

## Circulation of Elites in Pakistan's Politics

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this research is to study the circulation of elite in Pakistan's politics. How elites emerged, replaced and circulated in a society? Should they perform any role in socio-political development of a state? The debate in the paper will deal how many kinds of elites circulate in Pakistan's politics and their circulation process. Finally, as a developing nation Pakistan had many sociopolitical problems and the institutions also not strong enough so the circulation of elite is low in politics. The dominant class is the landowning, military and bureaucracy, a small sect of group is the ruling class in Pakistan. Data collected from various books from international and national level. The study employed mixed method of qualitative research; descriptive, explorative and narrative and the research had been drawn from pragmatic paradigm of Western thought.*

**Key Words:** Elite, Circulation of Elites, Pakistan's politics

### Introduction

Elite is the oldest concept but was developed after Renaissance and Reformation when the social idea of progress was changed and who rules is still a constant and universal political problem throughout the world. Social scientist talked about elites in the context of governing body, leadership and politician who performed structural functional role in politics.<sup>1</sup> The early philosophers, Plato Aristotle and Machiavelli also touched this subject while Plato talked about Philosopher King who is intellectual elite which comes out from a long and tiring process. He tells us that "neither cities nor states nor individuals will ever attain perfection until the small class of philosophers are providentially compelled, whether they will or not to take care of the states and until a like necessity be laid on the state to obey them...such men are not

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<sup>1</sup> Kuper, Jessica *Political Science and Political Theory*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, p.61.

ordinary mortals, they are spectators of all time and all existence”.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle classified it into three major groups: monarchy, aristocracy and polity, these are the normal and good forms of politics and the worst form of these kinds are tyranny, oligarchy and democracy. Monarchy and dictatorship were ruled by one, aristocracy by few and democracy by many.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Machiavelli suggested his Prince how to rule.<sup>4</sup> Almost, all philosophers contributed their thoughts regarding ruling and governing class and they popularized their particular thought towards this subject.<sup>5</sup> Later Karl Marx talked about the struggle of two classes of people in society and finally suggested classless society. “In 17<sup>th</sup> C the word Elite was used to describe, commodities of particular excellence, later it extended to superior social groups, such as military units or the higher ranks of the nobility”. “In 18<sup>th</sup> C Oxford English Dictionary applied this term as social groups and in 19<sup>th</sup> C this term did not become widely used in social and political writing until late in this Century in Europe, or until the 1930s in Britain and America”.<sup>6</sup>

Elite theory was basically derived from the two Italian sociologists Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca. It’s also related to the rise and fall of elite in political arena and how an individual is circulated recruited and replaced into different positions. Pareto started that people are unequal physically as well as mentally so in a society different types of people circulate and some of more gifted than others who are the elites.<sup>7</sup> He defined elite as, “a class of the people, who have the highest indices in their branch of activity, and to that class given the name of elite”.<sup>8</sup> He further explained that, “in every branch of human activity each individual is given an index, which stands as a sign of his

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<sup>2</sup> Girvetz, Harry K.. *Democracy and Elitism: Two Essays with Selected Readings*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1967, p. 40

<sup>3</sup> Kuper, op. cit. p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Porte, Robert La JR., *Power and Privilege: Influence and Decision-Making in Pakistan*, California: University of California Press, 1975, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Parry, G. *Political Elite*, London: George Allens & Unwin Publishers Ltd., 1977, Fifth Impression; p.15.

<sup>7</sup> Bottomore, T. B. *Elites and Society* Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1964, 7, p. 49.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas In Historical and Social Context*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971, p. 397.

capacity, very much the way grades are given in the various subjects in examinations in school as the highest marks are ten and lowest is zero”<sup>9</sup>

Review of literature.

