till 2012, 32 cabinet meetings were held under chief ministership of Shahbaz Sharif. Selected members were important to settle issues rather than full cabinet, in other words, he himself was enough to decide matters.

The study will discuss the causes for the downfall of cabinet especially with reference to Shabaz Sharif. He is alleged to rule as Mughal Emperor, as caliph or Ameer-ul-Momineen rather than civilian head of cabinet. It is analyzed that when regional-identities gain more strength, then the concentration of people remains on developing national political parties. Then long military takeover had caused a lot to weaken the institution of cabinet. It is analyzed that he works more and consults less even we will see that his work and hard struggle is reflected in his demand from Transparency International in which he demanded more and more to check his fairness and they declared him fair in manage schemes.

From 2008 to 2013 total cabinet meetings were held about 42, during 2008, 4 acts in, during 2011, 20 acts were passed. The number of Acts passed during 2012 was 60. During Chief Ministership from 2008-13 134 Acts were passed. 173 resolutions were passed during this era which is a record. But ministers were powerless except Rana Sanaullah. So analysts say this period one man show of a Hero. He spent very few time as head of Punjab Assembly. Collectively he attended 16 sessions to Punjab Assembly and Rana Sanaullah was prominent in this House. After the collapse of coalition, he was the head of single cabinet. As Punjab is the most populated and developed province than other provinces of the country but country was facing a lot of challenges and difficulties so it was not easy to run the affairs of the country smoothly. We will see in this study that how he in spite of all challenges introduced a number of reforms especially in education, health sector and especially for women and minorities, he introduced many reforms. The worsening condition of security inside and outside the country put a question mark on the competence of the state but Shahbaz Sharif tried to better the situation of the province by introducing a number of reforms in almost all fields of life. Punjab is said the heartland of Pakistan so the development of Punjab means the development of Pakistan.

Shahbaz Sharif told that solid measures will be taken in education and health sector. Danish School system was started from Southern Punjab, and then 4286 computer labs were established till 2010. 40,000 educators were recruited on special quota. Then laptop scheme was started from the province of Bahawalpur to talented students. Health was also important sector as Dengue fever was a great challenge to Punjab government which Shahbaz Sharif beautifully overcame. Many contract doctors were regularized. During 2008 health budget was doubled. In Southern Punjab, the development of Neurosurgery was upgraded, then Punjab blood transfusion authority was also established, clear water and water coolers were also installed. The study will deal with reforms for women especially women empowerment package 2012 was a great step to struggle to make Punjab a prosperous province. Side by side all these reforms a critical study is also being presented which points out weaknesses in these reforms as it means a lot more was needed to make Punjab a prosperous province. As far as women sector was concerned during 2012, 3153 cases of violence were reported against women. It is said that a heavy amount was spent on Metro bus service which was strongly criticized by opposition that whole attention of Shahbaz Sharif was on Lahore. In Health sector the price of thread doubled to 500 times which was a great burden on patients. He is alleged that he worked more and consulted less. He considered himself institution in himself.

The hypothesis of the study is that period under studies marks the consolidation of the institution of the Cabinet in the province of the Punjab which guaranteed the unprecedented reforms in the province. Whether it was coalition Government or the single cabinet the province grew economically mainly because the cabinet remained vigilant and proactive under the dynamic leadership of Shahbaz Sharif. This study will try to find answer to the followings What was the origin and development of the Cabinet System in Pakistan, how it was formed in the province of the Punjab (2008-2013)? What was the experience of the coalition Government in the Punjab? What was the working of the Single Cabinet? What were the implications of the Cabinet System in the Province?

This study was conducted to discuss the institution of Cabinet and in this regard this study focused on the formation and working of the Cabinet system in the province of the Punjab under the Chief Ministership of Shahbaz Sharif during 2012-2013. On 8 June 2008, Shahbaz Sharif became chief minister of Punjab and remained in office till the new general elections in 2013. The history of the cabinet system during the period under study was divided into two phases. First period is a period of a coalition government when Shahbaz Sharif formed the government with the help of Pakistan people's Party in the province which worked from on 8 June 2008 to 25 February 2011. The second period he headed the single party cabinet lasted from 25 February 2011 to 2013. The study has proved that whether it was the coalition government or the single cabinet the institution of the cabinet during this period became stronger as compare to the past. In fact, the province of the Punjab flourished and developed rapidly because of strong role of the institution of the cabinet. It also helped strengthen the democratic culture in the country.

