

Democratic Unrest

in Pakistan: Causes and Consequences

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⑥ Conclusion

While democracy fosters consensus and cooperation through political participation, its weakness rekindle the spirit of identity politics by killing the collective conscience of society. In Pakistan, democratic ideals often face obstructions at multiple levels. The extent of socio-political awareness and civic engagement determine the strength of democracy. In this similar vein, consensus of political leadership determine the nature of civic mobilization. A strong political leadership would promote democratic ideals and political participation while a weak leadership would keep the society ^{away} from the decision-making circle, resulting social disparities. In twenty first century, democracy is not confined to secrete ballots, public perception also acts as a catalyst for worsening or improving democratic conditions of a country. As a result, transnational actors play vital role in shaping perception about democratic institutions. A common perception about weak democracy

would create uncertainty, evading foreign investment. At the same time, the human rights concerns can make the youth vulnerable to foreign hands. Hence, political cooperation^{of leaders}, with inclusive governance and civic engagement, would prove a panacea to the faltering normative ideals of democracy in Pakistan.

Since inception of Pakistan, the democratic norms remained elite-centric. It means civic engagement remained low. In this scenario, social fabric have been kept systematically deprived of awareness about political participation. The death of Quaid, subsequently, created a leadership vacuum. Afterwards, the power struggle engaged the society through controlled-mechanism. That mechanism provided with non-party-based elections. Without political representation, Pakistan experienced multiple phases of identity politics, which finally led to the debacle of East Pakistan. Owing to such limited political

participation, the state of Pakistan operated under the bureaucratic-military apparatus, replacing the political forces through disqualification act. As a result, it introduced the concept of patronage-client politics, where politicians could escape disqualification. Hence, democratic ideals largely remained weakened due to the contribution of political forces with non-political ones.

In contemporary era, democratic unrest in Pakistan is the manifestation of historical legacies. Leadership vacuum to bring a strong democracy back seems an elusive phenomenon. Similarly, the diverging interests of political elites often use citizens as an instrument of acquiring their interests rather than changing the recurring patterns of the system. For instance, Pakistans faced multiple eras of coup d'état in pretext of changing the political system. The result of these coups diverted the attention of political forces from socio-economic welfare to amending

constitution so as to determine the most powerful among the elites. Eighth amendment and then seventeen amendment largely dominated the attention of decision-makers. Similarly, this power struggle to acquire strong political position doesn't operate at surface, instead, it draws legitimacy from states institutions by paying them ^{their} allegiance, hence, depriving social institutions from participation in the process of democracy. Consequently, the resentment of society is often cashed as an opportunity by opposition parties, resulting unrest in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, social fabric lacks awareness of how elites work in democratic system. This lack of awareness is exploited by political forces. The political top-brass often deceive citizens while achieving their interests. Thus, in name of civic engagement, mass is mobilized and society is polarized; however, the goal of attaining their interest is rephrased as 'charter

of democracy. The case of political and military leaders — Musharraf and Nawaz Sharif — shows society have been deprived of knowing political developments and institutional actions. Similarly, it presents the case of transparency that powerful people act within the social pattern, which legitimizes political actions in guise of smooth functioning of democracy.

At the same time, it reflects lack of political consensus but continuation of patronage politics. Maleeha Lodhi in 'The Search for Stability' observed that clientist politics demands clients to align with the expectations of patrons. Now, these patrons can be institutions or business-elites. The allegiance to them would be direct or indirect. Formulation of favourable policies would be considered as indirect while creeping monetary benefits would be direct advantages. In both cases, on one side, this hinders the continuity of democracy because democracy

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promotes inclusive governance.

When decision-making circles are not equally accessible by people, it results unrest among other representatives of the people. On the other hands, it circulates incentives among the patron-and-client, making social mobility difficult for people.

This collusion of business and political elites is also facilitated through loans and aids from international organization. Dr. Ishrat Hussain in "Governing the ungovernable" notes that such political consortia creates fiscal hamorrhage - fiscal leakage. Because, the business class gets loans through government guarantees. As a result, it stresses the economy of Pakistan while increasing public debt. Then, public debt poses conditionalities of Int'l institutions. The burden falls on social structure of Pakistan. At political level, such collusion weakens the spirit of democracy; and people lose trust in their existing

leadership and institutional structure. As a result, they resort to demonstrations and alternative routes.

Another important aspect of the democratic unrest in Pakistan arises from digital realm. Social media shapes public perception. Public opinion leaders receive information; interpret those information; and then disseminate through social networks. These people work as catalyst for the system. They can manipulate public perception, and can turn people against their institutions. In the case of Pakistan, public perception through social media often face criticism for targeting states' institutions. However, Public opinion leaders often term such expression as freedom of speech and press in democratic system. Meanwhile, their view is frequently supported by non-governmental organizations. As a matter of consequence, Pakistan is ranked 152nd in Global Press Freedom index. Nevertheless, the ranking shows that people's right to speech is limited to superficial

view about any emerging trends while suppression of dissent not only weakens democracy but reduces improvement in policies.