In Pakistan a very few attempts have been made to discuss this concept while these attempts made by Western and Pakistani authors. Asaf Hussain, discussed this concept and explained that “a specific elite group is a strong characteristic in the history of Pakistan. It imposed the greatest strain on the political system when it developed along ethnic lines. The major landowning elite group led to the ethnicization of political forces of the NWFP and Baluchistan on one side, and Sind and Punjab on the other”.<sup>10</sup> He divided elites into three different groups: “traditional, colonial, and emergent”. “Traditional group referred to the period of Muslim rule, colonial to the period of British rule (1857-1947) and emergent elites were those that become politically active in the post-1947 period”.<sup>11</sup> “Each elite group was continually engaged in mobilizing its resources to transform the state to safeguard its vested interests. With such transformations in mind, each regime emphasized some ideology to legitimize their systems”.<sup>12</sup> The main study dealt with the two concepts which can apply to all societies, although the political ideology may differ from states to state. The first class is the governing or ruling class and the second class is the masses and it is considered as governed.<sup>13</sup> “In every society political power is differentially distributed in the political system. Political elites are the power-holders in the body of politics. In the general sense, political elites are those persons who possess more power or political influence than the non-elites (the masses). While governing elites specifically refers who occupy leading positions in the political arena and exercise power.”<sup>14</sup> Political arena of Pakistan where the governing elites are

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<sup>9</sup> Pareto, Vilfredo, *The Mind and Society: A Treatise on General Sociology*, New York: Dover Publication, 1935, 1423.

<sup>10</sup> Hussain, Asaf, *Elite Politics in an Ideological State: The Case of Pakistan*, Kent: Wm Dawson & Sons Ltd, Cannon House Folkestone, 1979, p. 153.

<sup>11</sup> Rizvi, Farzana, Circulation of Elite in West and in Pakistan: Historical Perspective, *Journal of the Punjab University of Historical Society*, Vol 28 No. 1, 2015: p. 55.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Hussain, op. cit. pp. 34-35.

concentrated and where most of the high level decision-making takes place, is the Central Cabinet of the Pakistan government”.<sup>15</sup>

Saeed Shafqat identified five types of elite: “military elites, bureaucratic elites, industrial-merchant elites, political elites, and religious elites. Of these, military, bureaucracy and merchant-industrial classes are dominating and the parameters of Pakistani political system.”<sup>16</sup> “Political elites, who led the nationalist movement which had a high mobilization capacity they inherited weak or almost non-existent political institutions”. “In the absence of political institutions, they fell on bureaucracy. On the other hand, the Muslims-merchant classes who provided the initial finance for the Pakistan movement and also migrated to Pakistan emerged as an important coalitional component”.<sup>17</sup> He further asserted

“In 1958 when the military acted to resolve the crisis and then a new ruling coalition was evolved. This change of regime meant defining new rules which were EBDO changed the role of political elite and with that new farmers and new Industrial commercial-industrial class appeared. Bureaucratic and military elites are dominant in this period and during 1970 election the nature and role of Islam were encouraged as an ideological component. It was under such an environment that Z. A. Bhutto (1971-77) had to formulate a ruling coalition and rejuvenate the structural components of Pakistan’s political system.”<sup>18</sup>

Bhutto headed Pakistan People Party (PPP), “which was an umbrella organization, representing interests of feudal, middle class, intelligentsia, students, and labor” etc. “It had sympathizers in the military and bureaucracy. However political elites who dominated the decision making had social origins in the feudal and urban middle class”.<sup>19</sup> Bhutto adopted a policy of selective co-option to recruit political elites and a reformist program to legitimize its

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.35

<sup>16</sup> Shafqat, Saeed, *Political System of Pakistan and Public Policy: Essays in Interpretation* Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1989, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-27.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 29, 30, 36.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

rule. The regime's primary objective was to establish the supremacy of political elites and rehabilitate the political structures of the political system.<sup>20</sup>

Robert La Port, Jr. analytically divided the population of Pakistan into four broad categories of people. "First group is the modern, ruling elite, identified as top-level military officers, the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP officers), and leading businessmen and industrialists (including the twenty families). These ruling elites is western-oriented and belongs to western-schooled now controlled the political system".<sup>21</sup> "Second class is educated middle class, who are sophisticated enough to realize the possibilities of societal change or reform but economically restricted in their ability to influence change or reform". Occupational examples of these transitional-dependents include lawyers, academics, and journalists.<sup>22</sup>

"Third group are the thousands of students in Pakistani Universities and Colleges. They are transitional-independents because they lack the economic concerns of their older brothers, uncles, or fathers in the transitional-independents category". "Fourth group traditional are the parochial, provincial rural, and urban dwellers."<sup>23</sup> The last category especially is the broad mass of people includes industrial workers, unskilled urban laborers, village craftsman, peasants, agrarian proletariat, mini-farmers, and regional affinities.<sup>24</sup> The main criticism of this categorization and the behavior modes, values, and attitudes is that it is too broad and general and does not sufficiently differentiate between groups within each category.<sup>25</sup> According to him: "there are three major but overlapping elite groups in Pakistan: Political, Economic, and Social." The political elite groups are based on these following categories: The top-level military, the central elite civil services, landowning families.<sup>26</sup> "Top level military are based on Colonel through General-ranks, with emphasis on seniority in rank, and principally the Army and Air Force, since the navy has not traditionally attracted the most ambitious sons of the landowning class and, therefore, has exercised a great deal of power relative to