On 18 February 2008 general elections were held. PML – N had a clean sweep in the province of the Punjab. Shahbaz Sharif was chosen as parliamentary president of PML-N by the central working committee of PML-N. MLN established a coalition government in Punjab between PML-N and PPP. Initially Dost Muhammad Khosa became chief minister of Punjab in April 2008. Raja Riaz of PPP became senior provincial minister of the coalition government of Punjab. On 1st March 2008, Shahbaz Sharif was acquitted in Sabzazar case by an anti terrorist judge, Shabbir Hussain Chatta. It was a major hurdle in acceptance of his nomination papers for elections. Shahbaz Sharif, after winning the seat in the Punjab Assembly, became chief minister of Punjab on 8 June 2008. Dost Muhammad Khosa resigned to allow Shahbaz Sharif to become Chief Minister. Shahbaz decided to carry out with the coalition government earlier formed by Dost Muhammad Khan.

Shahbaz Sharif was chosen as the chief Minister of Punjab and included ministries from amongst coalition partners. The Governor of the Punjab, a nominee of the centre was the PPP leader but he was the constitutional head with small powers in his hand to exercise. Whereas the chief Minister of the Province whether it was Dost Muhammad Khosa or Shahbaz Sharif, was chief executive of the province of the Punjab who had enormous powers. At top of it, after the introduction of the 18th Amendment the provincial powers *vis vis* the centre increased immensely. Whether it was during the coalition government or the single party Cabinet Shahbaz Sharif had immense powers to exercise, who could

select, nominate, dismiss his ministers. Constitutionally the Cabinet is accountable to the Legislative Assembly but hardly there was any occasion when the Cabinet seemed accountable to it. But it remained subordinate, submissive and subdued to the Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif who did not repose complete trust on his own cabinet ministers and therefore, all the matters were decided by him. At Punjab level, the cabinet members were looking powerless. Sharif's personalized and whimsical political arrangement alienated many allies. He depended mostly on a small group of close associates from central Punjab and in central Punjab, they depended leaders from Lahore. The Cabinet members and even coalition partners were often ignored. Again the norms of democracy were being oppressed.

During the coalition Cabinet, there were a number of ministers including 16 from PML-N, 7 from PPP, one minister from the minority. There were about 40 departments under the cabinet of shahbaz Sharif from 2008-13. There were 7 advisors to the chief minister for his help. Under Dost Muhammad Khosa total cabinet meetings were held i.e. 2. From 8 June 2008 to 25 February 2009, the number of cabinet meetings was 16, from 1 April 2009 to 20 March 2012, the number of cabinet meetings were 12. Now during this period of chief ministership of shahbaz Sharif, their own family members and selected members were more important to decide issues rather than to take into confidence to cabinet and people. There are certain things which weaken the institution of cabinet and cause the strength of personalities. As if regional identities gain strength in the electoral politics, then focus on people remains on developing personalities instead of developing national political parties. Another reason is for the weak of institution of cabinet that when there is the military cabinet instead of civilian cabinet, then also the institution of cabinet suffers a lot.

The coalition government which lasted for three years, 2008-2011, only in the province of the Punjab was because of special phenomenon resulted from the Benazir Bhutto's martyrdom and Asif Ali Zardari's reconciliation policy. But soon rift and disagreement between the PMLN and PPP ministers in the Legislative Assembly proceedings and in the Cabinet meetings began to appear. On the Judges Issues, conflicts turned acute, and hot words were exchanged between PPP and PML-N ministers. On 25 February 2009, a three judge's bench of supreme court declared Shahbaz Sharif ineligible to hold any public office. President imposed governor rule in Punjab, however the situation instead of going better went on worsening day by day. So the president on verdict of Supreme Court suspended verdict of ineligibility of Shahbaz Sharif and president lifted governor rule on 30 March 2009, and chief ministership of Shahbaz Sharif were revived. Eventually, on 25 February 2011, the coalition between PML – N and PPP collapsed in Punjab.

