



RESEARCH PAPER

Patterns of Governance in Pakistan: A Shift from Democratization to Consolidated Democracy

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: March 26, 2022 Accepted: June 27, 2022 Online: June 30, 2022	Pakistan has faced numerous issues since its inception but predominantly all are related to Governance. From early migration crisis to hostile neighborhood, lack of infrastructure, center-province tensions, patron-client polity, etc. the prevalent challenges have developed a socio-political environment contrary to strengthening the process of democratization. The unusual and unconstitutional power shifts from civilian to military regimes have granted unstable, dysfunctional, and undemocratic institutional arrangement. The civilian government of 2008-13 was the turning point in the history of Pakistan that worked to avail the chance to inculcate democratic norms in the system by introducing 18th constitutional amendment. The objective of the study is to highlight the pattern of governance in Pakistan by reviewing the working of institutional structure to consolidate democracy in the state. This is a Qualitative study having focus on exploratory approach.
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Introduction

Democratization in simple terms is the process of transition from a non-democratic regime to a democratic rule. The minimum requirement attached to the phenomenon of democratization is free and fair elections. While democratic consolidation connotes the strengthening of democratic norms in the system that no unconstitutional force can revert the political structure from its track.

The success of a political system and consolidation of democracy is based on the governance dynamics of the regime. Governance is the relationship between the state and civil society that caters the issues concerning national interest. (Lungo, Mario, 1998). Francis Fukuyama posits that governance is the ability of a government-democratic or otherwise- to deliver services as well as to make and enforce rules. Arguably, governance occurs in all kinds of regimes-from democratic to authoritarian.

Democratic governance is defined as "...a governance with possibilities of participation and influence for all social actors although in unequal conditions." Others have defined the term as "...instrumentalization of society in the function of dominant interest represented in the state" (Judge, D, G Stoker and H Wolman, 1995). Scandinavian countries can be used as a model to study democratic governance. For instance, Danish politics is all about consensus. Since no party has commanded a majority in the parliament since 1909, multiple parties' bargain amongst themselves to form the coalition government. Danish constitution (implemented circa 1849) lends stability and structure to this democratic form of governance. The political culture is participatory and there exists a trusting relationship between government and citizens. The high level of trust in government is conducive to an environment in which citizens feel comfortable enough to

turn a large portion of their income in taxes to the government. Consequently, Denmark has been regarded as the least corrupt nation by Transparency International's "Perceived Corruption Index" multiple times. All in all, robust institutions of service delivery, active citizenry, institutional balance and high trust levels in government make democratic governance work in Denmark as well as Scandinavia.

Within democratic governance, a distinction has to be made between parliamentary and presidential patterns of governance. Generally, parliamentary governance relies on a fusion of power and hence, rigid party structures, party-aligned interest groups, and a centralized decision-making process. Presidential governance, on the other hand, relies on the separation of power and a system of checks and balances. Decision making in the presidential form of government is comparatively less centralized with flexible party structures. The presidential system can suffer from executive-legislative deadlock that is common in the US presidential system while the parliamentary system can suffer from immobilism. Furthermore, there is imperialization of the presidency (Case in point: Post-Patriot Act USA) that puts a damper on the system of checks and balances and then there is "presidentialization" of parliamentary form which is making it harder for legislatures to hold executive to account (Case in Point: British PM Tony Blair reduced the Q/A time-an instrument of accountability). In both cases, the strong institutions, the supremacy of the constitution, participant culture and institutional balance are the features that contribute positively toward good governance. The US exemplifies the virtues and vices of presidential governance while the UK exemplifies the virtues and vices of parliamentary governance.

Apart from democratic rule, authoritarian governance has also been practiced in various parts of the world. Encyclopedia Britannica has defined authoritarianism as "any political system that concentrates power in the hands of a leader or a small elite that is not constitutionally responsible to the body of the people. Authoritarian leaders often exercise power arbitrarily and without being accountable before existing bodies of law as well as the process of removal from power cannot be done through popular elections. The presence of opposition is either limited or nonexistent in authoritarian regimes. In some countries, it has worked as China while in North Korea it has wreaked havoc. The closer observation reveals that even though China practices an authoritarian style of governance but have robust institutions. Furthermore, the communist party has complete control over the political process, the party follows a stable trajectory aimed at the economic development of the nation rather than the personal enrichment of the top brass. On the contrary, North Korea is plagued with predatory and extractive institutions with the political elite having preferential access to public goods, and cult-like following of its leader. Aside from China and North Korea, the Singaporean style of governance is often referred to as 'soft authoritarianism'. The Singaporean style of governance is authoritarian as well as interventionist with the government maintaining a robust public sector whilst rejecting the welfare state model.