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>21</sup> LaPorte, op. cit. pp. 3, 12, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Rizvi, Farzana, op. cit. p. 56.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> La Porte, op. cit. p. 13.

the other armed forces.”<sup>27</sup> “The Civil Services and the Foreign Services in Pakistan depended of the members of the large landowning families of the Punjab and Sind, who chose other occupations outside the civil service and the military, (this category would include, for example, such individuals as Z.A.Bhutto, who comes from a large landowning family in the Sind) This category has been a source of ministerial talent for all regimes in Pakistan since 1947.”<sup>28</sup> The main political power has been concentrated on the bureaucratic-military elites who were the successors of the British Raj but the mostly ministers were from landowning class.<sup>29</sup> “The main beneficiaries of independence have been the bureaucracy and military who have enjoyed lavish perquisites and have grown in number, the new class of industrial capitalists, professional people whose numbers have grown rapidly and the last are the landlords.”<sup>30</sup>

Who are the real elite group or power holders in Pakistan? When this question was asked by a former Federal Minister Dr Mubasher Hasan, he answered that the real power is in the hands of ‘Military’. He said, “that the higher civil servants (not whole bureaucracy), law machinery (judges), and tax collector are active participant and sportive to military. The dismissal of Bhutto’s government also indicated that the real power holder in Pakistan is the military rule”. He further asserted:

“That it was the weak nationalist and pro-imperialist character of the Pakistani ruling class that brought about the collapse of party politics in the pre-military hegemonic phase. The ruling class in Pakistan had three components: feudal class, the capitalist class and the middle class. He called all these classes are fake and vassals of imperialism. Thus he conclusively asserts that, these classes are always looking towards their imperialist bosses for their guidance and direction”.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.4

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 91-92.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

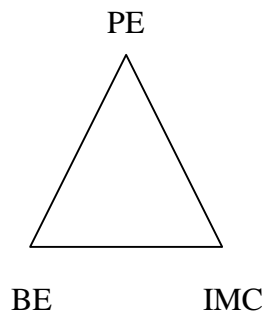
### **Circulation of Elite in Pakistan's Politics 1947 to date**

Circulation of elite in Pakistan's politics in different phases from 1947 to present is represented through the following figures:

#### **Elite Circulation (1947-1958)**

In this phase, there are three types of elite circulation appeared in Pakistan. These elites, who led the nationalist movement had high mobilization capacity but at that time the political institutions were weak and immature which inherited by British. Due to the weak institution the leadership fell on bureaucracy always educated and organized class. The third important class was Industrial Merchant Class not only provided fiancé but they migrated in newly independent state emerged as a new class in Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> Jinnah was the professional elite (Lawyer) who performed a dominant role for the establishment of Pakistan. Whole situation is presented through the following figure:

FIGURE: 1 Circulation of Elites (1947-1958)



#### **Elite Circulation (1958-1969)**

Military in 1958 intervened in Pakistan's politics and emerged as new ruling elite. They imposed EBDO which changed the political scenario and with that New Farmers and New Industrial Commercial Class appeared.<sup>33</sup> This era can be represented in the following figure:

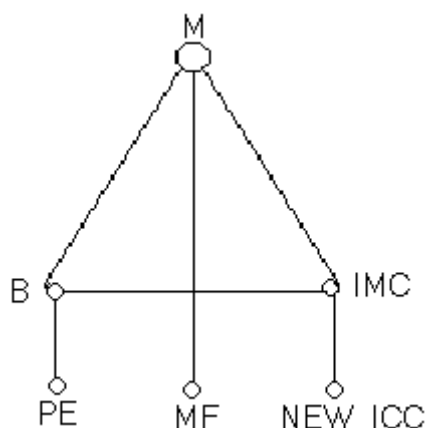
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<sup>31</sup> Interview of Dr. Mubashir Hassan. All these views were collected through an interview from Dr. Mubashir Hassan, former Federal Minister of Z. A. Bhutto' Cabinet.