Now Shahbaz Sharif was the head of single cabinet. Punjab government passed six women related bills. 7 bills were passed in the opposition's absence. A number of splendid projects were started as for the children of poor people Danish schools were established and this start was made from Rahim yar Khan. In every Danish school 550 children get educated with the cost of ten thousand on every child. Laptops were distributed in two steps, in every step 1, 25,000 laptops were distributed to talented students and the cost came 8 billion rupees. 4,286 schools were awarded computer labs with 5 billion rupees cost. CM started an Ashiani

housing scheme under Punjab land development committee with collective cost of 15 billion rupees, the Yellow Cab scheme was started for young people and 20,000 youngsters were given these yellow cab cases and for 31% population of south Punjab, 40% quota was allotted in these yellow cabs. With the help of Turk company, splendid metro bus service was started but the opposition says this as a Gangla bus in which a heavy amount of 70 billion rupees were wasted. They say that this metro bus service has faded the beauty of Lahore. So this allegation on Shahbaz Sharif that his main focus is Lahore was strongly criticized by the opposition. According to women empowerment package, in all official institutions, companies, task force, and women are given share of 33 percent. In official jobs also 15% quota has been reserved for female workers but still these steps are insufficient to remove the grievances of the women. Still according to statistical data, Punjab was at the top in cases of violence against women. This survey was made at the end of 2011, in Punjab total cases of violence against women were 6,188 Sindh had 1316 cases of violence, KPK 305 and Balochistan had 198 total cases of violence against women. So Punjab needed much more to improve the condition of women. South Punjab had the highest strength in these violent cases against women. If we have a look on the health sector, here too in the history of the health field, for the first time, health was allocated 48 arb 80 crore rupees which is a record, Punjab government announced free medicines in hospitals and Rs. 18 billion rupees were kept reserved for this purpose. 4 new medical colleges at Sahiwal, Gujranwala, Sialkot and D.G Khan were approved, Punjab also established a cardiac center at Quetta with cost of Rs. 2 arb rupees but many things were still deplorable in hospitals especially for poor people.

Critics believe that despite all above-mentioned reforms there were 6 teaching hospitals but only one had burn unit. Hospitals had 57,700 nurses on duty but they complain of more duty and less income. The only one tetanus ward of Meu hospital was still incomplete after 5 years. In 2012, Punjab sports festival was held which was the biggest sports event in the history of Pakistan. Many mega events were included in these festivals. Most important thing was the Guinness World Record team was invited and Pakistani sportsmen were successful in making these events to their name. 6,000 players presented the best performance in this festival.

Still the allegation on PML-N could not be eliminated as Punjab based party, one man show, and concentration of work on Lahore, intolerant disposition of the Punjab head towards individuals, cabinet and political groups. There were about 40 departments under the cabinet of Shahbaz Sharif from 2008-13. Till 2012, 32 cabinet meetings were held under the chief ministership of Shahbaz Sharif. Selected members were important to settle issues rather than full cabinet, in other words, he himself was enough to decide matters. Shahbaz Sharif assumed enormous powers as the executive head of the Cabinet from 2008 to 2013 and as a result mostly ministers were powerless. Therefore analysts brand this period as one man show. Shahbaz Sharif spent very few times as head of the Punjab Assembly. Collectively he attended 16 sessions to Punjab Assembly and Rana Sanaullah was prominent in this House. After the collapse of coalition, he was the head of single cabinet and became more powerful. As Punjab is the most populated and developed province than other provinces of the country but country

was facing a lot of challenges and difficulties so it was not easy to run the affairs of the country smoothly.