When studying different modes of governance, the following specified variables must be given importance. These include institutions, surveillance capitalism and globalization. These variables have a significant impact on the pattern of governance operationalized by the state and can either facilitate or hinder democratic consolidation.

Surveillance capitalism is the hallmark of the Information Age and refers to the commodification of data. When combined with globalization, this has made the relationship between government and civil society more complex. On one hand, it has made it easy to control and monopolize the narratives but on the other hand, globalization of technology at the heart of surveillance capitalism has made access to information easy for the public. Consequently, it has the power to transform the governance pattern or at the very least

disrupt the status quo. The practical implication of the said situation can be seen in Arab Spring of 2011.

Researchers and analysts have often claimed that the fate of the nations is contingent upon their institutions. Success is the product of inclusive and pluralistic politico-economic institutions as such institutions create incentives for everyone to invest in the future. On the other hand, predatory and extractive institutions all but ensure economic underdevelopment and faulty service delivery.

Three institutions are of absolute importance when it comes to determining the future and quality of governance.

1. Judiciary-necessary for the protection of property rights as well as enforcement of contracts.
2. Legislature-necessary to prescribe laws as well as the regulatory framework.
3. Executive-necessary to formulate policies and to ensure smooth delivery of public goods and services.

Robust institutions play a crucial role in sustaining and upholding democratic values. In the case of the United States of America, robust institutions of democratic governance survived Trumpism, particularly the January 6 siege of Capitol Hill.

The pattern of Governance in Pakistan: An overview

Since its inception, Pakistan has experienced all sorts of governance patterns with inconsistency from democracy to dictatorship, parliamentary to presidential or civilian to military rule.

Pakistan has faced many challenges in the initial years of independence including the East-West divide, centre-province issues, settlement of immigrants, hostile neighborhood, lack of leadership etc. These challenges have halted the process of democratization and political stability in the state. The parliamentary democracy could not perform well because of lingual, cultural, and ethnic issues. The unstable democratic setup has paved the way for military intervention in the political process of the state. The democratic government dissolved in 1958 and General Ayub Khan assumed power through a military takeover.

The Military Rule of General Ayub Khan

In the history of Pakistan, various attempts have been made to establish a stable and civilian democratic political order in the state but the military intervention in the political process has hampered those efforts. The first attempt to establish a democratic political rule was initiated in the aftermath of independence in 1947, however, it only lasted till October 1958 when General Ayub seized power and abrogated the constitution (Rizvi, 2011).

The role of the military in any state is to safeguard internal and external threats. They are not trained to take any political decisions. Pakistan has faced four military coups in past and the journey of military intervention started in 1958 with the military takeover of General Ayub Khan. The prevailing chaos and incompetence of political leaders have made it easy to assume power.

Since the martial law of 1958, governments have functioned under the shadow of the military whether it be direct or indirect. Ayub Khan gave rise to an alliance of the

Punjabi army and civil bureaucracy. On the economic side, an industrial class was formed that was influential. The structure of parliamentary democracy was modified with the addition of the system of Basic democracies which was justified to be an institution of the genius people. However, this system undermined the principle of democracy and didn't empower the citizens to participate in the democratic process.

There has been a huge debate about the selection of form of government in the state. It is argued, whether the parliamentary system better suits Pakistan or the presidential system. After independence, Pakistan inherited a parliamentary form of government just like India but certain reasons including inefficient leadership, lack of experience, presence of political chaos and prevalent confusion have made the system a failure in Pakistan. However, in the meantime India has been practicing a parliamentary form of government since the partition of united India and Pakistan has been experimenting with all sorts of systems whether it is from democracy to dictatorship, parliamentary to presidential or civilian to military rule (Ahmad, 2010).

The parliamentary form of government was proposed in the constitution of 1956. The system prevailed in the state till the imposition of martial law along with the abrogation of the constitution.

The constitution of 1962 has approved a presidential form of government under military influence. Under this constitution the powers exercised by the president were unlimited and had the whip hand in the decision-making process. A weak political process with dysfunctional political institutions has made the bureaucracy - military dominance over the political setup.