<sup>32</sup> Shafqat, op. cit, p. 24.

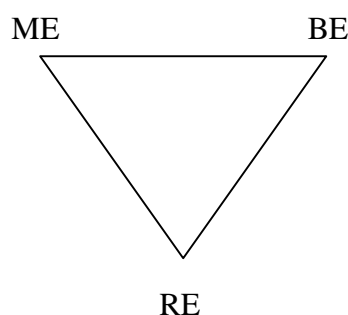
<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

FIGURE: 2 Circulation of Elites (1958-1969)

**Elite Circulation (1969-1971)**

During that period military and bureaucracy were dominant in politics and the religion especially the role of Islam was encouraged as an ideological factor. Over all the military, bureaucratic and religious elites were dominated that phase which can be observed in the following figure:

FIGURE: 3 Circulation of Elites (1969-1971)

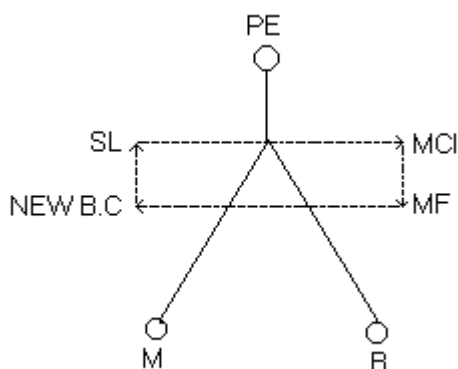
**Elite Circulation (1971-1977)**

Z. A. Bhutto, who Pakistan People Party (PPP) and headed was formed as an umbrella organization represented multiple interests of feudal, middle and lower classes, intelligentsia, students, labor and had sympathizers in military and bureaucracy. PPP as an ideological vision (Islam and socialism) restructure and re organized the almost whole of Pakistan's system and with significant unanimous constitution of 1973.<sup>334</sup> In that period the political elite was dominant in Pakistan's politics and supported elite circulation is well represented in the following figure:

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 36.



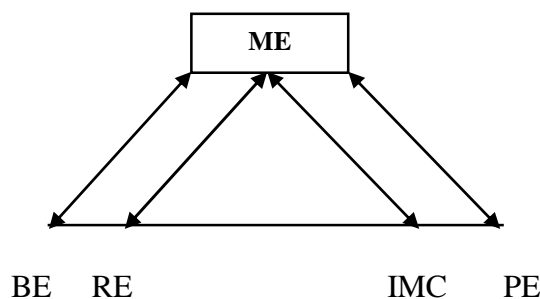
FIGURE: 4 Circulation of Elites (1971-1977)



**Elite Circulation (1977-1985)**

General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, Chief of the Army Staff formed a military rule in Pakistan. Bhutto's trial, MRD movement, Presidential Referendum Non-Party Elections and his Islamization were the significant events during that period. This period's politics is well represented in the following figure, Military, bureaucratic, religious, industrial and professional elites are significant elites:

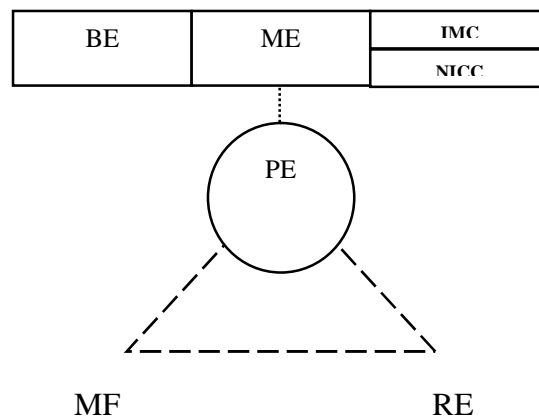
FIGURE: 5 Circulation of Elites (1977-1985)



