



ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN STRENGTHENING (OR WEAKENING) DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Democratic institutions facilitate and promote the operations that make democracy work. An institution is a permanent way to provide the fundamental necessities of living a social life. Institutions play a key role in seeking order and discipline in society; the state structure and government, as a lead agency, are major institutions that make decisions, formulate policies, and promote the objectives and virtues for the citizens. Pakistan has experienced a long path to establish a strong democratic system. Inefficient leadership, low progress of the key institutional setup, and non-civilian factors' increasing willingness to handle politics became the reason for the failure of parliamentary government four times in the history of Pakistan. However, behind weak party and political systems, there have been non-democratic forces that have always damaged the major political parties and slowed progress to legitimize their regimes by rigged referendums. On one side, the democratic institutions were crushed during the military regimes, and on the other side, low participation of political leaders remained involved in the making of illegal and black wealth, unending corrupt activities, favoritism, and promotion of hereditary politics. The research will highlight the factors that supported the civilian governments in completing their constitutional tenure. The research discusses the causes of weak democratic structure and all those demonist factors which hardly let democracy prosper. This research describes the role of political parties and democratic institutions in developing democracy. This work also highlights the involvement of the judiciary and the military in political affairs and the role of legislation in political development. This research provides moral support to the thesis. The general framework of the thesis is presented at end of this chapter.

Keywords: democratic Institutions, political Development, civil-military relations, parliamentary democracy, democratic consolidation

Introduction

Generally, political development indicates the conversion of the power structure, which changes authority from a reactionary aristocracy to broad participation. This spread is designed to promote peace and prosperity within society (Hameed A.K Rai, 1982). As long as development comes along and tries to catalyze more modernization and social mobilization, that in turn encourages further political activities. However, political development indicates an increase in both citizen involvement and national political unity in the political process (Kakuba, 2016).

Pakistan's long history as a country has been very turbulent, especially with reference to the evolution of the democratic system in the country. This has transformed military rule versus elected civilian government that changes secular policies during cold war and the war against terrorism, it helps as frontline state. The devitalized democracy of Pakistan continued to grow, it faced multiple challenges from the very first day. It was the reason that the country took nine years to frame its first legal framework to run the country. 1956 was the year when the first constitution of the country was framed, following an unfortunate episode, it could only survive



two years. In 1958's coup by non-democratic forces of the country toppled the government, abrogated the constitution, and all powers were handed to the army. The Supreme Court justified this attack on democracy in the name of the doctrine of necessity. This support provided a path for the long military rule in Pakistan, which left the country socially, financially, and politically fragile throughout different eras till 2008. This time period not only showed the unsuccessful story of Pakistan's path towards development, but it also deprived the people of their voice to be respected in the parliament.

However, the role of political parties is comprehended as the major means of smooth transformation of power. Pakistan's journey on the path of democracy remained under the continuous influence of non-democratic and non-civilian forces, which always hindered the growth of the country. Poor performance, incompetence, and lack of democracy within political parties also hindered the proper growth of the democratic system and left political institutions fragile, which impacted the nourishment of political institutions. Though for the positive political development of the country it is necessary that the democratic institutions must be transparent and autonomous so that the damaged trust of the public can be regained on the institutions. It is devastated by the dissolution of assemblies and abrogation of constitutions at different times. In the face of political instability, weak party system and harsh affections, democratic institutions kept struggling for their survival, legitimacy and stability. Pakistan is among the few Muslim developing states where citizens of the country have expressed their esprit and willingness to embrace the democratic system. Despite of that Pakistan have different cultural and structural conditions which weaken the promotion of democracy and the positive role of democratic institutions. Pakistan has faced continuous military rule, religious split, and authoritarianism, which in one way or another affected the democratic progress of the country (Shafqat Saeed, 1998).

Pakistan's political parties need to strengthen their practices that define democracy. The 2008 election, which elected a civilian government, gave a second birth to democracy to strengthen its weak process. The transformation from Pervez Musharraf's military rule to an elected government has been in the face of multiple hindrances, which included strained relations among civilian and military institutions, undermined and selective judicial authority, disrupted political environment, and people's disbelief in the political institutions. Due to all these difficulties, certain concerns surfaced that the forces which remained the most powerful authority through the years, still pose a threat to the civilian governments, or with the public support which elected the government in 2008, will help to establish a strong and effective democratic government in the country? The co-operation among political leaders and their unity will decide whether they will work to strengthen democracy.

Though the 2013 elections ended with the peaceful transition of democratic governments, which stabilized democracy and restored the lost trust of people in democratic ways, which welcomed another elected government with a complete tenure. On one side, Pakistan's ruling parties were celebrating the success of democracy, and on the other side, there were political parties that ended as runners in the general elections and led the opposition in the parliament; they challenged the transparency of elections with the support of all opposition parties. This was also one of the drawbacks for the institutional democracy, which barely started to take breath after two consecutive elected governments.