Under General Ayub Khan, certain institutional developments were made which brought a significant impact on civilian politics. In the early 1950s, there was an institutional transformation of the military from an ex-colonial army to a national army. This transformation enhanced the military capabilities of Pakistan. In 1958 military established a preventive autocracy by demolishing constitutional order as it thought would be better to avoid the chaos by general elections. The civil service structurally and functionally had a colonial character with it after independence even which was elitist, imperialistic and arrogant in nature.

The Democratic Rule of Zulfiqar-Ali-Bhutto

The second attempt to establish a stable democracy was made in December 1971 when Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto came into power to lead a civilian political order. Although it is assumed that Bhutto was simply a military nominee, but this was not only the reason behind his success rather he also had electoral success. (Khan, 2009, p. 246). The political culture in Pakistan has revolved around some set norms. One of the important features includes the personality-oriented system of the power structure. Pakistan's politics has always been personality-oriented, and people vote for individuals, not for a party. The political parties have a strong leader and weak infrastructure which ultimately weakens the political institutions. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto has assumed power as a president along with that of a chief martial law administrator. Thus, he was the first distinction of being a civilian CMLA. His government drafted the constitution of 1973. The constitution has proposed a parliamentary form of government but wasn't implemented in its true sense as later the military heads made it a quasi-parliamentary system for their benefit and to pursue more power.

The distinctive feature of Bhutto rule was his charismatic politics that mobilizes the masses for the first time in the history of the state. He wanted to put an end to feudalism even though he belonged to a feudal family. He also introduced agrarian reforms to protect

the peasant class. In Bhutto's period, a set of reforms were introduced by the government that focused on changing the structure of bureaucracy and changing the laws affecting civil services, thus, giving the services a whole new orientation. However, Bhutto's government didn't last that long to implement its reforms and his government was overthrown by Gen Zia who contradicted Bhutto in all the matters and so he undoes the bureaucratic reforms which were introduced by Bhutto. Despite all these efforts, due to his intolerance and westernized lifestyle, he lost popularity among the masses, and it became the reason for his downfall.

The Military Rule of Gen Zia-ul-Haq

Finally, in July 1977 Gen Zia imposed martial law and overthrew PPP's government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He introduced changes in the constitution of 1973 which made a semi-presidential hybrid system. He introduced 8th amendment to secure his power over the parliamentary system. Due to this amendment, the president was given all the powers and control over the system which caused a detrimental effect on peoples regarding democracy. This amendment halted the democratic system, and many civilian governments were dismissed.

The era of Gen Zia has seen no significant institutional development. Moreover, the Islamization policies further halted the development of institutions. Only the military as an institution gained further control over the country. The role of intelligence agencies expanded during the military rule of Gen Zia-ul-Haq as he heavily relied upon ISI and MI to pursue political agenda (Rizvi, 2011). ISI's position was strengthened as it played a key role during the Afghan issue.

The manipulation of politics has created distortions in the political process that resultantly undermined the prospects of a viable democracy. Legislatures, under the parliamentary form of government, are said to be sovereign and can pass a law within their constitutional competence. However, parliament faced many ups and downs throughout these years. During Gen Zia's period parliament was given another expression in terms of Majlis-e-Shoora which developed parliament as an advisory body instead of a sovereign institution. In 1981 a majlis-e-shoora was formed which comprised of his appointees and it was nothing than a mere rubber-stamp. (Khan H., 2009). In the same period, Federal Sharia Court was established through a constitutional amendment which created a parallel system of judiciary. There were certain consequences of this new judicial addition on the high court as well as on the supreme court and due to this system, the jurisdiction of high courts was curtailed. Legislature abdicated its primary duty and function in favour of the executives who have been after the power game.

The Democratic Rule of Ms. Benazir Bhutto and Mr. Nawaz Sharif

The third attempt for the democratic civilian government was made between December 1988 till October 1999. During this period Mr. Nawaz Sharif and Ms. Benazir Bhutto both served as prime Minister of Pakistan. Ms. Benazir Bhutto was the first female political head of the country and was determined to bring changes in the political system. She tried to improve the status of women especially after the Islamization policies of Gen Zia-ul-Haq. Despite her struggle, she couldn't bring revolutionary changes in the administrative and economic sectors. Her performance as the executive head was hampered due to various factors, include, contention with the army and continuous pressure from the religious parties and opposition. In addition to this PPP and Ms. Benazir had to face a fallout with their allies, also a motion of no confidence was raised against Ms. Benazir Bhutto (Khan, 2009, p. 400). Moreover, it was expected that she is being the choice of the masses won't look up to the military, but she did so. Before and after becoming the

PM, she visited military headquarters and involved the chief of army staff in the decision-making process.