**Elite Circulation (1985-1988)**

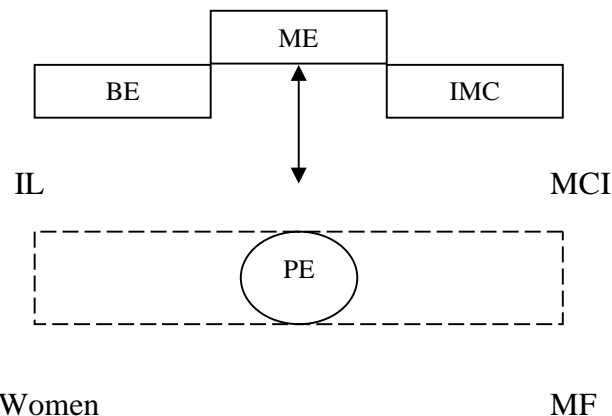
In 1985's Non-Party election Junejo government formed, formation of IJI (Islami Jamhuri Ittehad), Zia – ul – Haq's accidental death, General elections PPP's second government and Benazir Bhutto's became Prime Minister of Pakistan. The dominant classes were political with military, bureaucratic, New Industrial Commercial Class and Islamic Merchant Classes appeared. Middle farmer and traditional religious were less significant in that period. Whole situation is presenting in the following figure:

FIGURE: 6 Circulation of Elites (1985-1988)

**Elite Circulation (1988 - )**

In this period industrial, labor, industrial merchant classes and women's role in politics were prominent. Military elites are still at the top with the cooperation of bureaucratic and industrial elite classes. The whole situation is well represented in the following figure:

FIGURE: 7 Circulation of Elites (1988 - )

**Findings and Conclusions**

After reviewing the different literature regarding elite there can be viewed six types of elites in Pakistani politics, who are holding power directly and indirectly in the country. These six types of elite are: military elite, bureaucratic elite, religious elite, industrial elite, landowning elite and professional elites. When all six elite circulate in politics are called political elite while performing their role in political arena. Further more in Pakistan the artists still not got the position/status of elite but players are still struggling for their status in politics.

Elite can be described as an “influential figure in a society, who has enough capability to drive certain section of people according to their own will or interest are called elite”. “That person must have some capacity to set the styles, norms and values and change or alter the rules. He must be at the top of any institutions or organizations. Moreover, elite is an individual, wealthy, influential, well known and have intellectual superiority”. On the other hand, Circulation of elites is a process in which masses become elite and elites became masses. “This process is depends on two following factors: the first is ‘Hereditary Factors’: a person may have wealth (or status), which make him elite due to that wealth. The second factor is ‘Acquired’: any individual or masses can become elite through education and intelligence. Through proper education, training and intelligence, a person can acquire status and this status gave him power and this power can convert him into a wealthy person; an elite”.

Today the concept of social progress changed and now an ordinary person become elite through their knowledge, education and experiences and with these qualities they can maintain their designation. Now multinationals hired/appointed expertise for their businesses because an idiot can easily loosed everything. The most important factor is education and experience which can convert an ordinary person into elite. It can be concluded that an elite must be an intelligent person. In Pakistani politics three types of circulation of elites can be observed:<sup>35</sup>

“Circulation between the elite and masses

- Circulation between different categories of ruling elites
- A process in which, one elite is replaced by another”.

Circulation of elite in Pakistan’s different phases is further explained in the following table:

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<sup>35</sup> Rizvi, Farzana Circulation of Elites in Bhutto’s Regime 1971-77, *Pakistan Perspectives*, Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi, Volume 19, No. 1 2014, p. 129.

**Circulation of Elites in Pakistan**

<b>Periods or Dates</b>	<b>Dominate Elite Leader.</b>	<b>Others Activists or Supporters</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1947-58	PE	BE, IE	Only Professional Elite In Pakistan.
1958-71	ME	BE, IE, PE, RE	Religious Elites Are Active
1971-77	LE	IE, PE, BE, ME	Feudals, Students, Labours & Women.
1977-85	ME	BE, RE, IE	Judiciary Entered In Politics.
1985-88	ME	LE, PE, RE,	New Industrial Groups Emerged
1988-90	LE	LE, PE, BE	Feudals, Women & Labour
1990-93	IE	LE, PE, IE	Business Groups & Professionals
1993-96	LE	LE, PE, IE , ME	FEUDALS, (Representing Interests Of All Groups.)
1997-98	IE	LE, PE, IE	Business Groups & Professionals
1998-2008	ME	ME,LE, RE, PE	Women Are Active In Politics, Judiciary's Influential Role
2008-	LE	PE, LE,	Democracy, But Judiciary And Media's Influential Role. Sit-In And Protest.

Table: 1Sources: Prepared by Researcher (Notes: these above abbreviations stands for, BE (Bureaucratic elites), IE (Industrial elites), LE (Landowning elites), ME (Military elites), PE (Professional elites), RE (Religious elites).