This study has proved that in spite of all challenges Shahbaz Sharif introduced a number of reforms especially in education, health sector and especially for women and minorities, he introduced many reforms. The performance of cabinet on number of reforms remained exemplary. Shahbaz Sharif Cabinet took solid measures in education and health sector. Danish School system was started from Southern Punjab, then 4286 computer labs were established till 2010. 40,000 educators were recruited on special quota. Then laptop scheme was started from the province of Bhawalpur to talented students. Health was also an important sector as Dengue fever was a great challenge to Punjab government which Shahbaz Sharif beautifully overcame. Many contract doctors were regularized. During 2008 health budget was doubled. In Southern Punjab, the development of Neurosurgery was upgraded, then Punjab blood transfusion authority was also established, clear water and water coolers were also installed. Important reforms for women empowerment especially the Women empowerment package 2012 was a great step. The worsening condition of security inside and outside the country put a question mark on the competence of the state but Shahbaz Sharif tried to better the situation of the province by introducing a number of reforms in almost all fields of life. These reforms in the province of the Punjab helped the PMLN to claim that since the Punjab is the heartland of Pakistan so the development of Punjab means the development of Pakistan.

Shahbaz Sharif was alleged by PPP representative when governor rule was imposed that he had given 13 ministries to PPP and 25 ministries were to PML-N, principally, there must be ratio of 40:60 in case of coalition government. The coalition partners had a long list of complaints against the Shahbaz Sharif's attitude towards his cabinet members. They alleged that Shahbaz Sharif was holding more than 15 ministries and considered himself a cabinet to decide matters. They complained that the Aashiana housing scheme, Sastirotti, Yellow Cab scheme, Metro Bus Service, Laptop Schemes was started without consultation with his cabinet ministers. At the top of it, the cabinet members complained intolerant disposition of the cabinet head toward individuals and political groups. Shahbaz too, formed a few political favourites, group and ignored the respective opinions of the most of the members and cabinet ministers. After long military rules, people had become conscious of their right of democracy. Authoritarian military regime and authoritarian monarchical form of government is not always being repressed but still allows its cabinet members very limited dissent about decisions. Shahbaz Sharif though held 43 meetings of the cabinet but he did not consider necessary to these cabinet meetings to approve or disapprove his projects, he just showed about his projects if considered necessary otherwise he himself was institution in himself to approve or disapprove projects. He attended just 16 Assembly meetings, the Assembly is the place where problems of people are discussed and government.

In short, The working of the cabinet is much important to deal as a proportional time of the cabinet was spent in receiving reports, making decision, legislating bills and deliberating issues. The Cabinet also helps in resolving controversial issues it is the sensitive body which depends mostly upon particular

individuals, personalities and also with its good relations with different institutions. Side by side public opinion is given special consideration. Shahbaz Sharif introduced numerous schemes such as the SastiRotti, Ashiana, yellow cab schemes. These were so fruitful and successful. In his laptop, metro bus service, solar lamps schemes and Danish schools, Shahbaz Sharif invited transparency international organizations to check his fairness and he would be punished if there will be a penny corruption. Even transparency international declared him fair. In fact, people will forget neither Shahbaz Sharif nor his fairness and transparency. There were total 42 cabinet meetings held during 2008-2013 in which 134 Acts were passed whereas in 5 years tenure the Punjab Assembly passed 173 resolutions. In the history of Pakistan, this was a new record in the cabinet history of the Punjab. Shahbaz Sharif beautifully completed five years in Punjab as chief minister and as the head of the cabinet. Officials say that his morning started at 6 O' clock and all his works were completed with the help of junior bureaucracy. Outcome of his labour was that he made Punjab a peaceful land, a model province and role model for other provinces. His habit to work day and night has overcome his demerits. As a matter of fact, it was the result of his good governance that the province of the Punjab progressed rapidly and Shahbaz Sharif was declared as an iron man. Therefore this study has shown that Shahbaz Sharif's outstanding performance, good governance and public work during the period under discussion 2008-2013 enabled him and his political party namely the PMLN to win the general election 2013 not only in the province of the Punjab but also in the whole country.