In 1990s, the national assembly was dissolved under article 58(2)(b) of the constitution by President Ghulam Ishaq. The general elections were held in October 1990 and the President of Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), Mr. Nawaz Sharif won the elections and became the prime minister. He had cordial relations with the president but later on differences developed as Nawaz Sharif wanted to introduce some changes in the constitution along with other differences such as the issue of the appointment of Chief of army staff. Thus, President dissolved the national assembly and dismissed PM from the office.

The elections of 1993 have brought Ms. Benazir returned to power and held the office of prime minister for the second time. However, this time as well there were rifts between prime minister Benazir and president Leghari (Khan, 2009, p. 438) and at last, the president dismissed the national assembly and Benazir's tenure came to an end. Later on, in the elections again Mr. Nawaz Sharif won the majority vote and became prime minister for the second time and it is evident that president Leghari willingly inducted the government of his own choice after dismissing Benazir Bhutto from the post. In 1997 president Leghari resigned from the post and blamed Nawaz for the constitutional crisis that prevailed in the state. After his resignation, Muhammad Rafiq Tarar was announced as the president. During the term of prime minister Nawaz Sharif, he wanted to endeavor more power and in this conquest of power he established difficult relations with the armed forces, also Kargil crisis became the last nail in the coffin of PM Nawaz's term. As the conflict between armed forces and PM tensed and finally in 1999 Gen Pervez Musharraf imposed martial law in the country.

The Military Rule of General Musharraf

In October 1999 Gen Pervez Musharraf seized power and appointed himself as the chief executive. He established a military-dominant National Security Council. Similar to all his predecessors, General Musharraf has legitimized his coup through the order of the supreme court known as the doctrine of necessity (Qazi, 2013). After coming into power General Musharraf has suspended the constitution, issued a special decree, introduced constitutional changes, and enhanced the powers of the president. Also, the clash between judiciary and executive which exists today has its roots back in Gen Musharraf's period.

General Musharraf has used state power for military rule and assigned politicians subordinate roles in state affairs. In addition to this, the judiciary was also demanded to facilitate the military to maintain control over the political power. The major blow faced by the bureaucracy was during the Musharraf regime, as all the major positions in the civil hierarchy were taken by the military generals and the military was having complete authority.

Contemporary Civilian Experience of Pakistan

The democratization process started from 2002 with the development of a new parliamentary cum presidential system. During this regime, it was intended to devolve power at the grass root level. It was the development of local self-government system in Pakistan. Though the system evolved in this period was also alleged as the selected system but it contributed to build up a democratic system and sovereign parliament. After a long time, the government had completed five years term, general election was conducted and a peaceful transition of power was made.

The Democratic Rule of Pakistan People's Party (2008-2013)

In 2008 PPP and PML(N) both collaborated despite differences between them and agreed upon removing Gen Musharraf from the president's office. Thus, in August 2008 General Musharraf has resigned and Mr. Asif Ali Zardari was elected as the 11th president of Pakistan. A major step was taken by the government to pass the 18th amendment which paved the way for provincial autonomy and strengthen democratic values in Pakistan. The major constitutional development was removing the clause 58(2)(B) of the constitution to balance the powers between the president and prime minister. The eighteenth constitutional amendment has revitalized the supremacy of parliament as previously parliaments were mere puppets and rubber stamps in the hands of authoritative forces (Khan, Ullah, & Khan, 2021). Moreover, the judiciary was also restructured as in the original 1973 constitution. President was empowered to appoint judges for both the Supreme Court and High Court which questioned the independence of the judiciary. However, a new arrangement was proposed according to which a parliamentary committee recommended judicial commission comprising of 7 members, would suggest names to a parliamentary committee and after confirmation, it will be forwarded to the president for finalizing the appointment (Khan, Ullah, & Khan, 2021).

In addition to this, the 18th amendment has enhanced the freedom of the election commission through the provision of a transparent appointment procedure for the members of the election commission of Pakistan. Also, the senate was nourished by increasing and allotting seats for various groups such as minorities and women, however, in earlier years specifically after the Islamization process of Gen Zia women's role was limited in the political process.