One cannot neglect the role of political parties against each other, which has always damaged the power of the legislature these forces have played a decisive role in the country, which faces political instability. Due to unstable systems of politics, ineffective role of political parties, and unfavorable cultures of politics and politicians all these shape the weak governmental system of the country. Despite facing continuous challenges, Pakistan has reduced political instability to some extent with maintaining transparency in elections and instigating all the stake holders to unite for the betterment of country not only this but Pakistan also upholds the constitutional rules and enforces them.

Literature Review

Stress the necessity of powerful and influential political parties to support and uphold democratic values. In Pakistan, political parties mostly promote their interests rather than the



national interest in the parliament. Unfortunately, many leaders have supported the authoritarian rule for their gain rather than fostering the democratic principles and strengthening the political institutions, for example, the supporters of PML(N) attacked the supreme court in 1977, and the party leader took no action to stop them and this shows the weak respect for the democracy and rule of law (Bibi, Jamali, Jalal 2018)

How the major Political Parties have now appeared as fragmented, damaged, and incompetent despite their significant role played in the past. The Political Parties have lost their strength and unity, and are now facing the challenges within their Political parties, dealing with internal turmoil. Along with these Political Parties, many new Political parties are not much old, which lack experience and have never been tested, hindering the citizens from understanding their aims and objectives. This makes a voter into a confused condition of whom to choose and making it difficult to examine who stands for what. Political Parties in a democratic state can bring change and reform the quality of governance (Jafri, 2002)

what means political organizations work in several situations in Asian states. They believe that for political organizations to engage in positive domestic betterments, political groups have to first and foremost wholeheartedly boost and bring change in themselves. Interior rectifications are essential for making political groups more meaningful. Furthermore, the common people must trust and believe in the capability of political organizations to create meaningful change. On the other hand, Political groups may have some weak points, which ought not to be shown as merely a part of the issue. Yet political parties possess the ability to play a major role in making governance more suitable and democratic (Manikas and Thornton, 2003)

Research Methodology:

Research methodology is a systemized way of analyzing, assembling, and assimilating data. There are two types of data: quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is data purely based on numbers, it focuses on numerical data. The second one is qualitative data, which is existing literature that focuses on the listed and perceived data. Research follows steps that show a structured way for the researcher.

The case study examines the unique political events that hindered Pakistan's political development. The chapter elucidates the approach, which includes the use of reasonable methods that are used to achieve the objectives of the research. Further, this chapter summarizes the methods by which data will be analyzed for the objectives which tools that will be used. The researcher utilized a secondary method of data collection. Which is based on the existing literature, which includes research articles, newspapers, internet sources published books, and different other sources, rather than interviews which indicates direct participation. The researcher visited different libraries of Sindh, which includes the Central Library of the University of Sindh, seminar libraries from various departments like Political Science and History, and the Pakistan Studies Centre at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro. Additionally, the researcher explored public libraries in Hyderabad, such as the Hasrat Mohani Public Library and the Daudpoota Public Library.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR ROLE

Political party refers to a group of people who unite under the umbrella of similar thoughts, they work to convince the people they contest elections as well as to establish a government Mclevr stated that political party is organized to encourage few rules and on the basis of these rules , it forms government through using constitutional methods. A national party always seeks the national welfare, not for sectional or class interests. A political party does not promote the interest of a specific community, according to Edmund Burke political party works for the national interest based on the shared rules. Stephen Leacock explains



a political party as a cooperation of citizens who join together as a political unit. The structure of a nation is supported by political parties, which work as pillars. As part of the political system, they are well well-organized framework of leadership, share power, represent the public, contest elections, and make decisions (Taj and Rehman). In 1960s the term "political development" was used first to explain the "political modernization" of newly emerging countries, which were freed after decolonization. Political development is divided into two different conceptions "Development" and "underdevelopment. Human and Natural resources are not used properly in the underdeveloped nation, and political parties are supported by the people because political parties help to achieve the political and democratic growth they also empower the political framework.

