

Discuss the role of regional and nationalist parties in Pakistani politics. How far these parties are necessary for the political system?

OUTLINE OF THE QUESTION

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1- INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a multi-party democracy. It has many regional and a few national parties. Both regional and national parties are main drivers of the country's democratic culture. Most of the times, Pakistan has witnessed regime of coalition government. These political parties are considered as agent of change as they work as the bridge between people and government. Pakistan's political parties play their indispensable role in economic, political and social spheres of life. Their key role is also mandatory for economic stability, democratic evolution and social empowerment across the country.

"What is important is that a political party articulates the mood of a generation."

(Benazir Bhutto)

2. REGIONAL AND NATIONALIST PARTIES IN PAKISTAN

Regional parties are those which belong to small regions of the country and their electoral strength is very limited. For example small parties in all provinces are regional parties. Balochistan's National Awami Party, Pashtunkwa Milli Awami Party etc. are regional parties. Similarly, Sindh's Mutahida Qumi Movement and Khyber Pakhtunkwa's Awami National Party are known as regional parties. While parties having representation in two or more than two provinces are known as National parties. PPP, PML(N) and PTI are Pakistan's national parties.

3. ROLE OF REGIONAL AND NATIONALIST POLITICAL PARTIES IN PAKISTANI POLITICS

a) ECONOMIC LEVEL

(i) Demand economic rights on regional resources:

Regional and nationalist political parties demand for economic rights on regional resources. For example; in Sindh regional parties raise the voice of affectees of the Gorano reservoir Thar, where Engro Coal Mining company was reluctant to provide jobs and financial aid to locals.

(ii) Bring attention of government towards provision of resources and necessities of life:

Political parties attract governments attention towards provision of resources and necessities of life of a region. In Balochistan, natural gas demand of locals raised by regional and national parties as per Islamabad Policy Research Institute's report,

59 percent of Balochistan's districts lack natural gas supply.

(iii) Hold All Parties Conference (APC) for discussing economic situation:

A combined initiative is taken by the country's political parties for discussing economic situation. For instance, Awami National Party (ANP) invited to political parties to participate All-party conference on May 3, 2023, to address the country's ~~economy~~ other pressing issues and most importantly economy.

b) POLITICAL LEVEL

(i) Play role to pass bills in the parliament:

Political parties who have representation in provincial and national assemblies make legislation on economy and other national and regional issues. Sometimes, harsh debate is also initiated before passing bills in the parliament.

(ii) Shape public opinion:

Regional and nationalist political parties are agents of public opinion making. These parties transfer narratives to the public. People of the country closely follow stances built by political parties.

(iii) To empower federation:

Federalist politics in Pakistan has taken its deep roots amid constructive role of political parties. For increasing political popularity and electoral strength, political parties of the country stress on strong federation.

(iv) Encourage political participation and accountability:

Pakistanis political parties encourage ^{for} political participation and accountability as they enlighten their supporters. For this purpose, they hold public gatherings in form of rallies, corner meetings, massive crowd on an open place.

C) SOCIAL LEVEL

(a) Ensure effective service delivery at educational and health institutions:

Pakistanis political parties work for good governance in the country. They hold concerned authorities accountable for ineffective service delivery at educational and health institutions.

(b) Play role in national integration by

Cooperating with other parties:

In Sindh province, Awami

National Party and Pakistan Peoples Party collaborate with each other for eradicating ethnic tensions between Sindhis and Pashtuns in Karachi.

(c) Promote religious harmony in the society:

Regional and nationalist political parties promote religious harmony in the society. They try to eradicate extreme religious ideology from the society. They protect minority rights. They discourage interfaith clashes.

4- NECESSITY OF REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTIES FOR POLITICAL SYSTEM

a) ECONOMIC LEVEL

(i) To play active role for economic stability:

In Pakistan, political parties strive for economic progress every time. Recently, one of the country's major political parties, PPP has asked for signing charter of economy which can be a road leads to economic progress

(ii) Supporting visionary economic policies of government:

They support visionary economic policies of government publically ~~as~~ as well as in legislature. They also provide strong recommendations for designing and implementing visionary economic policies in Pakistan.

(iii) Opposing bitter and worst economic policies of government:

They distance away from worst economic policies of government and criticize them publically as well as in the parliament.

b) POLITICAL LEVEL

(i) For ensuring political awareness and political participation:

Political awareness and participation is indispensable for the democratic evolution. Pakistanis political parties are doing it by adopting democratic norms.

(ii) For successful evolution of democracy:

Pakistanis regional and nationalist political parties promote democracy in the country existing political culture. They demand timely general elections, initiate protests against rigged elections and criticize anti-democratic practices in politics.

(iii) For maintaining checks and balances:

Pakistanis political parties maintain checks and balances on government with the help of democratic forums. Members of standing committees in parliament do the task. Chairman of the ~~public~~ public accountability committee is main watchdog. To examine government's performance is their task.

C) SOCIAL LEVEL

(i) For protecting fundamental rights of people:

Pakistanis political parties have become saviors of fundamental rights of people. They raise issues on democratic forums which are related to fundamental rights and are suppressed by government.

(ii) By increasing national cohesion by representing every ethnic group:

Pakistanis regional and national political parties give membership without ethnicity. They discourage ethnic clashes and work for national integration.

(iii) For ensuring community mobilization for any national cause:

Pakistanis political parties mobilize community for taking part in national issues. For example) during COVID-19 crisis, government of that time form tigher force consisits on youth for helping government to control the situation.

5- CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Pakistan's regional and nationalist political parties are driving force behind democratic evolution in the country. They do not only represent to people of Pakistan on the democratic forums but also promote democratic norm in the society. However, they witness immoral practices like horse trading, political engineering and absence of intra-party elections. There is dire need to eradicate such practices with political parties so that they can play further active role ~~for~~ in politics.

6- CONCLUSION

Pakistan's regional and national political parties influence economic, political and social spheres of life broadly. Pakistan's democratic political culture is entirely dependent on them. They shape public opinion, encourage political participation, ensure effective service delivery, promote national integration and institute religious harmony. Their importance is indispensable in the country as they play vibrant role for economic uplift, political stability and social development.