Apart from all these developments during PPP's government, it is important to note that it particularly focused on completing the tenure and its major aim was to survive despite focusing on governance. Thus, it can be said that it was a democratic transition not a democratic transformation of the country.

The Democratic Rule of PML-N in 2013

The year 2013 is historic for continuing a democratic process in Pakistan. The elections of 2013 had represented Pakistan's first democratic turnover of power from one elected civilian government to another. The general elections were held on 11 May 2013 and PML(N) won the elections. The Nawaz government promised to counter the issues of fiscal deficit and power shortage. Efforts were made to counter these issues. In addition to this during this era, Pakistan established cordial relations with other countries especially China and a new project was also started named China- Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). However, in 2014 PML(N) and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif faced a political crisis due to the protests mobilized by Imran Khan and Tahir-ul-Qadri the opposition forces. The major stance of Imran Khan was on electoral fraud in 2013 elections whereas, Tahir-ul-Qadri wanted to bring inqilab to replace constitutional order. Khan alleged the elections to be rigged and blamed the election commission for this rigging along with other administrative officials. Later, he vowed to mobilize the Azadi march in which Tahir-ul-Qadri joined him. They demanded Nawaz Sharif resign from the post. The situation worsened and the army was also called under article 245 to manage the threat of terrorism and consequences of civil disobedience. (Shah & Asif, 2015). However, the protest failed to gather wide political attention. In a middle way, Mr. Qadri left for Canada, and it is rumored that he made a compromising deal with Nawaz Sharif government. Lastly, Imran Khan forced an independent judicial inquiry for the 2013 general elections. However, the terrorist attack on Army Public School in Peshawar thwarted his planning and the protests were called off to show solidarity with the government.

The major role played in this situation was the institution of the military. The conflict was mediated by COAS Gen. Raheel Sharif. He met the parties and make sure to address their reservations. Javed Hashmi (A former member of PML-N) alleged that PTI was following a “script” written by badge bearers, a euphemism used for generals, asserting that they were the ones who instructed Imran Khan to coordinate his protests with Qadri to put pressure on the government (Shah & Asif, 2015).

The Rule of Pakistan Tehreek-i- Insaaf (PTI) in 2018

The general election was held in 2018 on 25 July. PTI won the majority votes and formed a coalition government. A slowdown in economy and corruption charges against Nawaz Sharif government turned the voters in favour of PTI. After assuming power, PTI had to face many socio-economic challenges already prevailing in the country.

Various changes were made in the institutions such as the structure of local bodies was devised. In addition to this, the civil-military relations have been cordial with the PTI government as compared to the previous governments which had a contentious relationship with the military institution (Mamoon, 2019). Furthermore, the agricultural sector is being paid a lot of attention and enhanced efficiency through Chinese agriculture-based technologies in farming techniques. Moreover, legal reforms have also been introduced in the judicial system along with a revision of civil and criminal codes, anti-terrorism act and the working efficiency of institutions has also increased. National Accountability Bureau (NAB)’s powers are enhanced. The PTI government is intended to held accountable the corrupt political leaders.

In Pakistan, there is a huge discrepancy between democratic rhetoric and the ground realities of the political system. All the political parties and individuals emphasize democratic principles such as rule of law, accountability, transparency, socio-economic justice, free and fair elections. All of these are part of their speeches and party manifesto but these principles are not reflected in day to day politics (Rizvi, 2011). Most civilian and military rulers usually pursue personalization of power and authoritarian political management. An institutional imbalance has affected the growth of democracy. The state institutions such as the military, bureaucracy and intelligence agencies have been more powerful than the civilian institutions such as political parties, societal groups, and elected assemblies. The imbalance couldn’t be rectified due to certain reasons such as the weak institutions didn’t overcome their weakness, secondly, bureaucracy and military maintained professional disposition and hierarchy which gave them an advantage over the political elite. The military-bureaucracy cooperation has strengthened during the military rule.

Pakistan has a trivialized parliament that played little to no role in the decision-making process of the country. Even today, legislation is a matter beyond the parliament as the legislators prioritize their privileges over genuine pluralism, rule of law and institutional integrity (Ahmad, 2010).

Discussion: Is Pakistan moving toward Democratic Consolidation?