Political parties work for the good will of society as a general, and they also protect the rights of the people; they are the bridge between the civil society and elected representatives. The party supports the elected members, it represents their issues before parliament, and political parties in a democratic country perform multiple roles; the key role is to nominate the candidates and support them in elections. In Pakistan, there is a multi-party system that shapes the government of the country, its policies, and its political atmosphere. In a society, political parties ensure that various voices and perspectives are included in the political process. They also represent diverse interest groups within society. For the evolution and development of political development, all political parties are the main stakeholders in any country

In Pakistan majority of political parties are fragile and non-systematic which resulted in political instability in the country there are only few political in the country, who consistently rule as major political parties, Pakistan Muslim League (N), Pakistan People's Party, Mutahida Qoumi Movement and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. This is mainly because of the uncertain political growth to protect public interests the political institutions need to be stronger otherwise, the weakness of political institutions will provide a pace for non-democratic forces of state to dominate (Iqra, Baig, and Sehrish) The dominance of a single state institution weakens the political development of the country. The political history of Pakistan shows this dominance of state institutions over political parties. In the last three elections, 80% of National Assembly (NA) seats were won by five major political parties. For the first time in the political history of Pakistan, an elected government completed its five-year tenure from 2008 to 2013, under the Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

Smooth transmission of power took place after the election of 2013, and the Pakistan Muslim League (N) succeeded in forming the government. Political parties during this era played a crucial role in amending the constitution of 1973, with the Pakistan People's Party, all parties stepped in making policies and in the political development of the country. They introduced the 18th, 19th and 20th amendments, also promoting political growth via constitutional reforms. These amendments facilitated the relocation of presidential supremacy to parliament, enhanced provincial autonomy, and curtailed the powers of president. They also established the selection of caretaker government and the process of dissolving assemblies. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has also advocated for the greater autonomy of election commission of Pakistan. Nonetheless, Pakistan People's Party (PPP), remains a major political force, playing a significant role in Pakistan's political landscape and demonstrating a commitment to democracy. It has made efforts to strengthen constitutional governance.

On the other hand, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) has also played a significant role in promoting democracy and political development in Pakistan. Although the party has gained power three times, it was during its most recent term from 2013 to



2018 that it completed its full term in office. During this period, the PML-N implemented several reforms that strengthened democratic institutions. The party established an independent judiciary and also passed multiple laws that protect human rights. It also has been a strong advocate of free and fair elections. The efforts of the political parties of Pakistan made possible the smooth working of the National Assembly (NA). Which played an important role in the political development of Pakistan. Political parties of Pakistan have faced many hurdles, their leaders either were exiled or assassinated, and despite all these difficulties, they kept working for the political development of the country. Pakistan's political parties played a vital role in the overall development of Pakistan. Moreover, there is lack of internal democracy within the political parties of Pakistan has been both a cause and an outcome of Pakistan's cheered democratic track-record. The undemocratic attitude of political parties made a path for unelected forces to derail democracy. Pakistan's political parties never promote democratic culture within party. Intra-party elections are simply eyewash because they only meet the needs of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Basically the authoritarian nature prevails in all political parties of Pakistan (Khan 2019). Pakistan faces another crucial issue within the political Parties that, to some extent, hinder the rapid political development are dynastic and hereditary politics. To abolish the genetic leaders from the political parties and to provide opportunities to visionary and efficient persons with real leadership qualities is the critical need of the political parties, which will enhance the political development and democratic institutions of Pakistan.

The political system of Pakistan has transformed from a multiparty system to a three-party system in a short time. Initially, there were only two mainstream political parties; Pakistan Tehreek-I-Insaf surfaced as another mainstream party. Immediately after contesting two elections, it managed to form government in the Centre. The emergence of PTI in mainstream politics has disturbed the dynastic political tradition. PTI is also a centralized party like PPP, PML-N, and ANP it is embodied by the charisma of Imran Khan. The only difference is the PTI leader does not hail from a political background. Through particular institutional structures, democracy represents its values. In 71 years electoral history of Pakistan, July 2018's general elections were key moments.

These elections remarked the third consecutive transfer of power from one elected government to another. Pakistan Tehreek-I-Insaf's chairman Imran Khan become Prime Minister. The former Prime Minister and his party were voted into power with the promise of bringing change. The years from 2018 to 2022 are considered to be crucial years in the politics of Pakistan. PTI also showed notable performance in several areas, particularly in parliament. PTI, government has enacted 24% more laws than its predecessor during the same time-frame. During Imran Khan's national assembly, 155 bills were passed, Only 126 bills were approved. History shows that every government in Pakistan which comes in power faces challenges. Public had hopes for the PTI which increased these challenges. On 9 April 2022 then Prime Minister Imran Khan faced vote of no confidence, which resulted the removal of then Prime Minister. Following this Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif was sworn in as the new prime minister on 11 April 2022. When ruling political party promotes authoritarian governments than it is obvious for members of opposing political parties to unite in support of democratic reforms. The establishment of democratic practices in Pakistan has been hindered by various obstacles including division within government. There is significant delay in the democratic progress in the political system of Pakistan due to these issues. The democratization process in Pakistan is at a pivotal point. The base of democracy lies on the rule of law supported by civil society. Political parties do not appear



serious to become presumptive alternate to the ruling party. Their blame gaming continued which direct indirect hindered direct and indirect the political parties also weakened the democratic institutions.

