

Q1

Introduction

Democratic evolution in Pakistan has never been less than a roller-coaster ride since its inception from independence. After the separation of East Pakistan in 1971, the country continuously oscillated between civilian and military rules, marked by political instability, power struggles, elite capture, economic crises, security threats, electoral controversies, civil liberties and media freedom. Hence, the democratic environment of Pakistan was and continues to be in a state of fragility. The contemporary democratic ^{environment} has been termed as a hybrid regime, which states that the elected ^{government} ~~candidate~~ has a strong non-political influence in the background.

Evolution of democracy since 1971

Electoral Freedom:

Electoral Freedom in Pakistan represents the backbone of democracy. However, the system was all together absent in some decades or it was given the allegations of being rigged. Ironically, it was after first proper elections in 70s that resulted in breakaway of East Pakistan. The elections were termed fair, but there was disagreement over power sharing formula. Regardless, Zulfikar Bhutto became the first elected Prime Minister. Unfortunately, the country faced two major Martial law regimes, stripping the very essence of democracy: elections. Although, hopes have reawakened after the fall of Musharraf, the elections have always been questioned. There were allegations of non-democratic force involved and a system of unfairness in giving all parties a level playing field. Both 2018 and 2024 elections were alleged to have non-political influence.

Economic Crises:

Economic instability weakens democratic footprint of a country. Since 1971, Pakistan has been engulfed in various economic issues. The nationalization process of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto weakened Foreign Direct investment and caused organizational inefficiencies in nationalised firms, resulting in huge sum of losses. The denationalization process during Zia regime and liberalization efforts by Nawaz Sharif did make some improvements. However, the country continues facing economic crises, exacerbated by political instability, security issues, climate change and pandemics. Consequently, it creates breeding ground for non-political forces to dominate, resulting in weaker democratic system.

Political instability: ~~and weak governance.~~

Political instability and weak governance

undermine the true spirits of democracy. Since 1971, the country has not achieved political harmony. To begin with, Z.A Bhutto's era of Premiership ended with him being assigned the death penalty. Zia ul Haq died from plane crash while Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto could not complete 5 years of Prime Minister tenure. After 13th Amendment was passed, hopes grew for a proper democracy. However, these hopes were shattered by the military coup of Pervez Musharraf. Once again, President were given powers after 17th amendment. A renewed hope for democracy started after ouster of Musharraf and the declaration of historic 18th amendment. Unfortunately, not a single Prime Minister completed his full term by being either disqualified through court decision or faced no confidence motion. Moreover, politicisation of legal action against opposition has further worsened the situation.

Weak governance:

The nationalization of Z.A. Bhutto created governance crises which exists till date. The institutions of government faced corruption, inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Transparency international ranked Pakistan poorly in corruption Index. Moreover, there has been a constant tussle between legislative, judicial and executive bodies. Hence weak governance pertains to weakened democracy.

Press Freedom and civilian liberties:

Press Freedom and civil liberties have been compromised throughout Pakistan's history since 1971. The authoritarian regime of Z.A. Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haq faced a curb in freedom. Although Musharraf gave some relaxation to private media, civilian freedom was still at bay. The era of Imran Khan and the present Shabbaz Sharif face additional

restriction in freedom through POTA (amendment) act, suppression of dissent and case of missing person. There have been reports of illegal abduction and missing person cases throughout the country. These restrictions undermine the very essence of democracy. The Freedom House termed Pakistan to be part free.

Democracy shaped by civil-military relation

Civil military relations greatly determine the fate of democracy in Pakistan. Worsening relations constitutes to instability while warming relation pertains to democratic continuity.

When have civil-military relations shaped democratic continuity?

Better civil military relations creates some

stability in democratic system. Since 1971, military has a strong presence in the affairs of the state. The presence of democratic values in cordial relations is evident through the tenure of Imran Khan. The country was functioning smoothly as Khan's relation with COAS Bajwa was stable. Similarly, political environment has stabilised due to strong footprint of military in civilian domain. From foreign policies to economic affairs of the state, Field Marshal Asim Munir has facilitated P.M. Shehbaz Sharif to advance the national interest. The defence Minister, Khawaja Asif, has behaved this era as that of hybrid regime. Although there is involvement of undemocratic forces, the country has democratic continuity.

When have civil-military relations led to democratic instability?

Civil-Military relation results in democratic

derailment when the ~~relations~~ civil and military ~~are~~ do not have a mutual understanding. It has been evident through hanging of Z.A. Bhutto, coup of Musharraf and cases against Imran Khan by the military establishment. After the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister, he also put allegations on Bajwa for his removal. The same is the case with Imran Khan; he blames military for his ousting. Hence, the strong presence and history of military makes it essential for democratic continuity ~~to~~ align and it should be aligned with civilian governance.

Conclusion

Since 1971, Pakistan's democracy has evolved from oscillation of civilian-military regimes to the model of hybrid regime. Weak electoral system, political instability, economic crisis, and poor governance have contributed

major roles in democratic breakdown.

Q3- Introduction

The 20th century's nationalization gave birth to crises of governance that exists till-date.

Many people are of the view that crises of poor governance has its roots in political culture. They argue that kick-bribe-client-agency political campaigns, corruption, nepotism and political revenge are the main factor in weak governance. In my opinion, although this is true, there are many other factors such as lack of education, accountability and meritocracy are also issues resulting in incapable governance. However, these issues directly originate from political environment.

Politics in Pakistan is based on client-agency relationship causing weak governance:

Political campaigns in Pakistan is based on rigid short-term benefits for the voters rather than sustainable efforts. This approach mirrors lack of visionary political leaders. As a result, ~~there~~ they are less concerned with correcting the governance system and more with giving short term benefits such as creation of roads, bridges or tubewells.

Lack of accountability and corruption:

Pakistan is engulfed in rampant corruption. Corruption has taken roots in executive branch.

Lack of accountability enables them to exploit government institutions for personal gains. Bribery, funds embezzlement and influence takes the front seat while effective governance sits in paralysis.

Transparency International has ranked Pakistan 131 in corruption Index.

Politicization of government institutions:

Political parties have set a new trend of using institutions to suppress dissent & opposition. Human Rights Commission Pakistan (HRCPP) has reported hundreds to be detained illegally after May 9 incident. Experts claim that the case is political in nature. Similarly, organizations like NAB and FIA are allegedly political tools to place opposition political parties behind the bars. This causes governance crises, as institutions are focused on suppressing political dissent rather than solving actual issues, causing governance crises.

Lack of meritocracy and nepotism:

There is absence of proper merit in the governance. Appointments are made in exchange of political favours rather than actual performance. One prominent example is

the appointment of High Court Judges after 26th amendment. This has given powers to executive to appoint Judges, limiting merit and exacerbating poor governance. Similarly, nepotism in general politics has weakened legitimacy of government. This creates toxic political culture spiralled with incompetency and lack of true representation. Consequently, elite capture weakens the system of governance.

Political Instability :

Pakistan is engulfed in political instability. In its political history, rarely a leader has completed the legitimacy of his/her tenure. Such issue result in inconsistent policy making. Hence, governance destabilizes and red tapism prevails in the country.

Conclusion

Pakistan's toxic political culture has complicated the already slow bureaucratic system of governance. Political culture focuses on short term favours over long-term sustainability, resulting in poor focus on issues of governance. In addition, rampant corruption and lack of accountability by both institutions and executives, causing a multiplier in governance crises. These institutions are rather used for political favours and revenge. Similarly, lack of merit creates incompetency, which worsen the condition of governance system further. Finally, inconsistent ~~political~~ policies by government create lack of fruitful results through governance.