Things are looking up for Pakistan in terms of democratization. Three consecutive elections can be taken as a hint towards democratic transition in Pakistan. Huntington’s two consecutive turnovers of power can be used to justify the said assumption. However, despite democratization, Pakistan is still far away from democratic consolidation. In this regard, two sets of issues belonging to the pre- and post-independence era should be taken seriously. These are the very issues that combined to create an environment conducive to martial law and authoritarian governance. If these issues are not dealt with in one way or another, Pakistan will remain stuck in a phase where even though the chances of military

take-over would remain slim to none, democratic consolidation would remain an elusive dream.

Pre-Independence Issues

Colonial legacy and Patron-client Polity and Economy

The British ruled India through a 'divide-and-rule' policy. They understood that the local population dominated them in numbers and knowledge of the terrain. Hence, they co-opted certain classes into state apparatus while marginalizing and alienating others based on the degree to which each class accepted the colonial rule. For instance, the political consciousness of Bengalis was more developed than Punjab and Bengali's resisted colonial rule with much more valour than Punjab. Consequently, the British perpetuated the myth that Bengalis were feeble and effeminate people while co-opting certain rural castes of Punjab into state apparatus. These groups persisted even after independence giving rise to patron-client economy and polity. This resulted in public goods becoming conventional and hence rivalrous and excludable with kinship networks becoming instrumental in accessing them. This underlying trend impeded the development and growth of democracy in Pakistan and continues to do so.

Institutional Imbalance and security-centric policy-making process

At the time of Independence, the bureaucracy, military, and intelligence services were much more organized and disciplined than political institutions. Hence, Pakistan inherited institutional imbalance at the time of Independence. Moving forward, two trends granted the military an upper hand vis-a-vis political institutions and civilian bureaucracy which further deepened the institutional imbalance and impeded the growth of democracy.

After independence, while civilian bureaucracy succumbed to organizational chaos, corruption and lack of discipline, the military implemented rigorous recruiting standards, discipline, and professionalism. It successfully replaced the kinship networks with 'military networks' and installed esprit de corps within its rank and file.

The hostile nature of the Indo-Pak and Pak-Afghan relationship led to the development of a security-centric view of the policy-making process which ultimately provided the military with the ability to influence the policy-making process.

Post-Independence Issues

Rule of Law: In Pakistan, the rule of law has always been in an abysmal state. Islam (2001) cogently describes the situation as; 'the rule of law remains an anthem to Pakistani culture. The inherent cultural propensity to take the law into one's own hands has been reinforced by feudalism, customs, sectarian creeds, and religious traditions. Police brutality and lack of redress are also cited as reasons to circumvent the due process of law'. An equal system of traditional justice goes in defiance of the rule of law and judiciary in many regions of Pakistan, even though most of its decisions may be opposite to the norms of justice and codes of human rights. The Special Courts dealing with atrocious crimes and terrorism yet another layer of legal institutions that pose a challenge to the rule of law. In these situations, illegal actions are justified by a "higher law" that bestows legitimacy on them. The overall effect, however, is a condition of endemic lawlessness and total disrespect for the rule of law and judicial institutions. There seems to be no universal concept of law (Islam, 2001).

Furthermore, the public harbors a low level of trust in the police (primary law enforcement institution) and judiciary (primary law adjudication institution) in Pakistan. The politicization of police and judiciary has contributed to the negative conception of these

institutions. From the perspective of police and judiciary, chronic underfunding, lack of personal and underdeveloped institutional capacity are the true malaise.

Corruption: Pakistan is notorious for constantly ranking higher on corruption perception indexes. The CPI of 2021 has placed Pakistan in 140 out of 180 countries, while the index of 2020 has positioned Pakistan in 124 out of 180 countries. In 2019, Pakistan ranked 120 out of 180 countries on the 'Corruption Perceptions Index released by 'Transparency International'. In 2018, Pakistan had bagged 117th position. The figures show that Pakistan is constantly rising its status on the scale of the corruption perception index.

Accountability: There is little to no accountability of state officials in Pakistan. Decision-making is highly centralized and undemocratic. The patron-client system is one of the basic reasons for the lack of accountability in Pakistan.

Transparency: There is a lack of political will to make the decision-making process more transparent and open in Pakistan. Citizens have a right to information, but this right has constantly been stomped upon by the government.