Conclusion:

Developed countries of the world have adopted the modern form of democracy and framed Their constitution is to run the country. But Pakistan is the country which is still been under the civil-military relations in Pakistan since its birth. In Pakistan's history of seventy-five years, the country has faced several martial laws. More than thirty years. Pakistan remained under direct military rule initially, and after its independence of Pakistan had no constitution of its own. It took nine years to frame its constitution. Pakistan unnecessarily delayed in framing the constitution, and also took a long time to resolve its constitutional dilemma. The military has created a favorable atmosphere to take control of the government and impose martial law rules.

Several political leaders were either assassinated or imprisoned, and the men in khaki remained the most influential authority in the country. In front of the army judiciary, parliament, and political parties were left helpless, and democracy was paralyzed. In the history of Pakistan's politics, there are only two elected governments that completed their constitutional tenure in office. The democratic structure of Pakistan is completely shattered by the multiple military coups. When those who destroyed democracy in Pakistan wrote their histories, they placed a larger part of the blame for the destruction on the victims, supposedly it was the people because they were not 'ready' for democracy.

For the collapse of democracy, people themselves were held responsible. The regime, which emerged after the dissolution of the assembly, claimed that Pakistani citizens were incompetent and needed to be ruled by a controlled government that could train them properly. However, the fact is that democracy believes in active participation regardless of the political expertise of the citizens. All forces emphasized manipulation instead of empowering the public through education and participation. However, political leaders were also blamed for political instability. These leaders were accused of mismanagement, corruption, and diverting attention away from the lack of accountability and the erosion of democratic institutions, which were considered to be deeper backwash. These steps were taken to undermine the public trust in the democratic process and emphasized the belief that only an authoritarian, centralized government could ensure stability.

The reasons behind the strength of the military and the weak democratic structure were multifaceted. The major factor for the direct military rule was political instability, the influence of external powers in the internal affairs of the state, and militant attacks, which provided the cause for the army for the intervention. The Military's direct rule not only destroyed the democracy of Pakistan. Leading to the eighteenth amendment, a general election was held, and civilian government was established through a democratic process. The Eighteenth Amendment ensured the balance of power between the center and provinces democratically. However, the military's attempt to intervene directly failed, but it succeeded in influencing government policies indirectly. This indirect intervention created multiple challenges.

Beyond all doubt, the military is responsible for the delay in the democratic process, but this is not the reason for the failure of democracy. The judiciary is also the reason for the weak political development. The judiciary always supported the non-democratic forces. The judiciary justified all the undemocratic actions through the doctrine of necessity. Not only did the judiciary favor the unconstitutional actions, but through judicial activism, it weakened parliament at different times. The judiciary, after the military, remained the most influential actor in the weakening of democracy. Disqualification of acting prime ministers by the judiciary is unconstitutional, as it claims to be the guardian of the constitution when the guardian of the constitution itself violates the constitution. Instead of protecting parliament, the judiciary is always involved in the dissolution of the national assembly. If we talk about the role of political parties and political leaders in the development of democracy and in empowering the parliament, their role is not satisfactory. General Zia said that 'the political leaders of Pakistan are immature. It is right that political leaders always play their part in the politics of blaming. It is a curse for Pakistan's fate that political leaders also fought for power instead of democracy. Political leaders



are always engaged to degrade each other rather they should support civilian government for the restoration of democracy and parliament. However, political parties never united against the military's influence in political affairs and government decisions, many alliances were made and several coalition governments were signed but soon after they withdrew the support of ruling governments. This blame gaming politics and trials to down the civilian government always weakened the democracy in the country. The political instability provided space for military and other non-democratic forces which ruled people and ruined democracy. Political leaders never dared to stand against the military's unnecessary interference neither they could resist judicial activism. Whenever they faced a political challenge they called the military judiciary to intervene in the matter. Who always interfered the political affairs? But those who stood in front of the judiciary or military faced false allegations of corruption and others.

This is the reason why 2008's elected government is the first ever elected government that could complete its first tenure it was the first civilian government ever in the history of Pakistan. Because the major political parties Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League (N) stood on the front line to defend the democracy and supremacy of parliament. The ruling government of the time and the major opposition party worked together. The opposition did not oppose the decisions of the government but helped to pave way for the constitutional development. Despite all these, the fact cannot be denied that the major political parties have not used the opportunity to strengthen democratic practices within their organizations. Pakistan can break its traditional cycle between civilian and military rule need for concerned policy action from all stakeholders is more important than ever. The seventy-five years as a sovereign state Pakistan developed nothing but a fragile history of bad civil-military relations and judicial activism. It is the first time that despite all these challenges parliament can secure itself after the eighteenth amendment parliament has become stronger and no president or any other force can dissolve the national assembly unilaterally.

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