In such scenarios, people are often trapped between two choices: the choice of compromise on their rights; and the choice of making their leadership accountable. The trust-deficit in institutions widens when institutions show reactive approach, usually aggressive in nature. Meanwhile, it weakens the spirit of democracy. As Gaiser Bangali argues that lack of accountability is 'threat to social contract'. This brings a broader view of political approach. Because, it links social behaviour with the actions of politicians, besides the effects on the healthier democratic system. Nevertheless, accountability fosters cooperation and strengthens democracy by reducing trust-deficit, making accountability a currency of political trust of the people.

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Such stark picture of democracy can ruin confidence of people in social institutions and states' apparatus. As Emile Durkheim presented the concept of collective conscience, identity politics emerged when collective conscience is killed by through systematic process of marginalization. Social disparity further fuels resentment in the lower class of society. That's why Karl Marx envisaged that rising social disparities would certainly begin a struggle between the Bourgeoisie and Proletariates. The ultimate domination of Proletariate brings communist authoritarian system of Proletariate. However, Lenin interpretation in ^{imperialism} 'The highest stage of capitalism' shows that such revolutionary spirit was halted due to the welfare state of democracy. In Pakistan, the ^{weak} spirit of democracy fuels resentment and initiates a class struggle, which further would create instability in the country.

Similarly, political uncertainty evades ~~foreign~~^{foreign} investment. Policies inconsistencies abrupt business activities while bureaucratic inertia and ~~rep~~ red tapism intensify and worsen the situation. The complex structural procedural remained static because of ~~so~~ changing priorities of governments. Similarly, regime changes also impacts the economic stability of a country. Economic instability make living standards unaffordable for an ordinary citizen. Thus democracy has correlation with inflation, which ultimately guides the choices of citizen in political arena - elections. However, elections often face allegations from opposition parties. In this case, demonstrations impact trade activities within the country, further worsening the economic conditions of people.

Subsequently, institutional priorities also impact socio-economic and the spatial resources of the country. People lose trust in institutions when weak law enforcement damages the infrastructure in the country. Hence, protection to life and property of citizens determine their allegiance to governments. The weaker the law enforcement; the stronger the resentment against the institutions. However, the ruling elites often control a sense of democracy rather than developing social awareness regarding democracy. This kind of behavior obstruct democratic process. People lack the sense of civic engagement and mobilization by elites for their interests. Therefore, institutions often provide guide to citizens to reframe their choices.

Hence, many individuals often found themselves distant from resources. Their demonstrations remain passive in the beginning. However, as Ted Gur in 'why do men rebel?' says, the

passive protest is transformed into active violence by the government machinery. In Ted-Gur's frustration-aggression hypothesis, when institutions fail to deliver, citizens' expectations either grow more high or reduce to zero-expectations. In both cases, if institutions failed to meet the ~~expecton~~ expectations, it causes frustration, which then turned into aggression. In case of Pakistan, the service delivery of government institutions frequently fail to provide swift justice or take immediate actions cause frustration, as the case may be seen in protests, strikes, and hartals.

Therefore, it is important to bring stable democratic forces under political cooperation of political elites. It should also be remembered that democratic transition require impartial stakeholders to avoid rigging allegations. As a result, leadership will rests on two principles of cooperation and compromise for the political stability and

enhancement of delivery of service. Thus, cooperation at political level would be an example for social cooperation and revival of democratic norms.

Similarly, inclusive governance promotes the essence of democracy—equal opportunity. When individuals know their due rights are protected by institutions, they render their cooperation and allegiance. Afterwards, the state focus on development rather than controlling the minds of people. The earning of social confidence by state institutions reduces social grievances and social disparity, thus promoting national integration. In short, political participation in strengthened democracy proves to be a glue for national cohesion.

Another important remedy to the social grievances and way of earning social trust is accountability of political

leaders. It fosters a tolerating environment while making dissent a democratic culture. Dissent and the ability ~~to~~ to question the actions of leaders shows the awareness level of citizens. In turn, it brings improvement in policies by taking dissent as feedback. At the same time people express their views openly through media or shared interests. Because, they know institutions are transparent and not coercive. As a result, as an ideal of democracy civic engagement flourishes.

In conclusion, democratic ideals in Pakistan are hindered due to historical legacies, political vacuum of leadership. While extractive nature of institutions contribute to the loss of people confidence in states machinery. The ultimate consequences of these challenges impact socio-economic aspects of individuals' life, shaping the landscape ~~of~~^{for} political forces. Hence, politically inclusive governance

is essential to reduce social
disparity and enhance rule
of law and civic engagement.