Economic Performance: Pakistan, during the first forty years of its existence, was 'one of the top economic performers among the developing countries in the world'. But since 1990, there is a decline in the growth rate from 6.5% to 4.5%. Pakistan has fallen far behind its neighboring countries in terms of economic performance.

These issues have not only haunted Pakistan's democratization process but also stifled the development of a participatory political culture which in turn has worsened the problem. A functioning democracy relies on active and well-informed citizenry while it is vice-versa can hamper the process of democratization. The shift towards democracy after General Musharraf's rule was made possible by consensus among political parties and shifting public opinion in favour of democracy as per the geo-political realities. But political consensus and public opinion are the two most important variables in this context. Whenever politics and war of narrative have gotten the better of the political elite, extra-constitutional forces have benefitted from it.

Furthermore, lackluster service delivery and flawed governance practices plagued by the issues have pushed the public opinion in favour of the extra-constitutional forces in the past. Today, social media platforms propped up by surveillance capitalism have amplified public opinion. It has become much harder for governments or any state institutions to have complete control over narratives or to cross the institutional boundaries. However, it has also made the extra-constitutional forces interfere in political processes in a much more conceited manner and co-operate with key political players thereby giving birth to hybrid governance. Hence, democratic consolidation in Pakistan comes down to pro-democracy public opinion and political consensus among political parties in a few key areas: to neither involve nor tolerate extra-constitutional maneuvering by any state institution, to focus on strengthening institutions of service delivery, minimizing patron-client polity and economy, and to eliminate the issues plaguing Pakistan since independence gradually. Moreover, efficient service delivery by the democratic government can be the biggest motivator in shifting the opinion of mainstream society towards democracy.

To tackle the issues and to ensure democratic governance, reforms have been proposed now and then. Dr Ishrat Hussain's 'Comprehensive Plan of Action to Reform Institutions of Governance' is the most significant in this regard. However, the problem is lack of political consensus over the implementation process of said reforms.

Political parties must understand that Pakistan can only head towards democratic consolidation if the political will is generated through political consensus to tackle problems plaguing the institutions of democratic governance. A comprehensive top to bottom plan is required to tackle the issues about political will and consensus-building. The following suggestions would be helpful to understand and implement the process of democratic consolidation in the state.

- First and foremost, political parties must realize the stakes involved and try to minimize the culture of political opportunism. Partisan politics must take a back seat and political consensus must be achieved to ensure that reforms are implemented without any hiccups.
- Political elite and policymakers should also take a step back to get the whole picture. The increasing radicalization of society, widespread violence and sectarian conflicts should serve as a wake-up call for them.
- Bureaucracy must actively participate in the reform implementation process without the fear of being political victimized.
- Finally, growing educated urban middle class and an onslaught of communication networks should participate in bringing about this change.

The ongoing pandemic has provided an invaluable lesson to Pakistan. States with strong institutions were able to quickly formulate coherent policies to “flatten the curve” and enforce measures to contain the virus. Singapore is one such example. Whereas, the states with weak institutions like Italy succumbed to the virus. Another important lesson that can be drawn from this pandemic is that no matter how strong institutions are if they are politicized, they will gradually weaken. The United States of America provided with one such example. The strong institutions due to political engineering were unable to perform under pressure. Singapore, on the other hand, was successful in managing the effects of the virus because its institutions were not politicized.

The examples of such states offer to Pakistan two valuable lessons. First, strong institutions are essential and equally important in normal times as well as their importance increase manifold in the time of any crisis (emergencies and pandemics). It goes without saying that in times of pandemics and emergencies, the survival of states depends upon the efficacy of strong institutions. Second, Institutions must be guarded against politicization which has the potential of eroding their performance and credibility.

Conclusion

To sum up, Pakistan has observed the working of different patterns of governance since its inception. The geopolitical and geo-economic realities of the region have combined to create an unstable political environment that easily fell prey to extra-constitutional forces. Pakistan has inherited many challenges including the monopoly of social and political groups, sectarian issues, corruption, centralization of power, lack of coherence policymaking and weak democratic institutions. These challenges are contrary to the process of democratization and democratic consolidation. A state policy must revolve around the principle that good governance must be citizen-oriented, inclusive, and transparent.

After the period of General Musharraf, the process of democratization has started but to achieve democratic consolidation, there must exist a political consensus among political parties and the willingness to work towards strengthening democratic governance as well as pro-democracy public opinion.

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