The leading representative elite class in Pakistan is still the landowning class, who got the highest seats in the National Assembly from 1947 to now, but they are less significant. They look like influential and decision maker but the dismissal of Bhutto's government indicates that the real power holder is not this class who are the leading representative class in the assembly.

The second largest elite class is the middle class. These middle classes are based on professionals and intellectuals. In the history of Pakistan under Bhutto's regime it is a great change, which took place. They played significant role in Pakistani politics. Their major contributions are Constitution of 1973 and a lot of policies about different issues. But they could not be able to play this role for a long time. The reason behind this is the traditional elite, they did not allow the new class (Middle class professional elite) to play effective role

for long time. The real change is the awareness introduced which by Bhutto. His influence appealed the middle class, lower middle class, who can changes the pattern of any society. Now common man had his own opinion, especially the lower middle class is loyal to Bhutto's philosophy though they suffer a lot in the next martial law period.

Third important leading classes are the industrials and religious classes. The religious leaders influence is greater than the seats in National Assembly Suggested. They have the ability to call people in to the streets (motivated the masses) but could not win a number of seats in the elections. On the other hand industrialists are also convince the colonial elites to make the policies for their own interests. Bureaucracy and military are institutional and administrative and non elected elites, so their representation in the elections is quite less or minimum. Above all in Pakistan the real power holder is the bureaucratic and military elites.

Today judiciary and media's role is quite significant. During the recent confrontation between executive and judiciary the judiciary's superiority leads the country towards new and different directions. The non elected actors (Judiciary) superiority over elected actor (parliament) creates a number of changes and also leads towards a new confrontation among separation of powers. What happens next we still do not know?

Media as non-elected and non-state actor perform their role very powerfully today. In the last ten years, the rapid changes in media technology have had their effects on both the content of the media and the amount of material published and broadcast. In the first place, new printing technology, the use of satellites and the laying of cables have helped to increase in media output, although there is now a greater diversity of ownership, as the costs are too high for new or alternative companies to enter the market.<sup>38 36</sup> This technology has also allowed events to be transmitted directly both locally and internationally, so that events taking place far away are becoming more relevant and meaningful to the audience. A further influence on the way news is produced comes on one hand from the competition between the various media outputs and on the other from the activities of individual journalists,

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<sup>36</sup> Moore, S. & Sinclair, S. P. *Sociology* Chicago: NTC Publishing Group, 1995, pp.318-319.

producers and writers.<sup>39</sup> <sup>37</sup>Competing media as organizations, particularly those concerned with news production will often engage in amplification of events in order to sell more copies or gain more viewers. So stories develop which come to be both exaggerated and distorted, in the attempt by rivals to outsell the others. On the other hand, the attempts by individuals with in media organizations to promote their own careers can influence the actual content of the media as they seek to gain personal attention.<sup>38</sup>

How media constructs a reality for us and then examine the extent to which this affects our lives. It is often claimed that the media or free press provide us with an independent means of judging the government and putting forward different views. Yet many critics point to the way that almost all the media are owned by relatively few companies or individuals.<sup>39</sup> The question is how free are the media is? We then look at the way the content of media is affected, if at all, by the patterns of necessarily mean that they dictate what the content is but there is a strong argument that pressures outside the control of the owners actually dictate the contents of newspapers, television, radio and films.<sup>40</sup> There are many approaches about the media that the owners directly control the content of media; the owners indirectly control the content of media' the media determine by a plurality of values' and that the media reflect the wishes of the buying public (a laissez-faire approach). These processes have made a number of commentators worry that a free press which allows a range of opinions and ideas to be aired is gradually disappearing and the particular views of the few media companies are imposed throughout the media.<sup>41</sup> Today not only media owner but few anchor persons are also considered to be in the elite group.

The purpose of the study was to see the circulation of elites in Pakistan's politics. After reviewing the different concepts of elite circulation in Pakistan, it can be observed that in a society like Pakistan the circulation of elites is not much obvious. A few classes participated in politics. The major requirement of the study is to the inductions of middle classes and educated

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 312-313.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 314.

class in Pakistan's politics. The other important requirement is to re-structure the political system so other profession can enter in politics which can be helpful for policy making for Pakistan. The question of eligibility to govern or rule is generally vague, but elite must have some extra qualities which differentiate him from masses. Now requirement of time is to minimize the role of hereditary aristocracy and induction of new educated and intellectual classes in Pakistan's politics.